

ORIGIN OF "O. K."

From the Rochester Post Express.

The Century Dictionary says of "O. K.": "Origin obscure. The letters are usually said to have been used originally by Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States, as an abbreviation of 'all correct' spelled, whether through ignorance or humorously all correct, but this is doubtless an invention. Another statement refers

the use to Old Keokuk, an Indian chief, who is said to have signed treaties with his initials, O. K."

Some years ago the editor of the American Magazine of History made a careful investigation into the origin of "O. K." and concluded that it came from the Choctaw word *oke*, which has in Choctaw exactly the same sound as the alphabetic pronunciation of the letters O. K. in English. The meaning of the word *oke*, as nearly as it can be conveyed in English, is "that is true," or "that is all so."

In the Rev. Cyrus Byington's Choctaw New Testament the first sentence, Matthew v., 13, "Ye are the salt of the earth," is "Gakni in huppi huchehla hoke," literally, "the earth its salt ye, that is so."

To General Jackson is attributed the introduction of the Choctaw word into our speech. Before the war of 1812 in voyages up and down the Mississippi and in trading expeditions overland from Nashville, Tenn., to Natchez, Miss., through the Choctaw nation, he was brought into frequent communication with these Indians. General Jackson was prone on the use of energetic methods of assertion, and hearing that this word "*oke*" so frequently used by the Choctaw people, he learned the meaning conveyed by it to the Choctaw mind and appropriated it to his own purposes.

General Jackson was no scholar, but he was not so grossly ignorant of English orthography as to suppose that "O. K." were the proper initials for "all correct." It is quite likely that he indorsed documents with the letters "O. K." as a jocular symbol of his favorite Choctaw expression. That the abbreviation O. K. was coined by Jackson himself and used by him long years before it passed into the current slang finds confirmation in an extract from the court records of Sumter county, Tennessee, as follows: "October 6, 1790. Andrew Jackson, Esq., proved a bill of sale from Hugh McGary to Casper Mansker, for a negro man, which was "O. K." It is likely that the "O. K." of this entry was suggested by Jackson himself as a brief way of saying, after the Choctaw fashion, that the claim had been legally made out.