

Stand Watie and the Confederate Cherokees

The only two Native American Generals in the Civil War both had connections with its end. Seneca Ely S. Parker, later Brevetted Brigadier General, drew up the surrender plans that Grant presented at Appomattox Court House (April 9, 1865) and had a remarkable exchange there with Lee. The other, Stand [sometimes Stan] Watie, a ¾ Cherokee promoted to Brigadier General May 6, 1864, put by his arms June 23, 1865—two and a half months after the war was officially over. He was the last Confederate leader to do so.

Stand's father, Uwatie ("the ancient one"), a pure-blood Cherokee, married Susanna Reese, of European descent, and was a wealthy planter and slave-owner in what is now the northwest Georgia area of the Cherokee Nation, which also included Tennessee and western North Carolina. The U was later dropped, and the family name became Watie, though some refer to it as "Waitie." He was baptized, took the name David, and sent his children to the Moravian mission school.

The son (12/12/1806-9/9/1871) had various names, too—Standhope Oowatie and Isaac S. Watie, the "Isaac" in accord with his baptism as a Christian. He favored and adopted part of the translation of his Cherokee name (Degataga), "stand firm." His brother, born Buck Watie (Galagina), took the name of a White benefactor and became Elias Boudinot. Buck was the Editor of the tribal newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, which spoke against anti-Indian legislation and was destroyed by the Georgia Militia. Stand assisted him and served as a clerk of the Cherokee Supreme Court and Speaker of the Cherokee National Council.

Stand Watie is invested with more than a Civil War aura. In a sense, the history of White, Indian, and Black relationships resides in his story. For example, his family held most of the some 1,600 slaves among the Cherokees, and he would become a member and leader of the anti-abolitionist Knights of the Golden Circle. Although owners and owned worked side by

side, offspring were born free; intermarriage was allowed; and most Cherokees, taught in Christian schools, opposed slavery.

Stand's family was also much involved with assimilation. By an 1802 compact, Georgia gave up today's Alabama and Mississippi in exchange for the promise that the federal government would force the Cherokees west. They refused, with some 20 percent adopting White lifestyles in hopes of remaining in place. The discovery of gold on their land would exert more pressure for "Removal." Ultimately came The (1838) Trail of Tears (Nunna Daul Tsuny, "Trail Where We Cried"), with as many as 4,000 dying on the way west.

The Waties favored Removal to Oklahoma and signed the Treaty of New Echota, but it was rejected by Principal Chief John Ross (7/8 Scottish and 1/8 Cherokee and a striking example of the amicable relationship between Scots settlers and the Native Americans). Cherokee self-war resulted, and many "political" murders were committed. They included three members of Stand's family: his brother, Elias; uncle, Major Ridge; and cousin, John Ridge. He escaped because a friend witnessed the murders and warned him. He would later kill James Foreman, one of the assassins, and would be acquitted on the grounds of self-defense, even though Foreman was not armed. Ironically, Major Ridge himself had helped write the Cherokee Constitution's "blood law" requiring the death penalty for anyone who "alienated" tribal land (sold it without authorization).

The "free blankets" offered at the "signing place" lured only some one hundred eligible voters. Ross and his Council did not attend. The treaty was denounced by Whites, too, including Davy Crockett and Daniel Webster. The Cherokees were to leave in exchange for \$15 million and 800,000 acres in Indian Territory (today's northeastern Oklahoma and part of Kansas). The Ridge-Watie faction helped draft the treaty and considered its terms generous,



but some 90 percent of the tribe opposed it. Approximately 1,000 Cherokees avoided being rounded up by hiding in the mountains.

The Supreme Court's ordering Georgia to protect Cherokee land had brought President Jackson's famous retort: "The Chief Justice [John Marshall] has made his ruling. Now let him enforce it." Not only the Jackson but the Van Buren administration refused to void the treaty. Ross lost his court battle against it.

The Waties and other non-Ross supporters had voluntarily moved, early (1837), to what came to be called the Cherokee Nation, West (Oklahoma) and were able to select choice land. Stand settled at Honey Creek; after his kinsmen's murders, he became leader of the Ridge-Watie-Boudinot faction.

The Civil War was tribe against tribe as well as, for the Cherokees, another fight-within-the-fight. Although the majority agreed to support the Confederacy, Ross and some of his followers eventually went over to the Federals, and Stand was elected to take his place as Principal Chief (1862-1866). He was not recognized by Ross, and the factions would battle after the North-South conflict ended.

Stand raised a cavalry regiment and was commissioned Colonel of the First Cherokee Mounted Rifles. Clem Rogers, the father of Will, was one of his chief cavalry scouts. He and his troops were in 18 battles and major skirmishes and often raided behind Union lines, forcing the enemy to hold needed troops in the West to deal with them. They fought not only in Indian Territory but in Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Texas and were said to have engaged in more battles west of the Mississippi than any other unit. Stand

joined Van Dorn's command in the Battle of Pea Ridge/Elkhorn Tavern (Arkansas, 1862), in which his mounted troopers, outnumbered, rallied to his call, captured Union cannons, and turned them on the enemy. The battle was lost, but Stand covered the retreat of the Confederates. The Indian Rebel Yell must have been especially fierce. His troops won special fame for taking the J. R. Williams, a Union steamboat. He was promoted to Brigadier General by General Samuel Bell Maxey and assumed command of the First Indian Brigade (two regiments of Mounted Rifles and three battalions of Cherokee, Seminole, and Osage Infantry). At the Second Battle of Cabin Creek, considered among the most brilliant raids of the Civil War and the greatest Confederate victory in Indian Territory, a federal supply train, valued at over two million dollars, was captured. In command was General Richard Montgomery Gano, whose promotion predated Stand's by a month. Some historians argue, however, that Gano was put in charge because Whites would have refused to take orders from an Indian. Following the Battle of Doaksville, Stand signed a cease-fire at Fort Towson in the Choctaw Nation portion of Indian Territory. He never surrendered.

Stand Watie was married four times and had six children. None had offspring, and none of his three sons outlived him. After the Civil War, he returned to Honey Creek to rebuild his destroyed home, and a letter to a daughter speaks of his loneliness. He was buried in the Ridge Cemetery in Delaware County, Oklahoma. Some say that, like Robert E. Lee, he died, at least partially, of a broken heart.

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of us wanted a change. I am very concerned; however, that we have for the next four years no checks and balances. Assuming that there will be a vacancy on the Supreme Court filled some time soon, it will mean that all three levels of government will be controlled by the ideology of one party. I am not sure that is what the electorate really wanted. You know the ole saying, "don't throw the baby out with the wash"? Perhaps there won't be gridlock now and we all wanted that, but I am afraid the "environmental baby" is about to land on its head.

The Constitution guarantees us life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Life is the gift of Nature. Without the services provided by Nature of clean air, clean water, food and shelter, the quality of our liberty and ability to pursue happiness is diminished. Our society has spent the past fifty plus years developing and perfecting environmental laws and programs to help balance the greed of those who

want all at all costs. Unless you live under a rock, it should be fairly clear to you that both the state and national agendas will be to weaken environmental laws and programs in the name of making things better. Will things really be better for all of us or just for the wealthy and powerful?

For the foreseeable future, we need to do more than just vote. We need to be defenders of a clean environment because our lives, the lives of those we love and the lives of those who follow will depend on what actions we do or don't take. Selfishly, we need to be environmental heroes and sheroes.

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Seeking Sleep

BY LOU LIPSITZ

Hey— they turned the moon off!
gone by my window
once too often
I stick my arms out
and get a glassful of dark air.
O to pour
the night over my head!
O for a taste
of nothing!
Everything I've lost—
years gone into the past's
shoes.
now for the other life!
the one
without mistakes.
I finally dream of you.
I'm like a mountain goat
searching for your window
as my crazy hooves
clack along the deserted
streets of town.

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