

William Penn Adair

William Penn Adair (1830–1880) was a Cherokee leader and Confederate colonel.

Background

William Penn Adair was born on April 15, 1830 in the old Cherokee Nation in New Echota, Georgia. His parents were George Washington Adair and Martha Adair. He attended Cherokee schools in Indian Territory, studying law. He was a Freemason,^[1] belonging to the Vinita Lodge No. 5, which was chartered in 1875.^[2] He was described as being "six foot and two inches in height, magnetic, logical and frankly agreeable, the ablest and most brilliant of all Cherokees."^[3]

Adair's first wife was Sarah Ann McNair. His second was Susannah "Sue" McIntosh Drew.^[4] He lived on the Grand River in what is now Adair, Oklahoma.^[1]

Military service

During the civil war he served in the Confederate States Army,^[1] first in the First Regiment of Cherokee Mounted Volunteers, under General Stand Watie.^[5] Adair rose in rank to colonel and organized the Second Cherokee Mounted Volunteers.^[6]

Tribal leadership

Adair served the Cherokee Nation in many capacities. He was a senator, a justice of the Cherokee Supreme Court, delegate to Washington, DC, and assistant principal chief.^[1] He served as the Senator from the Flint District from 1855-1860^[7] and Senator from the Saline District from 1869-1874.^[8] In 1879, he was elected as Assistant Chief.^[3] Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, Adair served as a delegate to Washington.^[9]

He was a vocal advocate for the rights of the Texas Cherokees. In 1873, he and Clement Neely Vann co-authored the book, *History of the Claim of the Texas Cherokees*, in which they wrote on behalf of "the Texas Cherokees and Affiliated Bands."^[10]

Cherokees sought compensation from Texas for lands lost in 1839 and sent Adair to Washington to petition Congress to allow him to sue the state to return lands in Texas once belonging to Cherokee people. In 1839, Republic of Texas President Mirabeau Lamar had forcibly driven Texas Cherokees into Indian Territory and seized their Texan lands. The tribe wanted 1500000 acres (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km²) in East Texas returned to them. The state offered lands in the Texas Panhandle, but the tribe refused to accept that offer.^[11]



William Penn Adair, 1866

Death and legacy

While in Washington, DC, Adair died on October 23, 1880.^[3] Several Cherokee men were named after him in the late 19th century, including the celebrated Cherokee humorist William Penn Adair Rogers (better known as Will Rogers).^[12] Adair, Oklahoma was named for William Penn Adair and his brother, Dr. Walter Thompson Adair.^[5]

Notes

[1] Littlefield and Parins, 165

[2] Starr, 185

[3] Starr, 264

[4] Starr, 328

[5] Thomas, Betty Lou Harper. "Adair." (<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/A/AD002.html>) *Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. (retrieved 24 March 2010)

[6] Starr, 148

[7] Starr, 272

[8] Starr, 267

[9] Starr, 296

[10] Adair and Vann, 1

[11] "Cherokee Indians." (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/CC/bmc51.html>) *Handbook of Texas Online*. (retrieved 24 March 2010)

[12] Rogers et al, 83

References

- Adair, William Penn and C. N. Vann. *History of the Claim of the Texas Cherokees*. ([http://books.google.com/books?id=1-kNAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq="William+Penn+Adair"&ei=Te6qS-zpD4OGkgT24PGgDQ&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=1-kNAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=)) New York: Morgan, Comes, and Lawrence, 1873.
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External links

- "William Penn Adair," (<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/Chronicles/v029/v029p032.pdf>) article in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* by Cherrie Adair Moore, Spring 1951.

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