

Stand Watie

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Born	December 12, 1806 Calhoun, Georgia
Died	September 9, 1871 (aged 64) Delaware County, Oklahoma
Allegiance	United States of America Confederate States of America
Service/branch	Confederate States Army State of Georgia
Years of service	1861–65 (CSA)
Rank	Brigadier General (CSA)
Commands held	1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles
Battles/wars	American Civil War
Other work	Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation (1862-1866)

Stand Watie (December 12, 1806 – September 9, 1871; also known as **Standhope Uwatie**, *Degataga* (Cherokee: ᏈᏈᏍᏈ), meaning “stand firm”, and **Isaac S. Watie**) was a leader of the Cherokee Nation and a brigadier general of the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War. He commanded the Confederate Indian cavalry of the Army of the Trans-Mississippi, made up mostly of Cherokee, Muskogee and Seminole.

Watie served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation 1862-1866, during the war years and immediately after. By that time, he had support of the majority of the tribe, but a minority refused to ratify his election. The former chief John Ross was captured in 1862 by Union forces. Two delegations went to Washington after the war to sue for peace, hoping to have tribal divisions recognized; Watie hoped to gain recognition of a Southern Cherokee Nation. The US government negotiated only with those who had sided with the Union, and named John Ross as principal chief in 1866 under a new treaty.

Early life

Watie was born in Oothcaloga, Cherokee Nation (now Calhoun, Georgia) on December 12, 1806, the son of *Uwatie* (Cherokee for "the ancient one"), full-blood Cherokee, and Susanna Reese, daughter of a white father and Cherokee mother. His brothers were *Gallagina*, nicknamed "Buck" (who later took the name Elias Boudinot); and Thomas Watie. The brothers were nephews of Major Ridge, and cousins to John Ridge. By 1827, their father David Uwatie had become a wealthy slave-owning planter.

After *Uwatie* converted to Christianity with the Moravians, he took the name of David Uwatie; he and Susanna renamed *Degataga* as Isaac. He preferred the English translation of his Cherokee name, "Stand Firm". Later, the family dropped the "U" from the spelling of their surname and it became Watie. Along with his brothers and sisters, Stand Watie learned to read and write English at the Moravian mission school in Spring Place, Cherokee Nation (now Georgia).

Adult life

Stand Watie occasionally helped write for the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper, which his older brother Elias started in 1828 with Samuel Worcester, a missionary and printer who cast the type for the Cherokee syllabary. Stand Watie became involved in the dispute over Georgia's repressive anti-Indian laws. After gold was discovered on Cherokee lands in northern Georgia, thousands of white settlers encroached on Indian lands. In spite of federal treaties protecting Indians from state actions, after Congress' passage in 1830 of the Indian Removal Act, in 1832 Georgia confiscated most of the Cherokee land. Georgia militia destroyed the offices and press of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which had published articles against Indian Removal.

Believing that removal was inevitable, the Watie brothers favored securing Cherokee rights by treaty before relocating to Indian Territory. They were among the Treaty Party that signed the 1835 Treaty of New Echota. The majority of the Cherokee opposed removal, and the Tribal Council and Chief John Ross refused to ratify the treaty. They belonged to the National Party.

Early years in Indian Territory

In 1835, Watie, his family, and many other Cherokee emigrated to Indian Territory (eastern present-day Oklahoma). They joined some Cherokee who had relocated as early as the 1820s. Those Cherokee who remained on tribal lands in the East were forcibly removed by the U.S. government in 1838; their journey, on which they took their slaves, became known as the "Trail of Tears," during which 4,000 people died.

Members of the National Party targeted Treaty Party men for assassination because they had given up tribal lands; it was a blood offense. Stand Watie, his brother Elias Boudinot, their uncle Major Ridge and cousin John Ridge, along with several other Treaty Party men were attacked. Of the first four men attacked on 22 June 1839, only Stand Watie survived.

In 1842 Watie encountered James Foreman, one of his uncle's assassins, and shot him dead. He was tried for murder in Arkansas and acquitted as acting in self defense. In the post-Removal violence within the tribe, close to civil war, Ross partisans killed Stand's brother Thomas in 1845. At least 34 politically related murders were committed among the Cherokee in 1845 and 1846.

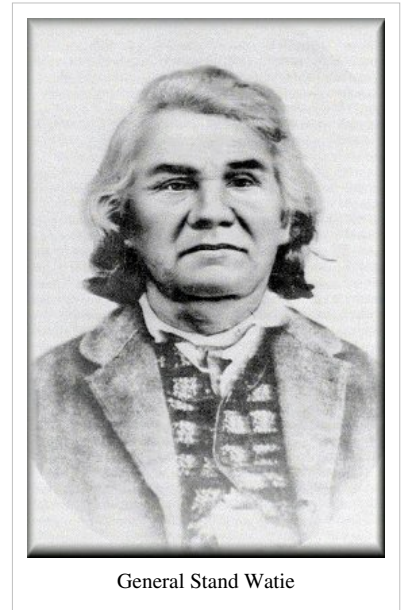
Watie, a slave holder, developed a successful plantation on Spavinaw Creek in the Indian Territory. He served on the Cherokee Council from 1845 to 1861, serving part of that time as speaker.

Civil War service

Watie was one of only two Native Americans on either side of the Civil War to rise to a brigadier general's rank. The other was Ely S. Parker, a Seneca who fought on the Union side.^[1]

After a majority of the Cherokee Nation voted to support the Confederacy in the American Civil War, Watie organized a regiment of cavalry. In October 1861, he was commissioned as colonel in the 1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles. Although he fought Federal troops, he also led his men in fighting between factions of the Cherokee, as well as against the Creek, Seminole and others in Indian Territory who chose to support the Union. Watie is noted for his role in the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, on March 6–8, 1862. Watie's troops captured Union artillery positions and covered the retreat of Confederate forces from the battlefield after the Union took control.

After Cherokee support for the Confederacy fractured, Watie continued to lead the remnant of his cavalry. He was promoted to brigadier general by General Samuel Bell Maxey, and given command of the First Indian Brigade of the Army of the Trans-Mississippi, composed of two regiments of Mounted Rifles and three battalions of Cherokee, Seminole and Osage infantry. These troops were based south of the Canadian River, and periodically crossed the river into Union territory. They fought in a number of battles and skirmishes in the western Confederate states, including the Indian Territory, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Texas. Watie's force reportedly fought in more battles west of the Mississippi River than any other unit. Watie participated in what is considered to be the greatest (and most famous) Confederate victory in Indian Territory, which took place at Cabin Creek during mid-September 1864. He and General Richard Montgomery Gano led a raid that captured a Federal wagon train and netted approximately \$1 million dollars worth of wagons, mules, commissary supplies, and other needed items.^[2] Stand Watie also oversaw a massacre of black haycutters at Wagoner, Oklahoma during this raid. Union reports stated that Watie's Indian cavalry "killed all the Negroes they could find", even murdering wounded men.^[3]



General Stand Watie

During the war, General Watie's family and other Confederate Cherokee took refuge in Rusk and Smith counties of east Texas. Knowing their families were relatively secure at the Mount Tabor Community, also known as Bellview, Texas, enabled the warriors to stay out on campaigns. The Cherokee and allied warriors became a potent Confederate fighting force that kept Union troops out of southern Indian Territory and large parts of north Texas throughout the war.

On June 23, 1865, following the Battle of Doaksville, at Fort Towson in the Choctaw Nation's area of the Indian Territory, Watie signed a cease-fire agreement with Union representatives for his command, the First Indian Brigade of the Army of the Trans-Mississippi. He was the last Confederate general in the field to surrender.^{[4][5]}

Tribal leadership

John Ross had signed an alliance with the Confederacy in 1861, but repudiated it two years later, reflecting the shifting support within the Cherokee Nation, although by then a majority favored the Confederacy. After he was captured by Union forces and ended up in Washington, D.C., Tom Pegg took over as principal chief of the pro-Union Cherokee.^[6] Following Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, Pegg called a special session of the Cherokee National Council. On February 18, 1863, it passed a resolution to emancipate all slaves within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation. Most of the "freed" slaves were held by masters who were part of the pro-Confederate Cherokee, so did not gain immediate freedom.^[6]

Stand Watie was elected principal chief of the pro-Confederate Cherokee, who increasingly outnumbered pro-Union elements. Ross' supporters, by then in the minority, refused to recognize his election. Open warfare broke out between the "Union Cherokee" and the "Confederate Cherokee" within Indian Territory. After the wider war ended, both factions sent delegations to Washington, DC. Watie pushed for recognition of a separate "Southern Cherokee Nation", but never achieved that.

The US government refused to recognize the divisions among the Cherokee, although there were critical differences. The Southerners wanted the government to pay to relocate the Cherokee Freedmen from their lands; the Northerners suggested adopting them into the tribe, but having the government giving them an exclusive piece of associated territory. The government went further, adding that the Cherokee Freedmen would receive full rights for citizenship, land, and annuities as the Cherokee. It assigned them land in the Canadian addition. In the treaty of 1866, the government declared John Ross as the rightful Principal Chief.

Open hostilities threatened the stability of the tribe over Ross's return and the treaty issues, but Ross died and a new chief was elected in 1867. The Cherokee Nation elected the full-blood Lewis Downing, a compromise candidate who proved to be a shrewd and politically savvy Principal Chief. He brought about reconciliation and reunification. As between the North and South, tensions lingered into the 20th century, but the Cherokee did not have the extended insurrection among pro-Confederate forces that occurred in the South.^[7]

Shortly after Downing's election, Watie returned to his home from exile in the Choctaw Nation, where he had gone after the treaty signing. He tried to rebuild his fortunes while staying out of politics. He died in 1871, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.^[8]

In culture

Stand Watie is featured occasionally in *Rifles for Watie*, a novel by Harold Keith. It is about a young Union soldier from Kansas, and his experiences with Watie and his people in Tahlequah and in the surrounding areas.

The song "Coyotes," as recorded by Don Edwards, is an old cowboy's lament about things that have disappeared from the Old West -- among them, Comanches, outlaws, longhorns, Geronimo, the red wolf, and Stand Watie.^[9]


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- [9] "Don Edwards - Coyotes Song Lyrics" (<http://www.1songlyrics.com/d/don-edwards/coyotes.html>). . Retrieved 1 October 2011.

Additional reading

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External links

- Paul Ridenour, "Stand Watie and Elias Boudinot Family (Sons of David Oo-wa-tie)" (<http://www.paulridenour.com/swatie.htm>), Paul Ridenour Website
-  "Waite, Stand". *Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*. 1900.

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