

**Stand Watie (1806-1871)**

**Cherokee Leader  
Confederate Brigadier General**

## Stand Watie's Cherokee name was De-ga-ta-ga, or "he stands.

Stand Watie was born Dec. 12, 1806, near Rome Georgia, and died Sept. 9, 1871, at his home on Honey Creek in Delaware County, Oklahoma, near the northwest corner of Arkansas. He learned to read and write English at a mission school in Georgia, and occasionally helped write for the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper (after Sequoyah developed the 86-symbol Cherokee syllabary in 1821) with his brother Buck Watie (who took the name of Elias Boudinot from a white benefactor). His father David Watie (or Oowatie) was the brother of Major Ridge, and the Ridge-Watie families became wealthy slave-owning planters in the new Cherokee constitutional republic that replaced tribal government in 1827. The state of Georgia opposed any form of tribal government and in 1828 began to pass repressive anti-Indian laws without any recourse for the Cherokee in state courts. After gold was discovered on Cherokee lands in northern Georgia, 3000 white settlers poached on Indian lands. Only the treaties with the federal government gave Indians protection from the states. The Supreme Court under John Marshall declared the repressive state laws null and void in the 1832 *Worcester v. Georgia* case, but President Jackson refused to enforce the court's decision. In 1832, Georgia confiscated most of the Cherokee land, including the estates of John Ross, and sold them in a land lottery to whites. The Georgia militia entered the Cherokee capital of New Chota and destroyed the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

The Ridge-Watie faction allied with President Andrew Jackson to sign the New Echota Treaty Dec. 29, 1835, that required Cherokees to leave Georgia in return for 800,000 acres in the Indian Territory and \$15 million. The Treaty was opposed by tribal chief John Ross and the Council and most Cherokees who refused to leave their homes in Georgia. The Ridge-Watie group led the voluntary removal of 2000 Cherokees from Georgia to the Indian Territory in 1837, but Ross and 10,000 others were forced out on the "Trail of Tears" in 1838. Some members of the anti-treaty party decided to kill the leaders of the Treaty Party at a secret meeting at Double Springs on June 21, 1838, and the next day killed Major Ridge and John Ridge and Elias Boudinot. The executions were justified by a clause of the Cherokee Constitution that authorized the death penalty for anyone selling tribal land without authorization. Stand Watie was also marked for death, but was warned and escaped. The Cherokee nation was deeply divided by the experience of the Treaty and the Trail of Tears and the Ridge-Boudinot murders. Watie formed a band of warriors for protection and refused to disband after Ross complained to the Jackson government. This internal civil war lasted until a truce was established in 1846 and Stand Watie joined the Tribal Council 1845-1861 (although Ross would remain the official elected Principal Chief until his death in 1866) presiding over a Cherokee population of 21,000 in the Indian Territory in 1861.

Watie joined the Confederacy in 1861 because he feared the consequences of Lincoln's election and the Republican Party's free soil promises to open the west and the Indian Territory to white settlement. The Union abandoned all Indian Territory military posts in the spring of 1861, violating treaty pledges and making the area vulnerable to Confederate attack.

He was a slave-owning planter that shared many values of the Old South. When Albert Pike and Douglas Cooper recruited Indian soldiers for the Confederacy in 1861, Watie agreed to form a Cherokee cavalry unit. Also, John Drew formed a regiment of full-blood "Pin" Cherokees (wearing a crossed-blades symbol as a pin on uniforms), as did the Choctaws and Chickasaws



**Sarah Bell Watie, the wife of Stand Watie.**

And Creeks and Seminoles. However, the Creeks were divided like the Cherokees. Creek chief Opothleyaholo refused to join the Confederacy and in April 1861, Confederate Indians began attacks on the neutral Creek settlement on the Deep Fork River, but Opothleyaholo won the Battle of Round Mountain Nov. 19 and Chusto Talasay Dec. 9. However, on Dec. 26, Cooper's Confederate Indians defeated Opothleyaholo at Chustenalah and drove the pro-Union Creeks into Kansas where they formed the First and Second Union Indian Brigades to retake their homeland. At the Battle of Pea Ridge March 6-8, 1862, Stand Watie and his Cherokee Mounted Rifles captured Union artillery batteries in a dramatic charge and held their position to allow an orderly withdrawal of Earl Van Dorn's Confederate army. Pea Ridge began the Union invasion of the Indian Territory. John Drew and his Confederate Indians deserted from the Confederacy but Stand Watie continued to fight. The Indian Expedition of 1862 advanced from Fort Leavenworth with 6000 on June 28 led by Col. William Weer, an alcoholic former officer under Jayhawker James Lane who sought to take over the Indian Territory lands for his personal gain. Weer occupied the Confederate capital of Tahlequah and captured John Ross, but paroling him when he agreed not to oppose the Union army. Stand Watie was defeated at Locust Grove July 3 by the 6<sup>th</sup> Kansas Cavalry and the black First Kansas Colored Infantry. But Weer's officers led by Col Frederick Salomon mutinied against Weer and retreated back to Kansas, re-arresting John Ross and taking him to Kansas (and then was sent to Washington D.C. where he died in 1866). Watie was left in control of the Cherokee lands and his forces conducted a brutal campaign of revenge against pro-Union Cherokees and white missionaries. Stand Watie was chosen to replace the deposed John Ross as Chief of the Cherokees. Watie joined a Confederate raid into southwest

## THE CONFEDERATE 1<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL FLAG AND THEIR INDIAN ALLIES

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1861, the Fort Smith Times ran an article in its columns that detailed the meeting between the Confederate commissioners to the Five Civilized Tribes and the Seminole Indian Council. In describing the events, the Times reporter noted that: “The Confederate flag floats over our camp. In its blue field are the eleven white stars, in a circle, and inside that circle the Commissioner has placed four small red stars, forming the four extremities of a passion cross—for the four nations, the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles, in token that these Christian tribes of red men are encircled by our protection, and are with and of us. When, if ever, we deem it fit to treat with the Cherokees, a fifth red star will form the centre of the cross. ...” Although the Cherokee Nation would split over the alliance between the tribe and the Confederacy, the fifth red star was eventually added to the “passion cross”. And, at least two flags survive that indicate that the flag which the commissioners used came to represent the Indian tribes that formed alliances with the Confederacy.



One of these flags is relatively large (about 4 feet hoist by 6 feet fly) with 12 white stars surrounding a cross of 5 red stars. It is otherwise undistinguished. A second flag of the same basic pattern was captured at Locust Grove, Indian Territory on 3 July 1862 from a force that consisted of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cherokee Mounted Rifles was about the same size but bore 11 white stars surrounding five red ones. The latter were laid out in the form of a St. Andrew’s cross, with the center star larger than the others. This flag, additionally, has the unit nickname “CHEROKEE BRAVES” in red letters on the center white bar.

Missouri lead by Col. Cooper and Jo Shelby, defeating Frederick Salomon at Newtonia Sept. 30. But Gen. Schofield led a Union army to retake Newtonia Oct. 4 and drove the Confederates back into Arkansas. Stand Watie and Douglas Cooper were defeated by Schofield at Old Fort Wayne Oct. 22, and retreated south of the Arkansas River. The Union army diverted 10,000 troops from the west to help Grant at Vicksburg in November. To take advantage of this Union weakness, Gen. John Marmaduke led 2500 Confederate troops to Cane Hill in northwest Arkansas but was defeated there Nov. 28 by Gen. James Blunt and 5000 Union troops. Gen. Thomas Hindman led a Confederate army of 11,300 to attack Blunt, but Gen. Francis Herron brought 6000 Union troops from Springfield to defeat the Confederates at Prairie Grove Dec. 7, 1862. Another Union army of 1200 under Col. William Phillips defeated Stand Watie at Fort Davis Dec. 22. By the end of 1862, Union forces had secured the western flank of the Mississippi to allow Grant's river offensive to continue. Confederate forces had been defeated and pushed south of the Arkansas River.



**Battles Around Indian Territories**

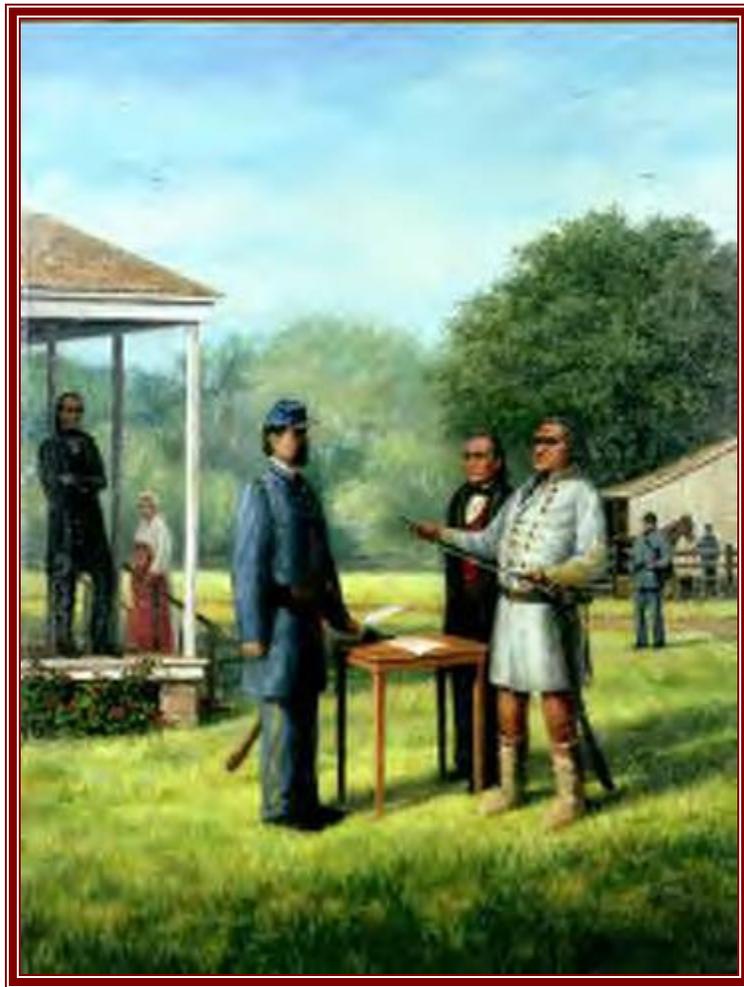
The Indian Expedition of 1863 under James Blunt captured Fort Gibson. At the Battle of Honey Springs July 17, Blunt defeated Cooper's Confederate Indians and Blunt crossed the Arkansas River and captured Fort Smith Sept. 1, 1863, ending the Union offensive in the Indian Territory. On Sept. 10, Little Rock fell to a Union force under Frederick Steele, and Sterling Price abandoned the Arkansas River and retreated to Arkadelphia in southwest Arkansas. Stand Watie conducted raids in 1863 and 1864, as did other irregular units such as Charles Quantrill who sacked Lawrence Aug. 21, 1864, but Watie focused only on military targets and distributed captured supplies to his people. In Nov. 1863, he attacked the Union Cherokees at Tahlequah, destroyed the town, and burned the Rose Cottage of John Ross at Park Hill. In December, Gen. Samuel Maxey began to rebuild Confederate Indian forces in the Territory and Watie was ordered to increase his raids to force a Union withdrawal from Fort Gibson. From his bases south of the Canadian River in 1864, he captured hundreds of horses from Fort Gibson and deprived the Union cavalry of fresh mounts. On May 10, he was promoted to Brigadier General and commanded the First Indian Brigade. In June 1864 at Pleasant Bluff just below the mouth of the Canadian River he captured the steamer J. R. Williams carrying supplies to Fort Gibson. One of Watie's greatest victories was the seizure of \$1.5 million worth of supplies in a federal wagon supply train at the Second battle of Cabin Creek on September 19, 1864.



**Saladin Ridge Watie, son of Stand Watie, enlisted in the Confederate service at fifteen and rose to the rank of captain in his father's Confederate Indian brigade. He was cited for exceptional bravery by Gen. D.H. Cooper at the 1864 attack on Union forces at Fort Smith AR. He served on the Southern Cherokee delegation to Washington in 1866. Saladin died of a sudden illness at Webber's Falls in 1868 – only 21 years old.**

Because of his wide-ranging raids behind Union lines, Watie tied down thousands of Federal troops that were badly needed in the East.

Tragically, the war forced Watie to fight not only Federal troops, who also included Indians, but some of his own people as well. The majority of the John Ross faction transferred their allegiance to the North when events turned against the Confederacy, and after Ross was captured by the Federals. Watie's own wife and children had to refugee from northeastern Oklahoma down the Texas Road into North Texas in the cold of winter and live out the war amongst the elements.



**Painting of the Surrender of Brigadier General Watie, by Dennis Parker**

Year after year, Federal armies from all over the west hunted Watie. They never caught him. Brigadier General and Cherokee Chief Stand Watie fought to the bitter end. Brigadier General Watie was the last Confederate general to surrender, undaunted and unvanquished, on June 23, 1865, nearly three months after Appomattox. He was the only Indian to achieve the rank of general in the Civil War.

Watie returned to financial ruin and a home burned to the ground by Federals during the war. He spent his final years farming and trying to restore his once-beautiful Grand River bottomland, which was devastated by the war. Aging into his mid-sixties, Watie exhausted his war-punished body by committing every talent and meager resource remaining to him to the quality education of his children. Realizing this, one of his daughters, Watica, who had barely learned to read and write during a childhood savaged by the years of total war in the Indian Territory, wrote him from the private school to which he had managed to send her: "I feel proud to think that I have a papa that take the last dollars he has to send me chool."

Tragedy continued to mark Watie's life as his beloved son Saladin – captain, decorated war hero, postwar Southern Cherokee delegate to Congress, and only twenty-one years of age – became the final of his three boys to precede him in death. He also watched as colossal tracts of land legally deeded to the Indians a generation before by the U.S. government, were taken from them as punishment for their support of the Confederacy and given to other tribes; as other vast tracts were confiscated from them and given to the mercantilist railroads racing westward; and as Congress began to levy taxes on Indian Territory business enterprises, while gradually eradicating the Nations' legally-sanctioned political independence. Tragedy has marked much of the American Indian's history since then as well, with one of their chief contemporary distinctions being that of helming the largest casino efforts in Oklahoma.

"You can't imagine how lonely I am up here at our old place without any of my dear children being with me," Watie wrote another daughter, Jacqueline, only weeks before his death in 1871. "I would be so happy to have you here, but you must go to school."

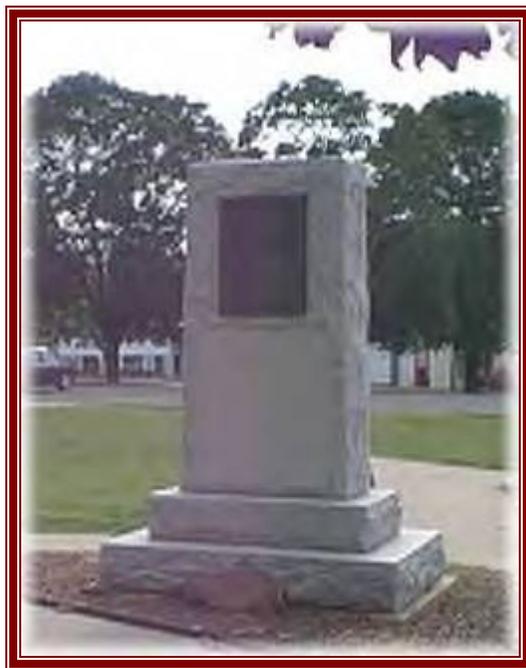
Like another fabled Confederate general, Robert E. Lee of Virginia, it was said that Chief Stand Watie died at least partly of a broken heart. Yet Mrs. A. K. Hardcastle wrote to Watie's widow, the lovely Sarah Bell of Tennessee: "I read with sadness of the death of your much esteemed husband. My tenderest sympathy is yours. I trust you have consolation from a Higher Power than earthly friends for the loss of one so dear to you. His labors on earth have not been in vain, he has done much lasting good for his country and country-men, that will never be forgotten but handed down to the future generations in the book of history for them to follow in his foot-steps and to aspire to leave their foot prints on the sands of time as well as he."

Indeed, he was not always forgotten. Edward Everett Dale, the great 20<sup>th</sup>-century University of Oklahoma historian, for whom that school's Dale Tower was named, remains long after his own passing, perhaps the dean of all Sooner State historians. Dale wrote many memorable books, among them *Cherokee Cavaliers*, which chronicled forty years of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Cherokee history, including the Trail of Tears, and which remains in print nearly seventy years after its writing. He filled the grand work with over 200 letters written by Cherokee men and women of the time, great and small alike. But he wrote his inscription to one: "To the memory of General Stand Watie – Patriot, Soldier, and Statesman – this volume is reverently dedicated."



**The Grave of Stand Watie**

## Monument to General Stand Watie in Tahlequah, Oklahoma



In Honor of

General Stand Watie General Stand Watie – only full blood Indian Brigadier General in the Confederate Army. This brave Cherokee with his heroic regiment rendered inestimable services to the Confederate Cause of Indian Territory.

Born in Georgia, December 12, 1806, died in Cherokee Nation, September 9, 1871  
A tribute to his memory by the Oklahoma Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy.  
“Lest We Forget”

## Stand Watie Quotes

"God will give me justice if I am to be punished for the opinions of other people, who do not know my heart I can't help it."

"I call upon my God to judge me, he knows that I love my friends and above all others my wife and children, the, opinion of the world to contrary notwithstanding."

"I have always been opposed to killing women and children although our enemies have done it, yet I shall always protest against any acts of that kind."

"If I commit an error I do it without bad intention."

"My great crime in the world is blunder I will get into scrapes without intention or any bad motive."

"Poor Andy Nave was killed. He refused to surrender and was shot by Dick Fields. I felt sorry as he used to be quite friendly towards me before the war, but it could not be helped."

"Sometimes I examine myself thoroughly and I will always come to the conclusion that I am not such a bad man at last as I am looked upon."



## **CONFEDERATE CHEROKEE BRAVES**

**Indian Tribal units that were commissioned and fought with  
the CSA in the Indian Territory**

### **Cherokee Nation**

- \*First Cherokee Mounted Rifles [Table of units]
- \* **First Regiment of Cherokee Mounted Volunteers**
- \* **Second Regiment of Cherokee Mounted Volunteers**
  - \* **Cherokee Regiment [Special Services,] CSA**
- \* **Third Cherokee Regiment of Volunteer Cavalry**
  - \* **First Cherokee Battalion of Partisan Rangers**
- \* **First Squadron of Cherokee Mounted Volunteers**

- \* Cherokee Special Services Battalion
- \* Scales' Battalion of Cherokee Cavalry
- \* Meyer's Battalion of Cherokee Cavalry
  - \* Cherokee Battalion of Infantry
  - \* Second Cherokee Artillery

### Creek Nation

- \* First Regiment Creek Mounted Volunteers
- \* Second Regiment Creek Mounted Volunteers
- \* First Battalion Creek Confederate Cavalry

### Seminole Nation

- \* First Battalion Seminole Mounted Volunteers
- \* First Regiment Seminole Mounted Volunteers

### Chickasaw Nation

- \* First Regiment of Chickasaw Infantry
- \* First Regiment of Chickasaw Cavalry
- \* First Battalion of Chickasaw Cavalry
- \* Shecoe's Chickasaw Battalion of Mounted Volunteers

### Choctaw Nation

- \* First Regiment Choctaw & Chickasaw Mounted Rifles
  - \* First Regiment of Choctaw Mounted Rifles
  - \* Deneale's Regiment of Choctaw Warriors
  - \* Second Regiment of Choctaw Cavalry
  - \* Third Regiment of Choctaw Cavalry
- \* Folsom's Battalion of Choctaw Mounted Rifles
- \* Capt. John Wilkin's Company of Choctaw Infantry

