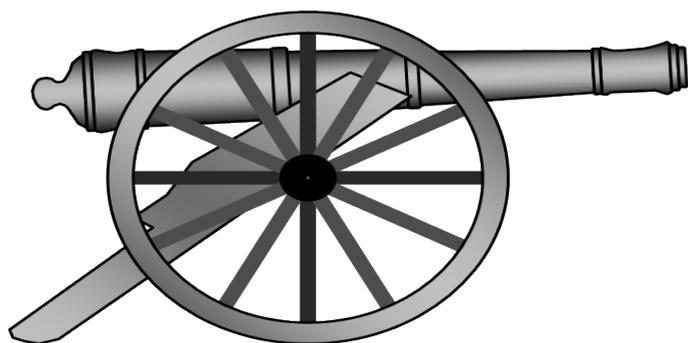


Historically Speaking:



Continuation of "THE CHEROKEES DURING THE CIVIL WAR"

By Lee Uwoyeni Billingsley

19 July 1866 – Treaty signed by John Ross in Washington D.C. provides:

That all prior treaties are insufficient,

For a general amnesty for all Cherokees,

That freed slaves become citizens of the Cherokee Nation,

For U.S. Courts to be established in the Cherokee Nation,

For military posts to be established in the Cherokee Nation

For sale of all lands in Kansas as well as the 'Cherokee Strip.'

The Cherokee Nation used the badly needed money from the sale of this land to build schools and otherwise benefit the nation. This treaty was enacted 11 Aug. 1866, 10 days after John Ross died.

April 1867 – 980 Delawares, by agreement, bought land from the Cherokee Nation and paid for the privilege of becoming full citizens of the nation. The Delawares had lost all their land in Kansas.

THE EASTERN CHEROKEE

William Thomas had been adopted by Yonaguska, was raised Cherokee, and later obtained land for the Cherokees in western North Carolina. He was a tremendous help to them in keeping their culture alive and their land base intact.

Before the war, "Citizen Cherokees" strived to become citizens of North Carolina hoping this would keep them from losing their land and culture. They helped Gen. Winfield Scott track down Appalachian Cherokees who resisted removal. This Yonaguska/Thomas group was also called "Oconoluftee Indians" and later organized as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Yonaguska's grandson translated the New Testament into the Cherokee language.

During the war, the Cherokees sided with the Confederacy, in support of their state of North Carolina. Thomas formed a regiment of soldiers, both white and Cherokee, called the "Thomas Legion of Indians and Highlanders." They operated in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, keeping the passes closed to Union advance through that area. They also acted as recruiters for the Confederacy, capturing deserters, conscripting residents, promoting the Confederacy and disrupting Union efforts to recruit the area.

Eastern Tennessee was one of the poorer areas of the country at the time. The settlers there could hardly afford slaves, so were very lukewarm toward the idea of supporting such an institution for the South. The Cherokees forcing support for the Confederacy became somewhat heavy-handed at times, earning them the nickname "Cherokee Bloodhounds."

A few Cherokees from this group enlisted in the Union army, and they were ostracized upon returning home after the war. The Thomas Legion surrendered May 9, 1865 at Waynesville, the site of Thomas' home town where he was raised in Cherokee tradition. This was the last Confederate unit to surrender east of the Mississippi.

After the war, the Cherokees were allowed to remain on their land which became known as the Qualla Boundary Reservation. However, alcoholism, poverty, political factionalism, and severe measles epidemic following the war all weakened the community. Full rights of citizenship were still elusive, and they were not given the right to vote until 1930.

AFTER THE WAR

Problems prior to the war continued after the war, and in some cases made things even worse. Indians continued to lose land through allotment and fraud. Children were removed from their homes to be placed in boarding schools and forbidden to even speak their language. Indians continued to be denied citizenship. Reservation agents fraudulently misdirected supplies meant for Indians.

All Indians in the east lived in constant fear of removal, both before and after the war. They found themselves surrounded by and dependent upon whites who were always trying to get their land. Indians were much more patriotic toward their tribes than either the Union or Confederacy. So, caught "between two fires", they tried to protect their land base, their culture, as best they could and as warriors they saw that enlisting for military service was the most that they could do for their people.

Lee Uwoyeni Billingsley

Reference: *Between Two Fires* by Laurence Hauptman