

The Civil War**Biography**

Stand Watie

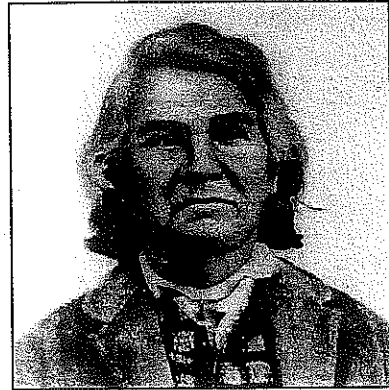
1806–1871



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Stand Watie was the only Native American to rise to the rank of general in the Civil War. He was the last Confederate general to surrender to Union forces.



As you read the biography below, consider the two major conflicts in Stand Watie's life. How were these conflicts similar? How were they different?



Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library

More than 10,000 Native Americans took part in the Civil War. When the Union moved soldiers from Indian Territory east to fight, Confederates moved in to negotiate treaties. Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole tribes contributed about 5,000 soldiers to the Confederate army. Many tribes were divided over the conflict. By the time Stand Watie, a Cherokee leader, joined the Confederate forces, he was already familiar with civil war.

Stand Watie was born in 1806 near Rome, Georgia. His Cherokee name was De-ga-ta-ga or "he stands." He received his early education at home; then was sent to a mission school in 1815. There he was baptized and adopted a Christian name. Eventually, he became known as Stand Watie. After completing his education, he returned home to oversee the family farm. Watie was appointed clerk of the Cherokee Supreme Court in 1828. Later he practiced law within the Cherokee Nation.

In 1835 the U.S. government offered the Cherokee money and land in present-day Oklahoma in exchange for Cherokee land in North Carolina and Georgia. While most Cherokee stood opposed to the treaty, Watie supported it. He argued that the Cherokee should make the best agreement possible before the government decided to take their land by force. Watie joined with others in signing the treaty and moved to the new Indian Territory in 1837. However, most Cherokee refused to recognize the treaty and were moved West by force on a march that became known as the Trail of Tears.

Members of the anti-treaty group killed Watie's brother, uncle, and cousin in 1839, blaming them for the Trail of Tears. Watie was warned and escaped death. The murders started a civil war in the Cherokee Nation that lasted until 1846. In the 1850s Watie returned to his legal practice.

Prior to the Civil War, Watie had led a group opposing the efforts of

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abolitionists trying to force the Cherokee to free their slaves. He also feared that President Lincoln would open the Indian Territory to white settlement. So when the Civil War began, Watie joined the southern cause.

Watie was made a colonel in 1861 and raised a regiment of Cherokee soldiers for the Confederate army. The group took part in numerous battles and skirmishes with Union troops. Watie was known best for guerrilla warfare. He and his men captured a Union steamboat and seized \$1.5 million in federal supplies. Watie destroyed the property of Union sympathizers even among his fellow Cherokee, burning homes and crops. In 1864, he became the only Native American to be promoted to general on either side of the conflict. When the war ended, Watie was the last Confederate general to lay down his arms.

After the war, Watie farmed, practiced Cherokee law, and represented the Cherokee in Washington, D.C. He also helped with a collection of traditional Cherokee tales and legends. Watie died at his farm in 1871.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **List** What did Stand Watie do to earn the rank of general in the Confederate army?

2. **Cause and Effect** Why did Stand Watie decide to fight for the southern cause?

ACTIVITY

Stand Watie helped create a collection of traditional Cherokee tales and legends. Read two or three Cherokee tales. Then write the story of Stand Watie's life in a similar style. Read your tale for the class.