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REDBIRD SMITH AND THE NIGHTHAWK KEETOOWAHS

up around the capitol grounds. There was even a circus and an opera troupe in town for the duration of the payments. Merchants who had outstanding accounts with the recipients set up tables outside the east door of the capitol building where the claimants exited after collecting their money. A number of U.S. Deputy Marshals were in town to try to maintain order and discourage whiskey peddlers. Quite a number of the Cherokees left town with very little money, but some of them were able to put the windfall to good use.

The Dawes Commission arrived in Indian Territory in January of 1894, and the members were outraged when they discovered that the Indians were less than eager to have their tribal lands titles extinguished and their tribal governments dissolved. The Commissioners could not understand why these Indians were fillfully refusing to accept personal land holdings which Washington was so generously offering them. The Commission advised Congress to simply abolish tribal governments forthwith and forget all this negotiating nonsense. Congress, however, told the Commission to continue with the negotiations.

In 1895 the Dawes Commission begun surveying the Cherokee lands. The Cherokees had learned to have a distrust for surveying instruments because their use had always meant

that something was going to be taken away from them. When the first telephone line was built from Tahlequah to Muskogee in 1887 one of the stipulations for granting permission for construction was that no surveying instruments be used.

In the wake of the government of the government's allotment program cultural aliention and traditional factionalism reappeared in the Cherokee Nation. The mixed-bloods were so Americanized most of them could not speak Cherokee. The full-bloods spoke little or no English and there was no way for the two factions to communicate with each other. The mix-bloods families had become so much like the white frontier families that their value systems were no longer Indian. They would probably have had little to say to each other even if they had spoken the same language.

During this period when the fullblodds of the five Civilized Tribes could feel their Nations slipping out from under them, the Four Mothers Society was formed at Sulphur Springs in the Illinois District. Like the Keetowahs, the Four Mothers Society was based upon the ancient Southeastern ceremonial tradition. Constructed primarily from the memories of old Natchez people, the Four Mothers Society had a direct link with the ancient religions.....

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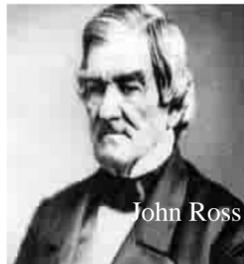
It seems the rubber stamp tribal councilmembers sold out the Cherokee people to get elected and have sold out on every important issue that has come before the tribal council. Their actions speaks louder than their words. . . They are not representing us the Cherokee People, but they are Chief Smith's rubber stamps. They do whatever he tells them to do. You ask how we know that? Their actions speaks louder than words. . . Their own voting record on every important issue. They have had their chance to do what they promised the Cherokee People. . . But they have failed us. May have thrown up their hands and quite demanding accountability. But that is what they want the Cherokee people to do. . . When we do this. . . Then our Elderly, children, and disabled family members who can't fight. . . Then the Smith administration has won!

Treaty of New Echota

The Treaty of New Echota was a removal treaty signed in New Echota, Georgia by officials of the United States government and several members of a faction within the Cherokee nation on December 29, 1835. In the treaty, the United States agreed to pay the Cherokee people \$5 million, cover the costs of relocation, and give them land in Indian Territory (modern Oklahoma) in exchange for the Cherokee reservation land in Georgia and Alabama. While the treaty was ratified by the United States Senate and enforced upon the Cherokee people, it was never signed by any official representative of the Cherokee nation, and the Cherokee nation refused to recognize the validity of the treaty.

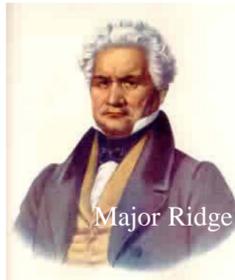
The Ridge Party

John Ross, the elected leader of the Cherokee, who never approved the Treaty of New

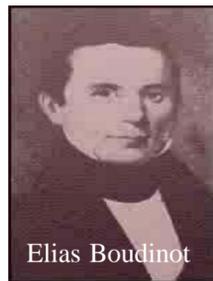


Echota By the 1830s, the Cherokee had withstood a

steady erosion of their ancestral lands into the hands of white settlers, despite the Cherokee's attempts to organize themselves (they had an elected tribal government) and their treaties with the United States. When the elected leader of the Cherokee, John Ross, refused the U.S. government's offer of money and land in Oklahoma in exchange for the land previously guaranteed to the Cherokee, the federal government simply chose to deal with a group of Cherokee who were willing to move to Oklahoma for the offer price. "The Ridge Party", as this

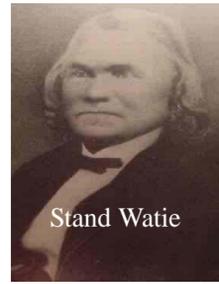


faction came to be called, was led by **Major Ridge**, his son



Elias Boudinot

John Ridge, and his nephews



Stand Watie

Elias Boudinot and Stand Watie. The federal government sent its designated agents, **General William Carroll** and the **Reverend John Schermerhorn**, to draw up a treaty and convince the Ridges to sign it. By signing the treaty even though they were not elected representatives of the tribe, the Ridge Party actually violated Cherokee law—a law that in fact had been proposed by John Ridge himself several years earlier. Once the deal was approved, the Ridge Party was paid, and they began their journey west.

Objections from the Cherokee

After news of the treaty became public, the elected officials of the Cherokee nation instantly objected that they had not approved any treaty, and that the document was invalid. John Ross and the Cherokee tribal council begged the

Senate not to ratify the treaty (failure to ratify would thereby invalidate it), but the measure passed in May of 1836 by one vote, thanks in part to President Andrew Jackson's support. Ross later drew up a petition asking Congress to void the treaty—a petition he delivered to Congress in the spring of 1838 with more than 15,000 signatures attached.

The result

The petition was disregarded by President Martin Van Buren, who soon thereafter directed General Winfield Scott to forcibly move those Cherokee who had not yet complied with the treaty and moved west. Scott's action is now commonly referred to as the **Trail of Tears**.

After the Treaty of New Echota was enforced, the Cherokee people were almost entirely removed west of the Mississippi (a few purchased farmland in the area in order to remain near their ancestral lands). Upon arrival in Indian Territory, many of those who had been forcibly removed took their anger out on the Ridge Party—several signers of the treaty were killed, and the Cherokee nation endured 15 years of civil war.

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