



John Ross Cherokee Chief

To start at the beginning we first come to William Shorey born in Scotland. Shorey was called "Dayunita" by his Cherokee friends. William Shorey was married to a full blood Cherokee wife called "Ghigooie". In the beginning Shorey came to the mountains as an interpreter for the British army at Fort Loudoun in what is now Tennessee or "TA NI SI" in Cherokee.

When he died in 1762 he had two children, a daughter named Anna and a son named William. Anna married a man named John McDonald. John was born in Inverness about 1747. John had come from Inverness to Charleston, S.C., from South Carolina he moved to Fort Loudoun in "TA NI SI". Here he met and married Anna Shorey. The two moved near what is Lookout Mountain "TA NI SI".

John had a trading post where he dealt with the Cherokee on a daily basis and this gave him much influence with the English, French, and the Spanish who were all trying to have an alliance with the Cherokee.

The McDonalds had one child, a daughter named Molly. In time Molly met and married Daniel Ross. Ross was from Sutherland in Scotland and had come to the mountains to live and trade with the Cherokee during the American Revolution. Molly and Daniel Ross settled near the now older McDonald and started a family.

On October 3, 1790 a son was born, John Ross. It is rumored that young John had blue eyes but in all portraits he is brown eyed. John and his brother Lewis came under the influence of their grandfather the Older McDonald. According to McDonald they were to be brought up as Scots.

John was born at Turkey Town, Georgia (now Etowah County, Ala) John was seven-eighths Scottish and one-eighths Cherokee. As John grew older his father Daniel established a store at Chattanooga Creek, near the foot of Lookout mountain. Daniel built a small school house and hired a teacher. It was here John started his education. Daniel Ross was determined his children would be well educated. John was educated and studied with Reverend Gideon Black, later moving to the Maryville, Tennessee Academy.

John's education in this time and place was unheard of. The average person in this time white or Cherokee, was lucky to even see the outside of a school house, let alone own a book or be able to read from it.

Under his grandfather's influence John dressed in the manner of white settlers and was made fun of by his young Cherokee companions. Under the influence of his grandmother Anna, who was half Cherokee, half white, he was taught the Cherokee ways and developed a deep love for the Cherokee people, their traditions and the Cherokee way. John had seen the aftermath of settlers raiding Cherokee villages. John vowed to help "his" Cherokee people anyway he could. He would serve his Cherokee people by any means necessary. He knew his education was his best weapon.

At the age of 19 John was sent to Arkansas by Indian agent Return J. Meigs to see to needs of the Western Cherokee of Arkansas. This was around 1809. In the war of 1812 John served with Andrew Jackson as an adjutant with The Cherokee Regiment. Jackson used the Cherokee in his various campaigns but had a deep dislike of all native peoples. The Cherokee fought with much valor but received no pay and were on the lowest rung of the social ladder. In 1813-14 he again fought along side Andrew Jackson in the Creek wars. Andrew Jackson had 1000 Cherokee with him plus his regular troops. John Ross participated in the battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 28,

1814 and attained the rank of Lieutenant. The British Allied Creek Indians were defeated and peace was restored.

After peace had returned John Ross turned his hand to making his fortune. About 1815 John and Timothy Meigs opened a trading post which became known as Ross's Landing. The trading post was on the banks of the "TA NI SI" River. Ross's Landing is now Chattanooga, Tennessee. The young John Ross also owned a 170 acre farm which brought in much profit. Ross also established warehouses and trading company which brought him income. John also helped start the Brainard Mission and School. Ross knew the value of education and wanted it to be available to the Cherokee people.

About the year 1817 John was chosen a member of The Cherokee Nations Council. In 1819 he was elected president of the Cherokee National Committee. John Ross moved to Coosa to be closer to the Cherokee capitol at New Echota, Georgia. John was then elected assistant chief of the Eastern Cherokee. John Ross participated in drafting the Cherokee Constitution based on the U.S. Constitution. This included a Senate and House of Representatives. In the year 1828 John Ross was elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

In 1828 gold was discovered in North Georgia, Cherokee country. The state of Georgia and its white settlers rich or poor wanted the Cherokee out. Gold fever was rampant in Georgia and the Cherokee were in the way. The state of Georgia outlawed the Cherokee government, of course the Cherokee appealed for Federal protection.

President Andrew Jackson rejected this appeal. This act opened the door to a landslide of whites into Cherokee country. These were dark days for the Cherokee. They were shot working their farms, whole families were killed. Houses were burnt to the ground, sometimes with families in them. Livestock was slaughtered and left on the ground, all in an effort to get to the gold. The final blow came when President Andrew Jackson authorized the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

The Jackson administration put much pressure on the Cherokee to go west. The Cherokee rejected any efforts by Jackson. Chief John Ross and the majority of the Cherokee remained

against removal to Indian territory (present day Oklahoma). By using various underhanded methods, Jackson's government got about 500 Cherokee to support a treaty giving up their present lands for land in Indian Territory. The treaty was repudiated by nine-tenths of the tribe, but congress ratified the treaty May 23, 1836.

All during this John Ross was going back and forth to Washington pleading the cause of the Cherokee people. For all his efforts the Cherokee people were forced to move to Indian Territory. In 1838 the removal started. To the Cherokee it is known as The Trail of Tears.



This 2,200 mile forced march to Indian Territory took many lives including John Ross' wife Quatie. The federal death figures counted 424 deaths from the march. One doctor traveling on the march estimated 1500 died in the camps and another 2000 along the trail. Those who died on the trail were left not buried. Some estimate 6000 died on the march.

Once the Cherokee reached Oklahoma, John Ross was re-elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee in July 1866. John Ross was again in Washington working on behalf of the Cherokee. On August 1, 1866 John Ross died in his hotel room in Washington. John Ross was 76. Ross' body was returned to Indian Territory and he was buried at Ross Cemetery, Park Hill Oklahoma.

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