

A Guide to Cherokee Confederate Military Units, 1861 – 1865

(from “The People’s Paths” website)



by Lars Gjertveit

By the spring of 1861, Stand Watie (1806-1871), the leader of the southern faction of the Cherokee Nation, was a prosperous attorney and speaker of the nation’s National Council (the lower house of the Cherokee legislature). He owned a plantation and mill at Honey Creek in the Illinois District of the Cherokee Nation.

1st (Watie’s) Cherokee Mounted Volunteers
(2nd Cherokee Mounted Volunteers
[designation changed to 1st Regiment about
Dec 62, after Drew’s regiment had disbanded],
Watie’s Regiment Cherokee Mounted Rifles)

COLONELS. Stand Watie, promoted Brig Gen 6 May 64; James Madison Bell, promoted and transferred from Lt Col of the 2nd Regt. after Watie became general

LIEUTENANT COLONELS. Thomas Fox Taylor, KIA 27 Jul 62, Bayou Menard (n. Fort Gibson); Robert Calvin Parks, replaced Taylor (from Capt, 1st Co B) killed by a fellow officer in a personal difficulty at Fort Washita in April 1864; Clement Neeley Vann, succeeded Parks (prev pvt Co K, Drew’s Regt.?)

MAJORS. Elias Cornelius Boudinot, after reorganization elected Cherokee delegate to Congress, Col and Vol ADC on Maj Gen T C Hindman's staff in Dec 62; Joseph Franklin Thompson, (from Capt, 1st Co I); Erasmus J Howland, succeeded Thompson in 1864 (from Capt, 2nd Co D).

REGIMENTAL STAFF

Adjutant: 1st Lt Charles E Watie, to 1st Lt, 2nd Co B after reorganization; 1st Lt Thomas F Anderson (from pvt, 1st Co H) to Brigade AAG 1864

Assistant Quarter Master: 1st Lt George W Adair, died April 62; 1st Lt William Penn Adair, to Col of 2nd Regt. 3 Feb 63; 1st Lt Johnson Thompson

Asst. Commissary of Subsistence: 1st Lt Joseph M Starr, Sr, until 62; 1st Lts Oliver W Lipe (from pvt, 2nd Co G) resigned 3 Jun 63; Peter G Lynch (from pvt, 2nd Co B), Samuel M Ware (from pvt, 2nd Co A)

Surgeon: Maj Walter Thompson Adair, to Brigade Surgeon 1864

Assistant Surgeon: Capt William D Polson, resigned 1 Jul 62; Capt Francis H Fisk (from drill instr, 1st Co I)

Surgeon's Interpreter: Capt Richard Fields (prev Capt, Co F, Drew's Regt) Chaplain: Rev J N Slover

Sergeant Major: George W West, KIA 20 May 63; R M Morgan (from sgt, 1st Co C), H Lincoln Foreman (from pvt, 2nd Co D), Patrick Patton (from 1st Sgt, 2nd Co A)

Quartermaster Sergeant: Benjamin W Carter (from pvt, 2nd Co G), John G Schrimsher (from pvt, 2nd Co G)

Ordnance Sergeant: George W Harlin

Hospital Steward: Jasper Polson, Ben Trott

Companies and their Commanders: First Organization

Company A. Buzzard, KIA 20 May 63 n. Fort Gibson.

Company B. Robert Calvin Parks, to Lt Col after reorganization.

Company C. Daniel H Coody

Company D. James Madison Bell, to Lt Col of the 2nd Regiment 3 Feb 63.

Company E. Joseph Franklin Thompson (prev in the Arkansas State service) to Major after reorganization.

Company F. Joseph F Smallwood

Company G. George H Starr

Company H. John Thompson Mayes

Company I. George W Johnson

Company K. James H Thompson. This company became Co H, Clarkson's Battalion, Independent Rangers 14 July 62. This Bn was broken up in Nov 62, 5 cos merged into Clark's Missouri Infantry Regiment.

Company L (aka J). Bluford West Alberty.

In addition, Thomas J Parks was designated to lead Company M, but this does not appear to have materialized.

ORGANIZATION. On July 12, 1861, Stand Watie received a commission from Brig Gen Benjamin McCulloch to raise a regiment. At a mass meeting of the southern sympathizers among the Five Civilized tribes held at Old Fort Wayne, Delaware District, in the Cherokee Nation, on July 27, 1861, organization of the First Cherokee Regiment began. After the twelve-month enlistment time expired, the regiment was reorganized around 12 July 1862 at Spavinaw Creek, Tahlequah District, for 2 years, with mostly new officers and many new men. Note that the companies were not reorganized separately, rather a set of new companies were formed and new officers elected, although the majority of the men continued in service from the first organization.

Companies and their Commanders: SECOND Organization

Company A. Hugh Tinnin

Company B. Benjamin B Wisner (prev sgt, 1st Co D)

Company C. Charles Lowery (prev sgt, 1st Co E)
Company D. Erasmus J Howland (prev pvt, 1st Co G), to Major 1864; J S Knight (from 1st Lt)
Company E. Alexander Foreman (prev pvt, 1st Co C), removed 25 June 63; John W Brown (from 1st Lt)
Company F. Dumplin O Fields (prev pvt, 1st Co D)
Company G. James L Butler
Company H. John Spears, to Frye's – Scales' Battalion, John Foster ? (from 1st Lt)
Company I. Moses C Frye (prev Sgt, 1st Co I) to Major of Frye's Bn about June 63; William W Alexander (from 1st Lt)
Company K. James Stuart (prev 1st Sgt, 1st Co H)
Acridge's Company. William H Acridge Became Co G, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.
Alberty's Company. Bluford West Alberty. Became Co B, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.
Brewer's Company. O H Perry Brewer (prev 1st Lt, 1st Co C) Became Co F, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.
Patton's Company. D C Patton Became Co E, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63
Vann's Company. John Vann (prev pvt, 1st Co C) Became Co I, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.

ORGANIZATION. Company A was mustered in 12 May 62 in Maysville, Ark. Companies B to K, plus Acridge's, Alberty's, Brewer's, and Patton's are all on record as having enlisted 12 July 1862 at Spavinaw Creek, Tahlequah District, Cherokee Nation. On September 1, 1862, another company – John Vann's – was added, made up mostly of loyal men from Drew's late regiment. The five unnumbered companies were on February 3, 1863, merged with Bryan's 1st Battalion, Cherokee Partisan Rangers to form the 2nd (Adair's) Cherokee Mounted Volunteers.

Drew's Regiment, Cherokee Mounted Rifles
(1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles)

COLONEL. John Drew.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL. William Potter Ross, later sutler for 3rd Indian Home Guards.

MAJOR. Thomas Pegg, later Capt, Co A, 2d Indian Home Guards.

REGIMENTAL STAFF

Adjutant: 1st Lt James S Vann, resigned 12 Dec 61

Assistant Quarter Master: Capt Israel G Vore, later AQM on Brig Gen D H Cooper's staff

Assistant Commissary of Subsistence: 1st Lt Frederick Augustus Kerr, dropped 2 Aug 62

Surgeon: Maj James P Evans, POW 7 Mar 62, Pea Ridge

Assistant Surgeon: Capt Joseph V Carden, resigned 7 Apr 62 Chaplain: Rev Lewis Downing, later Lt Col, 3rd Indian Home Guards

Companies and their Commanders

Company A. (Saline District) Jefferson D Hicks, KIA 27 Jul 62, Bayou Menard, n. Fort Gibson ?

Company B. (Tahlequah District) Nicholas B Sanders

Company C. (Canadian District) John Porum Davis, to 2nd Lt, Vann's Co, 1st Regt 1 Sep 62 (became Co I, 2nd Regt)

Company D. (Delaware District) Isaac N Hildebrand

Company E. (Flint District) James Vann, later Capt, Co A, 3rd Indian Home Guards.

Company F. (Illinois District) Richard Fields, POW 7 Mar 62, later served on the staff of the 1st Regt.

Company G. (Going-Snake District) George W Scaper, later Capt, Co H, 2d Indian Home Guards.

Company H. (Tahlequah District) Edward R Hicks

Company I. (Tahlequah District) Albert Pike

Company K. (Sequoyah District) Pickens M Benge, MW 24 Aug 62.

Reserve Company. (Cooweescoowee District) James McDaniel, later Capt, Co A, 2d Indian Home Guards.

ORGANIZATION. At a mass meeting at Tahlequah 21 August 1861, the Cherokeees decided to seek alliance with the Confederate States, and also to raise a mounted regiment. Each of the nine districts of the Cherokee Nation raised one company, except Tahlequah, which furnished three. By October 7, the day the treaty between the Cherokee Nation and the Confederacy was signed, the regiment was almost completed. At Fort Gibson, on November 5, 1861 the regiment was officially mustered in for a period of twelve months, with 1214 men on the rolls.

Drew's regiment, composed mostly of full-blood Cherokeees («Pins») hostile to Stand Watie and his followers, never identified with the Southern cause. During the pursuit of the Creek dissident Opothleyahola in December 1861, officers and men refused to fight, deserted in large numbers, and many even joined the enemy. A reorganization of the regiment was attempted, and about 500 of its men fought at Pea Ridge the first day (March 7, 1862), where they scalped some Federal soldiers. A Union invasion of the Cherokee Nation in July 1862 resulted in the mass surrender of most of Drew's men, and their subsequent enlistment in the Federal 2nd and 3rd Indian Home Guard Regiments. A few officers and men (notably Colonel Drew, Captains John Porum Davis, Pickens M Benge, Richard Fields, and Lieutenant Charles Drew) remained loyal to the Confederacy and later served under Stand Watie. Captain John Vann's company of Watie's 1st Regiment, later Co I of the 2nd Regiment (formed 1 Sep 62), was composed mostly of loyal Confederates from the ranks of Drew's late regiment.

1st (Bryan's) Battalion,
Cherokee Partisan Rangers
(Bryan's Battalion, Cherokee Mounted Rifles)

MAJOR. Joel M Bryan, to commander of Cherokee Bn Special Service 1865.

BATTALION STAFF

Adjutant: Lt. Joel B Mayes, to AQM of 2nd Regt
Assistant Surgeon: Capt Harrison J Payden, to Ass Surg of 2nd Regt

Companies and their Commanders

Company A. Joel M Bryan , to Major 13 Sep 62, William H Shannon (from 1st Lt) Became Co H, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.

Company B. Joseph L Martin Became Co D, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.

Company C. John R Harden Became Co C, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.

Company D. Alexander Wofford (prev 2nd Lt, 1st Co G, 1st Regt), resigned 16 Oct 62); E M Adair (from 1st Lt) Became Co K, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.

Company E. John Miller Became Co A, 2nd Regt on 3 Feb 63.

ORGANIZATION. Joel M Bryan was authorized by Brig Gen Albert Pike to raise 100 men or more as partisan rangers during the summer of 1862. The company (A) was mustered in at Fort Davis, Canadian District, Cherokee Nation, July 20, 1862. Bryan proceeded to recruit another four companies, and was ordered by Maj Gen Thomas C Hindman to organize the force into a battalion, which was done September 13, 1862. Records indicate that the enlistment term was three years.

By order of Brig Gen Douglas H Cooper, the battalion was on February 3, 1863, consolidated with 5 companies attached to Watie's 1st Cherokee Mounted Volunteers to form the 2nd (Adair's) Cherokee Mounted Volunteers

1st (Holt's) Squadron,
Cherokee Mounted Volunteers

CAPTAIN. Charles H Holt, to Captain of Co L, 2nd Regt after 30 Jun 63 ?.

STAFF. Adjutant Charles C Reed.

ORGANIZATION. This company was mustered in at Webber's Falls, Canadian District, Cherokee Nation, 12 December 62, for two years. The last record of the company is dated June 30, 1863, it may have been assigned to the 2nd Regiment as Company L after that date.

2nd (Adair's)
Cherokee Mounted Volunteers
(Adair's Regiment, Cherokee Mounted Rifles)

COLONEL. William Penn Adair (prev AQM, 1st Regt).

LIEUTENANT COLONELS. James Madison Bell (from Capt, 1st Co D, 1st Regt) promoted and transferred to the 1st Regt in June 1864; O H Perry Brewer, succeeded Bell (from Capt, Co F).

MAJORS. T Porter Hammock, appointed 26 Apr 63 (from 2d Lt, Co A); John R Harden, by May 64 (from Capt, Co C); John F Vann, by Sept 64 (from Capt, Co I).

REGIMENTAL STAFF

Adjutant: 1st Lts Joseph A Scales (from 1st Sgt, 2nd Co F, 1st Regt) to Capt, Co A, Frye's Bn June 63; Andrew J Greenway (from 2nd Lt, Co B); S T Fair (from pvt, Co C) Assistant Quarter Master: Capt Joel B Mayes (from Adj, 1st P R Bn) to Brigade AQM 1864); J W Phagan, to Capt, Co G, 12 Jul 64. Ass Commissary of Subsistence: 1st Lt Richard F Martin
Surgeon: Maj Thomas M Colley, resigned 16 Apr 63; William J Dupree appointed 24 Jul 63.
Assistant Surgeon: Capts Robert White, resigned 16 Apr 63; Harrison J Payden (prev Ass Surg of 1st P R Bn), W C Dunn
Chaplain: Rev Elder L Compere
Drill Master: 2nd Lt Michael L Coudon (from pvt, Co G) to 2nd Lt, Co E, June 63.
Sergeant Major: J W Burk (from pvt, Co D), Riley Walter Lindsay (from Co H)
Quartermaster Sergeant: A W Timberlake
Ordnance Sergeant: J Foster Bell
Hospital Steward: J Frank Marrs (from pvt, Co H)

Companies and their Commanders

Company A. John Miller, to Cherokee Battalion, Special Service 1865; T D Flinn ? (from 1st Lt)
Company B. Bluford West Alberty
Company C. John R Harden, to Major by May 64; W H Hendren (from 1st Lt)
Company D. Joseph L Martin
Company E. D C Patton
Company F. O H Perry Brewer, to Lt Col July 64; Thomas F Brewer ? (from 1st Lt)
Company G. William H Acridge, J W Phagan (12 Jul 64, from AQM)
Company H. William H Shannon
Company I. John F Vann, to Major by Sept 64; Cary Walker ? (from 1st Lt)
Company K. E M Adair
Company L (?). Charles H Holt

ORGANIZATION. Formed 3 February 1863 at Prairie Springs, Creek Nation (winter camp of Indian Cavalry Brigade, 15 miles southeast of Fort Gibson), by the consolidation of Bryan's 1st Battalion, Cherokee Partisan Rangers, and five companies attached to Watie's 1st Cherokee Mounted Volunteers.

Frye's – Scales' Battalion,
Cherokee Mounted Volunteers
(1st Battalion, Cherokee Mounted Rifles)

MAJORS. Moses C Frye (prev Capt, 1st Co I, 1st Regiment); Joseph Absalom Scales, promoted Major 23 Apr 64 (from Capt, Co A), to Brigade AIG after Bn was disbanded.

Companies and their Commanders

Company A. Joseph Absalom Scales (prev Adj, 2nd Regt), to Major 23 Apr 64.
Company ?. Morgan (prev 1st Lt, Holt's Squadron ?), MW 18 Dec 63, Barren Fork, I. T.
Company ?. John Spears (prev Capt, 2nd Co H, 1st Regt)

ORGANIZATION. On April 1, 1863, Col Watie was authorized to raise a Cherokee brigade. After the 2nd Regiment had been formed, steps were taken to enlist another unit. The first company (A) was probably organized on 3 June 63, but details about the other companies are missing. Consisted of 4 companies by December 1863. The battalion was apparently broken up and consolidated with the 1st and 2nd Regiments about 12 July 64.

A general reorganization of the Cherokee forces took place on Limestone Prairie, Choctaw Nation, after Watie had been promoted Brigadier General and the Cherokees on June 27, 1864, had declared their unanimous reenlistment for the war. On July 11, the Cherokee National Council passed a conscription act, which required that all able bodied free citizens between 17-45 report for duty before August 1.

Cherokee Battalion (or Regiment),
Special Service (Bryan's Battalion)

LIEUTENANT COLONEL. Joel M Bryan (prev Major, 1st Partisan Ranger Bn)

Companies and their Commanders

Company ?. John Miller (prev Capt, Co A, 2nd Regt)
Company ?. Owens.

ORGANIZATION. Not much is known about this organization, which is mentioned in Brig Gen Douglas H Cooper's correspondence in March and May of 1865 and in a Federal report dated 23 Apr 65, then supposed to be at Fort Towson (in the southern Choctaw Nation), 300 strong. Joel M Bryan, who previously led the 1st Partisan Ranger Bn, was the commander. Captain John Miller led a company, and a Captain Owens another.

NOTES:

1st (Meyer's) Battalion, Cherokee Cavalry is a "paper" organization that never existed. Major Benjamin W Meyer may have received authorization to raise a battalion early in the war, but he never did.

Brigade Staff Upon Watie's promotion to Brigadier General in the summer of 1864, he was entitled to appoint staff officers to the following positions:

Aides-de-Camp: Capt Lucien B Bell, 1st Lt Saladin Ridge Watie (from pvt, 2nd Co G, 1st Regt)
Assistant Quartermaster: Major Joel B Mayes (from AQM, 2nd Regt)
Assistant Adjutant General: Capt Thomas F Anderson (from Adj, 1st Regt)
Assistant Inspector General: Major Joseph A Scales (from cdr of Frye's-Scales' Bn)
Surgeon: Major Walter Thompson Adair (from Surg, 1st Regt)
Assistant Surgeon: ?

Ass Commissary of Subsistence:?
Ordnance Officer: ?

Cherokee Battalion, Thomas' North Carolina Legion
(2nd Battalion, Thomas' Legion; Indian Battalion)

COLONEL. William Holland Thomas, Col of Thomas' NC Infantry Regt 27 Sep 1862, which was a month later increased to a Legion. Relinquished field command of the Legion about 1 Sep 63 (officially in command until March 1865), except the Cherokee Battalion, which he personally commanded until war's end.

Companies and their Commanders

Company A. William Holland Thomas, 9 April 62, to Major of Thomas' Inf Bn Jul 62; James W Terrell, 19 Jul 62 (from 1st Lt), to AQM of Thomas' Inf Regt (later Legion) 27 Sep 62; Matthew H Love, 27 Sep 62 (from the 16th NC Inf Regt).

Company B. Gideon M Hanks, 18 May 62, KIA late 1863; James Taylor (from 1st Lt)

Company C. Campbell H Taylor (from 2nd Lt, Co B), resigned 4 Jun 64; James Welch

Company D. Black Fox

ORGANIZATION. The nucleus of the battalion was the «Junaluska Zuaves», a North Carolina militia company of Cherokees organized in Quallatown in May 1861 by William H Thomas. Company A was mustered into CS service April 9, 1862, at Quallatown. Company B was organized in Knoxville, Tn, on May 18, 1862, by a division of the over strength Co A. In July 1862, these two companies formed part of Thomas' Infantry Battalion. The battalion was increased and reorganized as Thomas' NC Infantry Regiment on September 27, 1862, in Knoxville. The Cherokee companies then became Cos C and D, respectively. In October, another battalion (Walker's) was added to Thomas' command, which thereafter became known as Thomas' Legion of Indians and Highlanders. In January 1863, the two Cherokee companies reverted back to their previous designations as Co A and B of the Infantry Regiment (Love's), Thomas' Legion. The Cherokee companies were detached from the regiment in September 1863, and from then on served as a separate battalion under Thomas' direct command (who at that point relinquished field command of the Legion). Company C was added in Quallatown in December 1863, and Company D organized in the summer of 1864. Not until April 9, 1865, however, was the Cherokee Battalion officially mustered as a separate unit of Thomas' Legion. At that time the battalion reportedly totalled about 300 men.

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