

CHEROKEE CHIEFS

Before the removal of the Cherokees to Indian Territory in 1838-39, Chiefs of the Old Cherokee Nation were great leaders, and their names to readers of history are familiar. Moytog, Attacullaculla, Oconostota, Tassel, Hanging Maugue, Pathkiller, and others are mentioned in many historical writings.

In the some 130 years from the beginning of the Cherokee Nation, now Eastern Oklahoma, to the present, twelve men have served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Perhaps there are some who know about each of these leaders, but for those many who do not know of their Indian heritage, the following information may be of interest.

1. John Ross served the longest period as Principal Chief of the Cherokees, holding office in both the Old Cherokee Nation (Georgia) and in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory. He served continuously from 1828 to 1866. His principal home was at Park Hill. He died in Washington, D. C. and was first buried there, later his remains were brought back to his native homeland, and he now rests in the Ross Cemetery.
2. William P. Ross was next to take office, first in filling out the unexpired term of John Ross from 1866 to 1867. In 1872 he was elected to office and served until 1875. His home was at Ft. Gibson and he is buried at the Ft. Gibson City Cemetery.
3. Rev. Lewis Downing was elected to office in 1867 and served his full term which ended in 1872. Lu-wi Tsa-wa-na-ski, as he was known to his friends and neighbors at his home on Spring Creek, was a Colonel in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was buried in the Ned Adair Cemetery.
4. Rev. Charles Thompson was a beloved minister among the Cherokees. He was elected Principal Chief in 1875 and served until 1879. His old home site was inundated by Lake Eucha. Among the Cherokees he was known as Rev. Euch-la-ta. He was buried at Eucha Indian Cemetery.
5. Dennis Wolfe Bushyhead served the Cherokee Nation as Principal Chief from 1879 to 1888. His home was at Tahlequah and his is buried among many close friends at Tahlequah.
6. Joel B. Mayes was elected Chief in 1888 and served until 1891. His home was on the west side of Grand River southeast of Pryor. He is at rest in the Tahlequah Cemetery.