



### **Historians Corner, Paul R Petersen**

Paul is the Author of *Quantrill of Missouri*, *Quantrill in Texas*, *Quantrill at Lawrence* and *Lost Souls of the Lost Township*. Petersen is a retired U.S. Marine Corps master sergeant and a highly decorated infantry combat veteran of the Vietnam War, Operation Desert Storm, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is a member of the William Clarke Quantrill Society, the James-Younger Gang Association, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Jackson County and Missouri State Historical Societies.

## **Colonel Joel Bryon Mayes**

### **Legendary Confederate Indian Leader Tsa-WA Gak-ski**

The Civil War produced many outstanding examples of leadership throughout the annals of Confederate history with most emphasis being placed on the events and leaders of the eastern theater in the Army of Northern Virginia. The South's Army of Tennessee ranked below that of Robert E. Lee's army in prestige for later writers and historians but for all events and purposes the war started first in the west long before the firing on Fort Sumter. It was here in the Confederate Army of the Trans Mississippi that simple men without military backgrounds or experience excelled in the art of war. Their names have become legend due to their accomplishments during the War of Northern Aggression.

One such Southern leader was Joel Byron Mayes, a principle chief among the Cherokee nation. As one of the first families among the Cherokees, Mayes exhibited great influence among the native Indians though bearing a white man's name and language and with scarcely enough Indian blood to evidence itself in his features. Mayes was described as a rugged character. He was known for his integrity and a marked executive ability. He stood six feet tall weighing over two hundred pounds. He was born on October 2, 1833, in Cartersville Georgia, and acquired a college education before moving with his family to present-day Oklahoma, known during the Civil War as the Indian Territory. His mother, being Cherokee married Samuel Mayes, being of Scots/Irish descent. Shortly after their son Joel was born the United States pushed the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes from the Southern states of Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida,

further west into Oklahoma. After graduation Mayes taught school for two years before becoming a cattleman like his father until the war started. During the war the Cherokee Nation divided into Northern and Southern factions. Indians who owned slaves moved to the southern part of the Territory while those who favored the north remained in the northern half of the Territory closest to Kansas.

When news reached the Indian Territory that war had started Mayes enlisted as a private in Company A, of the 1st Cherokee Regiment, but soon rose to the rank of captain. A short time later Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith appointed Mayes as a brigade commander in the First Indian Brigade under Confederate General Stand Watie, Principal Chief of the Southern faction. The future notable Missouri guerrilla leader William Clarke Quantrill found himself in Texas at the start of the war escorting wealthy Missouri slaveowner Marcus Gill and his family to the safe environs across the Red River into Texas. Quantrill immediately headed back north enlisting as a private in the First Cherokee Mounted Regiment of Colonel Joel Byron Mayes before transferring into Captain William Stewart's Company B, made up of settlers from southern Kansas in Colonel Jeremiah Vardeman Cockrell's Independent Home Guard of the 1st Brigade, 8th Division, Missouri State Guards, commanded by Brigadier General James Spender Rains where he took part in the early battles of Dry Forks, Dug Springs and Wilson's Creek. Quantrill was soon promoted to sergeant in Company I, of the 3rd Missouri Cavalry until he was later commissioned a captain of cavalry scouts in Colonel Upton B. Hays's regiment in General Joseph Orville Shelby's Brigade on August 12, 1862. Quantrill later established his own company of

Southerners comprising soldiers not only of Blacks but also many Cherokee Indians like Cherokee Joe, Solomon Strickland, Adam Wilson, Squirrel Tail, James Washington and James Martin, who served him as scouts. James Martin even rode next to Quantrill during the Lawrence raid. Many other famous Cherokees like Tom Starr fought alongside Quantrill where Quantrill stayed as a guest at Starr's ranch north of the Canadian River.

It was not just the Cherokee's that enlisted to fight for the Confederacy. Every tribe eagerly fought to protect their homes and land and their way of life. Indians from the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole nations made up a large part of the Confederate defense of the Indian Territory. The Cherokee's would furnish ten companies of mounted cavalry. Their enlistment guaranteed them that they would not be called to fight outside the Indian Territory. General Stand Watie drafted all Cherokee males from 18 to 50 years old into Confederate service. The Cherokees proved to be a daring cavalry unit skilled at hit-and-run tactics. They achieved one of the most notable raids when they ambushed the steamboat, J. R. Williams, capturing Union supplies valued at over \$120,000 bound for Fort Gibson. At the Second Battle of Cabin Creek in Indian Territory, the Cherokee's captured 129 Union supply wagons with 740 mules. They took 120 prisoners after leaving the Federals with over 200 casualties. The First Mounted Cherokee Cavalry also served significantly at the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas. Though mounted chiefly on ponies, and armed with only common rifles and shotguns they proved themselves a formidable force.

Indians protecting the Indian Territory proved a welcomed assistance for the Confederacy guarding Texas from Federal invasion and attacks by Kansas Jayhawkers. They freed up many Southern soldiers that would be sorely needed to fight important battles on both sides of the Mississippi River.

**Article by Paul R. Petersen**

References: Walker, Andrew J.. *Recollections of Quantrill's Guerrillas*. Daily Herald, Weatherford, Texas, 1910, pg. 10. Anderson, Mabel Washbourne. "General Stand Watie", *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 10:4, December 1932. Mayes photo courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries.