

Kindred spirits ~

The story of Nancy Ward and Lydia Russell Bean is heart-warming and proves that from the horrors of war, kindness and humanitarian actions are not only possible, but so rewarding. Nancy Ward was a Cherokee woman. Lydia Russell Bean was a white captive woman who was about to be tortured and killed when Nancy first saw her. Fires had been lit around the woman bound to a stake. These two women who came together like kindred souls made an enormous impact on the lives of each other and their own people.

Nancy Ward (1738 - 1824) ~

Nancy Ward was born in the Wolf Clan, her mother's clan. The Cherokee are a matrilineal society, so Nancy was a lifelong member of this clan. Nancy's Cherokee name was Nanye-hi, which means "One who goes about." It seems to have been an appropriate name for Nancy, for she spent her whole life "going about" to make life better for her people.

Nancy's mother was called Tame Doe, whose brother was the well-known Cherokee leader Attakullakulla in the 1760s and 1770s. There is no record of further information on Tame Doe or Nancy's father, who may have been of the Leni Lenape tribe.

The home of the Wolf Clan was in Chota, which is now Monroe County, Tennessee. Chota is now an historic Overhill Cherokee site that was a very important town for the Cherokee Nation during the mid 1740s to the late 1880s. The Cherokee people have been a prominent part of the Appalachian regions since long before any British Colonies were established. One of the most significant transitions the Cherokee had to make, that of adjusting to the Europeans and their way of life, was possible in part due to the work of Nancy Ward. She was very instrumental in helping her people make this difficult change from their way of life to one that would help them to go forward.

Nancy Ward was a Beloved Woman, *Ghigau*, of the Cherokee Nation. In the Cherokee tradition, the title of 'Beloved Woman' was given to those women who were allowed to join in with the men in council and make decisions. At the age of 18, Nancy was given the title of Warrior Woman when she fought by the side of her husband Kingfisher in the Battle of Taliwa in 1775. When Kingfisher was killed, Nancy took his gun and carried on his task of leading their people to a victory. This act of courage gave her the honored place of Ghigau, Beloved Woman of the Cherokee. As Ghigau, Nancy was able to make decisions and one of these was the right to save the life of a captive.

One life Nancy spared was that of Lydia Russell Bean. Lydia had been captured while on her way to Fort Watauga in what is now Elizabethton, Tennessee.

Lydia Russell Bean (1726 - 1788) ~

Lydia Russell was born in Richmond County, Virginia, USA, on September 29, 1726. It is uncertain when she married Captain William Bean of the Virginia

Militia. Their first child, William R. Bean was born in 1745, the first white child born in Tennessee. They had seven other children.

William had been on hunting expeditions with Daniel Boone in Watauga Valley in what is now Tennessee. In 1768 he cleared some land in the area where hunting was good, on Boone's Creek that ran off the Watauga River. He built a cabin there and returned to Virginia. A year later he and Lydia moved to Boone's Creek. Lydia's brothers, George and John Russell joined them not long after and soon other relatives and friends moved from Virginia to the small settlement in Watauga.

In July of 1776, Lydia and Samuel Moore, a 13 year old, were on their way to Fort Watauga at Sycamore Shoals when a band of Cherokee captured them. It is unknown what happened to Samuel Moore, but Lydia was taken to the Cherokee Overhill towns, to be burned at the stake. As she was being bound and the fires lit, Nancy Ward saw what was happening and freed her, using her rights to do so as the Beloved Woman of the Cherokee.

Nancy and Lydia ~

Lydia had been wounded, was weak and terrified. Lydia was spared and taken into Nancy's home. Nancy nursed the woman back to health and for her kindness and friendship Lydia taught Nancy how to weave. She showed Nancy how to set up a loom and use thread or yarn for spinning.

Nancy saw that this would be a remarkable improvement for the Cherokee. The fine woven, soft and comfortable to wear cloth would replace the rough animal hide clothing the Cherokee wore and also made them less dependent on the traders for the woven cloth they so admired. This new craft of weaving that Nancy learned brought to the traditional Cherokee woman a new role in life. The women took on the task of weaving and the farming they had been doing was left to the men of the tribe. Cherokee women were also able to spend more time on housekeeping instead of working all day in the fields.

Lydia managed to retrieve two of her dairy cows from the settlement and taught Nancy how to raise cattle and how to prepare the dairy products from them. This helped greatly to supplement the diet of the people.

These new things Nancy learned from Lydia changed the way of life considerably for the Cherokee people. Rather than a communal agricultural society they had become more like their European neighbors.

Two women who made a difference ~

In her later life Nancy took on the role of an ambassador between the Cherokee and the white settlers. From her maternal uncle, Chief Attakullakulla, she learned the art of diplomacy. When John Sevier, delegation leader of the whites complained with shock that such important work was assigned to a woman, Nancy replied that "(women) are your mothers, you are our sons.

Nancy died in 1822 (or 1824). Her son, Fivekiller, said that she was buried in Chota, her home. Nancy is remembered as an important figure to not only the Cherokee, but also as an early pioneer for American women in politics. Lydia died in 1788. In April of 1959 the Lydia Russell Bean Daughters of the Revolution Chapter in Knoxville was established. It is unknown where Lydia was buried. These two women, kindred souls, did so much to show there could be peace and friendship between two cultures. They worked together to make life better for their people.