

William Shorey Coodey

(1806 – 16 Apr 1849)

William Coody was the nephew of the famous Cherokee Chief, John Ross. He was educated ... William Coody owned a large farm not far from New Echota at the foot of Lookout Mountain. In the spring of



William Shorey Coodey
(Dayunita)

1833 he played host to Joseph Nicollet (R37/27) who was on an extended scientific tour of the Southeast. In 1839, after the forced removal to the West, he drafted the Constitution of the United (Eastern and Western) Cherokee Nation, and as a delegate to the national convention was one of the signators of the document on September 6, 1839. In 1840 he was elected President of the Senate in the 1st Council of the Cherokee Nation -- Bluford West (R40/89) and Thomas Pegg (R40/44) were fellow Senators and Ezekial Starr (R40/90) was a councilor. Later William Shorey Coody was elected Senator from the Canadian District (also elected President of the Senate) and served until his death in 1849. Coody was a delegate to Washington, D.C. in 1839 and 1845.

William Coody was a correspondent of the American Philosophical Society and was described as "slim and handsome" and a "hand-picked patriot" of the Cherokee nation.

William Shorey Coody was the son of Joseph Coody and Jennie Ross (sister of chief John Ross). His grandparents were Mary McDonald who was born Nov. 1, 1770 and married Daniel Ross, a Scotsman born in 1760 in Sutherlandshire, Scotland. She died Oct. 5, 1808 and he May 22, 1830. His great-grandparents were Annie Shory and John McDonald. His great-great-grandparents were Ghigooie, a full-blood Cherokee of the Bird Clan, who married William Shorey, a Scotsman.

Eyewitness to America, David Colbert (ed)

The Trail of Tears Begins (pp 154-155)

In 1824 about seventy-seven thousand Indians were living east of the Mississippi River, according to estimates given to the secretary of war. By 1840, almost all the tribes had been "removed," pushed westward to make room for new settlers.

In the series of forced marches that has become known as the 'Trail of Tears,' fourteen thousand Cherokees were driven out of Georgia and Tennessee into Oklahoma. About four thousand died along the way.

Coody, who witnessed the first of the thirteen drives, described the scene in this letter to a friend.

August 28, 1838

The entire Cherokee population was captured by the U.S. troops under General [Winfield] Scott in 1838 and marched to, principally, the border of Tennessee where they were encamped in large bodies until the time of their final removal west. At one of these encampments twelve miles south of the Agency and Headquarters of Genl. Scott, was organized the first detachment for marching under the arrangement committing the whole management of the emigration into the hands of the Cherokees themselves.

The first of September was fixed as the time for a part to be in motion on the route. Much anxiety was felt, and great exertions made by the Cherokees to comply with everything reasonably to be

expected of them, and it was determined that the first detachment would move in the last days of August.

I left the Agency on the 27th, after night, and watched the encampment above alluded to, early the following morning for the purpose of aiding in the arrangements necessary to get a portion in motion on that day -- the remainder to follow the next day and come up while the first were crossing the Tennessee River, about twelve miles distant.

At noon all was in readiness for moving; the teams were stretched out in a line along the road through a heavy forest, groups of persons formed about each wagon, others shaking the hand of some sick friend or relative who would be left behind. The temporary camp covered with boards and some of bark that for three summer months had been their only shelter and home, were crackling and falling under a blazing flame; the day was bright and beautiful, but a gloomy thoughtfulness was depicted in the lineaments of every face. In all the bustle of preparation there was a silence and stillness of the voice that betrayed the sadness of the heart.

At length the word was given to "move on." I glanced along the line and the form of Going Snake, an aged and respected chief whose head eighty winters had whitened, mounted on his favorite pony passed before me and led the way in advance, followed by a number of young men on horse back.

At this very moment a low sound of distant thunder fell on my ear. In almost an exact western direction a dark spiral cloud was rising above the horizon and sent forth a murmur I almost fancied a voice of divine indignation for the wrongs of my poor and unhappy countrymen, driven by brutal power from all they loved and cherished in the land of their fathers, to gratify the cravings of avarice. The sun was unclouded -- no rain fell -- the thunder rolled away and sounds hushed in the distance. The scene around and before me, and in the elements above, were peculiarly impressive and singular. It was at once spoken of by several persons near me, and looked upon as omens of some future event in the west.

The National Intelligencer, April 17, 1849

Coody. In this city, early yesterday morning, William S. Coody, of the Cherokee nation--one of the representatives of the old Western Cherokees. The friends and acquaintances of himself and family are invited to attend his funeral from his late lodgings at Mr. Shackelford's, opposite Willard's hotel, at half past 3 o'clock this afternoon.