CHAPTER 1

FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND HOME

This son will be my greatest joy and greatest sadness.

SKYAHETA “LYDIA” CHRISTIE,
mother of Nede Wade

From an early age, Nede Wade Christie listened to family stories of Cherokee life before removal. He learned about promises made and broken, the desire that non-Indians had for what Cherokees possessed, and just how far they would go to take those resources. He heard about the horrors of the removal trail, about the death of his relatives, and what the future might hold for the Cherokee Nation. Ned also knew just how much his own family lost. Those realities molded his attitudes towards the federal government.

Ned’s ancestors were well established in the East. Nede Wade Christie’s grandmother Quatse “Betsy” was the daughter of Hiketiyah, a Cherokee, and Dutch trader John Christie. Ned’s grandfather Wakigu “Lacy” Dalasini (also known as “Sugar Tree” and “Step-a-long”) was the son of Tsatsi Dalasini. They lived at the base of the Smoky Mountains in the forested Tahquohee District of the Cherokee Nation, in the village of Turtletown. Their son, who became Nede Wade’s father, Wade “Watt” Wakigu, was born in 1817 and he grew up in the same area.1

Nede Wade’s great-uncle Edward (Betsy’s brother), who also was known as “Nede,” and his wife, Sallie Peak Christie, lived on a productive farm on the north side of the Hiwassee River, in modern-day Murphy, North Carolina, less than twenty miles from Turtletown. Great-uncle Edward “Nede” and Sallie were not wealthy, but they lived comfortably in a seventeen-by-seventeen two-story log home with plank floors, a chimney made of sticks and clay, and an attached shed. Also on the property were a smaller log home with a chimney, a smokehouse, two large cornhouses, corncribs, stables and an old hill house. The Christies’
most valuable assets were the sixty-five acres of cultivated land with almost two hundred peach, cherry, and large and small apple trees. They also had a son they named Watt (like Ned’s father) who was born in 1812 and later farmed at the mouth of the Valley River.²

The Cherokee Nation encompassed over 120,000 square miles of northern Alabama, northwestern Georgia, northwestern South Carolina, southwestern North Carolina, western Virginia, and eastern Tennessee and Kentucky.³ The areas around the Hiwassee River and its tributaries were fertile and abundant with iron ore and gold, which were greatly desired by intrusive white settlers whose hunger for the resource-rich Cherokee lands resulted in methodical reductions of the Cherokee land base. Between 1721 and 1785, the tribe lost more than half their lands. Then in 1785, after the Revolutionary War, the Treaty of Hopewell with the United States guaranteed the protection of the remaining Cherokee lands; however, over the next thirty years, more treaties were signed and the tribe lost two-thirds of the lands that were supposed to be protected.⁴

Lacy and Betsy witnessed the land reduction and no doubt worried they would lose more, if not all of it. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the stream of white intruders onto Cherokee lands had increased. In response to the persistent whites who wanted tribal lands, the government kept pressure on the Cherokees to move. Understanding that they would inevitably have to move anyway, almost 3,000 of the 15,000 Cherokees moved to Arkansas Territory in 1818. These “Old Settlers” were later forced to sign a treaty in 1828 requiring them to move farther west to northeast Indian Territory.⁵

A declining land base was not the only stressor in the Cherokee Nation. The Christie family also paid close attention to how Americans influenced their traditional system of governance and social organization. Non-Indian men, such as the Dutchman John Christie, entered into the Cherokee territory and often married Cherokee women. By the late eighteenth century, the Cherokees’ association with Irish, English, German, and other European traders, artisans, and merchants resulted in a significant population of mixed-bloods who adhered to the value systems of their non-Native fathers. Factionalism resulted between those Cherokees who desired wealth, to become Christians, and to leave the old ways behind, including the matriarchal system (that is, tracing descent and clan membership through one’s mother’s female line) and seeking advice from tribal doctors (medicine men and women). But some intermarried whites like John Christie (Ned’s great-grandfather) respected the Cherokees’ social organization and traditional system of governance, and their families continued to adhere to
Cherokee mores. The Christies continued to trace their Bird Clan line through the traditional way.⁶

In 1828, gold was discovered on Cherokee land in Dahlonega, an hour north of modern-day Atlanta, resulting in a renewed fervor for tribal land.⁷ Georgians were determined to take Cherokee property even though the tribe had created a government and declared itself a sovereign nation. The Georgia legislature abolished the Cherokee government and laws and prepared to take the tribal property and give it to white citizens. In 1830, Congress passed the Removal Act that authorized President Andrew Jackson to negotiate removal treaties with tribes.⁸

Two factions emerged among the Cherokees: those who believed there was no choice but to remove west to Indian Territory and those who vowed to fight leaving. Mixed-blood Guwisguwi, also known as John Ross, led the anti-removal National Party. The educated Ross campaigned tirelessly against removal,
including confronting Congress for compensation for Cherokee grievances in 1824. The tribe elected him chief in 1828 and he remained in that position until his death in 1866.9 The leader of the Removal Party, Degatada, also known as Stand Watie, served as speaker of the Cherokee National Council and worked as a businessman and lawyer. His brother Gallegina Uwati, also known as Buck Watie, attended the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, and while there converted to Christianity and married a white woman. He changed his name to Elias Boudinot and continued to argue for Cherokee acculturation.10 A prominent leader of the pro-removal Treaty Party was the wealthy plantation owner and slaveholder Nunnehidhi, or Ganundalegi, best known as Major Ridge or The Ridge.11

Chief John Ross, whom Ned’s father, Watt, knew well, sought an injunction with the Supreme Court arguing that Georgia had no constitutional rights to take
Cherokee lands and Georgia laws violated the Cherokee Nation’s sovereign rights. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), the Supreme Court ruled that it lacked the authority to hear claims of Indian nations because they are not foreign nations, but are dependent nations within the United States. The state of Georgia then passed a law requiring citizens who wanted to reside within the bounds of the Cherokee Nation to obtain a license. A missionary named Samuel Worcester, who established the newspaper *Cherokee Phoenix* with Elias Boudinot and who translated the Bible into Cherokee, refused to purchase a license and as a result Georgia tried and convicted him. The Supreme Court heard the case and ruled in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) that Georgia's license law was unconstitutional; only the United States had power to negotiate terms of Indian lands. This ruling had virtually no effect. Georgia and President Jackson ignored it and the removal commenced.

Even before these Supreme Court cases, the Cherokee Nation took steps to prevent the further loss of land. In 1829 the National Council revitalized a Cherokee law condemning to death any tribal member who sold lands without permission of the council. Despite the seriousness of that law, Stand Watie, Elias Boudinot, and Major Ridge signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835 anyway, thus committing the entire tribe to removal. Knowing full well what he had done, Major Ridge told Thomas L. McKenney after signing that "I expect to die for it." And indeed he did, on June 22, 1839, at the hands of those furious at his deception.

It did not matter that only a small portion of the tribe committed the entire Cherokee Nation to move. Thirteen detachments of Cherokees started west between January and March 1839. In the 1930s, numerous Cherokees interviewed for the *Indian-Pioneer Papers* oral history collection recounted what their grandparents told them. Stories range the spectrum of horrors: starvation, disease, hypothermia, injuries, and theft of personal property. Russell Thornton estimates that almost eight thousand Cherokees died as a result of removal. Some died en route to Indian Territory, although the majority of those who perished did so after arrival, from malnutrition, sickness, disease, and hypothermia. Choctaws, Chickasaws, Muskogees, and Seminoles underwent similar removals, resulting in thousands more deaths.

The Christie family managed to survive, except for Ned’s great-grandmother Betsy who perished from cold and hunger on the trail. The Christies arrived in Indian Territory in 1839 during the winter and like other traditionalist families, they settled away from well-traveled roads. Watt and his first wife, Wadaya, established their home in Wauhillau, twelve miles east of Tahlequah on the banks
of the Barren Fork in the Goingsnake District and this is where Nede Wade was born.20 “Wauhillau,” a word that comes from the Cherokee awa’hili, meaning “eagle,” is named for Ned’s mother’s mother, Katie Eagle, who is also known as Wahila, or Goback.21 Other Cherokee families such as the Adairs, Sanders, Squirrels, and Wolves also established homesteads in the area.22

In 1917, the *Tulsa World* published a story about thief Bob Davis, “notorious Oklahoma outlaw” who robbed the Bank of Canehill in Arkansas. Davis and his partner-in-crime fled into Oklahoma, heading for Rabbit Trap, a small community five miles from Wauhillau, an area the paper referred to as a “notorious rendezvous” site for “desperados.”23 The paper also described the Rabbit Trap area as “the principal rendezvous of the Union Indians . . . [a] deep and narrow valley . . . strewn with great boulders and masses of rock [that] was regarded as all but impregnable.”24 The reputation of Rabbit Trap as a destination for criminals and as a defensible hideout might account for why most writers incorrectly claim that the Christie family settled in Rabbit Trap and that Ned was born, raised, and died there.25

Wadaya, like so many other Cherokees, had been weakened by the removal ordeal and died in 1842. Watt then married Skyaheta Tecorhurtuski, also known as Lydia Thrower, in 1849.26 Steele states in his *Last Cherokee Warriors* that Christie’s father, Watt, had “eight wives” and that those “various wives” bore him eleven children. Steele indulges in more stereotypical fiction by adding, “Watt was a strikingly handsome Indian and soon collected a harem of the most beautiful Indian maidens in the territory.”27 The reality is that Watt married five women, but only because he became a widower four times. Besides, in 1825, the National Council passed a law stating that no man, white or Cherokee, could have more than one wife.28

Travelers from California stopped at the Wauhillau Trading Post—one of the few trading posts at that time—and camped by nearby Caney Creek on their way east to Fort Smith and west to California. If short on money, customers might pay for goods with livestock.29 Many Christies, including Wadaya and Nede Wade, are buried in the Watt Christie cemetery next to the still-standing old stone Wauhillau Trading Post.

After arrival in the territory, Watt immediately began building a log home, filling in chinks between logs with clay, and established a garden and livestock pens. Some Cherokees had dirt floors, and others puncheon floors. Most had one bedroom, a kitchen—although some families preferred to do their cooking outside—and a smokehouse either adjoining the main house or a separate structure.
Instead of a smokehouse, some dug a hole in the floor to store food. Windows and doors were made of little poles two feet long and fastened with bark and strips of hide for hinges.\(^{30}\)

Much of their new territory resembled the bountiful East. Nede Wade’s Wauhillau land is uneven, with 800-foot-high hills and sloping valleys crossed by streams and creeks and during his lifetime covered with timber, edible plants, and teeming with wildlife. In 1885, the *Cherokee Advocate* described the Goingsnake District as being “beautifully supplied with the purest water that flows from its many hillsides in sparkling springs.”\(^{31}\)

During Ned Christie’s time, the foliage grew so densely that geologist Charles Newton Gould stated that “a person may ride all day and scarcely be out of the woods.” There is a variety of timber, with oaks and hickories the most common, followed by walnut, cedar, pecan, dogwood, elms, redbud, sycamore, maples, pawpaw, chinaberry, locust, crabapple, hawthorn, and others.\(^{32}\) The Christies were surrounded by much seasonal food, such as blackberry, raspberry, dewberries, strawberries, grapes, huckleberries, and plums. Tributaries of the Illinois River provided an abundance of fish; a favorite way to catch them was what residents referred to as “poisoning” the water by using powdered root of the buckeye tree or the crushed roots of the white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*), also known as the devil’s shoestring, to stun fish so they could easily be caught.\(^{33}\) Although much of
the land has been cleared for farming and livestock grazing, today it still retains much of the nineteenth-century flora and fauna. Canoeing, rafting, and kayaking the stretch of the Illinois where Ned lived is a peaceful way to photograph the wildlife and lush vegetation, although poison ivy pervades the area.

The Christies also had ample animal foods: bear, deer, raccoons, opossums, beavers, ducks, geese, prairie chickens, quail, wild pigeons, muskrats, squirrels, and rabbits. Residents of that period recall seeing deer in droves, and turkeys roosted in trees right outside of houses. Squirrels, a favorite food of Ned’s, were sometimes so populous that they destroyed corn crops. Copperheads and rattlesnakes inhabited the hillsides while cottonmouths lived along the streams and creeks. Wild and garden foods were usually plentiful except during times of drought, although some affluent residents who could afford to purchase foods from trading posts had changed their traditional ways of eating to the extent that white flour, coffee, and sugar appeared at every meal. Most residents, including the Christies, had what many called a “milch-cow” and chickens. They raised corn, beans, potatoes, and pumpkins and traded with neighbors for peanuts, sweet potatoes, watermelons, black-eyed peas, and honey from their apiaries.

A gristmill was built on the creek close to the Wauhillau Trading Post; then in the early 1880s another took its place one hundred yards to the southeast and became known as “Bidding” Mill, named after Dr. Nicholas Bitting, who settled there in 1876. This name later changed to Golda’s Mill, after Golda Unkefer, who operated the mill until 1900. The name Bitting was initially misnamed and now the church and creek are named “Bidding.” The Christie family, however, has always called Bidding Creek by the name “Goback Creek” and others refer to it as Bitting Spring, Goingsnake Creek, and Ned Christie Springs.

It was amid the developing Cherokee Nation and growing Indian Territory that Ned was born into the Bird Clan, on December 14, 1852. Lydia gave birth to Ned on a cold, dark evening while her Wauhillau neighbors stood outside the cabin by the fires, the women softly singing. Lydia’s mother, Solada (“Charlotte” in English), smoked and blessed the house, then braided her daughter’s hair. Wahila, a tall, imposing woman with long silver hair she kept piled atop her head, served as Lydia’s midwife. Dick Keyes, known as “Backfoot” because when he walked a sound like another foot behind him kept pace, played the fiddle on the front porch. After Ned emerged into the world, Wahila buried the afterbirth on the east side of the cabin.

Nede Wade grew up amid a large extended family who spoke mainly Cherokee. Watt and Lydia had eight children: Rachel, born in 1850; Ned (1852); Mary
(1857); Jack (1860); Darkey (1862); Goback (1864); Annie (1869); and Jennie (1872). When old enough, Ned went to the small Caney school located next to the Caney graveyard. This school became known as Christie School, sometimes as Sugar Mountain School, and his cousin Katie later taught there. Ned spoke, read, and wrote in Cherokee as well as in English. He learned Cherokee manners, traditions, and politics from all his relatives, but notably from his uncle Goback Eagle.

In 1852, the year of Ned’s birth, thousands of Cherokees could speak English and learned to read. Many adults already could read and write in Cherokee because in 1821, the silversmith Sequoyah (also known as George Gist or George Guess) created the Cherokee syllabary. Prior to their move to Indian Territory, the Cherokees began publication of the Cherokee Phoenix newspaper with columns in both English and in Cherokee. After their arduous removal from the East in the 1830s, they started printing the Cherokee Advocate with College of New Jersey (now Princeton) graduate William Potter Ross as the first editor. Ross was the nephew of Chief John Ross, leader of the antiremoval faction of Cherokees. By the 1820s, many Cherokees, mixed-bloods mainly, made it clear they wanted a system of education for their children and they approved many missionary-run schools such as the American Board’s Dwight Mission. The constant push for education continued long after removal.

The Progressive Cherokees were those who spoke mainly English, had converted to Christianity, strived for material wealth, and wanted to compete economically with the surrounding whites. They continued to believe the way to accomplish their goal was to regulate their own schools and curricula. In so doing, they would educate Cherokee youth in their way of thinking, believing that after graduation they would then become savvy enough to maintain control over tribal politics. The most prominent Cherokee schools were the two boarding schools, Cherokee Female Seminary at Park Hill (where the Cherokee Historical Society is now located) and its counterpart, the Cherokee Male Seminary (located southwest of Tahlequah), which were established by the tribal council with the intention of educating their children in the ways of white society. The seminaries did not teach Cherokee students about their culture. The first female teachers came from Mount Holyoke in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and the male teachers from Yale. The tribe spent $60,000 apiece on the seminaries, creating institutions that were large, spacious, and equaled, if not surpassed, the best eastern schools.

Ned was born a year after the seminaries opened but he never attended the male seminary. Although he was cognizant that the seminaries were not intended to be
cultural schools, he supported them because they were an avenue for students to understand the white world that surrounded them. He hoped that students would acquire knowledge of Cherokee culture from their families, and to learn English and how to negotiate the changing political and cultural landscape at the seminars.45

Ned remained a staunch traditionalist. The Christie family belonged to the Keetoowah Society, the religious organization determined to preserve Cherokee culture and sovereignty, which included objecting to the influx of white intruders into tribal nations, white men intermarrying with Cherokee women, the allotment of their lands, and Oklahoma statehood. They were also antislavery and advocated for the tribe’s rights as per the treaties with the United States. Ned’s grandfather Lacy and his father, Watt, served as chiefs of the Keetoowah ceremonial ground located on the Wauhillau family grounds.46 As a future council member, Ned retained his traditionalist beliefs and concerns and preferred to speak Cherokee, yet his ability to read and write in English and knowledge of the U.S. federal government enabled him to make crucial political, social, and economic decisions that impacted the Cherokee Nation.

Ned learned gun- and metalsmithing from his father, Watt, who maintained his reputation as a skilled smith through the decades. The Cherokee Advocate wrote that citizens took their plows and hoes to Watt Christie because “he never fails to put them in order, no odds how rough they may be, and rough they are, as everyone knows who has ever been in their district.”47

Ned’s brother, named Goback like his uncle, became a respected metal and gunsmith too. Neighbor George Keys recalled that “he could make anything he wanted. Didn’t make any difference what it was. He could make it. He could make a pocketknife and blades. The only difference between it and the factory was it didn’t have no lettering on it.” Goback also made wagon rims, plows, and watch springs and his arrowpoints and fish gigs were “works of art.”48 In addition, the gregarious Goback was an artist and belonged to the Masonic lodge.49 Not only was Goback a “master in working metals, wood and stone . . . [but] his gift of knowledge of the use of herbs and plants in treating the sick was known far and wide,” and he knew enough about healing to successfully set a compound fracture. And he served as a “confidant to those in trouble.” According to Goback’s son Amos Christie (and grandson of Watt), his father was considered “one of the best known and most loved of all the Cherokees of his time.”50

Goback learned about healing from his maternal grandmother, a medicine woman. His older sister’s husband, Seed, was a medicine man.51 One of the most
serious consequences of Indian removal was the inability of the tribal doctors to immediately locate the traditional medicinal plants needed for ceremonies and healing, and Goback quickly filled an urgent need. Another brother, Jack, lived near Hungry Mountain and made a living at sharpening mill burrs, among other things. He took after his father, for he too was deemed “a natural mechanic” who “could do almost anything.”

Ned’s happy childhood was disrupted by the Civil War. Prior to the start of the war in 1861, members of the antiremoval Ross faction and the Treaty Party maintained resentments and the advent of the war brought forth the old Cherokee factionalism. The majority of Ross’s followers were Keetoowahs, at that time also known as “Pin Indians.” They had no loyalty to the Confederacy or to white
southerners; instead, they pledged allegiance to John Ross.\textsuperscript{53} His Company E is the regiment that Ned’s father, Watt (age forty-one), joined, along with Watt’s brother Arch (thirty), and Watt’s son and Ned’s brother James (twenty).\textsuperscript{54} There are no stories about Ned’s participation in the Civil War since he was barely nine years old when the war began.\textsuperscript{55} John Ross spent the last years of the war in Washington, D.C., and when he died on August 1, 1866, Watt Christie served as one of his pallbearers.\textsuperscript{56}

The war soon spread to Indian Territory and the aftermath resulted in more loss of tribal lands, loss of life, property damage, and societal upheaval with unprecedented violence spreading throughout the tribal nations. Residents recall having plenty to eat and wear prior to the war. With the corn, pumpkins, wild berries, fruits, honey, and game, together with gardens and wild fowls, “the Indians before the war, were living good,” yet the troops came through and “they simply stripped us of everything.” Troops burned barns, houses, and cribs after taking furniture and driving off cattle. The tribal properties look as “hopeless as can be conceived,” wrote Indian agent Proctor.\textsuperscript{57}

After the war the Indian population, especially full-bloods, decreased, while the numbers of non-Indians and mixed-bloods increased. The federal government saw an opportunity to seize more tribal lands. The western half of Indian Territory was renamed Oklahoma Territory and served as home for Southern Plains tribes from Kansas and Nebraska. “Agreements” for these moves were not exactly honest. For example, Kickapoos learned that government agents had accepted a ten-year-old’s signature on their agreement to move to Oklahoma. Tribes also had to acquiesce to the intrusion of railroads and the loss of lands as rights-of-way.\textsuperscript{58}

The Christies worked to find normalcy after the war. Ned learned to play a fiddle that he purchased by mail order. The Wauhillau community had regular music gatherings where Ned played and neighbors danced. Roy recalls that when he was a child the tradition of music parties held at his great-uncle John’s, with plenty of “food, music, lots of laughing, sometimes games of horseshoes, chunky, or shooting contest (cans on the fence).” Ned’s last fiddle eventually found a home with one of Nancy Christie’s sons, but it disappeared after Ned’s death.\textsuperscript{59} Christie developed into a skilled marble player, a popular game among peoples around the world including Natives of many tribes. Cherokees call marbles \textit{digadayosdi}. Using rolled clay or polished river stones about the size of today’s billiard balls, players attempt to toss the marbles into five holes in the proper sequence while knocking opponents’ marbles out of the way.\textsuperscript{60}
Ned’s father and the men who visited his shop taught young Christie how to shoot pistols and rifles. A preteen carrying a weapon at that time was not surprising. By necessity, most people in Indian Territory were forced to learn to shoot and even more acquired guns to protect themselves after the Civil War. White and Indian murderers, rapists, whiskey peddlers, and thieves inhabited the western portion, especially the Union Agency that included the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations. In 1866, Allen Wright, chief of the Choctaw Nation directly to the south of the Cherokee Nation, stated that “every species of lawlessness, violence, robbery and theft” pervaded his tribal lands. The number of murders would not subside in part because of the railroad construction and the volume of transient criminals passing through the territory. Christie also learned the time-consuming task of making ammunition, a potentially dangerous project using hot liquid metal. He had a steady hand and good eye and his widow, Nancy, later recalled that he would “draw his guns so fast you would never see them leave his holster; but, there they were, having magically jumped into his hands." Watt gave Ned the guns he used in the war, .44-caliber cap and ball pistols. Using what he learned in his father’s smithy, Ned transformed the guns into five-shot pistols.

In his October 1859 annual address to the nation, Chief John Ross had already discussed the dire need for jails to curb the increasing violence. Cherokees had passed laws in 1852 addressing gambling and carrying weapons. The tribe had its own three-story sandstone national jail, and a gallows outside. In 1884, the jail housed twenty prisoners who wore zebra-striped suits and who were assigned to chop wood and to work on buildings and roads.

Considering the number of cases in which noncitizens living in the tribal nations were accused of serious crimes, the federal government had to know something needed to be done even before the Civil War started. In 1851, Congress authorized the federal court for the Western District of Arkansas in Van Buren, Arkansas, jurisdiction over the western counties in Arkansas and all of the Indian Territory. In 1871, William Story was appointed as judge but resigned in 1874 after corruption charges. His replacement, thirty-six-year-old Isaac Parker had served as a Missouri City attorney, a circuit attorney and circuit judge, in addition to serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. During his tenure as judge, he tried an impressive 13,490 cases, with 344 of those capital crimes. Tribal courts only heard cases involving tribal members. If one party was Indian and the other white, or if a crime occurred in which the victim and perpetrator both were white, then the case was heard at the U.S. court in the western district.
of Arkansas. Cherokees became involved in many crimes, either as victims or perpetrators, and Nede Wade Christie soon became familiar with Judge Parker’s reputation and how the court system worked.

Ned matured amid these postwar changes. He grew to resemble his half-blood grandmother Quatie Christie. He had the bone structure of his Cherokee forebears, and the wavy hair with auburn and red highlights of Quatie and her father, Trader John Christie, which he usually wore down. Ned related well to children, and females apparently found him captivating. In 1871, nineteen-year-old Ned met his first wife, Nani Digi, also called Nannie Dick, at a dance where he played the fiddle. During that dance, a drunken man grabbed Nannie’s arm, causing her to fall. That man wanted a dance with her and Ned told him to back off. The inebriated man pulled a knife, then Ned hit him in the nose and put the barrel of his pistol to the man’s forehead. “Hadn’t you rather go home than die?” Ned asked him. The man stood, Ned put away his gun, but then the man drew his pistol. In response, Christie quickly shot him in the arm. There is no word on what happened to the would-be suitor.66 Ned and Nannie married and the next year had a daughter, Mele or Wali, also known as Mary, who witnessed her father’s death in 1892.

The year Mary was born, the Cherokee Nation contended with yet another violent episode: a gunfight at the Goingsnake Courthouse, an event that shaped Ned’s perception of federal authority over crimes in the Cherokee Nation. The event spotlighted Cherokee Ezekiel “Zeke” Proctor, a mixed-blood Keetoowah who survived the removal trek and has long been labeled by writers as an outlaw associate of Christie.

In 1872, a Fort Smith posse attempted to accost and take Zeke to trial at Fort Smith for killing, albeit accidentally, Polly Hildebrand. Polly’s first husband, Stephen, was the uncle of Zeke’s wife, Rebecca. After his death she married James “Jim” Kesterson (also seen as Chesterson). On February 27, 1872, Zeke went to talk to Jim, possibly because of a dispute over cattle. An argument ensued, Zeke attempted to shoot Jim, and hit Polly instead. Zeke immediately surrendered to Goingsnake District sheriff Blackhawk Sixkiller. Because Zeke and Polly were Cherokees, Cherokee lawmen were determined uphold the law and keep Proctor’s trial in a Cherokee court, but Fort Smith men wanted him tried at Fort Smith because they argued that Zeke had attempted to kill Jim, who was a white man. They forced the issue in trying to take Zeke during his trial and the result was the Goingsnake Massacre that left ten men dead and many wounded.67

This confrontation occurred only four miles from the Christie home and the
Family, Friends, and Home

aftermath certainly impacted Ned. All Cherokees, including Keetoowahs, paid close attention to how the federal government responded as the situation grew more volatile. The U.S. district attorney of the Western District of Arkansas believed that by resisting the marshals’ attempts to take Proctor, the Cherokees were purposely defying U.S. authority. After the shootings, Zeke made himself scarce in the hills of Wauhillau along with Sixkiller, members of the Cherokee Senate, and almost fifty supporters. Proctor garnered the reputation as an unrepentant killer outlaw who spent his days raiding and murdering. Like Ned Christie, Zeke Proctor’s reputation underwent character defamation for the sake of selling newspaper copies. For examples, Pomeroy’s Democrat in Chicago wrote, “It is said, on good authority, that Proctor has killed twenty-three men and two women during his pilgrimage here on earth.” Zeke eventually turned himself in, as did other members of the Senate who were also wanted. Ultimately, their charges were dismissed. Surviving members of the posse who attempted to arrest Zeke at the Goingsnake Courthouse left the territory even though they had warrants against them.

Zeke has been the subject of fabricated stories and is portrayed as either a murderous outlaw (he killed twenty-one men and wore a steel breastplate) or, like Christie, whom Steele calls one of the “Last Cherokee Warriors,” a valiant defender of Cherokee sovereignty. Despite all the negative publicity, the Cherokees knew the reality and Zeke was appointed to the Cherokee National Council, along with Ned’s father, Watt, and uncle Nede Grease. A few years later Cherokees showed their continued confidence in him by electing him a Cherokee senator. He also became a successful rancher, cultivated large amounts of produce on his farm, and later served the Cherokee Nation as a sheriff. Except for a few gossipy sentences, newspapers did not connect Christie and Proctor together, mainly because they never were together except perhaps in group settings. Zeke’s family settled ten miles from the Hildebrand-Beck Mill along Flint Creek, about thirty-six miles from where Ned’s family lived in Wauhillau. While the two men knew of each other, if there was any socialization going on, it would have been conducted between Watt Christie and Proctor, not Nede Wade and Proctor. In 1872, Zeke was forty-one and Nede Wade twenty-one years old and the latter had just married. Christie focused on his new family, not on outlaw escapades with a man twice his age.

Amid the turmoil in the Cherokee Nation, Nannie took Mary and left Ned in 1874; she later married Ned’s father, Watt, thereby becoming Ned’s ex-wife and stepmother. All remained friendly. Nannie reportedly was shot and killed around 1882 by a man named Booger Sanders who wanted to stop her from testifying.
against him in court. There are no news reports about this incident, although there is mention of Sanders being shot dead by William Madden on November 9, 1901, as the “result of an old feud.”

In 1874, when Ned was twenty-two, he and Watt traveled to Tahlequah to meet Watt’s friend Toyanisi “Bug” Tucker, who had arrived with his daughters Peggy and Jennie. The smaller woman, Peggy, with long, dark hair and eyes caught Ned’s attention. They wed two years later and her sister, Jennie, married Ned’s brother Jack. In 1876 Peggy bore a son, James, usually known as Jim. Their happy marriage was short-lived for around 1880 Peggy became ill and died sometime in 1881. She was buried in the Thornton Family Cemetery alongside her mother, Millie, and sister, Jennie Tucker Christie.

Ned then married Jennie Scraper, the daughter of his friends Otter and Sallie Scraper, in 1881, and they had a daughter, Annie. The outspoken Jennie had no qualms about debating politics with Ned and she did not approve of him drinking. She divorced him in 1882. Ned’s descendants recall how proud he was of his daughter Annie, once telling some friends while riding in a wagon with her, “Don’t look gentlemen. I have the most beautiful woman in the world riding with me today. One look and you will surely be blinded.” He and ex-wife Jennie remained on good terms and he continued to visit Annie and bring her Jennie’s other children by her new husband, Lou Johnson, candy and other gifts. Ned referred to all of the children as “his girls” and they were just as fond of him. Jennie passed away after 1918.

Ned married for the last time, probably in 1886. Nusi Goie Ahwiousi “Nancy” Grease was Ned’s cousin, the daughter of Ned’s aunt Arley Christie Grease (often seen as “Greece”). Ned and Nancy rediscovered each other one spring while both were in the woods, Nancy looking for firewood and Ned hunting. She asked him to come to her home for supper and they never parted after that. He called her Nusi Goie.

Nancy had previously been married at age thirteen to William “Will” Adair and they had two children: Albert, and a girl who died shortly after birth. Nancy was not happy in this marriage, so after the death of her daughter she let Will know the marriage was over by setting his belongings outside the front door. Albert then lived with her and Ned. Roy Hamilton grew up communally with another of her sons, John (his great-uncle, “Uncle John”), whom she had with the man she married after Ned died, Ned’s brother Jack Christie. Nancy’s leaving the disgruntled Adair would later have consequences for the fate of Christie and his cousin Arch Wolfe.
The marital upheavals raise the question of why two of Ned’s wives left him. Jennie did not like him drinking, but no one has mentioned anger issues. Descendant Roy Hamilton believes that Ned’s wives left him because “his devotion and passion to government was stronger than his devotion to the wives. . . . Nancy said the only fight they ever had was over him giving so much of his life to the Cherokee people and their right to be a sovereign Nation. She hoped he would devote his life to her and their daughter and their children (though their children died in infancy); but, he was obsessed with his people’s rights and the Cherokee Nation. But, she did love him dearly.”

Nede Wade, Nancy, Albert, and Jim (Ned’s son with Peggy) made their home at the top of a heavily treed hill along modern-day E0790 Road in Wauhullah. They utilized a spring a short distance down the hill from their home. Ned gardened as he had learned from his parents, cultivating beans, corn, squashes, and potatoes. A rail fence kept the horses and cows contained. Some full-bloods in the vicinity lived in smaller homes with barely adequate cribs, but they tended to be communal and helpful to each other. Most of the families owned a wagon and
Ned and Nancy did not have much money, but they had what they needed to survive comfortably and they were happy. At least until Dan Maples died.
DEVON A. MIHESUAH, a member of the Choctaw Nation, is Cora Lee Beers Price Professor in International Cultural Understanding at the University of Kansas. Previously serving as Editor for The American Indian Quarterly, she is the author of numerous award-winning books, including *Choctaw Crime and Punishment, 1884–1887*, *American Indigenous Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*, *Recovering Our Ancestors’ Gardens: Indigenous Recipes and Guide to Diet and Fitness*, *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities*, and *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851–1909*. 

Ned Christie
The Creation of an Outlaw and Cherokee Hero
By Devon Abbott Mihesuah
$29.95 HARDCOVER | 978-0-8061-5910-2

BUY NOW AT OUPRESS.COM

Also available from your local bookseller and favorite online retailers!