

• CHAPTER 2 •

NANCY WARD (NAN YI' HE)



*From* Through a Woman's Voice  
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Essay and curriculum guide  
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Video of the NANCY WARD

<https://vimeo.com/481485704>

*Portrait of NANCY WARD by Vija Doks*



*Monument to the Cherokee Clans East Tennessee*

## Home of Beloved Woman of the Cherokee

The image above is a monument to the seven clans of the Cherokee, located in present day East Tennessee. It was once an important Cherokee town named Choata, where Nanyi'hi, or Nancy Ward was born and became the Beloved Woman, a position of honor and great importance, giving her a voice in treaty negotiations.



*De Soto's Discovery of the Mississippi A.D. 1541 by William Henry Powell*

When the first European settlers arrived in the area now known as Tennessee, Indians had been living in settlements along Tennessee's rivers for over 1000 years. The earliest Indians of Tennessee were nomadic hunters who roamed the wooded areas of the state following animals for food, clothing. When Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto entered the territory in 1540 looking for gold, Native Americans in the area had developed a complex tribal system and lived in towns generally located along Tennessee's rivers.

By the time Europeans began to explore the area, the Cherokee, found in the Appalachian Mountains, was the dominant tribe living in Tennessee. The Chickasaws lived in northern Mississippi and the Creeks who were frequent rivals of the Cherokees lived in north Georgia. Women held places of great importance among the Cherokees and sometimes served as spiritual leaders and advisors. The Cherokees believed that the Great Being spoke to the people through the Beloved Women of the Cherokee.

Nancy Ward, who lived at the time the Europeans settled in Middle Tennessee, was a Beloved Woman of the Cherokee. This was the highest honor in the tribe and gave Nancy Ward a voice in the Council of Chiefs which determined if there would be war or peace. The Beloved Woman of the Cherokees arbitrated quarrels within the tribe and was the head of a woman's council. As in other cultures, women were the central figures in the family life. They cared for the children, raised the crops that were produced, made all the clothing, and cooked meals for the tribe. In Cherokee society, women generally did their work in groups rather than working independently. Cherokee children were named after their mother's family rather than their father's family and became members of their mother's clan, a large extended family unit. Hunting and war were the only areas of life from which Indian women were limited, though Nancy Ward had gone to war herself.



*Nancy Ward Cherokee re-enactor in traditional dress*



*Cherokee arrow reproduction*

Women had a voice in Cherokee tribal government until the arrival of the settlers into Tennessee. Women were able to speak openly in Council meetings and the Beloved Woman often determined the fate of captives held by the tribe. Because the Cherokee society had a matrilineal kinship system, children belonged to the clan of their mother and their only relatives were those who could be traced from the mother's family. The Cherokees were also matrilineal, which is to say that when a man and woman married, the man lived with his wife in a house which belonged to her, or perhaps more accurately, her family. Cherokee women, married and single, had property rights. If a marriage ended in separation, the women retained rights to property and the children. The Cherokee understanding of property included agricultural produce since the women were the principal farmers. Technically, the Cherokees held land in common, but improved fields did belong to specific matrilineal households. As the settlers moved westward, the roles of the Cherokee women diminished.



*Cherokee re-enactors*

In 1785, Nancy Ward participated in a peace conference to negotiate the land holdings at Hopewell, South Carolina, but this was the last treaty negotiation in which women played an official role. As relations with the English-speaking settlers became increasingly important to tribal welfare, women became less significant in the Cherokee economy and government. By the 1800's, the inheritance laws and property rights of Cherokee women were lost and Cherokee women could not own property. Again, this mirrored existing conditions among the white settlers.



*Painting by Chester Martin, used with permission, courtesy of Fort Loudoun Association*

*Painting of Fort Loudan, 1731, Cherokee town houses are in the distance.*

If women voiced opposition to such changes, that opposition was not recorded. The only women about whom we have much information are those who conformed to expectations and those expectations were the same as for white women. Nancy Ward, who advocated peace with the English and then later, the United States, appears in the historical records, while other women who may have been less cooperative are unnamed. Cherokee government became more centralized and power, both political and economic, rested in the hands of a few elite men who adopted the lifestyle of the antebellum South. The ideal Cherokee woman became one who confined herself to her home. In 1826, the Council drew up a governing document for the Cherokee nation which stated, "No person but a free male citizen who is full grown shall be entitled to vote."

## Nancy Ward ( Nan yi' hi )

The only Native American woman in Tennessee about whom much has been written is Nancy Ward. Many legends about Nancy Ward, known as the "Wild Rose of Cherokee", that have been handed down still exist. She lived in East Tennessee at the time the European settlers came across the Appalachian mountains.

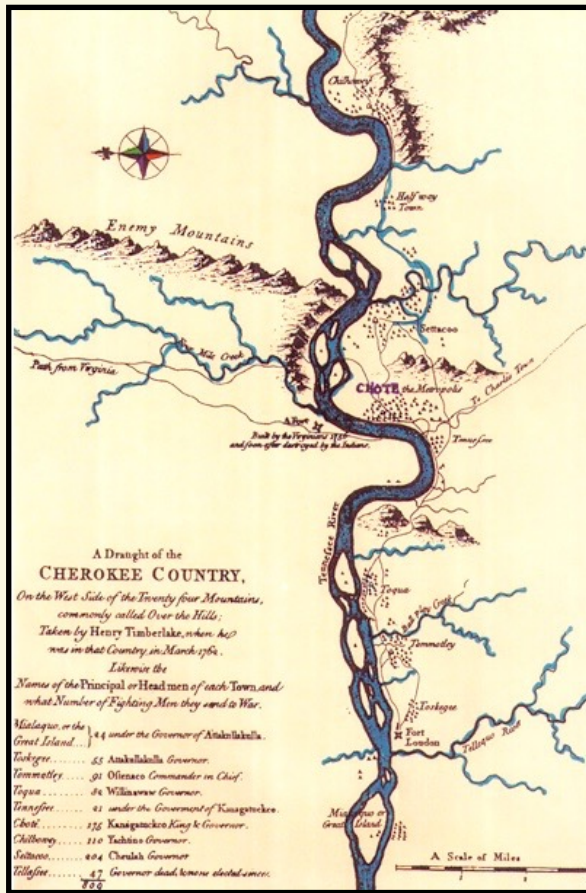
Nancy Ward was born sometime around 1738 and was the niece of Attakullakulla, the chief of the Overhill Cherokees. According to legend, she had beautiful, smooth skin and was married at an early age to Kingfisher, a Cherokee. During the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the Cherokees sided with the British but the Creeks were on the side of the French. There was a great battle in 1755 between the Cherokees and the Creeks at Taliwa along the Etowah River in (present day) North Georgia. Nancy Ward went with her husband and was present at Taliwa when the battle took place.

Oconostota, a great Cherokee warrior-chief, led 500 men into battle. When Kingfisher was killed in battle, she took up his weapon and continued fighting the Creeks. Her action inspired her people and ultimately they defeated the Creeks. When the story of Nancy's bravery spread among the Cherokees, she was chosen *Aqiquae*, Beloved Woman of the Cherokees. She would later marry Bryant Ward, a trader at Fort Loudan.



*Nancy Ward Cherokee Re-enactor*

Nancy Ward was from the Cherokee town of Chota. In the Cherokee division of clans and towns into red/war and white/peace categories, Chota was the mother (oldest) white/peace town. Therefore Nancy Ward was a Beloved Woman notable for her action in warfare against the Creeks and capable of preparing the sacred "Black Drink," but she was also a Beloved Woman who represented peace. Nancy Ward wanted peace with the Anglo-Americans. She may have seen herself as an instrument of peace between Cherokees and white settlers, both by her marriage and her intervention in the Fort Watauga attack.



As Beloved Woman, Nancy was given a voice in the Council of Chiefs, the body of males who determined whether or not the tribe would go to war. Because she was a member of this council, she was able to warn John Sevier and the settlers member at Fort Watauga of the planned attack on the Fort. This warning enabled the settlers to reach the safety of the fort before the attack occurred.

During one attack on the settlers, Lydia Bean, who had been one of the first European settlers, was captured and tied to a stake in a huge ceremonial mound. According to legend, Nancy Ward said, "No woman shall be burned at the stake while I am Beloved Woman" and Lydia Bean was freed. Lydia Bean then went with Nancy to her lodge and taught her many customs of the Europeans including how to make butter and cheese from milk.





*The treaty of Transylvania Purchase negotiations by T. Gilbert White*

By the time of the French and Indian War, Great Britain had thirteen colonies along the Atlantic coast of North America. Richard Henderson, a land speculator, was interested in the land of Kentucky and Tennessee. He saw the land as an opportunity to make money. If he could buy the land, he would then sell it later for a profit. Since this land was not really part of any colony, he hoped to create a fourteenth colony from the land that would be called “Transylvania,” which means “across the woods.”

Henderson visited the Overhill towns of the Cherokees. He offered to buy much of the land that is now central Kentucky and middle Tennessee from them. He would pay for the land by give the Cherokees goods if they would agree to the deal. Little Carpenter and Nancy Ward went to North Carolina to look at the items that they would receive if the Cherokees agreed to Henderson’s offer. They reported back that Henderson’s offer was a good deal for the Cherokee .

When the conflicts between the Native Americans and the settlers finally subsided, Nancy Ward lived for the remainder of her life in east Tennessee. During her lifetime, the Cherokee nation emerged from its matrilineal society based on tribal groups, to a republican-based system of government. This change in the structure of the Cherokee nation led to the demise of the position of Beloved Woman. When she lost her own land under the Hiwassee Purchase, she moved to land on the Ocoee River where she operated an inn for travelers until her death in 1824. Her grave can be found in Polk County south of Benton, Tennessee.

**Beloved Woman of the Cherokee** written from transcripts of  
Nanye'hi speeches

You who have plundered our lands and hunting grounds  
We women were never consulted about these treaties that have been broken  
Now we are here of our own account to speak  
You think that women are looked upon as nothing,  
But we are your mothers, you are our sons.  
Our cry is all for peace  
Let your women hear our words  
Let your women's sons be our sons, our sons be yours  
This peace must last forever,  
For I have seen much trouble during the late wars

I am not young, but I hope to yet bear children  
Who will grow up and people this nation  
The words that I give are my own,  
And from the warriors in my town  
They rejoice that we have peace  
I rejoice we have peace  
And hope that this chain of friendship  
Will never be broken

**Cherokee Peace Pipe Song**

Hi no he ye ni Hi no he ni Hi no he ye ni  
Hi no he ye ni Hi no he ni Hi no he ni

**Cherokee Song Sources:**

Walker Calhoun, **Where the Raven's Roost**,  
(audio Tape) published by Mountain Heritage  
Center

**Song Sources:**

**Speeches cited in Nathaniel Green papers**,  
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. and  
American State Papers, Class 2: Indian Affairs  
(Washington, DC, 1832),1:41

*Special thanks to Vija Doks for her painting of Nancy Ward, Katherine Sandoval Taylor for her portrayal of Nancy Ward, and to Jim Apple and Anne Apple for their portrayal of a Cherokee couple. Also thanks to The Eastern Band of Cherokee Tribal Council, Robert Bushyhead, (translation), Nat Shiedly, Lynn Harlan, Jean Bushyhead and Kurt Mayer, Library of Congress. Many thanks also to the tribal council of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, Cherokee NC, and Walter Calhoun for his assistance with the Cherokee Peace Pipe song.*

**Credits:**

**Track #3 :** Nanyihí or Nancy Ward

**Actors:** Voice of Nancy Ward in Cherokee: Jean Bushyhead

Voice of Nancy Ward in English: Candace Corrigan

**Musicians:** Bull Run Singers, Nashville, TN

Cherokee Cane flute and rattle: Joanie Geiser

Additional vocalists: Janne Henshaw and Carol Levack

**Secondary Sources:**

Alderman, Pat. Nancy Ward: *Cherokee Chieftainess; Dragging Canoe: Cherokee-Chickamauga War Chief*. Knoxville, Overmountain Press, 1990.

Dykeman, Wilma. *Tennessee Woman: An Infinite Variety*. Newport, Tennessee, Wakestone Books, 1993.

Klebenow, Anne. *200 Years through 200 Stories*. Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

Perdue, Theda. *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835*. Omaha, University of Nebraska Press, 1999.

West, Carroll Van, ed. *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Nashville, Rutledge Hill Press, 1997.

**Fiction:**

Ellington, Charlotte Jane. *Beloved Mother: The Story of Nancy Ward*. Knoxville, Overmountain Press, 1994. (young adult novel)

Furbee, Mary R. *Wild Rose: Nancy Ward and the Cherokee Nation*. Morgan Reynolds Publishing Co., 2001. (grades 4-8)

# Tennessee Curriculum Standards

## Tennessee 4th grade curriculum

4.1spi3 - determine how various groups resolve conflict (i.e. school, tribal councils, courts)

4.1spi4 - examine how Native American culture changed as a result of contact with European cultures (i.e. decreased population, spread of disease, increased conflict, loss of territory, increase of trade)

4.1spi5 - identify various racial and ethnic groups in Tennessee at the founding of statehood (i.e. Cherokee, Creek)

4.2spi4 - recognize the difference between a barter system and a money system

4.2spi5 - analyze the impact of European exploration and colonization on the economy of Tennessee

4.3spi2 - identify and use key geographical features on maps (i.e. mountains, rivers, plains, valleys, forests)

4.5spi1 - identify Native American groups in Tennessee before European explorations (i.e. Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw)

4.5spi2 - identify major Tennessee political leaders (i.e. Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, James K. Polk, Sequoyah, David Crockett, Nancy Ward)

4.5spi3 - interpret a timeline that depicts major historical pre-Civil War events

4.5spi4 - determine the hardships faced by early Tennessee settlers in the late 1700's (i.e. security, isolated communities, lack of access to goods, natural geography)

4.5spi5 - determine the reasons for colonial settlement (i.e. religious, economic, individual freedom)

4.6spi1 - recognize how groups work cooperatively to accomplish goals and encourage change (i.e. American Revolution, the founding of Tennessee, the failure of the Articles of Confederation, the colonies)

4.6spi3 - read and interpret a passage about a political or economic issue which individuals may respond to with contrasting views (i.e. state taxes, federal taxes, slavery, Bill of Rights)

**Reading Standards** (Skills – reading a timeline, a map, summarizing, compare-contrast, main idea, inference, drawing conclusions)

## Tennessee 8th grade curriculum standards:

8.1spi4 - compare and contrast the tenets of America's early major religions (i.e., Olmec beliefs, Native American Earth/Mother spirit, African Traditional Religion, Puritanism, Quakerism)

8.2spi4 - recognize the economic activities of early America (i.e., agriculture, industry, and service)

8.3spi1 - recognize the causes and examples of migration and immigration in early America (i.e., land, religion, money, pioneer spirit, indentured servitude, displacement, and slavery)

8.3spi6 - recognize how topographical features such as mountain and river systems influenced the settlement and expansion of the United States (i.e., Cumberland Gap, Wilderness Road, Ohio and Tennessee river systems)

8.4spi2 - identify the purposes and structures of various systems of governance (i.e., Federalism, Confederation, Republic, Democracy, Executive, Legislative, Judicial)

8.4spi3 - recognize the purpose of government and how its powers are acquired, used, and justified

8.4spi5 - identify how conditions, actions, and motivations contributed to conflict and cooperation between states, regions and nations

8.5spi1 - contrast the characteristics of major native civilizations of the Americas

8.5spi2 - Read a timeline and order events of the past

8.5spi4 - recognize causes and consequences of conflict, (i.e., French and Indian, revolutionary War, War of 1812)

8.5spi5 - recognize consequences of the westward expansion of the United States

8.5spi7 - recognize the historical impacts of European settlement in North America

8.5spi13 - examine the demographic changes brought about by westward movement  
(i.e., slavery, industrialization, and Native American relocation)

8.6spi1 - identify the impact of individual and group decisions on historical events

8.6spi5 - recognize how groups and institutions work together to meet common needs

### Objectives :

What do you want your students to learn?

1. What was life like for the Cherokees before the arrival of the European settlers?
2. How was Cherokee society organized? What was the role of women?
3. Compare the lives of the Cherokees and the settlers.
4. How did the Cherokees govern themselves?

### Guided Practice – Introduction of skills (Large or Small Activities):

1. On a map, locate Chota and the Cherokee villages.
2. On a map, locate Chota and the Cherokee villages in the Appalachian Mountains.
3. Create a classroom dramatization of Nancy Ward's life.
4. Make butter as a class from cream.
5. Do research on medicinal uses of herbs. Examine dried herbs and discuss how they are used today.

As a class discuss the story of Nancy Ward. Divide the class into four groups: Two groups will discuss the story from the perspective of the Cherokees. Two groups will discuss it from the point of view of the settlers. How do the points of view differ?

### Independent Practice- Activities that develop mastery of the skill taught.

1. Prepare a Venn diagram of a Cherokee woman and a woman who might have been a settler.
2. Write a news report for a newspaper about the Battle of Taliwa.
3. Write a news report about the Battle of Watauga.

### Assessment:

1. Prepare a journal for Nancy Ward's life with 10 entries covering the important events of her life.
2. Write an obituary for a newspaper about Nancy Ward