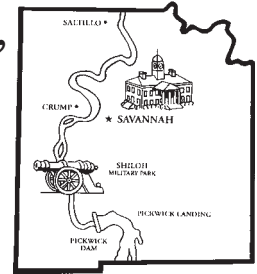


Hardin County Historian

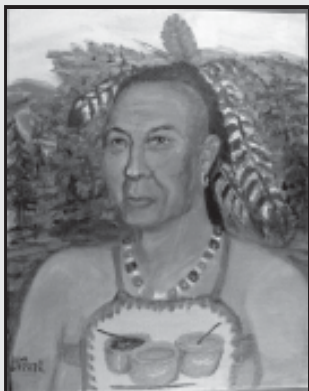
Hardin County,
Tennessee



Volume 6 Number 3

July - December 2009

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**Front Cover
Doublehead the
Cherokee Chief.
Original acrylic
painting by Dixie
Decker. The model
was husband, Jim
Decker.**



Back Cover (left)
Shep Thacker and Wife Mary
Thompson Thacker.



Back Cover (right)
Tennessee Josephine
Thacker (daughter of
Shep & Mary Thacker)
married Leroy Morton

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Hardin
County
Historical
Society
P.O. Box 1012
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The Hardin County Historical Society promotes the preservation of the county's rich history through various projects and programs, including the publishing of the Hardin County Historian.

Each membership in the Hardin County Historical Society entitles the member to the current year's issues of the Hardin County Historian (ISSN 8755-6073). The Historian is printed twice a year. Membership also entitles one to vote on HCHS affairs and hold office.

The Hardin County Historian emphasizes unpublished, primary source material of Hardin County historical and genealogical content. Manuscripts submitted for publication are judged for factual accuracy, style, clarity of thought, sources used and for appeal to members. Full documentation should be submitted where possible. Neither the Hardin County Historical Society nor the Historian Staff can assume responsibility for errors on the part of the contributors. Corrections when known will be printed in subsequent issues of the Historian.

HCHS AREA:

The Hardin County Historical Society will publish material that touches on Hardin County, Tennessee. Material from other counties and areas will be published only if there is a connection to Hardin County within the article or contains genealogical information pertinent to any family that lives or lived in the county.

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The Historical Society does not exchange publications or periodicals.

RESEARCH:

The Society does no genealogical research for individuals since it does not maintain a full-time staff. We will try to answer questions of a genealogical or historical nature if time permits.

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The Hardin County Historical Society was chartered Sept. 19, 1972, as a non-profit organization.

Annual dues are as follows:
Regular Membership
\$20.00
Student Membership
\$10.00



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DARK & BLOODY GROUND

“We are afraid if we part with any more of our lands the white people will not let us keep as much as is sufficient to bury our dead.”(1) These words were spoken by full blooded, Chicamaugan Cherokee War Chief, Chuqualatague Tugiahute Taktyska. Taktyska means Doublehead in English and Doublehead is the name used in accounts of him. The descriptive meaning of Taktyska being duplicity or one that speaks with two heads.

Doublehead was of the Cherokee Paint Clan from whom individuals were selected by the Chiefs of Clans to sign treaties on authority originally stemming from King William II of England. Being War Chief gave him the added responsibility of protecting tribal lands from encroachment.

Doublehead was in the unenviable position of having to negotiate away lands in an effort to satisfy an increasingly invasive horde of settlers backed by mighty armies he could not defeat. On the other hand he was duty bound to protect Cherokee lands and keep intruders out of lands not under treaty. These were not new problems but were ever increasing problems handed down to him through a direct family line of forefathers.

Eventually Doublehead was blamed by his people for their plight and assassinated by Indian peers for what many saw as his personal failure. Reproachful feelings grew as he continued his people's attempts to control territory at the end of the American War for Independence lost by Britain. Relief from one foreign situation was only partial relief from Cherokee leadership obligations. As history changed his circumstances Doublehead, like Chief John Ross, was the rare Indian who was able to adjust to many of the ways of the white man but remained Cherokee.

James (Jim) Lowell Decker, 335 Patterson Rd., Savannah, TN, is now age 75 and totally white in appearance. He is broad shouldered, hard working and easy going. Much of his life has been spent occupied as a farmer, over the road truck driver, plant worker and in the plumbing and wiring trades. He is a leader in the local Masonic Lodge and Church of Christ.

Jim is a direct descendant of Chief Doublehead.

Dixie Donnell Decker, Jim's wife, is extremely talented. Her beautiful voice and paintings are well known in this area. She has taught private piano and voice lessons since they moved to Savannah in 1980. She has always been an active member of the Savannah Art Guild and community theater, The Dreamweavers of West Tennessee. Like Jim, she is active in the Church of Christ.

Jim was born four miles below Guntersville Dam at Parches Cove, Marshall County, Alabama, on April 26, 1934. Dixie Donnell Decker was born at Shiloh, TN, Jan. 1, 1935. They were married, Aug. 18, 1956 in Hammond, Indiana where they met. They lived in northwest Indiana for over twenty years. Their son Brian David Decker who is 52 lives in Lowell, Indiana where he grew up and graduated high school. After going into the U.S. Air Force, he came home and worked his way up through the local fire department as an EMT, Paramedic and then earning his RN and BSN degrees at Purdue University. He now works in the emergency room at St. Margarets Hospital in Hammond, Indiana. Brian has one son Erick, who is a history teacher and baseball and basketball coach and a graduate of Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

Marie Decker Goodlett, who is four years older than Jim, lives out in the country from Arab, Alabama. Another sister Artie lives with Marie, along with her son Robert Gallaher. A brother Robert Earl Decker is deceased. Jim's youngest sister Evana lives in Savannah and is married to Jack Harmon. They have four grown children: Alan, and wife Thelma who live in Knoxville, Kay and her husband Perry Byars and their daughter Andrea and son Micah live in Florida, Grady and his wife Margaret live in Huntsville, Alabama and Stephen and his wife Betsy live in Florence, Alabama and they have a small son, Dakota Chase, and daughter, Raney Mae.

Jim's genealogical line including Doublehead is [Tistoe, King Oukah Ulah, Emperor Moytoy, Chief Great Eagle, Doublehead, Peggy Wilson, Sarah Wilson, Robert Artis, Millie Artis, Jim Decker] as follows: (a.) Father, Norman Decker, born Hardin County Kentucky, Sept. 30, 1905, died Hardin County, Tennessee, Feb. 23, 1979; He was a steelworker, farmer and Marine. (a.) Mother, Millie Catherine Artis, born April 27, 1912, Marshall County, Alabama, married 1928, Marshall County, Alabama, died May 3, 1998, Marshall County, Ala. (b.) Grandfather, Robert Huse Artis, born June 30, 1889, Marshall County, Ala., life long farmer and timber man, married (b.) Grandmother, Mary L. Upton, Dec. 26, 1909, born Jan. 2, 1895, Marshall County, Alabama, died April 4, 1973. (c.) Great Grandfather, John M. Artis, born April 26, 1836, Madison County, Alabama, died 1920, Madison, County, Alabama, farmer, married (c.) Great Grandmother, Sarah Elizabeth Wilson, born Sept. 20, 1856, died unknown date (d.)

Great, Great Grandfather, William Wilson, born (orphan born unknown date on the then western frontier), married April 3, 1824, (d.) Great, Great Grandmother, Peggy Doublehead, was the grand daughter of (g.) Alexander Drumgoole, a French Canadian trader, and (g.) Nancy Augusta. Nannie the Pain Drumgoole, thought to have been born 1779 and died 1807, probably married Doublehead as early as age 14, was the mother of Peggy, a daughter of Doublehead. Peggy was born late 1700's in Cherokee Indian Territory, died believed 1870's, Madison County, Alabama, (f.) Great, Great, Great Grandfather, Chief Doublehead, born Cherokee Nation East about 1744, marriage dates unknown (but had at least five wives.) Doublehead died summer of 1807, Hiwassee River, TN, burial place uncertain.

Most American Indian lines are not historic so Jim Decker is fortunate to have a continuance of his line as follows starting with first direct ancestor on record and coming forward: "(A) Tistoe, born about 1550, (B) King Oukah Ulah, born about 1575, died about 1650, (C) Nancy Moytoy, born about 1675, (D) Chief Moytoy, born pre- 1700, signed treaty, very important person, more

later on him, died 1741, married, Wild Potato Clan mother early 1700's, (D) Chief Wilenawa or Great Eagle, unknown birth date, signed treaty, died early in 18th century. Great Eagle died soon after the birth of his son (F) Doublehead.

It is confusing that Great Eagle's wife was named Wurteh also called Woman Ani-Wadi, and their daughter and Doublehead's sister was also named Wurteh. The sister Wurteh being the mother of Sequoya, the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet." (2) Sequoya thereby being Doublehead's nephew.

Much pre-Doublehead information became written history because Chief Moytoy became famous when appointed "Emperor of the Cherokees" by a British emissary named Cuming in 1730. For the honor Moytoy acknowledged the King George II sovereignty over the Cherokee. The Cherokee then developed significant trade arrangements with English settlements, except some in South Carolina.

Cuming strived for continued Cherokee friendship taking seven of the natives to London where they were wined, dined and exhibited to the public. The English and the Cherokees were marvels to each other.

The English proudly proclaimed the seven Cherokees the male term "Princes" but at least one of them was a woman named Clogoittah who was born in 1693 and died in 1753. She was a daughter of Emperor Moytoy and returning from Europe became the wife of Christian Priber. Clogoittah marrying Christian Priber gave him prominence as a trader further enhanced with the later marriages of Priber's daughter Creat to Doublehead.

Arranged marriages could be used as a means of sealing alliances and bettering ones self.

Creat was a grand daughter of English trader George Priber. His son Christian Gottlieb Priber lived among the Chickamaugans making history in the territory around Tellico Plains, TN by bringing education to Cherokee children in a school for them. He worked on a Cherokee alphabet too difficult to use and also wrote a book. Both were not published and lost. To his credit he also taught the adult Indians how to trade intelligently.

Christian arranged the marriage of Creat sometime after 1750. The daughters of Doublehead and Creat, Tuskihooote and Saleeche, were thereafter arranged in marriage to Chief George Colbert. These marriages opened up economic opportunities as Colbert established a trade route using ferry's as transport across the Duck and Tennessee Rivers as allowed by Doublehead.

Thus, Chickasaw Chief George Colbert being Doublehead's son in law, with Creat being the mother in law, allowed both Doublehead and Colbert to move freely throughout a wide territory on both sides of the Tennessee River. Of course such arrangements agitated the French and English as trade with both the Cherokee and the Chickasaw had become so important. It appears Doublehead and Colbert walked a tight rope between fierce enemies and competing European forces as well as the Americans.

Doublehead moved often and had homes in Chickasaw Territory where he lived from time to time. On occasion he moved north with homes even into Kentucky.

Both Doublehead and Colbert had stores commonly called trading posts or stands whose supply of merchandise relied upon the two men having their beneficial personal relationships, plus valuable commercial connections with traders from various countries.

Even the Spanish came into regional play by somewhat weakly insisting upon rights to lands south of the Cumberland River until their final loss at Mobile, Alabama to U. S. forces.

When the Transylvania Land Company signed the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals in 1775, Chief Dragging Canoe of the Cherokee said the white man had secured “a dark and bloody ground.” Kentucky, middle Tennessee and Northern Alabama could all fit the description as the Cherokee doggedly tried to hold their own.

As War Chief, Doublehead kept available a group of long frustrated Cherokee warriors ready to “liquor up” and hit the warpath. Doublehead blazed a bloody path from 1788 to 1794, himself killing many misplaced Shawnee, Creek and other Indians as well as forewarned settlers or other unwelcome parties on then un-ceded Cherokee lands. Cherokee law included “the law of revenge” or eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The Cherokee made their cruelest reprisals to those who had killed their direct kin. From the record it appears Doublehead immediately killed his enemies without torture. He didn’t take scalps, called “counting coup,” but didn’t prevent the practice as part of the ancient warpath ritual. Traditionally the mixing of red ceremonial paint for warriors to use on their bodies was the responsibility of Paint Clan Chief Doublehead.

Iriquois and Cherokee had common ancestry. Iriquois had an ancient ceremony which included cannibalism. Part of the Doublehead tradition includes use of this ceremony, but this information seems to have come from his enemies.

While at peace he was considered a good neighbor and friendly man, generous to those in need. Likely there were atrocities blamed on him, never really proven, and which now seem untrue when everything about him is considered.

Historic Indians in our area, or those known in writings since Columbus: Eube or Yuchi, Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee and Chickasaw, roamed the Tennessee River Valley with few interlopers for about 300 years. The end of this era, from Muscle Shoals through the Big Bend of the Tennessee River, is generally considered 1787 when the fiercest of the warriors, the Creeks, were forced to the south by a group of militia from the Nashville area. The Great War Chief Bigfoot was killed at this time.

Doublehead put his life on the line in an all out effort to prevent change in the ancient hunting grounds. During one attack Doublehead was unable to completely control some 100 warriors who killed a group of settlers including eight in a Wilson family. He did save an adolescent boy,

William Wilson, whom he raised as a son, this being the same Wilson who afore mentioned, married his daughter Peggy Drumgoole Doublehead.

Originally, Superintendents of Indian Affairs came among the Cherokee as friends from England. U.S. authorities then replaced the English officials with their administrative system. In 1789 North Carolina gave the Tennessee River region to the U.S. The federal government made a new territory called the Territory of the United States South of the Ohio River. Tennessee became a state in 1796 but the earlier system of supervision continues into the present day with the tribes managing their own affairs for the most part.

In the National Archives of Washington, D.C. are two letters showing the grandfather of Peggy Drumgoole Doublehead Wilson may have been influential in the life of Doublehead. The first, dated 1787, is signed by Benjamin Franklin then sent to Isaac Shelby and Superintendents or Agents of Indian Affairs, stating, "Alexander Drumgoole to be a man of good character useful to the United States." A lengthy and very articulate and literate letter, dated 1788, is also in the files from Alexander Drumgoole to Joseph Martin, Indian Affairs Agent, concerning events and conditions throughout Franklin, also called Cumberland.

In 1795 the Georgia Land Company sought to take land, containing Doublehead Reserve, sold to them by the State of Georgia legislature on the grounds that Georgia ran to the Mississippi river. Chickasaw, Cherokee and the Federal Government declared this Georgian act illegal and defeated efforts to colonize the selected territory. A few settlers, favorable to the Indians, did manage to retain farmsteads during this time.

Why Doublehead gave up personally led combat missions to save Cherokee lands is a matter for debate. Chief allies died. Dragging Canoe died in 1792, and the half warrior Creek, Alexander McGillivray in 1793. Of course land grant occupants with Indian and Revolutionary war fighting experience were an ever increasing deterrent to Cherokee warring parties as militias were formed in the middle Tennessee frontier.

Perhaps Doublehead saw the futility of his efforts and decided to enhance U. S. authorities friendship to save himself and those close to him. His father in law Alexander Drumgoole owned a large tract adjoining the lands of Chief John Ross in Georgia and this may have had an influence on him. Doublehead's opening of Tennessee lands by treaty may have taken some of the pressure off the Georgia situation for a few years after his death.

John Chisholm was one of the first settlers in northwest Alabama. He was of the planter class and helped found the first church after Florence, Alabama was founded. Chisholm and family members are buried in the earliest white cemetery in Lauderdale Co., Alabama. Doublehead took a liking to Chisholm and accepted his tutoring. Chisholm taught him how to deal with the white man in a friendly manner that was more effective than the terror tactics he had used instinctively.

After instructions upon how to be a gentleman Doublehead led a delegation to Washington, D.C. in 1794. He dressed himself in a fine manner, was very handsome and commanded much attention. He met with President George Washington though little is chronicled of the event.

George Washington thought the Cherokee and Colonists should unite and become one people. Perhaps the "Father of Our Country" had information that Doublehead was acceding to that destiny in some of his marital adventures.

Doublehead then negotiated with Secretary of War John Knox for many things needed by his people as well as getting his and other Chiefs yearly government stipend increased from \$1500.00 to \$5,000.00.

Following this diplomatic success he sent a letter written for him by John Chisholm to William Blount, the Governor of Tennessee, stating there would now be, "lasting peace."

Using his authority as Treaty Signer and by circumstance being in a position of atonement for earlier British alliances, Doublehead made three sessions of land in 1798. In 1802 there was a request of record to the Indian Agency for a large keelboat with two mounted guns that was probably acted upon favorably. In the request Doublehead stated the desire to travel down the Tennessee River (through now Hardin County, TN) to New Orleans and back, as well as up the rivers in Arkansas to begin trading with the Indians.

It is known the U. S. Government built Chief George Colbert a new ferry. Poorly constructed of green wood it was of little use. In retaliation Colbert made Andrew Jackson pay a huge price for moving his troops across the Tennessee River in later years.

The Natchez Trace cut through Cherokee lands. Federal takeover and improvement of the trace created a tide of traffic after 1800. Doublehead had already given up trying to control that vital artery. On the eastern United States seaboard the Cherokee had made the decision to try the way of the white man. The time came for the Highland Cherokee to make the same decision.

In his new progressive roll Doublehead purchased a cotton gin. This manufacturing miracle was seeing widespread use after being invented in 1793. Small amounts of cotton had been grown in South America and later southeast North America long before Doublehead was born but was becoming a major crop before his demise.

Less hunting land meant fewer furs for blankets. Cotton blankets woven by Indian women became trade items still popular today.

James Vann was one of the numerous Doublehead brother-in-laws. He claimed Doublehead had mistreated his sister causing her to die in childbirth after being gone for six months and finding her three months pregnant. Other sources state she and the infant died a natural death in labor.

Historian Don Shadburn wrote of a series of events showing James Vann to be a domineering demon, sadistic to those under his control, a plotter and schemer who died unloved, his death a relief to the many who feared him including wives and slaves.

At a tribal council meeting in August of 1800 Doublehead asked James Vann to cease his public criticizing of him. He made it known that Vann was taking every opportunity to lay blame upon him for all the Cherokee woes as well as activities that would be deemed criminal by the Cherokee.

This action did not stop the bad publicity given Doublehead by Vann who continued berating him for seven years until he convinced a majority of the Cherokee Nation that Doublehead should be slain.

As matters deteriorated in the Cherokee Nation, Doublehead became a person of derision and jealousy, and thus a scapegoat useful to James Vann.

In 1805 a treaty was signed leading to the slaying of Doublehead. Incriminations spread like wildfire among the Cherokee as to the treaty being illegal.

Living many miles from the treaty signing site, Doublehead may not have been aware of the exact transactions or did not wish to duel directly with the Cherokee leadership, or perhaps, he simply didn't know of the great anger against him.

In the 1805 treaty there was a statement that a very valuable three square miles of land at the mouth of the Clinch and Hiwasee Rivers was to be reserved for the use of Doublehead and a Chief named Tahlonteskee. U.S. agents did not let be known the exact details of this arrangement. Title was never transferred for this reserve but Tahlonteskee was an ally of James Vann.

James Vann then built a fine mansion that today remains a tourist attraction. It can't be proven at this late date but there is the strong likelihood that James Vann secretly took the place of Doublehead at the 1805 signing, and perhaps later, during treaty negotiations.

English speaking, but only a minor chief, with no authority in tribal council, the Dutchman Cherokee James Vann accumulated wealth that came in large part from illegal land dealings and bribes. He always sought to draw attention away from himself with fear mongering and voicing the hype that led to him naming Doublehead the name gone down in history.

In 1809, as many truths came to light, James Vann was executed by the Cherokee.

Chief Tahlonteskee fled to the west. There becoming leader of the western band of Cherokee after 1809. Leadership was granted him as he was kin to Sequoyah and so many other Chiefs were no longer living.

Chief John Ridge, after becoming wealthy from giving up Cherokee lands, was assassinated by his people for signing The Treaty of Echota.

Once proud Indian fighting men, who got no more than a “shirt and a rifle”, complained they could make more money than they got from their homelands “in a few days hunting, before their leaders turned them into women.”

Conceivably on an expedition to discover just what had happened concerning the 1805 treaty, Doublehead traveled to the Hiwasee River.

On the day of his demise Doublehead played in a Stickball game. Knowledge of this game is found in the earliest of Cherokee lore. A very tough brave named Bone Polisher began an argument with Doublehead concerning the disposition of lands. Tempers were already flaring from licks delivered during the game. Bone Polisher became the dead loser in a fight between the two.

James Vann met with Major Ridge, and Alexander Saunders. The three men decided to kill Doublehead. On August 9, 1807 the three men went to the Hiwasee River. James Vann claimed illness and left the group. Ridge and Saunders continued and found Doublehead at McIntosh Tavern on the Hiwasee River. As stated in one of several different enumerations, Chief Ridge shot Doublehead through a window and the ball hit and passed through his jaw only making him appear slain.

Some of Bone Polisher’s kin knew that Doublehead had been taken to the house of a schoolmaster named Black. Finding Chief Ridge and Alexander Saunders they took them to the Black location.

No longer a young man, Doublehead was perishing from blood loss. Yet he arose and being of immense strength almost overcame Ridge and Saunders. Saunders managed to sink a tomahawk in Doublehead’s skull causing his immediate death.

Ridge in a moment of later contemplation stated, “Cherokee blood, if not destroyed, will win it’s courses in beings of fair complexions, who will read that their ancestors became civilized under the frowns of misfortunes, and the causes of their enemies.”

From today’s viewpoint it becomes obvious that both red and white peoples, during pioneering times, were simply human beings striving to live their own special kind of life consistent with their individual knowledge, traditions and environment.

Several authorities think Doublehead has a grave just outside present day Florence, Alabama, but others say he was buried alongside the Hiwasee River or in Doublehead Cave, Kentucky.

In what seems a heavy handed action, the Indian Agency acted rapidly to take over Doublehead’s property after his death. Fear that squatters would get the land probably caused swift action. Doublehead had allowed 50 settlers to move on small acreages and these people were run off. Doubleheads fine two-story log house was burnt. Perhaps the cotton gin attributed to Doublehead ownership was the one moved to the Tombigbee River to a place now called Cotton Gin Port where it was put to use by wealthy white planters.