



Tales of Texas Newsletter



June 2026

This issue of Tales of Texas is about a great American hero: Nanyehi “Beloved Woman” of the Cherokee Nation.

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America’s 250th Is Remembering All Of Our Heroes

In the violent and uncertain world of eighteenth century frontier America, very few women held political power recognized by both Native nations and European settlers. One did. Her name was Nanyehi, though history remembers her more often as Nancy Ward, the Cherokee “Beloved Woman.”

She lived during one of the most turbulent periods in Cherokee history. Empires clashed across the southern frontier. British agents, French traders, American settlers, and tribal nations competed for land and influence. Villages burned. Alliances shifted. Disease and war swept through the mountains and river valleys of what is now eastern Tennessee and North Carolina.

Yet amid that storm stood a woman whose voice carried extraordinary authority.

The title “Beloved Woman” was not just ceremonial. Among the Cherokee, it represented one of the highest positions a woman could attain. A *Beloved Woman* could sit in council. She could speak publicly to chiefs and warriors. She possessed the authority to spare captives condemned to death. The role reflected the Cherokee understanding that wisdom and leadership were not reserved exclusively for men.



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Nanyehi earned that distinction through courage.

According to Cherokee tradition, she was born around 1738 and married a warrior named Kingfisher. During a battle against the Creek, her husband was killed. Rather than flee, Nanyehi reportedly took up his rifle and continued fighting beside the Cherokee warriors. Her bravery under fire became legendary. In recognition, she was later named *Ghigau*, or *Beloved Woman*.

What makes her story especially compelling is not merely her courage in war, but her struggle to preserve peace afterward.

As white settlement pushed deeper into Cherokee lands during the mid and late 1700s, conflict intensified across the frontier. Raids and reprisals became tragically common. Families on both sides lived with constant fear. It was an age when rumors traveled faster than truth and vengeance often outran mercy.

Nanyehi emerged as a voice urging restraint.

One of the most famous stories associated with her concerns the rescue of a white woman named Lydia Bean. Captured during frontier violence and reportedly sentenced to death, Bean was spared through Nanyehi's intervention. The Cherokee woman took her into her own home and cared for her. During her stay, Lydia Bean taught Nanyehi new methods of dairy farming and butter making, skills that later spread among the Cherokee.

Whether every detail of the story survives exactly as it happened is difficult to know. Frontier history often mingles memory and legend. Yet the heart of the account rings true to the reputation Nanyehi earned throughout her life: a woman who consistently chose preservation over destruction whenever she could.



Sons of the American
Revolution
Recognizing a Patriot
Ancestor: Nanyehi



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Nanyehi, Beloved
Woman

The American Revolution placed the Cherokee in an impossible position. Many Cherokee leaders sided with the British, believing the Crown might restrain colonial expansion more effectively than the settlers pouring westward across the mountains. The result was devastating. Campaigns against Cherokee towns intensified. Villages were destroyed. Crops burned. Entire communities were uprooted.

Nanyehi continued urging peace even as the world around her hardened.

At one point, she reportedly addressed Cherokee warriors directly, warning them not to fight the Americans because their numbers were overwhelming. Her words proved tragically prophetic. Within decades, enormous portions of Cherokee land were lost through treaties, coercion, and encroachment.

What makes Nanyehi especially fascinating to modern readers is that she resists easy categorization. Some later critics viewed her efforts toward peace and accommodation as naïve or even harmful. Others see profound wisdom in her attempts to preserve her people from annihilation. History rarely grants us simple heroes untouched by contradiction, especially in times of cultural collapse and national upheaval.

Perhaps that complexity is precisely why she remains so compelling.

She stood between worlds.

She understood Cherokee traditions deeply, yet recognized that the frontier was changing irreversibly. She witnessed the collision of civilizations from the inside rather than from the safe distance of hindsight. Like many leaders in impossible times, she faced choices between terrible outcomes rather than clear victories.

Even today, her legacy remains visible across Tennessee. Nancy Ward's grave is located near Benton, Tennessee, not far from the Ocoee River. Historical markers preserve her memory. Stories about her continue to circulate through Appalachian and Cherokee history alike.

Yet perhaps the most remarkable aspect of her life is not her title, nor even her bravery. It is the fact that in an age drenched in bloodshed, she repeatedly used her influence to save lives instead of taking them.

That choice deserves remembering.



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Modern Americans often imagine the frontier only through the lens of conflict. We picture rifles, forts, raids, and battlefields. Those things were certainly real. But the frontier was also shaped by diplomacy, cultural exchange, difficult compromise, and individuals who attempted, however imperfectly, to prevent violence from consuming everything around them.

Nanyehi was one of those individuals.

The Cherokee Beloved Woman reminds us that leadership does not always roar like a battlefield speech. Sometimes it speaks quietly in council fires, warns against hatred when others demand revenge, or reaches across cultural lines in hopes of preserving a future no one else can yet see.

History remembers many warriors. It remembers far fewer peacemakers.

Nanyehi or Nancy Ward deserves to be among them.

The Cherokee/Texan connection cannot be overstated. Our Anglo/Scottish ancestors from Appalachia moved westward to Texas. The Trail of Tears, Sam Houston, Stephen Austin, Andrew Jackson and Davy Crockett are all connected by blood, kinship, and dreadful circumstances.

In my new novel *Isobel's Song*, I place fictional characters inside these very days. The protagonist is a young woman. This in and of itself is unusual because the story is not a romance, Hallmark movie formula, or "chick lit."

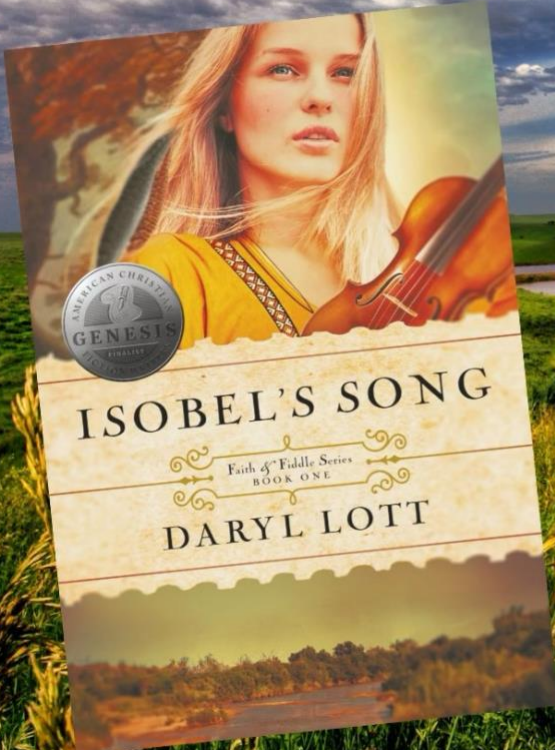
The story springs from my own family's history as well as yours. Our female ancestors were not who we think they were. They were much stronger. They did not adhere to tropes and modern-day stereotypes. They didn't have time for such nonsense. They were too busy trying to survive. We stand on the shoulders of giants.

Most of the characters are actual historical figures, including the females of the era.

Another thing about so many of our ancestors is that they relied on their Christian or Jewish faith to guide them through the hazards of life.

The novel is available in Kindle, paperback, hardback, and audiobook (Amazon & Audible). We are not trying to sell a book so much as we are trying to get a message out that our ancestors sacrificed much to leave Texas to us. Regardless of our race or gender, we can be proud of Texas, the First Texans, and all those who came to Texas thinking about the future.

The illustration following is from *Isobel's Song* and includes the link to the Amazon listing.



Isobel's Song
Faith & Fiddle Series
Book #1

#HistoricalChristianFiction #ACFWGenesisFinalist2026