

CHOCTAW CODE TALKERS

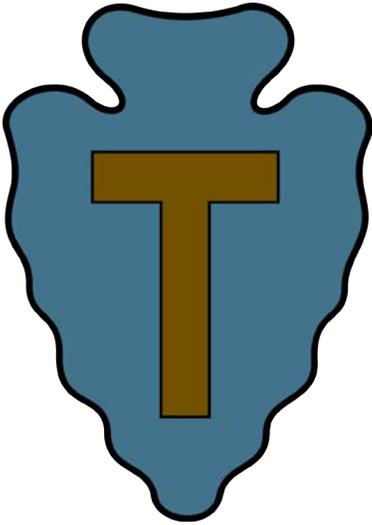
TELEPHONE WARRIORS

THEY SERVED. THEY SACRIFICED.



Choctaw Nation Historic Projects

TELEPHONE WARRIORS: BEGINNING THE WEAPON OF WORDS



Among the Choctaw veterans of WWI were those who are heralded as “WWI Choctaw Code Talkers.”

These reported telephone warriors were: Solomon Bond Lewis; Mitchell Bobb; Robert Taylor; Calvin Wilson; Pete Maytubby; James M. Edwards; Jeff Wilson; Tobias William Frazier; Benjamin W. Hampton; Albert Billy; Joseph Davenport; Jonas Durant, George Davenport; Noel Johnson; Victor Brown; Ben Carterby, Ben Colbert, Otis Leader; Joseph Oklahombi and Walter Veach. All of these soldiers were in WWI in France during October/November of 1918 and fought against the enemy. Most of them were in the 36th Division, 141st, 142nd, 143rd and 144th Infantry. Leader was in the 1st Division, 16th Infantry.

The 36th Division moved to the western front in France on October 6, 1918. Although the 36th Division was late in entering the war that had begun in 1914, their participation provided a margin of victory as the war came to an end.

On October 8, the 36th Division was engaged in their first major battle at St. Etienne. It was a hard-fought battle, with poor communication and significant losses for the American Expeditionary Forces.

In the Army Reorganization Hearings in the Sixty-Sixth Congress, information was shared regarding Choctaws from the 36th Division using their language as a successful weapon in October 1918. They were under Lieut. Col. Morrissey and Capt. Horner, working in conjunction with the Fourth French Army on the Western front. Three Choctaws were at Headquarters, three on the firing line, and messages transmitted in Choctaw were said to be very effective - never deciphered by the German Army.

WORDS FROM TESTIMONY TO THE ARMY REORGANIZATION HEARINGS:

Joseph Dixon, leader of the Rodman Wanamaker Historical Expedition stated: “They knew that the Germans had a superior listening-in system and were finding out the entire movements of the American and French troops. Therefore, the commander ordered over the telephone a movement of troops at a certain spot at 8 o’clock that night, which of course was a false command. At precisely 8 o’clock that night, the Germans put down a terrific barrage on the exact spot. It was then that Col. Morrissey and Capt. Horner conceived the idea of using the Indian in his own dialect, and therefore they placed six Indians at the end of the telephone wire, three at headquarters and three on the firing line, and the messages were transmitted in the Choctaw dialect, which proved to be very effective during the short time that it was used. One can imagine that this barbed wire conversation was a barrage that nonplussed the puzzled Germans. There were, of course, difficulties in using Choctaw, as there are no words in the Choctaw tongue for many military technical expressions so that it became necessary to make a table of substitutions. For instance, we called regiment, ‘the tribe,’ First Battalion, ‘One grain corn,’ company, ‘Bow,’ platoon, ‘Thong,’ machine gun, ‘Little-gun-shoot-fast,’ artillery, ‘Big gun,’ ammunition, ‘Arrows,’ grenades, ‘Stones,’ rations, ‘Food,’ attack, ‘Fight,’ patrol, ‘Many scouts,’ casualties, ‘Scalps,’ gas, ‘Bad air.’”

Col Morrissey stated: “We found that the Germans knew absolutely nothing about our preparations and were taken completely by surprise. This was the first time that we surprised the Germans during our stay in the lines, and I attribute it in many respects to the fact that the Choctaw language was used in making preparations for this attack.”

Col. Morrissey was asked if he had to fight the war over again, and he had command of a regiment if he would like to have any Indians in it. He made the reply: “I would make every effort to fill my regiment with Indians.”



*photo used by permission from
Mathers Museum of World Cultures*

This photo was collected by Joseph Dixon at Camp Merritt. It is of the Choctaw telephone squad, 142nd Infantry, Company E. Solomon Louis, Mitchell Bobb, James Edwards, Calvin Wilson, Joe Davenport and their Captain, E.W. Horner. This photo was a treasured keepsake of most of these men. Horner kept a copy on his wall all of his life. Wilson's son inherited Calvin's copy. The reason Noel Johnson was not in the photograph is because of contracting tuberculosis. Johnson was sent back to the U.S. on a different ship to South Carolina, where he died in a tuberculosis sanitorium.

TRANSMITTING MESSAGES IN CHOCTAW

The Choctaw Code Talking situation can be best told in the words of Colonel A.W. Bloor, the commander of the 142nd Infantry Regiment. An excerpt from the memo he sent to the Headquarters reads:

Headquarters 142nd Infantry, A.E.F. -- January 23, 1919, A.P.O. No. 796

From: C.O. 142nd Infantry --

To: The Commanding General 36th Division (Attention Capt. Spence)

In compliance with memorandum, Headquarters 36th Division, January 21, 1919, to C.O. 142nd Infantry, the following account is submitted:

In the first action of the 142nd Infantry at St. Etienne, it was recognized that of all the various methods of liaison the telephone presented the greatest possibilities. The field of rocket signals is restricted to a small number of agreed signals. The runner system is slow and hazardous. T.P.S. is always an uncertain quantity. It may work beautifully and again, it may be entirely worthless. The available means, therefore, for the rapid and full transmission of information are the radio, buzzer and telephone, and of these the telephone was by far the superior, – provided it could be used without let or hindrance, – provided straight to the point information could be given.

It was well understood however, that the German was a past master of “listening in” moreover, from St. Etienne to the Aisne we had traveled through a county netted with German wire and cables. We established P.C.’s in dugouts and houses, but recently occupied by him. There was every reason to believe every decipherable message or word going over our wires also went to the enemy. A rumor was out that our Division had given false coordinates of our supply dump, and that in thirty minutes the enemy shells were falling on the point. We felt sure the enemy knew too much. It was therefore necessary to code every message of importance and coding and decoding took valuable time.

While comparatively inactive at Vaux-Champagne, it was remembered that the regiment possessed a company of Indians. They spoke twenty-six different languages or dialects, only four or five of which were ever written. There was hardly one chance in a million that Fritz would be able to translate these dialects and the plan to have these Indians transmit telephone messages was adopted. The regiment was fortunate in having two Indian officers who spoke several of the dialects. Indians from the Choctaw tribe were chosen and one placed in each P.C.

The first use of the Indians was made in ordering a delicate withdrawal of two companies of the 2nd Bn. from Chufilly to Chardoney on the night of October 26th. This movement was completed without mishap, although it left the Third Battalion, greatly depleted in previous fighting, without support. The Indians were used repeatedly on the 27th in preparation for the assault on Forest Farm. The enemy’s complete surprise is evidence that he could not decipher the messages.

After the withdrawal of the regiment to Louppy-le-Petit, a number of Indians were detailed for training in transmitting messages over the telephone. The instruction was carried on by the Liaison Officer Lieutenant Black. It had been found that the Indian’s vocabulary of military terms was insufficient.

The Indian for “Big Gun” was used to indicate artillery. “Little gun shoot fast,” was substituted for machine gun and the battalions were indicated by one, two and three grains of corn. It was found that the Indian tongues do not permit verbatim translation, but at the end of the short training period at Louppy-le-Petit, the results were very gratifying and it is believed, had the regiment gone back into the line, fine results would have been obtained. We were confident the possibilities of the telephone had been obtained without its hazards.

**A.W. Bloor, Colonel
142nd Infantry,
Commanding.**

Choctaw men were recruited to transmit messages and devise a system of communications. Within twenty-four hours after these telephone warriors began their work, the tide of the battle had turned, and in less than 72 hours the Germans were retreating, and the Allies were on full attack.

The achievements were sufficient to encourage a training program for future Code Talkers. The Choctaws had established the standard for all other Code Talkers to follow.



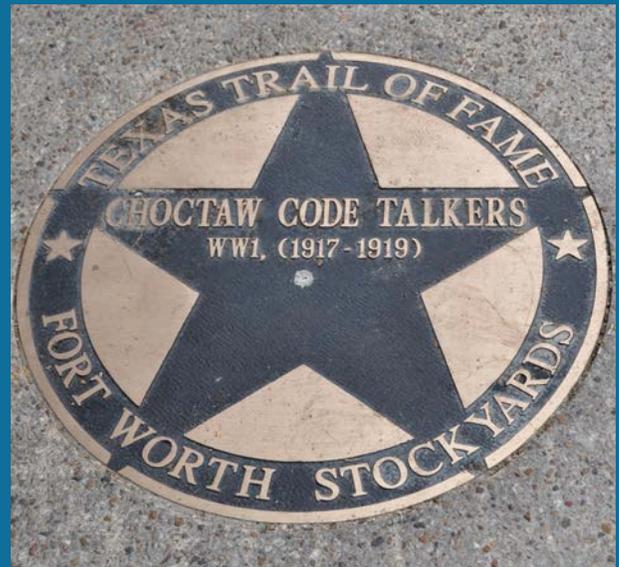


Native Soldiers at Camp Bowie prior to shipping out to France in WWI

On October 1, 1917, the 142nd was organized as regular infantry and given training at Camp Bowie near Fort Worth as part of the 36th Division. Transferred to France for action, the first unit of the division arrived in France, May 31, 1918, and the last August 12, 1918. This photo was sent to Choctaw Nation from the family of Noel Johnson. The men from left to right from facial features and height description are believed to be: 1. Unknown; 2. Unknown; 3. Ben Hampton; 4. Unknown; 5. Unknown; 6. Calvin Wilson; 7. Noel Johnson; 8. Unknown; 9. Unknown. If anyone has any input on this photo, please contact judy.allen@choctawnation.com.



In 2013, Oklahoma State Legislation named 55 miles of State Highway 3 between Antlers and Broken Bow the WWI Choctaw Code Talkers Highway.



The Choctaw Code Talkers of WWI have a star on the Texas Trail of Fame at the Fort Worth Stockyards.

MEN WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF WAR

ALBERT BILLY

According to the late Mozelle Dawson from Coalinga, Calif., her father, Private First Class Albert Billy, talked to his commanding officer about the Choctaw language being used to confuse the enemy. She said Billy and other Indians were used on the



phone lines speaking in their native dialect. This would confuse anyone tapping into the lines. As it turned out, the Germans were more than just a little confused, and after the Choctaw Code Talkers were put on the

phones, the Germans immediately began losing.

Ms. Dawson said her father told her that during the night, some Germans were captured, and a General of the German army said that he would like to ask just one question: “What nationality was on the phones that night?” The only reply this German officer received was that it was “only Americans” that had been on the phones.

Albert Billy was born in 1885 in Howe, (formerly San Bois County, IT). He was a member of the 36th Division, 142nd Infantry of the U.S. Army, Company E and was from Poteau in LeFlore County. When Billy enlisted in the Army he filled out his papers that his occupation was “farmer” and that he was a “natural born citizen”. According to the paperwork, Billy was tall and was of medium build.

MITCHELL BOBB

Private Mitchell Bobb was one of the Choctaw Code Talkers in WWI. This group of extraordinary men devised “code” words, exchanging Choctaw words for Army lingo so that messages sent over

telephone lines could not be interpreted by the German Army. By substituting “big gun” or “Tanampo Chito” for field artillery, the Code Talkers began a long list of coded words and were able to talk Choctaw across telephone lines, fooling the enemy and helping win the war!

Bobb was born January 7, 1895, in Rufe, Indian Territory. When Bobb enlisted, he was described as being tall and slender, and stated he was “a natural born citizen” of the United States. He left a wife and child behind when he went to France to serve his country. Bobb served as a member of the 142nd Infantry, Company E.

VICTOR BROWN

Corporal Victor Brown, one of the Choctaw Code Talkers of World War I, served in the 143rd Infantry. Brown enlisted in the Army May 29, 1918, at Idabel. His daughter, the late Napanee Brown Coffman of Bartlesville, Okla. wrote, “He was one of the Indian telephone operators who spoke Choctaw.”

“The Germans could not break the code. He served in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and was wounded (as his citation from President Wilson states) – gassed (mustard gas), broken nose and head injuries.

“My father seldom talked about the war, but I used to ask him, and he would tell me about his war service and experiences.

“I remember quite well about his stories of speaking in Choctaw over the telephone lines as he was very proud and pleased that they had ‘fooled the Germans.’ My father attended Armstrong Academy, was a graduate of Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kan., attended Tyler Commercial College and Southeastern State College.



“After the war, he entered the Indian Service and was Field Clerk for the Choctaw Nation. He was an auditor in the Internal Revenue Service and finished his government service at Ft. Sill, Okla. (civilian),

“During World War II he was a Deputy State Examiner and inspector for the State of Okla. He died July 22, 1966.”

BEN CARTERBY

Code Talker
Ben Carterby, born December 11, 1893, in Bethel, the son of Ebon and Taboll Carterby, preferred, like most combat veterans, to remember his humble beginnings rather than his war experiences.



Ben liked to think about how his grandparents had removed from Mississippi to locate to the Carterby homeplace in the woods of the Ouachita Mountains. The quiet hero chose to talk about the simple pleasures of life rather than the violence of war. He enjoyed reminiscing about his family and would recall there was always plenty to eat back home in the mountains. The area he grew up in was filled with deer and wild game and the creeks and rivers full of fish. Ben was a member of the 141st Infantry, 36th Division.

JAMES M. EDWARDS

James Morrison Edwards was born to Morrison and Lena Carney Edwards on October 6, 1898, at Glover, Okla. Edwards attended Armstrong Academy in Caddo, Okla., and the Folsom Methodist Training School in Smithville. He was known for his laughter and was often joking around with his buddy Ben Carterby.

Corporal Edwards was one of the first to transmit messages in Choctaw in October 1918. He was a Corporal in Co. E, 142nd Infantry, 36th Division when the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.)

went to France. He told a reporter

in a December 21, 1941, Daily Oklahoman article that every order phoned became known to the enemy and surprises were impossible. According to this article, Edwards and Mitchell Bobb, Calvin Wilson, Solomon Louis, Joe Davenport, Noel Johnson (all fellow students from Armstrong Academy near Bokchito) worked together as Code Talkers. First, they developed code words for army terms that had no counterparts in the Choctaw language. Field artillery became “big gun” and “fast shooting gun” became machine gun. “Big group” was a company, “twice big group” was a battalion and “eight group” meant squad.

According to the Daily Oklahoman article, Edwards said he was in charge of the message relay team, and he and Noel Johnson were stationed at division headquarters with the commanding officers. Louis and Wilson were sent to the front-line trenches while Davenport and Bobb manned phones at battalion headquarters.

The newspaper is quoted “Success was immediate. Secret orders remained a secret with those concerned. Word leaked back from the German lines that the Kaiser’s most expert linguists were stumped.”

Later during World War II, he tried to enlist again, stating “maybe they [German forces] still can’t talk Choctaw.” Edwards worked for the BIA and served the Choctaw people as a pastor of the Indian Methodist Church. James Edwards died on October 13, 1962.

7/15/13 Article - 10-2223 :
Publication: The Oklahoman; Date: Dec 21, 1941; Section: None; Page: 60

Choctaw Who Foiled Germans in 1918 Wants to Go Tongue Twister Ready

Hugo Man Hopes Divorce Makes Him Eligible to Serve

HUGO, Dec. 20.—(Special.) Even if the Germans had learned Choctaw, even an intelligent intelligence officer might have difficulty discovering that “twice big group” meant a battalion.

It was this ruse, suggested by a Hugo Indian during the first World war, that spoiled the plans of the Kaiser’s line-tappers. And this same Indian, James M. Edwards, believes Hitler’s legions are no smarter than their predecessors: that he and a few other Choctaws can throw the enemy off guard as they did more than 20 years ago. Such troops are being trained on the basis of the first war experience.

Edwards, now 42 years old, was a corporal in Co. E, 142nd Infantry, 36th division, when the A. E. F. went to France. He already has offered his services, but was rejected because he was married. Since then, he and his wife have been divorced, and he believes severing of the marital bonds will make him eligible for service again, especially now that the United States has gone to war.

Edwards recalls that American officers were becoming alarmed at German wire-tapping. Messages that

phoned became known to the enemy. Surprises were impossible. “Maybe they can’t talk Choctaw,” Edwards told his commanding officer, Capt. E. W. Horner.

The more the captain thought of the idea, the better he liked it, and Edwards was instructed to carry out his plan. He picked several others of his tribe—Mitchell Bobb, Calvin Wilson, Solomon Lewis, Joe Davenport, Noel Johnson, all fellow students at old Armstrong academy near Bokchito—and they formed a relaying team.

First, they found it necessary to devise a code, since many of the army terms had no counterpart in

became “big gun”; “fast shooting gun” meant machine gun; “eight group” was a squad, “big group” a company, and “twice big group” was a battalion.

Edwards was in charge of the relayers, and with Johnson, was stationed at division headquarters with the commanding officers. Lewis and Wilson were sent to the front line trenches while Davenport and Bobb manned phones at battalion headquarters. Messages were handed to them, translated, and the tongue of the American aborigine traveled across the battlefields of France.

Success was immediate. Secret orders remained a secret with those concerned. Word leaked back from the German lines that the Kaiser’s most expert linguists were stumped. And Edwards thinks they’d be stumped again with the same triple play: Edwards to Lewis to Davenport.

Edwards, a member of the American Legion’s Lock Sanders post in Hugo, studies the international situation avidly. He thinks Germany’s success is due to her intense preparation. “They wouldn’t take me in 1918, but I’ve got my divorce now and I’m as healthy as I ever was.” He taps his barrel-like chest with gusto. “Maybe they haven’t learned to talk Choctaw, and they need us

James M. Edwards

GEORGE E. DAVENPORT

George Davenport was born in Antlers, Okla. April 28, 1887. He passed away April 17, 1950, in the Veterans hospital in Muskogee. He was a Private First Class in the famous 36th Division, 142nd Infantry, composed of Oklahoma and Texas boys. He was one of a group of men who transmitted information in the Choctaw language from the front lines back to interpreters in headquarters in a crucial drive against the enemy.



JOSEPH H. DAVENPORT

Private Joe Davenport was known to few members of his family as one of the Code Talkers from the 142nd Infantry. In fact, he didn't talk about it to many people. This was an honor that he held close to his heart. The story of the heroism of the Choctaw Code Talkers is one of the best weapons of WWI. At least one Choctaw man was placed in each field company headquarters. The German Army never did decipher the messages given in Choctaw.

From Finley, Okla., Davenport was born February 22, 1892, and died April 23, 1923. He is buried at the Davenport Family Cemetery on the Tucker Ranch.

JONAS DURANT

Private Jonas Durant, Company E, 142nd Infantry, was awarded the Episcopal Church War Cross "For services in transmitting and receiving telephone messages in his native tongue." Solomon Louis, Noel Johnson, Joe Davenport, Cabin (Calvin) Wilson and Mitchell Bobb also received this War Cross. This is the first known award to any soldiers for code talking.

TOBIAS WILLIAM FRAZIER

The daughter of Corporal Tobias Frazier was Ruth Frazier McMillian. The following comments are from words she recorded:

"World War I was for the most part, different from World War II, in that World War I was trench warfare. The English and French in one set of deep trenches and the Germans and their allies in another set, usually only a few hundred yards apart. Each side would climb out of the trenches and charge across no man's land toward the other side's trenches, in the hope of breaking through and advancing into the other's territory. Both sides used telephone lines and crude radios to alert troops of upcoming charges. Enemy telephones were tapped and radio messages intercepted. Germany had experts who knew all common languages, so it was impossible to have a secret.

"Papa sailed for France on July 18th, 1918. The 2nd and 36th Divisions traveled by train and were trucked to the front, east of Reims. They were assigned to the Fourth French Army, which was supporting Pershing's offensive, and were given the task of breaking the German grasp on the most critical part in the line.

"Near St. Etienne, the Germans held fast when the 2nd Division entered the fray. The 36th Division was called in to replace a weary 2nd Division, and at this time the Choctaw language was used as the code, as all other languages were being broken by the enemy.

"He said there was talk among the Choctaws that they could relay messages in their own tongue and this conversation was overheard by an officer. The officer trained fourteen Choctaws to be radio operators. This was rudimentary code, for example, a regiment was called 'the tribe' in Choctaw. The Germans were wholly beaten since they could not break the code, and turned this campaign into an outstanding success. This also paved the way for the World War II success of the Navajo Code Talkers."



Frazier was born August 7, 1892, in Spencerville. He served in Co. E, 142nd Infantry, 36th Division. He passed away November 25, 1975.

NOEL JOHNSON

Code Talker Noel Johnson was in the 142nd Infantry. He was born August 25, 1894, at Smithville: Indian Territory. He attended Dwight Indian Training School. His World War I draft registration stated he had weak eyes.

Johnson was sent home from France with tuberculosis in 1919 and died in South Carolina soon afterward. His death certificate states he is buried in Arkansas.

Noel Johnson is one of the Choctaw Code Talkers who was posthumously awarded a Congressional Silver Medal from Congress in honor of service during WWI. His family proudly accepted the award in Washington, D.C., along with families of the other Code Talkers at a ceremony in 2013. The Congressional Gold Medal was awarded to the Choctaw Nation on behalf of all Choctaw Code Talkers, and each family was honored with one Silver medal for each of the 23 Code Talkers. Johnson's family was represented by Christine Ludlow, his great-niece.

BEN COLBERT

Ben Colbert has no known living family. His service as a Choctaw Code Talker was documented through the oral history of Charley Jones. One of the honors celebrated by descendants of WWI and WWII Code Talkers was the induction into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame in 2012.

BENJAMIN W. HAMPTON

Benjamin Wilburn Hampton was born May 31, 1892, in Bennington. He was a Private in the 142nd Infantry, Company E.

A 1979 issue of the Durant Daily Democrat newspaper reported of a visit by Ben Hampton to the city of Durant on August 16, 1939. The article reads as follows:

“An interesting Durant visitor Wednesday was Benjamin W. Hampton, Choctaw World War I veteran who lives in Bennington. Ben's part in the U.S. battle plan was unique but nonetheless important. High Allied officials had learned that Germans were tapping their communications lines, decoding messages, and using the information to good advantage. There's where Ben and some of his fellow Choctaws came in. They'd speak only Choctaw over the wire and then interpret to officers at either end. After the war, it was definitely established that the Choctaw lingo defied all efforts of German code experts, which isn't surprising if you've ever heard it spoken.”



CALVIN WILSON

Calvin Wilson was born June 25, 1895, at Eagletown, Eagle County, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. He was a member of the 142nd Infantry, Company E. Corporal Calvin Wilson and some of the other Code Talkers were demobilized from Camp Bowie.

Calvin continued to be a community leader when he returned to McCurtain County. Calvin donated



land for the Panki Bok Presbyterian Church near Eagletown. He is buried at the small cemetery next to the church. Some of the documents from the military have his name misspelled as Cabin. The Congressional Medal for his family was accepted by his eldest granddaughter, Margaret McWilliams.

OTIS LEADER

Corporal Otis W. Leader, another hero of World War I, entered the army at the age of thirty-five, one of the oldest Choctaw Code men in the service. He was in the 1st Division, 16th Infantry. Upon his arrival in France, Leader was being trained by the French “Blue Devils” when he caught the eye of French artist Raymond Desvarreaux. This was an acclaimed artist who had been commissioned by the French government to paint a portrait of the ideal American soldier. Handsome, 6’x2”, Choctaw Indian Otis Leader was selected as his model. The painting is now in Paris in their Army museum, and a reproduction is at the Choctaw museum at Tushka Homma.



company defended the flank in the first engagement of Americans in combat of World War I.

On May 28, 1918, Leader was wounded and gassed during the American offensive at Cantigny but re-joined his division near Soissons in July. In the next battle, he crawled through a ravine to attack a machine gun nest. Getting within sixty feet of the enemy, Leader picked up a rifle and fought with the infantry after his own machine gun crew had all been killed. Attacking the German positions, Leader captured two machine guns and eighteen enemy soldiers manning them. In 1955, the Oklahoma House of Representatives praised Leader as the Outstanding Soldier of World War I. He was buried at Coalgate in 1961.

SOLOMON BOND LOUIS

Solomon Louis was born April 22, 1898, at Hochatown, Eagle County, Choctaw Nation, in Indian Territory. He later moved to Bryan County. He was a Corporal in the 142nd Infantry, Company E.

Louis, a full blood Choctaw who is credited with being the leader of the Choctaw Code Talkers in World War I during a fierce battle in France against the German Army, was actually underage when he entered the armed services to fight for his country.



Awarded the French Croix de Guerre twice, (one with Palm and one with Silver Star), Purple Heart Medal, Silver Star Medal, Victory Medal, French Verdun Medal, French Fourragere and Battle Stars for Sommer-ville, Ansauville, Picardy, Cantigny, Second Marne, St.

Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Mouson-Sedan, and Coblenz Bridgehead, Leader was called one of the “war’s greatest fighting machines” by General Pershing.

On the night of November 2, 1917, Leader’s company drew the first relief assignment, moving into the trenches at Bathlemont. The following day his



Choctaw War Hero, Order Given In Choctaw

In the Old Choctaw Nation, a young Choctaw, Solomon Louis, was enrolled as number 1755. A young Choctaw girl, who later became his wife, Mary Patterson, was enrolled number 11372.

Mary became the bride of Solomon Louis on November 30, 1917, they were married in Fort Worth, Texas, and were to stay married for 55 years. They were the parents of two sons, Solomon Louis, Jr. and Gilbert Louis, both of whom were veterans of World War II and the Korean War. Mary did her part during the war by doing volunteer work with the Red Cross.

Mary is active in the Presbyterian Church. She has been a Sunday School teacher for 60 years, worked with children for 33 years. She is president of the Women's Society and also doing mission work.

Solomon and Mary met at a football game at Southeastern College. She was living with her aunt and Solomon was a student at Armstrong Academy. At the beginning of World War I, he and six other young Choctaw men joined the Army at the same time. It is believed Solomon lied about his age and was only 16 years old at the time. The other young men were Ben Cartaby, Robert Taylor, Calvin Wilson, Pete Maytubby, James Edwards, and Jeff Wilson. After joining the Army, Solomon who was an orphan had no beneficiary for his Army insurance, so after 4 years of dating he and Mary were married before he sailed for France.

He received his first training at Ft. Sill and later was sent to Ft. Worth, Texas, for advanced training. There he was placed in a company made up entirely of Indians, the company was part of the 36th division.

The Division sailed for France July 11, 1918. Arriving at Lazerre, France, they rested a few days and went into intensive training. On Oct. 7, 1918, they arrived at the front lines and the following day went over the top for the first time at St. Mihiel.

The officers of the Allied forces had become aware that the Germans were tapping their telephone lines. Capt. E.W. Homer conceived the idea of asking certain Choctaw boys to talk over the telephone in Choctaw, so that the Germans could not understand the orders.

Solomon Louis was called and asked to choose seven men who knew the language well. He selected Cartaby, Edwards, Maytubby, Wilson and Taylor, who were placed on the front lines some distance apart. Joseph Oklahombi was also in the group. James Edwards was to be stationed with the field artillery and Solomon Louis at headquarters. It was not long until Louis was in touch with Edwards, who told him that the Germans were making great preparations to go over the top. The others, all along on the line, reported



DAVID GARDNER

MARY PATTERSON LOUIS

Here is a picture of Mary Patterson Louis and Chief David Gardner taken as they were sitting together at a table during the Choctaw - Chickasaw Alliance General Meeting at Stigler on April 10.

practically the same thing but Ben Cartaby's message came with more emphasis. He said, "go, quick and tell Colonel Brewer, it is hell down here where I am. The Kaiser's crack troops are getting ready to go over the top tomorrow. They are the Prussian guards!"

In a short time, Colonel Brewer gave orders to be passed out in Choctaw to be ready to go over the top at 6 o'clock sharp, the next morning ahead of the time set by the Germans. Also a message was sent to the field artillery to send a barrage over at 5:55 A.M. When that division went over the top that day, over five hundred prisoners were captured in about 30 minutes. The ground was literally covered with dead German soldiers. About half of the company was killed and wounded. Joseph Oklahombi, the Choctaw who made such a wonderful record for the Indians of Oklahoma and American troops, also distinguished himself in this encounter.

Solomon was well decorated and returned to Oklahoma where he and Mary lived in Bennington. Solomon was elected Justice of Peace four times in Bryan County. Solomon was a preacher at the time of his death.

He passed away February 19, 1974, and is buried beside his son at Homers Chapel Cemetery in Choctaw County.

Louis, a proud young Indian man from Bryan County, Oklahoma attended Armstrong Academy, and when his older friends enlisted, Louis pretended to be 18 so that he, too, could join the service.

Solomon Louis received his basic training at Ft. Sill, Okla. and then was sent to Ft. Worth where he joined an all-Indian Company which was part of the 36th Division. He was a Corp. in Co. E., 142nd Infantry. The 36th sailed for France July 11, 1918.

Arriving at Lazerre, France, they rested a few days and went into intensive training. On October 7, 1918, they arrived at the front lines and the following day went over the top for the first time. The first battle and those following were brutal.

The officers of the Allied Forces had become aware that the Germans were tapping their telephone lines. Certain Choctaw soldiers were asked to talk over the telephone in Choctaw, so that Germans

could not understand the orders. Reports say that Louis was stationed at Division Headquarters, with Choctaw James Edwards on the other end of the telephone line out in the field at the front line.

The others were stationed along the line. Ben Carterby's message came in "Go quick and tell Col. Brewer it is hell down here where I am. The Kaiser's crack troops are getting ready to go over the top tomorrow. They are the Prussian guards!"

Orders were sent in Choctaw to go over the top at 6 a.m., ahead of the Germans, and a message to the field artillery to send a barrage over at 5:55 a.m. Over five hundred prisoners were captured in about 30 minutes that morning.

It was reported that the ground was literally covered with dead German soldiers, with about half of the enemy company killed and wounded. It was a great success for Allied Forces.



JOSEPH OKLAHOMBI

Joseph Oklahombi lived in McCurtain County and loved the area. When he returned from WWI, he never wanted to leave his woods and rivers again.

Oklahombi was lauded as a great soldier. A member of the 141st Infantry, Private First Class Oklahombi was cited

as capturing more men in the Champagne sector of France (171 Germans) than Sgt. York did in a comparable and more famous event in the Argonne Forest (132 men captured) during the same time period of Oct 8-11, 1918.

Oklahombi was often reported to be among Oklahoma's greatest warriors of World War I. His enlistment card has Oklahombi's signature and his statement that he was a "natural born citizen", testament that he was a citizen of the United States at the time he served. Several other Choctaw Code Talkers also signed as "natural born citizens".

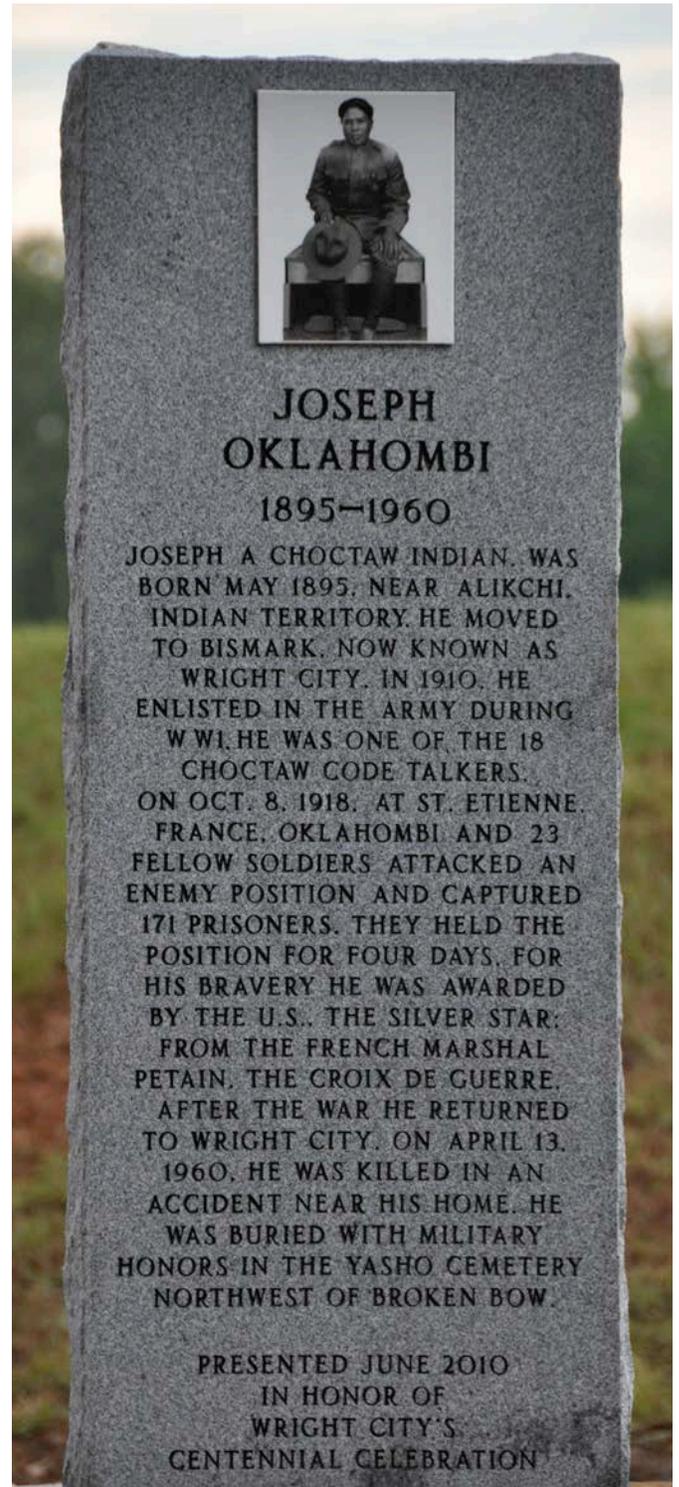
About five weeks before the armistice in 1918, Oklahombi and his division were cut off from the rest of the company. As a scout, Oklahombi was in the lead when he and another 23 men came across a German machine gun emplacement, with about 50 trench mortars. Oklahombi moved about 200 yards over open ground against artillery and machine gun fire, rushing the machine gun nest and capturing one of the guns. Turning the weapon on the enemy, the



Oklahombi and Ben Carterby

Americans held the Germans down with blistering fire for four days (without food or water) until their surrender. Of the enemy, 171 were taken prisoner.

General orders cited Oklahombi for his bravery for his actions. His medals and recognitions



included the Citation Star, Victory Ribbon, and the Croix de Guerre with Silver.

Oklahombi's WWI war honors later included a Silver Star.

The Choctaw Nation is among those making efforts for a posthumous award of the Congressional Medal of Honor to be awarded Oklahombi.

PETE MAYTUBBY

Peter P. Maytubby was born on September 26, 1891, in Reagan, Indian Territory now located in Johnston County. Pete was a Corporal in the 142nd Infantry, Company E.

Maytubby was one of the soldiers trained to use the Choctaw language as a weapon. He died in 1964 and is buried at the Tishomingo City Cemetery in Tishomingo, Okla.

Pete was a Choctaw/Chickasaw Code Talker. His great-niece, Matha Vaughn remembers him as a kind man she loved to visit. Matha was honored to represent Pete at the Congressional Medal Ceremony which was held in Washington, D.C. in 2013.

JEFF WILSON

Jeff Wilson attended Armstrong Academy and was from Antlers. Past accounts have mistakenly called this Code Talker Jeff Nelson instead of Wilson, giving the name a controversial twist, with no known living family for either name. Recent research has found military acknowledgment of Wilson being in the 144th Infantry, Company A. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Pushmataha County, although no exact location is cited.



ROBERT TAYLOR

Robert Taylor was born January 13, 1894, in Idabel, McCurtain County, Oklahoma (based on his registration for the military in 1917). He was a member of the 142nd Infantry, Company E.

Taylor's Congressional Silver Medal was accepted in November of 2013 by relative Annabelle Quoetone.

WALTER VEACH

Soon after Oklahoma became a state, a young Choctaw, Walter Veach, helped organize Company H, First Infantry (Durant, Oklahoma's first National Guard Unit) and served as its commander.

Under his command, Company H put down the

Crazy Snake uprising near Henryetta in the old Creek Nation and later was detailed to patrol the border between the United States and Mexico. The company had a significant hand in stopping the Pancho Villa invasion of Texas.

In 1917, the company merged with the Texas 36th Division and was sent to Europe. Veach, now a Captain, was told to organize an all-Indian company of members of 11 Oklahoma Indian tribes.

This all-Indian company was Company E. The company saw much activity during the war. The record of Company E played a role in granting full United States citizenship to Indians – a Congressional Act finally passed in 1924.

Captain Walter Veach trained the majority of the Choctaw Code Talkers, helping them attain the battle skills they needed to survive.

A Choctaw himself, and a fluid speaker, he was entrenched with them up to the time of use of the Code Talking. Paper trails show he was likely not at the battle of Forest Farm, yet Veach still claimed to be a Choctaw Code Talker. The other Code Talkers did not dispute his claim, which gives credence to his legacy as serving with Choctaw Code Talkers.



Walter Veach

WWII CODE TALKERS

Four Choctaws are documented through the Choctaw Code Talker Association as having served in the European Theater as Code Talkers in WWII: Schlicht Billy, Forreston Baker, Davis Pickens and Andrew Perry. Schlicht Billy and Forreston Baker both returned to the U.S. to family life.

Lt. Schlicht Billy, United States Army, was awarded the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart with three Oak Leaf Clusters while serving with the 45th Infantry Division during WWII. Born December 26, 1920, he was the last living Choctaw Code Talker. He died January 10, 1994, and is buried at Zion Baptist Church near McAlester.

Private First Class Forreston Baker returned home to become deeply involved with church. Although he married, there were no children from the union.



Schlicht Billy



Forreston Baker



Davis Pickens

Sgt. Davis Pickens was Killed in Action, leaving a wife and young daughter.



Andrew Perry

Corporal Andrew Perry was also Killed in Action, an unmarried man who was mourned by his mother and rest of his loving family. He is buried in France.

MAJOR AWARDS AND HONORS FOR CHOCTAW CODE TALKERS

- 1986** Choctaw Medal of Valor presented at Labor Day Festival
- 1989** November 3: Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite (Knight of the National Order of Merit) Medal presented by French Government on the steps of the Oklahoma State Capitol by former Prime Minister of France, Pierre Mesmer
- 1997** November 11: Award of Honor presented by Choctaw Nation at the Veteran's Day Ceremony
- 1997** Choctaw Code Talker Association formed
- 2002** Code Talker exhibit in National Security Agency
- 2006** "Telephone Warriors" film released by Red-Horse Native Productions in Los Angeles
- 2006** Smithsonian Traveling exhibition on Code Talkers
- 2007** "The Language of Victory: American Indian Codetalkers of WWI and WWII" by Tribal Eye Productions film released
- 2007** September 16: Lone Star Medal of Valor presented by State of Texas at a ceremony at Camp Mabry in Austin
- 2008** October: President George W. Bush signs Code Talker Recognition Act
- 2009** Citation of Valor from State of Oklahoma presented at the Oklahoma State Legislature
- 2010** October: Code Talker Star placed on the Texas Trail of Fame
- 2010** November: Code Talkers awarded the Native American Drum Award
- 2010** Choctaw Code Talkers (Vision Maker video) on PBS
- 2012** November 9: Inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame
- 2012** June: Code Talkers featured during Choctaw Days in Washington, D.C.
- 2013** September: WWI Choctaw Code Talker Highway signs unveiled on State Highway 3 at Antlers and Broken Bow, Oklahoma
- 2013** November: Congressional Gold Medals presented in Washington, D.C.
- 2016** U.S. Mint releases Native American \$1 coin featuring Code Talkers
- 2016** Children's Code Talker book "Toby and the Secret Code" printed
- 2017** Oklahoma passes legislation to name 23 State Highway bridges in honor of the 23 Choctaw Code Talkers
- 2018** Black granite monument placed in Antlers in honor of WWI and WWII Code Talkers
- 2018** Book "Anumpa Warrior" released
- 2019** Black granite monument placed in Broken Bow
- 2019** INC Comics releases "Tales of the Mighty Code Talkers"
- 2019** Children's Code Talker book "Ben and the Missing Pony" released



CODE TALKER RECOGNITION ACT | CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDALS

The Code Talker Recognition Act, HR 4544, recognized every Native American Code Talker who had bravely served the United States Armed Services with a Congressional Gold Medal for their respective Tribe and a duplicate Silver Medal to the Code Talker or family, if deceased. When the legislation was written, fourteen tribes had been identified, including Assiniboine, Chippewa, Oneida, Choctaw, Kiowa, Menominee, Comanche, Cree, Sac and Fox, Mississauga, Crow, Muscogee (Creek), Hopi and Sioux.

The Code Talker Recognition Act legislation was written to allow all tribes who could provide proof that there were Code Talkers in their tribes to come forward so that medals could also be presented to them.

In 2013, 33 tribes were recognized at Emancipation Hall of the United States Capitol. Congressional Gold Medals were awarded to 25 tribes whose designs were ready and medals were minted:

Cherokee Nation, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Choctaw Nation, Comanche Nation, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Crow Nation, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe, Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Ho-Chunk Nation, Hopi Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, Menominee Nation, Meskwaki Nation, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Oneida Nation, Osage Nation, Pawnee Nation, Ponca Tribe, Pueblo of Acoma Tribe, Pueblo of Laguna Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Nation, Seminole Nation, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (Sioux) Tribe, St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Tlingit Tribe, Tonto Apache Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Yankton Sioux Tribe.

Two additional tribes were eligible and received their Congressional Gold Medals at a future date. They are: Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. The Navajo Nation received Congressional Gold Medals in 2001.



Chief Batton, Judy Allen, and Chief Pyle with the Choctaw Congressional Gold Medal. These leaders were among those fighting for approval of the Code Talker Recognition Act.



CHOCTAW CODE TALKERS OF WWII HONORED WITH MONUMENT AT ANTLERS- SECOND MONUMENT AT BROKEN BOW



Lee Watkins, great-grandson of Joseph Oklahombi, at dedication.

Descendants gathered to honor their warrior ancestors at the July 6, 2018 dedication of a Choctaw Code Talker monument in Antlers recognizing the Choctaw Code Talkers of WWI and WWII. These Code Talkers were instrumental in the success of the Allied Forces. 2018 was the 100th anniversary of the Choctaw Code Talkers' participation in WWI.

The monument is inscribed "Preserving our Heritage. The United States Army Choctaw Code Talkers of World War I and World War II have left a lasting legacy for the Choctaw Nation, the State of Oklahoma and the United States of America.

"These Telephone Warriors used their language on battlefields during World War I and World War II.

Choctaw Soldiers pioneered the use of Native American languages as a military Code. With pride, the Choctaw Nation recognizes their unique and heroic service." The opposite side of the monument lists the names of the warriors. The Choctaw Code Talker Association continued fundraising and placed a similar monument at Broken Bow in front of the Choctaw Community Center.

The next goal for a large monument to honor the Code Talkers is a life-size Code Talker Statue to be placed at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant.

Donations can be sent to CCTA Treasurer Carole Ayers, 8692 Homestead Road, Kingston OK 73439.



Family of Code Talker George Davenport pictured at dedication.



Left: An example of the type of telephone used in WWI to transmit messages. Above: Oklahombi's was the first of 23 bridge signs placed to honor the WWI and WWII Choctaw Code Talkers. Donations are being accepted in order to continue telling the story of the Code Talkers through future monuments and memorials.

SOME OF THE CODE TALKER "CODE" TERMS USED IN WWI

Regiment	tribe	okla	ok-la
1st Battalion	one grain of corn	tanchi nihi achvffa	tan-chi ni-hi achuf-fa
2nd Battalion	two grains of corn	tanchi nihi tuklo	tan-chi ni-hi tok-loh
3rd Battalion	three grains of corn	tanchi nihi tuchena	tan-chi ni-hi toch-chi-nah
Company	bow	iti tanampo	it-ti ta-nam-po
Platoon	thong	hlibata	thi-ba-ta
Machine gun	little gun shoot fast	tanamposhi hussatpalhki	ta-nam-po-shi h _u s-sat-palh-ki
Artillery	big gun	tanampo chito	ta-nam-po chi-to
Grenade	stone	tvli	tu-li
Ration	food	illimpa	il-lihm-pa
Attack	fight	ittibbi	it-tib-bi
Patrol	many scouts	tikba pisa lawa	tik-ba pi-sah law-wa
Casualty	scalps	hattak pashi	hat-tak pahn-shi
Gas	bad air	mahli okpolo	mah-le ok-po-lo
Army		tvshka chipota	tush-ka chi-po-ta
A soldier	warrior	tvshka	tush-ka

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