

## STANDING STONE MONOLITH STILL AN ICON

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For more than 100 years, the Standing Stone Monolith was an icon located beside the Indian Trail, west of Monterey. Revered by many who looked upon it, the monolith site became a geographical reference point for newspaper articles and United States Topography Maps.



The oldest known newspaper covering the Upper Cumberland area – still available for reading – is the *Carthage Gazette*. Copies dating back to the year 1808 are recorded on microfilm and contain incredible data from the distant past. On Friday, June 1, 1810, the following article mentioning the Standing Stone, appeared in the *Carthage Gazette*: “On Walton’s Road, near the Standing Stone, a pair of old saddlebags, three pair of overalls, one broadcloth coat with some kain (sic) reeds rapt up in it (sic), two waistcoats, one pair of stockings, one pair of socks with eight dollars rap(sic) in them, one bandanner (sic) handkerchief – the owner may have them by proving his property and paying charges.”

Another article from the same newspaper and the same date of publication as above mentions Standing Stone again: “Taken up by James Officer, near Standing stone, one bay horse colt about 4 years old...13 hands high, appraised at 10 dollars...”

Although the Standing Stone was located on the Walton Road some 50 miles east of Carthage, it is obvious that the Standing Stone Monolith was so well known that any mention of the Standing Stone would leave no doubt as to the location of the subject matter

Individuals began to settle that are of the state shortly after Tennessee became a state in 1796. The settlement, having a sizable radius emanating from the standing Stone Monolith, became known as Standing Stone, Tenn. The name appears in several editions of the *Tennessee Gazetteer*. The center of the settlement was the Standing Stone Post office, which stood just across the Walton Road from the original site of the Monolith. An historical marker stands at the site today.

During the same period, Monterey, Tenn., was a post village located in McNairy County, Tenn. In 1893, a new town was surveyed at the eastern terminus of the Nashville &

Knoxville Railroad, and took the name of Monterey. Standing Stone, Tenn., gradually adopted the name Monterey, which became official in 1901, while the Monterey in McNairy County faded into history.

A United States Geological Survey, dated November 1898, contains the Standing Stone Quadrangle and is referenced as Standing Stone, Tenn. The survey of 1898 shows the towns of Monterey and Standing Stone coexisting one mile apart.

Located on a major, highly-traveled east-west road, the standing stone became victim to vandals and souvenir takers. Once described as a 'dog in a sitting position, ears erect and facing west' the proud Stand Stone Monolith was gradually reduced to a portion of its original height.

The final blow to the monolith came in the early years of the 1890s as the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad neared completion from Cookeville to the new town on the plateau known as Monterey (surveyed and named by Major Robert Moscrip who is buried in the Cookeville City Cemetery). In the fall of 2009, Dr. Calvin Dickinson, Tennessee Tech University History professor emeritus, uncovered the only known photograph of the final destruction of the Standing Stone Monolith as railroad workers were removing the fragmented stone portions from the surveyed railroad bed.

Realizing the historical significance of the Standing Stone, a Cookeville Fraternity known as Narragansett Tribe #25 – I.O.R.M. (Improved Order of Redmen), procured the smaller of the two largest fragments from the fallen monolith, and shipped the stone to Cookeville for the purpose of inscribing information on one face of the stone. Engraved on the stone were an eagle and a tomahawk with the secret word (TOTE) of the Red Men imprinted on the tomahawk blade. The Cherokee word - NEE YAH TEE – ('Standing Stone') was engraved on the stone as well. The date of the engraving by the Cookeville Marble & Granite Works was placed upon the Standing Stone fragment: Corn Moon, GSD 402 (the Red Men's dating system meaning: September 1893).

The Standing Stone fragment, weighing some 816 pounds (as determined by Tennessee Tech's Department of Geology) was taken to Cookeville. The engraved fragment was stored at the Cookeville Marble & Granite Works until October 1895 when a train, with great ceremony, took the stone back to Monterey to be mounted on the pedestal where it remains to this day near the Monterey Library.

On Oct. 17, 1895, the Standing Stone Monument was officially dedicated with a crowd estimated to be around 3,000 looking on. (Cookeville Press, Oct. 24, 1895, edition). The monument stands 16 feet high..the height of the original Monolith as recorded by early settlers.

For many years following the 1895 dedication, an annual Pilgrimage to the Standing Stone Monument was led by the Order of Red Men. However, The Great War (WWI) and the Great Depression of the late 1920s and 1930s, diverted the attention from the Standing Stone to survival of the family structure. Paramount in the decline in the annual

pilgrimages to the Standing Stone was the passing of the generation, which revered the symbol of the aborigines who once roamed this area of Tennessee.

In 1939 the historical significance flared up again with the State of Tennessee naming its new State Park after the Standing Stone Mystery. The park is located in Overton County, Tenn., approximately 20 miles northwest of Monterey.

World War II and the lack of interest in the Standing Stone History gradually erased the Stone's significance from the minds of the local inhabitants. The Monument in Monterey became a structure on the decline and out of mind, except for an occasional visit by young high school students looking for 'somewhere to walk.

However, Nannie Buckner (Bohannon) Walker refused to let the history die. Her father was present at the 1895 dedication ceremony, and she respected the older generation's heritage.

During the 1940s and early 1950s, Nannie walked her children over to the Standing Stone Monument, and related the story of the Stone to the eager children.

(The author of this article is the youngest of the children who visited the Stone with our Mother). Nannie passed away in 1971, and the history almost died with her. In 1975, this author began to research the history of the Stone, and in 1979 invited the Cherokee nation of Oklahoma to return to one of their ancient worship sites. Cherokee Principal Chief Ross Swimmer and later, Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller, visited Monterey several times to pay homage to the Standing Stone.

Standing at the Monument on a snowy day in February of 1979, Monterey Mayor Ray Way signed a Proclamation written by Attorney Dale Bohannon declaring the second Thursday of each October to be, "Standing Stone Day in Monterey, Tennessee, as long as the Mountain shall be..."

Monterey has observed a Standing Stone holiday every year since, with the observance of the Standing Stone Celebration occurring the second week of October. The event continues to grow every year with more and more participation from local citizens as well as the arrival of hundreds of rail travelers aboard the special Excursion Express from Nashville.

Although the Standing Stone's original purpose will always remain a mystery, the Monument stands today as the Nation's only Monument to the Volunteer Departure of the Eastern Cherokees westward-predating the infamous Trail of Tears of 1838 by more than a decade. *Cookeville Press, Cookeville Tennessee, Thursday, Sept. 30, 1897.*

"Cumberland Tales," created by Calvin Dickinson and Michael Birdwell and sponsored by the Cookeville History Museum, welcomes any take for this region's history. For more information, contact Calvin Dickinson at [cdickinson@tntech.edu](mailto:cdickinson@tntech.edu) or Michael Birdwell at [birdie@tntech.edu](mailto:birdie@tntech.edu).

\*Read more 'Cumberland Tales' at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

## **OFFICIALS HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR STANDING STONE MONUMENT**

By Jim Herrin (Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 31 July 2017)

Revitalization work is continuing this month on a monument around the ancient stone in Monterey that once served as a boundary marker for American Indian tribes.

Putnam County did not get a \$50,000 tourism enhancement grant it hoped for the project, but County Parks and Recreation Director John Ross Albertson said that hasn't put a halt to plans to improve the Standing Stone Monument.

"After we didn't get the grant, we started a process of just doing what we could to help maintain it," Albertson said. "We pressure washed it to help clean it off. Then, we have gone through and stained it and sealed it. All the cracks in the stone are stained red to represent the blood of the tribe. I think the color turned out perfect. It actually shows up well from the road now."



A concrete pad that had surrounded the monument has been replaced.

"There was a small little ring of concrete around it that had been busted out and was cracked, so we went in and took that out," Albertson said. "Now, we've poured a new concrete slab which is actually seven-sided to represent

the seven tribes that the Cherokee nation had. We've also added some benches that used to sit at the Putnam County courthouse."

(Pictured: From left, Stephen Poteet, Tommy Palk, Matt Haugk, Matt Finley and John Ross Albertson of Putnam County's Parks and Recreation Department pose in front of the Standing Stone Monument in Monterey. The department has been working to improve and expand the monument park. Photo: Dale Welch)

Albertson said he has particularly enjoyed researching the history of the Cherokee clans and hopes to also plant some flowers and fauna that were common to the region when Native Americans lived here.

Additional work is also underway.

"We're going to move into the second phase which is putting in a stone walkway and potentially a council house," said Albertson. "We're working on the planning of that, trying to determine costs and find contractors. We're going to try to work within our capital projects budget to pay for it."

He said the cost has not yet been determined.

"We're going to do it probably much cheaper than what we anticipated with the grant," Albertson said. "We're going to scale it back a little bit, but I still think it will turn out well. We'll have to see what our costs come in at. We're at the point right now of trying to determine how to even lay out a seven-sided council house."

He said the department will do as much as they can with the funds available, noting that a planned fire ring may not be completed immediately.

"We may end up having to break it up into phases, so it may take a little longer to phase in. Ideally, if we can afford to do the council house, we would hope to have it done before Standing Stone Day in October," Albertson said.