

Osteneco (Judd's Friend) ^[1]

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by D. H. Corkran, 1991

1705?–1777?

Osteneco (Judd's Friend), the second warrior of the Overhill Cherokee and a member of the Wolf Clan, was known to the colonials as Judd's Friend (sometimes Judge's Friend) because early in his career he had saved a trader named Judd from Cherokee wrath. He appears in the South Carolina records as one of "the two Tacites," or great warriors, of Tellico in Monroe County, Tenn. His name signifies "The Pigeon."

As a great warrior of Tellico, he was one of the principal supporters of the South Carolina-sponsored spurious "Emperor," Ammonscoissite, or the "Young Emperor of Tellico." When in 1751 the Tellico coterie of headmen decided to treat with South Carolina to obtain the removal of a trade embargo occasioned by disorders arising from the Creek-Cherokee war, Osteneco was the agent sent to enlist the support of the Cherokee Lower Towns. The headmen of Chota, the legitimate Overhill capital, frustrated this move. Despite Chota opposition, Osteneco persisted and went to Charles Town, where he won [Governor James Glen's](#) ^[2] agreement to hold a conference on the condition that the Tellico headmen would bring the recalcitrant Chota headmen to Charles Town. The Chota headmen, inspired by the "Little Carpenter," hoped to break the South Carolina trade monopoly by obtaining trade in Virginia and refused to attend. The Tellicos went ahead with the conference and agreed to halt visits of the northern Indians, who had inspired the disorders, and to deliver up the troublemakers if Glen would remove the embargo and negotiate a Creek peace. But since the [Cherokee](#) ^[3] were slow to implement the treaty terms, Governor Glen did not make a Creek peace for them or fully restore the trade.

Disillusioned with South Carolina, the Young Emperor went to Virginia to seek trade but failed to obtain it. In this circumstance he lost the confidence of the Tellicos and of South Carolina. The Tellicos then accepted Chota leadership. Osteneco, to be nearer the seat of power, moved to the Overhill town of Tomatley and became a member of the Chota council.

Osteneco tended to be a rival of the Little Carpenter. When in 1755 the Little Carpenter was preventing Cherokee warriors from participating in the conflict between England and France in the Ohio Valley in order to obtain better terms for trade, Osteneco recruited Overhill warriors to go to Virginia's aid in the Sandy Creek expedition against the French-allied Shawnee in the winter of 1755–56. After this expedition failed, he went to Williamsburg, Va., for his reward. There he was entertained by [Governor Robert Dinwiddie](#) ^[4], who was happy to treat with a Cherokee who was less truculent than the Little Carpenter. He returned to the Overhills with Colonel Andrew Lewis's expedition to build the Virginia fort near Chota agreed to by the Little Carpenter and other headmen at the Treaty of Broad River in March 1756. When Virginia failed to garrison the fort and to commence the promised trade, Osteneco's prestige fell somewhat. Nevertheless, in the ensuing tensions, in which Old Hop, the Cherokee first man, began a correspondence with the French, Osteneco favored the English, and when Captain Raymond Demere built Fort Loudoun for South Carolina near Chota, Osteneco befriended him. He again led Overhill forces to support the Virginia frontier, where he was active against the French until his recall late in 1757 on the occasion of a misunderstanding that had led to the imprisonment in Winchester of several Cherokee deputies on their way to visit the Six Nations in New York.

In the stressful years of 1758 and 1759, when the Cherokee were murdered by Virginia frontiersmen, Osteneco opposed the Little Carpenter's efforts for peace and supported the great warrior, Oconostota, in demands for war on the English. In the war with South Carolina that followed, Osteneco planned and led the attack on Fort Loudoun that led to its fall.

Even after English and colonial forces had devastated the Cherokee country in campaigns of 1760 and 1761, Osteneco refused to consider peace. But he was finally prevailed upon to visit Colonel Adam Stephens's Virginia forces, which were poised to strike the Overhill towns, and saw for himself that resistance was useless and that good terms could be had—even better than those obtained by Little Carpenter at Charles Town. He therefore set himself up as the proprietor of the Virginia peace and escorted Lieutenant Henry Timberlake of the Virginia forces to Chota with the final terms of the treaty. When these were ratified at Chota, Osteneco accompanied Timberlake to Williamsburg to seal the peace with [Governor Francis Fauquier](#) ^[5]. On the way he stopped at Shadwell, the home of Peter Jefferson, which he had visited before. Osteneco was the Indian chief best known to Thomas Jefferson, who had seen him at his father's house and who now visited him at his camp near Williamsburg. During his interviews with Fauquier, Osteneco demanded to be sent to England; for, he said, he desired to know whether the Little Carpenter, who had been in England in 1730, spoke the truth. It would appear that Osteneco sought again to undermine the Little Carpenter by absorbing to himself the glory of having talked personally with the king of England.

In early May 1762 Osteneco, accompanied by Timberlake and William Shorey as guides and interpreters and a few of his countrymen, set sail for England. Arriving in early June, the Indians were a sensation. Fauquier had given Timberlake an introduction to Lord Egremont, who was to look after the Indians and obtain an audience with the king. Osteneco's party

lodged in a London tavern, the proprietor of which began to charge admission to the visitors who flocked to see the Indians. To escape this sort of thing as much as possible, Timberlake took his charges to various public entertainment gardens, where again they were the center of attention. On one occasion, Osteneco was given so many free drinks that he had to be dumped into a coach and hauled away. However, he did review the Grenadier Guards, was entertained at the tables of various lords and gentlemen, and finally was given an interview with the king. Osteneco prepared to smoke the pipe of peace with King George, but the king did not smoke and the Indian was made to see that a man so close to God could not smoke with mere mortals. During the two-hour meeting, Timberlake interpreted the king's remarks as the professions of friendship he thought the Cherokee had come to hear.

Despite unseemly episodes, the visit to England was a diplomatic and social success, and the Indians set sail from England vastly impressed by English wealth, energy, and power. Osteneco reached Charles Town in October 1762; thereafter, he was devoted to the English Crown and to its agent, John Stuart ^[6], His Majesty's superintendent of the southern Indians.

Osteneco's devotion to the Crown was instrumental in frustrating the efforts of certain Creeks to involve the Cherokee in the Pontiac conspiracy developing in the North. Sympathetic to this conspiracy was Oconostota, the great warrior of the Cherokee who had been well treated by the French during the Cherokee war with South Carolina and who deeply resented the English for having held him hostage for a short time in 1759. Since Oconostota would not meet directly or treat with the English, Osteneco as second warrior was the highest-ranking Cherokee warrior attending Stuart's conference of the southern governors and southern Indians at Augusta, Ga., in November 1763. At this meeting, pledges of peace were obtained, a new trade agreement was made, and Stuart and the southern governors agreed to mark a boundary between the Indians and the whites beyond which there would be no settlements and no trespass. Osteneco did not speak at the conference, but he did support all the propositions made by the Little Carpenter and regarded himself, with the Little Carpenter, as a prop of peace with the whites.

Osteneco continued to oppose Oconostota's talks with war-minded Creeks, asserting that if the Creeks went to war against the English, the Cherokee would join the English against them. In late 1764 he led a Cherokee war party to the Mississippi to waylay French trader convoys carrying goods and ammunition, to support northern Indian hostility, to the frontier. He destroyed a small convoy and brought back two French prisoners. After quarreling over the prisoners, Oconostota finally released one and Osteneco sent the other to Charles Town.

In 1765, when Oconostota—angry at English trespasses on Cherokee hunting grounds—proposed to precipitate war by killing the traders among the Cherokee, Osteneco joined the Little Carpenter in thwarting the great warrior and preserving the peace.

During the next two years he led Cherokee parties to supervise the survey of the boundaries between the Carolinas and the Cherokee. Thus, in June 1767 he was the principal Cherokee at Governor William Tryon ^[7]'s survey of the North Carolina boundary. The occasion was festive with many great speeches, the firing of salutes, and the drinking of fine wines, but Osteneco did warn of rogues—both white and Indian—who would not respect the boundary, the whites hunting for deer and the Indians hunting for horseflesh. The line, marked by blazes on trees, was completed only to the top of Tryon Mountain but proclaimed as far as Chiswell's mines in Virginia.

In 1768 Osteneco joined the Cherokee headmen in protesting settlers' disregard of the boundary line and attended Stuart's conference at Hard Labour, S.C., where the Cherokee agreed to the boundary from Chiswell's mines to the mouth of the Great Kanawha in the Ohio River.

In the spring of 1769 he visited Virginia and North Carolina, stopping to see Governor Tryon at New Bern. He returned by way of Charles Town, where he agreed to alter the Virginia line to include white settlements west of the Kanawha but continued to protest white invasion of the Cherokee hunting grounds.

In 1774 Osteneco became embittered against the frontiersmen when a settler at Watauga wantonly killed one of his relatives who was escorting survivors of a wreck on the Tennessee River back to Watauga. However, in 1776 he supported Stuart's effort to prevent the Cherokee from going to war against the frontiersmen until the British—now engaged in the Revolutionary War ^[8]—could launch a major attack on the south. The young Cherokee warriors, disregarding Osteneco and their elders, plunged into war and met disaster. The colonials retaliated with large expeditionary forces from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, ravaging the Cherokee country. Oconostota and the Little Carpenter made a peace that ceded to North Carolina and to South Carolina large areas of the Cherokee country; the Cherokee also agreed to remain neutral in the war between the Americans and the English. The Cherokee who refused to accept the treaty and desired to continue fighting withdrew to the Chickamauga Creek area of northwestern Georgia. When last heard from, in 1777, Osteneco was in the Chickamauga region sending messages to Stuart at Pensacola, demanding goods and ammunition with which to carry on the war. Presumably he died shortly afterwards.

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Additional Resources:

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