

Christian "Chris" Madsen

Chris Madsen was born on February 25, 1851, in Copenhagen, Denmark and little is known of his early life. He was the son of a professional soldier and at age fourteen was a member of the Danish Army, serving in the Danish-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars and in the Foreign Legion in Algeria. In the Battle of Sedan, he was wounded and taken prisoner. Upon escaping he fought with irregulars until the end of hostilities and his departure to the United States.



Chris landed in New York on January 21, 1876, and joined the United States Cavalry. In July 1876, he was present when Buffalo Bill Cody had his famous fight with, and scalped, Yellow Hand. It was erroneously reported that Chris died at Little Big Horn, but he was called upon to bury some of the dead. He remained in the army until 1891 and fought in many major Indian campaigns while earning a Silver Star.

He married his wife Maggie in 1887, and in 1891, he resigned from the army and was appointed U.S. Deputy Marshal serving under Judge Isaac Parker, the noted Hanging Judge. In this capacity he teamed up with Bill Tilghman and Heck Thomas as the "Three Guardsmen of Oklahoma". The three of them were largely responsible for ridding Oklahoma of organized outlaw gangs.



Chris would avoid gunplay if it was at all possible and sometimes it wasn't. On November 29, 1892, Chris, Heck Thomas and Deputy Thomas Hueston caught up with a dangerous outlaw named Ol Yantis. Chris called out to Yantis, "Throw up your hands, Ol. We're officers." Yantis snapped off a shot and Chris wounded him with his rifle. Yantis kept firing and Hueston shot him again. Yantis died that night. On March 5, 1896, Chris and a posse finally cornered George "Red Buck" Wightman in a dugout. When ordered to surrender, Wightman began firing and Chris killed him with a rifle shot.

Chris' law enforcement career was temporarily interrupted when Colonel Leonard Wood asked him to straighten out the quartermaster corps for the Spanish-American war. After the war ended, he returned to Oklahoma and his law enforcement duties. In 1911, he was appointed the U.S. Marshal for the entire state of Oklahoma. When World War I broke out he tried to enlist but was rejected because of his age. While in his sixties he was appointed Chief of Police for Oklahoma City.

He eventually retired to Guthrie, Oklahoma and died on January 9, 1944 at the age of 92. He is buried in the Frisco Cemetery in Yukon, Oklahoma next to Maggie who died in 1898.



Sources: *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, by Dan L. Thrapp, and *Encyclopedia of Western Gunfighters*, by Bill O'Neal.