

## The Long Journey- Another Story of The Nanih Waiya



Moundville, Alabama

This story was told by Peter Folsom, a Choctaw, to H. S. Halbert in the late 1880's. Folsom relayed this story to Halbert from what Peter's father had told him when they visited Nanih Waiya in 1883. Peter came from the western territory as a Baptist missionary to the Mississippi Choctaws.

The story mentions that the Choctaw and the Chickasaw was ruled by two twins. When they began to travel they went north for a long ways. West of Mississippi and south is Mexico. Over-population is the catalyst which forces the Choctaw, Chickasaw. The more stories we have of a journey of ancient peoples moving north, the more we may aid the historians in a possible answer to the question; What happened to the Maya?

It is a reliable old story as to how the Choctaw came to live near the great mound in Mississippi. It also shows no relationship of the Choctaw to the people who built the mound. From archaeological evidence the Choctaw now have been shown to be directly related to the Mound Builders of the Mississippian Era.

### The Long Journey

In Ancient times the ancestors of the Choctaws and the Chickasaws lived in a country far away in the west. They lived in two clans and were ruled by two brothers, Chahta and Chikasa.

As time passed, so many people were born that the land could no longer support them. There was not enough food to eat. The people looked for help to a great prophet. He told them: "We must leave this land and make our way to the east. There we will find a country with fertile soil and game of all kinds."

The people prepared for the long journey. They marched by clan, with seven days difference in their departing times. The great prophet marched at the head of the first group, carrying a pole. When camp was made each night, he planted the pole upright in front of the camp. "The pole will tell us which way to go," he said.

First the pole leaned north, and the people went in that direction. The journey led across streams, over mountains, through forest and barren prairies. The people always followed the direction in which the pole pointed each morning.

They had traveled a great distance when they came to the banks of O-kee-na-chitto, the great waterway (Mississippi River). They camped for the night and the prophet planted the pole. The next morning the pole leaned east, across the river. "We must build rafts and cross the great river," the prophet said. So the people felled trees and made a thousand rafts to cross on.

When they reached the other side they found a beautiful country, with green forests and streams. There was game of every kind and abundant fruits and flowers. "This surely is the end of our journey," the prophet said. "let us settle here." But the pole still leaned to the east.

At last the people came to a great mound and made camp beside it. The next morning they were awakened by the shouts of the prophet: "The pole stands straight. We have found our country. This mound is the center of our land." The mound came to be known as Nanih Waiya.

As it so happened, the group led by Chkasa had crossed a creek further east and camped on its bank. During the night a great rain began to fall. It lasted several days and the creek flooded the low-lying land where Chikasa and his clan camped. When the rains stopped, Chahta sent a messenger to tell Chikasa that the long-sought land had been found. But the Chikasa clan had proceeded on their journey. The rain had washed away all trace of them. Chahta's messenger had to return with the news that his brother could not be found.

Chikasa's group moved on to the Tombigbee River and eventually became a separate nation. In this way the Choctaws and the Chickasaws became two separate, though related, nations.