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The Trail of Tears

Removal did not begin with the Treaty of New Echota. Cherokees had moved west in large numbers between 1808 and 1810 and between 1817 and 1819. United States agents continued to encourage individual Cherokees to move, and the treaty negotiated with Arkansas Cherokees in 1828 included a provision for the relocation of eastern Cherokees to their new western territory. Pressure to go west increased dramatically in the 1830s, but relatively few Cherokees accepted inducements to move beyond the Mississippi. Under the terms of the Treaty of New Echota, the Cherokees had two years to move to their new home in the West. Confident that John Ross would prevail, most Cherokees resisted enrollment and made no preparation for leaving their homes and farms.

As the deadline approached in the spring of 1838, only about two thousand Cherokees had moved west. The United States ordered troops to round up the remaining Cherokees and imprison them in stockades in preparation for their forced removal. By mid-June, the soldiers had captured most of the Cherokees. Nearly three thousand divided into three detachments began their march west, but the grueling journey in the middle of a hot, dry summer claimed many lives. The commanding officer, General Winfield Scott, first agreed to allow the rest of the Cherokees to wait until fall to move west and then granted permission for the Cherokees to conduct their own removal. John Ross placed his brother Lewis Ross, a prominent merchant, in charge of provisioning the Cherokees and named conductors to organize detachments. The logistics proved challenging. The Rosses had to plan routes; provide transportation, tolls for roads and ferries, and blankets and clothing; and secure food and forage along the way. On August 23, the first of thirteen detachments under the direction of John Ross left the Cherokee homeland in the East and arrived in the western Cherokee Nation on January 17, 1839. The final detachments arrived in late March. The total number of lives claimed by Cherokee

removal is difficult to determine because many Cherokees died in the stockades before ever setting out on the Trail of Tears, but most scholars think that the death toll was at least four thousand, and some suggest that the population loss may have been as high as eight thousand.

The Cherokees arriving in the West in the spring of 1839 faced a new set of challenges. The Old Settlers, who had removed prior to the Treaty of New Echota, expected the more numerous newcomers to live under their government, and members of the despised Treaty Party sought a major role in any new government. Early efforts at reconciliation failed when a number of newcomers, distraught over the treaty and removal, killed the three leaders of the Treaty Party, Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot. The unknown assailants probably saw themselves as executioners of an ancient Cherokee law, cited by John Ridge in 1826 and committed to writing in 1829, that made land cession a capital crime. The friends and families of the slain men swore vengeance on John Ross, who insisted that he knew nothing about plans to kill Treaty Party men. A period of civil war followed until all sides agreed on a tenuous peace in 1846.

The standard work on the removal of southern Indians is Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932). Among the useful essays in William L. Anderson, ed., *Cherokee Removal: Before and After* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991) is Russell Thornton, "The Demography of the Trail of Tears Period: A New Estimate of Cherokee Population Losses," 75-95.

ENROLLMENT

The treaty that Arkansas Cherokees negotiated with the United States in 1828 provided transportation and subsistence, as well as payment for improvements, for Cherokees in the East who wanted to move west. The Cherokee Nation officially opposed this policy and enacted legislation in 1829 that revoked the citizenship of Cherokees who enrolled for removal. This official sanction plus private bullying discouraged most Cherokees who might have been inclined to go west from doing so. The slow pace of removal infuriated Georgians. In 1831 President Jackson appointed Benjamin F. Currey, a Tennessean, as the chief enrolling agent for Georgia. Currey was committed to the Indian policy of the United States government, which he interpreted as making "the situation of the Indians so miserable as to drive them into a treaty, or an abandonment of their country." The Cherokees protested

to Congress about Currey's tactics in "Memorial of Protest of the Cherokee Nation, June 22, 1836," document no. 286, U.S. House of Representatives, 24th Cong., 1st sess., which cites specific abuses of his authority as enrolling agent.

What tactics did Currey use to enroll Cherokees? Was there any check on his behavior? How did traditional Cherokee kinship and property law penalize husbands who refused to join their wives in enrolling? To what extent did Currey recognize the separate legal existence of married Cherokee men and women?

Memorial of Protest of the Cherokee Nation

June 22, 1836

Wahka and his wife were natives of, and residents in, the Cherokee nation east of the Mississippi. The agents of the United States prevailed upon the wife to enrol for emigration, against the remonstrances of the husband, and they afterwards, by force, separated her from her husband, and took her and the children to Arkansas, leaving the husband and father behind, because he would not enrol. The improvements upon which he resided, were valued in the name of the wife, and he turned out of possession.

Atalah Anosta was prevailed upon to enrol when drunk, contrary to the wish and will of his wife and children; when the time arrived for him to leave for Arkansas, he absconded. A guard was sent after him by B. F. Currey, which arrested the woman and children, and brought them to the agency about dark, in a cold rain, shivering and hungry. They were detained under guard all night, and part of the next day, and until the woman agreed to enrol her name as an emigrant. The husband then came in, and he and his wife and their children were put on board a boat and taken to Arkansas. There they soon lost two or three of their children, and then returned on foot to the Cherokee nation east of the Mississippi.

Sconatachee, when drunk, was enrolled by Benjamin F. Currey; when the emigrants were collecting, he did not appear, and Currey and John Miller, the interpreter, went after him. Currey drew a pistol, and attempted to drive the old man to the agency, who presented his

gun and refused to go. Currey and Miller returned without him. He made the facts known to Hugh Montgomery, the Cherokee agent, who gave him a certificate that he should not be forced away against his will. So the matter rested till the emigrants were collected the next year, and then Currey sent a wagon and guard for him. He was arrested, tied, and hauled to the agency, leaving some of his children behind in the woods, where they had fled on the approach of the guard. Richard Cheek enrolled for emigration, but before the time of departure, he hired to work on the Tuscumbia rail-road, in Alabama. When the emigrants started, Currey had Cheek's wife taken, put on board a boat, and started to Arkansas. She was even denied the privilege of visiting her husband as she descended the river. He was left behind, and never saw her more. She died on the way.

Such outrages, and violations of treaty stipulations, have been the subject of complaint to the Government of the United States, on the part of the Cherokees, for years past; and the delegation are not surprised, that the American people are not now startled at those wrongs, so long continued, for by habit men are brought to look with indifference upon death itself. If the Government of the United States have determined to take the Cherokee lands without their consent, the power is with them; and the American people can "reap the field that is not their own, and gather the vintage of his vineyard whom by violence they have oppressed."

FORCED REMOVAL

Evan Jones, a Baptist missionary who worked among the Cherokees in North Carolina, accompanied his congregation to the stockades and on the westward trek. Jones, like Worcester and other missionaries, did much to publicize the Cherokee cause and garner support among evangelical Protestants in the North. Their courage in defying both state and federal authorities and their willingness to share the Cherokees' suffering gained such missionaries considerable trust and admiration. Jones, who came to the most conservative part of the Cherokee Nation in 1822, also had developed a tolerance and even appreciation for traditional Cherokee culture that was rare among missionaries. Clearly John Ross had confidence in him, for he acted as the principal chief's secretary during the summer of 1838. When the time came to go west, Ross named him as assistant conductor of a detachment, and he became one of only three white missionaries who actu-

ally accompanied the Cherokees on the Trail of Tears. His detachment of 1,250 people left in October, and the journey took three and a half months. Seventy-one people died en route, and five babies were born before they arrived in their new homeland.

Jones's feelings about the Cherokees are clear in letters he sent to the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, which reprinted excerpts in its issues of September 1838 and April 1839. If you would like to know more about Evan Jones and his son John, see William G. McLoughlin's superb book, *Champions of the Cherokees: Evan and John B. Jones* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

How did Jones regard the Cherokees? What was his opinion of white Georgians? How did the Cherokees spend their time in the stockade? What were conditions on the removal west?

EVAN JONES

Letters

May–December 1838

May 21

Our minds have, of late, been in a state of intense anxiety and agitation. The 24th of May is rapidly approaching. The major-general has arrived, and issued his summons, declaring that every man, woman and child of the Cherokees must be on their way to the west before another moon shall pass. The troops, by thousands, are assembling around the devoted victims. The Cherokees, in the mean time, apprized of all that is doing, wait the result of these terrific preparations; with feelings not to be described. Wednesday, the 16th inst.,¹ was appointed as a day of solemn prayer.

May 31

We have cause for thankfulness that some few glimmerings of hope have at length penetrated the gloom. The delegation at Washington have at last come to an understanding with the Secretary of War on

¹"Instant": the current month.

the basis of a new arrangement; the Indians to cede the country east, to remove within two years to the west, to be protected during their stay, and escorted to their place of destination; to remove themselves, and have a title in fee to the country west of Arkansas; to receive a gross sum to cover all demands. May the Lord direct all for the advancement of his own glory!

Camp Hetzel, Near Cleveland, June 16

The Cherokees are nearly all prisoners. They have been dragged from their houses, and encamped at the forts and military posts, all over the nation. In Georgia, especially, multitudes were allowed no time to take any thing with them, except the clothes they had on. Well-furnished houses were left a prey to plunderers, who, like hungry wolves, follow in the train of the captors. These wretches rifle the houses, and strip the helpless, unoffending owners of all they have on earth. Females, who have been habituated to comforts and comparative affluence, are driven on foot before the bayonets of brutal men. Their feelings are mortified by vulgar and profane vociferations. It is a painful sight. The property of many has been taken, and sold before their eyes for almost nothing—the sellers and buyers, in many cases, being combined to cheat the poor Indians. These things are done at the instant of arrest and consternation; the soldiers standing by, with their arms in hand, impatient to go on with their work, could give little time to transact business. The poor captive, in a state of distressing agitation, his weeping wife almost frantic with terror, surrounded by a group of crying, terrified children, without a friend to speak a consoling word, is in a poor condition to make a good disposition of his property and is in most cases stripped of the whole, at one blow. Many of the Cherokees, who, a few days ago, were in comfortable circumstances, are now victims of abject poverty. Some, who have been allowed to return home, under passport, to inquire after their property, have found their cattle, horses, swine, farming-tools, and house-furniture all gone. And this is not a description of extreme cases. It is altogether a faint representation of the work which has been perpetrated on the unoffending, unarmed and unresisting Cherokees.

Our brother Bushyhead and his family, Rev. Stephen Foreman, native missionary of the American Board, the speaker of the national council, and several men of character and respectability, with their families, are here prisoners.

It is due to justice to say, that, at this station, (and I learn the same is true of some others,) the officer in command treats his prisoners with great respect and indulgence. But fault rests somewhere. They are prisoners, without a crime to justify the fact.

These *savages*, prisoners of *Christians*, are now all hands busy, some cutting and some carrying posts, and plates, and rafters—some digging holes for posts, and some preparing seats, for a temporary place for preaching tomorrow. There will also be preaching at another camp, eight miles distant. We have not heard from our brethren in the mountains since their capture. I have no doubt, however, but the grace of God will be sufficient for them, and that their confidence is reposed in the God of their salvation. My last accounts from them were truly cheering. In a few days they expected the victorious army, to sweep them into their forts, but they were going on steadily in their labors of love to dying sinners. Brother O-ga-na-ya wrote me, May 27, that seven, (four males and three females,) were baptized at Taquohee on that day. He says, "If it shall be peace, we intend to meet at this place on the second Saturday. We are in great trouble. It is said, that on Monday next we are to be arrested, and I suppose it to be true. Many are greatly terrified."

The principal Cherokees have sent a petition to Gen. Scott, begging most earnestly that they may not be sent off to the west till the sickly season is over. They have not received any answer yet. The agent is shipping them by multitudes from Ross's Landing. Nine hundred in one detachment, and seven hundred in another, were driven into boats, and it will be a miracle of mercy if one-fourth escape the exposure to that sickly climate. They were exceedingly depressed, and almost in despair.

July 10

The work of war in time of peace, is commenced in the Georgia part of the Cherokee nation, and is carried on, in most cases, in the most unfeeling and brutal manner; no regard being paid to the orders of the commanding General, in regard to humane treatment of the Indians. I have heard of only one officer in Georgia, (I hope there are more,) who manifests any thing like humanity, in his treatment of this persecuted people. . . .

The work of capturing being completed, and about 3,000 sent off, the General has agreed to suspend the further transportation of the

captives till the first of September. This arrangement, though but a small favor, diffused universal joy through the camps of the prisoners. . . .

July 11

Brethren Wickliffe and O-ga-na-ya, and a great number of members of the church at Valley Towns, fell into Fort Butler, seven miles from the mission. They never relaxed their evangelical labors, but preached constantly in the fort. They held church meetings, received ten members, and on Sabbath, June 17, by permission of the officer in command, went down to the river and baptized them, (five males and five females.) They were guarded to the river and back. Some whites present, affirm it to have been the most solemn and impressive religious service they ever witnessed.

I have omitted till now to say that as soon as General Scott agreed to suspend the transportation of the prisoners till autumn, I accompanied brother Bushyhead, who, by permission of the General, carried a message from the chiefs to those Cherokees who had evaded the troops by flight to the mountains. We had no difficulty in finding them. They all agreed to come in, on our advice, and surrender themselves to the forces of the United States; though, with the whole nation, they are still as strenuously opposed to the treaty as ever. Their submission, therefore, is not to be viewed as an acquiescence in the principles or the terms of the treaty; but merely as yielding to the physical force of the U. States.

On our way, we met a detachment of 1,300 prisoners. As I took some of them by the hand, the tears gushed from their eyes. Their hearts, however, were cheered to see us, and to hear a word of consolation. Many members of the church were among them. At Fort Butler, we found a company of 300, just arrived from the mountains, on their way to the general depot, at the Agency. Several of our members were among these also. I believe the Christians, the salt of the earth, are pretty generally distributed among the several detachments of prisoners, and these Christians maintain among themselves the stated worship of God, in the sight of their pagan brethren, and of the white heathens who guard them.

We had a very laborious journey through the mountains, which we extended to the Cherokee settlement in North Carolina. Here we had several meetings with whites and Indians, and on Sabbath, the 1st

inst., had the pleasure to baptize, on profession of their faith, three Cherokee females, who had previously been examined and approved.

December 30

We have now been on our road to Arkansas seventy-five days, and have travelled five hundred and twenty-nine miles. We are still nearly three hundred miles short of our destination. We have been greatly favored by the kind providence of our heavenly Father. We have as yet met with no serious accident, and have been detained only two days by bad weather. It has, however, been exceedingly cold for some time past, which renders the condition of those who are but thinly clad, very uncomfortable. In order, however, to counteract the effects of the severity of the weather in some degree, we have, since the cold set in so severely, sent on a company every morning, to make fires along the road, at short intervals. This we have found a great alleviation to the sufferings of the people. . . .

The members of the church, generally, maintain consistency of conduct, and many of them are very useful. Our native preachers are assiduous in their labors, seizing all favorable opportunities to cherish a devotional spirit among the brethren. Their influence is very salutary.

I am afraid that, with all the care that can be exercised with the various detachments, there will be an immense amount of suffering, and loss of life attending the removal. Great numbers of the old, the young, and the infirm, will inevitably be sacrificed. And the fact that the removal is effected by coercion, makes it the more galling to the feelings of the survivors.

WAITING TO CROSS THE MISSISSIPPI

Of the many physical obstacles facing the Cherokees as they moved west, perhaps the most daunting was the Mississippi River. Chunks of ice made crossing the great river extremely dangerous, and Cherokee detachments camped on the east bank to await a thaw. The cold, damp weather made the delay almost unbearable, as the following letter from George Hicks, the leader of a detachment, demonstrates. Marshall of one of the eight Cherokee districts, Hicks had attended the Moravian mission school and had become a church member. Unlike John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, who also attended the Moravian

school, George Hicks continued to oppose removal, and his continuing commitment to his Moravian faith and to the missionaries, along with the friendship of other Cherokee leaders, helped assuage suspicions about the Moravians, who opposed removal but remained silent publicly. Three Moravian missionaries originally planned to travel with Hicks to the West, but delays in his departure prompted them to go on ahead. His detachment, the last of the thirteen to leave the East, departed on November 4, 1838, with 1,118 people, and they arrived in the new Cherokee Nation in the West on March 5, 1839, with 1,039.

Hicks addressed his letter to Reverend William Van Vleck, a Moravian bishop and minister in Salem, North Carolina, and the original is in the Moravian Archives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Research rarely takes place in a vacuum: Scholars with similar interests usually share ideas and sources. This letter appears in this book as a result of that process. Our friend Anna Smith discovered the letter while pursuing her own research project and shared it with us. C. Daniel Crews, archivist at the Moravian Archives, kindly permitted us to publish it. The editors have standardized punctuation and spelling. To learn more about the Moravians and the Cherokees, see Edmund Schwarze, *History of the Moravian Missions among Southern Indian Tribes of the United States* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Times Publishing Company, 1923), or the more readable C. Daniel Crews, *Faith and Tears: The Moravian Mission among the Cherokee* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Moravian Archives, 2000).

GEORGE HICKS

Letter from the Trail of Tears

January 13, 1839

JOHNSON CTY ILLINOIS 13TH JANY. 1839

My Dear Friend & Brother,

Having a few leisure moments to spare & thinking you would like to hear from us, I cannot more agreeably employ a few moments than in addressing you a few lines. We left the Cherokee Nation East, the land of our nativity, on the first day of last November & took up the line of our March for the far West & through the Mercies of an all Wise Prov-

idence, who is ever ready to assist the oppressed & whose ear is ever open to their cries, have arrived thus far on our Journey West. The fall & Winter has been very cold & we have necessarily Suffered a great [deal] from exposure, from cold & from fatigue. Our people, a great many of them were very poor & very destitute of clothing & of the means of rendering themselves comfortable. We done all in our power to remedy their destitute situation & contributed very much to their comfort by supplying them, so far as we could, with clothing Blankets & shoes, but still we have Suffered a great deal with sickness & have lost since the 21st of October last about 35, a great proportion of them were aged & children. Our numbers are probably over 1100 & so large a train to see to, to attend to their wants & to watch over required a great deal of care & industry & caused a great anxiety of mind & so much responsibility added to the fatigue of travelling brought upon me a spell of sickness from which I thought I should not recover, but through the the mercies of an all wise providence, I have in a good degree recovered my health. We are now lying within about 20 miles of the Mississippi river which we could not cross on account of Ice. We have been lying by about two weeks & have not been travelling on account of their [sic] being ahead of us two detachments of Cherokees who must cross before we can cross. The Mississippi has been full of large quantities of floating Ice, which at times rendered it impassable, but they still keep crossing & I am in hopes we will get over in one or two weeks. We will start in the Morning again on our Journey West. The roads are in very bad Order as the ground was frozen very deep & there has been for the last ten days a general thaw, not even any frost, together with a good deal of wet which probably will make them almost impassable, but we must necessarily calculate on suffering a great deal from hardships & exposure before we yet reach our homes in the far West. We look to the Almighty for strength & protection to enable us to reach the place of destination—As yet we are hardly half way—& to look forward to the Termination of Journey & our toils we can not as yet—But hope for the best.

I Shall never so long as memory remains forget the kind friends, Brethren in Christ, which I met in last August in your country. The recollection of the happiness I felt among them & of their kindness & hospitality affords to me a pleasing reflection & shows the happiness a christian community can enjoy with one another when all are united in the bonds of brotherly love and affection. I solicit from you & from my dear friends and Brothers in Christ an Interest in your prayers at a

throne of grace for continuance of Divine favor & for protection. My family are all in the enjoyment of as good health as we could expect. I should be Extremely happy when leisure offers to hear from you & my Christian friends when we arrive West

& Believe me I ever Remain
Your friend & Brother in christ

Respectfully
George Hicks

Rev. Wm. Van Vleck

REMOVAL THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES

In early summer 1838, United States soldiers rounded up most Cherokees and imprisoned them in stockades to await deportation. Emotions no doubt ranged from indignation to anger to terror to resignation as people abandoned their homes and belongings. Stories abounded of families inadvertently separated and children accidentally left behind in the confusion. The hot, crowded conditions of the stockades ultimately gave way to the seemingly endless journey west. Most detachments took about five to six months to cover the thousand miles between the Cherokees' old home and their new. Some people rode in wagons or on horses while others walked the entire way. Fatigue, disease, and ultimately the cold took a heavy toll.

Rebecca Neugin was three years old when she made the journey west with her family. Her parents and brother no doubt augmented her memory by frequent recounting of the family's experience on the Trail of Tears. She shared her personal account with Grant Foreman, an Oklahoma historian, in 1932 when she was nearing one hundred years of age, and Foreman published the interview in his *Indian Removal*.

Do you think that this account of removal as experienced by a very small child and retold by her at an advanced age has historical value? Should a historian use family stories that are handed down orally? How does this account compare with those of Evan Jones and George Hicks, which were written at the time of removal rather than nearly a hundred years later?

REBECCA NEUGIN

Recollections of Removal

1932

When the soldiers came to our house my father wanted to fight, but my mother told him that the soldiers would kill him if he did and we surrendered without a fight. They drove us out of our house to join other prisoners in a stockade. After they took us away my mother begged them to let her go back and get some bedding. So they let her go back and she brought what bedding and a few cooking utensils she could carry and had to leave behind all of our other household possessions. My father had a wagon pulled by two spans of oxen to haul us in. Eight of my brothers and sisters and two or three widow women and children rode with us. My brother Dick who was a good deal older than I was walked along with a long whip which he popped over the backs of the oxen and drove them all the way. My father and mother walked all the way also. The people got so tired of eating salt pork on the journey that my father would walk through the woods as we traveled, hunting for turkeys and deer which he brought into camp to feed us. Camp was usually made at some place where water was to be had and when we stopped and prepared to cook our food other emigrants who had been driven from their homes without opportunity to secure cooking utensils came to our camp to use our pots and kettles. There was much sickness among the emigrants and a great many little children died of whooping cough.

REBUILDING THE CHEROKEE NATION

In 1841 Ethan Allen Hitchcock traveled west to investigate charges of corruption in the removal of the southern Indians. In addition to writing a scathing report on the government's Indian policy, which was suppressed, he kept a diary of his travels. He visited many Cherokee homes and dined at Cherokee tables. What he saw in the Cherokee Nation was a people rebuilding. Only two years after their arrival, the Cherokees were tilling fields, sending their children to school, and attending Council meetings. Although there was political turmoil and considerable violence, the lives of most Cherokees seemed to be returning to normal. Certainly suffering continued, but the Cherokees

seemed determined to put removal behind them and look to the future. How does this account of the Cherokees compare with that written by John Ridge in 1828?

The following selection is from Grant Foreman, ed., *A Traveler in Indian Territory: The Journal of Ethan Allen Hitchcock, Later Major General in the United States Army* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1930). The best study of the period following removal is William G. McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees' Struggle for Sovereignty, 1839-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). You can find a good bibliographic essay by Rennard Strickland in Morris L. Wardell, *A Political History of the Cherokee Nation, 1838-1907* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938).

ETHAN ALLEN HITCHCOCK

Journal

1841

Dwight Mission at Jacob Hitchcock's (my cousin from Brimfield, Mass.), Nov. 23, 1841. Left Fort Smith this morning and entered the Cherokee nation on horseback. Dined 17 miles at a Mr. Lowry's a Cherokee High Sheriff. Lowry not at home—his wife gave me venison, bacon, eggs, fresh butter and good corn bread on a table covered with a perfectly clean cotton cloth, in crockery ware (coffee, sugar and milk must be included), and she charged but two bits—fifty cents for two, for I had a guide with me. Lowry lives in a good log house floored and well secured against weather. His wife, about 30, large but good looking woman neatly dressed in a check frock. Her little girl about 10, also neatly dressed in check. There was nothing to distinguish appearances from those of many of our border people except the complexion (Cherokee) and superior neatness. Saw a spinning wheel and some hanks of spun cotton hanging in the passage between the two log houses under one roof.

Country today, wooded, mostly oak, not very dense except in the bottom along the river. Upland soil, medium, country rolling near the mission, almost hilly and rocky. Passed several log houses, with enclosures of several acres—upwards of 100 in one instance—trees

merely girdled and left to decay. Saw corn and pumpkins, hogs, fowls and cattle, two waggons and some oxen and horses; a fine looking negro at Lowry's was "snaking" in trees with two yoke of oxen. The trees entire and nearly as large as my body.

24th, visited the school; Miss Hannah Moore from Connecticut, is a teacher; about 25 years of age not overly handsome, has about 30 scholars, all girls except one, ages from about 6 to 16, quite fair, some with light hair and eyes, recited in arithmetic, plain addition and multiplication examples. Saw some writing, pretty fair and heard some respectable reading—mean for any school. Girls behaved well, were under good discipline, well but plainly dressed. The whole expense of this establishment is paid by the Board of Foreign Missions at Boston. Teachers have no salary but are provided with everything. Stores sent from Boston on estimates yearly from this place. Actual expense here for farming, etc., paid by drafts on Boston. I do not think I saw any but mixed blood in school. . . .

Mr. F.[ield] says the people elect the members of the Committee and Council for two years; they elect the sheriffs also, two committees and council and one sheriff for each of the 8 districts. The people elect the principal chief and assistant principal chief; and the committee and council act upon the nomination of the judges by the principal chief. They have a Supreme Court and Circuit Courts and other inferior Courts. The present committee and council is the first under the new constitution. In cases of appeal from the Circuit Court, the papers are sealed and passed by the Sheriff to the upper court. All proceedings are recorded. . . .

Tallequah, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, Tuesday Nov. 30, 1841. Arrived from Fort Gibson, 3 p.m. I rode in company with Mr. Drew a partner of Mr. Field's, a half-breed over 40 years of age, speaking good English but, as he told me, without any education but what he has picked up since he grew to manhood. Said he could read and write. We rode some 18 or 20 miles together and I kept him talking nearly all the way. He emigrated with his father in 1809 to this country, has traveled to the north since he grew up (Philadelphia, etc.). He says the ancient customs of the nation are all gone, the green corn and other dances, marriages of men with but one woman except with the most wild of the Cherokees. Knows of but one man of the half-breeds who has two wives, a Mr. Vann who has two distinct and large families, not living under the same roof—is wealthy. He says a man wishing to be married is obliged to procure a license from the clerk of the Circuit Court. Upon this any judge or clergyman may marry the

couple; certifies the marriage on the back of the license which is then deposited with the Court. They have a number of preachers among them, some who do not speak English at all. . . .

As we approached Tallequah we met several persons riding out, two women among them, well dressed and covered with shawls, the men well dressed with hats and all are riding good horses. These people, said I, don't look very wild. Mr. Drew was flattered. Presently we met another party and among them I found one of the Vann's, the Treasurer of the Nation, whom I knew in Washington last summer. We shook hands cordially.

As we came in sight of the capital, I saw a number of log houses arranged in order with streets; or one street at all events, was clearly visible but the houses were very small. One house was painted: "The Council sit there"—"The Committee sit there"; (some distance off) "to the left, the principal chief stays"—we saw a number of people "There are cooks, public cooks we call them" said Mr. Drew, "along those houses, meat etc., is furnished to them and they cook for the public. Everybody can go to the public tables. See there," said he, "you see some eating dinner." I saw some 20 at one table. "The nation pays the expense." We passed the centre of the town, "I live" said Mr. Drew "with a cousin over yonder. You had better go to Mr. Wolfe's on the hill" pointing in the direction I was riding. He politely offered to show me everything and we parted. . . .

I have seen a number of people and heard much which has left a general impression. It would be difficult to recall the particulars. Lewis Ross the merchant is wealthy and lives in considerable style. His house is of the cottage character, clapboarded and painted, his floor carpetted, his furniture elegant, cane bottomed chairs, of high finish, mahogany sofa, two superior mahogany Boston rocking chairs, mahogany ladies work table with drawers, a very superior Chickering piano on which his unmarried daughter, a young lady of about 17 or 18, just from school at Rawway in New Jersey, plays some waltzes, and sings some songs. She is lively and pretty with rich flowing curls, very fine eyes and beautiful regular ivory teeth. She has two cousins, twins, Misses Nave, 16 about, modest fair looking girls who have not the confidence and presence of mind of Miss Ross whose accomplishments perhaps overawe them. Mrs. Lewis Ross is a portly fine looking woman who has just returned from a 3 year absence superintending the education of her daughter. A married daughter Mrs. Murrill was also there and her husband a white man who seems to be in partnership with Lewis Ross. Mr. Lewis Ross told me he sold as a merchant

no ornaments of any consequence, that the Cherokees bought nothing of that kind now, he sold a great proportion of domestics, some ready-made clothing, especially pantaloons and overcoats, and a great many shoes. Of the latter article the Cherokees make a great use almost dispensing with moccasins.

REMOVAL 150 YEARS LATER

Removal remains a central event in the historical consciousness of modern Cherokees. Most families have removal stories, and all Cherokees keenly feel the injustice of removal and the loss of their ancestral lands. They sing hymns, such as "One Drop of Blood" and "Orphan Child," that they associate with removal. Exhibits in tribal museums, outdoor dramas in Oklahoma and North Carolina, and the Trail of Tears Art Show commemorate removal. Cherokee artists, including Donald Vann and Dorothy Sullivan, use removal as a theme in their paintings, and Cherokee novelists have written about removal—in particular, Robert J. Conley in *Mountain Windsong* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992) and Diane Glancy in *Pushing the Bear* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1996). The Trail of Tears Association works in conjunction with the National Park Service to mark sites along the route taken by the Cherokees and the graves of those who traveled it. Three distinct, federally recognized Cherokee tribes exist today—the Cherokee Nation (population 220,000) and the United Keetoowah Band (population 10,000) in Oklahoma and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (population 12,500) in western North Carolina—but the members of all three tribes join together periodically for two events that commemorate removal. The Trail of Tears Singing, a gospel music festival, takes place in western North Carolina where the ancestors of the Eastern Band managed to avoid removal, and a joint council of the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band convenes at Red Clay in Tennessee, the site of the last council meeting before removal. Former Cherokee Nation chief Wilma Mankiller's "tear dress" and current chief Chad Smith's colorful sashed coat, which they sometimes wear on public occasions, are styles from the removal era.

Mankiller, who served as principal chief from 1985 to 1995, has written an autobiography, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), that intertwines her life and Cherokee history. Her feelings about removal are unambiguous, as is her conviction that Cherokees must draw strength from their history and culture

in order to live satisfying lives in the modern world. As you read the following excerpt, consider the intersection of past and present. In what ways does the council at Red Clay represent the past? What modern issues did the two Cherokee tribes who met there discuss? Do you see any connections?

WILMA MANKILLER

Reflections on Removal

1993

During the winter of 1838–1839, thousands of my people died on a forced removal from our Cherokee homes in the southeastern United States to present northeastern Oklahoma, where I now live. Some of my own kinspeople came to this land during that time. The routes the federal soldiers forced our tribe to take were known as *Nunna daul Tsunyi*, which in Cherokee means literally, “the trail where we cried.” In English, the removal became known as the Trail of Tears.

It was in March of 1839 when the last of the groups of Cherokees arrived in this area. One hundred fifty years later, in 1989, our tribe observed the sesquicentennial of that journey. Before it was decided that we should recognize the historic date, we had considerable discussion and hesitation because of sensitivity about the entire removal process that lingers to this day. We ultimately settled on a commemoration only after some wagon-train hobbyists, who were not affiliated with the tribe, retraced the Trail of Tears. We needed to set the record straight. Many of our people did not make the trip in wagon trains. Far from it. They had neither that option nor that luxury. Old ones and small children were placed in wagons, but many of the Cherokees made that trek by foot or were herded onto boats. Some were in shackles. Thousands perished or were forever scarred in body, mind, and soul.

It was not a friendly removal. It was ugly and unwarranted. For too many Cherokees, it was deadly. The worst part of our holocaust was that it also meant the continued loss of tribal knowledge and traditions. So when we marked that infamous date 150 years later, there could be no celebration. There were no festivities. Nobody smiled.

There was absolutely nothing to be happy about. It was a solemn observance, a very emotional time. We regarded the removal as something that happened to our family—something very bad that happened to our family. It was a tragedy. It brought us pain that never seemed to leave. Still, for me, the removal commemoration at Tablequah did not have the historical impact on our people that an event five years earlier had.

It was in 1984 at Red Clay, Tennessee. It was a reunion of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and the Eastern Band of Cherokees. During the removal in the late 1830s, several hundred Cherokees evaded the soldiers. They escaped to the mountains and remained in hiding. Those people formed the nucleus of the Eastern Band of Cherokees, now living on the Qualla Reservation in North Carolina. The meeting at Red Clay in 1984 was the first gathering of the two Cherokee groups since the removal. The reunion was very emotional. I stepped into the circle where Cherokee meetings had been held such a long time ago. I felt the anger and passion of my ancestors as they had gathered to discuss whether to fight to the death for the right to remain in our ancestral homeland, or to cooperate with the federal removal.

Besides the formal joint council meetings at Red Clay, which I co-chaired, there were wonderful ceremonial events. One of the most interesting was a stickball game. It is said that in the old days, stickball was sometimes played to settle disputes instead of going to war with another tribe. There are several variations of the game, but all of them are played in an open field. In one version, each player enters the field with a pair of ball sticks, one in each hand. The sticks are about two feet long and curved at one end, then laced with rawhide to form a kind of a racket. The ball is small and hard and covered with rawhide. Sometimes a pole, with a fish or another symbol from nature placed on top of it, serves as the goal. The object of the game is to score by capturing the ball in a ball stick, then throwing it toward the goal, striking the symbol on top of the pole.

No matter what version is played, it is a rough game with few rules. It can become extremely dangerous when the players begin to swing their ball sticks. I remember that at the stickball game at Red Clay, an ambulance was standing by in case one of the players was injured.

Today, when stickball is played in Oklahoma at the ceremonial grounds, both women and men compete. Stickball is an exciting game, and one of the few physical games I have ever really enjoyed. Teams are divided into male and female. Some women play stickball

well into their seventies. The men carry ball sticks and the women use their hands. Some people say women are not allowed to use ball sticks because they have so many grievances against men, they might use the sticks as weapons of punishment.

Another important symbolic event at Red Clay was the lighting of an eternal flame by the two Cherokee groups. The flame was ignited by torches that had been lighted a few days earlier at Cherokee, North Carolina. The torches were carried by Eastern Cherokee runners along 150 miles of mountainous road. I will never forget the sight of the young Cherokee runners holding the torches high above their heads as they ran into Red Clay for our bittersweet reunion. Thousands of people were there to welcome them and to wish the Cherokees well.

The reunion at Red Clay was the beginning of regular meetings between the two Cherokee councils to discuss and act on matters of concern for all Cherokees. It also gave us an opportunity to provide public education about our history, for there is little accurate information about what modern native people are really like. There is a vacuum. Until recent times, most white Americans knew about native people only from what they saw in John Wayne-type movies.

Even in Oklahoma—in this land where so many Native Americans reside—plenty of people imagine that the state's history begins with the land run of 1889. That is because they think only in terms of white history. Our people had already been in Oklahoma for a couple of generations, and other native people had been living here long before that. We were the first ones to make this place hospitable. We had already settled this land for many years before the whites even arrived. Although it is so crucial for us to focus on the good things—our tenacity, our language and culture, the revitalization of tribal communities—it is also important that we never forget what happened to our people on the Trail of Tears. It was indeed our holocaust.

Chronology of the Cherokee Removal (c. 1700–2003)

In the chronology, dates in boldface pertain to the Cherokees; dates in regular type, to non-Cherokee events.

- c. **1700** First Cherokee contact with British traders.
- 1756– French and Indian War (Seven Years War).
- 1763
- 1760**– Cherokee War and first invasion of Cherokee towns.
- 1761**
- 1763 Proclamation from the Crown prohibits settlement west of the Appalachians.
- 1776– American Revolution.
- 1783
- 1776** Colonial invasion of Cherokee towns.
- 1781– Articles of Confederation.
- 1789
- 1783** North Carolina grants Cherokee land to its citizens; Cherokees cede land to Georgia.
- 1783 Peace of Paris ends the American Revolution.
- 1785** Treaty of Hopewell, the first treaty between Cherokees and United States, establishes peaceful relations.
- 1788 U.S. Constitution ratified.
- 1789 George Washington inaugurated.
- 1790 Congress passes first Indian Trade and Intercourse Act.
- 1791** Treaty of Holston proposes the “civilization” program.
- 1793 Invention of the cotton gin makes cotton a more popular export than deerskins.
- 1794** Chickamaugas make peace.

- 1796** George Washington initiates "civilization" program among Cherokees.
- 1796 John Adams elected president.
- 1800** Moravians establish mission among the Cherokees.
- 1800 Thomas Jefferson elected President.
- 1802** The United States and Georgia enter into a compact regarding future Indian land cessions.
- 1803 Louisiana Purchase.
- 1804 Moravians open a mission school.
- 1808** Cherokees' first recorded laws establish a police force and protect patrilineal inheritance.
- 1808 James Madison elected President.
- ~~1808~~ First major Cherokee migration west of the Mississippi.
- 1810**
- 1810** Cherokees outlaw blood vengeance in accidental deaths.
- ~~1812~~ War of 1812.
- 1815
- ~~1813~~ Creek War in which Cherokees fought with U.S. soldiers and
- 1814** "friendly Creeks" against "Red Stick" Creeks.
- 1816 James Monroe elected President.
- 1817** American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and Baptist missionaries arrive among the Cherokees. Cherokees adopt articles of government that give only the National Council the authority to cede lands. Cherokees exchange eastern land for territory in Arkansas.
- 1819** Cherokees cede additional territory in the East in exchange for western lands; some Cherokees in North Carolina receive reservations outside the Nation.
- 1821** Sequoyah introduces a Cherokee syllabary.
- 1822** Cherokees establish a supreme court.
- 1824 John Quincy Adams elected President.
- ~~1826~~ Creeks cede their last land in Georgia. Georgia asserts state sovereignty over the Cherokee Nation.
- 1827** Cherokees write a constitution asserting national sovereignty and providing for legislative, executive, and judicial branches.
- 1828** The *Cherokee Phoenix* begins publication. Arkansas Cherokees relocate to Indian Territory.
- 1828 Andrew Jackson elected President.

- 1828— Georgia extends state jurisdiction over Cherokee Nation and nullifies Cherokee law.
- 1829— Jeremiah Everts publishes "William Penn" essays. Andrew Jackson announces his removal policy.
- 1830 Lewis Cass publishes his defense of Jackson's removal policy. Indian Removal Act authorizes the president to negotiate removal treaty. Georgia outlaw's Cherokee national government, requires loyalty oath for white citizens living within the Cherokee Nation, and creates the Georgia Guard to enforce state law within the Cherokee Nation.
- 1831 In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, the U.S. Supreme Court declares the Cherokee Nation a "domestic dependent nation."
- 1832 In *Worcester v. Georgia*, the U.S. Supreme Court upholds Cherokee sovereignty in Georgia.
- 1835 Treaty of New Echota, negotiated between the Treaty Party and the United States, provides for removal of Cherokees to lands west of the Mississippi.
- 1836 U.S. Senate ratifies Treaty of New Echota.
- 1836 Martin Van Buren elected President.
- 1838— Removal of the Cherokee Nation.
- 1839 Execution of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot for Cherokee civil war.
- 1839— Cherokee civil war.
- 1846 Treaty of 1846 unites the warring Cherokee factions.
- 1851 Cherokee Nation opens Female and Male Seminaries.
- 1861— United States Civil War.
- 1865 Reconstruction treaty reestablishes relations between Cherokee Nation and United States.
- 1868 Congress recognizes Eastern Band of Cherokees as distinct tribe.
- 1889 Eastern Band of Cherokees incorporates under North Carolina law.
- 1898 Curtis Act makes allotment of Cherokee Nation mandatory.
- 1901 Cherokee—United States allotment agreement.
- 1907 Oklahoma statehood.

- 1934** Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act extends authorization to incorporate to Cherokee Nation.
- 1946** Congress authorizes the organization of the United Keetowah Band.
- 1971** Election of W. W. Keeler as principal chief of Cherokee Nation, the first popular election for principal chief in the twentieth century.
- 1976** Cherokee Nation ratifies first modern constitution.
- 2003** The Cherokee Nation approves a new constitution that affirms its sovereignty.

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