

BACKGROUND

By the early 19th century, the United States felt threatened by England and Spain, who held land in the western continent. American settlers continued to clamor for more land. Thomas Jefferson proposed the creation of a buffer zone between U. S. and European holdings, to be inhabited by eastern American Indians. The plan would also allow for American expansion westward from the original colonies to the Mississippi River.

President Andrew Jackson set a policy to relocate eastern Indians. In 1830, the policy was endorsed when Congress passed the Indian Removal Act to force those remaining to move west of the Mississippi. By the late 1830's, Indian nations located between the original states and the Mississippi River, including Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole, had signed over 40 treaties ceding most of their lands to the United States. Between 1830 and 1850, about 100,000 American Indians living between Michigan, Louisiana, and Florida moved west after the U. S. government coerced treaties or used the U. S. Army against those who resisted. Many were treated brutally. An estimated 3,500 Creek died in Alabama and on their westward journey. Some were transported in chains.

THE CHEROKEE

The Cherokee had historically occupied lands in eight south-eastern states. Calling themselves "Ani Yunwiya," which means "The Principal People," they had developed a system of social order and participatory democracy based on sacred law long before the white man arrived. Cherokee society was organized through seven mother-descent clans. It was through the mother that children gained clan identity, which afforded them citizenship. Meeting in a seven-sided structure, both men and women participated in the general council. Principal Chiefs were elected, and the Beloved Woman was speaker for the Women's Council. As the number of European settlers increased, many Cherokee inter-married with them, adopting and adapting to European customs, including the disenfranchisement of women. Gradually, the people as a whole turned to an agricultural economy while being pressured to give up traditional homelands.

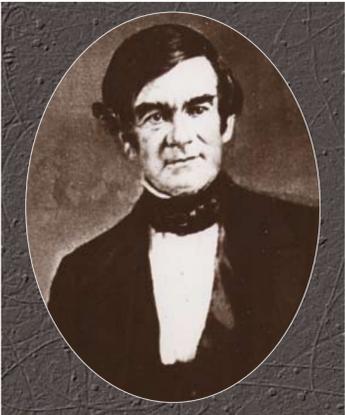
"When the first lands were sold by Cherokees, in 1721, a part of the tribe bitterly opposed the sale, saying...the whites would never be satisfied, but would soon want a little more, and a little more again, until there would be little left for the Indians. Finding [they could not] prevent the treaty, they determined to leave their old homes forever and go far into the West, beyond the great River, where the white man could never follow them."

Legend of the "Lost Cherokees"
James Mooney, Ethnologist
who lived among the Cherokee from 1887 to 1890

During the time of French and Spanish occupation of the Louisiana Territory, some Cherokee had already begun to migrate to what is now northern Arkansas and southeast Missouri and to other areas west of the Mississippi. Their kinsmen who remained in the east referred to them as the "Lost Cherokees." In a letter to President Monroe, drafted on November 2, 1819, Chief John Ross referred to the Cherokee west of the Mississippi River as

"...the Cherokees on the St. Francis River who had moved there great many years before."

By the 1820's, Sequoyah's syllabary brought literacy and a central governing system with a written constitution. In 1830—the same year the Indian Removal Act was passed—gold was discovered on Cherokee lands. The State of Georgia held lotteries



Cherokee Chief John Ross
Courtesy: Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society

to give Cherokee land and gold rights to whites. Cherokees were not allowed to conduct tribal business, contract, testify in courts against whites or mine for gold. The Cherokees challenged Georgia in the U. S. Supreme Court and were successful. Although most Cherokee opposed removal, a minority led by Major John Ridge felt that they might survive as a people only if they signed a treaty with the U. S.

In December, 1835, the U. S. sought out this minority to effect a treaty at New Echota, Georgia. Only 300 to 500 Cherokee were there—none were elected officials of the Cherokee Nation. Twenty signed the treaty, ceding all Cherokee territory east of the Mississippi to the U. S. in exchange for \$5 million and new homelands in Indian Territory. More than 15,000 Cherokee protested the illegal treaty. Yet, on May 23, 1836, the Treaty of New Echota was ratified by the U. S. Senate—by just one vote.

Later, from his new home on Honey Creek in the Indian Territory, John Ridge, one of the signers of the Treaty of New Echota, would write in a letter,

"John Ridge signed his death warrant when he signed that treaty. And no one knows it better than he....John Ridge may not die tomorrow...but sooner or later he will have to yield his life as the penalty for signing."

A Cherokee law, originally drafted by Ridge himself and passed by the National Council in 1828, specified the death penalty for any Cherokee who agreed to sell or dispose of tribal lands.

Most Cherokee, including Chief John Ross, did not believe that they would be forced to move. In May, 1838, federal troops and state militias began the roundup of the Cherokee into concentration camps. In spite of warnings to troops to treat the Cherokee kindly, the roundup proved harrowing. Families were separated—the elderly and ill forced out at gunpoint—people given only moments to collect cherished possessions. White looters followed, burning or occupying homesteads as Cherokees were led away.

"I saw the helpless Cherokees arrested and dragged from their homes, and driven at the bayonet point into stockades. And in the chill of a drizzling rain on an October morning I saw them loaded like cattle or sheep into six hundred and forty-five wagons and started toward the west."

Private John G. Burnett
Captain Abraham McClellan's Company
2nd Regiment, 2nd Brigade, Mounted Infantry

Three groups left in the Summer, traveling from present-day Chattanooga by rail, boat and wagon, primarily on the Water Route. But river levels were too low for navigation. One group traveling overland in Arkansas, suffered three to five deaths each day due to illness and drought. Fifteen thousand captives still awaited removal. Crowding, poor sanitation and drought made them miserable. Many died. The Cherokee asked to postpone removal until the Fall and to voluntarily remove themselves. The delay was granted, provided they remain in internment camps until travel resumed.

By November 12, 1838, groups of 1,000 began the 800 mile overland march to the west. The last party, including Chief Ross, went by water. Now, heavy autumn rains and hundreds of wagons on the muddy route made roads impassable; little grazing and game could be found to supplement government rations. Two-thirds of the ill-equipped Cherokee were trapped between the ice-bound Ohio and Mississippi Rivers during January.

"The sick and feeble were carried in waggons—about as comfortable for traveling as a New England ox cart with a covering over it—a great many ride on horseback and multitudes go on foot—even aged females, apparently nearly ready to drop into the grave, were traveling with heavy burdens attached to the back—on the sometimes frozen ground, and sometimes muddy streets, with no covering for the feet except what nature had given them."

A Native of Maine Traveling in the Western Country

Although suffering from a cold, Quatie Ross, the wife of Chief John Ross, gave her only blanket to a child. Mrs. Ross became sick and died of pneumonia at Little Rock. A full blood survivor of the march remembered,

"Long time we travel on way to new land. People feel bad when they leave old nation. Women cry and make sad wails. Children cry and many men cry, and all look sad like when friends die, but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on go towards West. Many days pass and people die very much. We bury close by Trail."

Another survivor told how his father got sick and died; then, his mother; then, one by one, his five brothers and sisters.

"One each day. Then all are gone."

By March 1839, all survivors had arrived in the west. No one knows how many died throughout the ordeal, but the trip was especially hard on infants, children and the elderly. Missionary doctor Elizur Butler, who accompanied the Cherokee, estimated that over 4,000 died—nearly a fifth of the Cherokee population.

In August 1839, John Ross was elected Principal Chief of the reconstituted Cherokee Nation. Tahlequah, in what is now the state of Oklahoma, was its capital. It remains tribal headquarters for the Cherokee Nation today. About 1,000 Cherokee in Tennessee and North Carolina escaped the roundup. They gained recognition in 1866, establishing their tribal government in 1868 in Cherokee, North Carolina. They are known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Today, the Cherokee are the second largest Indian nation in the United States.

THE TRAIL OF TEARS THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST MISSOURI REGION

Before the forced removal of the Cherokee was ordered by General Winfield Scott on May 23, 1838, several groups of Cherokee had already started voluntarily for Oklahoma. Late in 1837, a party numbering 365, with B. B. Cannon as conductor, left Tennessee and set out on what is now called the Northern Route, which passed through Missouri. During the forced removal in 1838, twelve of the thirteen detachments of Cherokee passed through Missouri, all but one entering the state in Cape Girardeau County.

That detachment, headed by John Benges, left Fort Payne, Alabama and traveled northwest through Tennessee and Kentucky. Crossing the Mississippi River in Mississippi County, the party continued northwest to Benton then north almost to Cape Girardeau before turning southwest and continuing through Bollinger County.

Passing Through Cape Girardeau County

Eleven detachments of Cherokee made their way to Oklahoma over the Northern Route chartered by Cannon. Traveling in wagons and on horseback, they crossed from Willard's Landing in Illinois to Moccasin Springs on horse ferry boats at Green's Ferry near what is now Trail of Tears State Park and at Smith's Ferry at Bainbridge, several miles south. They crossed the river during the dead of Winter in December, 1838, and January and February of 1839.

Rain, snow, freezing cold, hunger and disease took their toll on the Cherokee emigrants as they waited to cross into Missouri. Falling temperatures caused the surface of the river to freeze before all of the detachments could be ferried across. The ice prevented both boat and horses from moving. Many Cherokee died in camps on both sides of the river while waiting for the journey to resume.

Reverend Daniel S. Buttrick accompanied the detachment led by Elizah Hicks which had crossed at Smith's Ferry. From his camp in Bainbridge, he wrote,

"We are told the detachment will probably be able to proceed on the journey tomorrow. It will then have been three weeks since our arrival on the other (west) bank of the river....During this time five individuals have died, viz. one old Cherokee woman, one black man, and three Cherokee children, making in all since we crossed the Tennessee River twenty six deaths."

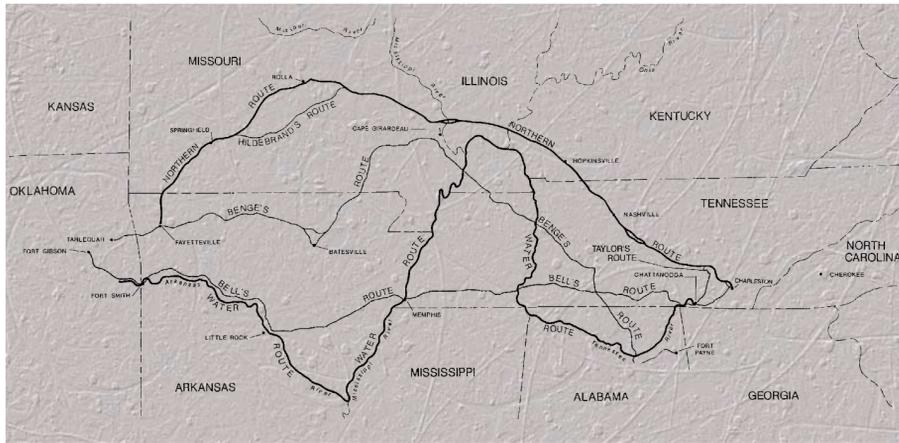
The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail Automobile Tour Route enters Missouri across the Mississippi River bridge in Cape Girardeau, and using modern highways, parallels the Northern Route through the Southeast Missouri Region. In Cape Girardeau, travelers on the Automobile Tour Route can visit the 1883 Glenn House (Friday - Sunday, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., April-December), admire the hilltop setting of the old Common Pleas Courthouse or visit the campus of Southeast Missouri State University.

For more information about the Cherokee in Missouri, visit the office of the Northern Cherokee Nation of the Old Louisiana Territory on Independence Street (Tuesday through Saturday). With over a thousand members, the Northern Cherokee Nation is recognized by both the State of Missouri and the State of Arkansas and has headquarters in Columbia, Missouri. Over 12,000 people in Missouri and Arkansas have identified themselves as Cherokee.

Trail of Tears State Park, located approximately 10 miles north of Cape Girardeau on Missouri Highway 177, should not be missed by visitors traveling the Automobile Tour Route. The Green's Ferry landing at Moccasin Springs is near the southern end of the park and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The park preserves the native woodlands much as they would have appeared to the Cherokee who camped there after crossing the Mississippi. It is here that Nancy Bushyhead Hildebrand (identified on a memorial to all of the Cherokee



Reverend Jesse Bushyhead
Photo from a painting by Charles Bird King (Courtesy: Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society)



who died on the Trail as "Princess Otahki") died and was buried. She was the sister of Rev. Jesse Bushyhead, who led one of the detachments. The park's Visitor and Interpretive Center offers museum displays relating to Cherokee history and the Trail of Tears, artifacts and books, and an excellent video program.

From Cape Girardeau, the Automobile Tour Route continues on Highway 72 to Jackson. Here, the Cherokee camped on Hubble Creek and then on Byrd Creek at the Widow Roberts' place. The Jackson Advertiser of December 26, 1838, reported,

"During the present week 1900 Cherokee Indians passed through town on their way; some of them have considerable wealth and make a very respectable appearance, but most of them are poor and exceedingly weak."

On February 16, 1839, the Advertiser again reported,

"The last detachment of emigrating Indians (Cherokee), consisting of about 1000, passed through this place yesterday on their way to their new home. The largest detachment in which there were 1800 passed the day before."

In historic Jackson, visitors will find a number of structures built before the Cherokee migration. McKendree Chapel (1819), located along Bainbridge Road, is the oldest Protestant church west of the Mississippi River. The detachment led by B. B. Cannon camped on the nearby Williams' farm on the way to Jackson. From the street, visitors can get a good view of the Old Rock House (1814) located on North Missouri Street, and the Welling Estate (1817) on Main Street—both homes much like those the Cherokee were forced to abandon in the east. The Oliver House in Jackson (1871) has been beautifully restored and is open to the public on the first Sunday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., from May to December.

Into Madison and St. Francois Counties

From Jackson, the Automobile Tour Route follows the winding path of Highway 72 through the wooded Ozark foothills to Fredericktown, a distance of 33 miles, and then turns north on U. S. Highway 67. In Fredericktown, the tour route passes the handsome 1899 Madison County Courthouse designed by Theodore Link. Just south on Main Street, Cordelia's Bed and Breakfast occupies a two-story brick home built in 1835. The building served as Union headquarters during the Civil War Battle of Fredericktown.

While the Northern Route veers northwest from Jackson through the village of Yount in Perry County, across the extreme northeast corner of Madison County and on into St. Francois County, one detachment of Cherokee, possibly led by Peter Hildebrand, did continue on into Fredericktown and then to Ironton to avoid the muddy, nearly impassable Northern Route to Farmington.

Theodore Pease Russell, whose family had settled in Iron County in 1838, recalled,

"There were about 2,000 Indians in this division. All the others had gone by way of Farmington, but the roads were so bad that this last division had to come this way along the Fredericktown Road and such a road at that time!"

Russell, who was 18 at the time, visited the Cherokee camp at the north end of the Arcadia Valley and later reminisced,

"I saw a group of girls playing at a sort of battledore. When I heard the laughter of the boys and girls, I could hardly realize I was in an Indian camp, among people who had been called savages."

From Fredericktown, the Automobile Tour Route travels north to Farmington through low rolling hills, where it again meets the Northern Route. In his Journal of Occurrences With a Party of Cherokee Emigrants, B. B. Cannon, who led the party of Cherokee which first took the Northern Route, recorded on November 19th, 1837,

"Marched at 8 o'clock A. M., halted and encamped 1/2 past 4 o'clock at Wolf Creek, issued corn & fodder, 14 miles today."

The detachments which followed in the early months of 1839 also passed through the town. Rev. Daniel S. Buttrick, writing in his diary on February 21, 1839 noted,

"This morning we passed through Farmington, a pleasant village."

In Farmington, visitors on the Automobile Tour Route will find the Long House, the oldest remaining house in the community and possibly the only remaining structure in Farmington to have witnessed the passing of the thousands of suffering Cherokee through the town. The house was started as a one-room log cabin in 1833 and was expanded as the Long family grew. It is open to the public during the Country Days festival and by appointment.

The Annual Farmington Pow Wow, held the third weekend of each September, brings together American Indian dancers from the Cherokee tribe and many other tribes from throughout the United States. The Pow Wow features storytellers, gourd dancers, inter-tribal dancing and contest dancing, as well as vendor booths where handcrafted and other items are sold. For visitors traveling the Automobile Tour Route during the Fall, the Pow Wow is an event not to be missed. For additional information, contact the Farmington Chamber of Commerce.

In Missouri, as elsewhere along the Trail of Tears, the Cherokee endured sickness, cold, hunger, and the curious and sometimes hostile reaction of settlers along the way. Sometimes greeted with kindness and gifts of clothing or blankets, they were often taken advantage of by landowners charging tolls or merchants ready to sell goods or whiskey. On November 21, 1837, Cannon recorded in his journal,

"A considerable number drunk last night, obtained liquor at Farmington yesterday; had to get out of bed about midnight to quell the disorder; a refusal by several to march this morning."

While the Northern Route continued southwest from Farmington through Delassus and Doe Run, and then on west, the Automobile Tour Route turns north at Farmington and continues north on U. S. Highway 67 six miles to Park Hills. At the northern edge of St. Joe State Park just south of Park Hills, visitors can explore the mining museum at the Missouri Mines State Historic Site. The old milling complex was used by St. Joe Minerals Corporation in the days when Missouri's "Lead Belt" produced nearly 80% of the nation's mined lead. From Park Hills, the Automobile Tour Route turns southwest and travels over Missouri Highway 32 to Bismarck, a distance of seven miles, and continues on west out of the Region.

That the passage of the Trail of Tears through the Southeast Missouri Region left a lasting mark is undeniable. There are residents in every county of the Region who pride themselves on having Cherokee blood. Although some are descendants of the Cherokee who migrated to Southeast Missouri before the forced removal, others can trace their ancestry to marriages or adoptions directly related to the Cherokee passage. It should be remembered that, while death was a constant companion during the forced march, there was also new life. Some 71 children were born alongside the trail.



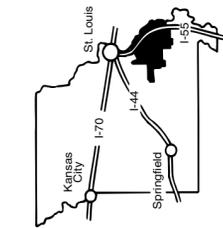
Courtesy: Missouri Department of Natural Resources

THE Trail OF Tears



in the SOUTHEAST MISSOURI REGION

WELCOME TO THE SOUTHEAST MISSOURI REGION



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Cover Painting: Allen with Broken Hearts by Cherokee artist Donald Vann. Copyright 1994 by Native American Images, P.O. Box 746, Austin, Texas 78767, all rights reserved.





Charity Along the Trail of Tears, a painting by Brother Mark Elder, C.M.
 Courtesy: Missouri Department of Natural Resources



American Indian dancers from many tribes participate in the Annual St. Francis River Pow Wow, held during the third weekend in September
 Courtesy: Linda Schlichter



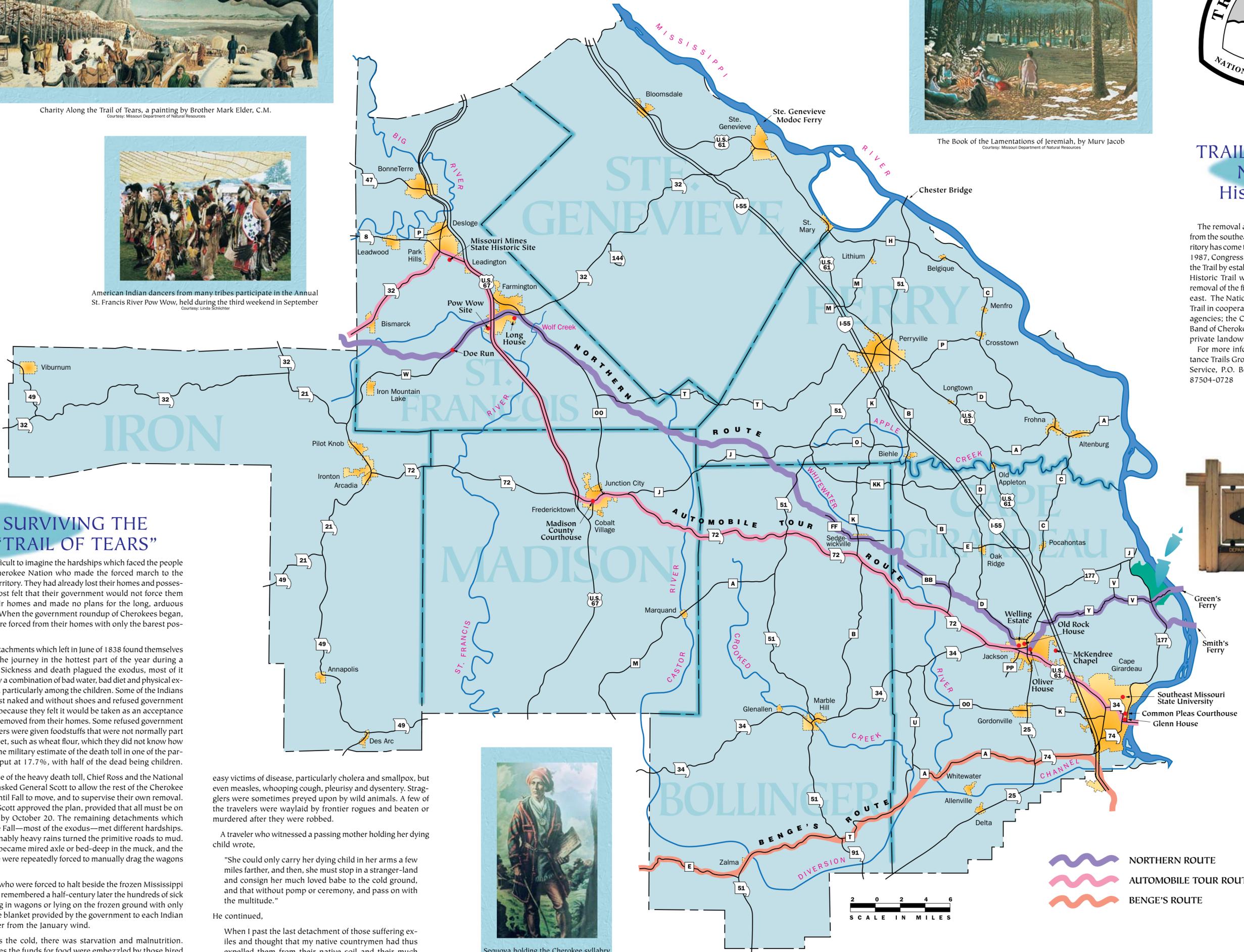
The Book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, by Murv Jacob
 Courtesy: Missouri Department of Natural Resources



TRAIL OF TEARS National Historic Trail

The removal and forced march of the Cherokee from the southeastern United States to Indian Territory has come to be known as the Trail of Tears. In 1987, Congress acknowledged the significance of the Trail by establishing the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail which commemorates the forced removal of the five civilized Indian tribes from the east. The National Park Service administers the Trail in cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies; the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; interested groups; and private landowners.

For more information, contact the Long Distance Trails Group Office, Santa Fe National Park Service, P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-0728



SURVIVING THE "TRAIL OF TEARS"

It is difficult to imagine the hardships which faced the people of the Cherokee Nation who made the forced march to the Indian Territory. They had already lost their homes and possessions. Most felt that their government would not force them from their homes and made no plans for the long, arduous journey. When the government roundup of Cherokees began, many were forced from their homes with only the barest possessions.

The detachments which left in June of 1838 found themselves making the journey in the hottest part of the year during a drought. Sickness and death plagued the exodus, most of it caused by a combination of bad water, bad diet and physical exhaustion, particularly among the children. Some of the Indians left almost naked and without shoes and refused government clothing because they felt it would be taken as an acceptance of being removed from their homes. Some refused government food; others were given foodstuffs that were not normally part of their diet, such as wheat flour, which they did not know how to use. One military estimate of the death toll in one of the parties was put at 17.7%, with half of the dead being children.

Because of the heavy death toll, Chief Ross and the National Council asked General Scott to allow the rest of the Cherokee to wait until Fall to move, and to supervise their own removal. General Scott approved the plan, provided that all must be on the road by October 20. The remaining detachments which left in the Fall—most of the exodus—met different hardships. Unseasonably heavy rains turned the primitive roads to mud. Wagons became mired axle or bed-deep in the muck, and the Cherokee were repeatedly forced to manually drag the wagons free.

Those who were forced to halt beside the frozen Mississippi River still remembered a half-century later the hundreds of sick and dying in wagons or lying on the frozen ground with only the single blanket provided by the government to each Indian for shelter from the January wind.

Besides the cold, there was starvation and malnutrition. Sometimes the funds for food were embezzled by those hired to provide it along the route. The later detachments often found that all of the wild game had been depleted by hunters from the first detachments which passed through. Weakened by the hunger and exertions of the trip, the Cherokee became

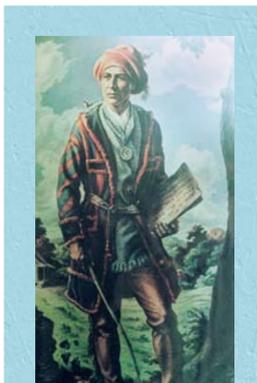
easy victims of disease, particularly cholera and smallpox, but even measles, whooping cough, pleurisy and dysentery. Stragglers were sometimes preyed upon by wild animals. A few of the travelers were waylaid by frontier rogues and beaten or murdered after they were robbed.

A traveler who witnessed a passing mother holding her dying child wrote,

"She could only carry her dying child in her arms a few miles farther, and then, she must stop in a stranger-land and consign her much loved babe to the cold ground, and that without pomp or ceremony, and pass on with the multitude."

He continued,

When I past the last detachment of those suffering exiles and thought that my native countrymen had thus expelled them from their native soil and their much loved homes, and that too in this inclement season of the year in all their suffering, I turned from the sight with feelings which language cannot express and wept like childhood then."



Sequoyia holding the Cherokee syllabary. Reproduction from an original painting by Charles Bank Wilson in the Oklahoma State Capitol
 Courtesy: Missouri Department of Natural Resources



- NORTHERN ROUTE
- AUTOMOBILE TOUR ROUTE
- BENGE'S ROUTE