

Trail of Tears in Warren County

Cardwell Mountain - Shellsford Trail of Tears

Shellsford received its name from James Shell, an early settler of the 1800's who established a gristmill on the Collins River near a river ford. The ruins of the mill may be seen by taking the trail across the access road which follows the original roadbed by the Collins River, and is located across from the canoe access area. The Cherokee's followed this route on their way to McMinnville and beyond, and were moved by the U. S. Army in detachments of 1,000 Indians from the Fall of 1838 thru 1839. Each detachment stopped at Shellsford for several days to rest, to grind their corn and care for their sick. In the cemetery of the Shellsford Baptist Church near the bridge one can find more than 500 graves, some of which contain the weary bodies of the Cherokees who suffered and died on the Trail of Tears.





TENNESSEE INFO: In the spring and summer of 1838, more than 15,000 Cherokee Indians were removed by the U.S. Army from their ancestral homeland in North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama. Held in concentration-like camps through the summer, they were then forced to travel over 1,000 miles, under adverse conditions to Indian Territory, which is now Oklahoma. Thousands died. The Cherokees came to call the event Nunahi-Duna-Dlo-Hilu-I or Trail Where They Cried.

This catastrophic journey, one of the darker events in American history, not only affected the Cherokee, but has symbolized the removal of the other Southeastern and Eastern Indian tribes. The grim result of U.S. Government American Indian Removal Policy, the forced relocations devastated American Indian cultures.

In 1987, Congress passed [Public Law 100-192](#), designating two of the routes taken by the Cherokee people in their removal as a National Historic Trail within the National Trails System. The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail is administered by the National Park Service.

Today you can contemplate the Trail of Tears as you visit sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. We want to help you have a safe and meaningful visit.

Remember that You're a Guest: Please respect your host's hospitality when you visit their certified sites. Leave everything as you find it. Summon owners only in emergencies. They retain the right to ask you to leave at any time. Obey signs - use designated parking areas - and limit your stay to the time necessary to appreciate the historic site.

Protect the Trail: Respect the features of the sites that you visit. Don't use metal detectors or dig at sites, collect artifacts, or remove anything. Some sites contain burials. Please respect these sacred places.

Stay Safe: Many parts of the historic routes are on road rights-of-way. Remain alert, and aware of your children's and pet's locations. Beware of traffic. Know where your nearest emergency help can be found.

Auto Tour Route

Auto tour route highways, closely following the historic land routes, are marked with the official [Trail Marker](#) to aid you in visiting Trail sites. Contact the [National Park Service](#) for more information.

Auto Route Map

[Detailed Maps](http://imgis.nps.gov/national_historic_trails.html) - http://imgis.nps.gov/national_historic_trails.html

Stop at local chambers of commerce and information centers to learn about Trail-related sites and other activities. Many Trail sites lack amenities; plan ahead - use public restrooms and other facilities before you visit sites.

Certified Trail Sites

Non-federal historic sites, Trail segments, and interpretive facilities become part of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail through certification - a voluntary process in which an owner or manager agrees to adhere to National Park Service standards for resource preservation and public enjoyment. Look for the official Trail marker at all certified locations. Updated lists of certified sites and facilities are issued periodically by the National Park Service's Long Distance Trails Group Office - Santa Fe.

Non-Certified Sites and Facilities

State, county, and city parks along the Trail route preserve Trail resources. Although not yet certified, they are open for public use.

Some sites on the Trail of Tears are privately owned, while many sites are on or along existing highways. Consult guide books and ask permission before going on private land.

Federal Sites

The historic Trail route passes through and by lands now managed by several federal agencies, such as the USDA Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the National Park Service. Some units of these agencies may provide interpretive information related to the Trail of Tears. Check locally or consult the National Park Service.

Between 1790 and 1830 the population of [Georgia](#) increased six-fold. The western push of the settlers created a problem. Georgians continued to take [Native American lands](#) and force them into the frontier. By 1825 the Lower Creek had been completely removed from the state under provisions of the Treaty of Indian Springs. By 1827 the [Creek](#) were gone.

Cherokee had long called western Georgia home. The [Cherokee Nation](#) continued in their enchanted land until 1828. It was then that the rumored [gold](#), for which [De Soto](#) had relentlessly searched, was discovered in the North Georgia mountains.

The Cherokees in 1828 were not nomadic savages. In fact, they had assimilated many European-style customs, including the wearing of gowns by Cherokee women. They built roads, schools and churches, had a system of [representational government](#), and were farmers and cattle ranchers. A Cherokee alphabet, the "[Talking Leaves](#)" was perfected by [Sequoyah](#).

In 1830 the Congress of the United States passed the "Indian Removal Act." Although many Americans were against the act, most notably Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett, it passed anyway. President Jackson quickly signed the bill into law. The Cherokees attempted to fight removal legally by challenging the removal laws in the Supreme Court and by establishing an independent Cherokee Nation. At first the court seemed to rule against the Indians. In Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, the Court refused to hear a case extending Georgia's laws on the Cherokee because they did not represent a sovereign nation. In 1832, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Cherokee on the same issue in Worcester v. Georgia. In this case Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the Cherokee Nation was sovereign, making the removal laws invalid. The Cherokee would have to agree to removal in a treaty. The treaty then would have to be ratified by the Senate.

By 1835 the Cherokee were divided and despondent. Most supported Principal Chief [John Ross](#), who fought the encroachment of whites starting with the 1832 land lottery. However, a minority (less than 500 out of 17,000 Cherokee in North Georgia) followed [Major Ridge](#), his son John, and [Elias Boudinot](#), who advocated removal. The Treaty of [New Echota](#), signed by Ridge and members of the Treaty Party in 1835, gave Jackson the legal document he needed to remove the First Americans. Ratification of the treaty by the United States Senate sealed the fate of the Cherokee. Among the few who spoke

out against the ratification were Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, but it passed by a single vote. In 1838 the United States began the removal to Oklahoma, fulfilling a promise the government made to Georgia in 1802. Ordered to move on the Cherokee, General John Wool resigned his command in protest, delaying the action. His replacement, General [Winfield Scott](#), arrived at New Echota on May 17, 1838 with 7000 men. Early that summer General Scott and the United States Army began the invasion of the Cherokee Nation.

In one of the saddest episodes of our brief history, men, women, and children were taken from their land, herded into [makeshift forts](#) with minimal facilities and food, then forced to march a thousand miles (Some made part of the trip by boat in equally horrible conditions). Under the generally indifferent army commanders, human losses for the first groups of Cherokee removed were extremely high. John Ross made an urgent appeal to Scott, requesting that the general let his people lead the tribe west. General Scott agreed. Ross organized the Cherokee into smaller groups and let them move separately through the wilderness so they could forage for food. Although the parties under Ross left in early fall and arrived in Oklahoma during the brutal winter of 1838-39, he significantly reduced the loss of life among his people. About 4000 Cherokee died as a result of the removal. The route they traversed and the journey itself became known as "[The Trail of Tears](#)" or, as a direct translation from Cherokee, "[The Trail Where They Cried](#)" ("*Nunna daul Tsunyah*").

Ironically, just as the [Creeks](#) killed Chief McIntosh for signing the Treaty of Indian Springs, the Cherokee killed [Major Ridge](#), his son and [Elias Boudinot](#) for signing the Treaty of New Echota. Chief [John Ross](#), who valiantly resisted the forced removal of the Cherokee, lost his wife Quatie in the march. And so a country formed fifty years earlier on the premise "...that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among these the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.." brutally closed the curtain on a culture that had done no wrong.

This map, designed and published by the National Parks Service in the [Trail of Tears](#) National Historic Trail brochure shows the individual major routes along which the Cherokee moved west in 1838-39.

Remember that the small groups of Cherokee would forage for food as they proceeded, so the map is only a general representation of the routes.

