

A56(418)

FEB 16 1984

Memorandum

To: Chief, Park Planning and Special Studies Division (763)  
Attention: Jeff Chidlaw

From: Chief Historian (418)

Subject: Task Directive--Trail of Tears

We have reviewed the draft directive and thank you for the opportunity to comment on it.

1. We believe defining the term "Trail of Tears" as the movement of Eastern Cherokee to Oklahoma is too narrow. A review of history texts almost universally indicates that the term has the broader meaning of the removal of the five civilized tribes--Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole, and Choctaw--to Oklahoma. One risks insult to those remaining tribes who suffered the loss and indignity of this forced removal by ignoring their part. We understand that the intent of Congress may narrow the bounds of the study, but every effort, we believe, should be expended to interpret this mandate broadly. Fort Mitchell, cited specifically in the legislation, was a concentration camp for the Creek Indians, a fact that suggests an intent broader than just the Cherokee removal story.

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2. We bring to your attention the National Historic Landmark study prepared by Ben Levy in 1973 entitled "Sites Associated with American Political and Military Affairs, 1828-1860." The removal of the civilized tribes was a subject included in that study. We recommend the following sites contained in it be made subjects for review in the "Trail of Tears" study:

I. Designated National Historic Landmarks

1. John Ross House, Rossville, Georgia (Cherokee)
2. Major Ridge House (Chieftains), Rome, Georgia (Cherokee)
3. Calhoun Mine, vic. Dahlonega, Georgia (Cherokee)
4. Hiram Masonic Lodge No. 7, Franklin, Tennessee (Chickasaw)
5. New Echota, Calhoun, Georgia (Cherokee)
6. Dade Battlefield, vic. Bushnell, Florida (Seminole)
7. Cherokee Supreme Court Building, Tahlequah, Oklahoma
8. Murrell Home, Park Hill, Oklahoma (Cherokee)
9. Old Chickasaw National Capitol, Tishomingo, Oklahoma

II. Not Designated National Historic Landmarks

The following sites reviewed in Levy's study were not designated but should be evaluated in the context of the trails proposal. It is Levy's opinion that the failure to designate Red Clay Council Ground was an error. It was the site of many important councils which led to the ultimate removal of the Cherokee.

- 1. Joseph Vann House, Spring Place, Georgia (Cherokee)
- 2. General William McIntosh House, Indian Springs, Georgia (Creek)
- 3. Old Lumpkin County Courthouse, Dahlonega, Georgia (Cherokee)
- 4. Red Clay Council Ground, vic. Red Clay, Georgia (Cherokee)
- 5. Rattlesnake Springs, vic. Cleveland, Tennessee (Cherokee)
- 6. Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty Site, vic. Mashullaville, Mississippi (Choctaw)
- 7. Site of Fort Mitchell, vic. Phenix City, Alabama

III. Previously Designated National Historic Landmarks

The following are National Historic Landmarks designated prior to Levy's study:

- 1. Cherokee National Capitol, Tahlequah, Oklahoma
- 2. Creek National Capitol, Okmulgee, Oklahoma
- 3. Fort Gibson, Oklahoma
- 4. Fort Washita, Oklahoma
- 5. Sequoyah's Cabin, Oklahoma
- 6. Wheelock Academy, vic. Millerton, Oklahoma

These lists do not exhaust the potential sites. We would encourage a thorough study in advancement of this proposal, for we regard the concept vital and significant. We will be glad to share the studies and any additional information with you that might prove helpful in this endeavor.

*Edwin C. Bearss*  
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