

BARRY SPRINGS INDIAN STOCKADE
By Col. Robert N. Mann

Many of the Cherokee Indians, who were of Iroquoian lineage, lived in this general area at the base of the southern Alleghenies where the Carolinas, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee adjoin. They numbered approximately 15,000, one of the largest Indian tribes in North America, and their name seems to mean "cave people."

A portion of them, it is believed, lived in the walls of Little River Canyon, Rock City, etc., in this area, as well as the hills, ridges, and mountains of this county.

DeSoto made contact with them in this area (now Cherokee County) in 1540 and the British about 1675. The Cherokees by 1801 had made much progress in farming, weaving, and stock breeding and in 1837 adopted a republican form of government and a constitution patterned after that of the United States.

Nevertheless, the pressures of the white settlers caused President Andrew Jackson to sign on May 28, 1830, the Indian Removal Act. Under its terms all Indians east of the Mississippi River were to cede their lands in exchange for territory in the west. In December 1835 the Cherokee became the last of the four great southeastern Indian Nations to cede all its eastern lands.

After much national debate and negotiations with the Indians May 23, 1838 was set as the date for their removal to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River in what is now the northeastern section of Oklahoma. Before removal the Indians had to be gathered at control points by U. S. Government Army and State Militia troops. One of these points or stockades was at Barry Springs where there was an ample supply of fresh water. The stockade consisted of a large circular chestnut log enclosure - the split logs about 20 feet in length were set end wise in the ground. The stockade was located a few hundred yards north of the spring and was large enough to permit the approximately 400 to 500 families to set up their tepees for shelter and cook their meals, the food being furnished by the U. S. Government, under the supervision of the soldiers. Many of the Indians died while thus imprisoned.

Barry Springs thereby became one of the points from which "The Trail of Tears" began. The Cherokees suffered indescribable hardships from which 4,000 of the 13,000 forced emigrants died.

Note 1. Barry Spings is located in the extreme northeastern part of Cherokee County on State Route 99. The rather large spring runs into Mills Creek some 100 feet east of the spring, which in turn runs into the Chattooga River. Local residents say the spring has no bottom and believe it to be the mouth of an underground cavern.

Note. 2. The Cherokees set up their capitol in Oklahoma at

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Tahlequah, their government remaining effective until 1906, when all Cherokees became United States citizens. They were also recognized as one of the 'five civilized tribes.'

Note 3. The details of the stockade were included in a family genealogy compiled Robert H. Alexander of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1959. The book was published by William A. Edwards of Rome, Georgia in 1961. Robert H. Alexander was the grandson of Eli Oliver Alexander who was born in 1802 in South Carolina. In 1828 he married Margaret (Barry) Allison, daughter of John Barry and Elizabeth Watson and widow of Thomas Allison, and shortly thereafter moved to the northern part of Cherokee County, Alabama. He and his wife's brother-in-law, Richard Barry, settled on adjoining farms which were granted to them by the Federal Government, and which had just recently been taken from the Cherokee Indians. The stockade was built on land adjoining Eli Oliver Alexander's land. After the Indians were moved west, Eli Oliver Alexander and his brother-in-law Richard Barry purchased the logs which enclosed the stockade and built two large barns, several houses, and used the remainder for building rail fences, which lasted for many years. The old log house, which was the original Richard Barry house, directly west of the spring (about 100 yards) was only recently destroyed by fire (about 1970).

Note 4. All County Maps show the site as "Berry Springs." This is incorrect. It was named for the original owners and settlers, the Barry Family.

Note 5. See CHEROKEE COUNTY HERITAGE, Volume II, No. 1, January 1973, page 37, for information on the Barry Family.

Note 6. The Cherokee County Historical Society, Inc. plans to place the following historical marker on County Route 99 near Barry Springs:

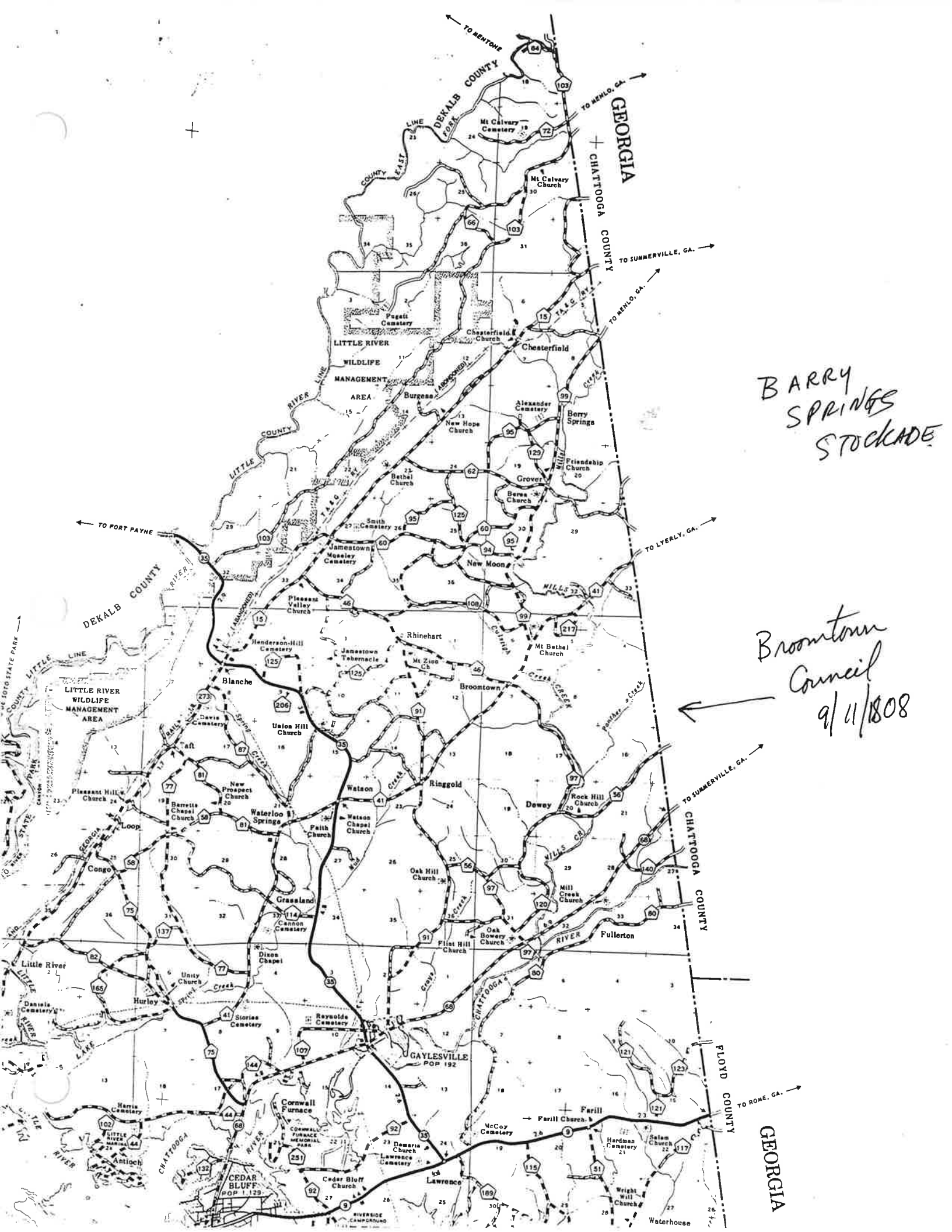
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One hundred feet east was one of the sites where the "Trail of Tears" began. On May 23, 1838 the Indians of this general area who had been held in a chestnut log enclosure or stockade (some since c. 1835-36), after being gathered here by the U. S. Army, began their long trek to Oklahoma.

The large spring, which was the source of water for the Indians, is believed to be the mouth of an underground cavern.

Eli O. Alexander (b. 1802, d. 1897) and his wife, Margaret (Barry) Allison (b. 1800, d. 1871) and Richard Barry (b. c. 1804, d. 1874), her brother-in-law, settled this area on Federal land grants about 1838.

The Richard Barry log house c. 100 yards west of the spring was only recently (c. 1970) destroyed by fire.



BARRY
SPRINGS
STOCKADE

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