



#427

Stephen Brewer D.M.D., P.C.

405 Alabama Avenue North
Fort Payne, Alabama 35967

RECEIVED
AUG 25 1989
CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF
WARM SPRINGS, OR

DeWayne King, Ph.D
P.O. Box C
Warm Springs, OR 97761

Dear Dr. King:

Several years ago we met at the museum in Cherokee, NC and have had a couple of written communications since then. Sue DeWitt has suggested that I contact you concerning the current study and documentation of the sites and structures still present on the Trail of Tears.

My limited knowledge of the Trail of Tears is centered around Will's Town, Alabama. I hope the following information will be helpful in your study of this event:

Following the death of Dragging Canoe in 1792, John Watts became Principal War Chief of the Cherokee Nation and moved his residence of Will's Town in order to be near Pensacola and Spanish supplies.¹ Will's Town Mission was established as an out cropping of the Brainard Mission in 1832 by Ard Hoyt the first superintendent of the Mission who remained so through the removal of 1838. The only remaining structure of the Mission site is the spring house with the adjoining cemenary where Rev. Hoyt is interred.²

Chief Red Head Will, for which the town of Will's Town was named, is buried a short distance from the Will's Town Mission site. The grave of Red Head Will is within 200 yards of the residence of Jessie G. Beason, who owned the entire site of Will's Town Mission situated in Little Will's Valley Dekalb County Alabama.³ The Beason house is still standing and the grave has been located and identified by a small marker which is assumed to have been originally placed.

¹The Cherokees By Grace Steel Woodward, University of Oklahoma Press, Page 113.

²The Cherokees By Grace Steele Woodward, University of Oklahoma Press, Page 141.

³The History of Alabama By Albert James Pickett published 1851, Page 415.

In 1838 Captain John Payne was appointed the agent for the removal of the Cherokees from Northeast Alabama. A fort was built at Will's Town which consisted of one large room, one building of hewn logs (picture enclosed was taken by Maitland Davidson, a professional photographer in the 1940's) one large fireplace (which is still standing on the undisturbed, original site) where meals for the soldiers were prepared. The fort was torn down in 1946, the remaining chimney is all that is visible on the site.

A copy of an enclosed 1838 map shows the home of Major George Lowery, brother-in-law of Sequoyah and Assistant Chief of the Cherokee Nation. He resided on the road known as Ross's Landing Road currently known as Godfrey Avenue through Fort Payne. On the same map the Valley Head post office is marked north of the current site of Major Lowery's house and the other Will's Town sites.

Manitou Cave, principal worshipping place of the Cherokee Nation, where their God of Nature, Manitou, resided, is still intact and exhibits early writing of Sequoyah's Syllabary, prior to the standardization of characters by the publication of the Phoenix. Manitou Cave is located 4 blocks south and 2 blocks west of the historic Fort Payne site, off Godfrey Avenue.

An 1820 map of Alabama shows Will's Town located on Big Will's Creek north of Lebanon on the southern edge of the limits of current Fort Payne. The site of the Will's Town Mission and the adjoining cemetery is located in the 3700 block of Godfrey Avenue North. The historic Fort Payne site is located in the 400 block of Godfrey Avenue South, the Beason house, adjacent to the burial place of Red Head Will, is located in the 2700 Block off north Godfrey Avenue, and Manitou Cave is located in the 1000 block south just east of Godfrey Avenue.

The most significant remaining structure of the Cherokee period is Cherokee Plantation, constructed in 1790 by Daniel and Molly Ross. This structure was authenticated to the period by an architectural historian from the Smithsonian Institute at the request of the National Registry, and was entered on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1984.

At the time of the removal, Cherokee Plantation was owned by Andrew Ross, brother of John Ross and Justice of the Cherokee Supreme Court. A copy of his Valuation Proclamation is enclosed which has been verified as being the one for Cherokee Plantation. It is assumed that at the time Daniel Ross moved to the area of what is now Rossville, GA, Andrew Ross remained in the house until the removal. A record for each owner of the house to date is available and the first legal owners of the property following the removal were William and Letitia MacFarland, who lived in the house immediately following the removal and were granted the property in 1845 under Grant #6292 by President James Polk.

Due to what was considered a "Cherokee town", it is most probable that Will's Town extended through Little and Big Will's Valley from approximately Valley Head as the northern limits to Lebanon as the southern Limits. Due to the cluster of historic sites and properties in the Fort Payne area on Godfrey Avenue, it is my feeling that Fort Payne, in the area along Godfrey Avenue should be considered the most significant area of Will's Town.

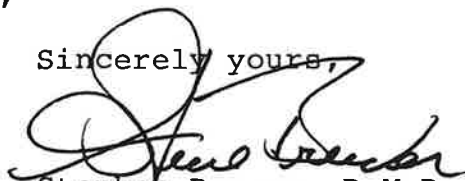
Upon your visit to Fort Payne, I would be more than happy to speak with you and share what knowledge I have of this area as it relates to the Cherokee removal.

As a charter subscriber to the Journal of Cherokee Studies, I have long admired your work with this publication. I also greatly enjoyed the book The Cherokee Indian Nation, edited by you and with your contribution to its text.

If I can be of any further help to you in the documentation of the Trail of Tears as it passed through Dekalb County, Alabama, I will be more than happy to meet with you and work with you in any capacity.

With kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,



Stephen Brewer, D.M.D.

SB:pj
ENC