

THE TRAIL OF TEARS THROUGH IZARD COUNTY AND JAMES WATTS - BORN ON THE TRAIL OF TEARS

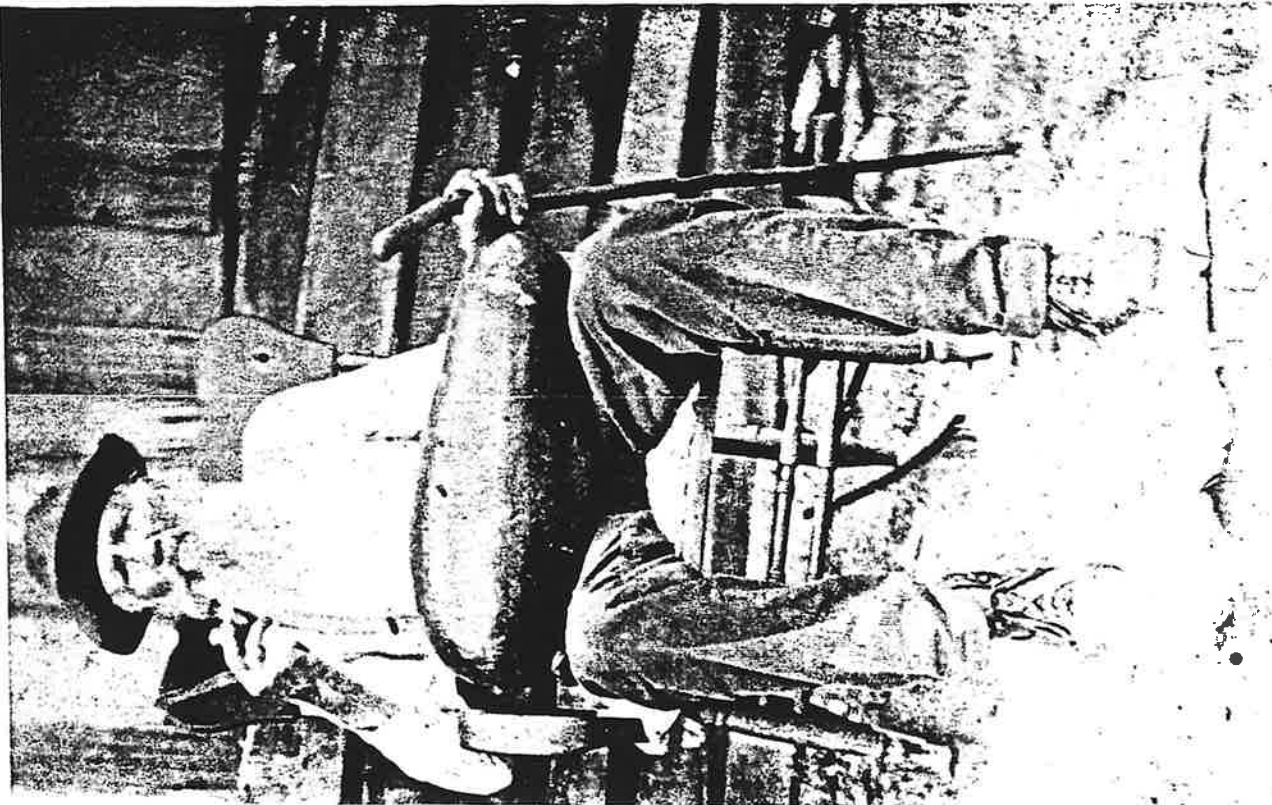
By Ray Watts
Box 406

Calico Rock, AR 72519

When the white people were settling in IZARD County between 1807 and 1819, most of the Indians living here belonged to the Osage Tribe. The whites began moving the Indians out of the East in 1813. The first to be moved into this area were the Shawnees in 1819. There were 2,000 moved from Lewiston, Ohio and these were settled at the mouths of three creeks on White River. All were moved to what is now Stone County. They were settled at the mouth of Livingston Creek in what is now Stone County above Boswell and across from the mouth of Piney Creek and at the mouth of Jack's Creek in the extreme northern part of Stone County.

Before the Indians were forcibly moved, many voluntarily moved into the Ozarks because the East was becoming heavily populated. These Indians were members of several tribes. As time went by, others knew what was coming and volunteered to move but were escorted. My ancestors were members of the Cherokee Tribe and were volunteers. There were 17,000 Cherokees who were forced to move. They were to be moved in thirteen columns. They lived in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. They were to be moved to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capitol of the Indian Territory.

On November 4, 1838, George Hicks, conductor of one of the parties reported to John Ross, Chief of the Cherokees; "We are now about to take our final leave and kind farewell to our native land, the country that the great spirit gave to our fathers. We are on the eve of leaving that country that gave us birth. It is with sorrow that we are forced by authority of the white man to quit the scenes of our childhood. We bid a final farewell to that we hold dear from the little trail we have made in a part to move. We know that it is a laborious undertaking but with firm resolution we think we will be able to accomplish it if the white citizen will permit it. Since we have been on our march, many of us have been stopped and our horses taken from our teams for the payment of unjust demands. Yet, the government says we must go and its citizens say,



Watts, born on the Trail of Tears. 1838 - 1926. Photo courtesy of tfs.

'You must pay me' and if the debtor has not the means, the property of his next friend is levied on and yet the government has not given us our spoilation (compensation) as promised. Our property has been stolen and robbed from us by the white man and no means given to us to pay our debts. The government officers will not protect us. Our property is robbed of us in open daylight and in open view of hundreds and why are they so bold? They know we are in a defenseless situation".

May 23, 1838 was the deadline for the 17,000 Cherokees to start moving. By mid June, 15,000 were in stockades and three groups were already on their way. Some had escaped to the mountains and were never captured. Those on their way were volunteers. It was October 1, 1838 when the first of the thirteen columns started their long journey. The march of the thirteen columns followed the same route as the early white settlers. It ran by way of Nashville, Tennessee to the mouth of the Cumberland River where they ferried the Ohio River thence across southern Illinois to Green's Ferry where they crossed the Mississippi River. From there, they traveled to Jackson, Missouri where two columns turned south into Arkansas. Part of the eleven columns went west from Green's Ferry to Farmington, Missouri and from there they went to Springfield and down the Old Wire Road to Arkansas.

The two columns that turned south at Jackson, entered Arkansas on the west side of Black River and traveled in a southwest direction until they were about halfway between the Eleven Point River and Spring River. One column turned almost west at Janes Creek and the other kept on going southwest to Strawberry River at Smithville. From there, they traveled in a west, southwest direction and came to the Fallen Ash Military Road near the intersection of Highways 69 and 58 which is now just west of Sidney.

What I have written thus far was taken from three history books. What follows is from personal research and talking with people living in the area of the two trails. These people, in turn, had heard about the trails from older people many years ago.

The fallen Ash Military Road was also known as the Jacksonport Road. It ran from Jacksonport to Fort Smith by way of Mount Pleasant, Melbourne, Newburg, Pineville, Iuka and what is now Cotter. It crossed White River at Cotter and went from there to Yellville, Carroll, Osage,

Fayetteville and on to Fort Smith. From where Highways 69 and 58 now intersect west of Sidney to Melbourne, the land is almost level. The Trail of Tears on this route was in the vicinity of Highway 69. From Melbourne to Newburg, there are some hills but Newburg was already settled and that was the only road.

The trail came northwest from Newburg and crossed where Highway 56 is now located about one mile west of Bandmill. About one-half mile southeast of where it crossed the highway, there was a spring on the Estes' place where the people camped. The trail is on the north side of the highway from about one mile west of Bandmill for another mile and is now used as a county road. It reenters the highway where the Wideman Road intersects and comes west almost to Piney Creek. It crosses Piney Creek just below where the highway bridge is now. From there, it goes to Pineville and a part of it is a county road. At Pineville the trail crossed what is now Highway 223 and went west on what is now Highway 177 for about six miles. It didn't follow all the way where the highway is as there was one hill too steep for a wagon. At the end of the six miles, it came back into the trail that it had left at Janes Creek.

My research indicates that most of the movement was on the other trail through Izard County. I only know of one Indian movement on the Fallen Ash Military Road and that was one of the thirteen columns.

I attribute this information to Herron Whitfield of Pineville. The trail came by where he now lives. As I mentioned before, the column that turned west at Janes Creek came west on the south side of Spring River just south of where Hardy now is to the vicinity of what is now Ash Flat. From the vicinity of Ash Flat, the trail went almost west and crossed Strawberry River about one mile north of where Franklin is now located. Gid Williams, of Wiseman, told me that Milt Billingsley helped to cut the trail in the Franklin area. He also told me where the trail crossed the Strawberry River.

The small town of Wiseman, only a short distance north of Franklin, got its name from a man named Martin Wiseman. He was helping to move the Indians from Tennessee to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capitol of the Cherokee Nation. Ernest Wiseman of Calico Rock gave me this information. He said that the Wisemans decided to settle in that area after the Indians were moved.

From the vicinity of Franklin, the Indians moved west going just north of Violet Hill and crossed where Highway 9 is located about one mile south of Oxford. After crossing Highway 9, the trail went almost west to where a gravel pit is now located on the South Wideman and Oxford road. From there, it is on the north side of the road and also on the north side of the Shelby Shaver place. It went almost west down the Indian Creek valley. Near the lower end of the valley is a spring where they camped. It was about one-half mile north of Wideman on what is now the North Wideman and Oxford road that the trail crossed. It crossed where the Marvin Dalrymple barn now stands.

From there, it went about one mile west to Piney Creek to the Bob Benbrook place. About one mile south of the old Corinth Church, it intersects the county road now used between Wild Cherry and Pineville. The county road follows the trail in a southwesterly direction for about three miles. There was another camp on the western end of this three mile stretch. It was named White Oak Hollow Camp. In this camp, the Indians built scaffolds and bored holes in trees and put pegs in the holes. The pegs and scaffolds were high enough to keep their dogs and wolves out of their provisions.

From the White Oak Hollow Camp, the trail went a short distance in the same general direction to Brushy Creek. It then turned up Brushy Creek in a northwesterly direction for about one-half mile and then went upgrade for about one mile to the community of Cross Roads. The trail crossed what is now Highway 223 and went to where the Wises' Chapel and cemetery now is and turned back west. Going in a west northwest direction, the trail came out in what is now known as Sanders Lane. In the same direction, the north trail intersected the south trail (the Fallen Ash Military Road) at luka on what is now the Izard-Baxter County line. From there, it went about one-half mile on what is now Highway 177 west and made a turn to the southwest.

The information in this part was told to me by Travis Blevins of Violet Hill, Melvin Ford of Oxford, Claud Fountain and Herron Whitfield of Pineville. Most of these people received the information from the late Jim Graham of Oxford.

As the trail was in the direction of west southwest, it went about five miles before turning northwest. Somewhere in the west southwest:

course, there was another camp by a spring. In that camp, more than three hundred people died. As they started to move on, the Indians told the whites who had settled in that area not to bother the graves. The Indians would never put grave markers at the graves.

On Highway 5 north from Norfolk, you can look off a high bluff and see some isles in the North Fork River called the Rapids. The Rapids is where the trail crossed North Fork River. From there, it came out on top of the hills at Salesville and went in a westerly direction. This information was given to me by Jimmy Teagarden.

JACOB WATTS

Jacob Watts, my great great grandfather, was half Cherokee Indian. His father, John Watts' Indian name was Young Tassel. Jacob was born in North Carolina in 1793. His wife, Emily (Ross) Watts, a full-blooded Cherokee, was born in 1806 in South Carolina. They were married in 1822 in Lawrence County, Tennessee. Their children were:

Emanuel, born September 22, 1823

Daniel, date of birth unknown

Nathaniel, born 1826 in Tennessee

Samuel, born 1827 in Tennessee

John, born 1830 in Tennessee

William, born 1833 in Tennessee

James, born January 6, 1838 on the Trail of Tears near

Mountain Home, Arkansas

Josiah, born 1841 in Izard County, Arkansas

Martin, born March 28, 1844 in Izard County, Arkansas

Jacob Z. Taylor, born July 6, 1846

Leona, date of birth unknown

In 1837, before the forced march, Jacob's family volunteered for the march to the Indian Territory at Tahlequah, the Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. During this march, his family stopped on the trail a short distance south of what is now Mountain Home, Arkansas, for Emily to bear another child. Instead of going on to Talequah, this family moved to the south side of White River about three miles above Calico Rock. They moved into the area where the Shawnee Indians were located in 1819. They stayed in that area until 1848 when they moved to Washington County.

In the meantime Emanuell, who was the oldest child, had married Sarah (Sally) Langston who was born about eight miles down the river from Calico Rock. She was the daughter of Jessie and Christina (Hawkins) Langston. Emanuell also moved to Washington County with them but did not stay long. He, and his family, moved back to the area which they left in 1848. In 1863, Jacob moved to Kansas. His three younger boys enlisted in the Union forces in 1863 at Cassville, Missouri and were mustered in at Springfield. Three more of the older sons enlisted in the Union forces in Kansas.

I have James' military record from birth until death. It states he was born January 6, 1838. That was almost a year before the Cherokees were forced to move. He was married March 18, 1863 at Fayetteville, Arkansas to Zililah B. Harris. Her maiden name was Custer. She had married Epherim Harris who was killed about 1861.

James enlisted in the U.S. Army on September 28, 1863. His unit was Co. B. 1st Regiment of Arkansas Cavalry Volunteers. His duty was to carry the mail from Fayetteville to Cassville, Missouri. When he was carrying important mail, he rode at night on a black horse — thus being less conspicuous. On February 14, 1864, he was carrying the mail from Fayetteville to Cassville, Missouri when his horse was shot from under him. The horse fell on him but receiving only slight injury, he continued to carry the mail until April, 1865. From that time to August 23, 1865, he worked on the stockade. On his muster out roll dated August 23, 1865, he owed the Army \$41.48 for clothes and 40 cents for a brush and wiper and thong.

James and his wife had two boys. Clay was born December 6, 1865 at Fayetteville and Dock was born October 24, 1866 at McGuire. After James was discharged, he lived in Madison County, Arkansas for 3 years, in Baxter County for 25 years, in Searcy County for 3 years, in Bouy County, Texas for 6 years and in Greenwood County, Kansas for 8 years.

He was living with Clay in Texas in the 1920's. Dock took his wagon and team and after being away for 3 weeks, he brought James back with him to Mountain Home, Arkansas. James died on August 25, 1926 within 5 miles of where he was born January 6, 1838, on the Trail of Tears.



Sarah Langston Watts, wife of Emmanuel Watts. 1821 - 1918. Photo courtesy of Ray Watts.