

Carroll County Historical Society  
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The "Trail of Tears"  
By Coy Logan

Sam Leath of Eureka Springs, Arkansas was born February 19, 1877 at Pocahtontas, Tennessee. His father, William David Leath was a missionary to the Indians. He attended institutions of higher learning in Alabama and Tennessee and was a graduate of the seminary at Louisville, Kentucky. His missionary work took him to many places in the country. His early work was in Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida. His work supported by the Missionary Baptist Church led him to work among the Indians of the West.

The family home was at Lakeview, Oregon and the territory assigned to Mr. Leath was the area with Reeding, California on the south and Wala Wals, Washington on the north. He entered this field of service in 1887.

Sam Leath was the only child of the family and his mother, Martha Ann, was an invalid. Her injuries were caused from a fall while riding a horse on a side saddle. Her spine was injured and her condition was such that she was a very weak person.

While on a missionary trip several miles away from home a great blizzard swept down from the north and Mr. Leath was caught out in it. This was on February 12, 1888. The Indians said this was the worst blizzard they had known in this area up to this time. When Mr. Leath failed to return home when the family expected him a search was started to find him.

Mrs. Leath was not able to help with the search and her son, Sam, now eleven years of age, set out to find his father. He learned that an Indian had found him and had carried him out to the stage line. The Indian found him when he saw the top of his buggy above the snow and ice. The horse was frozen to death and was still in a standing position hitched to the buggy. The Indian that found him was a traveler Indian and didn't leave any information. The body was frozen and Mr. Leath was unconscious. The Indian carried the body out and there were not any identification papers on it. There were identification papers in Mr. Leath's baggage in the back of the buggy but the Indian did not look there. Sam learned that the snow and ice <sup>was</sup> four or five feet deep. The discovery was made about seven miles east of Wala Wals and about two miles from the stage line. Sam learned that his father had been sent to a hospital but the doctors there could not give the treatment needed and he was sent to a special doctor in New York. The doctor lifted a part of his skull drained off the fluid but the operation was not a success. His body was too severely frozen. He never regained consciousness and died after a few months.

*Charles ...  
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of ...*

With Indian guides Sam traveled about over Washington, Saskatchewan and Alberta for a year getting this information. He never located the Indian that found his father.

In April 1889 Sam and his mother started back to Tennessee. Mrs. Leath was taken by private conveyance to Reno, Nevada where they took the train.

Mr. Leath did most of his work with the Indians at the stage taverns. The stage taverns on the Concord stage line were located eight miles apart where the horses were changed. Sam went with his father on some of the trips. Mr. Leath would stop at the tavern, read a few verses from the Bible, have a prayer, a short talk and then be on his way to another tavern. Sam recalls that at first there were less than a dozen Indians. Later when they learned about his work these same places would have as many as two hundred to listen to his message to them. Sam learned that some of these Indians had come ten to fifteen miles to hear the Gospel message.

Sam and his mother went back to Tennessee where she could be with her brothers to care for her. She was not paralyzed but was weak and helpless.

At the age of sixteen Sam was in school in Tennessee. His good pal Edward Gladsen, one quarter Cherokee, told Sam about his grandmother that was in the Indian movement to the Indian territory. Sam became very much interested in the Indians. He learned to love them and he respected their way of life. He says they are wonderful people once you understand them and cultivate their friendship.

Edward Gladsen's great grandmother was in the westward march of the Cherokees that started from Echota and Calhoun, Georgia in 1838. Because of the death of his father and the close friendship of his pal, Sam wanted to learn more about the Indians and especially about the group where his pal's great grandmother was during the march or the long journey known as the "Trail of Tears."

Sam was convinced that the "Trail of Tears," or this movement of the Indians westward was one of the most tragic things in our history. Sam and his pal went to Echota and Calhoun, Georgia. They learned that this was a forced march. Many had been moved from this area the year before. This time government workers were sent to get them out.

Sam and his pal secured ponies and started on the trail in 1892. They found one old Indian that gave them much information about marks on the trail. This Indian was sick when the Indians were moved. White people hid him from the searchers. Those having only one quarter Indian blood were not moved and quite a number hid out in the mountains. In the year of 1892 they searched

the trail from Echota, Georgia to Nashville, Tennessee.

They learned that John Ross was supervisor of the movement. Two men went together in the search to order the Indians to move. The two men would go to the Indian home, order them out and then set fire to the home to keep them from returning. In many cases they only took with them what possessions they could carry on their backs. Barracks were constructed as a central place to keep them until the round-up was completed. The barracks were constructed by standing split logs and poles in the ground, tied together with hickory bark. Sanitary conditions were bad and many died in the barracks. Life in the barracks was not suited to the Indian's way of living. Mr. Leath says this is the wrong thing for the Indians. Their nature is such that they will not live long where they are crowded together. Watchmen were placed on guard to keep the Indians in the barracks.

The round-up was started in the spring time of 1838. The movement on the trail did not start until September.

These Indians were not savages. They had established homes and lived very much like the white people. They had houses, cattle, horses, sheep, hogs and goats. They had orchards and they knew how to grow crops. They were a law abiding people that had established churches. The Cherokees were intelligent Indians.

The march started from Echota in September. The trail blazers had started two months ahead to mark the trail. Mr. Leath and his pal learned that the mark was a three point turkey foot that they found on trees and rocks along the trail. The middle point would be longer and point in the direction to be traveled. Some times when approaching a stream the middle point would point up or down stream where a better crossing was found.

On this march the government did not provide wagons and provisions. Only men were provided to see that the movement was made. There were times that whips were used when the Indians lagged behind. Some of the Indians had wagons and some rode ponies but most of them walked carrying what possessions they could. During the winter months the trail conditions were bad. Some of the wagons broke down and were left.

Mr. Leath's pal learned that his great grandmother had died in Nashville. At Nashville white men had let the Indians have whiskey. Some of the drunk Indians died in the mud and water.

In 1892 Sam and his pal searched out the trail from Echota to Nashville. In 1893 they went on to Hopkinsville, Kentucky. In 1894 they followed the trail to Cape Girardeau, Mo. Then later, 1897 with an Indian guide, Pensatak, Mr. Leath from the west end of the trail searched the remainder of the route back to Cape Girardeau.

From Nashville there were thirteen groups of 1000 each of Indians in the march on the way. There was no way to find enough

food on the way. Only the strong survived the journey.

John Ross was supervisor of the march. His wife was seriously ill when they reached the Mississippi River. He took her down the river to Little Rock for treatment. She died and was buried there. John Stephens acted as supervisor in the absence of Ross. Stephens was a wealthy Englishman that had married a Cherokee. His wife had been dead some time, but his daughter Stella was with him on the trip. Stephens died at Cape Girardeau and was buried there.

There was great difficulty getting across the Mississippi River. They crossed on a barge guided with push poles. From here they journeyed on to the White River and crossed two or three miles above Cotter. The river was full and there was a loss of property and life. Stella Stephens had a negro maid that was drowned at this crossing.

The trail led on west just north of Burlington by way of Denver and north of Green Forest and Berryville. They crossed Kings River near Grandview. They traveled on westward in the general line of the railroad over the tunnel by Gascins Switch and to Blue Spring. They stopped at Blue Spring three or four days to get the party all together again. They made a safe crossing of White River at Blue Spring and followed the Huffman Bend and by way of Huffman's store on to Bentonville. Near Bentonville at Sugar Creek they stopped four days to repair wagons, harness and shoe their ponies before continuing the march. From Sugar Creek they followed the Illinois River to Park Hill, the destination of their journey.

They started with 1300 in groups of 1000 and 4000 more joined on the way. Only 6000 of the stronger Indians were alive when they reached Park Hill.

Their troubles had not ended. They didn't find as much game here as they had back east. The water was not good. It was brackish. Here the land was sod land. It was hard to break and they didn't have tools and the power to work the soil.

Their journey was truly a "Trail of Tears."

Mr. Leath says there was another movement of Indians through Carroll County in 1837. This trail was by way of Carrollton, Osage, Huntsville and Johnson's Switch near Fayetteville. The trail blazers were instructed to demand that whiskey stores be closed. They did not want the Indians to get whiskey stores on the march. Near Fayetteville At Johnson's Switch a man did not obey instructions. He rolled out a barrell of whiskey and provided tin cups for all. A drunken brawl followed and several men were cut with knives. One Indian was killed and a white man was missing. This brawl created ill feelings between the Indians and the white people.

Old timers point out a place near Osage where one of the Indians died on the March and was buried.

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around 2 miles  
at the mouth of the  
Cape Girardeau*

Mr. Leath says the Indians made one request to his father. They urged him to tell the white men not to disturb the Indian graves. Even in that day there were treasure hunters and souvenir hunters. When the Indian died his tools were buried with him. If he had been an arrow maker his tools for making arrows would be buried with him. The same would be true for the basket maker and the weaver. Contrary to common belief Mr. Leath says these things were not buried in the grave with the body. Those things would be placed in a location two or three feet from the body.

Most Indian families were given eighty acres of land in the territory. If the land was poor an extra twenty acres may be given. Single Indians may work for families and grants were not given to them. Only the chiefs were given money from the federal government. Those of the common herd were not given money.

Lyman Squires said those arriving late got only the poor wasted lands. They were called the "Lates" The last ones arriving got very poor land if any. They were called the "Too Lates."

Yellville was a Shawnee Village 1733 to 1817.

Arkansas history tells us, "The migration of the Cherokees from their homelands in Tennessee began in 1785 when a few of these Indians came to Arkansas and formed a settlement on White River. President Jefferson encouraged other Cherokees to follow their kinsmen to the West. At president Jefferson's suggestion in 1809 the Cherokee chief, Tah-lon-tes-kee, brought 300 of his followers and settled in the Arkansas Valley on lands given up by the Osages. After the building of Fort Smith (1817), several thousand more Cherokees gave up their lands in Georgia and Tennessee for lands granted in the Arkansas Valley.

Arkansas is best thought of as the temporary home of the Cherokees. The first came in 1785; others came from time to time during a period of more than forty years, when (1829) the last of the tribe was moved into what is now Oklahoma."

"In 1830 Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. It forced the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole tribes to give up their lands east of the Mississippi and move to lands in Indian Territory. Their removal was supervised by the government contractors. Indian families were assembled at Arkansas Post and taken up the Arkansas River. Hundreds of others were taken by steamer up the Ouachita to Camden and marched overland from Camden to reservations in Oklahoma. These and other unhappy caravans straggling a foot through swamps and canebrakes gave the name "Trail of Tears" to the wilderness roads." Living in Arkansas by O. E. McKnight.

Mr. Leath says when the Cherokees came to Arkansas they were looking for forests that produced the greatest amount of wild fruits and nuts. They raised corn, beans, pumpkins and melons. Mr. Leath says the Indian hunter killed only what he needed. He wanted to preserve the wild game. This was not always true with the white hunters. Some of them would kill more than they could use. They seemed to want to boast about killing great numbers, not realizing the wild game would be scarce some day.

Old Fort Douglas, north of Clarksville near Low Gap and Sand Gap was a headquarters center for the Cherokees. In 1817 Sam Houston came to Arkansas to help the Indians. When they came here the treaty provided that this would be their home forever. Sam Houston seemed to approve the movement from Tennessee to Arkansas. He was disappointed when the government broke the treaty to move the Cherokees from Arkansas.

Sam Houston had been reelected governor of Tennessee without opposition. He gave up this position and came to his Indian friends. He and his first wife had trouble. They were divorced. When he came to Arkansas he found the Indian girl that was his sweet heart back in Tennessee. At first she didn't have any interest for him. She said he had a wife. He sent word to her that he was divorced. The explanation seemed to be satisfactory and they were married. The girl he married was a relative of Chief Jolly.

Chief Jolly sent Boudenot and some other men to Washington to appose the movement from Arkansas. It was reported that some white men got them drunk and Boudenot signed the treaty (X his mark) to move the Cherokees from Arkansas. Boudenot denied this but the Indians wouldn't believe this. They killed Boudenot and the men that went with him.

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Marker at Pea Ridge, Arkansas

1938-39

Here passed part of 20,000 Cherokee, driven by U. S. Army from their Tennessee - North Carolina - Georgia Mountains to Indian territory. One-third died on the way. 645 wagons hauled the infirm. 5,000 ponies ridden, thousands forced to walk.

Here, 1862, 1,000 Indian warriors came as Southern Soldiers for battle of Pea Ridge. They refused to fight in open battle. Each ordered to take a tree from which they carried on their savage warfare.

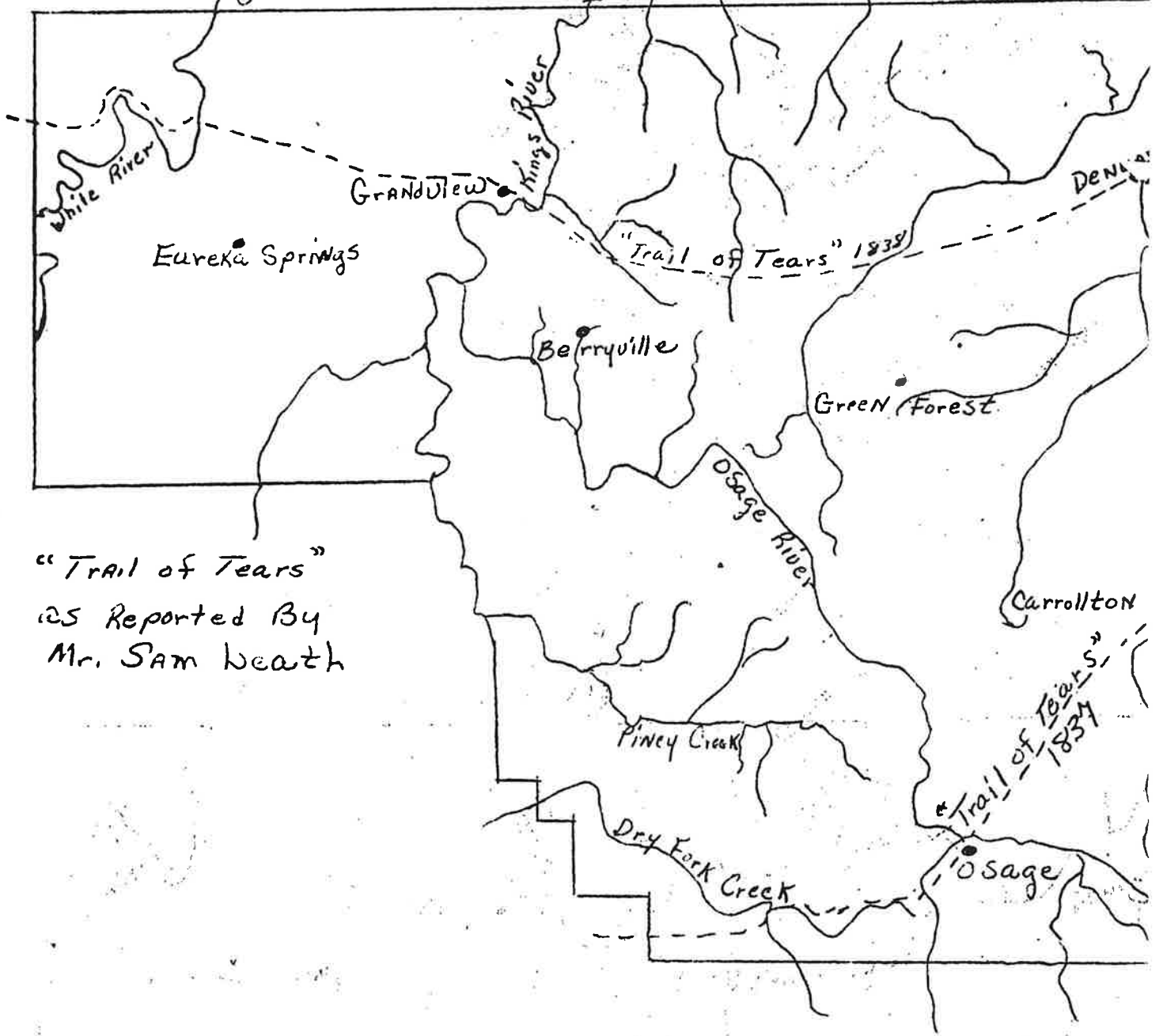
Marker at Pea Ridge, National Park Association. Erected 1933.

By Edsel Ford February, 1961  
The Ozark Mountainer

*Let really mean...  
He was a part of a good...*

*Handwritten notes on the right margin, including "T", "S", and "M".*

CARROLL COUNTY



"Trail of Tears"  
 as Reported By  
 Mr. Sam Heath

"Trail of Tears"  
One of Nation's Greatest Tragedies  
Arkansas Gazette  
September 28, 1958

Missourians who happened to be watching on the banks of the Mississippi near Cape Girardeau on a bleak November day in 1837 saw a strange procession disembark from the ferry.

They were Indians, but Indians such as Missourians had not seen. Silent, ghostly figures through the lowland fog, in creaking wagons, on horseback and afoot, they moved wearily inland as the ferry returned for the rest of their company. They filed past in bedraggled groups--an exhausted mother with a sick child lying limp in her arms, an old man racked with a cough, travel stained, eyes dulled with misery--who were they?

Missourians were witnessing one chapter of the tragic Cherokee removal. The Cherokees had been a proud people with a civilization equal to that of their white neighbors in Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina. They owned prosperous farms and engaged in commerce. Thousands of them learned to read and write when their great leader, Sequoyah, in 1821 invented an alphabet of characters in their own language. But the Cherokees owned rich lands and gold deposits which the whites wanted and took.

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State and federal governments cooperated in passing laws and in carrying out removal orders to resettle those people on new lands in the present state of Oklahoma. Political mismanagement and avarice added to their suffering during the expulsion and on the long journey west which they called the "Trail of Tears."

The party of 365 which came through Missouri in 1837 was the first large group to make the journey overland, though some had previously gone by river boats up the Arkansas. It was the 14th of November before all the company had crossed the Mississippi into Missouri. Some had already been buried along the route--from the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee, across the Cumberland Mountains, through Kentucky and Illinois.

They passed through Jackson, Missouri and camped "at the widow Roberts" near Fannington. They went through the lead mining country, halting sometimes for a day to repair wagons, shoe horses, and wash. B. B. Cannon, the official government conductor of the expedition did what he could with the meager rations of cornmeal and bacon, but they were little help with illness rampant.

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By November 25, 60 of the emigrants were too sick to travel farther, and the most gravely ill were sheltered in a Missouri schoolhouse, where four died. The party soon moved on, though there was not room enough in the wagons for all the invalids.

On December 5 the Cherokees camped on the Meramec River, and were plagued with rains, broken wagons, and rough country before they reached camp at Waynesville. They camped on the Gasconade on December 10, and reached James Fork of White River on the 14th. An Indian child was born that night. They went through Springfield and camped for several days to care for the ill and dying. The day before Christmas, 1837, the Indians arrived at Cane Hill, Arkansas, and in another day or so finally reached the land that was to be theirs.

Fifteen people had died on that agonizing march, 11 of them children. Somewhere in Missouri today a scattering of long-lost graves marks the Cherokee Trail of Tears.

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"Stories of the Ozarks"  
Had Interesting Episode

Chronicles of Arkansas  
By Margaret Ross  
January 5, 1959

Life in a remote pioneer settlement, cut off from neighbors and news of the world, was not characterized by daily events of an earth-shattering nature. Yet the pioneers of Arkansas had exciting moments occasionally.

Silas C. Turnbo wrote a series of sketches of pioneer life in Southwest Missouri and Arkansas, in the country adjacent to White River, under the title "Stories of the Ozarks." They deal particularly with the adventures of the early settlers with wild animals and includes the felling story:

The mouth of Bear Creek is one of the earliest settled places on the Upper White River. The place I refer to is where the Missouri state line divides Tancy County, Mo., and Boone County, Arkansas. The division line between Missouri and Arkansas crosses the river at the mouth of the creek named at the beginning of this chapter.

Girard Leiper Brown was the first settler at the mouth of Bear Creek. Brown married Miss Kate Coker in Alabama. They left Alabama for the wild west soon after their marriage, and arriving on White River above where Batesville now stands, they dug out a big canoe of black walnut, and in the late summer of 1816 they started up the river with their household. Among their effects was a small barrel filled with salt.