

State of North Carolina
Department of Archives and History

Raleigh 27602

28 April 1970

Honorable Roy A. Taylor
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Re: Fort Butler Site, Murphy, North Carolina

Yesterday members of my staff and I had a very useful conference with a fine delegation from Cherokee County comprising Mrs. Mary Faye Brumby, Mrs. Louise Bayless, Mr. and Mrs. Mayes Behrman, and Messrs. Charles Johnson, Joe Ray, and Bunch Nugent. As you know, these citizens are interested in acquiring additional land at the site of Fort Butler and in the construction of replicas of the old fort buildings.

We have just completed a study of Fort Butler and its role in the Cherokee removal of the 1830s, and it is our conclusion that this unfortunate event in American history was of national importance, and that the fort site is at least of statewide importance. The site of Fort Butler, therefore, ought to be acquired and preserved, and some means should be devised to portray the story of the Cherokee removal at Fort Butler. The town of Murphy now owns only one acre of the site, but more site acreage is needed if replica construction and further development are to be considered.

We believe that there may be federal programs under which matching funds might be available for the purchase of some portion of the site which cannot be acquired by gift by the Cherokee County Historical Association, and we are going to check these out and give what assistance we can in an effort to obtain such funds.

The proposal for construction of replicas of the original buildings at the fort, however, presents a more serious problem. The Historic Sites Advisory Committee (established under provisions of G.S. 121-8.1) in 1969 adopted a stand against use of state funds for anything but the acquisition of land and the restoration (as contrasted with construction of replicas) of surviving historic structures. Furthermore, under criteria just announced by the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service [see National Register Newsletter, Vol. II, No. 11 (April 1970), pp. 2-3], reconstructions do not qualify for matching federal grants proposed in the budget of the Department of the Interior now pending before the Congress and relating to P.L. 89-665, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

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In effect, though there may be means for acquiring additional acreage of the site, from our study of available aid we know of no state or federal source of funds for the construction of replica buildings. This letter is to ask the assistance of your office in determining if in the maze of federal programs there is one in which reproduction of structures qualifies for grants. If so, we will be happy to assist the Cherokee County group in the preparation of an appropriate application.

In addition to the above-cited inquiry, we should like to suggest that your office may be in a position to ask the National Park Service to investigate Fort Butler with a view toward its consideration for incorporation into the system of national historic sites. If the NPS is favorable to such an investigation, we will be glad to furnish copies of our department's research reports and to assist in any feasible way. We further believe that Fort Butler might be an appropriate subject for inclusion in the National Park Service Archeological Program. Although the brief archaeological exploration conducted by our department's staff was largely negative in results, a more thorough exploration might well reveal the outlines of the Fort Butler buildings to the extent that their foundations could be preserved as an archaeological site. Then, if reconstruction should be attempted later, these remains might be utilized as foundations for the new buildings.

Our staff will make an on-the-spot study of the site in June for the purpose of suggesting the amount of land needed to preserve the most significant portion of the site. We will also suggest alternative uses of the property, probably starting with its use as a recreational area until such time as further development may be feasible.

We assure you of our interest in the Fort Butler site, and if your office can suggest any avenues unknown to us for federal matching funds, we shall be glad to follow up. The need to perpetuate and make known the history of our westernmost counties is well recognized.

Sincerely yours,



H. G. Jones
Director

cc: Mrs. Brumby
Mrs. Bayless
Mr. and Mrs. Behrman
Mr. Charles Johnson
✓ Mr. Joe Ray
Mr. Bunch Nugent
Mrs. Joye E. Jordan