

NR
145

State of North Carolina
Department of Archives and History
Raleigh 27602

28 April 1970

Mr. Ralph R. Widner, Executive Director
Appalachian Regional Commission
1666 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20235

Dear Mr. Widner:

Re: Fort Butler Site, Murphy, North Carolina

We are writing to inquire about possible assistance from the Appalachian Regional Commission in the acquisition and development of the site of historic Fort Butler in the town of Murphy, North Carolina.

Fort Butler was built during and in connection with the removal of the Cherokee Indians from North Carolina in the 1830s. When Cherokee County was formed, one of the buildings at the fort was used as a courthouse for a few years. Subsequently the buildings disappeared and a portion of the site is now used for commercial purposes. Only one acre is now owned by the town of Murphy.

The Cherokee removal was one episode of our American past of which we are not proud. It remains, nevertheless, an important national event, and it should be memorialized. The acquisition of the fort site and the construction of replicas of the original buildings have been suggested by the Cherokee County Historical Association and many civic and patriotic groups in western North Carolina. The State Department of Archives and History heartily concurs in the acquisition and preservation of the site.

While the department's interest is chiefly from the standpoint of preserving history, the development of the Fort Butler site would undoubtedly contribute greatly to the economic improvement of our westernmost counties. Thousands of visitors from the Smoky Mountains National Park, the Cherokee Reservation, and the Blue Ridge Parkway could be attracted to Murphy. Thus there is a potentially substantial economic advantage in the proposal that the site be acquired and the buildings restored.

It is understood in addition that if a place of preservation can be secured, a unique and valuable collection of Indian relics now in private hands will be donated for public viewing.

Mr. Ralph R. Widner, 29 April 1970, Page 2

In view of the anticipated contributions of such a development to the economy of this mountain area, we are writing to recommend that your commission give consideration to assisting in the project. Unfortunately the reconstruction of the buildings (as contrasted to restoration of surviving structures) does not fall within the criteria of the preservation grants proposed by the National Park Service. It appears, therefore, that help cannot come from that source.

Should you be interested in pursuing this suggestion, we will be glad to provide you with a copy of our research findings and recommendations.

Sincerely yours,



H. G. Jones
Director

cc: Dr. William L. Turner
North Carolina Representative, ARC

Mrs. Mary Faye Brumby
Mrs. Louise Bayless
Mr. and Mrs. Mayes Behrman
Mr. Charles Johnson
✓ Mr. Joe Ray
Mr. Bunch Nugent
Mrs. Joye E. Jordan