

TRAIL OF TEARS

CARDWELL MOUNTAIN - SHELLSFORD

As the Cherokee's travelled through the McMinnville area, several detachments were noted to have camped at three different localities, Martin's Ford, Shellsford and between Crisp Springs and the Old Shelbyville Road. More importance was given to the Shellsford area due to its historical significance from the early settlement days and to mill that was also located at the ford.

Shellsford received its name from James Shell, an early settler of the 1800's, who established a gristmill on the Collins River near Shellsford. Christian Shell, believed to be James son, also lived nearby where he assisted in the operation of the mill and he also established a tavern nearby. The Shell tavern was thought to be the earlier tavern on record in Warren County.

When the Cherokee's camped at Shellsford, the Reverend Jesse Bushyhead, one of the leaders of a detachment, held a worship service for the detachment and for members of the community. A council was held in which a message to Chief John Ross was sent requesting the claims for losses be delayed until every Cherokee with a claim could be present or represented.

Several detachments stayed a few days in the Shellsford area to rest, care for their sick and to utilize the water mill for grinding of their corn. The ruins of the mill can be seen today on the south side of the Collins River facing upstream from the Shellsford Bridge. An alternate route is to follow the trail along the Collins River which follows portions of the original roadbed and leads to the Shellsford Canoe Access Area.

Located near the Shellsford Bridge just south of the Collins River is the Shellsford Baptist Church and Cemetery. It was established in 1810 with the congregation using a brush arbor, and is noted for being the oldest active congregation in Warren County. Originally called the Buck Springs Church, Shellsford evolved from a split-log structure to a modern brick building. The cemetery bears the stones of more than 500 graves some of which were the resting places for the weary bodies of the Cherokees who suffered and died on the "Trail of Tears".

Cardwell Mountain received its name from Francis Cardwell who immigrated to Tennessee in 1806 and settled in Warren County. He was a farmer by occupation and his son H.J. Cardwell inherited the land after his father died in 1844. He continued to farm the land and started raising apples and put in several orchards on the slopes of Cardwell Mountain, one of which is still in production today on the north side of the mountain.

Cardwell Mountain is an outlier of the Cumberland Plateau and is capped with a Pennsylvanian sandstone. This sandstone cap produces the bluffs and unusual rock formations located near the top of the mountain. Underlying the caprock is Mississippian limestone which has been sculptured primarily by water and has formed the caves, sinkholes and springs found on the sides of the mountain. An uncommon layer of sandstone is found at the 1200' elev. and it forms the flat areas found approximately halfway up the sides of the mountain.

Cumberland Caverns is the combination of two caves, Higgenbotham and Henshaw, and the passageway linking the two caves was discovered in 1953. Higgenbotham Cave was discovered in 1810 and named after Aaron Higgenbotham the man who bought the land around the cave. Henshaw Cave was mined for nitrate during the Civil War and there are still the remains of two vats used in the process near the present entrance of the Caverns. The Caverns opened commercially in 1956 and there are now 32 miles of surveyed passages.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Cardwell Mountain trail is for day use only. NO camping is permitted on or near the trail. No fires are permitted on the trail.

Cardwell Mountain is dry. Thus, it is recommended that hikers carry some water. Any water found on the mountain should be treated chemically or by boiling before drinking.

The Cardwell Mountain trail crosses over private property so help us protect this land by staying on the trail. Your cooperation will ensure that the trail will remain open.



TRAIL OF TEARS CARDWELL MOUNTAIN

LEGEND



- COLLINS RIVER-SHELLSFORD TRAIL
- CARDWELL MOUNTAIN TRAIL
- BALANCE ROCK
- ⊕ BUZZARD BLUFF
- P PARKING AREA
- ☐ CANOE ACCESS AREA

