

Some excellent material on
routes, but much fiction, & folklore
mixed in & not delineated!

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REMOVAL OF THE CHEROKEE INDIANS -- 1837-38

BY

Otto A. Koenig

And

REMOVAL OF THE CHEROKEE INDIANS -- 1838-39

An Account of Their Passing Through Cape Girardeau County

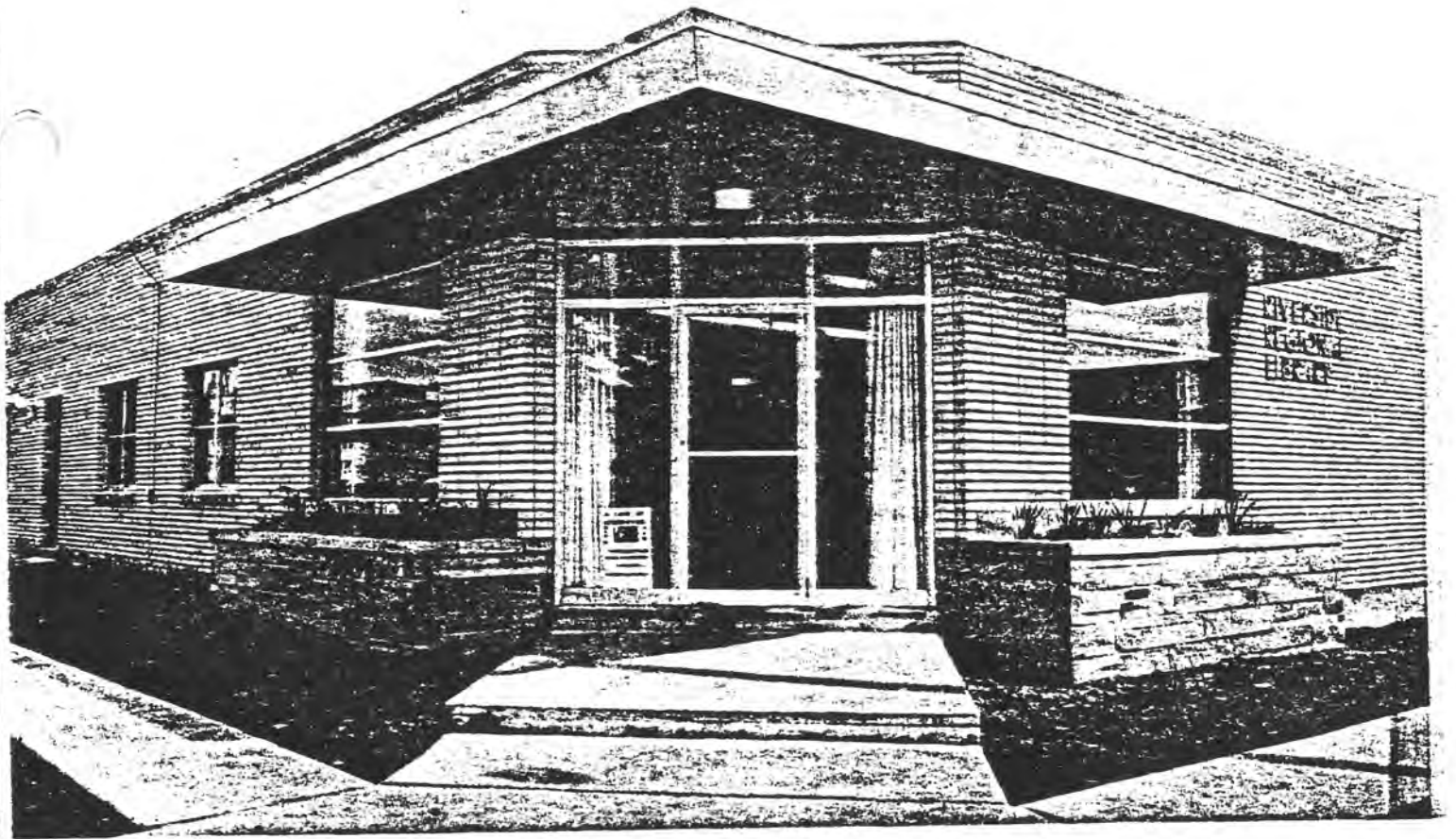
BY

John. S. Kochitzky



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Trail Of Tears



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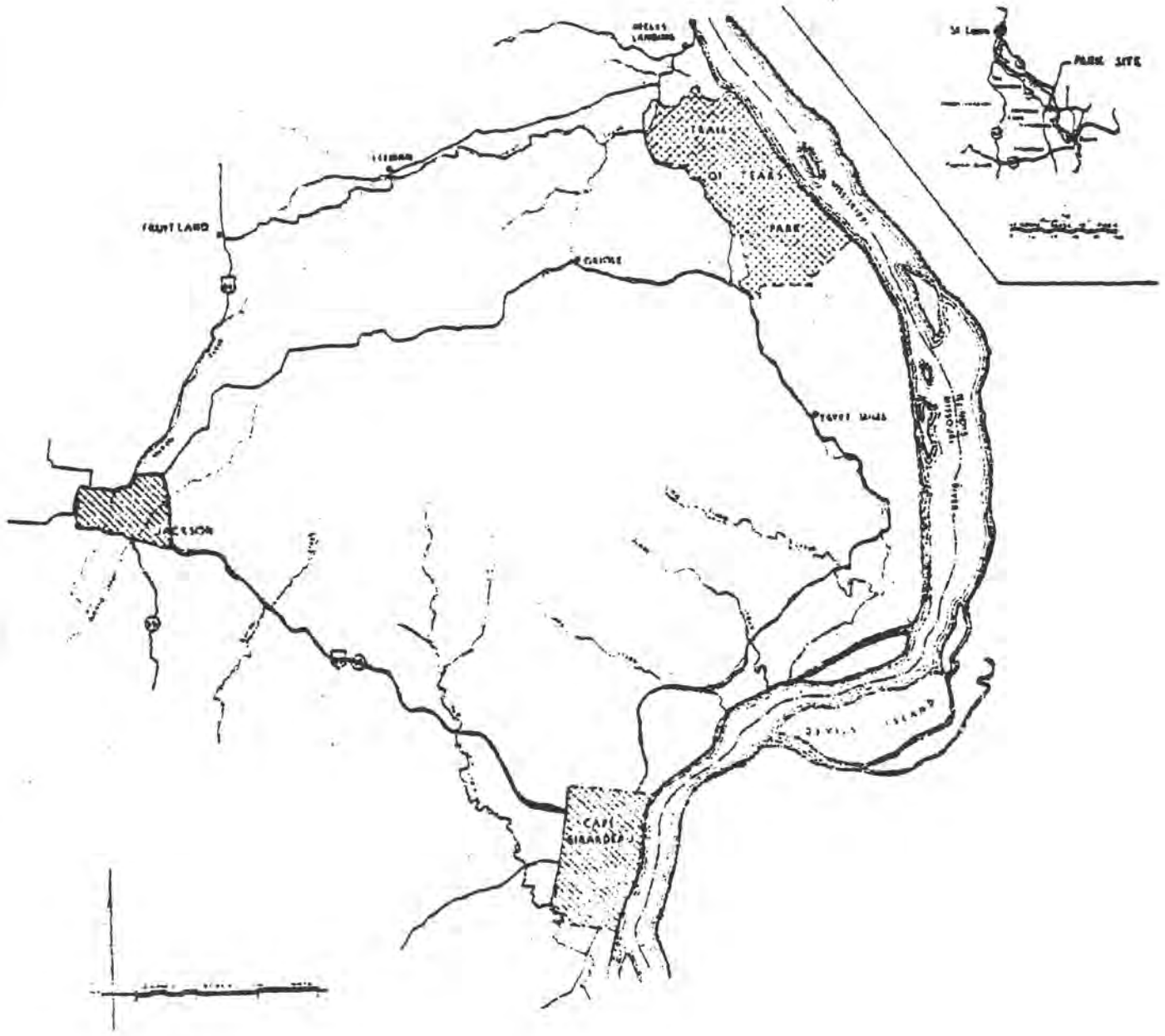
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REMOVAL OF THE CHEROKEE - 1827 - 1839

By

Otto A. Koenig

The story of any people, of any nation, and of most individuals has its bright pages, but among them are also some that are dark. The bright pages tell of the glory and valor of heroes and of sacrifices of their people who gave of themselves and shed their blood that others may have more and their children may have the treasured inheritance of many things that in their time could only be hoped for. These stories are often told and are retold; they are pleasant to listen to. The dark pages are blotted with the blunders and have the touches of infamy, and we pass them by, keeping them in seclusion like the proverbial skeleton in the closet. If we can not be proud of the tales they tell, it may be well to keep them shut up to gather more mold in the quiet and the unknown. However, to know even of these things may widen and broaden our perspective and our understanding of the background upon which we have built.

So it is with the story of the Cherokees and their sad plight along the "trail of tears". Little mention was made of their story; our history books give small space to them. It is now over a hundred years ago, and we can see it now in retrospect, with all the evil, the suffering and heartbreak to a people in the throes of racial clashes and struggle. It happened here, and we can change nothing now. However, it may help us to view similar situations of our time with wider understanding and deepened sympathies. Here we could list the Congo nation in Africa, and all the unrest of that continent, the Near East, most of Latin America, and even the countries in the shadow of the Iron Curtain.

The removal of any people from their home is a story of heartbreak and pathos, but the Cherokee, by the dignity of their resistance and the great suffering they endured, have become a symbol of the agony of a race.

As early as 1808 the Cherokee were a divided people, as the Kochtitzky paper (page 1) tells. The Upper Town had attained a very high plane of culture. These were later the Cherokee East. In the year 1829 their population was about 15,000. Their property listing was as follows:

22,000 cattle	31 grist mills
1,300 slaves	10 saw mills
2,000 spinning wheels	8 cotton gins
700 looms	18 schools
1 newspaper	

The newspaper, THE CHEROKEE PHOENIX, was published in 1828 and appeared regularly until it was silenced by Georgia authorities some ten years later. It was printed in the Cherokee language and also in English. The fact that Sequoyah -- also known as George Guess or Gist, the name he took after his white father -- translated the Bible into the native Cherokee language is evidence of their interest in and acceptance of the Christian faith. Many of them were devout Methodists or Baptists. Many who led them on their trek overland to the West were their ministers; the Rev. Bushyhead is a good example. The book, TORCHLIGHT TO THE CHEROKEE, by Robert Sparks Walker, is a good source book on the religious life and faith of these people.

The migration of the Cherokee did not occur in a given short time, but as Kochtitzky tells us so well, this was something that took place over several decades. The first migrations were voluntary, but the last part in 1838 was carried out under force by the Army of the United States under the command of General Scott.

As early as 1808 some of the Cherokee, wishing to preserve their way of life, had obtained presidential permission to migrate to lands west of the Mississippi, but those who wished to remain were assured the protection of life and property and assistance in the administration of their affairs. However, in spite of agreements and treaties with the federal government, clashes were frequent. By 1817, weary of the persecution inflicted on them by greedy white neighbors, several bands of Indians had taken up residence in Northwest Arkansas.

In Georgia they were exposed to much abuse which was accentuated by the discovery of gold on some of the Indian lands. This was further aggravated by the Cherokee Council when this body in 1827 formed the Cherokee Republic with its government modeled after that of the Constitution of the United States. The boundaries of the Republic included parts of northern Georgia. The Federal Constitution is very specific on this in that it forbids the erection of a new state within the borders of an existing state without the consent of that state. The legislature of Georgia in a rage demanded removal of the Cherokee from its lands. The federal government passed an act appropriating funds to pay the Indians in compensation for their land and other inducements. The tribesmen refused the offer, and petitioned for federal protection against the state.

With the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1828 their cause suffered a severe blow; in his inaugural address he promised speedy enforcement of the removal policy. The State of Georgia followed with severe and drastic measures in 1830. It decreed that all laws and customs of Indians were null and void; that any person of Indian blood or descent living in the Cherokee Country was prohibited from being a witness or party to a lawsuit where the defendant was a white man; that the Cherokee lands be surveyed and divided in 160 acre plots, and gold claims in 40 acre plots; that after the survey, the land be distributed by lottery with each citizen of the State of Georgia receiving a ticket. Aiming at the missionaries working among the Indians, the legislature provided further that all white men found living in the Cherokee Country within the border of Georgia after the first day of March, 1830, without having taken an oath of allegiance to the State of Georgia, and without possessing a license from the Governor, or his agent, were to be sentenced to not less than four years at hard labor. The above is taken from Walker's *TORCH-LIGHT TO THE CHEROKEE*.

In May, 1830, Congress added its weight to the acts of Georgia, when it passed the Removal Bill, which authorized the president to remove any eastern tribe beyond the Mississippi, and to do so by force when necessary.

Stripped of all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution to all citizens of the United States or any territory under the jurisdiction of the United States, the Cherokees were now subject to abuse, robberies and murder, without any recourse to local, state or federal law. Many whites of that time in and along the frontier knew of only one kind of Indian that was good, and that was a dead Indian.

Under these conditions it is not difficult to visualize that some of the Cherokees were thinking of leaving their home and escape the terror and exploitation. A minority faction led by Major Ridge felt that this would be their only way out.

Opposing this faction was John Ross who led the majority group which proposed never to give up their land granted to them by treaty with the United States Government in exchange for land west of the Mississippi. They were aware that this unbearable injustice could not continue, but they had an unflinching faith and confidence in the Constitution of the United States and that the guarantees of right, government by law,---would come into its own again. In this faith they bore their cross, offering a form of passive resistance and always hopefully awaiting the dawn of a new day that would bring "freedom with justice."

Secretly, the minority faction entered into an agreement with U. S. Agents in which they ceded their land to the government in exchange for lands in Oklahoma. John Ross was held a captive for two weeks during which time the treaty was negotiated. This was the treaty of New Echota, December 29, 1835.

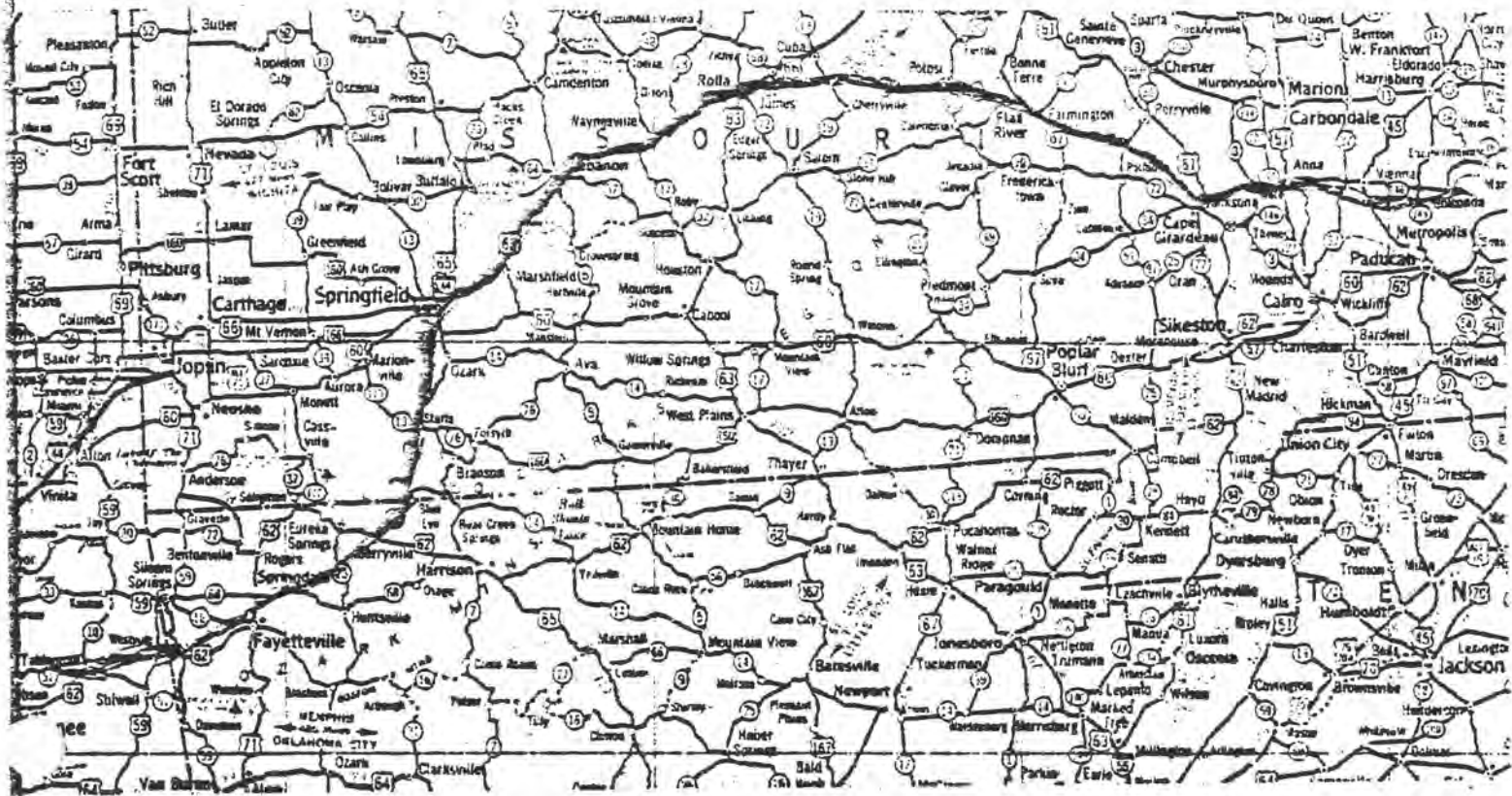
We can now say nothing more for this than that it was little if anything short of fraud. Major Ridge, wrote President Jackson, "We come now to address you on the subject of our griefs and afflictions from the acts of the white people. They have got our lands and now they are preparing to fleece us of the money accruing from the treaty. We found our plantations taken either in whole or in part by the Georgians---suits instituted against us for back rents for our own farms. These suits are commenced in the inferior courts, with the evident design that, when we are ready to remove, to arrest our people, and on these vile claims to induce us to compromise for our own release, to travel with our families. Thus our funds will be filched from our people, and we shall be compelled to leave our country as beggars and in want.

"Even the Georgia laws, which deny us our oaths, are thrown aside, and notwithstanding the cries of our people, and protestation of our innocence and peace, the lowest classes of the white people are flogging the Cherokees with cowhides, hickories, and clubs. We are not safe in our houses---our people are assailed by day and night by the rabble. Even justices of the peace and constables are concerned in this business. This barbarous treatment is not confined to men, but the women are stripped also and whipped without law or mercy...Send regular troops to protect us from these lawless assaults, and to protect our people as they depart for the West. If it is not done, we shall carry off nothing but the scars of the lash on our backs, and our oppressors will get all the money. We talk plainly, as chiefs having property and life in danger, and we appeal to you for protection."

The first party to be emigrated by the government under the term of the treaty was in charge of Dr. John S. Young, who had three assistants, one physician and three interpreters. All were paid by the government to conduct the party to Oklahoma. There were 466 Cherokees, one half of whom were children. The party was assembled in April, 1837. Dr. Lillybridge was not only a zealous official, but he took pains to set down accounts of the emigrants from day to day in his journals.

By flat boats and steamboats, and at times by railroad, the party descended the Tennessee, arrived at Paducah. From here they proceeded by keel-boats. There are frequent accounts telling whiskey having been sold to the Indians or traded to them for rations with the expected result of drunkenness, and disturbances which often involved local white people in the area where they traveled.

Also quoting from the doctor's journals, "Daughter of Young Squirrel sick with headache and fever, gave cathartic. Arthur, son of Archilla Smith sick with influenza; gave prescription.



The above map charts the route followed by the Cherokees across Southern Illinois (THE CHEROKEES CROSS EGYPT by Scerial Thompson), crossing the River at Moccasin Springs where Thomas Nicolas and Jacob Littleton maintained a horse ferry. (See Kochtitzky paper page 10)

This route was charted by B.B. Cannon who led the second party of 365 Cherokee in ther migration to the west, leaving the Indian agency in Tennessee on October 14, 1837 (Cannon, Journal of Occurances). This record shows the following data:

- November 12 - 13 -14 Ferrying the Mississippi River
- November 14 - traveled five miles and camped on Mr. Williams Farm
- November 16 Thru Jackson, Missouri 17 miles and Camped at Widow Roberts Farm. on Farmington Road.
- November 17 13 miles to whitewater dreek.
- November 18 Mr. Morans - 16 miles
- November 19 Wolf Creek 14 miles (this side of Farmington)
- November 20 Thru Farmington, halt at St.Francois River -15miles
- November 21 Thru Caledonia, halt at Mr. Jacksons - 14 miles
- November 22 Thru Courtois Diggin's , halt at Scotts - 13 ni.
- November 24 Halt at Huzza Creek, 12 mi.

Applied blister to the chest of Henry Clay. Stand has been in quite a feeble state of health since I first saw him at New Echota. --James William taken very suddenly with inflammation of spleen. Bled him and applied blister. --Sally Rainbow has been slightly indisposed for some days. She is a doctress and conjureress herself."

Shifted from keel-boat--to raft--to steamboat, they made their way down the Mississippi, up the Arkansas to Little Rock, Fort Smith, and ended the journey at Fort Gibson in Oklahoma. Major Ridge and his family were in this first detachment.

Late in 1837 a second party numbering 365, with B. B. Cannon as conductor left Tennessee. Generally, such a party was furnished with one wagon for every twenty people, one horse for every five persons. Thus, this party probably had 18 wagons and some 70 horses. It had a physician, wagoners, and interpreters. The government furnished and paid them. Also they were furnished with money to pay ferry charges, toll for road, fodder was bought for horses, smithies along the way repaired wagons, and shod the horses. Camp sites were selected ahead where they halted for the night. Never did they camp overnight without the permission of the owners of the land.

Food rations were at a rate of about 16¢ per person per day. Thus the removal, counting all costs, was costly to the government. The cost per party or detachment ranged from \$65,880.00 to \$70,000.00. Since there were these first two and 13 more in 1838, the cost can be estimated, and in terms of money value of that day and compared with the present value, this would represent a terrific expense.

This second party came thru Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Northwest Arkansas into Oklahoma.

Crossing the Cumberland Mountains took four days; thru Murphysboro, Nashville, Hopkinsville, and crossing the Ohio River at Berry's Ferry opposite Golconda they entered Illinois. Following the Golconda road they reached the Mississippi on November 12th. The Kochtitzky paper covers this well.

Death among the aged and children were high. The dead were buried in the morning before the march resumed. Illness which beset the party since it left Georgia remained with them as a result of exposure to the severe weather of rain and cold. Dr. Townsend tells of 60 persons ill with dysentery and bowel complaint.

On May 23, 1838, General Scott ordered the removal of all of the tribe by force. By June he reported that nearly all had been taken prisoners. Some escaped into the hills of North Carolina where they live yet, but Scott had nearly 15,000 in his concentration camp.

A severe drouth hit the Middle West, and water was scarce. The land parched in the summer sun. An epidemic of cholera swept through the concentration camp. Upon the request of leading men of the tribe, Scott consented to halt the removal until September 1. He also agreed to let the tribe move itself under the supervision of John Ross.

Under Ross's supervision all that remained and were now in prison camp were divided into thirteen parties or detachments. Each was headed by a conductor, who was assisted by a wagon master, a farrier, a commissary, and a physician -- which was very similar to the arrangement of the two earlier ones. Kochtitzky gives the names of each conductor on page 12. All of the parties started at various times at intervals of ten days to two weeks in succession. This was likely done in

accordance with the time it required to assemble personnel and supplies. It further eliminated concentrations of large numbers on the way, for hay, corn and food had to be bought for them.

Eleven of the thirteen parties came the overland way charted by Cannon. This was done because of ferry service at the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers; also, there were some roads established on this route. Furthermore, they avoided crossing of large streams by coming through the area of the upper course of the streams through Missouri, which were the Whitewater, Castor, St. Francois, Black, Meramec, and Gasconade.

Two parties which did not come the overland route came as far as the Mississippi. One of them probably went by way of riverboat down to the Arkansas River and up the Arkansas. John Ross himself was in this last party. His wife died on the journey at Little Rock and lies buried there.

The other party took a course to the south and west from Jackson, Missouri. It would be interesting to know more about this party and the course of their journey.

These last are the thirteen parties whose trail along to their destination to Oklahoma is known as the Trail of Tears. It was such a sad and cruel thing which had been forced upon them. They suffered from cold, severe weather, from disease, and torts of white settlers.

George Hicks, the conductor of one of the parties, sorrowfully reported to John Ross, on November 4, 1838:

"We are now about to take our final leave and kind farewell to our native land, the country that the great spirit gave our Fathers; we are on the eve of leaving that country that gave us birth. . . it is with sorrow that we are forced by the authority of the white man to quit the scenes of our childhood. . . we bid a final farewell to it and all we hold dear. From the little trial we have made in a start 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 citizens will permit us. But 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 & past Demands; Yet the Government says we must go, and its citizens say 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 spoliation [compensation] as promised; our property has been stolen and robbed from us by white men and no means given us to pay our debts. [The Government officers will not protect us, our property is] robbed of us in open Day light and in open view of hundreds, and why are they so bold; they know that we are in a defenseless situation. . ." (Grant Foreman, Indian Removal, page 305)

From the diary of a traveler on the frontier, we quote the following:

" . . . On Tuesday evening we fell in with a detachment of the poor Cherokee Indians . . . about eleven hundred Indians -- sixty wagons -- six hundred horses, and perhaps forty pairs of oxen. We found

them in the forest camped for the night by the road side . . . under a severe fall of rain accompanied by heavy wind. With their canvas for a shield from the inclemency of the weather, and the cold wet ground for a resting place, after the fatigue of the day, they spent the night . . . many of the aged Indians were suffering extremely from the fatigue of the journey, and the ill health consequent upon it . . . several were then quite ill, and one aged man we were informed was then in the last struggles of death.

" . . . About ten officers and overseers in each detachment whose business it was to provide supplies for the journey, and attend to the general wants of the company. . . We met several detachments in the southern part of Kentucky on the 4th, 5th and 6th of December. . . . The last detachment which we passed on the 7th embraced rising two thousand Indians with horses and mules in proportion. The forward part of the train we found just pitching their tents for the night, and notwithstanding some thirty or forty waggons were already stationed, we found the road literally filled with the procession for about three miles in length. The sick and feeble were carried in waggons -- about as comfortable for traveling as a New England ox cart with a covering over it -- a great many ride on horseback and multitudes go on foot -- even aged females, apparently nearly ready to drop into the grave, were traveling with heavy burdens attached to the back -- on the sometimes frozen ground, and sometimes muddy streets, with no covering for the feet except what nature had given them. We were some hours making our way through the crowd, which brought us in close contact with the wagons and multitude, so much that we felt fortunate to find ourselves freed from the crowd without leaving any part of our carriage. We learned from the inhabitants on the road where the Indians passed, that they buried fourteen or fifteen at every stopping place, and they make a journey of ten miles per day only on an average. One fact which to my own mind seemed a lesson indeed to the American nation is, that they will not travel on the Sabbath. . . when the Sabbath came, they must stop, and not merely stop -- they must worship the Great Spirit too, for they had divine service on the Sabbath -- a campmeeting in truth." (Grant Foreman, Indian Removal, pages 305-306)

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