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View of the beautiful country in East Tennessee which the Cherokee Indians were obliged to leave

INDIAN REMOVAL

*The Emigration of the Five Civilized
Tribes of Indians*

GRANT FOREMAN

Norman

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To the memory of
ROBERT L. WILLIAMS
who did much
to make and to preserve
Oklahoma history

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR / *The Trail of Tears*

ON JUNE 13, the second party of 875 captive Cherokee Indians departed from Chattanooga in charge of Lieut. R. H. K. Whiteley, with five assistant conductors, two physicians, three interpreters, and a hospital attendant. After the preceding day had been spent in organizing the party and reuniting separated families as far as possible, they were placed on six flatboats and dropped down the Tennessee river to Brown's Ferry where more prisoners joined them. For two days they remained there while clothing was purchased and offered to the Indians who refused to receive it "neither would they be mustered, as all attempts to obtain their names were without success."

When they left there the flotilla was increased to eight flatboats; tied together in pairs these safely negotiated the dangerous rapids and arrived at Kelly's Ferry in the evening. On the morning of the eighteenth with four flatboats moored on each side, the steamboat *George Guess* continued the descent of the river. This day the Indians decided to take the clothing of which they stood in need. "One death (a child) and one birth, were detained three hours wooding—Encamped on the bank of Tennessee River at 6 P. M. The hours of stopping and starting were so arranged as to give the Indians sufficient time to cook in the evenings and mornings the provision for the day."

On the twentieth they arrived at Decatur and the next morning departed on two trains, arriving at the boatlanding below Tuscumbia in the evening. One old woman died at Decatur and a man was killed by the cars when he attempted to rescue his hat. Before reaching Decatur twenty-five Indians had escaped from the party. The emigrants were required to remain at Tuscumbia several days before boats could

¹ *Journal of R. H. K. Whiteley, OIA, "Cherokee Emigration" File W 662.*

be secured to carry them over Colbert Shoals, and during their stay two children died. They passed the shoals on the twenty-eighth and encamped opposite Waterloo, Alabama, while awaiting the arrival of the steamboat *Smelter*. During the stay here, three children died, there was one birth, and 118 Indians escaped.

The emigrants departed from Waterloo the last day of the month on the steamboat *Smelter* and one keel boat in tow. The next day another child died before the party arrived at Paducah. Stops were made to take on wood, to escape a wind storm, and to obtain supplies at Memphis and on the Fourth of July the boats entered the Arkansas river by way of the White river cut-off. Two children died this day and one child the next. On arrival at Little Rock the emigrants were transferred to the steamboat *Tecumseh* of lighter draft in order to navigate higher up the river.

They left on the twelfth but were unable to ascend higher than Lewisburg where the boat grounded on Benson's Bar. Here after scouring the country, twenty-three wagons were secured to haul the sick people, principally children, and they departed on the twentieth leaving eighty ill in camp. The next day more wagons were secured and the remainder of the party took up the march.

The weather was extremely hot, a drought had prevailed for months, water was scarce, suffocating clouds of dust stirred up the by oxen and wagons, and the rough and rocky roads, made the condition of the sick occupants of the wagons miserable indeed. Three, four, and five deaths occurred each day. To avoid the heat the marches were started before sunrise and ended at noon. Before the end of the month there were between two and three hundred ill.

On August first they were in camp at Lee's creek. "Did not move this day, the party requiring rest and being more than one half sick; notwithstanding every effort was used, it was impossible to prevent their eating quantities of green peaches and corn²—consequently the flux raged among them and carried off some days as high as six and seven." Four days later these miserable beings entered the Cherokee Nation and went into camp near the head of Lee's creek. Here they

² At home the Indians ate peaches and corn with no bad results; but the hardships of the enforced marches, want of their customary diet, bad water, and many other causes contributed to the terrible mortality among them.

were delivered to Captain Stephenson, 602 of the original party, seventy having died in exactly three weeks.

"Among the recent immigrants," wrote Mr. Washburn at Dwight, on July 31, "there has been much sickness, and in some neighborhoods the mortality has been great. . . just returned from a neighborhood about ten miles from the mission where there have been fourteen deaths within three weeks. . . want of medical aid. . . Since last October about 2,000 immigrants have come. Twenty-five hundred more are on their way. . . much sickness and mortality among them. One company of these originally a thousand, but. . . diminishing by some hundreds is expected to arrive today. . . expected that nearly all. . . will settle within ten miles of this station."³

A picture of Indian desolation in Georgia was sketched by the exulting Gen. Charles Floyd, militia officer in charge of operations against the Cherokee in that state, in his report to Governor Gilmer: "Head Quarters, Middle Military District, New Echota, 18th June, 1838. Sir: I have the pleasure to inform your excellency that I am now fully convinced there is not an Indian within the limits of my command, except a few in my possession, who will be sent to Ross' Landing to-morrow. My scouting parties have scoured the whole country without seeing an Indian, or late Indian signs. If there are any stragglers in Georgia, they must be in Union and Gilmer counties, and near the Tennessee and North Carolina line; but none can escape the vigilance of our troops. Georgia is ultimately in possession of her rights in the Cherokee country. . ."⁴

General Scott gave orders June 17, for the discharge of volunteer troops engaged in capturing the Indians.⁵ The same day the third contingent of 1,070 captive Cherokee left Ross's Landing in wagons and on foot for Waterloo where they were to be embarked on boats.⁶ These people were in a destitute condition, with very little clothing, but they refused to accept any from the emigration agent. Four children and one adult died before their arrival at Waterloo. After their departure they

³ *Missionary Herald*, XXXIV, 445.

⁴ *Army and Navy Chronicle*, VII, 57; Scott to Poinsett, June 15, 1838, OIA, "Cherokee Emigration."

⁵ Scott, order No. 46, June 17, 1838, OIA, "Cherokee Emigration."

⁶ *Army and Navy Chronicle*, VII, 45; *Louisville Public Advertiser*, August 24, 1838, p. 2, cols. 2 and 3.

learned that General Scott had suspended the removal until autumn, and they demanded to be allowed to remain with the other members of their nation.

Three days after their departure from Ross's Landing a number of their brothers addressed to Gen. Nat Smith, superintendent of Cherokee emigration, a touching petition to halt the movement of the party and either return them to their former encampment or establish them in a new one where they could share in the respite until a more healthful season and join in the movement in the autumn under the permission of General Scott. "Spare their lives," they said; "expose them not to the killing effects of that strange climate, under the disadvantages of the present inauspicious season, without a house or shelter to cover them from above, or any kind of furniture to raise them from the bare ground, on which they may spread their blankets and lay their languid limbs, when fallen prostrate under the influence of disease. . . To this may be added the voice of our white neighbors. The cries of humanity have reached the citizens of the adjoining counties, and they have stepped forth to advocate the cause of mercy. The truth is, a general and powerful sympathy for our condition has seized the attention and affected the hearts of the white citizens generally in McMinn, Monroe and Blount counties. . . Not longer ago than yesterday the citizens of Athens, your immediate neighbors, sent a strong and affecting petition to Genl. Scott on our behalf signed by upwards of sixty of the principal citizens and physicians. . . We have today heard that the citizens of Monroe and those of Blount counties are preparing similar petitions."⁷ This appeal was not heeded.

One hundred of the party escaped along the way and when the remainder were joined on the twenty-fifth at Bellefonte, Alabama, by Smith they "made application to me to be suffered to return to the agency and remain until fall. . . . As they would have traveled over 120 miles, there health improving and they well provided with transportation and subsistence, I determined they should go on and so informed them. Shortly after which about 300 of them threw a part of their baggage out of the waggons, took it and broke for the woods and many of the balance refused to put their baggage into the waggons, or go any further and shewed much ill nature. Many of them told the agents who were with

⁷ John Ross Manuscripts, in possession of his great-grandson, W. W. Ross of Park Hill, Oklahoma.

them that the white men were all Lyars and bad men; and one of them come to me and made the same observation and added further that he would go back home the next morning and shoot for Jno. Ross; that he had plenty of money and he would fight for him.

"I immediately requested the Captain of the Town Company to call out his men and aid me in starting them which he very promptly did, and we succeeded in getting off all that was left about 10 o'clock. A part of those who broke off in the morning was found and made to return. I put the party in charge of Capt. Drane of the Army and called on the citizens for 30 volunteers to accompany him to Waterloo. They turned out immediately and I had the Capt. to muster them into service for 30 days unless sooner discharged.

"As very many of this party were about naked, barefoot and suffering with fatigue although they had not traveled over 9 miles pr. day, I determined to purchase some Clothing, Domestic for tents & shoes, &c., &c., and issue to them which was done on the 26 ult. They rested on that day in the evening of which I called as many of the aged and Infirm and their Families as would go by water to Waterloo and took them to the river, put them on board of the boat engaged in the upper contract and landed them next morning at Dicatur, where I learned Lieut. Whiteley's party were yet at Tuscumbia. I followed on and overtook him and party at Waterloo all dooing very well, and getting on bored of the boats to leave which they did at 10 o.c on 30 ult. We have been detained by head winds for 1 r-2 days or we should have reached this [Memphis] on the morning of 2d inst."⁸

Nat Smith accompanied this party as far as Little Rock "with 722 Cherokee out of over 1,000 who left Ross' Landing; they continued to desert some almost every night until we put them on board of the Boats" at Waterloo. On the thirtieth of June, 76 deserted before their arrival at Waterloo. "These people will have over 300 miles to travel to reach their old homes, many of them women and children and of course must suffer extremely for want of something to eat &c. Of the 3,000 which

8 Smith to Harris, July 3, 1838, OIA, "Cherokee Emigration" S 1041. "The Athens (Tenn.) Journal of July 4 says: 'Several detachments of Cherokees have passed through this place within the last two or three weeks, on their way from North Carolina to the Agency, and on last Friday 1,200 passed, conducted by two companies of artillery, under the command of Capt. Washington'" (New York Observer, July 28, 1838, p. 2, col. 4).

I wrote you from the Agency had left in the three parties, not over 2,000 will reach their new home, and all this for want of a few armed men as a guard which I have politely asked the Military for but could not get them agreably to my wish."⁹

The Smelter arrived at a point about sixty-five miles below Little Rock on July 20 but because of the low stage of the river could ascend no higher. The steamboat *Tecumseh* went down to bring up the Indians and Smith returned to Waterloo on the twelfth; there he found Captain Drane still detained with his land party of Indians, "supposed to consist of 800 or 900—he not having been able to muster them from their refusal to give their names and numbers of their families; the same case happened with Lieut. Whiteley's party, he had to count them out of the boats."¹⁰

An observer of this emigration between Memphis and Little Rock reported in September: "Eighteen hundred Cherokees have passed here by land within the last month, and they were suffering very much with measles and fever. We have had the longest drought I ever experienced in my life, and the corn crops will be light." And he predicted the tide of white and Indian emigrants would make provisions scarce and expensive.¹¹

This removal, in the hottest part of the year, was attended with so much sickness and mortality that, by resolution of the Cherokee national council, Lewis Ross and other leading men submitted to General Scott a proposition that the Cherokee be allowed to conduct their own removal in the autumn, after the sickly season had ended. On June 19 the humane general agreed¹² to the proposition on condition that they would all start by September 1, and heard himself condemned

9 Smith to Harris, July 12, 1838, OIA, *ibid.*: *Arkansas Gazette*, July 11, 1838, p. 2, col. 1.

10 Smith to Harris, *ibid.*: *Arkansas Gazette*, July 25, 1838.

11 *Louisville Public Advertiser*, September 22, 1838, p. 2, col. 1.

12 Scott to Lowery and others, June 19, 1838, OIA, "Cherokee Emigration" S 1059. General Scott's agreement with Ross aroused a storm of protest and charges from a host of office-holders and owners of steamboats and wagons and other contract seekers, who saw their anticipated profits vanish (*Nashville Whig* October 29, 1838, p. 2, cols. 1 and 2).

by the impatient whites for this evidence of compassion for the unfortunate Indians. In the meantime, however, General Scott kept the Indians under military guard in their concentration camps.¹³

However, a drought unprecedented for many years prevailed throughout the summer and autumn, rendering it impossible to move and subsist such large bodies of people and the cattle that accompanied them for food, and removal was again postponed until the next month. Officers were appointed by the Cherokee council to take charge of the emigration, the Indians being organized into detachments averaging one thousand each, with two leaders in charge of each detachment, and a sufficient number of wagons and horses for the purpose. To maintain order on the march they established in each party a sort of police organization that punished infractions of their regulations.¹⁴

¹³ *Army and Navy Chronicle*, July 19, 1838, VII, 45. There were 2,500 at Ross's Landing and 3,000 at the Cherokee Agency encampment covering nearly ten square miles; 1,250 in two camps between these points; 1,500 being escorted to these camps; two or three thousand more were prisoners at interior forts waiting to be marched to the river camps; 3,000 had been removed and General Scott estimated that there were fewer than 200 yet to be captured (Scott to Poinsett, June 22, 1838, OIA, "Cherokee Emigration" S 1059). The whole number collected in North Carolina was something more than 3,000 (Eustis to Worth, June 24, 1838, *ibid.*).

¹⁴ *Army and Navy Chronicle*, VII, 280. An effort was made to comply with the agreement to begin the emigration by September 1; two days before that date about 2,500 emigrants in two parties had traveled twenty miles on the road when they were obliged to stop and go into camp at Blythe's ferry. The long continued drought had dried up all the creeks and branches in the Cumberland Mountains making it impossible to find water for parties of more than a dozen or two men (*Knoxville Register*, September 12, 1838, p. 3, col. 3). The delay was a serious matter for the emigrants driven from their homes in warm weather with no clothing suitable for winter months (*Nashville Whig*, October 5, 1838, p. 2, col. 4). However, at Nashville the contractors engaged by Ross furnished many of the emigrants needed clothing. Stephen Foreman's party passed through Nashville November 11; they were well provided with teams, horses, ponies, and mules and some had private carriages; most of them were well clothed; many were furnished with good cloaks, bearskin or blanket overcoats, thick boots, shoes and stockings (*Nashville Union*, November 13, 1838, p. 2, col. 1). The emigrants headed by the preachers Evan Jones and Jesse Bushyhead had an agreement with the authorities that they would be allowed to rest on Sundays and conduct religious services. Bushyhead's party was camped four miles from Nashville but the owner of the camp site would not permit them to remain over Sunday and much to their regret they were obliged to march through Nashville on that day (*Knoxville Register*, November 21, 1836, p. 2, col. 6). The last detachment consisting of about 1,800 Indians reached the encampment on Mill Creek about four

Thus organized, numbering about 13,000 including negro slaves, they started after the drought was broken in October.

A party of Cherokee belonging to the treaty faction of the tribe who refused to emigrate under the leadership of John Ross, left the vicinity of the Cherokee Agency under the direction of Lieutenant Deas on October 11. Deas reported from Winchester, Tennessee on the twenty-seventh "up to this time our progress has been necessarily slow, in consequence of the obstructions in the road over which we have passed. . . . The Party under my charge numbers between 650 and 700 persons, and is composed for the most part of highly respectable and intelligent families, and there are but very few who have not made considerable advancement in civilization." Making ten or twelve miles a day and passing through Fayetteville, they reached Pulaski in November without incident except that a number of oxen belonging to the Indians died from eating poisonous weeds.¹⁵

On the twenty-fourth Deas finished crossing his Indians over the Mississippi river at Memphis and the next day they resumed their journey. As his party was made up of individuals who favored the plans of the government in the execution of the treaty, and they included some of the most highly civilized members of the tribe they were favored by a great increase in the allowances for transportation, subsistence and contingencies over those made for the other emigrants. A large quantity of their baggage was shipped up the Arkansas river by boat. This party reached Little Rock about the middle of December,¹⁶ and arrived in their new home on January 7, 1839.

Those who emigrated under the management of their own officers assembled at Rattlesnake Springs, about two miles south of Hiwassee river near the present Charleston, Tennessee, where a final council was held in which it was determined to continue their old constitution and laws in their new home.¹⁷

miles from Nashville the end of November and as winter was so near at hand it was predicted that some of the detachments would be obliged to go into camp on the Ohio river until spring (*Nashville Union*, November 30, 1838, p. 2, col. 2).

¹⁵ Deas to Harris, November 3, 1838, "Cherokee Emigration," D 257.

¹⁶ *Arkansas Gazette*, December 19, 1838, p. 2, col. 1.

¹⁷ *Missionary Herald*, XXXIV, 445. Their agreement provided for subsisting them at a cost of sixteen cents per diem for each person and forty cents each for the

Crossing to the north side of the Hiwassee river at a ferry above Gunstocker creek, they proceeded down along the river; the sick, the aged, and children, with the blankets, cooking pots and other belongings in wagons; the rest on foot or on horses. There were 645 wagons and about 5,000 horses, besides a large number of oxen. "It was like the march of an army, regiment after regiment, the wagons in the center, the officers along the line and the horsemen on the flanks and at the rear. Tennessee river was crossed at Tucker's (?) ferry, a short distance above Jolly's Island, at the mouth of Highwassee. Thence the route lay south of Pikesville, through McMinnville and on to Nashville, where the Cumberland was crossed."

The contingent of 1,103 Cherokee in charge of John Benge was the first to begin their journey, starting on October 1, 1838. Elijah Hicks's party of 748 started three days later and on the sixteenth reached Nashville near where they camped for several days; there they were reported as suffering sorely for the want of clothing, and it was thought that "scores of them must inevitably fall the victims of disease and death before reaching the far place of their destination. Indeed, when they passed through Nashville, 40 or 50 were on the sick list, and four or five were afterward buried near the city."¹⁸

500 horses it was expected would accompany each, 1,000 persons, two thousand pounds of soap for each 1,000 emigrants was included (*John Ross Manuscripts, ibid.*).

¹⁸ *New York Observer*, November 10, 1838, p. 3, col. 4. Mrs Rebecca Neugin, a half-blood Cherokee now living near Hulbert, Oklahoma, was three years old when she departed with her parents on the removal; from information given by her mother she told the author: "When the soldiers came to our house my father wanted to fight, but my mother told him that the soldiers would kill him if he did and we surrendered without a fight. They drove us out of our house to join other prisoners in a stockade. After they took us away my mother begged them to let her go back and get some bedding. So they let her go back and she brought what bedding and a few cooking utensils she could carry and had to leave behind all of our other household possessions. My father had a wagon pulled by two spans of oxen to haul us in. Eight of my brothers and sisters and two or three widow women and children rode with us. My brother Dick who was a good deal older than I was walked along with a long whip which he popped over the backs of the oxen and drove them all the way. My father and mother walked all the way also. The people got so tired of eating salt pork on the journey that my father would walk through the woods as we traveled, hunting for turkeys and deer which he brought into camp to feed us. Camp was usually made at some place where water was to be had and when we stopped and prepared to cook our food other emigrants who had been driven from their homes without opportunity

On the twenty-fourth Hicks, the first to reach there, reported from Port Royal near the Kentucky line "the people are very loth to go on, and unusually slow in preparing for starting each morning. I am not surprised at this because they are moving not from choice to an unknown region not desired by them. I am disposed to make full allowance for their unhappy movement." The venerable chief "White Path has been in the last stages of sickness for many days and has to be hauled & is helpless who cannot last but a few days. Nocowee has given himself up to the bane of death [whisky] and I have altogether lost his services. Our police has to drive him along the road sometimes fettered." A few days later near Hopkinsville, Kentucky, White Path succumbed to sickness, infirmity, and the hardships of the forced journey, and died at the age of seventy-five. He was interred near the Nashville road and a monument of wood painted to resemble marble was erected to his memory. A tall pole with a flag of white linen flying at the top was erected at his grave to note the spot for his countrymen who were following.¹⁹ This party reached their destination on January 4, 1839, the first to arrive in their western home.

Nine contingents left at intervals through October and four during the next month. John Ross remained behind to supervise the preparations and he was the recipient of numerous reports of progress and requests for advice. Wilson Lumpkin of Georgia and John Kennedy of Tennessee were appointed commissioners to supervise and carry into effect the provisions of the treaty preparatory to the removal of the Indians. Their duties required them to examine and pass on the claims of the Indians for loss and damage to their property in connection with the removal as well as claims of the whites against them. The Indians who departed more or less voluntarily had the benefit of greater indulgence and leisure on the part of the commissioners than fell to the lot of the more than 13,000 who would not consent to leave until

to secure cooking utensils came to our camp to use our pots and kettles. There was much sickness among the emigrants and a great many little children died of whooping cough." Agents were sent in advance to select and engage camp sites at intervals of about fifteen miles; water, fuel, and grazing for their animals were essential, and the neighborhood of a water mill for grinding their corn was also an important factor in selecting a camping place.

¹⁹ Draper Collection, 26 cc 15; *Hopkinsville (Kentucky) Gazette*, quoted in *Jacksonville (Alabama) Republican*, November 22, 1838, p. 2, col. 4.

the last moment; as it was manifestly impossible to give them more than perfunctory attention before their departure, the commissioners proceeded to hear and determine them after the Indians had gone.

As these Indians now on the way were driven from their home without either their property or compensation for its loss their bitterness of spirit was greatly aggravated. At McMinnville, Tennessee, Rev. Jesse Bushyhead's party held a council and sent a message to Ross saying they had been compelled to leave without satisfaction of their claims and they feared fraudulent demands would be made to defeat them; and they urged that no further consideration of them be had while the Indians were denied the opportunity of being present or represented.

The party in charge of Rev. Evan Jones, a Baptist missionary, traveled sixteen miles on October 16 but the people were so fatigued with the effort, that they remained in camp at McMinnville several days to rest. They "paid forty dollars at the Walderns Ridge toll gate and the man agreed to let the other detachments pass at half price viz., 37 1-2 [cents] for four wheeled carriages and 6 1-2 for a horse. On the Cumberland mountains they fleeced us, 73 cents a wagon and 12 1-2 cents a horse without the least abatement or thanks." Rev. Jesse Bushyhead's detachment was delayed by their oxen eating poison ivy and they were passed by Jones. Bushyhead "has had a distressing time with the discontents."

Bushyhead reported from his party on October 31: "We have a large number of sick and very many extremely aged and infirm persons in our detachment that must of necessity be conveyed in waggons. Our detachment now consists of about 978 or 79 Cherokees and there are forty-nine waggons" and they would be unable to haul the corn needed for the horses. They often found it necessary to double the teams in ascending the mountain roads.

The route carried all the emigrants through Nashville where the contractors furnished them with supplies. In November it rained excessively and the roads, cut up by thousands of horses, cattle, and people and hundreds of wagons and carts, became an appalling morass through which locomotion was accomplished with great difficulty and distress. The infirm and sick suffered in the wagons and carts that pitched and jolted behind the struggling oxen and horses; and they were obliged to await until stops were made at night for the attention



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Type of primitive turbine grist mill operated in the Cherokee country of East Tennessee and North Carolina

of their physicians, who, tired after a day of travel, spent most of the night making brief calls upon the large number of patients. After the Indians left those who had driven them from their homes, they found the white people sympathetic with them in their distress, and as the third detachment of about 1,200 camped near Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on November 13, the citizens made generous donations for their comfort.²⁰

The last party conducted by George Hicks did not start until November 4. Hicks sorrowfully reported that day to Chief Ross: "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. . ."

A sympathetic traveler who met them on the road describes the appearance of these unhappy people:

" . . . On Tuesday evening we fell in with a detachment of the poor Cherokee Indians . . . about eleven hundred Indians—sixty waggons—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

²⁰ Hopkinsville Gazette, quoted in Army and Navy Chronicle, VII, 363.

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 camp-meeting in truth. One aged Indian who was commander of the friendly Creeks and Seminoles in a very important engagement in the company with General Jackson, was accosted on arriving in a little village in Kentucky by an aged man residing there, and who was one of Jackson's men in the engagement referred to, and asking him if he (the Indian) recollected him? The aged Chieftain looked him in the face and recognized him, and with a down-cast look and heavy sigh, referring to the engagement, he said "Ah! my life and the lives of my people were then at stake for you and your country. I then thought Jackson my best friend. But ah! Jackson no serve me right. Your country no do me justice now!"

"The Indians as a whole carry in their countenances every thing but the appearance of happiness. Some carry a downcast dejected look bordering upon the appearance of despair; others a wild frantic appearance as if about to burst the chains of nature and pounce like a tiger upon their enemies. . . . Most of them seemed intelligent and refined. Mr. Bushyhead, son of an aged man of the same name, is a very intelligent and interesting Baptist clergyman. Several missionaries were accompanying them to their destination. Some of the Cherokees are wealthy and travel in style. One lady passed on in her hack in company with her husband, apparently with as much refinement and equipage as any of the mothers of New England; and she was a mother too and her youngest child about three years old was sick in her arms, and all she could do was to make it comfortable as circumstances would permit. . . . she could only carry her dying child in her arms a few miles farther, and then she must stop in a stranger-land and consign her much loved babe to the cold ground, and that too without pomp or ceremony, and pass on with the multitude. . . .

. . . When I past the last detachment of those suffering exiles and thought that my native countrymen had thus expelled them from their native soil and their much loved homes, and that too in this inclement season of the year in all their suffering, I turned from the sight with feelings which language cannot express and 'wept like childhood then.' I felt that I would not encounter the secret silent prayer of one of these sufferers armed with the energy that faith and hope would give it (if there be a God who avenges the wrongs of the injured) for all the lands of Georgia! . . . When I read in the President's Message²¹ that he was happy to inform the Senate that the Cherokees were peaceably and without reluctance removed—and remember that it was on the third day of December when not one of the detachments had reached their destination; and that a large majority had not made even half their journey when he made that declaration, I thought I wished the President could have been there that very day in Kentucky with myself, and have seen the comfort and the willingness with which the Cherokees were making their journey. But I forbear, full well I know that many prayers have gone up to the King of Heaven from Maine in behalf of the poor Cherokees."²²

²¹ James D. Richardson, *Messages of the Presidents*, III, 497.

²² "A Native of Maine, traveling in the Western Country" in *New York Observer*, January 26, 1839, p. 4. The last detachment, numbering about 1,800 passed through Nashville December 2 and the Nashville Banner predicted that they would

The Ohio river was crossed at a ferry near the mouth of the Cumberland, and the army passed on through southern Illinois until it reached the Mississippi river opposite Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The drought having delayed the start so long, it was winter when the emigrants reached that great river. "In talking with old men and women at Tahlequah, the author found that the lapse of over half a century had not sufficed to wipe out the memory of the miseries of that halt beside the frozen river, with hundreds of sick and dying penned up in wagons or stretched upon the ground, with only a blanket overhead to keep out the January blast. The crossing was made at last in two divisions, at Cape Girardeau and at Green's ferry, a short distance below, whence the march was on through Missouri to Indian Territory, the later detachments making a northerly circuit by Springfield, because those who had gone before had killed off all the game along the direct route."²³

Nineteen hundred of these Indians passed through Jackson, Missouri, early in December. "Some of them have considerable wealth, and make a very respectable appearance; but most of them are poor and exceedingly dissipated."²⁴ Another detachment passed near Batesville, Arkansas, December 15. Of this party John Bengé was conductor, George Lowery assistant, Dr. W. P. Rawles of Gallatin, Tennessee, surgeon and physician, and William Shorey Coodey, contractor. Many of them came through the town to get their carriages repaired, have their horses shod and for other reasons. "They left Gunter's Landing on Tennessee River 35 miles above Huntsville, Alabama, October 10, since which time, owing to their exposure to the inclemency of the weather, and many of them being destitute of shoes and other necessary articles of clothing, about 50 of them have died."²⁵ Twelve hundred

suffer intensely from the cold before they reached their new home (*New York Observer*, December 15, 1838, p. 3, col. 5).

²³ James Mooney, *op. cit.*, 133. As the Indians organized and managed the movement of this great body of people and the government had nothing to do with it, there were no journals of their experiences kept so far as the author has been able to ascertain; information and descriptions of this terrible undertaking are therefore meager. James Mooney's account written from the lips of survivors of that sad migration is the most complete of any extant.

²⁴ *Jackson Advertiser*, in *Arkansas Gazette*, December 26, 1838, p. 2, col. 1.

²⁵ Account from Batesville (*Arkansas*) *News*, in *Arkansas Gazette*, December 20, 1838.

Cherokee emigrants passed through Smithville, Lawrence County, Arkansas on December 12, "many of whom appeared very respectable. The whole company appear to be well clothed, and comfortably fixed for travelling. I am informed that they are very peaceable, and commit no depredations upon any property in the country through which they pass. They have upwards of one hundred wagons employed in transporting them; their horses are the finest I have ever seen in such a collection. The company consumes about one hundred and fifty bushels of corn per day. It is stated that they have the measles and whooping cough among them and there is an average of four deaths per day."²⁶

Evan Jones, with his party at Little Prairie, Missouri, wrote, December 30: ". . . We have now been on our road to Arkansas seventy-five days, and have traveled five hundred and twenty-nine miles. We are still nearly three hundred miles short of our destination. . . It has been exceedingly cold. . . those thinly clad very uncomfortable. . . we have, since the cold set in so severely, sent on a company every morning, to make fires along the road, at short intervals. This. . . a great alleviation to the sufferings of the people. At the Mississippi river, we were stopped from crossing, by the ice running so that boats could not pass, for several days. Here Br. Bushyhead's detachment came up with us, and before our detachment was all over, Rev. Stephen Foreman's detachment came up, and encamped along side us. I am sorry to say that both their detachments have not been able to cross. I am afraid that with all the care that can be exercised with the various detachments, there will be an immense amount of suffering, and loss of life attending the removal. Great numbers of the old, the young, and the infirm will inevitably be sacrificed. And the fact that the removal is effected by coercion, makes it the more galling to the feelings of the survivors."²⁷

Rev. Jesse Bushyhead wrote from Park Hill, March 19, that his party which departed October 5, was detained by the ice in the Mississippi river for a month, and that there were eighty-two deaths among them while on the road; they reached their destination on February 23 and he expected all the other parties would be in within a week or two.²⁸ Several hundred of the emigrants in Jones's and Bushyhead's

²⁶ *Ibid.*, January 2, 1839, p. 2, col. 2.

²⁷ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, XIX, 89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 178. Just after they crossed the Mississippi river, there was born to Reverend and Mrs. Bushyhead on January 3, 1839, a daughter who, in commemoration

parties were members of their church, the Baptist; "thus enabling them to continue, amidst all the toils and sufferings of the journey, their accustomed religious services."²⁹

At last their destination was reached. It was now March, 1839, the journey having occupied nearly six months of the hardest part of the year. Some of those whom sickness had prevented from emigrating by land with the main body of emigrants, were in a party of 228 Cherokee aboard the steamboat *Victoria*, which arrived at Little Rock about February 1, 1839. Among them were Chief John Ross and his family who had more cause to mourn than many at their enforced removal which was in part responsible for the death of Mrs. Ross as the boat landed at Little Rock; she was buried in the little cemetery at this village.³⁰

On the march there were many deaths, a few desertions and accessions and occasional exchanges from one party to another where some by sickness were obliged to drop out on the way and join those coming after; so that an accurate statement of the number removed and of those who perished on the way became impossible. But the following particulars concerning the movements of the emigrants are available:

Elijah Hick's party increased by accessions to 858, and traveling with forty-three wagons and 430 horses, arrived in their new home January 4, 1839, the first party to reach their destination, reduced then to 744; of the missing, thirty-four were accounted for by death, but they were offset by five births on the way. The next company to arrive three days later was that which started in charge of Hair Conrad, numbering 858, and ended the journey 654 in number commanded by Lieutenant Deas. Three days after these John Bengé arrived in his

of the state in which she was born, was named Eliza Missouri; she was married to David Rowe Vann in 1858, and after his death became the wife of Bluford West Alberty in 1873. Aunt Eliza Alberty, as she was affectionately called, reared a large number of orphan children, and sent others through the Cherokee and other academic and professional schools; she exercised a tremendous influence for good on the lives of many Cherokee citizens, some of whom have risen to important stations.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁰ *Little Rock Advocate*, February 4, 1839; *Army and Navy Chronicle*, VIII, 156. Mrs. Ross was known as Quatic Martin Ross; the monument at her grave is marked "Elizabeth Ross, wife of John Ross." John Ross was married to Mary B. Stapler of Wilmington, Delaware, at Hartwell's Washington hotel, Philadelphia, September 2, 1844.

new home in charge of a party of 1,103 remaining of a total of 1,200 who began the journey. Daniel Colton arrived January 16 with 651 emigrants.

A company of 1,033 Cherokee from the Valley Towns of East Tennessee in charge of the Rev. Evan Jones arrived February 2; these were all that remained of the original party numbering 1,250, headed by Situakee, who traveled with sixty-two wagons and 560 horses. There were seventy-one deaths and five births among them. The people of this party were strongly religious and maintained their church organization and services on the road with the inspiration of their Baptist conductor. Next behind them was the party headed by Rev. Jesse Bushyhead, a Cherokee Baptist minister who interpreted for Mr. Jones. His people numbered at the beginning 950, but he lost thirty-eight by death and after accounting for six births, he delivered 898 in their new home February 23.

Rev. Stephen Foreman, also a Cherokee preacher, who had been educated at Union and Princeton theological seminaries brought the next party of emigrants made up largely of Cherokee Indians of religious attachments who arrived February 27; they began their journey in charge of Capt. Old Field 983 in number, but there were fifty-seven deaths and nineteen births on the road and after accounting for a few desertions and accessions they numbered 921 on their arrival in the West. The party of Choowalooka began their journey numbering 1,150 but on arrival at their new home in the West March first there were but 970 of them. Mose Daniel's party originally numbering 1,035 suffered forty-eight deaths on the march, but there were six births, and Captain Stevenson, the certifying agent, receipted for only 924 in their new home March 2. James Brown's contingent of 859 was reduced to 717 when it reached their destination March 5, by thirty-four deaths and other causes. George Hicks reported to Captain Stevenson, March 14, 1,039 of his original enrollment of 1,118.

John Drew delivered a small party of 219 emigrants in their new home on March 18 of 231 who started with him. Richard Taylor began his journey in charge of 1,029 emigrants and after fifty-five deaths and fifteen births in the party he brought 944 survivors to their new home March 24. Peter Hilderbrand's caravan of 1,776 emigrants extended for several miles along the highway. Eighty-eight wagons contained the young children, the sick, aged and decrepit, and the personal

effects of the emigrants. There were 881 horses in the equipment of the party, some of which were employed with the oxen in pulling the wagons; the remainder were used as riding horses for women and girls many of whom bore infants on their backs. Men, boys, and able bodied women and girls walked along in company with the wagons and horses containing members of their families and their property. Only 1,312 of this party were delivered to the agent in the West March 25, the difference, 464, being accountable probably to diversion of some of them to another party and not altogether to deaths.³¹

³¹ These figures were turned in by the conductors of the parties; there was much disagreement on the subject. John Ross claimed a total of 13,149 removed under his supervision. Captain Stevenson, who receipted for the Indians on their arrival, reported 11,504; and Captain Page, the disbursing officer, said there were 11,702 (C. E. Royce, *op. cit.*, 202). All told, about 4,000 died during the course of capture and detention in temporary stockades, and the removal itself. See also Emmet Starr, *History of the Cherokee Indians*, 103.

BOOK FIVE / *Seminole Removal*