

5/15/89
#301

ui 3,
students
onology
his reg-
pondents
is a
o spent
included.

of this
chivist
e regis-
J. Drake,
shared
n.

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION
TENNESSEE STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

CHEROKEE COLLECTION

Ac. No. 1787

Processed by GMH
Date completed 9-7-66

Location VI-C-1-4

Lee
sion
nd Archives

This collection for the years 1775-1878, relating to the
Cherokees and to John Ross (1790-1866), Principal Chief of the
Cherokees from 1828-1866, was purchased from Mrs. Penelope Johnson
Allen, Chattanooga, Tennessee, who previously obtained the portion
belonging to John Ross from his grandson, Robert Bruce Ross (1845-
1930).

Linear feet of shelf space occupied: 7.98
Approximate number of items: 3,500 items and
22 volumes

Single photocopies of unpublished materials may be made for
purposes of scholarly research.



Preface

Long before the white man had come to the shores of North America the people of the Cherokee Nation had lived in the beautiful country lying in eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, northern Georgia, and northeastern Alabama. They were the most civilized of all the Indian tribes in the southeastern part of the United States at the time of their removal west of the Mississippi River. Their government was based on a constitution which had been modeled after the United States constitution with two legislative bodies and a principal chief. They had their own alphabet and a printing press. They published their own newspaper, Cherokee Phoenix. Many of their number were well educated. They loved their ancestral homes and relinquished them only at the point of the bayonet.

The white settlers--those of Georgia in particular--brought constant pressure upon the Federal Government to remove the Indians from their chartered lands. Agents representing the Government were finally successful in negotiating a treaty signed in 1835 by some of the Cherokee chieftains who had emigrated earlier to the western country and twenty unauthorized chieftains who had been prevailed upon to sign the treaty. In spite of the protests of the great majority of the Cherokees, this treaty was considered legal by the United States Government and plans were made for removal.

These papers contain some documents and correspondence dealing with removal procedures and a large number of claims made by individuals to the United States Government. Pathetically they listed beds, chairs, tables, cows, calves, hogs, work animals, fields of corn, fruit trees, and even peacocks, chickens, and chicken coops. These claims were never satisfied.

In the early stages of the removal before it was taken over by the Cherokee Council much brutality has been recorded. Many of the Indian families were surprised while eating a meal and forced to leave it unfinished. No time was allowed for gathering cherished possessions, and upon looking back, they discovered their houses in flames. They were herded like animals into roughly built stockades without adequate sanitary facilities. Four thousand of their number died during the removal to western lands.

These papers contain something of the story of this tragedy and are now made available by the Manuscript Division of the Tennessee State Library and Archives. They were preserved by descendants of the Cherokees, especially those of Chief John Ross, and were obtained from Mrs. Penelope Johnson Allen who had cherished and preserved them for many years.

The papers have been separated into correspondence, documents, claims, photographs, drawings, surveys, clippings, etc. For students and others interested in the history of the Cherokees, a chronology has been prepared for easy reference and is published with this register. In addition indexes have been included to all correspondents and to the claimants appearing in unbound claims, and there is a biographical sketch of John Ross, Chief of the Cherokees, who spent his life trying to obtain justice for his people, have been included.

The work of processing the papers and the preparation of this register has been done by Mrs. Gracia M. Hardacre, Senior Archivist of the Manuscript Division. The technical arrangement of the register and typing of the mats have been the work of Miss Linda J. Drake, Division Secretary. Members of the Manuscript Division have shared in proofreading and other jobs connected with the publication.

Harriet C. Owsley

Harriet Chappell Owsley
Director, Manuscript Division
Tennessee State Library and Archive

September 7, 1966