

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of the papers of John Ross (1790-1866), statesman and Principal Chief of the Cherokees from 1828-66, and of materials relating to the Cherokees added after his time. The papers of John Ross comprise: correspondence (1788-1866); documents of the Cherokee Nation (1781-1850); papers relating to Brainerd Mission (1816-31); surveys (1819-20); and claims (1817-45). Material relating to the Cherokees is as follows: negative photostatic copies of letters and documents (1775-1876) from the Virginia State Papers, Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia; U. S. Government documents pertaining to Indian affairs (1800-78); pamphlets (1871-1936); photographs, drawings, and clippings (1812-1937); a book (Richard Peters, The Case of the Cherokee Nation Against the State of Georgia, Argued and Determined at the Supreme Court of the United States, January Term, 1831. Philadelphia: John Grigg, 9 North Fourth Street, 1831.); and clippings (1844-1963), some of which are typed copies.

The primary materials in this collection are official in nature and cover two main periods: 1775-93 and 1820-42. A few documents extend to 1850, scattered letters to 1878, and claims to 1845. Most of the documents, correspondence, and claims, however, are for the removal period and a few years beyond, 1830-42.

With few exceptions letters and documents are concerned with relations between the U. S. Government and the Cherokee Indians. The earlier ones shed light on Indian wars and treaties from 1775-1816, particularly as they affected Chickamauga, the Cumberland settlements, Watauga, and the State of Franklin. Later letters, documents, and claims add substantially to the documentation and knowledge of the removal period.

Eight picturesquely phrased "Talks" from various Cherokee chiefs--one in 1775, one in 1785, and the rest in 1787--are all protests against some injustice or breach of trust and reflect the attitude of the full-blooded Cherokee toward the settlers easing into his territory. Four of these talks are from Old Tassel, and there is one each from Hanging Maw, Kingfisher, Oconestoto, and Tuskegetchee.

The earliest letter is dated September 26, 1785, from Benjamin Hawkins to Gov. Patrick Henry of Virginia. Hawkins had been appointed U. S. Commissioner that year to negotiate treaties with the Creeks and Cherokees. He mentions difficulties of transportation, the willingness of the Indians to meet with the Commissioners, various places where meetings have been set, and financial arrangements.

The correspondence of Alexander Campbell (1779-93) and an agent to the Cherokees, Joseph Martin (1781-93), related attempts to conclude peace treaties, the breaking of these treaties by both settlers and Indians, the behavior of the Chickamauga Indians, the encroachments of the inhabitants of the State of Franklin, and efforts to

keep open the Kentucky Road. They also show that the two men were not always on the best of terms.

As one exception to letters concerning the relations of the United States and the Cherokees might be cited the letter of the Creek chief, Alexander McGillivray, to Joseph Martin, April 18, 1788. He states that a retaliatory attack has been made by the Creeks on the "settlers from Cumberland." They had killed six Creek traders along with other Indians near Muscle Shoals in the fall of 1787. Since these murders had been avenged, he is now willing to make peace with the settlers.

The letters of John Ross (1820-66) are concerned with matters of state. Chief Ross wrote to all who he thought might aid the Cherokee cause or prevent the removal of the Cherokees to the West. He addressed firms of lawyers; the Indian commissioners; Presidents of the United States; the editors of the Washington, D. C., Intelligencer; and the Cherokee National Council. His letters give evidence of his fine education and his felicity of expression.

In the papers of the Brainerd Mission (1816-31) is some correspondence of 1816, before Brainerd was established, and of 1817 between Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury and the U. S. War Department, requesting financial aid for buildings and teaching materials for the schools he proposed to build. Other correspondence (1831) relates the experiences of Rev. Samuel A. Worcester and other missionaries from Brainerd when they were twice arrested in 1830. (They had refused to take an oath of allegiance to the State of Georgia when she declared New Echota and other Cherokee territory where the missionaries lived to be the property of the State.)

Two letters from George Lowrey (ca. 1770-1852), Assistant Principal Chief of the Cherokees, written in 1837 and 1838 to John Ross while the latter was in Washington, have some curiosity value, as they were written in Cherokee characters. The letters presumably were to apprise John Ross of affairs in the Cherokee Nation during his absence. (A few other pieces throughout the collection were also written in Cherokee--two memos of the Cherokee Senate and a few notations on claims.)

Correspondents, besides those already mentioned, include Elizur Butler, John C. Calhoun, William Carroll, Arthur Coodey, Elias Cornelius, William H. Crawford, John Donelson, Jeremiah Evarts, William Fleming, George R. Gilmer, Evan Jones, John McDonald, Joseph McMinn, John Martin, John Mason, James Monroe, John Powell, Archibald Roane, John Sevier, Isaac Shelby, John Thompson, and J<sup>ohn</sup> Vann.

#### Documents

Documents of the Cherokee Nation and those relating to Indian affairs were found in the papers of John Ross; in the book, Richard Peters, The Case of the Cherokee Nation Against the State of Georgia,

Argued and Determined at the Supreme Court of the United States, January Term, 1831; and in U. S. Government documents. (For a listing of the latter, see Box 18, f. 2.) Among the early documents are Sequoyah's treaty of 1828 and a record of the meeting, July 18, 1785, between The Mountain Leader and his followers and John Sevier and his followers.

Other documents include the Cherokee Supreme Court docket for 1829; proceedings, edicts, and memoranda of the Cherokee National Council and Senate; court cases, petitions, and depositions (1781-1838); receipts, warrants, and vouchers (1808-50); notices and orders of the U. S. Army relative to removal (1837-38); drafts of a treaty (1838) and a memorial (1834); an address by Agent Return J. Meigs in 1813; and a report by General John Coffee (1829).

Other signatories include Benjamin Harrison, Governor of Virginia; Brig. Gen. John E. Wool; Gen. Winfield Scott; and the Cherokee chiefs, George Lowrey, William Hicks, and Sequoyah (George Guess).

Surveys, 1819-20

As a result of the Treaty of February 27, 1819, individual reservations in the Georgia and Tennessee lands ceded to the U. S. Government were allotted to certain Cherokees. (See U. S. Government Document, H. R. 104 /20th Congress, 1st Session7, January 23, 1828, Box 18, f. 1, for a list of grantees; see also newspaper article, December 8, 1935, "Cherokee Homes in Hamilton," by Mrs. Penelope J. Allen, Box 19, f. 9, for an account of the background of this treaty and of the disposition of some Indian reservations in Hamilton County, Tennessee.) These individual reservations for sections of land (640 acres) were surveyed, with Robert Houston appointed commissioner in charge of running the boundaries and reservations in Tennessee. There are 119 such surveys of Tennessee land in this collection. Those for whom surveys were made include members of some of the families most prominent among the Cherokees. To mention only a few, there were John Benge, Catcher, James Coodey, Edward Gunter, John Hildebrand, George Lowrey, John McIntosh, Path-killer, Lewis and John Ross, Peggy Shorey, Situwakee, John Spears, Richard Taylor, Richard Timberlake, and John Walker.

Claims

There are some claims in this collection filed from 1817-37, and some as late as 1845. There is one volume of Cherokee spoliation claims for 1817-21, and there are about 10 unbound, individual claims for 1817-37. The majority of the claims in this collection were filed in the years 1838 and 1842. Claims of 1838 were probably for that final wave of emigrants who left the Cherokee Nation East in detachments or separately--the first detachment leaving on October 1, 1838, and the last on November 4, 1838. Most claims were either for improvements or spoliation, but there were a few for personal services, damages, false imprisonment, and personal injury.

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The claims entered in bound books by clerks east of the Mississippi were listed according to claim number and roughly chronologically according to the date of filing (August-October, 1838). Claim books were marked "Book A," "Book B," "Book C," etc., and there are no indexes for these books. Most claims listed the town or region of the claimant's former residence in the Cherokee Nation East, and the region was designated by one of the eight judicial districts established by the Cherokee, Eastern Nation, on November 2, 1820 (Amohee, Aquohee, Chattooga, Chickamauga, Coosawattee, Etowee or Hightower, Hickory Log, and Tahquohee Districts). It happens that in the claim books persons from one district were often listed en bloc.

There are also ca. 1,200 unbound claims which were entered before emigration (August-October, 1838). These were unnumbered with a few exceptions. As far as possible in the absence of a definitive map of the Cherokee Nation East's judicial districts, these claims have been indexed by the Manuscript Division in the district in which the claimant is thought to have lived (see Chart C). The claims have been arranged by the Manuscript Division alphabetically according to the claimant's name, and an alphabetical name index has been prepared (see Chart A).

Claims filed after emigration West were dated for the most part 1842; there was one in 1841, and there were a few in 1845, including the claim of John Ross. Those bound in books were arranged according to the Cherokee judicial district, Cherokee Nation West, in which the claimant filed his claim. Within each book claims were listed by number. The district of filing was usually the district in which the claimant lived, but there were some exceptions. Books were marked with the names of the districts, and those represented in bound form are Delaware, Flint, Going Snake, and Saline Districts. Each book has two indexes--one by claimant's name and one listing each claim by number.

As with the claims made in 1838, there are a large number of individual, unbound claims (ca. 600). The claims of 1842, however, were numbered, with a few exceptions. These claims have been arranged by the Manuscript Division by districts of filing and within districts by claim number. Districts represented in unbound claims are Delaware, Saline, Skin Bayou, and Tahlequah. The Manuscript Division has prepared the following indexes for 1842 claims: 1) alphabetical name index by district or origin, Cherokee Nation East (see Chart D); 2) alphabetical name index by district in which claim was filed (see Chart B).

Among the unbound claims were some arising from the Creek War (dated 1842), some made by Creek Indians living in Cherokee territory (dated 1838 and 1842), and some made by Cherokees who had emigrated to Arkansas before 1838 and were later moved farther West (dated 1842). These three classes have been indexed by the Manuscript Division in Charts E, F, and G, respectively.

Photographs and drawings

Photographs and drawings of persons, events, and historic sites in this collection cover quite a span of time. The colored drawing, "A View of Col. Johnson's Engagement with the Savages (commanded by Tecumseh) near the Moravian Town, October 5th, 1812," is probably the earliest, while a newspaper photograph of a Sequoyah monument at Calhoun, Georgia, October 15, 1933, is probably the most recent. (For a listing of all photographs and drawings, see index at front of folder entitled "Photographs and drawings," Box 18, f. 9.) There are portraits of the following: Gideon Blackburn, Lewis Cass, John Ross, Henry R. Schoolcraft, Sequoyah, Richard Taylor, and Tooantuh or Spring Frog.

Pamphlets

Probably the rarest of the pamphlets in this collection are those issued by the Executive Committee of Home Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States, Atlanta, Georgia. They are undated and are on a variety of inspirational subjects. They contain brief sketches of early missionaries and their Choctaw followers, who were also missionaries: Daniel Baker, Gideon Blackburn, Johnson Bob /sic/, Tephia Folsom, Mary J. Semple, Tunapinchuffa, and Frank Hall Wright. A pamphlet entitled History of the Claims of the Texas Cherokees (1871) is the earliest. Other pamphlets have such titles as Alexander McGillivray, the Last King of the Creeks (1903), Chimney Rock Anthology (1921), and Indians at Work (1936).

U. S. Government documents (1800-30, and one each in 1838, 1846, and 1878) concerning Cherokee affairs, 21 of which are conveniently collected, will be of interest to the historian. They deal with such matters as the Indian trading posts established under acts of March 3, 1795, and April 18, 1796, by the U. S. War Department; establishment of New Echota, Georgia, as capitol of the Cherokee Nation; and Cherokee education, government, treaties, reservations, boundary lines, and claims. Among documents reproduced are the 1827 Constitution of the Cherokee Nation (H. R. doc. 106, 20th Congress, 11th Session, p. 31 and ff.), some reports of Indian Commissioners to the Cherokee (1828, 1830), and Cherokee memorials of 1829 and 1846. Letters reproduced are from Presidents of the United States and Secretaries of War (1800-78) and from such persons as Jesse Bushyhead (1827); William Carroll (1829); John D. Chisholm (1798); John Coffee (1829); John Forsyth (1827, 1828, 1829); Andrew Jackson as General during and after the Creek War (1813-14, 1816); Hugh Montgomery (1826, 1829, 1830); Andrew Taylor (memorial, 1846); Hopkins L. Turney (speech, 1838); Samuel A. Wales (1829); Hugh L. White (1824); and the Cherokee Chiefs, Turkey and John Bomer (1826), "Major" Ridge (1827), William Hicks (1828), and John Ross (1827, 1829, 1830).

Clippings

Clippings (1844-1963), some of which are typed copies, embrace biographical material; abstracts or quotations from diaries, memoirs, and letters; material about historic houses, landmarks, towns, etc., in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee; a scrapbook, the greatest portion of which is about the dedication of a monument at New Echota, Georgia, in 1931 and the restorations at New Echota, 1963; and genealogy of some prominent Cherokee families--Clingan, Hildebrand, Lowrey, McLemore, McNair, Parks, Ross, Taylor, Vann, and Walker. There is biographical material on "Major" Ridge, Robert Bruce Ross, and Sequoyah. There are abstracts from the diaries, memoirs, and letters of Clark Lillybridge (1837), William L. Lovely (1780-1813), and Return J. Meigs (1802-1809).