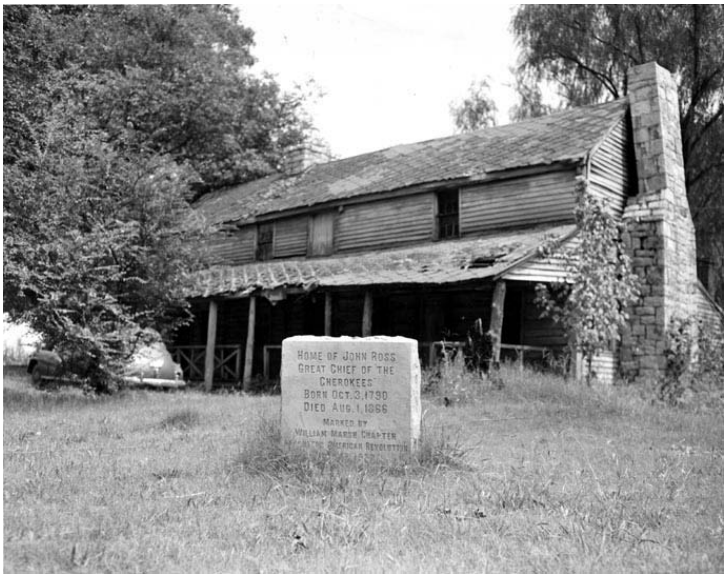
Myth and History:
The John Ross House through Time



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Myth and History:
The John Ross House through Time

by
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and
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PICTORIAL INVENTORY

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An Introduction to the John Ross House Project

This project was initiated by the John Ross House Association in 2005 as part of the process for The John Ross House being included on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail as a National Park Service Certified Site. The goal of the project was to document the history of the John Ross House and to provide a context for the house to aid in its future interpretation. As the original historian assigned to the project, Carey Tilley, stated in his initial proposal, "It is the intention of this project to provide the National Park Service with a better understanding of the John Ross House and its physical relation to John Ross and The Trail of Tears. The project will also serve the John Ross House in meeting their interpretive goals." Tilley left the project in mid-2006 when he accepted a new position in Oklahoma as executive director of the Cherokee Heritage Center in Park Hill. Georgia Trail of Tears Association Vice-President Jeff Bishop then took over and completed the project, at Tilley's request. The research was funded through Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the NPS and the John Ross House Association.

In completing this project, extensive use was made of the following resources:

- Two crates of various files, correspondence, inventories, and scrapbooks provided to the historians by Larry Rose and Earl McDonald of the John Ross House Association.

- The papers of Panton, Leslie & Co., on microfilm at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, FL.

- The Penelope Johnson Allen Collection at the Hoskins Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

- Gary E. Moulton's *The Papers of John Ross* and *John Ross, Cherokee Chief.*

- Gertrude Ruskin's *John Ross, Chief of an Eagle Race*, and her various correspondence.

- The records of the Cherokee Agency at Tennessee, on microfilm at the National Archives branch in Morrow, GA.

■ The GALILEO Project, "Georgia's Virtual Library," an initiative of the University System of Georgia (www.galileo.usg.edu).

■ The libraries of the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, GA and Georgia State University in Atlanta.

■ The Georgia Archives at Morrow, GA.

■ An Internet book search engine, books.google.com.

■ The Google Internet search engine, www.google.com.

■ The online historical map collection at alabamamaps.ua.edu.

A site visit was also made on Mar. 2, 2007 by a research team led by Dr. Georgina DeWeese of the Department of Geosciences at the University of West Georgia. This team used the scientific methods of dendrochronology to determine the precise year of construction for the John Ross House. According to the ethics of this newly emerging science, tree rings either date or they do not date; therefore, unlike carbon dating, there is no "plus or minus" or "around this period" in dendroarchaeology. Dates cannot be "forced" from the dendrochronologist, *i.e.* the *wood* must provide the date (or, as DeWeese is fond of saying, "Wood doesn't lie").

In reviewing the written materials concerning the John Ross House, it became apparent that, over time, a mythology steadily built up around the house through the process of accretion. Even the structure itself had been disassembled, moved, and reconstructed again. The method of the researcher, then, was to place all collected written materials regarding the house into chronological order, as much as possible, to determine when various claims were made, by whom, and in what contexts. This process revealed, for example, that while nearly every modern written reference to the John Ross House claims that it was built by John Ross' grandfather, John McDonald, in 1797, the link between McDonald and the Ross House wasn't put into writing until the 1930s, and the construction date of 1797 didn't emerge until as late as 1958. The researcher then compared these late claims to what can be inferred or proven from both modern scientific investigation and from documents and maps that actually date from the late 18th to mid-19th century. The goal of the researcher was to separate myth from reality with regard to the actual history of the John Ross House.

Although initially the research was to be limited primarily to the period of John McDonald's and John Ross' supposed occupancy, up to the time of the Cherokee Removal, a second period of historical significance became almost immediately evident. To do justice to the history of the John Ross House, its role in the American Civil War must also be

examined. Therefore, this, too, became part of the research project, even though there was no funding available for such an expansion.

Finally, a third period of significance clearly demanded study: the period of the home's restoration and relocation, which resulted in many changes to the physical structure and possible threats to its historical integrity. Any study that failed to examine this period would be woefully inadequate. Therefore this period, too, was examined (again with no funding).

It is the hope of the researcher that this study, as the basis for future interpretation, can help others to more fully appreciate the significance of this important and unique piece of American history.

Sacred Space

For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. "Draw not nigh hither," says the Lord to Moses; "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus, 3, 5). There is, then, a sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous. Nor is this all. For religious man, this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred – the only *real* and *real-ly* existing space – and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it.
It must be said that the religious experience of the nonhomogeneity of space is a primordial experience, homologizable to a founding of the world. It is not a matter of theoretical speculation, but of a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world. For it is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation.

----*Mircea Eliade (1957), "The Sacred & the Profane"*

For both the residents of Rossville and for many Cherokee Indians, the John Ross House is sacred space. It doesn't simply represent the origin of the town. It *is* the origin of the town. There is a difference. It is not some statue crafted by an efficient artisan to commemorate some long-ago event, like the innumerable Confederate soldiers that shade themselves under courthouse domes. It is not a reconstruction, like New Echota or Fort Loudon or even Jamestown. It's not a monument, a replica, or a tribute.

The John Ross House, the town myth tells us, was built by British trader John McDonald in 1797, "not a nail in it" (Ruskin, 1958); future Cherokee Chief John Ross grew up there, the ward of his grandparents, receiving the training from the "Old Scottish Chief" that would prepare him to lead his people through their most trying hour (Allen, 1936); the little "log mansion," expanded by Ross himself (Sartain, 1932, p. 10), served as the first school in North Georgia, we are told (Ruskin, 1958), and the first Post Office (Allen, 1936), and the first business (Allen, 1936), becoming the seed from which not only Rossville but all of Chattanooga would sprout. It has many secrets, people whisper, with trap doors and secret council rooms and underground tunnels leading to springs and caves (Ruskin, 1958). For Rossville, the Ross House is what mythology scholar Joseph Campbell would call the "axis mundi," the still point around which the town turns and from which the town springs. It's where pageants are played out, where solemn ceremonies of remembrance are held, where visitors to the town are taken, where the past shines through to the present (John Ross House, np).

It was not always so. In records prior to the mid-20th century the house is almost never mentioned, even when Ross and McDonald are written about with romantic reverence in local newspaper articles (Ross's Landing, in fact, gets all the press). George White (1969) and Belle Abbott (1980) both fail to note the Ross House, even in passing, in their early accounts. Ross himself, in his voluminous writings, gives the house no mention (of course, to be fair, it has also been pointed out that Ross never speaks of his first wife in his letters, either [Moulton, 1978, p. 4]). In fact, the house might have passed into obscurity and oblivion in the early 1960s if not for the efforts of one woman, largely forgotten today, who carefully crafted and popularized the Ross House legend; a white woman who referred to herself as "Princess Chewani" and inspired the community to believe that, even among the chain grocery stores and strip malls, there are still some vestiges of the sacred, and that when these are lost, some piece of our collective soul is lost with them. The story of the current mythos surrounding the Ross House rightly begins with Gertrude McDaris Ruskin.

Gertrude McDaris Ruskin, "Princess Chewani"

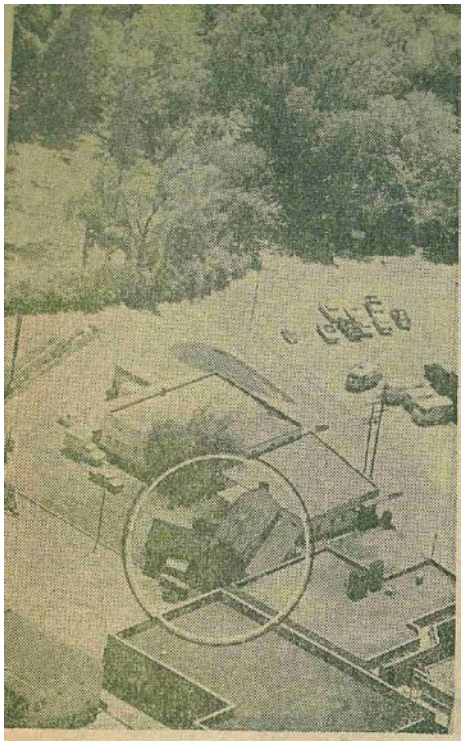
Type the words "Getrude McDaris Ruskin" into the Google search engine today and you will get only a handful of results, mostly related to a North Carolina scholarship fund and to a couple of long out-of-print books. But in the mid-1950s Ruskin was well-known for her push to restore both New Echota and the Vann House. It was these efforts that attracted the attention of two Ross descendants. Ruskin (1963, p. 53-56) describes the encounter in her short book, *JOHN ROSS, Chief of an Eagle Race:*

> Once on a trip to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, as Official Ambassador of the Cherokee Nation, I was asked for an interview by Jennie Ross Cobb and Anne Ross Pilburn, both great granddaughters of John Ross. They had heard that I had spearheaded the drive to save the Joseph Vann house, and now they wanted to know why it had been restored and not the Ross House.
>
> After I had explained that the Vann house was valuable because it was an example of the rapid Cherokee progress into modern civilization, they replied with conviction, "The man and his work is more important than the house." This stinging truth left me with no reply but the obvious one of getting to work.

Ross's two great granddaughters, Jennie Ross Cobb (left) and Anne Ross Piburn (right), with Gertrude Rustkin (center) at Park Hill, Oklahoma

Not long after this interview, Ruskin (1963, p. 56) said, she spoke with J(ohn) P. Brown, a noted Cherokee historian of the 1930s, who she said urged her "to accept the suggestion of Ross's descendants and to seriously undertake the project." It was Brown who she would continually refer to as her primary source for her "historical facts" concerning the house, first outlined in a 1958 issue of "Georgia" magazine and in 1963 expanded into a small book. (It is interesting that Brown is so often cited by her on the subject of the Ross House because, while undoubtedly one of the most knowledgeable authorities on Cherokee history at the time, he neglects even to mention the Ross House in his primary work, *Old Frontiers*; McDonald himself is only referred to a half-dozen or so times in the book, and never in much detail.)

It would not be an easy task to save the home, now a dilapidated rental property hemmed in on all sides by commercial development, "a bank on one side and a wholesale grocery on the other, an ice cream store in front and a parking lot in the rear," Ruskin (1963, p. 53) said. "The pressure of business demanded that the house be moved."



AS IT WAS . . .
For years the John Ross House watched civilization encroach upon its property until it was surrounded by stores and shaken by passing traffic. Its dog trot had been boarded up and a shed had been built upon the back corner. From this spot on Rossville Blvd. it has been moved into the wooded area behind it.

Ruskin said that she realized the first step would be “stimulation of interest.” Ruskin recognized that there had been efforts to save the home in the past, but she characterized those efforts as “amorphous” and said the “decisions lagged indefinitely.” Her approach would be different (Ruskin, 1963, p. 53).

In September, 1957 Ruskin decided to speak in Rossville to gauge local interest in such an undertaking. Her first thought was to address local church congregations, but it turned out that the pastor of a Methodist church she had targeted as an initial speaking engagement also served as president of a Rossville civic club, so she was encouraged to take her cause there. “I have been speaking and speaking ever since,” Ruskin (np) said in her correspondence.

Her first speaking engagement was treated as more of a Society Page item than a true news story. *The Chattanooga News Free-Press* coverage of the presentation (Williams, 1957) began with a description of Ruskin’s attire. “Wearing a ‘lucky’ garnet velvet hat which features her name in the Cherokee alphabet, Mrs. Sidney H. Ruskin of Decatur, Ga., expert on the Cherokee nation, addressed the Rossville Lions Club last night in the interest of preserving the Chief John Ross House as a memorial to him and the Cherokee nation.”

She explained to the club that her “Indian name,” Princess Chewani (“the faithful one,” she said), was bestowed upon her by a descendant of Chief Yonaguski, Rev. Sibbald Smith, and that what brought her to the club that night was a promise she had made to Smith on his deathbed to “carry the knowledge and teachings of the Cherokee nations to the people as the opportunity presented itself.”

MRS. SIDNEY RUSKIN

What followed and made its way into print was the skeleton of what would later be elaborated upon, first by Ruskin and then by others (but pulling substantially from the work of local early-to-mid 20th century historians J. A. Sartain, John P. Brown, and especially Penelope Johnson Allen), as the Ross House Myth, a story that is now familiar to most Rossville residents through its constant repetition:

> John Ross was the son of Daniel Ross, Scotch trader among the Cherokees, and Mollie McDonald, daughter of John McDonald, British agent to the Cherokees, and Ann Shorey, a Cherokee Indian. At the onset of the American Revolution John McDonald refugeed with his family, including Mollie and her husband, behind Lookout Mountain to a site near Center, Ala. McDonald and his son-in-law were unpopular, since they were British sympathizers, and fled for their lives. John Ross was born there.
>
> After 20 years of warfare, the Cherokees signed a peace treaty with the Americans in 1794 and McDonald and family returned to build the still-standing John Ross house.
>
> John Ross grew up there and along with his brother and sisters was instructed by a private tutor. Thus the first school in north Georgia came into being…
>
> (After the Creek War, Ross) set up a mercantile business at the foot of Market Street, then called Ross' Landing.

Ruskin ended her talk by quoting Marvin Griffin: "Kicking mules never pull and pulling mules never kick." She urged the Rossville Lions and Kiwanis Clubs to be the "pulling mules of Rossville, to save the house for posterity. It will be a Cherokee feather in our collective bonnets."

The reception was all that Ruskin had hoped for. "The enthusiasm generated was so great that we were able to organize as an association on October 1, 1957, two days after the birthday of Ross," and not even a month following her plea, she said (Ruskin, 1963, p. 56). The first meeting was held in the Simpson Memorial Methodist Church and a little over a year later, on November 25, 1958, the John Ross House Association was incorporated under Georgia law. The charter members of the association included officers John L. Mavity, president; Gordon McFarland, vice-president; Gordon Sterchi, secretary; and Ruskin, who was appointed "Official Historian" of the Association (Ruskin, 1963, p. 56).

After her apparent initial success, there followed five years of struggle. Neal and Preston Morgan, the owners of the John Ross House, were hoping to rid themselves of it as quickly as possible. "I know the Morgans are anxious to get the house moved so they can use the land for business development," Ruskin (np) wrote to a colleague. "In fact, they are so anxious to get the house off the land I believe they would give us a donation to restore the house if properly approached…"

The Morgans did indeed agree to donate the house to the Association, "provided that we were able to alter a stipulation the former

owner, Gordon McFarland, had put in the deed that the house could not be moved or destroyed for twenty-five years (Ruskin, 1963, pp. 56-57).

"Actually this stipulation had probably saved the house from destruction," Ruskin said, "but now it seemed about to save the house from preservation." She said the clause proved to be "quite an obstacle," leading to a "year of inaction" before Ruskin once again decided to take matters into her own hands.

When she approached McFarland about the clause in the deed, he "was not only not intractable but quite willing to sign the paper" drawn up by the Association's attorneys (Ruskin, 1963, p. 57).

Next, the house needed a destination. That was provided by John L. Hutcheson family, who agreed to deed to the Association a wooded lot only about 100 yards away from the Ross House site. "The grounds, all on the original Ross land, had been landscaped and richly planted … in wisteria, sweet olive, English ivy, dogwood, and many other lovely plants and trees." A small spring-fed, man-made lake was also on the property, along with a cave (Ruskin, 1963, p. 57).

By 1958, all the pieces appeared to be in place, but moving and restoring the house would still be an expensive proposition – perhaps as much as $28,000 -- and the Association had extremely limited financial resources. Strong leadership would be needed to marshal the troops through a full-fledged fundraising campaign. Events weren't proceeding quickly enough to satisfy Ruskin, and following the death of the original Association president, she began her search for someone who could really light a fire under the Association and the community – particularly in the arena of fundraising. She found that person in Lou Williams of Ridgedale Bank and Trust Co. of Chattanooga. Before meeting Ruskin, he had never even set foot in the Ross House (Ruskin, np).

Ruskin "had been interested in having the old house restored but notwithstanding her heroic efforts little progress was being made," Williams wrote in an April, 1973 letter.

"As I recall, it was about 1958 when she approached me with a plea to organize and head an organization that would undertake the task."

Frank Gleason, a local attorney interested in saving the Ross House, told Ruskin and other Association members that what they really needed was a public relations campaign to get the community fully behind the effort. Williams was initially sought out because of his media contacts, to publicize the transfer of ownership of the house to the Association, according to a letter from Ruskin (np) to Williams, dated Oct. 13, 1958.

"You will never know how much I appreciated your kindness in giving me the names of your newspaper friends," Ruskin told Williams. "Had it not been for your help, we would never have made the front pages of the paper in Chattanooga … A thousand thanks for your kindness." (The Ross House and the Association working to save it would be from that point forward a regular item in both the Rossville and Chattanooga newspapers.)

Gertrude McDaris Ruskin

Princess Chewani of the Cherokees in the textbook All About Music, *Georgia edition, by Margaret Swain.*

I know how you spearheaded the movement to buy and restore the Vann House at Spring Place. No one has given more time, effort and talent to the movement than yourself and may I congratulate you for making possible such a magnificent asset to Georgia. Your work in behalf of the Cherokee Indians has been monumental. No one has ever been so dedicated to their welfare.—Mrs. E. M. Bailey, Acworth, Georgia, prominent clubwoman of Georgia.

I cannot help but feel that your undertaking this kind of informational project will have far reaching implications. Please let me offer my congratulations and my sincere hope that your work will receive appropriate recognition.—Dr. Allen N. Wells, former minister at the Emory Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

Of course the Vann House opening was a tremendous success and I shall always remember your helpfulness in that and everything that concerns the Cherokee Indians.—Mr. Ivan Allen, founder of Ivan Allen Co., Atlanta, Georgia.

White Man's Magic was featured in the November-December issue of our National magazine, "Delightful Quest" by our Associate Editor, Marion Morris. We cannot thank you enough for such a brilliant piece of work, which made our evening so enjoyable—Marie Wallace, President, Alpha Chapter, 1958, and National Executive Secretary-Treasurer (1958-1960) Zeta Beta Chi National Sorority.

Ruskin made her designs on Williams even more evident when he missed the following meeting of the Association. Her letter of Oct. 19, 1958 got straight to the point:

"How disappointed I was not to see you at the meeting of the Chief John Ross Association yesterday at the Memorial Center," she said. "I came with my husband and Miss Bess Neely of Atlanta. I wanted you to meet both of them as well as ME."

Even in his absence she found a way to have Williams appointed as the new treasurer.

Ruskin's husband, Sidney, soon secured tax-exempt status for the group so fundraising could begin in earnest, and by August, 1961 Williams was fulfilling the leadership role Ruskin had envisioned for him.

A short two years later, the house was in the process of being relocated and restored.

"You certainly have the leadership which we have for so long lacked," Ruskin (np) wrote to Williams, "and I never go to sleep at night without thanking God for it."

The Myth of the John Ross House

A big part of the public relations and fundraising campaign would involve telling the story of the John Ross House in larger-than-life, highly romanticized terms. Thus was born the Myth.

The Myth has nine basic components:

1) British trader John McDonald built the home in 1797 for his Indian wife.
2) The home served as a trading post, the first business in the area.
3) The Ross House was the boyhood home of John Ross, future Indian Chief.
4) The house served as North Georgia's first school.
5) The house served as the "home base" for the founding of Chattanooga, through Ross' Landing and Warehouse.
6) The house served as the first U.S. Post Office in the area.
7) John Ross added onto the house and turned it into a "mansion."
8) The house contains secret council rooms, trap doors, and access to tunnels.
9) The home served as a Union and Confederate headquarters during the Civil War.

Soon after the *Chattanooga News Free-Press* coverage of Ruskin's address to local civic clubs, where the myth was first put forward in outline form, the story was fully elaborated in a 1958 article for *Georgia* magazine, written by Ruskin, titled, *North Georgia's Most Historic House.*

She began the article (Ruskin, 1958) with the immediate plight of the home:

> If the most historic home in North Georgia could talk, it would cry with Uncle Remus, 'Give me elbow room, I'm 'bleeged to have it.' The old place is almost completely surrounded by business houses; a bank and wholesale grocery flank each side, in the front is an ice cream store, and in the rear is a parking lot. Only a small strip of land remains, no bigger than a pocket handkerchief, and that is desired for further business expansion as well as the land where the Ross house stands.

Ruskin then spent three pages telling the story of the house and of Ross, the home's most illustrious and larger-than-life occupant (and, again, with the attribution for historical material going to "a letter from the Cherokee historian, J. P. Brown…").

> The various people who have lived in the Ross house were conscious of the tangible history surrounding them, and all have felt honored that their house had once been the home of one of the greatest Indians in American history, the founder of Rossville and Chattanooga ….
>
> Ann Shorey, a Cherokee Indian and daughter of William Shorey, interpreter at Old Fort Loudon south of Knoxville, married John McDonald, British Agent to the Cherokees at Chickamauga. One day, according to Sartain's History of Walker County, a party of traders, including Daniel Ross, was passing down the Tennessee River when they were captured by the Chickamauga Indians, where custom it was to kill all captives. John McDonald interceded for the life of Daniel Ross, probably because he was a Scotchman and perhaps one of the McDonald clan. Later, Daniel Ross married John McDonald's daughter, Mollie. they became the parents of John Ross.
>
> At the outbreak of the Revolution … John McDonald lived on Chickamauga Creek at the present city limits of Chattanooga, on the ground where Brainerd Mission to the Cherokees was later located in 1817 … British subjects were not popular when the Revolution began and McDonald, Daniel Ross and others who took the British side of the controversy refugeed behind the protection of Lookout Mountain at what was then the Cherokee town of Turkeytown, where John Ross was born.
>
> The Cherokees made peace with the Americans in 1794 after twenty years of unceasing warfare … At the conclusion of peace, John McDonald was enabled to return to his old home and in 1797 he built the present John Ross house at Rossville.

1. 1797 -- This 1958 article is the earliest attributed instance I have been able to locate that pins the year 1797 as the absolute date of origin of the Ross House. (Even Ruskin herself, just a few months earlier, had been much more cautious about a definite date of construction, stating simply that following "20 years of warfare, the Cherokees signed a peace treaty with the Americans in 1794 and McDonald and family returned to build the still-standing John Ross house.") One is led to believe that, sometime between the fall of 1957 and January of 1958, Brown or some other source supplied Ruskin with the date. There was an unattributed picture caption that appeared in an early October edition of the *Mirror-News*, relating news of an Oct. 2, 1957 "inspection" of the Ross House, just a little over a week after Ruskin's initial addresses to area civic clubs. That caption speaks of the "original building of the house in 1797." Ruskin appears to be in the picture, so perhaps she supplied the writer of the caption with the date, or perhaps Ruskin picked up the date from the caption. We are left to speculate until further evidence surfaces.

JOHN ROSS HOME INSPECTED

Photo by Mirror-News.

'Open House" Held At John Ross House, Oct. 2

The open house which was held at the old John Ross House in Rossville last Sunday drew a large crowd of interested people, who came to view the old landmark and to discuss the possibilities of its restoration. The Chattanooga Area Historical Association and other interested groups were in charge of this viewing and served refreshments during the afternoon.

Without knowing the history of this old home, it might be considered just a dilapidated old eyesore, which it is in its present condition, but after learning about the many, many soldiers of all our wars that have visited within its walls, and of the man from which the city of Rossville got its name; the original building of the house in 1797 and the romance in its history; one would be heartless indeed to want it to continue in its state of decay and ruin. Many people of this area have expressed themselves as believing that the shrine would be worth much more to the people than the cost of restoring it, and many have said that since the home of the Cherokees was taken from them without payment, that the least we can now do is to pay them the honor of giving it to the public in all its original beauty and meaning.

The Rossville Merchants Association has gone on record as favoring any workable solution toward the restoration and preservation of Rossville's only real historic landmark.

In any case, she must have been fairly confident about the date, because she repeats it in her 1963 book, *JOHN ROSS, Chief of an Eagle Race* (p. 15), stating, "When the Chickamaugas made peace with the Americans, Daniel Ross and John McDonald returned and built what has since become known as the Ross House at Rossville, Georgia, in 1797."

From this point forward, 1797 is generally recognized locally as the date of construction, with numerous references to the date in the media and on flyers and leaflets distributed by the John Ross House Association.

Some random examples:

> "For 166 years it has stood – the John Ross House. The old mansion was built in 1797 by John McDonald, trader among the Cherokees, for his Indian wife." (From the program for the opening ceremonies, "The Formal Opening of the Chief John Ross House, Built in 1797, May 29, 1963.")
>
> "In the 1790's, McDonald returned to Poplar Spring (Rossville). In 1797, he built the house now known by his grandson's name…" (From the program for the opening ceremonies, "The Formal Opening of the Chief John Ross House, Built in 1797, May 29, 1963.")
>
> "The John Ross House, built by John's father, Daniel, in 1797, was one of the finest of its day and circumstance." (7-21-63, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine*)
>
> "In 1797 John McDonald built his house now known as the John Ross House." ("Know Your Rossville Area"

> brochure, by the Rossville League of Women Voters, 1964, p. 3)
>
> "In 1797 John McDonald, maternal grandfather of John Ross, built his home in Rossville." (Brochure prepared by the Civic Participation Committee of the Rossville Business and Professional Women's Club, 3/20/67)
>
> "The rustic cabin, just off Chickamauga Avenue, which still bears his name, was first built in 1797 by Indian trader John McDonald, material (sic) grandfather of John Ross." ("Progressive Rossville Community Has Rich History", by Pete McCall, Feb. 21, 1968, *Chattanooga Free-Press*)
>
> "This, the John Ross House, is 174 years old (as of 1971). It was built in 1797 by John McDonald, maternal grandfather of John Ross." (a flyer, assumed to be printed by the Association for on-site distribution, ca. 1971.)
>
> "The John Ross House was built in 1797 by John McDonald at Poplar Spring, now Rossville, Georgia…" (Newsletter of the Rossville Business and Professional Women's Club, Rossville, Oct. 25, 1977)
>
> "……the house built for Ross in 1797 by John McDonald at what was then Poplar Springs and now is Rossville." (*The Chattanooga Times*, May 1, 1978)

The list goes on … on Google it runs into the hundreds, if not the thousands. In none of these instances, however, is a source cited (the closest being Ruskin's general attribution to Brown and one Ruskin reference to Sartain).

If Ruskin is relying on Brown, she is likely referring to a footnote Brown inserted into an essay he wrote in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume 16, No. 1, published in March, 1938, titled. "EASTERN CHEROKEE CHIEFS." The footnote, as written, however, seems to be presented more as an educated guess than an absolute date of construction. It simply states that McDonald, "About 1797, after conclusion of peace, …moved to what is now Rossville, Ga., and built the house still standing, where Chief Ross grew up."

2. Trading Post – Ruskin does not emphasize the "trading post" aspect in her mythology, but it is played up significantly in various retellings, based on some earlier articles by Penelope Johnson Allen (1936). Allen (1977) says the "big spring there was a fine location for a trading post." Ruskin does mention that McDonald was a British agent and trader.

3. Boyhood home – Ruskin unequivocally states in her 1958 article that the "Ross house, located at Rossville, Georgia, was the boyhood home of the famous Cherokee Indian Chief." She, again, does

not cite her source, but it may have been Allen, who appears to be the earliest writer to make a similar assertion, or more likely Brown.

"John Ross and his brothers and sisters grew up in the house built by their grandfather," Ruskin says in the article.

In her 1963 book, Ruskin (pp. 15-16) elaborates on the reasons for Ross going to live with his grandparents, the McDonalds:

"In 1808, while in school, he learned of the death of his mother and was nearly overcome by his grief," Ruskin writes (possibly basing this account on that of Rachel Caroline Eaton). "She died at the Ross House on October 5, 1808. at the age of 39.

"The Ross children were sometimes cared for by their grandmother who must have been a very kind and loving woman," she continues.

Much like the 1797 construction date, once this bit of information had been incorporated into the Ruskin mythology, it was repeated again and again in various brochures and newspaper accounts.

4. First school – When the little log house wasn't serving as an orphanage for the Ross children or operating as a trading post, it was apparently being used as a school house, according to Ruskin.

"Daniel Ross employed a private tutor, John Barbour Davis, to teach his children and those of other well-to-do Cherokees," she states in her 1958 article. "Thus the Ross House may be said to be the first school in North Georgia."

She modifies this story somewhat in the 1963 retelling, relocating the school to the "grounds" of the Daniel Ross house at the foot of Lookout Mountain:

"With Scotch thoroughness (Daniel Ross) acquired a fine library, the first in the area. He built a small school on the grounds, and employed a capable teacher, John Barbour Davis, to instruct them. Children of other well-to-do Cherokees also attended the school. Thus it may be said that Daniel Ross established the first school in the Rossville and Chattanooga section" (Ruskin, 1963, p. 15).

This hedge ultimately did not matter. By that time, various newspaper accounts had already picked up on the tale of McDonald's "Ross House" being the location of the first school, and since it was the building still left standing, it got the honors. North Georgia's educational system thus, by acclamation, began at the John Ross House.

5. Chattanooga's origins – It was also claimed that Chattanooga's true origins could be traced back to this log house, since Chattanooga traditionally began as Ross' Landing and warehouse (and, a little later, Ross' Ferry), a mercantile business owned by Ross at what is now the foot of Market Street. Since Ross' residence was at the Ross House in Rossville, it could be argued that the "headquarters" for the business operations that later developed into downtown Chattanooga were at the foot of Mission Ridge.

"At the end of the Creek War, John Ross returned to his home at Rossville and in 1815 began a mercantile business with Timothy Meigs at what is now the foot of Market Street in Chattanooga, then called Ross's Landing. Later, Lewis Ross, John's brother, bought out Meigs, and the firm was afterward called "John and Lewis Ross." The road from Ross's Landing to Rossville is the present Rossville Boulevard in Chattanooga." (Ruskin, 1958.)

6. First Post Office – Ruskin didn't mention this, but it certainly became an important piece of the mythology. Allen (1936) spoke of the house serving as a Post Office in an earlier article.

7. John Ross added on – Ruskin, again, didn't originate this idea (Sartain appears to be the originator), but it is mentioned in the newspaper accounts at various times. It is mentioned explicitly in Allen's works and is repeated in numerous newspaper articles.

8. Hidden rooms and secret tunnels -- Ruskin is very much responsible for emphasizing this element, which is actually overtly mythological:

> Another former owner of the Ross property told me that he had heard there were several tunnels under the house, and that one of them led to the spring which was located in a depression in the ground just at the entrance to the cave. In some places, he said, the tunnels were fifteen feet deep and could easily have been a place a refuge in case of an attack. My informant supposed one could get to the tunnel that led to the spring through a trap door in the floor of one room downstairs.

She repeated this paragraph *verbatim* in her 1963 book (p. 53), even though by this time the house had been removed and it was clear there was no tunnel system underneath it. Lou Williams, president of the John Ross House Association during the time of its relocation and restoration, said in a 1973 letter, "The removal of the old house dispelled the rumors which for years had been prevalent that there was a tunnel under the old structure. We found no such thing." The "hidden room" seems to have functioned merely as an attic.

But local news articles (Peck, 1962a) often repeated these tales of hidden rooms and secret tunnels and even elaborated upon them:

> One of the upper rooms has no visible means of entrance – only a small peephole from an adjoining room. Legend … has it that the room once was used for confinement of a woman who refused to give up her lover and was forced to remain in the secret room until she died of hunger.

This comes from the same news article:

> (Ross) enlarged the house his grandfather had built, adding a council chamber 23 feet long … A trap door in front of the fireplace in the council room is said to have afforded entrance into a passage below leading through a cavern to the ridge above the spring back of the house. Legend has it that Ross made use of the passage for secret meetings.

9. Headquarters during the Civil War -- Ruskin (1958) said that "During the bloody Battle of Chickamauga, in the War Between the States, it served as headquarters for General Gordon Granger who had been ordered to hold Rossville gap at all hazards." One prevalent account, easily found on the Internet, describes Granger ascending a haystack at the Ross House to get a good view of the Battle of Chickamauga. This would have been quite a notable achievement, scaling such a massive haystack, since the battle was in fact occurring on the opposite side of the ridge.

John McDonald and the Chickamauga

The process of demystification, it seemed to me, ought to begin with the alleged builder of the John Ross House, John McDonald. Did he in fact construct the John Ross House and, if so, when?

By the supposed time of the house's construction, 1797, John McDonald was already a longtime resident of the Chickamauga / Lower Towns, having first moved into the Chickamauga Creek area (a few miles northeast of the Ross House location) in about 1770 (Moulton, 1978, p. 3; Pate, 1969, p. 46; Brown, 1938, p. 163; Calloway, 1995, p. 200; Wayside exhibit, nda). Thus, one oft-repeated tale, that "John McDonald built the John Ross House for his Indian wife," should be rejected outright. Even if the house was built for his "Indian wife," it would most certainly not have been, as is often portrayed or implied, a haven for newlyweds to bring forth their family in the wilderness. The McDonalds by that time (1797) would have been married for nearly 30 years and their daughter Mollie and son George were also grown and married.

McDonald came to South Carolina from Scotland in the 1760s and by 1770 he had married Ann Shorey (daughter of interpreter William Shorey, who died on Lt. Henry Timberlake's journey back to England, and Ghigooie, a Cherokee of the Bird Clan) (Moulton, 1978, pp. 2-3) and was appointed assistant superintendent or "deputy and commissary" of Indian Affairs for the British, under John Stuart (Brown, 1938; Pate, 1969, pp. 44-46; Calloway, 1995, p. 200). (It is interesting to note, however, that McDonald is not even mentioned in the standard account of Stuart's agency, J. Russell Snapp's *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier*.)

So John and Ann McDonald settled not in Rossville, but on Chickamauga Creek, near its junction with the Tennessee River. McDonald may have built a mill there and it is said that in 1771, with the assistance of the Cherokees, he dug a ditch three-quarters of a mile long from a nearby spring to Chickamauga Creek. The ditch brought up the water level at his mill by six feet, increasing its capacity (Wayside exhibit, nda – This assertion may be questionable, as it may simply be inferred from a much later description of the place; see Walker, 1993, pp. 105-107).

The name of the creek was apparently of Muskogee origin, *Cukko Micco*, "Place of the War Chief." (Brown, 1938, p. 163) The name, as it turns out, was prophetic.

That's because six years later, in March of 1777, Dragging Canoe and his followers, disgusted by the appeasement policies of the older Cherokee chiefs toward the whites, decided to strike out on their own (although it should be understood that they never really fully separated

from the Cherokee Nation, as is often assumed, and in fact McDonald generally makes no real differentiation between the Chickamaugas and the rest of the Cherokees, as the header for nearly all of his correspondence says, simply, "Cherokees."). Dragging Canoe's 500 warriors settled on the bank opposite McDonald and began Chickamauga Town, the first in a series of "Lower Towns" of disaffected, mostly younger Cherokees and their families (Brown, 1938, p. 163; Pate, 1969, pp. 80-81; Hatley, 1995, pp. 222-226).

This map (Purcell, 1792) shows the location of Chickamauga Town. McDonald lived on the opposite bank of Chickamauga Creek on the south side of the Tennessee River.

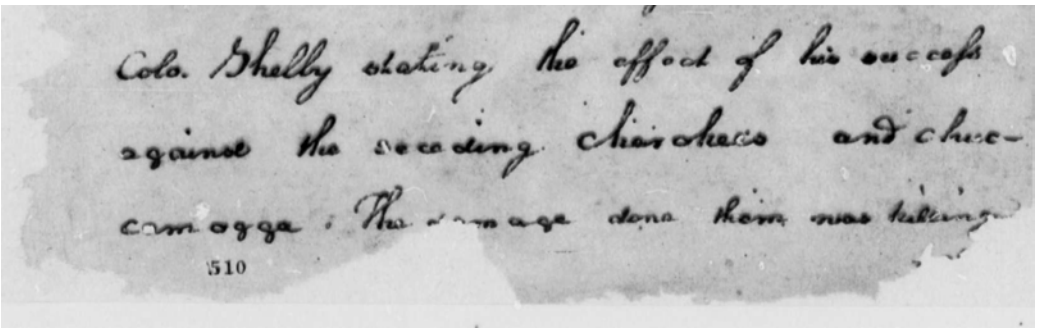
Their selection of a town site was no coincidence or accident. Dragging Canoe knew that McDonald had supply lines from his British contacts in Pensacola. With the American Revolution brewing, the Chickamauga and the British now had common enemies. McDonald, an ensign in the British Army, could provide the Chickamaugas with guns, ammunition, and other supplies that they could no longer get from the French or the Americans (Brown, 1938, p. 163; Pate, 1969, pp. 80-81).

McDonald was soon not only supplying Dragging Canoe and his followers with supplies but also actively helping to coordinate attacks against the frontier settlements in Georgia and the Carolinas, even to the extent of leading Cherokee raiding parties (Pate, 1969, pp. 88 and 91-93). The British began to use the Chickamauga Town as a headquarters for their operations in the Southwest, stockpiling food and supplies there and using the area as a rallying point for all tribes hostile to the Americans (Brown, 1938; Pate, 1969).

But all of this came to an abrupt end in April, 1779, when Gen. Evan Shelby led an American attack against Chickamauga Town and the

surrounding villages. The army burned all the buildings and destroyed the commissaries of McDonald and the other British agents, laying waste to the stores of food and plundering everything that could be carted off for sale, such as ammunition, furs, and horses (Brown, 1938; Pate, 1969, pp. 94-95; Jefferson, 1779). (Interestingly, this is the sale from which Sale Creek gets its name.)

"I … enclose you a letter from Colo. Shelby stating the effect of his success against the seceding Cherokees and Chuccomogga," Thomas Jefferson (1779) reported to George Washington following the attack. "The damage done them was … burning 11 towns, 20,000 bushels of corn collected probably to forward the expeditions … and taking as many goods as sold for ($125,000)."


Colo. Shelby stating the effect of his success
against the seceding Cherokees and Chuc-
comogga: The damage done them was burning
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A SNIPPET of Thomas Jefferson's (1779) letter to George Washington mentioning "Chuccomogga."

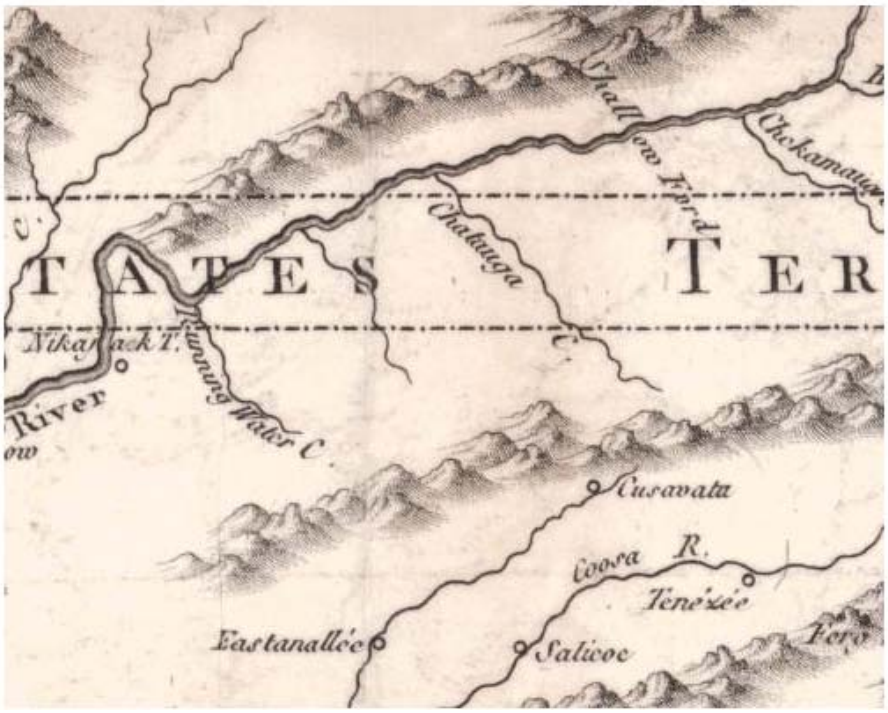
The Chickamauga warriors were not present during the attack (Pate, 1969). When they returned they ultimately decided to relocate again, even farther from the whites, west of Lookout Mountain, forming what would become known as the "Five Lower Towns" of Nickajack, Running Water, Long Island Town, Crow Town, and Stecoe, or "Lookout Mountain Town" (Brown, 1938; Pate, 1969; American State Papers, Indian Affairs I, 1792, p. 264).

McDonald, his home and commissary burned, apparently left the Chickamaugas at this point, perhaps to sort out his fortunes and alliances following this devastating loss. Fighting between American and British troops ended in 1782 (the final shots of the Revolution being fired by John Sevier and his militia against the Chickamauga at Lookout Mountain, where Chickamauga Town was burned a second time, after which Chickamauga Town was abandoned, the inhabitants claiming it had been "infested by witches." [Blount, 1793, pp. 431-432]).

McDonald explained in a 1794 letter to Alexander McKee that in Oct. 1783 he left the Cherokee Nation "with a large body of Indians to (St.) Augustine to Join Col. (Thomas) Brown, the Supperintendant of Indian affrs, having then acted as a commissary under him in the Indian department for his Majesty..." (Coker, 1986, Reel 9).

Though the Americans had officially declared the Revolution over on April 11, 1783, the Chickamauga fought on from their new base at the

Five Lower Towns, and by 1784, McDonald returned to help them, setting up shop at Running Water, a town situated at a Creek crossing on the Tennessee River, just west of Lookout Mountain (Brown, 1938, p. 246-247; Pate, 1969, pp. 146 and 160; Martin, 1785). In the McKee letter (Coker, 1986, Reel 9) McDonald described himself upon his return as free of British ties, "a private person carring (sic) on a small Trade to Pensacola."



RUNNING WATER TOWN was described as being "on the south bank of the Tennessee, except five or six huts which are on the north side…" (Tardieu, 1790; American State Papers, Indian Affairs I, 1792, p. 264)

RUNNING WATER TOWN was "three miles above Nickajack, and twelve below the Suck; here some Shawanese are settled, containing one hundred huts in 1790, and is a common crossing place for the Creeks." (Tanner, 1795; American State Papers, Indian Affairs I, 1792, p. 264)

North Carolina Indian Agent Joseph Martin (Brown, 1936, pp. 246-247) wrote to NC Governor Alexander Martin:

> McDonald and several others are now living at Running Water, within twenty miles of Chicamoggy. A certain Alexander Cameron is living with him, and is supplied with goods and ammunition from some merchant at Savannah or Augusta. McDonald's character is so well known that I need not say anything about it. Cameron in the course of the war has been a murderer and robber, and frequently went out with the Indians, murdering women and children. Several horse-loads of goods went to them while I was in the towns. Would it not be well for your Excellency to make known to the Governor of Georgia that no peace can be lasting while such villains among the Indians are supplied?

"Villain" is a term far removed from the bucolic picture drawn for us of the "frontier Indian trader," living with his "Indian wife" in his lonely log cabin. McDonald, rather, seems to have been a Cherokee partisan, even after his term as British agent among them had expired. Not only that – he chose to live among the most militant faction of the Cherokee, whom even their fellow people called "murderers and thieves," (Blount, 1793b) and he supplied them with the very arms they would use on their raiding parties to terrify and kill white men, women, and children

living on lands the Chickamauga claimed rightly belonged to the Cherokee (Brown, 1938; Coker, 1986; Pate, 1969).

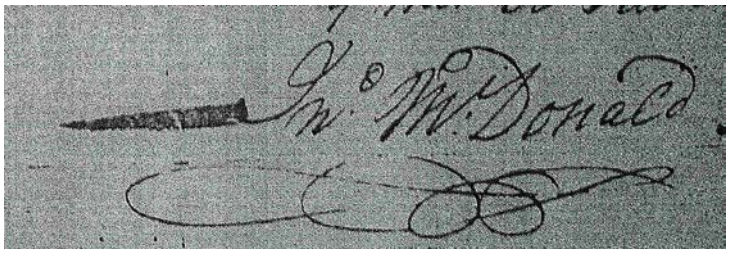
Still, some lingering feeling of connection to his fellow Scotsmen must have remained, for one year later, in 1785, McDonald interceded to save the life of a young man captured by Bloody Fellow on a successful Chickamauga raid on the Tennessee River (although he is sometimes characterized as a "boy," in some versions of the tale, the man in question was actually 25 at the time). That man, Daniel Ross, would not only become a lifetime companion and business partner for McDonald, but a part of his family, marrying McDonald's daughter Mollie in 1786.

According to Ross (Ridge, 1830), soon after his entry into the Chickamauga region he went into business at Stecoe (Lookout Mountain Town), opening a store. Stecoe was a town of about 80 huts, located about 15 miles south of Running Water (American State Papers, Indian Affairs I, 1792, p. 264).

The Spanish, by this time, were seizing control of Pensacola, as Florida was officially ceded from Britain back to Spain in 1783 following years of fighting over the territory. McDonald sent a letter from "Look Out Mt." on Sept. 6, 1785 (Coker, 1986, Reel 2), to Martin, who explained to his superiors in a separate letter (Martin, 1785) that he had "with much pains and some artifice prevailed on Mr. McDonald, the former British Agent, to correspond" with him, because McDonald, although described by Martin as a "villain," could either "very serviceble (sic) or very dangerous."

McDonald (Coker, 1986, Reel 2) explained to Martin that he had received a letter from the Creek nation stating that there were Spanish troops at Pensacola which had taken Americans in that area prisoner. The Spanish, he said, were "in a Formidable State," with troops "arriving every day at Pensacola," and moving "from there to all Posts up the River." He estimated their strength at between 5,000 and 6,000 troops and "about as many men Ready on any Emergency to spare from the towns of Pens., Orleans, and Mobil…"

Even though Pensacola, when it was under British control, had traditionally been one of McDonald's main sources of supplies, he emphatically stated to Martin: "<u>Believe me Sir I Shall Never Turn Spaniard</u>."

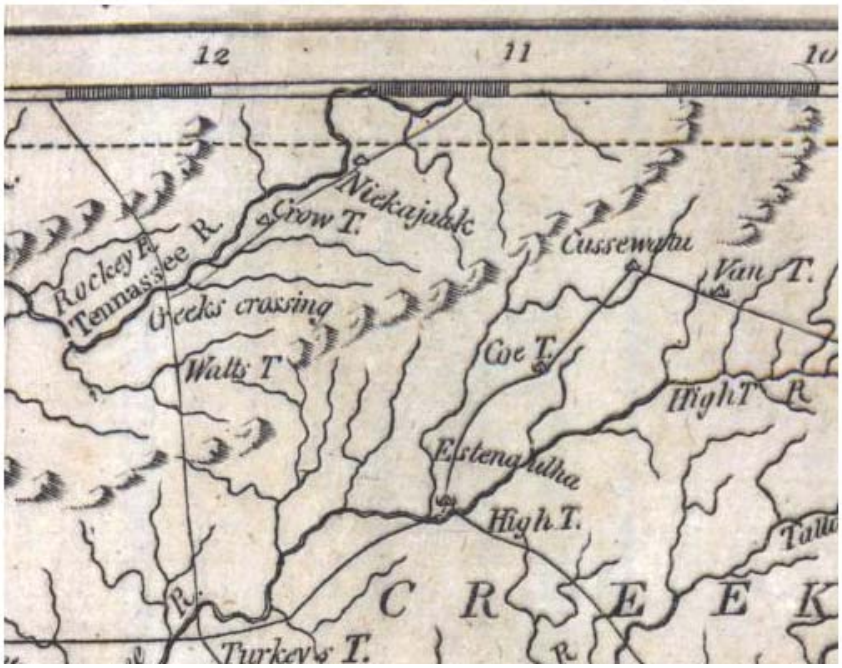


Martin, writing from "Chotee" on Sept. 19, 1785 to N.C. Gov. Richard Caswell, said that even though the Revolution had come to a close

he was now having "more trouble with the Indians in the course of the Summer, than I ever had, owing to the rapid encroachment" of white settlers on Cherokee lands. The "Talk from the Spaniards" and provocation from other Indian tribes was serving to make the future even more uncertain, he said (Martin, 1785).

McDonald, living "about 25 miles south west from Chickamagga," could unwittingly be a prime source of the "earliest and best Intelligence that can be had from that quarter," Martin said. "He has great influence with the Indians on that quarter, deals at Pensacola, corresponds with Mr. Gilvry, in the Creek Nation and one Mr. McClatchey at the mouth of St. Mary's, a British Merchant who furnishes some part of the Towns near him with goods."

Ross said that "about the year 1788, he removed together with his father in-law and their families to Turkey Town ("Tahnoovayah," according to Eaton, or, according to Brown, "Kanagatugi"), and continued trade with the Cherokees. The Little Turkey was the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and resided in that town." (Ridge, 1830) The town was also much closer to the old abandoned French Ft. Tolouse, and there was talk being circulated that it might be re-garrisoned by the Spanish or that a new fort would be garrisoned just north, near the current site of Ft. Payne, Alabama.



TURKEY TOWN can be seen at the extreme south on the above map (Doolittle, 1796). It was located near what is now Center, AL. This is probably the farthest south that McDonald and Ross ever lived.

Turkey Town, near the present location of Center, Alabama on the Coosa River, was where John Ross was born, in 1790. (Some have

indicated over the years that Ross was born in Rossville or even at the Ross House, but this is clearly incorrect). We do not know what the very early life of Ross might have been like, but we do have a general overview of how the children of traders were treated, as seen through the eyes of U.S. Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins (2003, p. 57) in 1797:

> The traders, several of whom have amassed considerable fortunes, have almost all of them been as inattentive to their children as the Indians. It has not entered the head of one of them to attempt to better the condition of the Indian. I believe they look on such attempts as fruitless.

It is not known precisely what Hawkins meant by "inattentive," but one might assume that he was referring to a general lack of schooling and discipline. The Cherokee at the time were often described as "indulgent" parents. But schooling opportunities would become more plentiful, especially to the children of the richer Cherokees, after the turn of the century. John Ross, thanks to his father, would be among that set.

At this time, McDonald was corresponding with William Panton of Panton, Leslie & Co., a British supplier of trade goods that had become allied with the Spanish interests. This company, too, was described by Hawkins (p. 57):

> Mr. William Panton has engrossed the greatest part of the trade of this nation, his establishment is at Pensacola; he supplies not only the white traders, but he has set up a number of Indian factors. They are both behind-hand with him, and the Indians are indebted to them to a considerable amount; the skin and fur trade is on the decline, and the wants of the Indians are increasing.

Although McDonald had vowed to Martin "never to turn Spaniard," he would spend the next several years trying to turn the Cherokees to Spain and would eventually become the official Spanish Agent to the Cherokees.

McDonald sent a letter to Panton on June 6, 1790 (Coker, 1986, Reel 5), detailing some overtures being made by the Spanish, particularly from Hector, Baron de Carondelet, to Chief Little Turkey. "I have not as yet learned from the Chiefs that they wish to receive their presents on the Missisippi in preference to Pensacola & when I find it is the general wish I will make it known," McDonald told Panton.

Spanish Commandant Don Arturo O'Neill had granted Panton's trade company a license to do business in Florida. Since much of Panton's business involved the sale of guns and ammunition, it was in his interest to keep stirring the pot when it came to Native American affairs. Keeping the Creeks and Cherokees at odds with the Americans was also in the Spanish interest, providing a buffer between the established colonial power and the newly emerging American nation.

Panton was a long-time friend of Creek Chief Alexander McGillivray and allowed him to be a silent partner in the company in exchange for his assistance in securing a monopoly on the Indian trade in the southwest. McDonald was a correspondent with McGillivray from at least as far back as 1785, and likely earlier. An alliance from this confluence of interests was soon forged.

It wasn't long before McDonald began corresponding directly with the Spanish governor. A letter dated April 10, 1792 from McDonald to O'Neill (Coker, 1986, Reel 7) shows the clandestine nature of the initial communications:

> Your Excellency will please to Observe to send no letters for the future either to the Nation or me except by Such as I Shall recommend, or else by Some faithful Whiteman employed by Your Excellency for the purpose … the Bloody fellow, passed the distance of Seventy Miles at least from my house, and as he told People as he went he had letters for me I expect (as he lives about hundred Miles distant adjoining the Sittlements) he will deliver them into the hands of the Amens … I am totally out of paper, your Excellency wil be condescending enough to Send me a little by these Indians…

The Bloody Fellow, from whose clutches McDonald had saved John Ross' father a few years earlier, became a kind of rival to McDonald, as he was being actively courted from the East by the Americans at the same time that McDonald was being wooed by the Spanish to the South. In a letter from McDonald to Panton dated June 7, 1792 (Coker, 1986, Reel 7) McDonald lamented the fact that Bloody Fellow had returned from Philadelphia, the American capitol town, with promises of land cessions from the whites – a feat heretofore unheard of, which McDonald feared could give Bloody Fellow increased influence and swing the Cherokees to the Americans' side.

> Nothing new, or interesting has occur'd since you left this, except, the arrival of the Bloody Fellow (but now called the Swan a name given him by General Washington) he seems perfectly well pleased with the treatment he received, & has got (tho' I did not see the articles) a very great addition to his Country by going – The line instead of running along the ridge that divides the Tensaw & Cumberland River, & along the mouth of Duck River & ca. as was agreed upon both by the hope well Treaty & that which they concluded last summer with Governor Blount, is to strike Cumberland high up, where the Kentucky road crosses it; then keep the course of that River to the confluence with the Ohio. – This it seems was the first demand the Bloody fellow made to the President which he readily aggreed to –
>
> The Indians then made application for more additions in other places but were refused –
>
> The President told them, that to give them more back after they themselves had ceded it in a regular, lawful, & formal manner, by fair treaties was a thing that did not

> lay within his breast to do; & added that it would create great confusion to disannul an act of Congress, relative to Lands & Boundaries, & run the Country to a very great expense to reimburse Individuals who had formed Settlement & made improvements, But if they (the Indians) had not signed away the lands in the manner they did, they might have possessed it, to the British Boundaries. – The Bloody fellow on hearing these facts did not further insist – being happy in obtaining what he did. – Indeed, considering how they have acted at treaties, & the advantage Governors & Commissioners generally take of simple Indians & Interpreters at such places, I think the acquisitions is greater than they could well hope to get; The recession made them is part of their lost hunting ground, which renders it of much greater value. – General Washington presented the Bloody fellow with an uncommon large Medal: on one side are the effigies of the President & the bloody Fellow – The President is seen to hold the Pipe of Peace, while the Bloody fellow smoaks, each are represented to hold it fast – On the other side is the Spread Eagle – Great attention was paid the Indians while in the City. – They were caressed, invited, entertained at all the publick places of amusement by the first rank – The new Commissary is also arrived at U'stanallie one of our beloved Towns; but to what lengths he will carry his points, time & dependence upon other circumstances must determine – A general meeting of the nation is to be held shortly at that place; where it is said he means to exert his abilities to get the trade of this Country, confined altogether to the States; by which means he supposes the Indians will more readily conform to their restrictions: -- Governor Blounts Brother, I am told has been tampering with some of the Indians since you left this place, offering to supply the whole nation upon much better terms than ever they were before he proposes furnishing them cheaper by far than any of their old Traders can do let them get their goods from the Spaniards, English, or whom they would. Notwithstanding such a boast, there will be no great danger of your losing the Trade, if you wish to keep it & the proper remedies applied – And if any advantage is to be derived you might as well have the handling of all the Skins that will go to Tunno at Charleston as not – I find every one here well disposed to give Pensacola the preference, people only want a living chance. – The President told the Bloody fellow, a large Army was going against the Northern Indians this Summer, the Commander was to carry the paper of peace in one hand, & in the other the Hatchet, if they accept of peace, he says they will get it, if not, he never means to crave it of them again – I am inclined to think they will accept of the Hatchet, instead of signing the paper of peace; they being emboldened by former successes: You may rely on it, Sir, that the conduct of all the Southern Tribes will be guided by the issue of the intended expedition. – Should the Northern prove too hard for the whites this time, the United States will bring on themselves the vengeance of all the rest…

This news culminated in a personal visit from Panton to McDonald. At McDonald's home in Turkey Town, Panton wrote a letter to John Watts (Pate, 1969, p. 210; Coker, 1986, Reel 7), who had

succeeded Dragging Canoe as leader of the Chickamauga, and to Bloody Fellow, as well, who was gaining more and more influence. James Carey related the following information to Gov. Blount in Nov., 1792 (Coker, 1986, Reel 7):

> The contents of the letter was to invite Watts and the Bloody Fellow, in the name of Governor O'Neal, to come down to Pensacola with ten pack horses; that they should have from Governor O'Neal arms and ammunition, as many and as much as they wanted, and that Panton himself would supply their nation with goods in plenty. Mr. Panton, during his stay in the nation, made the house of his countryman, McDonald, his headquarters, from whence they together paid a visit to the Little Turkey, and spent several days, Mr. McDonald acting as interpreter between Mr. Panton and the Turkey.

After this visit, Panton wrote to Gov. O'Neill, advising him on the best way to conduct the proposed meeting. The Cherokees, he said, should be supplied with much-needed arms, horses, and guns, and generous presents should be given. He specifically pointed out that that "Mr. McDonald, the old British superintendent," should be welcomed personally. He knew McDonald was very dissatisfied with the American treatment of the Cherokee and with Gov. Blount's efforts to tamper with Indian trade. Panton, like Martin on the American side, knew that McDonald with his influence over the Cherokee could be either "very serviceable" or "very dangerous."

By October, McDonald claimed in a letter to Panton that he had been successful in "turning the nation in favor of Spain," (Coker, 1986, Reel 7) but he said Spain and Panton would have to live up to their end of the bargain and supply the Chickamauga with the guns and ammunition needed to mount a war party against the Cumberland settlements.

> Let it … my good friend suffice (for the present) to assure you I have not been idle in the cause you advised me to engage in, and have through my assiduity & zeal, brought about an alternation in the State of the Nation, in favor of Spain—
>
> I made the first experiment to this effect on the Bloody Warrior, directly on his arrival from Congress, thinking him then more attach'd to the American interest than ever; I found him as I expected, a very staunch friend of theirs; but from the arguments I put to him, yealded by degrees to my way of thinking, and at length consented to send a short talk to His Excellency Governor O'Neill, which I drew up in a hurry for him, in his on name – The answer he received affronted him and his friends much satisfaction.__
>
> A Large Majority were strongly against coming into the Measure, from an apprehension that the Spaniards and Americans might be Confederated with the purpose to ensnare them and therefore were against turning their friendly views to a Nation they hitherto had no connexion with—

From the forceable arguments I occasionally made use of on this occasion convinced the whole of them to the contrary.

As the Nation Confided so far in my probity and honour, as to believe that I would not advise them to a measure that might in the end terminate in their ruin – I found the utmost caution necessary in conducting and accomplishing a measure of such importance, as, the turning of a Tribe of Indians in favour of a Nation – So effectually have I succeeded, the Scheme is so far accomplished, without my being scarcely, in it, but by a very few steady friends only—

An open exertion in one acting (in such important affairs) from no Legal Authority, would be both impolitic and Dangerous; by laying ones self open to the bitter & loud exclamations of the opposite party (the Am'ans) and liable from the bribery to suffer by the hands of a perfidious and Disaffected party.

Nevertheless from a persuasion that the change would benefit the Nation at Large, I have strongly advised an interview at any rate.—

The advantage or disadvantages that may accrue form their negotiations I would be more able to judge of, when I come down and shall direct them accordingly—

Thus My Dear Sir, you see how far you have engaged me, and I must place equal reliance on you; for if your friends fail in fulfilling all that you assure me would be done the total ruin of the nation & myself will in consequence follow, and you will entail an eternal reproach on yourself for having been the means of rendering a people more unhappy than they need have been but for your advice – You may look for me down about the 25th of this month, and shall bring a sufficient number of headmen along, probably 14, but ten have engaged, as the most of them are of the first rank, consequently will be considered as the representatives of the Nation for they are from different parts of it.

Among those Warriors are the Bloody Fellow, The Breath, The Glass, Charles from Chickamauga, John Taylor, Wm. Shawrey The Hair & others.

A Considerable body have turned out to war against Cumberland; there plan was to attack and destroy the City of Nashville, they have been gone about fifteen days and I have waited with Impatience till now to hear the issue of their expedition; although have not as yet comer to anything certain as to that enemy; their number was between three and four hundred- As I look for the party, back in a day or two, I will leave some person behind (of my company) to bring the news; My horses being now ready to Start, cannot delay them as I mean starting with them tomorrow—

O'Neill sent a report (Coker, 1986, Reel 7) of the Cherokee Pensacola expedition to Baron de Carondelet at New Orleans in early November. In it he gives details about all the gifts that were showered upon the Cherokee and Creek representatives in hopes that they would remain hostile to the Americans and become more closely allied with Spain.

… (T)he trader, McDonald, arrived here accompanied by six principal Indians and twenty-five warriors from the Cherokee nation. They were also accompanied by two other white men.

Four of the principal chiefs and one warrior, together with a young boy and girl, very properly requested that I permit them to depart for your city on board the schooner belonging to Pedro Lavalle, which I did after supplying them with ample gifts, munitions and provisions. As soon as I am able, I will have a statement drawn up showing what has been distributed, remitting same at the first opportunity.

Among the seven people who embarked for that city, I gave the four chiefs two blankets and two shirts each, and to the other three Indians I gave one blanket and one shirt each.

They all expected many presents upon their arrival there, but more particularly the chiefs, and also their interpreter, who speaks the English language. They told me that after leaving your city they were going direct to the Chickasaw nation for the purposes of inciting them to go on the warpath against the Americans, and, furthermore, they would either gain their point in an amicable manner, or if necessary, by threats and force. Moreover, that they [Chickasaws] should not cede any of their lands to the Americans as they were understood to have intentions of doing, as it would produce fatal consequences to the other nations. This appears to be a very good idea to me.

I understand that a chief, named Aliento, wil find it necessary to return, as two members of his family are in a very grave condition.

In the meanwhile those chiefs have left quite a few of their followers here. It would be advisable that they depart as soon as possible because of the great quantity of provisions I am forced to supply them; they are like a band of starving dogs. However, I must say that they seem to be quite contented with a daily ration of bread, a pound of rice and another of beef, and also a little tobacco, rum and wine which I give them from time to time.

Among those chiefs there is one by the name of Bloody Fellow, who is famous as being the most audacious and fearless in the whole nation, and also the one with the most authority.

They say that when he was here he even had the insolence to demand that he be given wine and coffee, and he was not satisfied with a few gifts.

It seems that all of them have great expectations of receiving from you the following articles: a saddle, overcoat, hat, shirts and numerous other things.

I supplied, not only to them but to the Creeks as well, sufficient provisions for twelve days.

The Indians who were here, ultimately, will inform Your Lordship regarding an attack which their nation had made against an American fort situated on their frontier. It appears that some Creeks accompanied them, together with some Shawnee Indians, a tribe whose habitat is beyond the Ohio river.

They were repulsed by the Americans, with a loss of four killed and six wounded. It seems like an Indian captain by the name of Whalts (who had been here not so

> very long ago) was counted among those wounded. I was specially requested to send him some gifts, which I did.
>
> The Indians living in the straits and the region of the lakes have given their word to join the Creeks against the Americans. Anything further in regard to this matter they, themselves, will be better able to inform Your Lordship.
>
> When the trader, McDonald, returned to the Cherokee nation, I made him some presents and gave food to five of his head Indians.
>
> It was insinuated by the Creeks that I should celebrate the the fact of them placing themselves under our protection by firing several salvos of cannon shots, but I excused myself by saying, that they should not allow themselves to be carried away by their zeal to the extent of requesting such a distinction; nevertheless, they remained contented. The cost of the gifts made to the Creeks was very much more costly than those customarily made to the other Indians.
>
> I offered them so much munitions and arms, that they were unable to pack it away, due to the lack of sufficient packhorses. They, naturally, desired to take all of it but, particularly, the salt.
>
> To the chief who remained as acting head of the nation, named Little Turkey, I sent some gifts, of which they, themselves, will inform Your Lordship.
>
> I understand, that at the present time, there are no American settlements established at Muscle (Shoals) on the Cherokee River. It seems to me that this Indian nation (Cherokee) could be very useful to us.

Panton made quite clear his intentions in a letter sent with the Bloody Fellow and the other Cherokee representatives to New Orleans, to be delivered to Carondelet upon their arrival (Coker, 1986, Reel 7):

> This letter will be delivered to you by some Cherokee chiefs who recently arrived with Juan McDonald, whom I have recommended to Your Lordship in my previous letters. They will inform you of war having begun anew between their nation and the Americans, as well as of the unfortunate attack which they and the upper Creeks have made agains the fort of Cumberland.
>
> … things in general are in a pretty good state, and next Spring, if Your Lordship desires, such a bloody war can commence as the United States of the south has never undergone…
>
> …My opinion is for your Lordship to send them a message or invitation in which Your Lordship will make known your intentions to the whole nation. To lose one moment would destroy all that has already been accomplished up to now, and will cause Your Lordship to lose forever the confidence of the Indians.

Panton was, in fact, so anxious to incite a combined Cherokee-Chickasaw-Creek-Shawnee-Choctaw assault on the Americans that he even offered to put up the money himself by allowing the Baron to arm the warriors on credit. When giving out guns to the Cherokees, he urged them

to use the weapons not for hunting, but to kill Americans (Brown, 1938, p. 351).

The Americans, for their part, were distrustful of the Spanish and could sense trouble brewing. So McDonald, rapidly emerging as Spain's primary link to the Chickamauga and the Cherokee, through Panton, became of growing interest to the Americans, and particularly Gov. William Blount of N.C. In fact, when a Capt. Samuel Handley was debriefed by Blount (1793a) following his captivity by the Cherokee, the first question he was asked was, "During your captivity with the Cherokees, in the Lower Towns, did you become acquainted with John McDonald?" The captain said that he had. "Did you experience any civilities and friendship" from either McDonald or Alexander Campbell, another former British agent? "Yes, very great from both – all their situation admitted of," the captain replied.

> G.B. – Do you suppose they wish peace with the United States?
>
> C.H. – I am confident they both wish it.
>
> G.B. – Did you hear both, or either of them, say whether or not the Spanish officers had encouraged the Indians to go to war, or whether they gave them ammunition?
>
> C.H. – They at first denied both; but afterwards, in conversation, they acknowledged they had learned that the Spanish governor told them, that he did not bid them go to war; but, if they were imposed upon, then he would furnish them with arms, ammunition, and men, to recover their country to the old line – the line made by the British.
>
> G.B. – What do you suppose to be the numbers of the five Lower Towns?
>
> C.H. – Messrs. McDonald, Campbell, and Adair compute them to seven hundred, exclusive of old men; that Watts had a list drawn, and that appeared to be the number.
>
> G.B. – Did they appear to be well armed?
>
> C.H. – Yes; taking them collectively, better than I ever saw the same number of militia men.
>
> G.B. – Have they any powder and lead in store?
>
> C.H. – Plenty.
>
> G.B. – From whence do you suppose they obtained their ammunition?
>
> C.H. – From the Spaniards, so they say.
>
> G.B. – Did you understand that the Indians had formed any companies of cavalry?
>
> C.H. – Yes; three companies.
>
> G.B. – Who commands them?
>
> C.H. – John Taylor and Will Shory command two, the third I do not know.
>
> G.B. – Did you see any swords and pistols among them?
>
> C.H. – Yes; I saw some. The pistols and holsters were new, the swords were of the British dragoon kind.
>
> G.B. – During your captivity did you see or hear of any parties of Creeks passing through the nation, for war against Cumberland?
>
> C.H. – Yes; I heard of several, particularly one of 150 lately.

> G.B. – Was it understood in the Lower Towns that the Creeks were at peace with the United States?
> C.H. – No; it was understood the Upper were at war with the United States.
> G.B. – Do you think Watts is sincere in his overtures for peace?
> C.H. – Yes; except as to Cumberland. It is my opinion that small parties of Creeks and Cherokees will continue to infest that district.

The correspondence between the Spanish and McDonald and other records reveal that McDonald was given a commission as Spanish agent by Hector, Baron de Carondelet of New Orleans, now the governor of Louisiana and West Florida, early in 1793. But the correspondence between McDonald and the Spanish also reveals his growing disenchantment with Spain as promises made in the fall were quickly forgotten by the following spring. Even while the Indian delegations were being incited by Panton to go to war, with promises of Spanish backing, the Spanish themselves were more hesitant, seeing this new alliance as more of a "defensive confederation," Carondelet explains in a report to the Spanish crown. He also expresses regret that the Cherokee had, by his estimation, jumped the gun, having sent their failed war party against Nashville and the Cumberland settlements. This, Carondelet was careful to point out, "was done without my consent. The mere fact of hostilities against the United States is contrary to my proposed plan to establish a general confederation…" (Coker, 1986, Reel 8).

This hesitancy and apparent misunderstanding between the various parties greatly frustrated Panton. He said in a letter to Carondelet in January, 1793 (Coker, 1986, Reel 8) that hostilities that were erupting between the Choctaws and the Creeks so soon after agreeing to become allies showed "how necessary it is to be furnished with good Interpreters." He blamed "the mistake" of recent violence on "a misconstruction of your own orders which Mr McGillivray has no doubt informed you of before this."

He urged Carondelet and the Spanish to emerge out from the shadows and to be clear regarding their intentions (Coker, 1986, Reel 8):

> Governor O Neill mentioned to me your anxiety to supply the Cherokees in an obscure manner, through my hands – for my own part I am willing to do what you please, but in my opinion you would hurt the cause you mean to promote *very much* by attempting to act behind the scenes – You have already gone too far to retract and your point will be sooner gained by coming forward boldly and acting openly to the full extent of your Promises, than it will be appearing in the least undercover which would assuredly discourage the Indians and for ever ruin your Interest amongst them.

In the same letter he urged the Spanish to place McDonald on their payroll.

> You have acted wisely in recommending Mr. McDonald As a Commissary for the Cherokees – he had much trouble with me, in attending me from Town to Town – His Journey hither was undertaken at my request, the Man himself is not rich, and in my opinion it would do no harm to your affairs, if you would desire me to pay him five hundred dollars as an immediate present from yourself until His Majestys pleasure was known respecting his appointments

Panton had apparently mentioned the possibility of such an appointment to McDonald in a letter written the previous December. McDonald answered him (Coker, 1986, Reel 8) in a letter sent Feb. 6 that he would accept the appointment; but the letter also betrays a growing sense of anxiety on his part.

> I received your favor of the 20th Decemr. by Moses Price, & carefully observe the contents – I mean to govern myself in regard to the affair alluded to, according to your advice, knowing them to come from a friend. I mean not to abuse the confidence of the Court by refusal of the post, but accept of it, as long as I can be serviceable in it. An affair of importance is now on the Carpet, but I have not legal & necessary instructions, am at a loss how to act with propriety.
>
> The Nation is a good deal divided & confused, & a general meeting of the Nation is strongly insisted on by Governor Blount. They are invited to meet him on the 17th April, at the Mouth of Clinch, Thirty miles further in the Indian Boundary, then was agreed on, at the Treaty of Holston, with the view, not only to get this favorite Tract of the Governors confirmed, (which he tried hard for, at the last Treaty without effect) but to give energy to all former Treaties, in case the Validity of them should be called in question by the Court.
>
> A company composed of near Fifty men for the relief of Cumberland, was attacked on their way by thirty Cherokees, & defeated, -- their Captain taken prisoner, but few days since was restored to his liberty by Watts. As the time is long enough to admit of a hearing from your quarter, I presume you will be as explicit as you can, and forwarding the necessary Instructions &c. If they are made out & have come to hand, -- for the Indians will expect some advice from me, & I would wish to act upon sure grounds, -- all I am now doing is upon the reliance of you as a friend. The Bloody Fellow and Taylor are not yet arrived, so that I have not heard any thing from Orleans, except what you write me. –As your own good Judgement will readily suggest the evil that will accrue, both to your own Interest, & that of the Government of Spain, from such Connections & Treaties, I need not say any thing further on the subject, at any rate, I mean to divert them from meeting him at the place and time appointed, or any where else till I hear further.
>
> I send this under Cover to Mr. Daniel McGillivray with injunctions ot have it send you immediately. Should this intelligence be deemed to be of much Consequence, as I conceive them to be, I presume the necessary Dispatches will be forwarded to me, either by

> Express, or some other quick & safe Conveyance – so, you will be carefull who to intrust.
>
> --Correspondence of this kind when interrupted, leads one inocently into snares he would fainly avoid. I would certainly communicate my sentiments much oftener, if there could be some safe line of conveyance established so as to afford a speedy & safe Intelligence.

At the April council meeting at Ustanauli the Cherokees, after hearing positive reports from the ambassadors returned from Pensacola and New Orleans, decided to be very explicit about their expectations of their new friends, the Spanish. Again, they sent their message through McDonald, who wrote to Carondelet on their behalf (Coker, 1986, Reel 8):

> Full of satisfaction and pleasure, the United Cherokee Nation has heard with joy the message of its ambassadors, and gives through me a cordial expression of thanks for the great generosity with which you offer to use the powers at your disposal to alleviate its condition. I translated and explained the letter which they brought in the General Meeting of the Indians called for that purpose; that which the Bloody Fellow and the other chiefs explained to you about the oppression which is suffered here is the same that the Nation expresses.
>
> They complain about the ungenerous manner in which the Americans have appropriated their hunting lands. The first treaty celebrated in Seneca after the war with great Britain was called Hopewell; in this treaty the Whites obtained concessions from the Indians, but not through the general consent of the Nation since it is certain that these lands were settled before consent was requested. The passion of the Americans to settle on lands of the Indians is too well known to your Lordship to need explanation, since the Americans, through fraudulent methods customary among them, have usurped the lands of the Indians, the Nation unanimously demands and insists that the ancient boundaries laid down in the treaty with the British Nation be preserved, and asks that Your Lordship use all your powers to obtain this grace from His Majesty, if possible; and in case you cannot obtain it, that you insist that the Cumberland settlement be removed in any event: outside of this there is nothing that will satisfy the Cherokees and Creeks.
>
> Cumberland was settled toward the end of the last war by a certain Robertson and some companions of his who by hiding their voyage and designs seized control of these lands; perhaps the Americans will try to make it appear they possess these lands by open and legal treaties, but this is not so, and the whole Nation declares to the contrary, because the last treaty, and likewise the first, were not clearly explained to the Indians at the place of the Asembly, and they only learned of the contents on their return to the Nation. Robertson and his companions are really and truly the cause of the shedding of so much blood, and the confusion that has existed and still exists is due to this settlement, and while it remains in this place a solid peace cannot be expected.

On the same day that McDonald wrote the above letter, he also sent separate letters to both O'Neill and Carondelet (Coker, 1986, Reel 8), pleading with both of them to make good on their promises and to give him some direction as to their wishes. Indeed, he still was unsure as to whether or not he was acting as their official representative. To O'Neill:

> Not having the honour of receiving any estimation from your Excellency or the governor of Orleans respecting the affairs of the Cherokees (Who now Consider themselves as Allies to Spain) rendered me in a great Measure at aloss, how to Conduct My Self, for want of the Necessary Instructions, or Whither (as I have been assured of) the Charge of the Nation are to be Commeted to my Care and Superentendency, -- the office are a troublesom one, but if proffetable Shall have No objection to undertake it—

To Carondelet:

> As I never had the honour of any Communication with your Excellency, or Governor ONeill, or any other person excep My friend Mr. Panton, I am, from the critical Situation of the Nation, at a loss in a great Measure how to act with propriety.
>
> It is now nearly a Year since I began to exert My influence in persuading the Indians to turn their friendly views, & depend Wholly on the Crown of Spain for redress of greivans – I have procured this alteration at no Small leabour & trouble – and have perhaps gone greater length than good policy ought to derect, without being previously furnished, With proper Authority – But I have entered into the Measure, from the persuasion of a friend, Who assured Me that My leabour & trouble – and have perhaps gone greater length than good policy ought to derect, without being previously furnished, With proper Authority – But I have entered into the Measure, from the persuasion of a friend, Who assured Me that My leabour would be handsomely rewarded if I Succeeded – the Indians have now been down, & returned to Their friends apparently well pleased – As they daily look to me for advice in the politicks of the Nation Should be happy (if My services are required) to be Speedly envested with the Necessary Instructions &c:

McDonald informed both Carondelet and O'Neill that Gov. Blount was "pushing hard" for a new treaty with the Cherokees. "I Shall endeavour to put it off, till I hear your Excellencys oppinion- upon the business," he wrote Carondelet.

Though McDonald's attempts to delay the treaty met with success, the failure to come to terms may have played a part in the undoing of the tribe, directly leading to a permanent end of any kind of active resistance to the Americans. By the time of McDonald's next communication to Panton in June (Coker, 1986, Reel 8), the whole Cherokee Nation was again in the "utmost confusion," he said, due to the "barbarous behaviour

of the Americans on the frontier." He was referring to the slaughter of a group of Cherokee leaders and their families at Hanging Maw's town, Coyatee, which was generally considered a "peace town" friendly to the United States.

> A few days Since, a party composed of Fifty men invaded the Nation & Killed Seven Indians on the Spot & wounded five more, two of them mortally. – Amongst the Dead is poor Charles of Chickamago, one of the chiefs who accompanied the Bloody Fellow to Pensacola last Fall – This took place at the Hanging Maws house near Toka --- These Indians went to Barter their furs & Considered themselves perfectly Secure from all danger, especially so as no provocation had been given by the Cherokees Sinse the winter, & whatever they might have done before appeared to have been overlooked, by the face of the Numerous letters Sent by Governor Blunt to the Nation, inviting them to a treaty authorized by the Congress – Finding that a treaty could not be brought about, he then endeavoured hard to get some of the headmen to accompany him to Philadelphia, but without effect – some of them it is true had consented to make that Tour with the Governour, but were easily dissuaded from it when I came to represent the folly of accompanying their destroyer --- Since this outrage was Committed it appears Clearly that Blunts drift in inviting the Chiefs to a treaty was with view of detaining them as hostages – a very despicable way of obtaining them.
>
> Governour Blunt did not know in reality but what a number of headmen was come agreeable to his invitation & wish – he accordingly affected to treat them with uncommon Civility, & ordered a quantity of Whiskey, Beef & Flour to be brought to the hanging maws House for the use of Such as might come there, & those Indians were actually drunk with the Whiskey, when the horrid murder was Committed upon them – it is however to be observed that the Americans were given to understand before they Commenced this massacre that the Indians had declined going to Philadelphia ---
>
> A General Congress of the Nation are now met at Ustanallie one of the beloved Towns, but their determination will be too late, for to be given to you by the bearer who waits for this.

McDonald soon followed this communication up with a second letter to Panton (Coker, 1986, Reel 8), in which he exonerated Blount:

> The present situation of affairs are very alarming & threatens the destruction of the nation unless the united States reduce their Laws and engagements into practices – It Seems the (blame) of that Affairs of Hanging Maw are (by [reports] from the Settlements) fixed on certain Capt. John Beard & was committed without the knowledge of Governor Blunt who Started to Philadelphia before the affair happened. – The Same Ruffian advanced the other day as far as Tellico, The Town being abandoned, he Surrounded the cornfield & took several women gathering corn, whom he Instantly Slaughtered with the Greatest Barbarity – What number he killed I have not as yet exactly

> learned, I did Intent to give you a full details of his various exploits, but the Express who goes to Invite the Creeks to assist in the Expedition will not no longer tarry.

By September the Cherokees – led by Watts and the Chickamaugas -- were setting out to exact retribution, selecting Knoxville as their target. They were ill-equipped for the raid and the mood of the Cherokees was more divisive than ever. This would be the final war raid of the Cherokees, and it would result in a notorious bloodbath at Cavett's Station. McDonald sent a letter to Panton dated Sept. 12 (Coker, 1986, Reel 8):

> The present State of the Nation Still remains in the Same alarming Condition as when I wrote you last & everyday threatens to become more & more So, not so much from the fear of invading enemy as from the Division among themselves, arising from private Animosity, Jealousy, or envy of each other; Such events are ever destructive to a civilized State, let alone Indian Nations, -- What is Called the Five lower towns are all unanimous, & Some days Since all Started on an expedition to the Settlements, terms the New State, Commanded by the Bloody Fellow & Watts—
>
> Altho' there is not a General turning out of the whole nation, yet I am of an opinion that more or less have joined from all parts of it, So that I Judge the whole that's gone, will amount to about Six or Seven hundred; much larger body would have gone, if they had Ammunition indeed those who are gone are but lightly furnished with Stores of ware—
>
> The Turkey went against taking any part in the present dispute, till he knew positively himself whether or not he could be plentifully Supplied with amunition from the Spanish Govern't—The Bloody Fellow relying on the assur'ce already given him to that effect Could not be prevailed to defer Striking in his turn any longer—
>
> The expected Succor from the Creeks have failed altho' the Creeks had been Very active in bringing the present afair to the head it has; however they promised to assist if the Cherokees would wait, -- The frequent unprovoked incursions of the Whites Since the Affair of the Hanging Maws have raised the resentment of these lower Town parties to such a pitch that nothing Short of immediate revenge Could Satisfy them; Report prevails that General Sevier has actually marched against them, if True & those who are gone meet with him I think they will be able to give him a Scare, for they are gone with a resolution to fight—
>
> All the Traders will be on the path in about ten or Twelve days at farthest, & every Trader is Commanded to bring one horseload of Amunition each, Some two, for those who don't go down Send a horse with them that do to bring it for them—
>
> The bearer of this is the little Turkey who is on a visit to Pensacola & probably to New Orleans if Necessary, at any event I presume to think it would be very imprudent to refuse Just now the Supply promised from your quarters, as a refusal now will be attended with mistrust hereafter –

> In regard to myself, I still rely on you to manage & procure, the pecuniary afair relating to my Services--&ca

It's interesting to note that McDonald apparently still had not been paid for his services to the Spanish.

On the same date that he sent the above letter, McDonald wrote a separate letter to the new Spanish governor at Pensacola, Enrique White, urging him to assist the Cherokee chief, Little Turkey, with provisions (Coker, 1986, Reel 8):

> The bearer of this is the Little Turkey whome without any previous acquaintance, I take the liberty to beg leave to entroduce to your Excellencys Civillity and attention, as one of the Chiefs of the Cherokees—
>
> as his Nation are likely to be reduced to a very destressing Situation his chief bussiness to Pensacola is to obtain a present supply of Ammunition agreeable to the promise made the Bloodyfellow at New Orleans—
>
> Your Excellency no doubt are acquainted how the present despute between the Indians and the Americans Originated by first Murdering a Number of their people under the faith of Government, Assembled at the Hanging Maws at the ernest Sollicitation of Governor Blount and other Agents of the United States. Since then the Whites have commited a Number of out rages by killing Women & children and in fact all they could find without destinction – all this while the Cherokeees have done Nothing to Justify Such treatment So many repeated violence instigated part of the of the Nation to turn out to take revenge – they are now Started to the Number of a bout Six or Seven hundred –
>
> When the Indians came to the determination of carrying on an expedition, it was agreed in councell that the Traders Should bring them a present Supply of Ammunition with the Traders agreed to do, that is one Horse load each – Some that dont go down Sends a Horse to bring it up for them
>
> The Supply want for the present will amount only to about 14 Horse loads – that is 700 lb powder, 1400 Ball this however is only My own Oppinion. But I think there will Not be Horses sent to bring more this winter than what will bring the Supply Mentioned—
>
> I presume to think it would be prudent in your Government to grant that quantity at any rates as refusal wil be attend with Mistrust for the future—If it is given it Must be given to the people without out delay as they Cannot wait with their Horses tell a Message goes & returns from Orleans – but I pressume there will be no Occasion for this Especially if your Excellency have seen the Bloody fellows Talk to Governor of Orleans dated the 14th Augst. last, Which was Sent by Express to the Creeks under cover to Mr Panton and left for your Excellencys perusal.

Courtesy Omar Morgan

Daniel Ross, Father of Chief John Ross

DANIEL ROSS, father of John Ross.

The next bit of correspondence, dated Sept. 26 (Coker, 1986, Reel 9), confirms that McDonald and Daniel Ross were still working as trading partners, as both Ross and McDonald eagerly awaited news of the raiding party:

> Mr. Ross has delayed Starting some days after we were ready, in order to hear the event of the expedition, but as I am Just informed the Indians have delayed several days at Highwassie with the purpose to Collect a Stronger force; Three or Four days must yet pass before we Can hear anything that may be depended on; the horses have in Consequence Started but you will hear what is done by the last that Starts.
>
> The Turkey has turned his Course, instead of going to Pensacola &ca is gone to the Walnutt hills which I think will answer a better purpose.

The Spanish, for their part, were beginning to come back around to the idea that they should support the Indians in these expeditions. Panton praises Carondelet for this decision in a letter dated Oct. 15 (Coker, 1986, Reel 9).

> It is highly pleasant to me to observe you reverting to your former sentiments respecting Indians, whom it would be unjust to desert after having in some measure been the cause of envolving them in their present distress – They must be supported, -- and that effectualy, or you will lost them, and thereby deprive yourselves of your best and safest Barriers against your turbulent neighbors, who have nothing more warmly at heart than the desire of separating the Indians from you, & which if you permit them to accomplish, they will make no hesitation in supplying them with ammunition & cloathing also & to turn their arms against you.
>
> Your reasoning concerning the Americans and of the probability of their taking the part of France is very just – If France is unsuccessfull, or likely to be reduced this Campaign America will haul in her horns & be very quiet, -- on the contrary if those republicans are successful, America may think this is a good occasion to open the Mississippi & perhaps take possession of Canada – This argues strongly in favour of Your supporting the Indians on this side, --- while it is equally the Interest of Britain to maintain those of the north, and now or never it is the time to do it.—Be assured Sir that the Americans are too good politicians to leave an Enemy of this kind behind them if they apprehended a War with England & Spain, and they will bribe them to become their friends or turn the united force of the Confederacy against them to extirpate them…

Later in the letter Panton chides Carondelet for his continued failure to pay McDonald for his role as Spanish agent and commissary:

> That Gentleman continues to serve you most faithfully, altho' you appear to have forgot that he cannot live on air, & that it is necessary to provide for him a salary equal to that he had formerly from the British -- … Your Excellency will pardon this freedom—I have no interest whatever in mentioning those person to you otherwise than I think it of Consequence that you should retain In Your Interest Men who are capable of serving you--

Although McDonald eventually would be paid for his services (in late 1797) and the Spanish policy would turn to more actively support the Cherokees, it was all too little, too late. Within the month the Cherokees would meet with complete disaster and ruin.

The Cherokees, it was clear, had merely been used as pawns in a series of high-stakes maneuvers conducted by the Spanish, the French, and the Americans to determine who would control the North American continent. Carondelet is unusually explicit regarding the Spanish position in a 1794 letter to Don Luis de las Casas (Coker, 1986, Reel 9):

> The Creek and Cherokee nations bordering upon the United States will never be in complete peace with that country, because their young warriors feel resentful when they see themselves every day, more and more, limited and restrained by these as to their hunting, and they seek only too often reasons to quarrel and fight, this placing each in a

> warlike mood against the other; some find a diversion in stealing horses on the plantations across their frontiers, the owners, in pursuing them in order to receiver these, often meet with Indian detachments, who being ignorant of what has happened and not making ready to defend themselves, are often upbraided and attacked by the Americans, ending with deaths on both sides, those deaths being a consequence for revenge for the whole of the nation, it being impossible to find out which side was the first to start thee hostilities.
>
> While these Indians remain, the frontiersmen will continually be exposed to these attacks, there not being and doubt that if they were to live in peace with the Americans we ourselves would then suffer from their plunderings, and for that reason, I am of the opinion that it would be advisable, that without inciting them to start a war with the United States, we nevertheless keep on supplying them with means of defending themselves when the Americans try to evict them from their lands, this demanding that we have always at hand a supply of rifles of English manufacture and some war ammunitions set aside for the sole purpose.

When the last Cherokee war party determined that their force was unequal to the task of an all-out attack on Knoxvile, they set their sites on a more vulnerable target, the nearby Cavett's Station. Everyone at the station, including women and children, was killed (Ehle, 1988; Brown, 1938, pp. 390-391). The Americans, incensed at this latest action and growing weary of the years of border skirmishes, sent out a force led by John Sevier, who had successfully led American troops as far south as Lookout Mountain at the close of the American Revolution, to put an end to Cherokee resistance once and for all. Sevier conducted what was basically a "scorched earth" campaign, killing untold number of Cherokees as his troops marched deep into Cherokee territory, all the way down to a final battle at present-day Rome, Georgia, burning crops and towns all along the way (Brown, 1938, pp. 392-395). It is perhaps interesting that John Ross, known for his years of non-violent resistance to Cherokee Removal, would in 1827 locate a home and ferry just across the river from the location of this final battlefield, the last location of active Cherokee military resistance to white encroachment.

As for McDonald, by the next spring, in April of 1794, he was again corresponding with the British (Coker, 1986, Reel 9), this time through Alexander McKee, complaining about the "backwardness of the Spaniards" in furnishing the Cherokees with "a liberal supply of presents and a cheap trade." McDonald said he could not "help Joining in the General cry, of the Southern Indians in wishing the return of the British once more to the Floridas…":

> I now again take the liberty of writing you these lines particularly to recommend to your civility, and favour the bearer of this William Shawrey who is my Brother in Law he is accompany'd with his cousens Jno. Taylor and a fellow known by the name of Capt. Dick's Son this last you

> will no doubt know when you see him, he is a son of the great Warrior that got killed among the Shawnies some years sence these are men of note among the red people – Several others goes in company, among the rest, a son of the Little Turkey one of our principle chiefs. AS Taylor talks English you will learn from him more particularly the news of this Country. Treaty of friendship and Guarantee was concluded between the Spaniard and the four Southern Nations on the 28th October last, at the Walnut Hills (Vicksburg, MS), by Govr Goyoso de Lemos authorized for the prupose by Baron Carondelet, Govr of Orleans and the Province of Louisianna – At this Treaty the Indians throwd themselves under the protection of his Catholic Majesty as the last and only resource to enable them to keep possession of the remainder of their country – This measure, no doubt, will be attended with happy consequence to the Indians, I mean if they adhere to the advice of their friends, and suffer them to conduct a business, they are not able to conduct themselves – but the seeds of discord the American emissarys daily sows among the different Tribes, and the backwardness of the Spaniards in furnishing them liberaly, and the dearness of Goods from that quarter, all tend to render the Union less firm than it would be, if they met with a liberal supply of presents and a cheap trade. I cannot help Joining in the General cry, of the Southern Indians in wishing the return of the British once more to the Floridas – You no doubt have long since heard the cause which originated the War between the Cherokees and the frontiers of the U. States – When the Govr. of Orleans became acquainted with the circumstances he advised the Nation to represent their complaint in a formal Maner, which they did by a Memorial and Which, he says, he has laid before his King, and enforme Me, have been graciously received and that his C. Majesty are determined to take proper measure upon the Subject – The Baron further adds that he has Wrote the Minister of Spain, in America to propose to Congress a suspension of Arms with the Cherokees from the first of this Instant April, which he wishes the Cherokees to exceed to, it and wait with patience the result of the negociation now carring on at Madrid &c. I am offered by the Spaniards the appointment of a Commissary of the Cherokee Nation but have not as yet excepted the offer.

This last bit confirms the wiliness with which McDonald conducted his affairs, since previous correspondence clearly shows that he had indeed accepted the Spanish appointment, even though at this time he still had not been paid for it.

The Americans were open to McDonald's apparent change of heart. Even Gov. Blount, who previously had been so concerned about McDonald, finally put forth the idea of making McDonald an American agent to the Cherokees. This was late in 1794, by which time McDonald had relocated once again, this time to Will's Town, near the present location of Ft. Payne, Alabama (Coker, 1986, Reel 9).

The Cherokees could be induced to be at peace with the Americans "only by some person acquainted with Indian customs and manners, in whom they have confidence, residing among them," Blount said.

> Such a person, I have been taught to believe, for I have no personal acquaintance with him, now lives at Will's town, a Scotchman, of the name John McDonald, heretofore in a subordinate character, under the British superintendent, Colonel Brown, who, I have reason to believe, would accept such an appointment, provided the salary was a good one … But salary alone would not be sufficient; he ought to be allowed to keep a table better than his salary would support; and, on proper occasions, to reward, with presents, such Indians as should render services, or give uncommon proofs of friendship towards the United States. This would have a greater degree of influence and confidence, and the better enable him to effect the object of his appointment.

WILL'S TOWN was a village that developed somewhat later than Running Water Town, Lookout Mountain Town (Stecoe), and Turkey Town. It was located in the area now known as Ft. Payne, AL. There is no way to know for certain, but the "Trading Post" indicated in the above map likely refers to that of Ross and McDonald (Russell, 1800).

Will's Town was by this time of strategic importance. Blount called the town "one of the most powerful of the Lower towns," the residence of John Watts, and right on the Creek Warpath, which made it a great place for intelligence concerning any Creek war parties headed to the Cumberland region. Since McDonald was already residing there, it made perfect sense.

> Another advantage, in appointing this gentleman, would be, that he has as much, or more, influence with the Lower Cherokees, than any other man who resides among them; and, being in the pay of the United States, that influence would, consequently, be exerted over them … and a third reason is, there are several Scotch traders, heretofore adherents to the British government, in the Lower towns, inferior in consequence to McDonald, who would be pleased with his being noticed by the United States, and support him and his measures to peaceful objects.

Blount concluded that his main reason for thinking that McDonald would accept such an appointment was because "he has informed me, by letter, not long since to my hands, though written in May, 1793, that he would accept such an appointment from the United States to the Lower Cherokees."

This letter was written by Blount in November, 1794. Just two months later, on Jan. 3, 1795, a treaty was signed at Tellico Block House, officially ending the Chickamauga war. (Interestingly, though this ended active Cherokee military resistance to white encroachment, it did not end McDonald's intrigues with the Spanish. He remained in correspondence with the Baron de Carondelet for some time afterward, and Panton continued to encourage the Baron to pay for his services. Carondelet said of McDonald in a 1794 letter to a fellow Spanish official that he was "completely sure through experience of his faithfulness, industry, and influence," apparently just as oblivious of McDonald's recent overtures to the Americans as the Americans were of McDonald serving as a Spanish agent. [Coker, 1986, Reel 10])

It's is known that McDonald remained a trader for at least a short time following the treaty, for Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins (2003, p. 259) mentioned McDonald and Ross in a Nov. 25, 1797 entry:

> Some time in the summer past, about the latter part of July, the Uchees who inhabit the Sauvannogee Valley stole two horses from some Cherokee traders. The trader, McDonnal, and his man Ross, they applied to Mucclassee Hoopoi, of Occhoiuchee, to obtain satisfaction; he went directly to the town with some warriors, and the thieves were gone, but were known, and the townspeople had taken the horses and restored them to the care of Richard Bailey. Mucclassee Hoopoi went to their houses, took three guns from them, and burnt three houses with all their property in it.

By 1800, McDonald had moved back to Chickamauga Creek, very near or on his original homestead among the Cherokees. (If there was some period between his residence at Will's Town in 1795 and his residence at Chickamauga Creek that he lived at the Ross House in Rossville, I have found no contemporary record of it.)

A record of a meeting of the Cherokee Council on Oct. 6, 1800 (Trivette, 2001) mentions that a group of Moravian missionaries were

searching for a suitable mission site at this time. McDonald's home place was one of the candidates.

> Chief Gentleman Tom to Chief Little Turkey –
> From what has been said respecting the missionaries of the Moravians, we consider their intention as laudable. Let them come and make the trial; we hope it will prove beneficial. We ask our beloved man, Little Turkey, his sentiments on the occasion.
> Chief Doublehead for Chief Little Turkey –
> Respecting those missionaries, it has been nearly twelve months since they paid us the first visit. Now I address myself to the Chiefs of my Nation. I hope it will be well understood. I have already mentioned these gentlemen have been here some time. Their desire appears to be good, to instruct us and our children and improve our and their minds and Nation. These gentlemen, I hope, will make the experiment; we will be the judge from their conduct and their attention to us and our children, this will enable us to judge properly. Should they not comply as now stated, the Agent will be the judge for the Red people.
> We advise them to live at Mr. McDonald's and, that both Upper and Lower may have the benefit, we think it best if one goes to Mr. McDonald's; the other, to James Vann.

One might argue that the location for McDonald's was ambiguous. However, Moravian records (Mauelshagen, 1986) following this council meeting make it very clear that McDonald was living at Chickamauga Creek, not Rossville.

"On Oct. 7, we wished to profit by the Indians going home to take a view of some of the peacock which had been told us," said Thomas Schweinitz in "An Extract from the Journey of the Brethren," a record of his travels with Abraham Steiner.

"Mr. McDonald and Will Story promised us at first to take us along to Chicamauga," he reported.

An Oct. 14 entry relates the following:

> In the afternoon we arrived at Mr. McDonald's whose wife was, however, not at home. We had to eat with him. Here we saw a good many Philadelphia newspapers. This place is 20 miles from Vann's and 100 from Tellico. Not far from McDonald's we came to the house of Will Story. Here we were received very friendly. We had to eat again and our horses were fed likewise.

A debate ensued about which location, Vann's at Spring Place or McDonald's at Chickamauga, would be the best location for the new mission. This appears in the Moravian records (Trivette, 2001):

> Mr. McDonald's place at Chickamauga is 100 miles southwest of Tellico and 13 to 15 miles south of the Tennessee River. McDonald is a white man with an Indian wife and a large family; is wealthy and influential with the Lower Cherokees. The land is good.

> Steiner's objections: The missionaries should locate on no man's property but should be independent. This section is not healthful, the Agent Lewis having contracted fever thrice in one season. McDonald does not seem very anxious to have them near. Major Lewis advises, also, that this place is too far removed from the frontier. He thinks the missionaries should not be too far from Tellico.

"Chickamauga," one might argue, may sometimes seem to be used as a general location that could refer to any place between Lookout Mountain and the Chickamauga Creek and south of the Tennessee River. But the statement "13 to 15 miles south of the Tennessee River" is a clear indication that the missionaries are referring to the home at the Chickamauga Creek location, since the Ross House at Rossville is only four miles from the river (the river veers sharply to the northeast as one heads east from the Ross House). It seems to me that, at least in this case, and perhaps in most every case, "Chickamauga" means "Chickamauga" (i.e. on the waters of Chickamauga Creek).

It does seem to make sense that, following the peace treaty with the Americans, McDonald would want to return back to the site of his original homeplace, where he had raised his children for nearly a decade – much longer than any period of time he had spent in any other Cherokee town. Cementing this idea, correspondence from McDonald's wife in 1809 is shown as being sent from "Chickamauga," rather than from Poplar Spring, as Rossville was then known (Cherokee Agency at Tennessee official records, U.S. Archives, M-208, Roll 4). Further, we know that McDonald was in fact living at Chickamauga Creek when he finally did sell his holdings to the founders of the Brainerd Mission 17 years later, in 1817 (Phillips, 1998, p. 27).

This being the case, then, contrary to the Ruskin myth, there seems to be no contemporary evidence that the John Ross House was built by John McDonald.

If that's true, then who did? And how did John Ross wind up living there?

Inheritance: The Rosses, Will Shorey, and the Coodys

Daniel Ross moved with McDonald to the eastern side of Lookout Mountain, both apparently at about the same time, sometime around the turn of the 19th century. For Ross, it was the first time he had lived on this side of the mountain, having previously lived in Stecoe, Turkeytown, and Will's Town, all in the Lower Towns area on the west side of the mountain (Ridge, 1830).

Precisely when the move was made is uncertain. But there is some contemporary eyewitness evidence that neither Daniel Ross nor John McDonald were living east of the mountain in 1799. Benjamin Hawkins (2003, p. 53j), who kept a journal of his travels through the Cherokee and Creek territories, went through the region in the summer of 1799 and does not mention them, although he does specifically mention two other traders, "Brown" and "Jack Sivills" living there as he crosses Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga Creek, and Chickamauga Creek, likely along the same path that now connects Chattanooga to Rossville and would soon be transformed into the Federal Road. "The flat land to the N. of the mountain rich and several indian settlements under good farms their corn plantings large," Hawkins reported in his viatories.

Hawkins was acquainted with both McDonald and Ross, as proven by an entry he made in 1797, so it seems likely he would have mentioned them along with the other traders – most especially if they had been operating, as is often claimed, a flourishing trading post right on the main path, allegedly established in 1797 – fully two years before Hawkins made his way through the area.

(We do know for a fact, however, that McDonald was living on Chickamauga Creek in 1800, as previously demonstrated. So if Hawkins' eyewitness account can be trusted to mean that the McDonald trading post at Rossville was *non-existent* in the summer of 1799, then in order to believe that such a trading post did exist prior to McDonald's establishment at Chickamauga Creek we are necessarily left with only *a one-year window*. His supposed residence at what is now Rossville, then, would have been exceptionally brief.)

We can be reasonably assured that Ross was living somewhere east of Lookout Mountain by June of 1802 because he sent a letter (Ross, 1802) from "Chickamoga" to the Tennessee Agent, Major William Lovely, regarding, again, some horses that had been stolen:

Chickamoga June 30th 1802

Sir

As you have at length returned from from S. W. Point. It is time to know how the horses stolen out of my possession belonging to the family are to be paid for, There being no positive altho very strong circumstantial proof against Estridge, it appears plain to me those horses ought to be paid for by the Government, agreeable to Tellico Treaty & I may add agreable to Col Meigs own decision at the green corn dance held at Wellstown, which agreable to Wm Vanns report, of Wm Hicks, the public Interpreter runs this. That Shorey ought to Seize so much of Estridge's property as would be sufficient to indemnify the loosers of the horses, and if there was not sufficiency found the UStateswould make up the remainder ... Shorey would be obliged to you to let him know as soon as possible whether he has any expectations from the Chief Agent on this subject or not.

With due consideration I remain
Sir your most Ob Servt
Daniel Ross

One early biographer (Eaton, 1921) states that Ross was living at this time in what is now Maryville, Tennessee, but it seems that this was in error. Another late source (Allen, 1977) states that "Gideon Blackburn established a school for Daniel Ross here (at his home) and sent a teacher (traditionally John Barbour Davis) down from Maryville to teach Ross's children and other Indian children of the neighborhood." A 2002 letter from Maryville College in the John Ross House Association archives confirms that they have in their collections a "letter from a local minister who helped start 'Indian schools' and who apparently helped John Ross's father set up a small school to educate his children."

What I've been able to substantiate regarding Blackburn and his schools begins with a query from Daniel Ross to Indian Agent Return J. Meigs, but it's dated Oct. 10, 1803 (Trivette, 2001) :

I now find the chiefs have hesitated in the admission of school education in the Nation. I take the liberty of suggesting the probability of introducing the scheme although the Chiefs should be against it; that is, let one or two reputable teachers slip in, one to this quarter (if thought expedient) and others to Hiwassee or Oostenali, and make a beginning. They will find their school to increase [as white and mixed-blood parents seek their children's improvement] although the Chiefs may not choose to send their children.

At first the Indians could not bear the idea of planting cotton, spinning, and weaving, ect. . . . Tho' they now see the utility of it.

The Glass, a high-ranking chief, informed Meigs soon afterward that the Cherokee "approve a school being established in our nation under the superintendence of Rev'd Mr. Blackburn and hope much good will [be] done by it to our people." (Trivette, 2001)

."Here, the savage taken from the filth of the smoky hut, from the naked and untamed state of the heathen, and from the idols of the pagan world, is brought to the habits and manners of civilized life," said Blackburn (Trivette, 2001).

While Gottllieb Byhan, a Moravian, said that this Presbyterian school of Blackburn's was located "at Hiwassee," near the Indian Agency, an 1809 inventory lists not one but two Presbyterian schools, with one at Southwest Point, Tennessee (20 students), and another school, with twice the enrollment, "Near Quotaquskee's," also in Tennessee. The origin of these two separate Blackburn schools is briefly described in the following bit of correspondence, again from John Gambold of the Moravians, writing in 1810 (Trivette, 2001):

> In regard to Mr. Blackburn's school troubles… That school of which Mr. Black [one of Blackburn's teachers] was formerly in charge on the Highwassee and which was last kept in the former Blockhouse at Fort Tellico, to be sure, according to reports about it, has gone to pieces; whether forever, time alone will tell. On the other hand, the other school, which was first on the Chicamaga, and for a long time has been on the other side of the Tennessee below the new Garrison on James Brown's plantation, where Joe Vann goes to school now, is still in existence; at least, I have learned nothing to the contrary.

The important thing to note here is that this second Blackburn school, which traditionally was located, at least initially, in Daniel Ross' home, was first located "on the Chicamaga."

There is a second reference that makes the identical point. Resolutions adopted by the Cherokee National Council at Ustanauli in April, 1804 clearly state that "exclusive of the School established at Highwassee they expect that the Superintendant will establish also school at Chickamaga which schools have the entire approbation of the nation." (Cherokee Nation, 1804)

This, then, is yet another piece of evidence to complete our picture. Daniel Ross wrote a letter inquiring about the possibility of establishing a school in October, 1803. Blackburn's school was established, according to Gambold, "on the Chicamaga," and then later relocated to the James Brown plantation. So it appears that, for perhaps as long as three years, Daniel Ross and his family were living "on the Chicamaga" with McDonald.

To reiterate: since Daniel Ross' 1802 letter to Lovely regarding the matter of the stolen horses was written from "Chickamoga," and since there apparently was a type of home school established at Ross' request for some brief period of time "on the Chicamaga," it is reasonable to argue

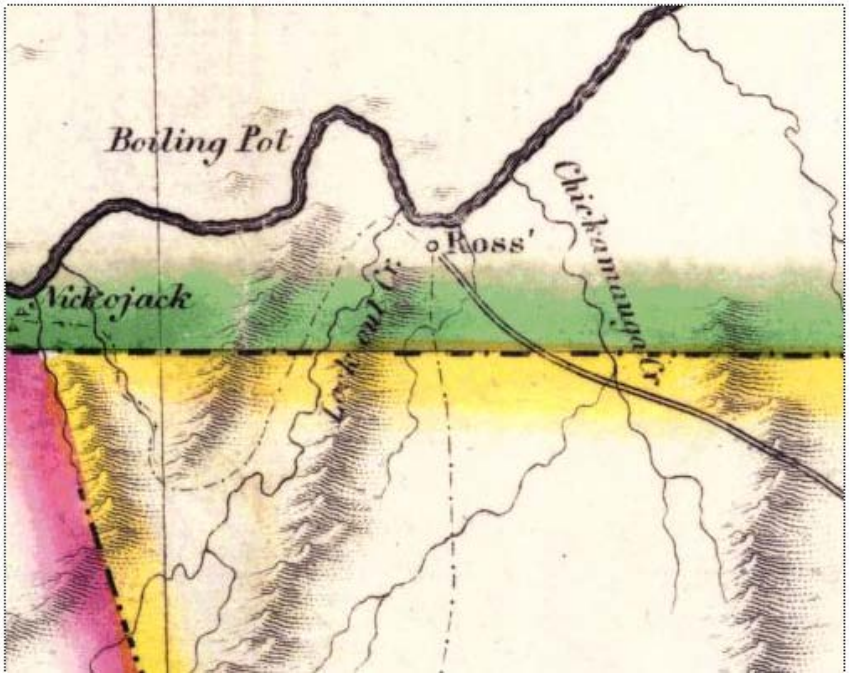
that Daniel Ross initially either lived with McDonald at his home on the Chickamauga Creek, or that they lived very close by.

It seems to me that they shared a home together during this time. It's very interesting to note, for instance, that the Moravians spoke of McDonald as having "a large family" when they visited his house on Chickamauga Creek in 1800 (Trivette, 2001), but we only know of two children of his, a boy (George) and a girl (Mollie), and they were fully grown by that date (Phillips, 1998, p. 439). This seems to imply that relatives like Ross were very likely sharing his household from 1800 until 1803.

It is important to note here, in any event, that Blackburn's school was most certainly <u>not</u> located at the John Ross House in Rossville.

Eventually John and Lewis Ross were probably sent to the school at Southwest Point (Moulton, 1985, p. 3), which is likely when the school "on the Chicamaga" was relocated to the Brown plantation, north of the Tennessee River. At about this same time, according to Allen (1936), "Daniel Ross built for his family a home at the foot of Lookout Mountain on the waters of Chattanooga Creek some three miles west of the McDonald house, a location indicated on old maps as 'Ross.'"

Ross "returned here around 1800 and settled on a knob at the foot of Lookout Mountain just beyond the present Ed Wright Chevrolet lot," Allen (1977) reported in a later article.



This is the earliest map (Melish, 1814) on which I have been able to locate the name "Ross." It clearly refers to the Daniel Ross home at the foot of Lookout Mountain, at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek.

"The Great Indian Warpath came around Lookout Mountain by Daniel Ross's place," she said. "The immediate area is very constricted. Go down there and you'll see what a close place it is.

"There's every reason why Ross would have put his development there. There was a river crossing from time immemorial just above the mouth of Chattanooga Creek."

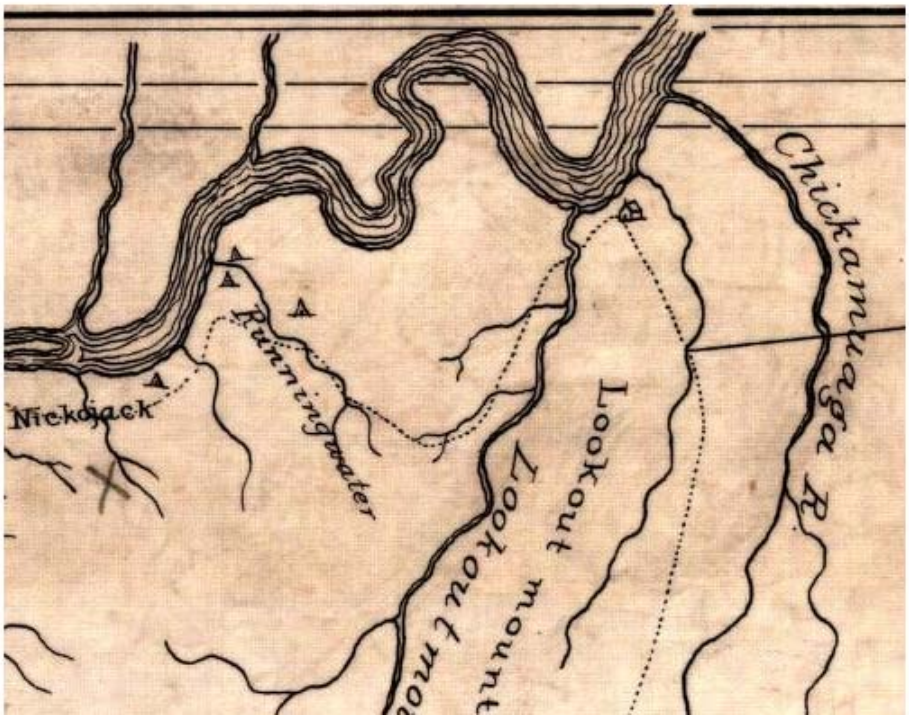
Also from Allen (1977):

> He had quite a development at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek which is mentioned in any number of contemporary letters.
>
> I've seen a letter, written about 1801, that told of representatives coming to Ross's in connection with a proposed government cantonment at the mouth of the Elk River. They met at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek at Daniel Ross's warehouse.
>
> It's well established by contemporary records that Ross's home was there and his tannery was about where Scholze Tannery is now…
>
> The Daniel Ross home was near the present W. 37th Street in St. Elmo where there is a railroad underpass after a curve in the road. Ross's spring was on the other side of the railroad tracks behind the present Calvin Donaldson School. The railroad tracks split the Daniel Ross property in two.

For the sake of clarity, it's important to keep in mind that, at this point, there are three separate locations that are being referred to: 1) The Daniel Ross house, at the foot of Lookout Mountain, at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek, on the west side of Chattanooga Valley; 2) The "John Ross House," purportedly built by McDonald, about three miles to the southeast of the Daniel Ross house, at the foot of Missionary Ridge in what is now downtown Rossville, the easternmost point of Chattanooga Valley; and 3) the John McDonald house, later the location of the Brainerd Mission, on the waters of Chickamauga Creek, about four miles northeast of the John Ross House in Rossville.

In addition to these residences, there are more Ross-related business developments that sprouted up in the ensuing years, although the dates for the establishment of each are uncertain. These include Ross Landing / Ross Wharf, Ross Warehouse, and -- somewhat later than the preceding -- Ross Ferry, all in the area that later became known as downtown Chattanooga. These will later be referred to in brief, but not in detail, as our main concern is the John Ross House proper.

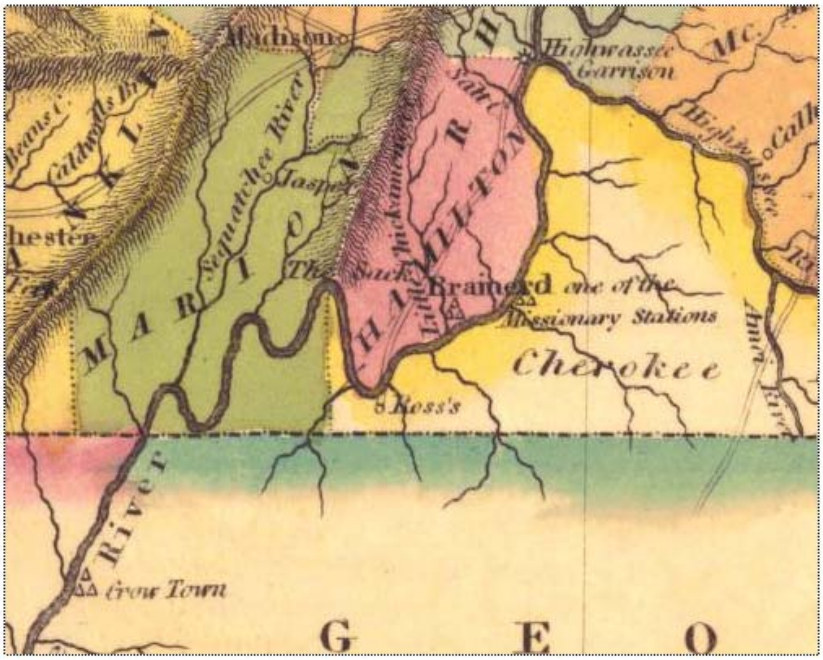
It is interesting to note that, while John Ross gets all the credit for the establishment of these business ventures, some of them may have been initiated by his father, Daniel Ross, and later taken over by the son. Even the area referred to on contemporary maps as “Ross” very likely refers to the Daniel Ross residence and his operations, and not to those of John Ross.



THE ROSS LOCATION (Melish, 1815) – It is instructive to see how consistently the location of "Ross" or "Ross's" is positioned on maps up until a certain date, when it then magically transports itself to the SE.

Pan Image Up View Image Full Size Pan Image Left Zoom In

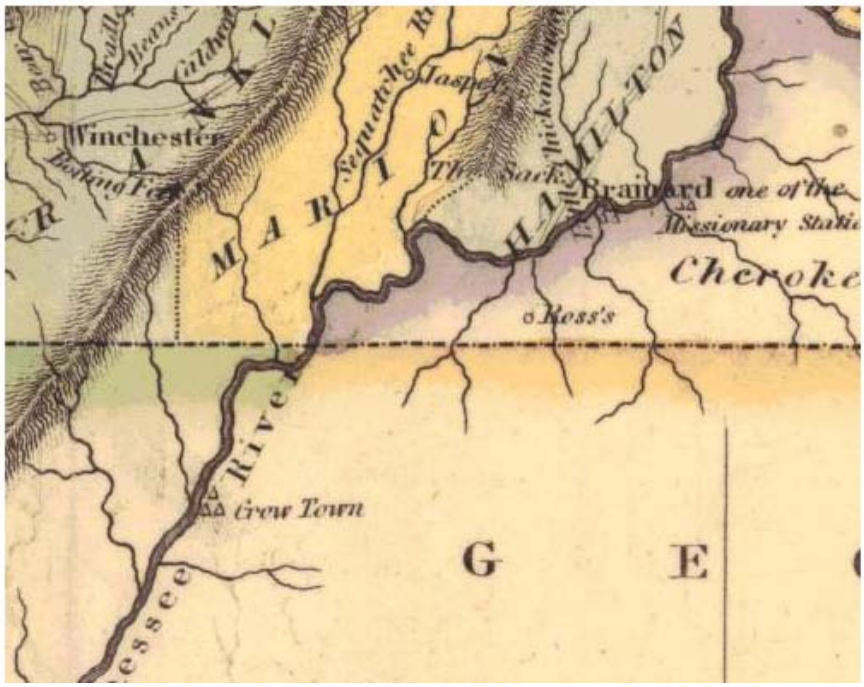
Note that "Ross" (Arrowsmith, 1817) is snuggled right up on the south bank of the Tennessee River, where Daniel Ross' home would have been.



Again, "Ross's" (Lucas, 1822) is right on the river.

1823 -- Once again, "Ross" is right on the south bank of the river (Finley, 1823).

In yet another map (Finley, 1824), Ross is on the immediate south side of the river.



In this map (Lucas, 1827), note the difference in position. Ross's has clearly moved some distance to the SE, away from the Tennessee River. This is likely representing the home of John Ross, as opposed to his father Daniel Ross, and one of the earliest representations of Rossville on a map. The position of the house in relation to the state line is a little off, however, showing the home on the north side of the line, but the state line was in flux at this time and varies from map to map. The earliest map I have been able to locate with the actual name "Rossville" is the well-known 1831 map of John Bethune, surveyor general of Georgia.

But the question remains. If the Daniel Ross and John McDonald residences are accounted for (at the foot of Lookout Mountain and on Chickamauga Creek, respectively), and if John Ross was away at school until at least 1807, then who was living in the "John Ross House" in Rossville during this time (assuming the house was in existence), and how did John Ross come into possession of the house?

There is one other important family member of the McDonald / Ross clan who thus far has received little attention, both in this paper in the history books, generally. That man is William Shorey.

McDonald met and married the sister of William Shorey while doing business in the Fort Loudon area. Both Shoreys were presumably reared by their mother, Ghigooie, a full-blooded Cherokee of the Bird Clan, following the death of their father, William Shorey, an English interpreter who died while en route to England. Being born of a Cherokee mother ensured that the Shorey children were treated and thought of as fully Cherokee by other members of the tribe (Moulton, 1978, pp. 2-3; Timberlake, 2001, p. 129)

Shorey is a much more shadowy figure than McDonald. He appears to have been McDonald's staunch ally and "right hand man," but is only referred to irregularly. We know that he was a leader of the cavalry during the Chickamauga war and that he signed some Cherokee treaties under his Cherokee name, Eskaculiskee, which means he was highly regarded by his fellow Cherokee. In fact, he may not have spoken English at all.

It is interesting to note that during the Moravian visit in late 1800, the brethren visited two homes. They first came to the home of McDonald, on Chickamauga Creek, and then, "Not far from McDonald's we came to the house of Will Story. Here we were received very friendly. We had to eat again and our horses were fed likewise."

It occurred to me early on in the course of performing this research that this may have been the first historical reference to what later became known as the John Ross House, or a portion of the house.

It makes sense that Shorey would have lived half-way between the home of his sister and brother-in-law, the McDonalds (just a few miles to the east), and the home of his niece and her children, the Rosses (just a few miles to the west). (A nephew, George McDonald, a probable son of John McDonald, also lived in the neighborhood, and the Taylors, also relatives of Shorey, were also a short distance to the east.)

Shorey himself had three known children, but only one was grown at the time of his death in 1809. Shorey left a will, dictated, interestingly enough, to John Ross. This will, one could argue, would become the basis for Ross' future business fortunes.

Moulton (1978, pp. 3-4) outlines the controversy this will caused in his biography of Ross:

> The younger William Shorey died in 1809 and left a verbal will that caused a controversy between his sister Anne and his oldest daughter Elizabeth. Shortly after Shorey's death, McDonald produced a document purported to be a will given orally to Shorey's grandnephew, John Ross, McDonald's grandson. In substance Shorey left the larger share of his estate to his sister Anne. Two Negro slaves were left to Anne and were to pass to John Ross at his grandmother's death. Shorey instructed Anne to care for his two younger daughters, Lydia and Alcy or Alice, to whom Shorey bequeathed other slaves. To his daughter Elizabeth, who had married a leading figure in Cherokee affairs, John Lowrey, he left some livestock valued at three hundred dollars. Ross inherited "a part of an island which is the first below Tellico B[lock] house." The island was the first of the extensive landholdings Ross eventually would acquire in Tennessee and Georgia.
>
> Elizabeth Lowrey was not ready to accept this verbal will. She resisted even to the point of detaining her two sisters who were to be cared for by Anne. Elizabeth insisted that her father had never mentioned any of the desires purported to be in this will. She thought that Ross probably had obtained the will when her father was drunk, that he would never have made such promises sober. Moreover, Elizabeth emphasized that Shorey's second wife [whose name is unknown] did not accept the will. McDonald felt that Elizabeth wanted to keep the girls only in order to get more property, and he also noted that the "wife" had left Sborey many years earlier. Eventually orders from Cherokee Chief Pathkiller and the United States agent to the Cherokees settled the matter; the decision went largely in favor of Anne McDonald.

So, in summary, if the "decision went largely in favor of Anne McDonald," then that meant that she inherited the majority of Shorey's holdings, which presumably would have included his residence, since his wife had left him some years previous and no one else other than perhaps his young daughters would have been living there at the time. (It occurred to me that it was possible that Ross was already living there with Shorey, since he was the one to whom the will was dictated. Other possibilities would have been that Shorey selected Ross because Ross could read and write, or he may not have dictated such a will at all, and Ross may have drawn it up at the request of the McDonalds after Shorey's death. No one can say with any certainty.)

Ross had just graduated from school and would have been in need of a residence at just this time. If Anne inherited the residence, it makes sense that she would have allowed her grandson to live there, most especially if he had already been living there with Shorey. Again, this is conjecture, but it seemed to me that Ross wound up living at the house almost certainly by 1817, since Ross letters with a heading of "Poplar Spring" and "Rossville" begin popping up at that time.

A little time should here be devoted to the Cherokee idea of defining families by matrilineal descent, for it will help to illuminate why Shorey would have wanted his will drawn up in such a way. This native

way of defining family linkages proved very difficult for Americans of European descent to decipher, as shown in the writings of the Moravians (Trivette, 2001), who appeared exasperated and at a complete loss to figure it out:

> . . . … father, step-father, father's brother, mother's brother and more than one degree of close relationship are called "Father", and all the female relatives are called "Mother", and similarly the relatives of the grand-parents are all called grand-father and grand-mother. Thus we have already learned to know two fathers and three or four mothers of our Johnny, and it is only with very great difficulty that we can find our which among all these are really his actual parents, and still I do not want to answer for the correctness of the information; for since it happens not infrequently that the child of a repudiated or an abandoned wife is taken and reared by close or distant relatives as their child, there are cases when an Indian himself does not know whom he has to thank for his existence.

In traditional societies, of course, there are no DNA tests for paternity. In these same traditional societies, the men spent much of the year on extended hunting expeditions with other men while the women stayed at home and dealt with rearing the children and planting and harvesting the crops. While the punishment for adultery could be quite severe, it would also be fair to say that women in these traditional societies often experienced a great deal of sexual freedom and opportunities for liaisons outside of the marriage. In Cherokee society, marriage was a very loose institution, in any case, as the women could “divorce” a man by simply putting his belongings outside the door of the house (Perdue, 1998; Reid, 2006).

From simply a genetic standpoint, then, it made a certain amount of sense for men to be invested in the children of the sister, for the simple reason that the man would know with certainty that the children of his sister would be genetically related to him, whereas he could never be entirely certain if the children of his wife (or wives) were his.

Southeastern Native American societies, including the Cherokee, were clan-based and matrilineal. Simply put, if a mother was a member of the Bird Clan (as was Ghigooie), then her children were also members of the Bird Clan. It did not matter if the mother only had 1/8th Cherokee blood and the father was 100 percent white. The Cherokees did not figure clan membership (or tribal membership) by blood quantum. Strange as it may seem to us, one could have almost no Cherokee blood, but still be considered 100 percent Cherokee, on the one hand, so long as the mother belonged to a clan by matrilineal rights; on the other hand, if a father were 100 percent Cherokee, a clan member, and he were to marry a half-Cherokee wife (by blood), but the woman had the misfortune of having a white mother, the mother and therefore her children would be clanless and therefore not really Cherokee, even though, by our modern measures, they

would most certainly qualify by their three-fourths blood quantum (Perdue, 1998; Reid, 2006).

Again, simply put: the father was irrelevant when it came to clan membership of the children. This is why John Ross, though only one-eighth Cherokee by blood, barely able to speak the Cherokee language, could assume the chieftancy as a full-fledged Cherokee without any question.

The bond between uncles and their nephews was a strong one in matrilineal societies like that of the Cherokee. The mother's brothers, not the father, were the role models for the young aspiring warrior. These were the warriors of one's clan. Grandmother's brother would be the "beloved old man" of the clan. And when something was to be passed down -- an inheritance -- it would be passed down from uncle to nephew, not from father to son. Most certainly this is how the power was transferred in the Southeastern chiefdoms visited by DeSoto in 1540 (Perdue, 1998; Reid, 2006; Smith, 2000).

Though William Shorey had an English name and an English father, his father died while he was still young and he and his sister were brought up as fully Cherokee by a full-blooded Cherokee woman. (In fact, the Shorey children both apparently spoke little to no English [Sparks, 1993, p. 108].) So far as is known, Ghigooie had only the two children. Therefore, after the passing of Ghigooie, Anna Shorey McDonald would have been the head of the family unit of the clan, for kinship purposes (One should not be misled into thinking that the woman, however old, would have been considered a "chief," however. Just because a society is matrilineal does not mean that the women are the political rulers, although this was sometimes the case in some Southeastern tribes. In any case, Cherokee chiefs traditionally had very limited real power or authority and women had a great deal of autonomy and authority within the household.) (Perdue, 1998; Reid, 2006)

So far as is known, the McDonalds had only the one daughter, Mollie, who married Daniel Ross. (Their children of their son, George, would have been of their mother's clan.) Shorey, by traditional Cherokee familial reckoning, would have filled the uncle role, even though he was technically a great uncle. (And George McDonald may also have filled that role for Ross, as well.)

From a traditional Cherokee perspective, then, the Shorey will makes perfect sense. The one to inherit Shorey's belongings would have in fact been Anne McDonald, not his own daughters, who belonged to the clan of the mother(s). And Shorey also would have wanted to ensure that the Ross children were well taken care of, because these, according to Cherokee tradition, were his charges (one might note that in the Daniel Ross letter reproduced above that it is Shorey who is to settle the matter of the stolen horses.)

All of this goes to show how John Ross could easily have inherited the Shorey house along with other property and improvements, either directly from Shorey or by the consent and wishes of his grandmother.

John Ross likely graduated from his home studies to attend the Blackburn school at Kingston (Southwest Point), where he and his brother Lewis also clerked for a time and became friends (and apparently later became business partners) with Timothy Meigs, son of Return J. Meigs, the Indian Agent (Moulton, 1978, pp. 7-8). Ross himself said, "I never have left the limits of the Cherokee nation, excepting when sent to school as a boy, and engaged in business in early youth and manhood, first in the situation of clerk to a merchant, and afterwards on my own account" (Moulton, 1985, p. 452). The Ross brothers were in Kingston as late as 1807, possibly later, up to the point of their mother's death in 1808. (Although I have located no school records for John Ross, in his collected papers there are three receipts signed by John Ross dated May 3, 1807 and June 27, 1808, proving that he was in Kingston at the time and working as a clerk with the trading firm of Neilson, King and Smith [Moulton, 1985, p. 15])

While many stories say that Ross, overcome with grief over his mother's untimely death, never returned to school and instead went to live with his grandparents, two points need to be made. The first point would be that Ross in 1808 would have been 18 years old, old enough to have successfully graduated from the school. The second point would be that in 1809 Blackburn became embroiled in an alcohol-related smuggling controversy that severely undermined his credibility within the Nation, basically leading to the undoing of the school (Trivette, 2001).

We can track Ross' post-school residency somewhat loosely by following the headers of his correspondence, as collected in the John Ross Papers by Moulton (1985).

As previously mentioned, we do know that in 1809 John Ross helped his great-uncle, William Shorey, craft a will. So perhaps we can safely assume that Ross was living in the general Chattanooga Valley / Chickamauga Creek area during 1809. The years 1810 and 1811 I have thus far been unable to sufficiently document. Perhaps he was helping his father and his grandparents with their farms and businesses during this three-year period, but there is no way to say with any certainty unless new evidence emerges.

Ross writes letters to Return J. Meigs from an excursion on the Arkansas River as Meigs' emissary in late 1812 and at the beginning of 1813 to establish contact with early Cherokee immigrants to the West. Ross had hoped to become a factor in the area. (Moulton, 1985, pp. 16-18; Moulton, 1978, p. 9) Timothy Meigs was involved as well, being paid $832 to furnish goods for the expedition. (Meigs, 1812). The trip was not as profitable as Ross had hoped, but it did lead to Ross becoming employed as a kind of spy for Return J. Meigs as soon as he became aware of growing divisions between the Upper and Lower Creeks, which would

eventually lead to the Creek War. (Moulton, 1978, p. 10; Moulton, 1985, pp. 17-20).

It was Return J. Meigs, based on communications from Ross and others, who would strongly urge the governors of Georgia and Tennessee and the U.S. Secretary of War to arm the Cherokees and prepare for a fight. There was "no time to hesitate," Meigs (1813) said, as "the frontiers were menaced with a formidable savage force," and "the service of the Cherokees would be of great value."

He continues:

> I never have had an idea that they will be considered as allies having always rejected an idea of their sovereignty, for there is no way to save them or to make them of use to the Government : <u>but to keep them dependent</u> -- They cannot stand alone and by paying them for their service they will feel themselves under control: besides it will flatter their pride to be considered in some degree on a footing with our troops. If the war should be protracted they may be made of great service, especially in combatting Indians.

John Ross returned to "Chickamoga" by the summer of 1813 (Moulton, 1986, p. 19), according to his own correspondence, and apparently soon afterward he and Timothy Meigs formed a business together, in late 1813, which was called, appropriately enough, "Meigs & Ross." This may mark the beginning of the entrepreneurial phase of Ross' career. This partnership, which may have lasted until Meigs' untimely death in Nov., 1815, "brought lucrative government contracts to the firm during the Creek War of 1813-14 when blankets, corn, and other supplies were needed for Cherokee warriors," asserts Moulton (1978, p. 8). There are conflicting accounts concerning whether this supposed two-year business venture was based out of Hiwassee Garrison at Southwest Point (Kingston, TN) or out of what later became Ross' Landing and Chattanooga. Moulton is silent on this issue, which is unfortunate, because we have so few writings and letters from Ross during this period of his life to help us establish his place of residency. But it would seem to me, from the scant evidence I've seen thus far, that these war supplies were sent by Meigs from the Hiwassee Garrison, floated down the Tennessee River, and then perhaps landed at what would later become Ross' Landing (Chattanooga), or, maybe likelier, closer to the mouth of Chattanooga Creek, near the Daniel Ross home, to be received by either John Ross or Daniel Ross and distributed to the troops. Thus it likely was the necessity of providing for a war, combined with the contacts the younger Ross had cultivated with a family in a position of power during his stay as a student and clerk at Southwest Point, that may account for a precursor of Ross' Landing, sometime between late 1813 and early 1814. More research on this point is needed.

In the meantime, it may be helpful to briefly examine some of the evidence at hand. One of the camps for the troops during the Creek War

was "Camp Ross." It is often assumed that this camp was at the home of John Ross (even by those organizing the collections at the Tennessee State Library and Archives [See header for Morgan, 1814]), but careful reading of the period correspondence (see the East Tennessee Historical Society's "Publications" of 1989, pgs. 100-101] makes it clear that the camp was on the Tennessee River, at Lookout Mountain, at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek, which was the location of the Daniel Ross home, not the John Ross home. The camp was initiated in October, 1813 and apparently still had stores of corn until the summer of 1815. A letter from Col. Gideon Morgan (1814) dated Feb. 11, 1814, illustrates how the close relationship -- established by the Meigs family on the sending end at Hiwassee Garrison and the Ross family on the receiving end in the vicinity of modern-day Chattanooga -- could prove beneficial to the troops and the war effort and profitable to both parties, sender and receiver:

> Rosses Lookout Mountain Feby 11th 1814
> Dear Sir
>
> I Left Fort Armstrong under an intention of proceding up as far as Highwassee but my horse from hard Riding and being entirely destitute of forage has become extremely weak and unable to bear the Ride
> Mr. Skelerin has business in that Quarter by whoom I now write.
> The Cherokees are nearly destitute of warm cloathing. My object is to provide them with Some Blankets which I Suppose Could be procured from your Son Should he feel disposed to furnish them the Cherokees will either pay him out of their wages or next anuity or in any other way which you may think propper to devise two Hundred 3 point Blankets would I Believe answer to furnish the Most Needy which if procured I wish Sent down by water immediately. we march from this place the 17th and Rendesvous at Ft Armstrong the 20th and form a Junction with Jackson the 25th. Should the Blankets not arive [arrive] by the 17th they will be useless to the Cherokees
>
> I am with Centiments of unabated Esteem Your obt
> G Morgan Colo Cherokee forces]
>
> Col R. J. Meigs
> Col. Morgan's letter 11th February 1814
> 200 Blankets to be Sent to Ross's place for Cherokee Warriors
>
> Colo. Return J. Meigs
> Highwassee Gr.
>
> Capt Skelerin

Charles Hicks (1814), a rising star among the Cherokee and an interpreter for Chief Pathkiller, sent a letter to Meigs on May 6, 1814, asking for help in procuring corn from Ross' stores, but it is unclear

whether he is referring to those of Daniel Ross or John Ross, since he never mentions the first name:

> I … enclose you five] due bills for corn, which I need for corn in the last boat load you had sent down and I told Mr Ross to left all the corn due bills that might be brought in and but I have received no answer to my letter which I had wrote to him the first of this month. I had received few lines from him before mine, that he borrowed some more corn from the quarter master. to releive Some of the most needy. and: … in consequence of these loans, I have received a letter from Majr Baxter D Q Master informing me that he lent the corn to Mr Ross and desires me to inform you that he wished it might be replaced again, and he self would have wrote up to you, but being in hurry in preparing to … to Huntsville, to meet Genl. Jackson-
>
> There is a general cry for corn in the uper [or rather middle] parts of the nation that if you could send down fifteen Hundred bushells of corn, it would relieve great many Distressed people as the waring par[tys have] in going and returning through Hightower fork Sellicoah and Oostanaleh has reduced their scanty stocks of provisions, and it was on this amount the ridge informed me that Chuleoa, and the sour mush wished to …, as I did not meet them at the ridges house as I expected, if this corn could be got, can be sent down to Mr Ross -- and Mr. Henderson & McGhee was proposing to let you have three hundred berrels of meal for the use of the Cherokees but if corn can be had, is much preferable then meal [deleted: it] and please to let me know on this subject.
>
> when I was at camp Ross the flute complained that he did not get the quatity of corn of the man who let him have it as was contained in the order you had given him, and he brought up Mr Thompson to substantiate this deficiency of corn, and Mr Thompson says he was present when the corn was measured which was brought by the flute. and that there was only a Hundred and twenty two bushells Scant measure --
>
> Mr Thompson informs me that he got one of his creatures which he had lost near fort armstrong- which creature is entered in my reports of the stocks destroyed by the army -- this creature was got at South west pointby the big Ratling goard-
>
> At the time when I was at camp Ross the old Broom came and complained that the waggoners who had brought his things to Joseph Coodys) he has moved to that place, had robed him of his duebills for corn which was in a trunk and wraped in a shawl Hand … Majr Baxter was informed of this circumstance and search and examiniation was made out … and the blame was laid to the brooms negroe fellow but if the fellow is guilty it will be found out but I suspect this act was commited by other waggoners in company because there was great many beads of Different sorts in the trunk which the did not take. and their bills contains about forty Dollars and signed, I suppose some by waggon master and perhaps Merideth has signed some of them please to have the payment of Stoped at the office where such bills are to be discharged-

So Camp Ross and the Meigs-Ross associations may have planted the seed for what later blossomed into Ross' Landing, although the physical location may have more likely been not at what is now Market Street but rather at or near the home of Daniel Ross, at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek, since that is where both the troops and the "receivers" were located, after all.

At about the same time, the site or town of "Ross'" appears on a map by John Melish (1814). This is the earliest map of the region I've been able to locate with "Ross" included as a placename, and it was apparently drafted as a direct result of the military expeditions involved in the Creek War. This map location appears quite clearly to refer to the Daniel Ross home location (serving then as "Camp Ross") rather than "The Ross House" in Rossville, however.

If the John Ross House were the flourishing trade post that it is often made out to be in the various undocumented tales, it almost certainly would have made it onto the 1814 Melish map. Instead, it is the Daniel Ross home that is depicted.

At this stage in his young life, Ross still did not have his feet firmly planted, but he was getting there. As previously stated, by the summer of 1813 Ross' place of residency was "Chickamoga." (Moulton, 1985, p. 19) He also married Elizabeth Brown "Quatie" Henley, "probably between April and October," says Moulton (1978, p. 12). She was probably the sister of James Brown, who had continued the school initiated by Daniel Ross years earlier (Moulton, 1978, p. 12).

It is possible that Ross and Quatie were either living with the McDonalds on Chickamauga Creek at this time or with widowed father Daniel Ross at the foot of Lookout Mountain, but the header of "Chickamoga" tends to sway one to believe that they were in fact living with the McDonalds. When Ross writes to Indian Agent Return J. Meigs, informing him of his return from a "tour to the Creek Path," in Alabama, and of the beginning of the Creek Rebellion, at the close of the letter Ross mentions that his grandfather, McDonald, and his father "presents their respects to you & will be very thankful if you will send a few late newspapers by the bearer."

Ross joined the military in Oct. 1813 as a second lieutenant in Col. Gideon Morgan's mounted cavalry. But on Mar. 2, 1814, Ross again wrote a letter from "Chickamoga" (Moulton, 1985, p. 19). This was written just as he was preparing to "take revenge for the blood of the innocent" and take part in the battle of Horseshoe Bend, under Gen. Andrew Jackson, who would later rise to the presidency and become one of the prime proponents for Indian Removal to the West. Ross again, at the close of the letter, asks Meigs "a very singular favor" and requests "A few late N Papers" for "the old Gentleman," his grandfather, McDonald. Interestingly, though, he *does not mention his father* this time, again giving additional weight to the proposition that he was living with the McDonalds. (It also tends to make me believe that McDonald was out of

the business of being a trader and that Ross was not yet fully engaged in the business, as newspapers would probably not have been difficult to come by for those constantly engaged in the business of trade.)

One could speculate that Ross would have a preference for the home of his grandfather because he likely lived there as a boy, prior to going away to school, from roughly 1800 to 1803. The two were obviously quite close.

Ross left the Lookout Mountain and Chickamauga Creek area for a short time to serve with other Cherokees in Alabama under Chief Pathkiller and Gen. Jackson against Red Stick Creeks in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. His military career proved short-lived. Two weeks after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Ross mustered out of service. As Moulton (1978, p. 12) suggests:

> Perhaps he contemplated the obvious lessons: no Indian tribe could withstand the superior of the United States, and the result of armed resistance was annihilation.

The partnership of Meigs and Ross, such as it was, came to an abrupt end with the sudden death on Oct. 16, 1815, of Timothy Meigs, age 33 (see *http://www.meigs.org/timothy197.htm*.) During the intervening years the Meigs and Ross families had apparently grown quite close, with Meigs' wife performing babysitting duties for Daniel Ross from time to time (Moulton, 1978, p. 8) Return Meigs consoled himself with the knowledge that Timothy "had as many friends and mourners as any man of his age ever had in such a country thinly settled."

At the same time, Meigs was dealing with a series of problems in Cherokee-United States relations that required face-to-face meetings in Washington. Young Ross was tapped to accompany Meigs and the delegation of high-ranking, older Cherokee headmen because of his fluency in English, which the other delegates – including Major Ridge, Richard Taylor, and John Lowrey -- sorely lacked (Moulton, 1978, p. 15). It proved to be a key factor, making Ross' first foray into politics, in early 1816, a successful one. (Meigs undoubtedly also hoped that his close personal relationship with the Ross family – coupled with Ross' youth and naivete -- would pay off when it came time to negotiate for land cessions, which were brought up at the meeting, but without the hoped-for success.)

This marked the beginning of Ross' political career.

By Nov. 25, 1816, John Ross was back in the Lookout Mountain area and his place of residence appears in a letter from Rev. Kingsbury (Walker, 1993, p. 24) to Dr. Samuel Worcester, who is giving out traveling advice:

> They will take the main road from Georgia to West Tennessee and proceed on to Mr. John Ross's near Lookout Mountain, on the Tennessee River. Mr. John Gambold, the Moravian missionary, who lives at Springplace, Georgia, thirty miles before they come to Ross's would be exceedingly glad to entertain them.

This reference does seem to single out a house lying directly on the Old Federal Road. It's also the earliest reference I've come across that specifically refers to a home explicitly owned by John Ross.

I think it is possible, and actually very likely, that Kingsbury is referencing what we now know as the John Ross House (perhaps on the site of the old Shorey home), now newly occupied by Ross to house his emerging family (his first child, James McDonald Ross, was born in 1814).

There's no way to be certain, but this could be the first historical reference to the John Ross House as we know it today.

By this time, apparently, the Ross capitalist ventures were starting to sprout. As a precursor, Daniel Ross had already established some business operations near his residence at Chattanooga Creek prior to the John Ross business ventures at or near the current Market Street location in what is now downtown Chattanooga. As Allen (1977) stated, the elder Ross had "quite a development" at the mouth of Chattanooga Creek, including a tannery and warehouse.

To be more explicit and precise, here are the extensive Daniel Ross holdings as recorded in an 1833 valuation (Currey, 1834), at that time owned by Daniel Ross' son-in-law, Joseph Coody:

Decr. 16th. 1833. No. 64
Joseph Coodys Impt. at the foot of the Look Mountain[added: on Tenesee RiverTenesee State]

1 Fram'd Dwelling house 38 feet by 18 One & half story high, stone chimney, good upper and under floors, four doors, with good shutters, six windows, sashes & glass, Cellar under the Hawl room, seald under the Joists in the shed; piazzer. South side of the building, shed on the North side, both included in the 38 feet, Hall & shed room neatly seald and weatherboarded; Stairs & stair case on the west end, out side [of the house]	500.00
1 Other large hew'd log dwelling house 36 by 18 hew'd logs partition a cross, story and a half high, rafterd, board roof, [deleted: large] 2 large chimneys well lind with rocks backs, Jams & hearths of rocks, good upper & under floors stairs & stair case, closet under the stairs, six doors, & door shutters, 1 window below and two above, sash &c worth --	250.00

No. 65

1 Double [house] viz, Negrow house & loom house all under the same roof, fine stone chimny in the centre between; two fire	120.00

places, good hew'd logs, worth	
1 Kitchen 18 by 18 hewd logs board roof &c	30.00
1 smoke house 16 by 16 hewd logs board roof &c	18.00
1 Hen house 12 by 12 round logs board roof	12.00
1 line of stables 50 by 18 hewd log board roof	45.00
1 Do. [Ditto] 16 by 16 round logs board roof &c	16.00
1 old Do. 20 by 18 Do. Do. Do.	15.00
1 corn crib 9 by 18 $15.00 1 Do. Do. both round logs $15.	30.00
1 Do. Do. old $15.00 Negro cabbin 16 by 16 board roof [$20.00]	35.00
1 Black smith shop hew'd logs 20 by 18 20.00 …	25.00
1 Yard Lot, horse lot, hog lot, spring lot, Turnip [patch lot, $6.00 each]	30.00
1 lane Lot $8.00 Garden Lot 1 Acre 1/2 stock [unclear: cuided] half Raild & naild Garden in the best order	58.00
74 large apple trees @ 4 pr tree $296.00 --	296.00
122 second size @ $1.50 $183.00 --	183.00
59 common peach tree @ 50 cents each	29.50
70 acres of good up land @ 5 dlrs pr a	350.00
5 acres orchard field @ 3.50 $17.50	17.50
7 Do. Do. at 4 $28.00	28.00
16 acres of Teneseebottom @ 8	128.00

No. 65
One Tan Yard Establishment for the same viz

16 vatts @ $.50 $136.00 One Stone table [8 by 4 feet 4 inches.] thick 20	156.00
1 Rock for grinding bark $15.00 --	15.00
	$2414.25
16th Decr 1833. Joseph Coodys valuation continued	Brought over 2414.25]
1 fram'd shed covering the grind[ing] wheel &c	20.00

1 [unclear: Barke] shed $20.00 30 cords of [unclear: loose] bark @ 2.00 [$60.00]	80.00
1 House for currying and dressing leather 30 by 20 hew'd oak logs chimney & shed}	80.00
1 shed over the vatts $3.00 troughs conveying the [water 400 yards $20.00]	23.00
1 acre Lot round the Tan Yard	5.00

No. 67
1 Tub mill Establishment

Stones 3 feet 5 inches of a good quality best Irons timbers of the frame large & strong, durable dam, Mill house 20 by 25 situated in part on a stone wall in good order at present worth	$350.00

No. 68

1 Dwelling house where the Millar lives 20 by 18 shed in front board roof comn chimy.	25.00
1 smoke house 10 by 10 shed extending from the smoke house to the dwelling house worth	10.00
1 Stable 18 by 18 $16.00 Corn crib 16 by 8 $8.00	24.00
1 new smoke house 14 by 12 -- --	12.00
1 Lot $5.00 10 acres of good creek bottom @ [$80.00]	85.00
	$3128.25

As he struck out on his own, John Ross would have a hard act to follow (In fact, the valuations prove that he never even came close -- at least while he was in Rossville -- of amassing wealth in like amounts to that of his father, although his assets would later far exceed his father's once he became established in what later became Rome).

And he wasn't quite on his own, either. His brother, Lewis Ross, joined him as his business partner in 1816, which may have been right at the very inception of Ross' Landing.

Eaton claims that in the "autumn of 1816" Ross traveled to "New York to buy goods" for the new store. "With a supply of deerskins and furs for traffic, he went by way of Savannah to New York and Baltimore, where he bought the stock of shawls, calicoes, implements, and such other

articles as were in demand among the Cherokees at this time." (Eaton, 1921, p. 24).

We have an interesting snapshot of the state of the Cherokee Nation at right about this time in the form of notes written by Return J. Meigs (1817). This series of answers to inquiries made in 1817 can help to provide some context for the world in which John Ross was living at the time of first establishing himself as a mature adult, father, and businessman:

> Answers to enquiries relating to the Cherokees.
>
> Qu [Question]: What is the number of the Cherokees?
> An [Answer]: The whole number of the Cherokeesis by estimation 13,000.
> Qu: In what part of the United Statesare they situated?
> An: Principally within the Chartered limits of Georgia& Tennessee but recently imigrations have been made to Arkansas river. The number of these emigrants is estimated at about 3000.
> Qu: What is the state of the Cherokees with respect to property?
> An: They have great numbers of Domestic annimals, a considerable number of Negro slaves, a number of good plantations, a number of Grist mills, some sawmills, & they manufacture Salt Petre & Gun powder by the aid of white men.
> Qu: What is their State as [to] acquired information?
> An: A considerable number [have] the knowledge of letters & figures ... but schools are greatly needed for the poor children.
> Qu: What is their present state & future prospect with respect to education?
> An: There is at present two public schools, some private schools, and a prospect of more public or free schools by respectable societies from Massachusets & Kentucky.
> Qu: What number of children at proper age for instruction?
> An: Not less than 1200 or 1500 between six and fourteen years of age, at a moderate calculation, but they are scattered over a great tract of Country.
> Qu: What is the state of the Cherokees with respect to religious knowledge?
> An: They have as a people no acquired knowledge of religion. Their Green corn dance, so called, is undoubtedly of religious origin, it is only an annual meeting & may be justly termed a Feast of the first fruits.
> Qu: Do the Cherokees believe in the being of a God?
> An: Yes universally.
> Qu: What conceptions have they of his attributes?
> An: That [added: his] power, & his goodness are infinite, that he approves or disapproves of our conduct here.
> Qu: Do they believe in a future state of existence?

An: Yes & that [it] will be terrestial enjoyment. For want of instruction they cannot elevate their minds above materiality they have no apprehensions of future unhappiness.

Qu: What are their most prominent traits of character?

An: Hospitality and kindness (and without ostentation) to the whole human race except in instances where they concieve that they are grossly injured.

Qu: How do gross injuries affect them?

An: They think it not only right; but necessary & very honorable to retaliate & take ample revenge.

Qu: Is their resentment implacable, unforgiving and inexorable?

An: No. On receiving satisfaction they make peace and reieve the Children of their enemy into their bosoms, accept them by the force of immagination as their own, to fill the place of those killed by the same enemy.

Qu: Do they then love their enemies?

An: No, not as enemies; it is not a sentiment of nature, and revelation has not reached […their minds] or hearts.

Qu: Are they willing to receive instruction?

An: Yes, but lessons must be short.

Qu: What is the greatest obstacle to [their] improvement?

An: [a dislike of all] Restraint, [close] application is abhorrent to their minds.

Qu: Can that obstacle be removed?

An: Yes. By waiting, by patience [&] ingenuity [in] the teachers. line [must be] upon line, here a little, and there a little. They cannot be hurried, [if they are hurried] it will disconcert them, and all will be lost. care must be taken not make the lessons tedious they cannot at present bear long, close application if that is attempted all will be lost.

Qu: What are the principal pursuits [of the] Cherokees for subsistence?

An: Hunting is the favorite pursuit where there is game. where it is scarce, the men are Herdsmen & cultivators.

Qu: What are the pursuits of the females?

An: Raising Cotton, Indigo, spinning, dyeing yard & weaving & taking care of family household affairs.

Qu: In what estimation are the women held by the males?

An: Since the introduction of domestic manufactures the females are held in higher estimation by the men. They are emerging from a partial kind of slavery with their proper place in society. They are more esteemed by the males, & as esteem & love are concomitant between the sexes, love is becoming a sentimental passion never known in a perfect savage state.

Qu: Have the Cherokees strong prejudices against whites?

An: No they hold all good men in high esteem - respect.

Qu: Are there [any] intermarriages between the Cherokees and the whites?

An: Yes. A great number & they are increasing; nearly half the Cherokee nation are the offspring of such int[er] marriages.

> Qu: Is there any apparent improvement in such offspring, [An] either in body or mind?
>
> Ansr. In size only. nothing in symetry of form or in mental powers. The form of the aborigine is the most perfect, there Head-shoulders, Chest hands & feet, are with few exception the most perfect.
>
> Qu: Is there any apparent difference [added: in the] temper and disposition or in the intellectual faculties between the aborigines & the offspring of [unclear: their] intermarriages?
>
> An: There is a marked difference [in] their manner & deportment between them. the offspring [of their intermarriages] are more volatile, have more levity, more cunning, less thought, less solidity, less dignity of deportment. There is no ostentation, no affection … in the male and no affectation or coquetry in the female of the aborgine -nature has been bountiful both to the exterior & to the mind and soul of the aborigines. They are undoubtedly susceptible of the finest improvement & in [all the] moral qualities decidedly have the advantage …
>
> Qu: Have the Cherokees any knowledge of the Constellations of the Zodiac? or names for any of the starrs?
>
> Answer. They have. The Ursa Major they call the [Auneelqonah] [the Great Bear] & have observed its movement round the Pole. The Pleiades. they call the little Boys. The evening starr they [call] the Torch from its superior Brightness.
>
> Qu: How do they reckon time?
>
> An: For the year they count the moons; but making only 12 by throwing away the … Days The calculate … their own age by winters.

Although I think 1816 is a solid, informed guess, according to an article that appeared in the *Chattanooga Times* on Nov. 24, 1929, "no man can point to the name and year when the landing began to be so called." The same article also states that "Ross landing, Ross wharf, Ross warehouse and Ross store were interchangeable terms for the place now known as Chattanooga. Ross ferry was established a little later…"

Apparently the developments weren't that impressive, however, according to eyewitness accounts (Featherstonhaugh, 1970, p. 210):

> About ten miles from the Suck, we came to the Look-out Mountain, a noble pile of stratified limestone with a huge hump of sandstone at the top. I should have been glad to land here, but the men had become rather impatient at my frequent stoppages, and upon my inquiring whether it was possible to find a path of any sort up the mountain near to the river, told me there was nothing of the kind, that they wanted to get back, and that I could find somebody at Ross' landing to serve me as a guide. …
>
> After some time, they ran the canoe ashore at a beach where there was no appearance of a settlement, and told me that it was Ross' Landing. I was somewhat dismayed at first at the prospect of being abandoned on a lone beach…

Two "old timers," Larkin Poe and Meredith Wolfe related to Walter Cline (Campbell, 1929) sometime in the 1920s that they

remembered coming to Ross' Landing as young boys, in the 1840s (which was, of course, following the Removal):

> Mr. Poe … stated that he came, in company of others, to Chattanooga with ox-drawn wagon loads of potatoes, when he was a mere lad of a boy. The potatoes were sold or traded to stores on the river bank which were near a spring. …
>
> Mr. Poe said that his party had a habit of camping on the higher ground near the current Elizabeth apartments, then a section of forest.
>
> Mr. Wolfe's memory was in substantial accord with that of Mr. Poe…

The Ross Ferry also was apparently less than first-class (Walker, 1993, pp. 194-195):

> We had not proceeded far, the next day, before the rain began to fall in great abundance. We reached the Tennessee River, which was not known to have been so high during many years. For the last few miles, we had pursued an unfrequented way, as the waters were said to be less dangerous than on the common road. This led us to Ross's Ferry, rather than Brown's Ferry. We had come nearly thirty miles, had seen but three habitations, and but one traveller. He begged a piece of rope to repair his harness, which had been cut that he might extricate himself and his horse from a stream into which he had ventured, not knowing the depth, and, losing his possessions, had narrowly escaped with his life. The boat at Ross's Ferry was old and dangerous. Our way to the shore lay through the tops of trees, and the ferryman thought our danger might be lessened by taking off the top of the carriage. This was, therefore, sacrificed, although the rain yet continued. The river was smooth and our sail would have been pleasant, but for the danger. In the midst of the river, I felt a strong reliance on God, and even enjoyed the scene, which was truly sublime. When approaching the shore, we could gather mistletoe from the tops of the trees, and were pleased with the thickets of vines, which promised plenty of grapes and muscadines the ensuing season.
>
> We were not aware that the day was almost past when we landed, and regretted our departure from the last little hut, poor as our accommodations must have been, when we again found ourselves strangers in a dark forest. The rain was falling in torrents, to which we were now wholly exposed, as we had lost our only shelter – the top of the carriage. The moon gave but partial light, and I felt my situation truly unpleasant, in not being able wholly to shelter from the rain my children who were asleep under my cloak, insensible to my anxiety or their exposure.

It's interesting that the above writer notes that the Ross Ferry was chosen because of the high water conditions. Allen (1977), too, notes that, "in time of high water (Ross' Landing) was quite advantageous."

The ferry was also a shortcut to the Ross House in what is now Rossville, Allen notes.

"The Ross's Landing was simply a shorter cut to John Ross's place at Rossville for traders coming down the Tennessee River," she said.

"It would have been going out of the way to come by river all the way to the mouth of Chattanooga Creek and then go by land across to the gap in Missionary Ridge at Rossville," she said. "It was just a time saver…"

If this was the case, I think it makes sense to say that the existence of the Ross Landing developments, meager as they may have been, imply Ross's residency in what is now called Rossville.

More than that, I'd suggest that perhaps Allen gets it precisely backwards. What if the landing and ferry didn't come into existence because of the house, but instead the Ross House came into existence because of the location chosen by John and Lewis Ross as ideally suitable for Ross' Landing and its attendant businesses?

Looking at the 1834 valuations, and striking off any development that is clearly labeled as "new," one can surmise that Ross' Landing possibly consisted of the following developments (particularly anything labeled as "old," as Ross' original developments would likely have been 20 years old by the time of the valuations):

2 large double cabbins each 20 by 18 with 9 feet entry between new board roof plank floor	$60.00
1 old stable & cribb Join'd $5. 1 Do. no roof $ 3	$8.00
1 Large ware house some what old 30 by 30 Logs hew'd 12 feet high up to the eves board roof partly under pinnd with stone good large strong door Lock &c worth Roll'd	$90.00
6 large apl. trees @ 3 $18. 12 p trees @ 50 $6.	$24.00
15 acres rich low land @ 8	$120.00
10 " old land fencd @ 3.	30.00

While a 30 x 30 "ware house" was located at the landing, a "store house" also seems to have been located in Rossville, adjacent to the Ross House, on the Federal Road.

Again, according to Allen (1936):

> …a four and a half-story hewn log building was erected for a storehouse in which the business of John McDonald and his grandson, John Ross, was carried on. This old building stood on the roadside just where the old gate in front of the house entered and some of its foundation stones were to be seen as late as the nineties.

The valuations (Currey, 1834) from the Removal period don't seem to bear out the massive size of the store that Allen puts forth, but they do note the presence of a store house; in fact, they mention two:

> 1 new store house 22 by 16 hewd logs board roof, two rooms log partition between, loose plank floor strong splitt timber for the upper floor, two doors good counter forming all 7 1/2 one way & 10 feet the other way 3 feet wide and three feet high, neat sheves on two sides of the store room 16 by 13 with a writing desk the other room 16 by 10 no upper floor in it worth $50.00

And:

> 1 Lumber house for holding salt &c 17 by 15 new round pine logs board roof plank floor strong plank door with lock of the best kind work $20.00

I would eliminate these from consideration as original Ross developments, however, because they are both clearly labeled as "new" and therefore probably were not part of John Ross' original holdings.

But interestingly, there is also a third, "former" storehouse mentioned in the 1834 valuations at Rossville, but it had since been converted into a residence. Here is its description:

> 1 Other large dwelling house formerly a store house 36 by 16 two story high good hew'd logs, shingled roof somewhat old best stone chimney One good fire place below two rooms above and below with hew'd log partition Rolled] above and below good floors above & below four door shutters 3 below & one above with good Iron hinges, two windows with shutters, 1 flight of stairs & closet worth} $225.00.

This two-story, 36 x 16 "store house" in Rossville is valued at $225 – over twice the value of the 12-foot-high, single-story 30 x 30 "ware house, " valued at $90, on the Tennessee River. I can only assume that both played some significant role in the business operations of John Ross and that goods must have traveled back and forth between the Tennessee River location of Ross' Landing and the Federal Road location of Rossville.

This original Rossville store house at some point was converted into a residence and a new, significantly smaller store house was constructed to replace it.

This raises some interesting questions. Who was living in the old store house? When the store house was converted into a residence, why was its replacement significantly smaller?

Answering the second question first, we might speculate that the original storehouse was constructed prior to the full development of Ross' Landing, or perhaps at roughly the same time. However, once Ross' Landing was fully developed, perhaps the need for such a large store at the Ross House location was not as great, so the replacement store house would have been smaller.

And the answer to the first question? We might find our answer in the pages of the journal pages of the Brainerd Mission (Phillips, 1998).

Recall that in 1800 the Moravians had considered, and rejected, the possibility of locating a mission at the Chickamauga Creek home of John McDonald, due to the area being "unhealthful" and remote (Trivette, 2001) (it was, after all, abandoned by Dragging Canoe and his followers in 1782 because it was infested by witches [Blount, 1793, pp. 431-432]).

Nearly 17 years later, a new group of missionaries came along and felt somewhat differently about McDonald's property (Walker, 1993, pp. 23-24):

> "… I found a plantation which had been occupied several years by an old Scotch gentleman, who had married into the Nation. As he wished to remove to another place, he offered me his buildings and improvements, which included about twenty-five acres of cleared land, for five hundred dollars. These are all the necessary buildings to commence, except a school house, and perhaps a dwelling house. …"

The property was indeed purchased. When it came time to move in, we are given the following details (Phillips, 1998, pp. 27-28):

> 1817
>
> Saturday, Jan. 18. Arrive at Chickamaugah … The houses both in this country & in Tennessee have generally wooden chimneys, are without glass, & the doors are obliged to be left open in the day time to admit light, so that one can hardly eat breakfast without a fit of the ague.
>
> Sab. 19. … Spend the day at the house on the plantation which we have purchased for the use of the school. Mr. McDonald, an old Scotch Gentleman, who has married a native, occupies it at present, but is soon to move out. …
>
> 20. Hear that some articles which I had ordered to be sent down the river had arrived at a Ware house about 6 miles distant. Go with small wagon to bring them.
>
> 21. Go again for my goods to the Warehouse. …
>
> 22. Rainy – Mr. McDonald is removing his effects to his grandsons about 4 miles distant, & I am busily employed in assisting him.
>
> 23. House still in confusion by the moving posture of the old occupants.
>
> 24. Labor today in preparing a window for my house. The day is pleasant, and the old people bid farewell to their old habitation no more to return to live in it.

The warehouse mentioned is likely to have been the Ross Warehouse at Ross' Landing. Just about a month later, on Feb. 15, the missionaries write: "Mr. Ross, a Cherokee by birth, & who is a very

respectable merchant in the neighborhood arrives from the Agency & brings a packet of letters for me from various friends. A feast indeed." (Phillips, 1998, p. 29)

But, even more intriguingly, the journal mentions that McDonald is going to live at "his grandsons about 4 miles distant." (Phillips, 1998, p. 27)

Was the first store house at Rossville converted into a retirement residence for the McDonalds, living immediately adjacent to their grandson, John Ross, at his new place of residence? Even if the conversion didn't happen until later, at any event the McDonalds were living with Ross following the sale of their residence at Chickamauga.

Thus, again, the Myth of the John Ross House gets the story precisely backwards. John Ross did not, as a boy, go to live at the Ross House (although he did, apparently, live with his grandparents). Instead, the McDonalds, as retirees (or the Cherokee equivalent of retirees), went to live with their grandson, John Ross, at or adjacent to the John Ross House. And this, it seems to me, is how the McDonalds became associated with the John Ross House in popular storytelling.

Ross appears to have lived at the Ross House in Rossville until the summer of 1827 (Moulton, 1985, pp. 125-129). If he lived off and on at what may have been Shorey's house from the time of Shorey's death in 1809 -- which is possible, but not at all substantiated -- then Ross would have lived at the Ross House site for about 18 years, covering the entirety of his young adulthood until he became chief of the Cherokee in his late 30s, at which time he relocated to what was then called "Head of Coosa," the old village of Hightower Town, in what is now downtown Rome.

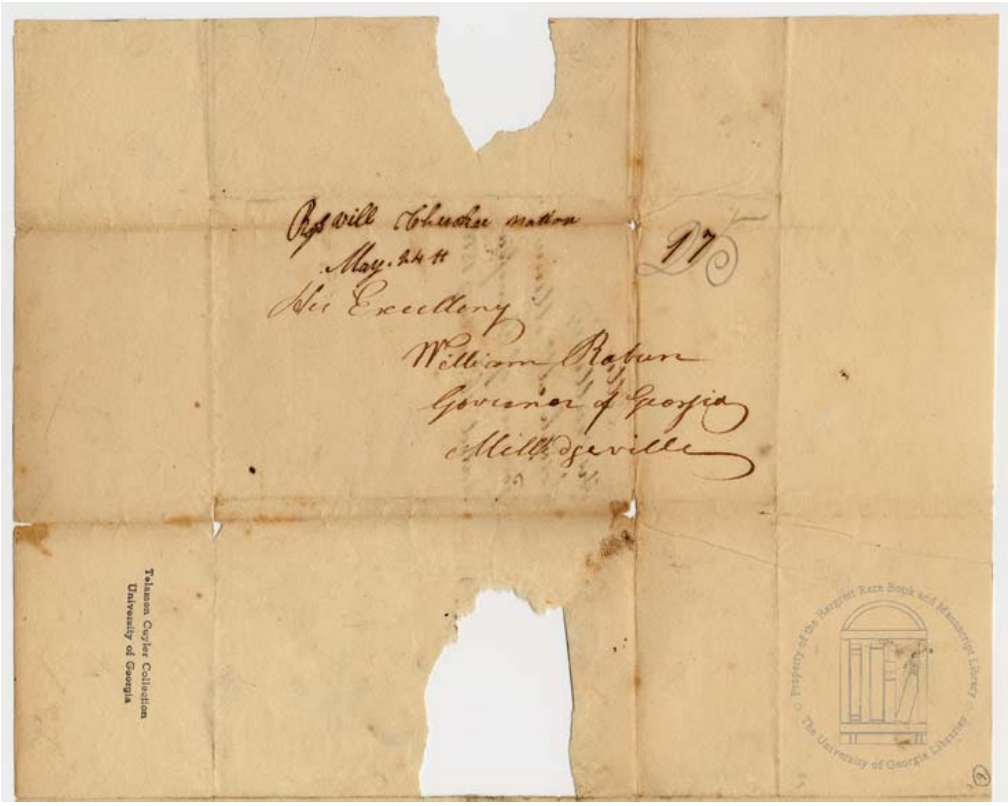
But Ross didn't begin writing letters with a heading of "Poplar Spring," until April of 1817 (Poplar Spring was the original name for what later became the town of Rossville). In this initial letter (Moulton, 1985, p. 30) Ross sounds very much like a bean-counting businessman and not at all like the passionate chief and tireless advocate for the people that he would later become.

> Poplar Spring Cherokee Nation April 11th 1817
>
> Sir
>
> The order which have been drawn on me by Toochalar for corn for the people of Chattooga, I can not furnish, for want of corn, the requisition calls for One hundred and Sixty five Bushels, viz 5 Bushels to each family. Mr. Henry Nave who lives on the road six miles from the river, has proposed to fill the order at one Dollar & fifty cents pr Bushel if you will acknowledge the order and pay him when the corn is furnished. The people of Chattooga will arrive tomorrow & must await your approbation. I assure you Sir positively that, I know of no corn in this neighbourhood to be bought for less than One dollar & fifty cents pr. Bushel and from the great mass of travellers it will undoubtedly make corn sell for a higher price. Shortly Lewis (Ross) and myself starts tomorrow, I

neglected my saddle Bags on the counter with Miss Grace's (Meigs') clothes. All in good health. I am Sir yr. very Obt. Srvt.

Jno Ross

Interestingly, this was also the time when Ross was named U.S. Postmaster of Rossville. But we do not have a letter from Ross with a "Rossville" header until December of the following year (Moulton, 1985, p. 31) (Tennessee Governor Joseph McMinn wrote a letter to Georgia. Gov. William Rabun from "Rossville" on May 16, 1818, however [McMinn, 1818]).



A VERY EARLY LETTER sent from Rossville.

JOHN ROSS as a young man.

(It should be pointed out that simply because Ross dated his letters from Rossville during this time period does not necessarily confirm that he was residing at the Ross House proper. But a strong local tradition from an early time period, immediately following the Removal, combined with the relative scarcity of early houses, and the fact that the Ross House is located next to the spring, all help to bolster the claim. One must also take into account the fact that the Ross House was assigned a higher value than other homes in the vicinity in 1834 and Ross was undoubtedly the most successful local businessman, excluding his father. There are also other bits of evidence which help to cement the argument, including written testimony from Ross family members, including a nephew and grandson, which I will discuss forthwith. The likely date of the home's construction also makes an extremely strong case for Ross' occupancy. Lastly, modern measurements of the house confirm that the main residence indicated on the 1834 valuations, occupied then by the Scales family, is very likely the southwesternmost portion of the home now known as the Ross House. All of this will be discussed at length in later chapters.)

During this time period a Joseph Coody married into the Ross family, marrying John's sister Jane (or Jenny). He and Jenny apparently lived about two miles to the east of the Brainerd Mission (the former McDonald home). A traveler (Newton, 1818) wrote of his impression of the Coody residence in November, 1818:

> We arrived at Mr. Coodey's late this evening, having travelled 31 miles. This was the first house I saw in the nation that looked like a white man's house.
>
> Here we got comfortable lodgings, and a good supper. Sometime after Supper, and before the family went to bed, he had them assembled, and then like a good Christian as I expect he is, he, together with the family, sung a hymn of praise, and then offered his supplications & thanks givings with a devout fervour, to the throne of Grace, in behalf of himself, his family his friends, and us who were present, of the Missionaries established among the Cherokees, and of the whole Nation.
>
> His wife is daughter of the celebrated Mr. Ross in the nation. She is a pious good woman, as is believe, and as appears to be true from her conduct. In conversation about her, with the daughter of a widow mentioned a little back, I was told, that Mr Coodey did not like to take in travellers, in consequence of his wife's being often offended with the profain which she heard uttered by them, because, added she, Mrs. Coodey is a Bapter; meaning, I suppose a Baptist; or perhaps, a religious person of any denomination.
>
> The next morning, Thursday, we set off to visit Brainerd, the missionary Station, about two miles distant from where we staid the night preceding….
>
> The missionary Station is situated in a beautiful place, on the banks of the Chickamaukah, the land appears good, and the missionaries appear to enjoy themselves very well , their own Company forms a good Society, and the children whom they have are happy & cheerful…

At about this same time a U.S. Post Office building appears to have been constructed in Rossville. A newspaper article written by Allen (1936) states:

> There is a stone with the date 1819 in the chimney at the rear of the (Ross) house. This stone, it is said, was in the chimney of the first post office at Rossville, which was across the road from the (Ross) house. Thomas G. McFarland says that this stone was used in another chimney before it was placed in the present one which was built in 1879.

On July 28, 1819, the Moravians at Spring Place reported in their daily diary (Mauelshagen, 1986), “The postman brought us a letter from John Ross at Rossville.” A letter from Ross at Rossville dated July 3, 1819 is included in his collected papers (Moulton, 1985, p. 36).

By 1819, Ross himself says in later testimony, his “residence had, for some time, been at Rossville, near the Lookout Mountain, within the charter limits of Georgia...” (Ross, 1836).

Besides those already mentioned, letters from Ross with Rossville headers survive from 1820, 1821, 1822, 1825, 1826, and 1827 (Moulton, 1985, pp. 31-129). Pathkiller, of Turkey Town, was the chief during most of this period. Charles Hicks apparently succeeded Pathkiller as chief for a few weeks in January, 1827; but following his death, Ross was named Cherokee chief.

This decade was a pivotal one for the Cherokee Nation and, in many ways, Ross was ideally situated for a rise to power. As the Cherokees dealt more and more with the problems of white encroachment and negotiations with the Federal government, Ross could serve as an intermediary between the world of the white man and the Indian because, although he grew up in Cherokee territory and identified with them, he spoke fluent English and looked like a white man. Thanks to the schooling instigated by his father, he also wrote well, which was a rare commodity in the Cherokee Nation at the time.

He also had the right "people connections." He grandfather, John McDonald, had been an influential voice at Cherokee councils. His father, Daniel Ross, had also been highly respected and successful as a businessman in the Nation. John Ross had spent months in Washington, D.C. as part of the Cherokee delegation, getting acquainted with influential speakers like Major Ridge. He had a longstanding relationship with the Indian Agent, Return J. Meigs. And now geography would work to his favor, as well, with the rise of English interpreter Charles Hicks, who lived just a few miles to the east, in Fortville (Dogwood Flats). Hicks had gained the confidence of the older chiefs during his years as interpreter at the councils at Ustanauli, on the Coosawattee River just a few miles upstream from what would later become the new capital of the Cherokee Nation, New Echota. A lame leg had sent him to north Georgia to take advantage of the medicinal springs in Fortville. But even though Pathkiller of Turkey Town was nominally the principal chief of the Cherokees (for whom Ross would soon serve as clerk), the council meetings were often held in Fortville, and the national treasury was located there, a clear sign of the deference paid to Hicks (undoubtedly it was difficult for Hicks to travel as his leg injury worsened over time). Although Hicks was now living in a more remote location, having resided in and managed a store for years in the heart of the Nation, Ross would now be one of his closest neighbors, and the relationship between the two mixed-blood English speakers flourished.

Ross, like Hicks, was a store owner, and during the course of their association Ross would become an economic force in the area with the establishment of Ross' Landing, his warehouse and ferry, and the Post Office in Rossville.

In May, 1817 the Cherokees established, for the first time, a more formal government endowed with significantly greater power than the old, loose "headman" system. This was done in large measure to protect the Nation from losing additional land through bribes to individual chiefs. As Moulton (1978, p. 20) describes it:

> …Assembled at Fortville, … the leading men had created a "standing committee" of thirteen men to transact political business, but only with the consent of the whole Nation. In time this group became an effective force for Cherokee advancement and security…

The group came to be known as the National Committee and John Ross was named its president in November, 1818.

When people describe the tragedy of what later became known as the Trail of Tears, one of the ironies frequently pointed out are the strides the Cherokees made in the early 19th century in becoming rapidly acculturated, or more like the white society that was increasingly encroaching on its territory. Much has been written in recent years about how such acculturation is often a defensive mechanism for people who are under siege – a useful adaptation in response to threatening new conditions that can help to ensure the continued survival of a people (See **Defensive Structuring and Environmental Stress**. Bernard J. Siegel. The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 76, No. 1, 11-32. Jul., 1970). Ross himself said that, when it came to the "old growth of natural Habits & customs," the Cherokees must "root it out." (Moulton, 1985, pp. 36-37)

The National Committee was at the forefront when it came to spurring on these changes, which included:

■ In 1819, the establishment of a new capital town, New Echota, at the head of the Oostanaula River. In 1825 it was laid out into square lots with public squares and public buildings, much like that of American cities.

■ In 1820, the organization of the government into a bicameral legislature, known as the General Council, which was made up of the formerly organized National Committee and a new National Council. Eight districts were created for the Nation and a judicial system was put into place. One the first declarations of this new governing body was that from hereafter it would cede not "one foot of ground" to the United States.

■The adoption of a constitution, modeled on the Constitution of the United States (which, interestingly, some have argued in recent years was modeled to some degree on pre-existing Native American forms of government, namely that of the Iroquois, from whom the Cherokees are likely descended … so it would seem things went full circle [See Donald A. Grinde's *The Iroquois and the Origins of American Democracy*, a speech delivered at Cornell University on September 11, 1987; see also http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2005/May/17-246412.html]).

■ The establishment of an official national Cherokee-language newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which was facilitated by the development of a Cherokee syllabary by Sequoyah in the early 1820s.

During all this time, Ross and Hicks were joined at the hip, as confirmed by missionary Daniel Butrick (Moulton, 1978, p. 31):

> Mr. Ross is rising highly in the opinion of the Nation. He is not in point of influence inferior to any

> except Mr. Hicks. These men walk hand in hand in the Nation's councils and are the hope of the Nation.

(For a more complete treatment of Ross' years of political apprenticeship to Hicks, one should read the second chapter of Moulton's *John Ross, Cherokee Chief*, pp. 15-33. This chapter covers the time of Ross' occupancy of the Ross House in Rossville.)

While Ross was becoming more and more active in Cherokee political life, his father apparently kept his residence at the foot of Lookout Mountain during this time. As Jeremiah Evarts reports (Walker, 1936, pp. 108-109) on May 20, 1822:

> At old Mr. Ross's we dined and were treated with the kindest hospitality. Riding upon the top of Lookout Mountain, where we had, through the trees, occasional glimpses of a magnificent prospect, we came to a place where it was expedient to separate. We alighted, knelt by the side of the road. Mr. Kingsbury prayed and then I prayed. After Mr. Kingsbury had proceeded down the mountain, I stood awhile upon a rock and looked down upon the Tennessee River and beyond it. I could observe but one clearing in the whole amphitheatre, which lay spread before me, and which was circumscribed by the Lookout and Raccoon Mountains, and by Walden's Hills. The whole appearance is that of a wilderness – probably much as it was a thousand years ago.
>
> On our way home to the Brainerd Mission, we found a tree of black mulberries ripe in Mr. Ross's field. They were delicious.

(Walker erroneously states that this was a stopover at the home of John Ross, but Evarts is clearly speaking of the home of Daniel Ross at the foot of Lookout Mountain; Evarts even calls him "old Mr. Ross." John Ross would have been only 32 at the time and would hardly qualify as being "old.")

In a letter dated Nov. 3, 1826, Nov. 3, John Ross mentions his "new residence on the Head of Coosa River…." A "Mr. Coodey" is also mentioned as transacting business at Coosa on behalf of Ross. Following the death of Charles Hicks in January, Ross would relocate to this new residence, sometime between late Feb. and late July of 1827 (Moulton, 1985, pp. 128-129),

Daniel Ross relocated to Head of Coosa with his son and died there on May 22, 1830, at age 70 (http://www.wcu.edu/library/cherokeePhoenix/Vol3/no07/3no7_p3-c5C.htm) (Ruskin mentions in her correspondence that she received a tip regarding the location of Ross' gravesite in Rome, but she must have been unsuccessful since she doesn't mention it again). Joseph Coody and his family apparently moved into the Daniel Ross home at the foot of Lookout Mountain and he served for some time as the new postmaster for the area.

Soon afterward, the McDonald residence on Chickamauga Creek, which had served as the Brainerd Mission for over a decade, went up in

flames. The sight is described by one traveler moving through the area, from west to east (see http://www.scvcamp469-nbf.com/Cherokee.htm):

> Friday we rode the whole day under the lofty Lookout Mountain, passed the residence of an ancient Chief, near the end of the Lookout, We saw some mounds about the place in the form of pyramids, about 10 feet high, and about 15 thick where the bones of ancient Chief's lie deposited. As we passed over the Lookout Mountain, the Tennessee was to be seen winding its course below the high Mountain, this I think is the highest Mountain I ever crossed in a wagon, at the end of this Mountain is the plantation of Mr. Joseph Coody, Father of Willam S. Coody, Clerk of Cherokee Delegation at Washington. There we talked and had a short visit with Mr. Coody's family. Mrs Coody, is a native sister of John Ross, the principal Chief. Traveling 8 Miles farther on we came in sight of the bare chimneys of the Brainend Station. The meeting house and some other houses at a distance escaped the conflagration.

Mary Coody, niece of John Ross and daughter of Joseph and Jennie (Ross) Coody, married a Methodist minister, Nicholas Dalton Scales, and the two of them apparently moved into the Ross House following John Ross' relocation to Head of Coosa. Scales ran the store at Rossville and eventually became Postmaster, as his father-in-law had been before him. The Scales also assumed ownership and operation of the Ross Ferry (now renamed the Scales' Ferry) and Ross' Landing.

It should be noted, again, that property seems to have passed to the next generation along matrilineal lines. Daniel Ross' sons did not inherit the house – his daughter did; likewise, it was the Ross niece and her family who inherited or purchased the John Ross House.

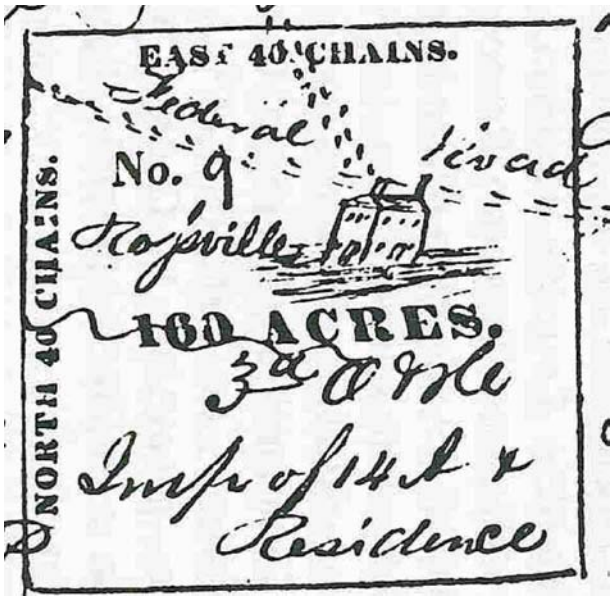
Sadly, they would not enjoy their ownership for long. For, in 1832, the Georgia surveyors marched through, divvying up the land, which the Cherokee had always held in common, in preparation for the dispossession process known as the Cherokee Land Lottery.

The man who surveyed the Scales property, Thomas G. McFarland, apparently liked what he saw, for he wound up purchasing the house and the land from the lucky lottery winner. The McFarlands were "the first settlers after the Indians were moved out," said one descendant. Initially occupied by Thomas and his two brothers, Xzanders Gordon McFarland and Columbus Duncan McFarland, the home would remain in the McFarland family for over a century. (Walker County History Committee, 1984, p. 271).

John Goff (1975, pp. 280-281), former survey-general for the state of Georgia and a recognized authority on Georgia place names and locations, had this to say:

> A platbook … based on the original survey of the Rossville area in 1832, contains a plat which names Rossville and depicts the Ross home in lot 9 of District 9, 4th Section of original Cherokee County of which Walker is

now a part. The little chart is unique because it depicts in the embryo stage a community that eventually was to develop into a city. The land map for District 9 shows there were two other buildings at the site of the home, in addition to the residence shown on the plat.



The drawing of the Ross house is merely a sketch but, except for outside chimneys at the ends of the structure, it is a reasonable depiction of the place as it was known in later years... The little stream shown on the left center of the plat is seemingly the brooklet that drained from the spring. It will be noted there was an 'Impr,' that is, a clearing of fields, of 14 acres on the area of lot 9. But the fertility of the land was not rated highly by the surveyor because it is marked '3d O&H,' meaning third quality oak and hickory land.

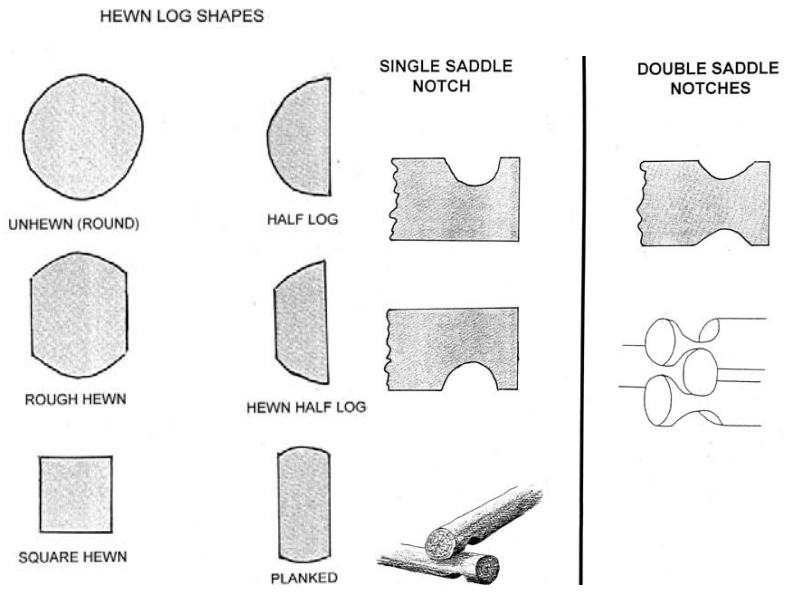
…The left margin of the plat showing Rossville discloses that James Jones of the Rick District of Laurens County was the 'fortunate drawer' who won lot 9 in the 1832 lottery to distribute the area of District 9.

Besides the valuations of the store houses already mentioned, the main house was also valued at the time for "Mary Scales, Impt on Chatanooga Creek" (Currey, 1834):

1 Large dwelling house by 38 by 16 two story high, good hew'd logs shingled roof, some what, worn, two first rate stone chimneys having five fire places, two below and three above, two rooms below, one very large, the smaller room adjoining the Kitchen well fram'd and weather boarded, the two rooms below neatly seald with pine planks, with chair & wash boards, well floord above and below, the smaller roof up stairs seal'd [sealed] a good set of stairs runing up in the large room with a closet, two plank partitions above and below four good door shutters Rullit below & two above, with good Iron hinges, bolts, Brass Butts & Locks to each, doors well cas'd and fac'd ten Glass windows, seven below, & three above having 12 lights in each 8 by 10,

good sash and window shutter with Iron Hinges all worth
$500

If this (above) is roughly identical with at least a portion of the existing house known as the John Ross House, the log construction and notching is generally as the following photograph indicates:



The logs seem to fall under the categories of “rough hewn” (see chart above) and the notches would be categorized as “single saddle.”

In addition to the main house, the following other, smaller structures were noted:

1 Lumber house for holding salt &c 17 by 15 new round pine logs board roof plank floor strong plank door with lock of the best kind work $20.00

1 new cabbin a (Kitchen) 19 by 17 board roof loose plank floor finish'd as common worth $25.

1 smoke house 16 by 15 round logs board roof &c $16.

1 old corn crib 21 by 10 $10. 1 old hen house 5. $15.

2 Old Large Stables 20 by 16 each 10 feet passage &c $30.

1 Old Spring house 10 by 10 round Logs board roof $5.

1 Stable Lot $4. Hog Do. $4. large Yard lot $11. $19.

1 Rich garden Lot $7. 1 Large cow lot $6. $13.

5 acre up land at 4 -- $20.

Roll'd 13 large apple trees @ 4. -- $52.

3 Young " " @ 1 $3.

14 large bearing peach trees @ 75 $10.50

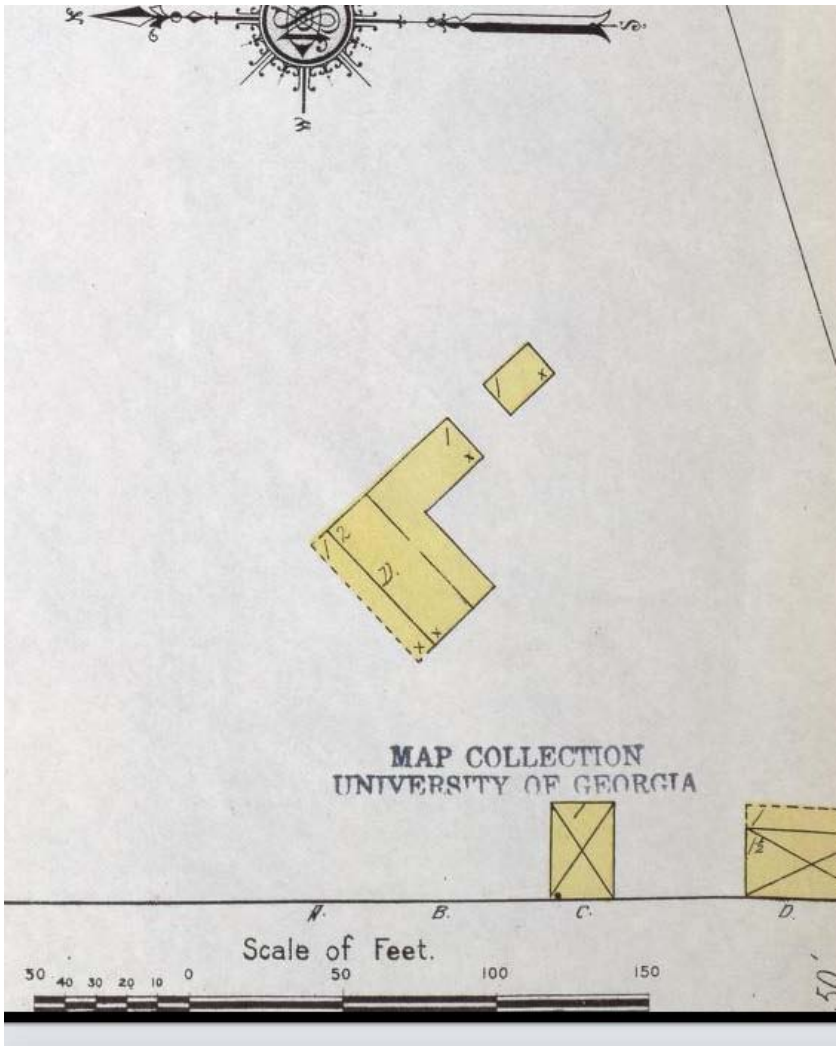
5 bearing peach tres @ 50 -- $2.50

9 acres of low land below th house @ 6 $54.

14 acres of good high land @ 5 $70.

1 pastur field fencd in with 4800 rails equal to 8 acres of ground at $6. per acre $48.

Fire maps drawn up following Rossville's incorporation as a city at the turn of the 20th century may give some indication of where some of these outbuildings were located and how they were situated on the lot:



THIS SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP from 1917 (http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/?Welcome) shows three wood buildings that may have been part of the original Ross development of the lot (there's not enough information to say with any assurance). Goff (1975, pp. 280-281) notes that "the land map for District 9 shows there were two other buildings at the site of the home, in addition to the residence shown on the plat."

The total value of the Ross House estate was put at $1,278. (This was considered the value of the improvements alone, not including the value of the land itself, which was not owned by individuals but held to be commonly owned by the entire tribe).

The Scales holdings were not limited to the Ross House and its immediate outbuildings, however. The family had other holdings the in the Chattanooga Valley, probably inherited from John Ross when he moved to Head of Coosa.

Also on Chattanooga Creek was an improvement "where Wilson lives," on the Tennessee side of the line. This included an 18 x 20 foot hewed log house, valued at $40; "1 Large cabbin," 20 x 18, valued at $20; a 12 x 12 smoke house worth $12 and "1 old Stable" valued at $6.

About ¾ of a mile from the Wilson house was "one old field reclaim'd and newly fenc'd with new oak rails," 12 acres total, valued at $36; "1 old corn cribb," 14 x 12, and another one, 22 x 9, valued at $19 for both; "40 acres rich upland" valued at $240; two more lots worth $5 total; 11 acres of "rich bottom land" worth $66; 20 acres of "good up land" worth $100; four large applies trees worth $23; 16 more apple trees valued at $32; and 18 peach trees worth $9.

Also on the Scales evaluation rolls at Chattanooga Creek was another 18 x 15 hew'd log cabin, with $12 worth of upland.

Another house, "where Payne lived," also on Chattanooga Creek, was included with the Scales valuations. This 1 ½ story house was 15 x 15 and valued at $30. Another 1 ½ story cabin at Payne's was valued at $16; and a third 12 x 8 cabin with a "board roof" was valued at $10. The Payne place also had one $6 corn crib and one $6 stable; a $2 hog lot; and 4 ½ acres of upland worth $22.50.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, the Scales also appear to have inherited or purchased control of the old warehouse at Ross' Landing and Ross Ferry, now the Scales Ferry.

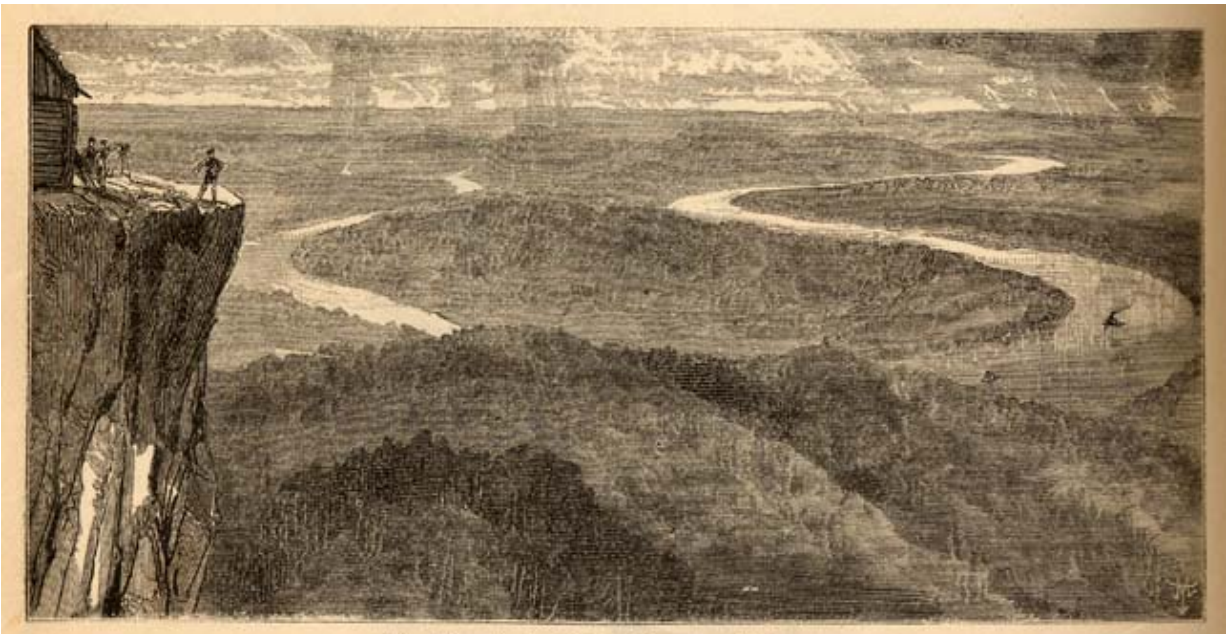
The former Ross holdings on the Tennessee River included the following when the valuations were made in 1834:

2 large double cabbins each 20 by 18 with 9 feet entry between new board roof plank floor	$60.00
1 old stable & cribb Join'd $5. 1 Do. no roof $ 3	$8.00
1 Large ware house some what old 30 by 30 Logs hew'd 12 feet high up to the eves board roof partly under pinnd with stone good large strong door Lock &c worth Roll'd	$90.00
1 other large new one 24 by 24 finishd nearly as above 10 feet to the eves &c	$70.00
1 Large new Store house well finishd for a store 26 by 18 counter partition across good upper & under floors	125.00

1 new corn cribb 11 by: 6 $15. 1 Lumber house 18 by 18. $30.00	45.00
6 large apl. trees @ 3 $18. 12 p trees @ 50 $6.	$24.00
15 acres rich low land @ 8	$120.00
10 " old land fencd @ 3.	30.00

Despite their apparent wealth, the story did not end well for the Scales, who only wound up living at the Ross House for about five years. The head of the family being white, they were immediately dispossessed of the property following the 1832 surveys. Scales died on Oct. 15, 1833, while making preparations to remove to the western territory. His wife, Mary, died just a few months later, on Mar. 16, 1834, while in Alabama en route to Arkansas by water.

They weren't by any means the only residents of Chattanooga Valley making preparations to leave. There appears to have been a mass exodus from the area to Arkansas in 1834, by the terms of an 1828 treaty.



View from Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga.

Other residents of the Chattanooga Valley, living on the waters Chattanooga Creek, included, as of Dec. 1833, Joseph Coody, "at the foot of Look Mountain on Tenesee River." His holdings, apparently inherited or purchased from Daniel Ross, included "1 Tub mill Establishment" and "One Tan Yard Establishment."

Probably near Joseph Coody's was the residence of Daniel Coody.

Moving down Chattanooga Creek to its mouth on the Tennessee River, valuations were made for Nelly Sydney. Also on the Tennessee River lived Greenberry Purdue.

Back up Chattanooga Creek were James McPherson, Archibald Jackson McDaniel, and Andrew McDaniel, all on the Tennessee side of the line.

On the "east side of Lookout Mountain," in Georgia, were the improvements of Henry Naves and William Naves, also Ross relatives, with improvements stretching out for several miles along "the Road from Coodys to Newtown," otherwise known as the Federal Road. The Naves holdings were to the immediate west of the Scales (formerly Ross) holdings. The Naves, like the Coodys, had married into the Ross family. (For a more complete listing of the holdings of these Chattanooga Valley residents, see Bishop's *1833-1834 Residents of Chattanooga Valley* in the sources collection provided to the NPS for this report, or see Currey, 1834, in References Cited).

But by the time the Census was taken the next year, in 1835, the Scales, Coodys, Naves, McDaniels, and all the rest of the Ross/McDonald relatives were gone. The only Cherokees recorded in the Chattanooga Valley at that time were Pigeon, Robbin Burns, Toosawalter (of mixed-Spanish blood), Agga, and their families, totaling 26, none of whom had large plantations or substantial property (Trail of Tears Association, 2002, p. 63).

Meanwhile, the whites were streaming in. Lottery drawer James Jones of Lawrence County, winner of the lot containing the Ross House, sold the house, the improvements, and the 160 acres to Thomas Gordon McFarland, whose family would own the house for over a century (Georgia Surveyor General, 1832).

Thomas and his brother Xzander McFarland were both, like Ross, of Scottish descent, the sons of John Buie McFarland, who was the son of immigrants. A descendant of the McFarlands, Mary Alice Dantzler (Walker County History Committee, 1984, p. 271) wrote:

> John Buie McFarland came to "Hickory Grove," Rossville, Walker County in 1840 from Montgomery County, Georgia. He had first brought his family from Richmond County, North Carolina to Tattnell County, Georgia in the early 1800's. He and his family were the first settlers in that county. His wife Sallie Ann Gordon died there in 1816 and is buried in Tattnell County.
>
> After his wife's death he moved with his family over into Montgomery County, where again he was a first settler. John Buie raised his large family here sending at least two of his sons to the University of Georgia. Four of his sons were surveyors, and two of them served in the Georgia legislature.

A second source (Sartain, 1932, p. 413) says that the elder McFarland was originally from Cumberland County, North Carolina. Three of his sons came to Northwest Georgia as government surveyors in

1832. They were apparently so impressed with the Rossville area that they decided to make it their home, perhaps as early as 1835. Again from Dantzler (Walker County History Committee, 1984, pp. 269-270):

> Xzanders Gordon McFarland came to "Hickory Grove," Rossville, Walker County with two of his brothers Thomas Gordon and Columbus Duncan in the year 1835.
>
> He was to assist Thomas Gordon with the surveying of the ninth District and 4th section of Cherokee County. A large part of this was made into Walker County. After this survey was finished all three of these McFarland brothers sold their lands in Montgomery county and came here to settle.
>
> Thomas Gordon bought the John Ross house. The three brothers lived there together for several years. Xzanders Gordon represented Walker County in the General Assembly of Georgia in 1844.
>
> In 1839 Xzanders Gordon built himself a fine home about two miles south of Rossville on the McFarland Gap road.

The McFarland brothers became local merchants and postmasters at the Rossville post office and sold goods, initially, to both Cherokees and the whites. Soon their father, another brother, and five sisters joined them in Rossville. According to Dantzler (Walker County History Committee, 1984, p. 271):

> John Buie was not a young man when he moved to Walker County, but he wanted to be near his children and grandchildren most of whom had already moved to Walker County.
>
> It took John Buie a month to make the trip from Mt. Vernon, Georgia to Rossville in a covered wagon.
>
> After coming to Rossville he lived with one of his daughters a Mr.s Sallie Ann Thomas. She lived on the side of Missionary Ridge where her brother Xzanders Gordon McFarland lived.
>
> John Buie McFarland died January 15th, 1846 and was one of if not the first to be buried in the Old McFarland Cemetery on the McFarland Gap Road.

Following the ratification of the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, the Ross Home and its adjacent buildings may have served as a temporary headquarters for the Tennessee militia as "Camp Wool" while it was constructing a more permanent military presence closer to Ross' Landing in preparation for the impending forced Cherokee Removal (Despite some legends to the contrary, there is really no conceivable way that John Ross could have moved back into his old home in Rossville after being similarly dispossessed of his home at Head of Coosa in 1835. Instead he lived in a ramshackle two-room cabin near Red Clay, described in some detail by both John Howard Payne and Featherstonhaugh [p. 238].)

On July 12, 1836 General John E. Wool (1837) wrote a letter to Gen. Winfield Scott, informing him that a "part of the brigade retained I shall send into the Cherokee country in the course of the present week.

The Battalion 370 strong will set out on the march on Saturday next for Rossville." The battalion was of East Tennessee volunteers.
Again, on July 15, Wool informed the paymaster general, "It is my intention to send into the Cherokee country in the course of this week two battalions of about 370 each. One battalion will be sent into the country via Rossville…"

The brigade apparently wouldn't stay for long, as it was en route to Valley River, NC. But Wool made a point of ordering the captain in charge to stop for a day and recruit men in Rossville and, while there, to "enquire into the progress making in the erection of the buildings under taken at Ross' Landing under the direction of Mr. Ramsey and the prospect of procuring corn in that neighborhood."

On July 23, Wool issued an order to "appoint R. J. Ramsey issuing agent at Rossville. "He will confine his issues to such Indians as are poor and require assistance. None will be issued except to heads of families who call in person." (It makes sense that a commissary would be stationed least temporarily at the Ross House since it had several outbuildings, including a store house.)

By August 3 Wool said that of the five companies of mounted volunteers he had stationed in Georgia, four were "stationed in the neighborhood of Rossville" while the other was at the Cherokee capital, New Echota.

By Aug 24, Rossville was serving – for a day, at least -- as the Headquarters of the Army of East Tennessee and the Cherokee Nation. Gen. Wool visited Rossville on that day but left the same day.

A Major John R. Delaney was put in charge of the Camp, which was alternately referred to as "Cantonment Wool" or "Ross' Landing" in Wool's correspondence. On Jan. 1837 he referred to the camp as "Cantonment Wool near Ross' Landing." In February, Wool refers to it as "Cantonment Wool, Tennessee." (By this time, apparently, the camp had migrated north, after the buildings nearer to Ross' Landing had been completed.)

The camp had to deal with some disturbances from time to time. Wool informed the officers that, "In relation to Gamblers or black legs you have all the authority necessary to prevent them from establishing themselves in your neighborhood…"

"Ardent spirits not to be sold within 10 miles of the cantonment," Wool ordered.

The Cherokees, too, sometimes caused problems for the troops, perhaps in the form of passive resistance and civil unrest, since few dared to challenge the troops directly.

On Feb. 4, 1837:

> Wool "has been informed that an Indian by the name of Tah Koo or Bridge maker is making some disturbance in the (Rossville) neighborhood in which he lives. You will send Capt. Hembree with a small escort

> immediately and have him taken and confined and secured under guard….”

On Feb. 13:

> The Indian Bridge Maker will be taken care of and secured in the guard house as to render his escape impracticable. The bottom of the guard house will be so floored and secured as to render it impossible to make his escape by digging under the bottom logs of the outer walls of the house. He will be treated kindly and well fed [sic] and furnished with clothes to make him comfortable. If he has not blankets sufficient for that purpose you will purchase the number required and I will see that they are paid for…”

Bridge Maker was finally ordered to be released on Mar. 12.

In the summer of that same year a visitor arrived at Ross’ Landing in the person of geologist G. W. Featherstonhaugh (1970, pp. 210-218), and he gives us a vivid account of the area as it appeared to him in 1837, on the eve of Removal:

G. W. FEATHERSTONHAUGH

> At length I came to a small village hastily built, without any regard to order or streets, every one selecting his own site, and relying upon the legislature of Tennessee to pass a law for the permanent arrangement of their occupations. The appearance of the individuals I saw was very unpromising, and addressing myself to one of them, he directed me to a small tavern kept by a person by the name of Kennedy.
>
> Supposing, from the state in which the country was, that I should meet with all sorts of disorderly persons, and wishing in my heart that the Indians had continued in

possession of their country – for wherever I had been, the Indians had been friendly to me – I almost dreaded the idea of going to this tavern; but on reaching it, I was quite delighted that it consisted of three new log huts, built upon a high piece of ground that commanded a beautiful view of the surrounding country. The landlord was very civil, every thing was tolerably clean, and having made a neat and acceptable supper with good milk, bread and butter, and coffee, I considered myself a most fortunate person, and laid down to rest in a very contented state of mind, with the benefit of the wandering breezes of the night upon my face, that entered through the open logs of the hut I slept in.

July 26. – On awaking, I got a fine view of the country through the walls of my bed-room, which fronted that fine chain which on this side of the river is called Raccoon Mountain. The Look-out Mountain also was towering up with the numerous peaks of its extended line, that appeared wooded to the top. The rest of the landscape consisted of picturesque knolls of limestone, all densely covered with trees. Having made a hearty breakfast, I strolled out to look at the rocks. The limestone consisted of heavy compact beds of blueish colour, much intermixed with chert and non-fossiliferous. Near the river it was horizontal, but here I found the anticlinal structure occasionally well-marked, the beds not observing the steady horizontal position of the beds at Tuscumbia and Decatur. I was not surprised at this, always expecting that the nearer I approached to the Alleghany Mountains, the more I should find the beds influenced by that great movement which has modified the surface it operated upon into their ridges and valleys, and produced those flexures in the non-bituminous carboniferous beds.

How I was to remove my luggage from this place, and get fairly into the interior became now a matter for serious consideration. There was no such thing as a wheeled vehicle in the place, nor any probability of their being one; and I found it equally impossible to engage horses. In this serious dilemma, I determined to go to Camp Wool, in the neighbourhood, to state my case to a Colonel Ramsay, who acted as commissary and storekeeper to the Tennessee mounted volunteers stationed there. I lost no time, therefore, in proceeding to his quarters, where the troops appeared to be comfortably hutted. He received me civilly, and offered to accompany me to the quarters of the commanding officer, Colonel Powell, where we immediately proceeded. With this officer, I found a Major Vaughan and a Captain Vernon, three persons, as far as I could judge, well suited to the responsible duty they were engaged upon.

They received me in a very friendly manner, and the commanding officer, on being acquainted with my situation and embarrassment, expressed his regret at not being able to give me any conveyance. He said that he expected an order every moment to take his command to a place called Red Clay, where Ross, the Cherokee chief, had convened his nation to meet on the 31st of this month. This piece of information, although it was the cause of a great disappointment, excited a strong desire in me to go to Red Clay also. To have an opportunity of seeing the whole Cherokee people convened together, to deliberate upon the resolution it was proper for them to take at this juncture

was to me very tempting; and I determined, if possible, to shape my course for the accomplishment of it.

At the camp, I was told that the best chance afforded me of procuring a vehicle would be at the Moravian Mission of Brainerd, six miles distant, and determining to go there, I engaged a horse of a suttler for the ride as the heat was too overpowering to go on foot. But the animal turned out exceedingly vicious, and plunged and reared in such a furious manner, that part of the rotten bridle they gave me having given way, I was thrown, and came with the back of my head upon the bare limestone, receiving a very stunning blow that made me sick at my stomach for at least an hour. As this happened in sight of the encampment, several of the soldiers ran up to assist me, and the accident being reported to Colonel Powell, he sent Captain Vernon, who offered me every kind attention, remaining with me until I felt somewhat recovered, and insisting upon my mounting his horse to accomplish the excursion. The sun beat powerfully upon me, and I was quite ill during the ride, grateful, however, to Providence for not having fractured my skull. On reaching the Mission, which had the appearance of a farm-house, I dismounted, and an Indian woman called Mr. Buttrick, the resident Moravian missionary, a pious elderly person apparently out of health, with whom I had a very interesting conversation about his Mission and the situation of the Cherokees. On the subject of my visit, he referred me to a Mr. Blunt who managed the farm belonging to the establishment. This person, whilst he professed to be sorry for my embarrassment, did not seem disposed to give himself much trouble to relieve my wants. I soon found out that every one at the Mission was zealously disposed in favour of the Indians, and anxious to prevent their being sent out of the country, a measure that would of course be followed by its suppression. Not knowing me, they considered it to be very possible that I sympathized with their oppressors; and, therefore, rather politely, but coolly enough, declined assisting me. It was evident that the people at the Mission had transferred all their natural sympathies for their own race to the persecuted Indians. I was not much surprised at it, and perceiving how matters stood did not renew my request.

… Mr. Buttrick was a decided friend of the Indians, and considered the whites to have violated the most sacred of rights in dispossessing the Cherokee nation of their native country. It had not been found difficult he said to frame an apology for the conduct of those whites who had, in the earliest times, come amongst these defenceless men and taken their lands, for they had done it under pretext of converting them to Christianity; but, in the case of the Cherokees, not only treaties had been trampled upon, but every wrong had been heaped upon an unoffending Christian nation. He said he knew the Cherokees well, and thought they would die on the spot rather than leave their country; but, if it came to that, the whites were the strongest and must prevail. "Nevertheless," added he, "God has his eye upon all that is passing, and at his own time the Cherokees will be avenged."

I was very much impressed by his manner, for he evidently was sincere, believing himself in a deep decline, as a bad cough, which frequently troubled him, too truly indicated. I remarked to him that none of the Indian tribes

had been able to stand against the tide of white population, and that perhaps the hand of Providence was it; for, although the people of Georgia had treated the Indians wrongfully, yet a few generations hence, their descendants might fill the land and be a good and religious people; that the Indians would probably be a much happier community in a distant territory, where they had no white neighbours, and that I was of opinion that those who had influence with them would render them an essential service by advising them to submit where resistance was hopeless; that to encourage them to resist would be to assist in their extermination, and that I sincerely believed the wisest plan would be to endeavour to persuade them to throw themselves upon the generosity of the United States Government, who had the highest motives to deal in the most merciful and humane way with them. To this he merely observed, that the Council of the Cherokee nation would determine what was to be done.

I saw several young Indians of both sexes about the Mission, and would willingly have remained longer, but I was not encouraged to do so, and perceiving that my presence was an embarrassment, I took leave of the interesting Missionary, assuring him that the Indians had not a more sincere friend than myself. Mr. Blunt, the farmer, followed me to the gate, looking as if he was conscious that he had not acted a very friendly part towards me, and began an apology which I cut short by saying: "Either you have a conveyance, Mr. Blunt, or you have not. If you have not, that fact would render an apology unnecessary; but if you have one, as I have been informed is the case, then you have lost an opportunity of obliging a traveller who has always been a friend to the Moravian Missions." Leaving Mr. Blunt to digest this I returned to the encampment; and having delivered the Captain his excellent horse with many acknowledgments, walked slowly back to my quarters, my head aching violently with the severe blow I had received in the morning.

July 27.--I had a restless night with some fever and great soreness in the back of my head; towards morning, however, I got some sleep, and was awoke by a refreshing breeze passing over my face. Having dressed and breakfasted I felt much better. The landlord had heard of the ruins of an old gig with wooden springs that belonged to a man of the name of Rawlins; it was under a shed, and had served exclusively for some time past for his cocks and hens to roost upon. Hoping that it might be possible to cobble it up in some way or other, I went to see it and its owner, a long-legged drawling fellow, who was a complete pendant to his vehicle. He said if I would go to the expence of having it repaired, he didn't care if he hired it to me but that he had no horse, though he had some old harness. As this was the only card I had left to play, and fearing that if the detachment left the camp, I should be left here without a resource or friends of any kind, I hastened to Colonel Powell's, who upon learning the discovery I had made of the gig, asked me what use I could make of it without a horse. "Why to tell you the truth," said I, "I know some of your suttlers keep yokes of oxen to move their things about, and as these men are always ready to make money, I have thought you would lend me your influence to hire a yoke to take the gig with my luggage to some main road where I can get a conveyance, and as to myself, I

> would rather walk than ride, for I want to examine the country as I go along." "Upon my word," he replied, "a man that is as ready to help himself as you are ought to be helped by others, and I will direct one of my blacksmiths to mend the gig for you."
>
> Accordingly the Colonel mounted his horse, and with the smith and myself on foot proceeded to Mr. Rawlins'. Here upon inspection, it was reported that the gig could be mended, and Rawlins having paraded his harness before us, the Colonel said there was an old horse at the encampment which had been unwell, but was now better, and that he would lend him to me for three or four days. Thus was I, by the kindness of this worthy officer, put into an independent position again, and making a bargain instantly with Rawlins to accompany me and to bring the horse back, I took leave with many thanks of the good Colonel, who returned to his camp with the smith. Meantime, Rawlins and myself went to work to clean the gig, and mend the harness. Whilst we were thus occupied, the smith returned with the horse, a miserable looking creature that seemed to have every infirmity. But being an exceedingly clever and obliging man, in an hour, what with ropes and the fragments of horse millinery belonging to Rawlins, and the ingenuity of the smith, we had got the horse into the shafts and drove to my quarters.
>
> Here I took leave of my obliging landlord, and, sending Rawlins to proceed and lead the horse, soon followed him. It was a burning sun, and I was not yet free from headache, but the excitement produced by getting up this equipage, and by having the world once more before me had made me rather indifferent to it. We reached the Moravian Mission in three hours, which was two miles an hour, and here I fed the horse whilst good Mr. Buttrick looked up some Cherokee vocabularies for me. At 4 P.M. we started again, but an unthought of difficulty soon brought us up, for we had to pass the Chiguamawgah Creek: this was rather too deep for Rawlins and myself, who were on foot, so we were obliged to get into the gig, which had no seat in it, and which was already filled with the luggage. Alas! when we had got fairly into the middle of the creek, our Rosinante could not muster strength enough to drag us across. In vain we encouraged him, he would not stir, and for near a quarter an hour it seemed certain that we should have to lighten his load, by jumping out. At the end of that time we tried the poor animal once more, and setting up a great shout, and clattering the ropes upon his back we got the steam up a little, and on we went amidst the rocks and stones at the bottom, bouncing and rolling from one to another, every instant expecting an upset. Happily, we reached the opposite bank in safety.

Cherokee Removal from Georgia occurred in May, 1838, at the urging of the land-hungry whites. Even one of the McFarlands wrote to the governor, asking for help with controlling the Indians that had begun to gather at the border between Walker and Floyd counties. The only record of the Ross House's connection with those dark days, other than the military records of Fort Wool, is the following anecdote, which may be questionable, since apparently McFarland and his brothers living at the home at the time of Removal. Gertrude Ruskin (1958) reported that she

had spoken with Mrs. Ray Crow, a former resident of the house, who related the following tale:

> Once an old Indian ninety-six years old came to the door. He and his niece had traveled all the way from Oklahoma to see his old home once more. He was living in the house when the Indians were taken away to Oklahoma, and he remembered that he had left some coon hides on the boards.

At first I thought this mysterious visitor might be one of the children of Nicholas Scales and Mary Coody, but the age and date do not match, so this "Indian, ninety-six years old" must, at least for now, remain anonymous

Thus ends the first period of historical significance for the Ross House.

The Civil War: Before, During and After

The Chickamauga area had been a war-torn region for generations. Its name comes from the Muscogee name, "Place of the War Chief," so it can be assumed that there were Creek tales of war associated with the place. We do know that when the Napochies revolted against the paramount chiefdom of Coosa in the mid-16th century, Spanish soldiers with the Tristan de Luna expedition went to join the fight, which occurred in this area (Smith, 2000). Dragging Canoe, and later his successor John Watts led a sustained revolt against the newly-formed United States and the Cumberland settlements, using the Chickamauga region of Lookout Mountain for a base, for well over a decade, at the close of the 18th century. Finally, with its thousands of deaths that ultimately resulted, one could argue that the Cherokee Removal was the most violent act ever committed on a peaceful people within the boundaries of the United States. However, it appeared that with the area having undergone "ethnic cleansing," that the bloodshed could at last stop. As Feastherstonhaugh had told the missionaries at Brainerd, "yet a few generations hence, (the white people's) descendants might fill the land and be a good and religious people…"

The prospects in Rossville at first seemed bright, if this letter from T.B. McFarland (1964) is any indication:

> 6 July, 1840
> Georgia, Walker County, Hickory Grove
>
> My dear niece:
>
> I am about to undertake what I am afraid I cannot get through with, that is a letter to you. My hand is getting too old and clumsy to write so that any person can read it. I started from Montgomery County the 17th of last October and got to Rossville in Walker County on the 1st day of November. I drove a wagon all the way, upward of 300 miles. I live a about a mile and a half from the Tennessee line and about 6 miles from the Tennessee River, where there is a promising beginning of a great town as the railroad from Augusta, Charleston and Savannah leads to that town called Chattanooga. Besides the steamboats from New Orleans pass there to Knoxville about 130 miles northeast of us.
>
> "So I expect it will be one of the foremost upcoming country towns in the Union. A few days back one man received one hundred hogsheads of brown sugar per steamboat "Harkaway," on her way to Knoxville. Now I will try to give you a short description of this part of Georgia formerly inhabited by the Cherokee Indians who have been moved to the Arkansas state by the government when they purchased the land from them. I live in Walker County between Mission Ridge on the east and Lookout Mountain west. The land is very rich and fertile in the

> valley which is about 3 or 4 miles wide and 13 or 14 miles long.
>
> It is most excellent for the production of corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, clover, blue grass and Irish potatoes, onions, tobacco and corn. Thousands of bushels of it (corn) is offerd for sale at Chattanooga, about 6 miles from here at 25c per bushel flour superfine selling at Chattanooga at from $2.50 to $3 per barrel. Bacon 7c, pork 3c per lb. and articles cheap in proportion.
>
> Money is scarce enough, and a plenty of everything else.
>
> Country pure clear. Blue Limestone Springs, cold enough in the summer and warm in winter, snow almost all winter on the ground. The seasons are too short to make much cotton or sweet potatoes or sugarcane, but a great many we have in our country that extracts the juice from the sugar maple and boils it and makes sugar, not quite as good as we used to make out of sugar cane in the low country. …
>
> UNCLE T.B. McFARLAND
>
> P.S. Address your letter to Rossville Post Office. Your cousin Thomas G. is Postmaster there.

The Civil War between North and South would not erupt for another two decades. But it's interesting to note that "state's rights" was a prime issue leading to the Cherokee Removal. The Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the Cherokees in one important case and the Indians had relied on the federal government for protection, but the infant government dared not go toe-to-toe against its constituent states -- especially not over Indians, no matter how "civilized." (Ehle, 1988, pp. 254-256; Lumpkin, 1907).

When the Civil War finally did commence, one of its bloodiest battles would be engaged at Chickamauga, and the Ross House would once again play a key role in American History.

John B. Gordon (1903, p. 198), Maj. Gen. of the CSA, paints a picture of the area in the years leading up to the war

> REARED from childhood to maturity in North Georgia, I have been for fifty years familiar with that historic locality traversed by the little river Chickamauga, which has given its name to one of the bloodiest battles of modern times. Not many years after the Cherokee Indians had been transferred to their new Western home from what was known as Cherokee Georgia, my father removed to that portion of the State. Here were still the fresh relics of the redskin warriors, who had fished in Chickamauga's waters and shot the deer as they browsed in herds along its banks. Every locality now made memorable by that stupendous struggle between the Confederate and Union armies was impressed upon my boyish memory by the legends which associated them with deeds of Indian braves. One of the most prominent features of the field was the old Ross House, built of hewn logs, and formerly the home of Ross, a noted and fairly well-educated Cherokee chief. In this old building I had often slept at night on my youthful

> journeyings with my father through that sparsely settled region.

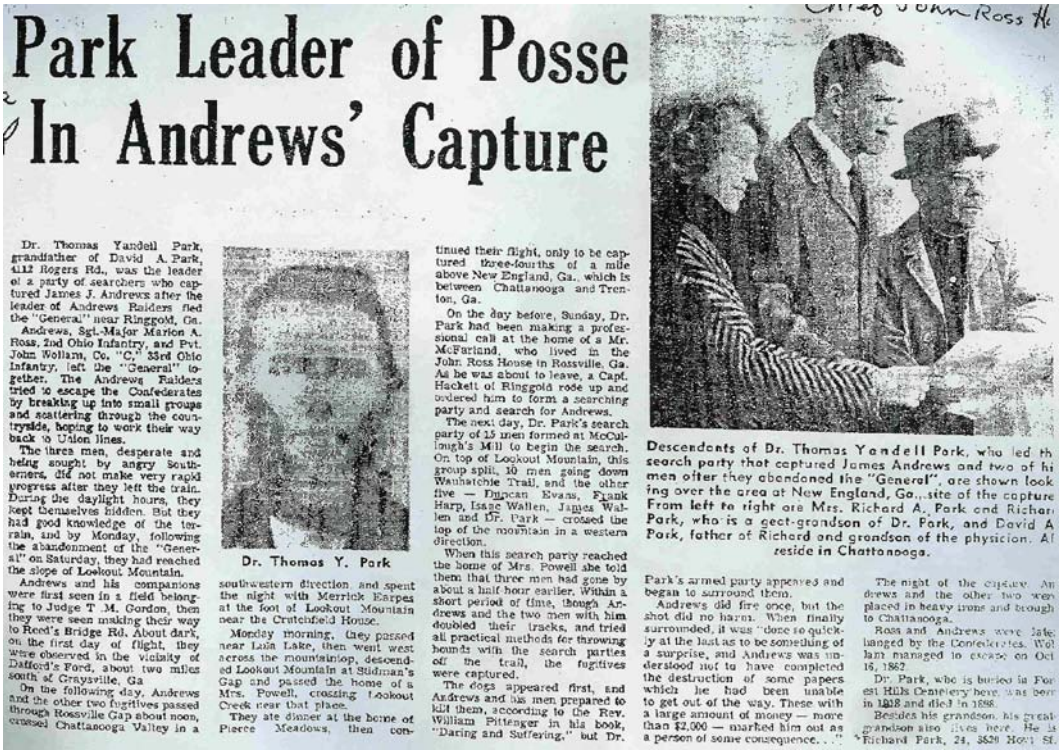
The first taste of the inevitable excitement of War arrived at Rossville in April of 1862 with the conclusion of the Great Locomotive Chase, when James Andrews' "Raiders" were apprehended just a few miles from Rossville. According to one undated newspaper article, volunteers sent to search the woods for the escaped raiders -- who hijacked a train at Big Shanty and raced across the countryside, cutting lines of communication and pulling up rail lines all along the way -- was summoned from the front porch of the Ross House.

THE GENERAL

Dr. Thomas Yandell Park was "making a professional call at the home of a Mr. McFarland, who lived in the John Ross House in Rossvile, Ga.," the newspaper article states. "As he was about to leave, a Capt. Hackett of Ringgold rode up and ordered him to form a searching party and search for Andrews."

Although search parties were being formed all over the countryside, it was Parks' party who successfully apprehended Andrews, who had just passed through Rossville Gap when Park was given his orders , the writer of the article states:

> … Dr. Park's search party formed at McCullough's Mill to begin the search. On top of Lookout Mountain, this group split … Dr. Park – crossed the top of the mountain in a western direction.
>
> When the search party reached the home of Mrs. Powell, she told them that three men had gone by about a half-hour earlier. Within a short period of time, though Andrews and the two men with him doubled their tracks, and tried all practical methods for throwing hounds with the search parties off the trail, the fugitives were captured.



Park Leader of Posse In Andrews' Capture

Dr. Thomas Yandell Park, grandfather of David A. Park, 4112 Rogers Rd., was the leader of a party of searchers who captured James J. Andrews after the leader of Andrews Raiders fled the "General" near Ringgold, Ga.

Andrews, Sgt.-Major Marion A. Ross, 2nd Ohio Infantry, and Pvt. John Wollam, Co. "C," 33rd Ohio Infantry, left the "General" together. The Andrews Raiders tried to escape the Confederates by breaking up into small groups and scattering through the countryside, hoping to work their way back to Union lines.

The three men, desperate and being sought by angry Southerners, did not make very rapid progress after they left the train. During the daylight hours, they kept themselves hidden. But they had good knowledge of the terrain, and by Monday, following the abandonment of the "General" on Saturday, they had reached the slope of Lookout Mountain.

Andrews and his companions were first seen in a field belonging to Judge T. M. Gordon, then they were seen making their way to Reed's Bridge Rd. About dark, on the first day of flight, they were observed in the vicinity of Dafford's Ford, about two miles south of Graysville, Ga.

On the following day, Andrews and the other two fugitives passed through Rossville Gap about noon, crossed Chattanooga Valley in a southwestern direction and spent the night with Merrick Earpes at the foot of Lookout Mountain near the Crutchfield House.

Dr. Thomas Y. Park

Monday morning, they passed near Lula Lake, then went west across the mountaintop, descended Lookout Mountain at Sidman's Gap and passed the home of a Mrs. Powell, crossing Lookout Creek near that place.

They ate dinner at the home of Pierce Meadows, then continued their flight, only to be captured three-fourths of a mile above New England, Ga., which is between Chattanooga and Trenton, Ga.

On the day before, Sunday, Dr. Park had been making a professional call at the home of a Mr. McFarland, who lived in the John Ross House in Rossville, Ga. As he was about to leave, a Capt. Hackett of Ringgold rode up and ordered him to form a searching party and search for Andrews.

The next day, Dr. Park's search party of 15 men formed at McCullough's Mill to begin the search. On top of Lookout Mountain, this group split, 10 men going down Washatchie Trail, and the other five — Duncan Evans, Frank Harp, Isaac Wallen, James Wallen and Dr. Park — crossed the top of the mountain in a western direction.

When this search party reached the home of Mrs. Powell she told them that three men had gone by about a half-hour earlier. Within a short period of time, though Andrews and the two men with him doubled their tracks, and tried all practical methods for throwing hounds with the search parties off the trail, the fugitives were captured.

The dogs appeared first, and Andrews and his men prepared to kill them, according to the Rev. William Pittenger in his book, "Daring and Suffering," but Dr. Park's armed party appeared and began to surround them.

Andrews did fire once, but the shot did no harm. When finally surrounded, it was "done so quickly at the last as to be something of a surprise, and Andrews was understood not to have completed the destruction of some papers which he had been unable to get out of the way. These with a large amount of money — more than $2,000 — marked him out as a person of some consequence. . ."

The night of the capture Andrews and the other two were placed in heavy irons and brought to Chattanooga.

Ross and Andrews were later hanged by the Confederates. Wollam managed to escape on Oct. 16, 1862.

Dr. Park, who is buried in Forest Hills Cemetery here, was born in 1818 and died in 1888.

Besides his grandson, his great-grandson also lives here. He is Richard Park, 24, 3526 Hoyt St.

Descendants of Dr. Thomas Yandell Park, who led the search party that captured James Andrews and two of his men after they abandoned the "General", are shown looking over the area at New England, Ga., site of the capture. From left to right are Mrs. Richard A. Park and Richard Park, who is a great-grandson of Dr. Park, and David A. Park, father of Richard and grandson of the physician. All reside in Chattanooga.

William Pittenger (2007) in his book *Daring and Suffering*, upon which the classic Hollywood silent movie "The General," starring Buster Keaton, was partly based, describes his apprehension while traversing the Chickamauga and Chattanooga valleys as virtually the whole populace was alerted to the Raiders' presence. Although he doesn't specifically mention the John Ross House, he undoubtedly passed right by … perhaps more than a few times, according to his account. This comes from Chapter VI:

> On leaving the train, I confess for a moment my heart sunk within me. I was alone, for no one happened to strike off in the same direction I did. I knew not where I was--whether fifteen or fifty miles from Chattanooga--neither had I the most indefinite idea of the lay of the country. I only knew that north or northwest would bring me to our forces; but the sun did not shine, to give me even the points of the compass.
>
> The description of places and distances given in the preceding chapter, was mostly obtained from Confederates, who afterward visited and talked with us.

THE ROUTE taken by Andrews' Raiders.

I supposed that the country would be aroused, and a vigorous pursuit made, but my worst anticipations proved far short of the reality. It was Saturday, the 12th of April, and was a general muster-day for the conscripts over the whole country; but as soon as the news of our raid was received, drill was suspended, and every one turned out in search of us. Then was organized the most stupendous man-hunt that ever took place in the South. Horsemen hurried at full speed along every road, and proclaimed the news as they went. Each planter, with his dependents, for at least fifty miles in every direction, took his bloodhounds and scoured the woods. Every cross-road, every river, ford, or ferry, was at once picketed by bodies of cavalry. Large rewards were offered, and thousands of soldiers pursued us, in addition to the universal uprising of the citizens. The only partially known object of the expedition imparted a tone of romantic exaggeration to it, and made the people doubly anxious to solve the mystery. The feeling in northern Georgia may be best conceived by imagining what would be the excitement in the immediate vicinity, if a party of Confederates would seize a train near Philadelphia, and attempt to run it through Baltimore, especially if the movements of their armies should be such as would lead to the belief that this was only part of a grand scheme!

I will now give a personal sketch of my own adventures after leaving the train. It was still moving when I jumped off,--fast enough to make me perform several

inconvenient gyrations on reaching the ground. Most of the party were ahead of me. Three had taken the eastern side of the road, and the remainder the opposite side. I followed the example of the latter, and soon reached the cover of the stunted pines that grew near the road. Feeling the necessity of getting away as far as possible before the enemy could pursue us on foot, I struck off at a rapid rate.

Soon I passed the little brook that ran along the foot of the hill, and pressed on up its steep side. There were three of my comrades not far from me on the left, but I could not overtake them, and still proceeded alone. I knew that pursuit would be rapid and instantaneous. I seemed to hear the tread of cavalry in every breeze that sighed through the branches of the naked forest!

The country was rough and uneven. On the bottoms, and by the streams, were a few pines; but on the mountain spurs, which here are a low continuation of the Cumberland range, the timber is mostly oak and other varieties, which were not then in foliage. This was a great disadvantage, because it left no hiding place, and exposed us to the view of the watchful eyes of our enemies.

Soon I found myself in the bend of a little river that empties into the Tennessee at Chattanooga. It was swollen by continuous rains, and for some time I searched along its bank for a place to cross the turbulent stream; but, seeing none, and believing that death was behind, I committed myself to its angry current, and, after being thoroughly soaked, and almost washed away, I succeeded in reaching the opposite side. Here the bank rose in an almost perpendicular precipice of more than a hundred feet in hight. I dared not recross the stream, for I knew the enemy could not be far behind, and, therefore, I clambered up the precipice. Several times when near the top did I feel my grasp giving way; but as often did some bush or projecting rock afford me the means of saving myself. At last, after the most imminent danger, I reached the top utterly exhausted, pulled myself out of sight, and breathed for a while.

I had had no breakfast or dinner, and had spent not only that day, but many preceding ones, in the most fatiguing exertion. I was very faint and sick, and almost out of hope. I had no guide even in the direction of home, for the sun still lingered behind an impenetrable veil.

While I thus lay and mused on the unenviable situation in which I found myself placed, a sound reached my ears that again sent the blood leaping wildly through my veins. It was the distant baying of a bloodhound! Never again will I read the story of human beings, of any color, pursued by these revolting instruments of man's most savage "inhumanity to man," with indifference!

I started to my feet, and a few moments' listening confirmed my first impression. It was true. They were after us with their bloodhounds! not one pack alone, but all in the country, as the widening circle, from which echoed their dismal baying, revealed but too plainly. There was no longer safety in idleness, and I at once started up, and hurried off, as nearly at right angles to the railroad as I could ascertain by the whistling of the trains, which seemed to be moving in great numbers, and much excited. The fearful barking of the dogs also gave me a clue to avoid them. Faint and weak as I was, excitement supplied the

place of strength, and I rapidly placed a considerable distance between myself and pursuers.

Away across the hills and streams I sped, I knew not how far--I only knew that the noise of the dogs grew fainter and fainter as the evening wore on. I had distanced them, and began to breathe freer. I even indulged the hope of being able ultimately to work my way to the lines, and still think I might have done so, had the weather been clear enough to permit my traveling by the sun or stars.

As I descended the long slope of a wooded hill into a wild, solitary valley, I saw a rude hut, and a man in the garden beside it. I approached him to inquire the road to Chattanooga, though that was the last place I wished to go. The answer was, that it was only eight miles. This was nearer than I liked to be, as I rightly judged the pursuit would be most vigorous in that vicinity. However, I continued my journey in that direction, until out of sight, and then climbed up the hill at right angles to my former course. I traveled this way for some time, when an incident occurred that would have been amusing, had it been less vexatious.

I had often heard that persons who were lost would naturally travel in a circle, but did not attach a great deal of credit to the assertion.

Now I had the proof. I had crossed a road, and left it for something like an hour, during which time I walked very fast, when, to my surprise, I came to the same place again.

I was considerably annoyed to thus lose my labor, but struck over the hill in what I supposed to be the right direction. Judge of my astonishment when, after an hour or more of hard walking, I found myself at precisely the same spot again! So much time had been lost, that I now could hear the bloodhounds once more. I was perplexed beyond measure. A few steps further brought me to the _same river_ I had crossed hours before. In sheer desperation I took the first road I came to, and followed it a long time, almost regardless of where it should lead, or whom I should meet.

Thus I pressed forward till twilight was deepening into darkness, when I met a negro driving a team. From him I learned that I was within four miles of Chattanooga; words can not describe the tide of vexation, disappointment, and anger that swept over my breast, when I found that in spite of my most determined efforts I was steadily approaching the lion's mouth. But it was no use to give way to despair. Learning from the negro the direction of both Ringgold and Chattanooga, I resolved to make an effort to reach the Tennessee river some eight or ten miles below Chattanooga. For this purpose, I struck across the fields in the proper course.

For some time now I did well enough, but before long I came to a large field of deadened timber. When I had crossed this, I was again completely lost. Soon, however, I reached a road which seemed to lean right, which I followed with renewed vigor for several miles. At last I met three men on horseback; it was too dark to tell whether they were negroes or white men, but I ventured to ask them:

"How far is it to Chattanooga?"

"Three miles!"

"Is this the road?"

"Yes, sah! right ahead."

I had afterwards reason to believe that these were men sent out to arrest us, and that they did not stop me just because I was going right to Chattanooga!

BUSTER KEATON'S "THE GENERAL" is considered by many to be one of Hollywood's silent film classics. It was based on the events of the Andrews raid.

But it was evident that I was again on the wrong road. Indeed, it seemed as if I was so hopelessly bewildered that it was impossible for me to travel any _but_ the wrong road. As soon as the horsemen got out of sight, I turned and followed them three or four miles, when I came to a large road running at right angles with my own, which terminated where it joined the other. I deliberated for some time as to which end of this new road I should take. I had no guide to direct me, for my old road was too crooked even to give me the direction of the dreaded Chattanooga.

Many a time have I wished for a sight of the moon and stars. Long before the clash of arms was heard in our land, before the thunder and the wailing of battle had filled a nation with weeping, have I waited and wished for the parting away of the tedious clouds, that, with my telescope, I might gaze on the wonders and beauties of the worlds above. But never did I bend a more anxious eye to the darkened firmament, than in my solitary wanderings over the Georgia hills that memorable night. But all in vain; no North Star appeared to point with beam of hope to the land of the free.

At length I started off on the road that I thought most likely to lead me in the right direction; but as usual I had the misfortune of being wrong; for after I had gone a

long distance, the moon broke through a rift in the clouds, and for a moment poured her light down on the dark forest through which I was passing. That one glance was enough to show me that I was heading back toward the railroad I had left in the morning. Wearily I turned and retraced my tedious steps.

One of my feet had been injured by an accident three mouths before, and now pained me excessively. Still I dragged myself along. My nerves had become completely exhausted by the long-continued tension they had sustained, and now played me many fantastic tricks, which became more vivid as the night waned away. I passed the place where I had made the wrong choice of roads, and still toiled on.

The rain fell in torrents now. I was thinly clad, and as the wind, which was blowing quite hard, drove the falling showers against me, my

teeth chattered, and I shivered to the bone. I passed many houses, and feared the barking of the dogs might betray me to watchers within; but my fears were groundless. The storm, which was then howling fearfully through the trees, served to keep most of those who sought our lives, within doors. Even the barking of the bloodhounds was heard but seldom, and then far in the distance. I seemed to have the lonely, fearful, stormy night to myself.

At last all thoughts gave way to the imperative necessity of repose. I reeled to a large log that lay by the side of the road, on the edge of a small patch of woodland, and crawling close under the side of it, not for shelter from the driving rain, but for concealment from my worse-dreaded human foes, I slept in peace.

Up to this time the image of that terrible night is graven on my memory with a scorching pen of fire. After this it changes, and with the exception of a few real incidents that aroused me from my trance, it floats before me in more than the voluptuous splendor of an opium-dream. The cause of this change is a curious chapter in mental philosophy. It was no doubt purely physical, resulting from want of sleep, fatigue, dampness, lack of food, and intense mental exertion.

But let me narrate facts.

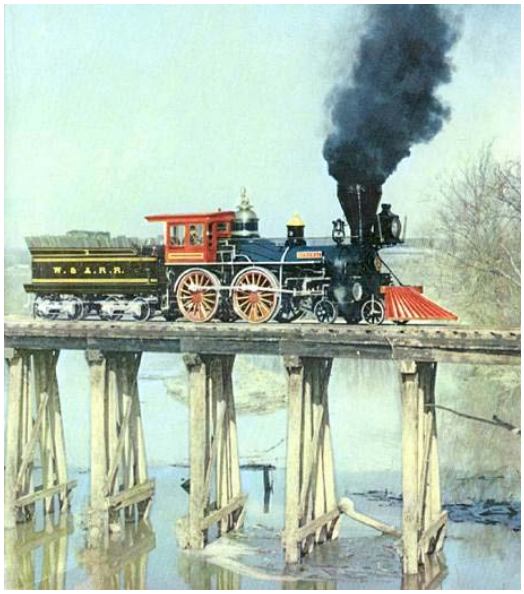
When I awoke, it was with a full realization of my position. But in addition to this, I seemed to hear some one whisper, as plainly as ever I heard human voice:

"Shoot him! shoot him! Let us shoot him before he wakes!"

My first impression was, that a party of rebels had discovered my hiding-place, and were about to murder me in my sleep, to save themselves further trouble. But the next thought brought a new suspicion, and I cautiously opened my eyes to test it, and see if my senses were really playing false.

Directly before me stood a small tree. The first glance showed a tree and nothing more. The next showed a score of angels, all clad in softest outlines, their heads nodding with feathery plumes above all beauty, and their wings slowly waving with borders of violet and pearl. The whole forest was suddenly transformed into a paradise of radiant glory, in which moved celestial beings of every order, all instinct with life, blushing with love, and bending their kindest regards on me. Ladies, too, were there, fairer

than ever walked the fields of earth, embowered in roses; little cherubs with laughing faces, on cloudlets of amber and gold, floated around. Indeed, all that the imagination could conceive of beauty was comprised in that one gorgeous, glorious vision.



DISNEY also adapted Pittenger's book into a film starring Fess Parker that, while more historically accurate than Keaton's "The General," is far less revered.

The most singular fact of all was, that although the brain and eye were thus impressed with that which had no real existence, I was perfectly calm and self-possessed, knowing the whole thing to be but a pleasing illusion. I did not in the least fear these figures of the brain, but on the contrary found them pleasant company. Not always, however, did they personate the same characters. Occasionally they would change to the old feudal knights, sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, but always clad in glittering armor.

The finest landscapes would start up from the cold, dull hills around, like mirages in the desert; panoramas of the most vivid action passed before me; even language was not denied to my visitants, whose voices were inexpressibly melodious; every thought that passed through my mind seemed sounded audibly at my side.

Thus through the visions of night and darkness I passed rapidly on, for now I felt refreshed and endowed with new strength. Even the merciless pelting of the cold rain seemed pleasant and luxurious as a cool bath in the parching heats of harvest. But beyond these illusions, another faculty seemed to penetrate and show me, though but dimly, the true face of the country.

Once the two became mingled, and very nearly involved me in a serious difficulty. At a cross-road, a considerable distance ahead, I saw what I at first supposed to be some more of my spectral friends, standing around a

fire, the ruddy blaze of which served to render them clearly visible. They were not quite so beautiful as those I had seen before, but still I advanced carelessly toward them, and would probably have continued to do so, until too late for retreat, had not my progress been arrested by a sound of all others the least romantic. It was the squealing of a pig they had caught, and were killing, preparatory to roasting in the fire.

This at once drove away the seraphs and the angels, and left me in full possession of my faculties. I listened, and soon became convinced that they were a picket, sent out there to watch for just such persons as myself. They had some dogs with them, which, fortunately, were too much absorbed in the dying agonies of the poor pig to give attention to me.

I crawled cautiously away, and made a long circuit through the fields.

A dog made himself exceedingly annoying by following and barking after me. I did not apprehend danger from him, for I yet had my trusty revolver, and had managed to keep it dry all the time; but I feared he would attract the attention of the picket, who might easily have captured me, for I was too weary to elude them.

At last he left me, and I again returned to the road. I had not gone far till I came to three horses hobbled down, which, no doubt, belonged to the picket behind, and had to make another circuit to avoid driving them away before me. On again reaching the road, I pressed on as fast as possible, hoping, before the morning light, to be beyond the circle of guarded roads, and the line of planters who were scouring the woods with their dogs. It was a vain hope, but I knew not then the gigantic plan of search which had been organized.

The visions which had made the lonely forest almost a paradise, now grew dimmer and dimmer. The roses faded, and all the forms of beauty vanished into thin air.

WILLIAM PITTENGER

The chill horror of my situation froze deeper into my veins. I would find myself walking along, almost asleep, then would wander a short distance from the road to a secluded spot,--throw myself down on the flooded ground, and sleep a few minutes; then would awaken, almost drowned by the pitiless rain, and so sore and benumbed that I could scarcely stagger to my feet, and plod onward.

Thus that dreary night wore on; it seemed an age of horror, and placed a shuddering gulf between my present life and the past. But at last the cold gray of a clouded morning broke through the weeping sky. Day brought no relief. Every one I saw seemed to be a foe. Still I did not avoid them. I carefully washed all traces of that terrible night from my clothes. The wet did not matter, for the rain was still falling fast enough to account for that…

…Sabbath morning … came not to me with the blessed calmness and peace that accompany it in my own sweet Ohio. I saw the people going to church, and longed to go with them, but dared not encounter the prying eyes that would have greeted a stranger, even if I had wished thus to loiter on my journey.

But why should I dwell longer on this dreary morning? why linger over its miseries, deepened by the faintness of the hope that they would ever cease, and give me again to the comfort and love of home? I wandered on till about noon, when I was observed by some one on the watch for strangers. This was just beyond Lafayette, Georgia. A party of pursuit was at once organized numbering twenty or more. I knew nothing of my danger, till they were within about fifty yards of me, when they ordered me to stop.

I put my hand on my pistol, and looked round. The country was level and open for some distance, and I was too weary to run, even if some of the party had not been mounted; therefore I made a virtue of necessity, and stopped, asking what they wanted. They replied that they wanted to talk with me awhile. Soon they came up, and a little, conceited man, who had the epaulets of a lieutenant, but whom they called major, undertook to question me. He was very bland about it, and apologized hugely for interrupting me, but said if I was a patriotic man, as he had no doubt I was, I would willingly undergo a slight inconvenience for the good of the Confederacy. I endeavored to imitate his politeness, and begged him to proceed in the performance of his duty, assuring him that he would find nothing wrong. He then searched me very closely for papers, looking over my money and pistol, but found nothing suspicious.

He next asked me who I was, where I came from, and where I was going. I told him that I was a citizen of Kentucky, who had been disgusted with the tyranny of Lincoln, and was ready to fight against it; that I came to Chattanooga, but would not enlist at that place, because most of the troops there were conscripts, and the few volunteers were very poorly armed. I told him all about where I had been in Chattanooga, and the troops there, for I had heard a good deal said about them as I went down on the cars to Marietta, on the previous Friday evening. I had also heard them praising the First Georgia, which was with Beauregard, and now told the Major that I wanted to join it.

He then asked why I did not proceed at once to Corinth, without going so far around the country. I alleged that General Mitchel was in the way at

Huntsville, and that I was merely making a circuit far enough around to be out of the danger of capture.

This seemed to be perfectly satisfactory to the little man, and turning to the crowd he said:

"We may as well let this fellow go on, for he seems to be all right."

These words rejoiced me, but my joy was premature. A dark-complexioned man, who sat on his horse, with his hat drawn down over his brows, raised his eyes slowly, and drawled out:

"Well, y-e-s! Perhaps we'd as well take him back to town, and if all's right, maybe we can help him on to Corinth."

This was rather more help than I wanted, but it was useless to demur.

They conducted me to the largest hotel in the place, where I was received very kindly. Soon a number of lawyers came in, and commenced asking me all kinds of hard questions. I answered as well as I could.

When I told them I was from Kentucky, they wished to know the county. I told them Fleming. Then they asked the county seat. This also I was able to give; but when they required me to give the counties which bounded it, I was nonplussed. I mentioned a few at random, but suspect most of them were wrong. They said it looked suspicious to find a man who could not bound his own county, but proceeded in their examination.

They requested a narrative of my journey all the way through from Kentucky. This I gave very easily, as long as it was on ground that was not accessible to them; but it sorely puzzled me to account for the time I had been on the railroad, and for the last night, which I spent in the woods. I had to _invent_ families with whom I stayed--tell the number of children and servants at each, and all the particulars. This was rather perilous, as many of my auditors knew all the country around which I was thus fancifully populating; but I had no alternative. I might have refused to answer at all, but this would have been construed into positive proof of guilt--at least as good as a _mob_ would have required. Besides, I still had a faint hope that they might be induced to release me, and allow me to continue my journey. As it was, my assurance puzzled them somewhat, and they held numerous private consultations.

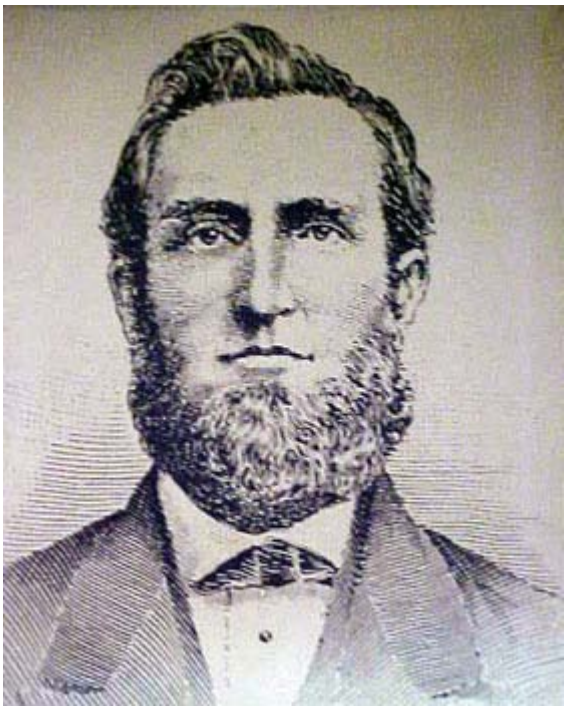
But while they were thus deliberating over my case, and could only agree that it needed further investigation, a man, riding a horse covered with foam, dashed up to the door. He came from Ringgold, and brought the news that part of the bridge-burners had been captured, and that they had at first pretended to be _citizens of Kentucky, from Fleming county_,--but, on finding that this did not procure their release, they confessed that they were Ohio soldiers, sent out to burn the bridges on the Georgia State Road.

The remarkable coincidence of their first story with the one I had been trying so hard to make the rebels believe, produced a marked change in their conduct toward me. They at once adjourned to another room, and, after a

brief consultation, agreed to commit me to jail to await further developments.

The little major was my escort. He first purloined my money, then took me to the county jail and handed me over to the jailor. This personage took my penknife and other little articles,--then led me up stairs,--unfastened the door of a cage of crossing iron bars, in which was one poor fellow--a Union man, as I afterward found--and bade me enter. My reflections could not have been more gloomy if the celebrated inscription, Dante, placed over the gates of hell, had been written above the massive iron door.

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."



JAMES J. ANDREWS

When federal and Confederate troops finally clashed in the Chattanooga area, Rossville became a key military location because of the gap in the ridge, just to the east of the Ross House, called “Rossville Gap.” The gap was one of two in the ridge called “Mission Ridge” or “Missionary Ridge,” after the former Brainerd Mission. The second gap, confusingly enough, was named “McFarland Gap” (confusing in that the Ross House was also occupied by a McFarland.) McFarland Gap is located approximately two miles to the south of Rossville Gap. These two gaps are often confused in the accounts of the battle. But the owner of the home at McFarland Gap, which was used as a military hospital following the Battle of Chickamauga, was Xzanders McFarland, while Thomas McFarland owned the Ross House at Rossville Gap. Dantzler (Walker County History Committee, 1984, p. 270) states that while most of the family fled to South Georgia when the troops neared, Xzanders’ wife,

Lucy Ann McFarland, "being the staunch Presbyterian that she was, would not leave her home."

Dantzler continues:

> She had an old sick negro mammy and three small sons in the home so when the soldiers came, they told her that she would have to leave as they were going to burn the home. She told them that she had no place to go and they would just have to burn it. The soldiers went away and then returned telling her that she would have to use part of her home for a hospital, and that she would have to nurse the men of both armies, which she did thus saving the lives of those that were with her. She had one male slave there to help her. She must have been a brave lady.

Everything came to a head in September, 1863. The events leading up to the battle are summarized by Ambrose Bierce (2002), a cartographer for the federals who participated in the battle:

> I was an officer of the staff of a Federal brigade. Chickamauga was not my first battle by many, for although hardly more than a boy in years, I had served at the front from the beginning of the trouble, and had seen enough of war to give me a fair understanding of it. We knew well enough that there was to be a fight: the fact that we did not want one would have told us that, for (Confederate General Braxton) Bragg always retired when we wanted to fight and fought when we most desired peace. We had maneuvered him out of Chattanooga, but had not maneuvered our entire army into it, and he fell back so sullenly that those of us who followed, keeping him actually in sight, were a good deal more concerned about effecting a junction with the rest of our army than to push the pursuit. By the time that (Union General William) Rosecrans had got his three scattered corps together we were a long way from Chattanooga, with our line of communication with it so exposed that Bragg turned to seize it. Chickamauga was a fight for possession of a road.

AMBROSE BIERCE

Back along this road raced Crittenden's corps, with those of Thomas and McCook, which had not before traversed it. The whole army was moving by its left.

There was sharp fighting all along and all day, for the forest was so dense that the hostile lines came almost into contact before fighting was possible. One instance was particularly horrible. After some hours of close engagement my brigade, with foul pieces and exhausted cartridge boxes, was relieved and withdrawn to the road to protect several batteries of artillery--probably two dozen pieces--which commanded an open field in the rear of our line. Before our weary and virtually disarmed men had actually reached the guns the line in front gave way, fell back behind the guns and went on, the Lord knows whither. A moment later the field was gray with Confederates in pursuit. Then the guns opened fire with grape and canister and for perhaps five minutes--it seemed an hour--nothing could be heard but the infernal din of their discharge and nothing seen through the smoke but a great ascension of dust from the smitten soil. When all was over, and the dust cloud had lifted, the spectacle was too dreadful to describe. The Confederates were still there--all of them, it seemed--some almost under the muzzles of the guns. But not a man of all these brave fellows was on his feet, and so thickly were all covered with dust that they looked as if they had been reclothed in yellow.

"We bury our dead," said a gunner, grimly, though doubtless all were afterward dug out, for some were partly alive.

To a "day of danger" succeeded a "night of waking." The enemy, everywhere held back from the road, continued to stretch his line northward in the hope to overlap us and put himself between us and Chattanooga. We neither saw nor heard his movement, but any man with half a head would have known that he was making it, and we met by a parallel movement to our left. By morning we had edged along a good way and thrown up rude intrenchments at a little distance from the road, on the threatened side. The day was not very far advanced when we were attacked furiously all along the line, beginning at the left. When repulsed, the enemy came again and again--his persistence was dispiriting. He seemed to be using against us the law of probabilities: for so many efforts one would eventually succeed.

One did, and it was my luck to see it win. I had been sent by my chief, General Hazen, to order up some artillery ammunition and rode away to the right and rear in search of it. Finding an ordnance train I obtained from the officer in charge a few wagons loaded with what I wanted, but he seemed in doubt as to our occupancy of the region across which I proposed to guide them. Although assured that I had just traversed it, and that it lay immediately behind Wood's division, he insisted on riding to the top of the ridge behind which his train lay and overlooking the ground. We did so, when to my astonishment I saw the entire country in front swarming with Confederates; the very earth seemed to be moving toward us! They came on in thousands, and so rapidly that we had barely time to turn tail and gallop down the hill and away, leaving them in possession of the train, many of the wagons being upset by frantic efforts to put them about. By what miracle that

> officer had sensed the situation I did not learn, for we parted company then and there and I never again saw him.
>
> By a misunderstanding Wood's division had been withdrawn from our line of battle just as the enemy was making an assault. Through the gap of a half a mile the Confederates charged without opposition, cutting our army clean in two. The right divisions were broken up and with General Rosecrans in their midst fled how they could across the country, eventually bringing up in Chattanooga, whence Rosecrans telegraphed to Washington the destruction of the rest of his army. The rest of his army was standing its ground.

Rosecrans and his chief of staff, James Garfield, flew from the field, headed west along the Dry Valley Road to McFarland Gap, then north to Rossville. Somewhere between McFarland Gap and Rossville, possibly near the Ross House, but more likely to the south (the precise spot is not detailed), the two had a conversation that would ultimately determine not only the fate of the careers of both men, but possibly also the fate of the Battle of Chickamauga itself, and thus the course of the War.

According to Rosecrans, in his official report (members.tripod.com /~ProlificPains/chickamauga.htm):

> At the moment of the repulse of Davis' division, I was standing in rear of his right, waiting the completion of the closing of McCook's corps to the left. Seeing confusion among Van Cleve's troops, and the distance Davis' men were falling back, and the tide of battle surging toward us, the urgency for Sheridan's troops to intervene became imminent, and I hastened in person to the extreme right, to direct Sheridan's movement on the flank of the advancing rebels. It was too late. The crowd of returning troops rolled back, and the enemy advanced. Giving the troops directions to rally behind the ridge west of the Dry Valley road, I passed down it accompanied by General Garfield, Major McMichael, Major Bond, and Captain Young, of my staff, and a few of the escort, under a shower of grape, canister, and musketry, for 200 or 300 yards, and attempted to rejoin General Thomas and the troops sent to his support, by passing to the rear of the broken portion of our lines, but found the routed troops far toward the left, and hearing the enemy's advancing musketry and cheers, I became doubtful whether the left had held its ground, and started for Rossville. On consultation and further reflection, however, I determined to send General Garfield there, while I went to Chattanooga, to give orders for the security of the pontoon bridges at Battle Creek and Bridgeport, and to make preliminary dispositions either to forward ammunition and supplies, should we hold our ground, or to withdraw the troops into good position.

Apparently Rosecrans' initial inclination was to go in person back to the front to determine Thomas' situation, and to send Garfield to Chattanooga to rally the routed troops in defensive positions, but he was talked out of this course of action by his chief of staff.

Some have speculated on the motivations that Garfield may have had, perhaps seeing an opportunity for himself, particularly since he had been bad-mouthing his superior officer in secret communications, behind his back, for some time. Whatever his motivations, which may have been entirely practical and honorable, it is known that his later campaign for the U.S. presidency made much hay of his supposedly heroic ride back to the front.

It is certainly all put into grand, overly romanticized (and at times unintentionally humorous) terms by his biographer (Ridpath, 1881, pp. 154-158):

> …General Garfield dismounted, and exerted all his powers to stem the tide of retreat. Snatching a flag from a flying color-bearer, he shouted at the deaf ears of the mob. Seizing men by their shoulders he would turn them around, and then grasp others to try and form a nucleus to resist the flood. It was useless. The moment he took his hands off a man he would run.
>
> Rejoining Rosecrans, who believed that the entire army was routed, the commander said: "Garfield, what can be done?" Undismayed by the panic-stricken army crowding past him, which is said to be the most demoralizing and unnerving sight on earth, Garfield calmly said, "One of us should go to Chattanooga, secure the bridges in case of total defeat, and collect the fragments of the army on a new line. The other should make his way, if possible, to Thomas, explain the situation, and tell him to hold his ground at any cost, until the army can be rallied at Chattanooga." "Which will you do?" asked Rosecrans. "Let me go to the front," was General Garfield's instant reply. "It is dangerous," said he, "but the army and country can better afford for me to be killed than for you." They dismounted for a hurried consultation. With ear on the ground, they anxiously listened to the sound of Thomas's guns. "It is no use," said Rosecrans. "The fire is broken and irregular. Thomas is driven. Let us both hurry to Chattanooga, to save what can be saved." But General Garfield had a better ear. "You are mistaken. The fire is still in regular volleys. Thomas holds his own, and must be informed of the situation. Send orders to Sheridan, and the other commanders of the right wing, to collect the fragments of their commands and move them through Rossville, and back on the Lafayette Road, to Thomas's support." There were a few more hurried words; then a grasp of the hand and the commander and his chief of staff separated, the one to go to the rear, the other to the front. Rosecrans has said that he felt Garfield would never come back again.
>
> Then began that world-famous ride. No one knew the situation of the troops, the cause of the disaster, and the way to retrieve it like the chief of staff. To convey that priceless information to Thomas, Garfield determined to do or to die. He was accompanied by Captain Gano, who had come from General Thomas before the disaster, and knew how to reach him; besides these two, each officer had an orderly. On they galloped up the Dry Valley road, parallel with, but two miles back of, the morning's line of battle. After reaching a point opposite the left wing, they expected

to cross to General Thomas. But Longstreet's column, after passing the Union center, had turned to its right at Widow Glenn's, to march to the rear of General Thomas, and thus destroy that part of the army which still stood fighting the foe in its face. The course of Longstreet was thus parallel with the road along which Garfield galloped. At every effort to cross to the front he found the enemy between him and General Thomas.

GARFIELD'S WORLD-FAMOUS RIDE

It was a race between the rebel column and the noble steed on which Garfield rode. Up and down along the stony valley road, sparks flying from the horse's heels, two of the party hatless, and all breathless, without delay or doubt on dashed the heroes. Still the enemy was between them and Thomas. They were compelled to go almost to Rossville. At last General Garfield said: "We must try to cross now or never. In a half hour it will be too late for us to do any good." Turning sharply to their right, they found themselves in a dark-tangled forest. They were scratched and bleeding from the brier thickets and the overhanging branches. But not a rider checked his horse. General Garfield's horse seemed to catch the spirit of the race, Over ravines and fences, through an almost impenetrable undergrowth, sometimes through a marsh, and then over broken rocks, the smoking steed plunged without a quiver.

JAMES B. GARFIELD

Suddenly they came upon a cabin, a Confederate pest-house. A crowd of unfortunates, in various stages of the small-pox, were sitting and lying about the lonely and avoided place. The other riders spurred on their way, but General Garfield reined in sharply, and, calling in a kind tone to the strongest of the wrecks, asked, "Can I do any thing for you, my poor fellow?" In an instant the man gasped out, "Do not come near. It is small-pox. But for God's sake give us money to buy food." Quick as thought the great-hearted chief drew out his purse and tossed it to the man, and with a rapid but cheerful "good-bye" spurred after his companions. Crashing, tearing, plunging, rearing through the forest dashed the steed. Poet's song could not be long to celebrate that daring deed.

Twice they stopped. They were on dangerous ground. At any moment they might come upon the enemy. They were right on the ground for which Longstreet's column was headed. Which would get there first? A third time they stopped. The roar of battle was very near. They were in the greatest peril. Utterly ignorant of the course of events, since he had been driven from Widow Glenn's, General Garfield did not know but what the rebel column had passed completely to Thomas's rear and lay directly in front of them. They changed their course slightly to the left. Of his own danger Garfield never thought. The great fear in his mind was that he would fail to reach Thomas, with the order to take command of all the forces, and with the previous information of the necessity of a change of front. At last they reached a cotton field. If the enemy was near, it was almost certain death. Suddenly a rifle-ball whizzed past Garfield's face. Turning in his saddle he saw the fence

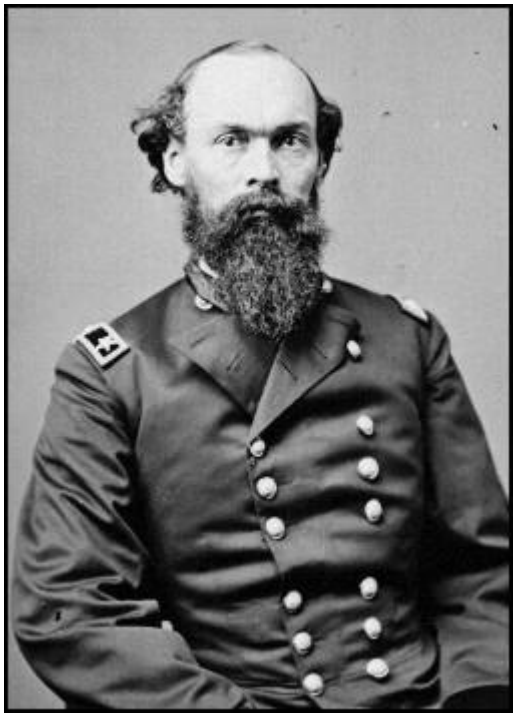
> on the right glittering with murderous rifles. A second later a shower of balls rattled around the little party. Garfield shouted, “Scatter, gentlemen, scatter,” and wheeled abruptly to the left. Along that side of the field was a ridge. If it could be reached, they were safe. The two orderlies never reached it. Captain Gano’s horse was shot through the lungs, and his own leg broken by the fall. Garfield was now the single target for the enemy. His own horse received two balls, but the noble animal kept straight on at its terrific speed. General Garfield speaking of it afterwards said that his thought was divided between poor Thomas and his young wife and child in the little home at Hiram. With a few more leaps he gained the ridge, unhurt. Captain Gano painfully crawling on the ground finally gained the ridge himself.
>
> General Thomas was still a mile away. In ten minutes Garfield was at his side, hurriedly explaining the catastrophe at noon. They stood on a knoll overlooking the field of battle. The horse which had borne Garfield on his memorable ride, dropped dead at his feet while the chief of staff told Thomas the situation. There was no time to be lost.

The tale spins on for pages longer, detailing the valor of Garfield’s deeds in the most colorful prose. Ambrose Bierce, ever the satirist, had some choice words for this description of events:

> A good deal of nonsense used to be talked about the heroism of General Garfield, who, caught in the rout of the right, nevertheless went back and joined the undefeated left under General Thomas. There was no great heroism in it; that is what every man should have done, including the commander of the army. We could hear Thomas's guns going--those of us who had ears for them--and all that was needful was to make a sufficiently wide detour and then move toward the sound. I did so myself, and have never felt that it ought to make me President. Moreover, on my way I met General Negley, and my duties as topographical engineer having given me some knowledge of the lay of the land offered to pilot him back to glory. I am sorry to say my good offices were rejected a little uncivilly, which I charitably attributed to the general's obvious absence of mind. His mind, I think, was in Nashville, behind a breastwork.

ONE POOR VICTIM of the pen of Ambrose Bierce.

Unable to find my brigade, I reported to General Thomas, who directed me to remain with him. He had assumed command of all the forces still intact and was pretty closely beset. The battle was fierce and continuous, the enemy extending his lines farther and farther around our right, toward our line of retreat. We could not meet the extension otherwise than by "refusing" our right flank and letting him inclose us; which but for gallant Gordon Granger he would inevitably have done.



GORDON GRANGER

Gordon Granger had been stationed at Rossville with his reserve troops and initially established his headquarters at the Ross House. One newspaper article describes a "semi-comic episode" that occurred while the house was under Granger's command in the days leading up to the battle (John Ross House Association, Inc., np):

> To protect the Missionary Ridge gap, Union General Gordon Granger was ordered to take his Fourth Reserve Corps to Rossville. They arrived a few days before the Battle of Chickamauga and Granger set up headquarters at the Ross House.
>
> Granger, who had "West Point ideas" and a brusque manner, did not get along well with his division commander, General James Steadman.
>
> One of Steadman's units was the 115th Illinois, called the "Second Methodist Regiment" because it contained so many Methodist ministers.
>
> Methodist ministers are widely recognized as hearty eaters. When the troops reached Rossville they were very hungry, but the supply of wagons were far behind. A rumor quickly circulated that it was all right to live off the land – a notion not approved by Granger – and the men scattered to search for food.
>
> They hit the jackpot. Beef, pork, poultry and honey were especially plentiful. So many animals were shot that Granger reportedly heard the firing and concluded that a heavy skirmish was taking place. When he learned the truth he was furious.
>
> Granger had more than 100 of the foragers arrested. They were assembled at the big spring near

> headquarters, stripped to the waist and tied. Each was to receive 39 lashes with a blacksnake whip. When a hostile looking group gathered with the apparent intention of supporting the prisoners, Granger backed down. He told Steadman to punish the men severely, and left.
>
> Steadman only scolded the men.
>
> Colonel Jesse Moore, commander of the 118th and himself a Methodist minister, was away from headquarters at the time. He was busy doing his ministerial duty to some mutton which the foragers had brought to him.
>
> When Moore heard about the predicament his men were in he rushed to headquarters to intercede for them. By the time he got there Steadman had things calmed down but Moore's effort made a big hit with his troops.
>
> For almost half the men, the incident probably provided their last fun and last good meal. A week later they would be on Snodgrass Hill, beyond all earthly needs.

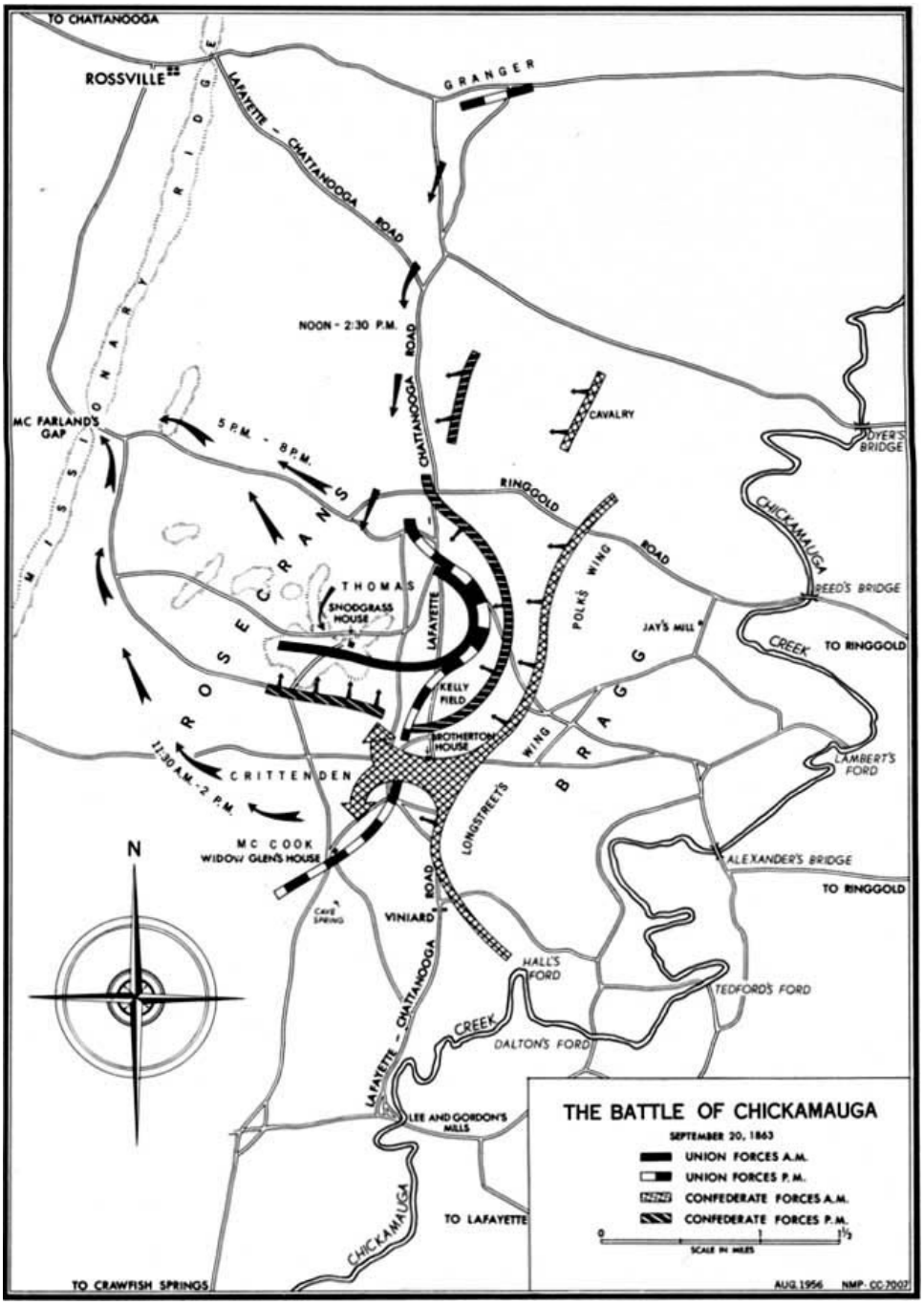
On the day of the battle, Granger and his troops proceeded through the Rossville Gap and took up a support position east of Missionary Ridge and north of the battlefield, at McAfee's Church. Though some accounts have him located at the Ross House when he famously stood on a haystack to take account of the status of the battle (ngeorgia.com/history/granger.html), such a scenario would make very little sense, since surely the haystack would not have been taller than Mission Ridge itself (and it would have had to have been in order for him to have seen the battle from that particular location).

Granger had been given strict orders not to budge – to hold the Rossville-Lafayette Road at all costs. Here is perhaps the most famous account of what ultimately caused him to disregard those orders and enter the fray, related by Granger's chief-of-staff (Johnson, 1887, p. 666):

> A silence of desertion was in the front. This quiet continued till nearly 10 o'clock; then, as the peaceful tones of the church-bells, rolling over the land from the east, reached the meridian of Chickamauga, they were made dissonant by the murderous roar of the artillery of Bishop Polk, who was opening the battle on Thomas's front. Granger, who had been ordered at all hazards to hold fast where he was, listened and grew impatient. Shortly before 10 o'clock, calling my attention to a great column of dust moving from our front toward the point from which came the sound of battle, he said, "They are concentrating over there. That is where we ought to be." The corps flag marked his headquarters in an open field near the Ringgold road. He walked up and down in front of his flag, nervously pulling his beard. Once stopping, he said, "Why the _____ does Rosecrans keep me here? There is nothing in front of us now. There is the battle"-- pointing in the direction of Thomas. Every moment the sounds of battle grew louder, while the many columns of dust rolling together here mingled with the smoke that hung over the scene.
>
> At 11 o'clock, with Granger, I climbed a high hayrick near by. We sat there for ten minutes listening and watching. Then Granger Jumped up, thrust his glass into its case, and exclaimed with an oath: "I am going to Thomas,

orders or no orders!" "And if you go," I replied, "it may bring disaster to the army and you to a court-martial." "There's nothing in our front now but ragtag, bobtail cavalry," he replied. "Don't you see Bragg is piling his whole army on Thomas? I am going to his assistance."

We quickly climbed down the rick, and, going to Steedman, Granger ordered him to move his command "over there," pointing toward the place from which came the sounds of battle.



Bierce said that Granger's assistance came none too soon:

> This was the way of it. Looking across the fields in our rear (rather longingly) I had the happy distinction of a discoverer. What I saw was the shimmer of sunlight on metal: lines of troops were coming in behind us! The distance was too great, the atmosphere too hazy to distinguish the color of their uniform, even with a glass. Reporting my momentous "find" I was directed by the general to go and see who they were. Galloping toward them until near enough to see that they were of our kidney I hastened back with the glad tidings and was sent again, to guide them to the general's position.
>
> It was General Granger with two strong brigades of the reserve, moving soldier-like toward the sound of heavy firing. Meeting him and his staff I directed him to Thomas, and unable to think of anything better to do decided to go visiting. I knew I had a brother in that gang--an officer of an Ohio battery. I soon found him near the head of a column, and as we moved forward we had a comfortable chat amongst such of the enemy's bullets as had inconsiderately been fired too high. The incident was a trifle marred by one of them unhorsing another officer of the battery, whom we propped against a tree and left. A few moments later Granger's force was put in on the right and the fighting was terrific!
>
> By accident I now found Hazen's brigade--or what remained of it--which had made a half-mile march to add itself to the unrouted at the memorable Snodgrass Hill. Hazen's first remark to me was an inquiry about that artillery ammunition that he had sent me for.
>
> It was needed badly enough, as were other kinds: for the last hour or two of that interminable day Granger's were the only men that had enough ammunition to make a five minutes' fight. Had the Confederates made one more general attack we should have had to meet them with the bayonet alone. I don't know why they did not; probably they were short of ammunition. I know, though, that while the sun was taking its own time to set we lived through the agony of at least one death each, waiting for them to come on.
>
> At last it grew too dark to fight. Then away to our left and rear some of Bragg's people set up "the rebel yell." It was taken up successively and passed round to our front, along our right and in behind us again, until it seemed almost to have got to the point whence it started. It was the ugliest sound that any mortal ever heard--even a mortal exhausted and unnerved by two days of hard fighting, without sleep, without rest, without food and without hope. There was, however, a space somewhere at the back of us across which that horrible yell did not prolong itself; and through that we finally retired in profound silence and dejection, unmolested.

It is perhaps fitting that, although the Cherokee were removed from the land, their voices still haunted these hills in the form of this "Rebel Yell," which colonial militia fighters from Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas picked up, it has been argued (Brown, 1938, p. 285), from

their military engagements with Native Americans. This "ugliest sound that any mortal ever heard" was meant to intimidate, and it worked.

GENERAL THOMAS AT CHICKAMAUGA.

Chickamauga has been described as the bloodiest two days in American history, and the following totals confirm the story:

■ Federals -- 1,657 dead, 9,756 wounded, 4,757 missing; 16,170 casualties from 58,000 troops.

■ Confederates -- 2,312 dead, 14,674 wounded, 1,468 missing; 18,545 casualties from 66,000 troops.

The Federal troops withdrew to the Ross House, by way of McFarland Gap. Troops established fortifications along Missionary Ridge to block the Confederate advance. They also hastily set up wire communications at the house (Wyeth, 1899, p. 258):

Some troops were engaged in the task of gathering up their fallen comrades. John Sanders, of Company B in the 84th Illinois Infantry Regiment remembered (http://www.chickamaugacampaign.net/walker/tom-mcfarland-house.html):

> When we started back that evening we got William Bost and John Brant of our Co. and carried them back about four miles to a house where our doctors had established a hospital and left them there and went on to Rossville about four miles further. Next morning I with some others went back to get them and bring them to Rossville, but William Bost was not able to be moved. We carried John Brant back to Rossville and left him in the old Ross House. The house is still standing there yet. I have visited it since the war. It is one of the landmarks of the war. William Bost was captured by the rebels and paroled and got well of his wound, but John Brant died.

Jewel S. Stafford (1982) asserts that "…a part of the John Ross House was used for hospital purposes to both the Northern and Southern soldiers. It was for this reason that the John Ross House was not burned…"

Those who weren't tending to the wounded were engaged in shoring up defensive positions around the Ross House. From the diary of E.G. Whitesides, Adjutant, 125th Ohio Volunteer Infantry (http://home.earthlink.net/~nhaldane/wside-diary.html):

> Monday 21. Arose at 6 A.M. after a rest of four hours. Before breakfast could be had we were ordered into position in front of Rossville on Missionary Ridge, where we built breastworks of rails and stones and lay in position all day. Some skirmishing on our front in the morning. One of the boys of Co. F wounded in the leg. They attempted to shell us off the ridge in the afternoon but the shells all passed over our heads. At 9 P.M. we retired towards Chattanooga.

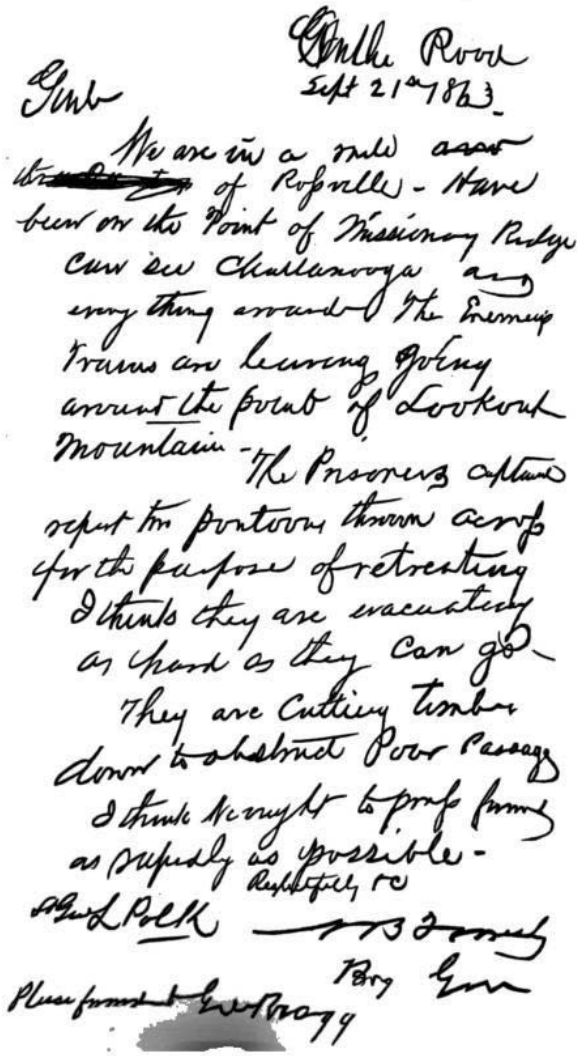
This assault on the Federal position was made by a cavalry charge led by Gen. Nathan B. Forrest. It was Monday, Sept. 21, as related in his biography (Wyeth, 1899, pp. 258-263):

> …Gen. Forrest, with a strong advance guard from Armstrong's brigade, and accompanied by this latter general, moved forward on the Lafayette Road towards Chattanooga. When nearing Rossville they came upon a rear-guard of Federal cavalry, seeing which Forrest remarked, "Armstrong, let's give them a dare." He immediately ordered a charge, and the two generals, at the head of some four hundred Confederate cavalry, at full speed rode down upon the Union troopers, who fired a volley and fled in the direction of Chattanooga. Forrest's horse was fatally wounded by this volley, a Minie ball passing through his neck and severing one of the large arteries. The blood spurted from the divided vessel, seeing which Forrest leaned forward in the saddle, inserted the index-finger of his hand into the wound, and thus, stanching the hemorrhage, the animal was still able to carry his rider onward with the troops pursuing the Federals. As soon as the field was cleared, Forrest, removing his finger from the wound, dismounted,when his noble charger sank to the earth and was soon lifeless.

GEN. FORREST on horseback.

General Armstrong says that just as the pursuit ceased he and Forrest found themselves on the point of a knoll or spur of Missionary Ridge, and that, looking up in a clump of oak trees, they saw three or four Federals perched in the timber upon little wooden platforms, where they had evidently been placed with field-glasses for purposes of observation. So rapid had been Forrest's advance that these men of the signal corps had no time to descend from their perches and escape. He called to them to climb down, which they immediately did. Taking a pair of glasses from one of the prisoners, he then climbed the tree, from the top of which he had a full sweep of the Chattanooga valley, of the town, Lookout Mountain, the Tennessee River, and Walden's Ridge to the far north.

From this perch in the tree-top he dictated to Major Charles W. Anderson the celebrated dispatch, an engraving of which is here presented, for which I am indebted to Dr. William M. Polk, of New York, who found it among his distinguished father's effects after his death. It was written upon a pale-blue sheet of paper, evidently torn out of a pocket memorandum-book. By pulling taut on the stirrup and holding it up high, the flat leather shield of this part of the saddle served as a table to support the paper as the despatch was written out. The switching of the horse's tail and the movement of his feet and legs, as he stamped to disengage the flies which were fretting him, will account for the staggering chirography…



Genl Rossville Road
Sept 21st 1863.

Genl

We are in a mile or so of Rossville - Have been on the Point of Missionary Ridge can see Chattanooga and every thing around The Enemy Trains are leaving going around the point of Lookout Mountain - The Prisoners captured report the pontoons thrown across for the purpose of retreating I think they are evacuating as hard as they can go - They are cutting timber down to obstruct Poor Passage I think we ought to press forward as rapidly as possible -

Respectfully yr
Genl L Polk

Bry Genl

Please forward to Genl Bragg

DID THIS NOTE change the outcome of the War?

The letter stated, in part:

Rossville Road
Sept. 21st, 1863.

Genl

We are in a mile or so of Rossville. Have been on the Point of Missionary Ridge can see Chattanooga and every thing around. The Enemy Trains are leaving … I think they are evacuating as hard as they can go…

GEN. NATHAN B. FORREST

"It was that despatch that fixed the fate of the Confederacy," said General James Longstreet in 1896 (Wyeth, 1899, p. 260). While the Confederates had contemplated crossing the Tennessee River and vigorously pursuing the Federals into Chattanooga, they now felt confident in their victory and were therefore more lax in their pursuit. This would later prove to be a costly mistake.

Forrest shelled Thomas' position for several hours, but the Federals would not budge and continued to fortify their position. Forrest made camp on the ridge while, under cover of darkness, the Union troops limped back to Chattanooga.

A portion of the Army of Tennessee entrenched upon the western foot of Missionary Ridge following the nighttime retreat of the Federals, while the remainder surrounded Chattanooga and began a siege that was to last for two months.

When the Federals finally decided in late November to force their way southeast, the Ross House would again play the role of guardian at threshold.

Although Bragg's troops now had the tactical advantage, with their main lines entrenched at Missionary Ridge, his command was in disarray, with his troops bordering on mutiny. President Jefferson Davis himself was forced to pay a personal visit to sort out the problems (Wilson, 2000).

Bragg's headquarters was not at the Ross House, but atop Missionary Ridge, which afforded a placid view stood in stark contrast to the anguish suffered by the starving, louse-ridden troops. Bragg wrote to his wife (Wilson, 2000):

> Just underneath my headquarters are the lines of the two armies, and beyond their outposts and signal stations are the Lookout, Raccoon and Waldron mountains. At night all are brilliantly lit up in the most gorgeous manner, by the myriad of campfires. No fairy scene in the most splendid theater ever approached it. From my door, we can see it for miles on miles, right, left, front and rear. Many persons, and some who have traveled much, say it surpasses any sight they ever witnessed.

On Nov. 24, the new Union commander, Ulysses S. Grant, ordered an assault on the Confederate position. It was Hooker who would lead a prong of that attack first to Lookout Mountain, and then along the Rossville Road to Rossville. "General Hooker was … directed to move on the Rossville road with the troops under his command …, carry the pass at Rossville, and operate upon the enemy's left and rear," Gen. Thomas said in his report on the battle (www.civilwarhome.com/thomaschattanooga)

"In retiring on the night of the 24th, the enemy had destroyed the bridges over Chattanooga Creek on the road leading from Lookout Mountain to Rossville, and, in consequence, General Hooker was delayed until after 2 p.m. in effecting the crossing of the creek," he reported.

By the time Hooker arrived at Rossville, ill-prepared Confederate troops were already in a panic all along Missionary Ridge.

"In moving upon Rossville, General Hooker encountered Stewart's division and other troops. Finding his left flank threatened, Stewart attempted to escape by retreating toward Graysville, but some of his force, finding their retreat threatened from that quarter, retired in disorder toward their right, along the crest of the ridge, when they were met by another portion of General Hooker's command, and were driven by these troops in the face of Johnson's division of Palmer's corps, by whom they were nearly all made prisoners," reported Thomas.

The following comes from Hooker's report (www.swcivilwar.com/HookerChatt.html), detailing the entire advance, from the top of Lookout Mountain, across Chattanooga Creek, all the way to Rossville and Missionary Ridge:

> An impenetrable mist still covered the face of the valley. Prisoners reported that the enemy had abandoned it, but, deeming it imprudent to descend, a reconnaissance was ordered, and soon after 9 o'clock report came in that the rebels had retired, but that their pickets still held the right bank of Chattanooga Creek, in the direction of Rossville. Soon after the fog vanished, and nothing was to be seen in the valley but the deserted and burning camps of the enemy.
>
> Among the fruits of the preceding operations may be enumerated the concentration of the army, the abandonment of defenses upward of 8 miles in extent, the recovery of all the advantages in position the enemy had gained from our army on the bloody field of Chickamauga, giving to us the undisputed navigation of the river and the control of the railroad, the capture of between 2,000 and

3,000 prisoners, 5 stand of colors, 2 pieces of artillery, upward of 5,000 muskets, &c.

Of the troops opposed to us were four brigades of Walker's division, Hardee's corps, a portion of Stewart's division of Breckinridge's corps, and on the top of the mountain were three brigades of Stevensons division.

In conformity with orders, two regiments were dispatched to hold the mountain, Carlin's brigade directed to await orders on the Summertown road, and at 10 o'clock my column, Osterhaus (being nearest the road) leading, marched for Rossville.

On arriving at Chattanooga Creek it was discovered that the enemy had destroyed the bridge, and, in consequence, our pursuit was delayed nearly three hours. As soon as the stringers were laid, Osterhaus managed to throw over the Twenty-seventh Missouri Regiment, and soon after all of his infantry. The former deployed, pushed forward as skirmishers to the gorge in Missionary Ridge, and drew the fire of the artillery and infantry holding it, and also discovered that the enemy was attempting to cover a train of wagons loading with stores at the Rossville house.

As the position was one presenting many advantages for defense, the skirmishers were directed to keep the enemy engaged in front, while Woods' brigade was taking the ridge on the right, and four regiments of Williamson's on the left. Two other regiments of this brigade were posted on the road leading to Chattanooga to prevent surprise. In executing these duties the troops were necessarily exposed to the enemy's artillery, but as soon as it was discovered that his flanks were being turned and his retreat threatened, he hastily evacuated the gap, leaving behind large quantities of artillery and small-arm ammunition, wagons, ambulances, and a house full of commissary stores. Pursuit was made as far as consistent with my instructions to clear Missionary Ridge…

The enemy had selected for his advance line of defense the breastworks thrown up by our army on its return from Chickamauga, but such was the impetuosity of our advance that his front line was routed before an opportunity was afforded him to prepare for a determined resistance. Many of the fugitives, to escape, ran down the east slope to the lines of Osterhaus, a few to the west, and were picked up by Geary. The bulk of them, however, sought refuge behind the second line, and they, in their turn, were soon routed, and the fight became almost a running one. Whenever the accidents of the ground enabled the rebels to make an advantageous stand, Geary and Osterhaus, always in the right place, would pour a withering fire into their flanks, and again the race was renewed. This continued until near sunset, when those of the enemy who had not been killed or captured gave way, and in attempting to escape along the ridge, ran into the arms of Johnson's division, of the Fourteenth Corps, and were captured.

Our enemy, the prisoners stated, was Stewart's division. But few escaped. Osterhaus atone captured 2,000 of them. This officer names the Fourth Iowa, Seventy-sixth Ohio, and Twenty-seventh Missouri Regiments as having been especially distinguished in this engagement. Landgraeber's battery of howitzers also rendered brilliant service on this field.

> Here our business for the day ended, and the troops went into bivouac, with cheers and rejoicings, which were caught up by other troops in the vicinity and carried along the ridge until lost in the distance.
>
> Soon after daylight every effort was made, by reconnaissance and inquiry, to ascertain the whereabouts of the enemy, but to no purpose. The field was as silent as the grave.

The Ross House – which according to the Hooker report was being used as a Confederate commissary -- would remain in Federal hands throughout the remainder of the war, but would lose its strategic importance as the Confederate forces retreated farther and farther south. What had been a site of national significance, first as the home of Cherokee Chief John Ross and later as a pivotal location in a war that would determine the fate of a nation, would for the next century be of significance mainly to the McFarlands, who lived there, and to the people of the town of Rossville, who considered the house as the "place of emergence" for the growing town.

North Georgia's "Most Historic Home," Nearly Lost to Oblivion

The Civil War had left the Rossville area virtually a barren wasteland. Private Frederick Charles Buerstatte (http://www.russscott.com/~rscott/26thwis/fredbdia.htm), when traveling through Rossville on May 2, 1864, said, "We came to Missionary Ridge battlefield .... The roadside was full of graves and the cannonballs and rifle balls were buried in the trees."

Photographs taken by George Barnard (1866) following the battle show a devastated landscape, bereft of trees, with the Ross House virtually the only thing left standing.

THE BARNARD PHOTO OF THE ROSS HOUSE

One photograph in particular shows the Ross House at the far right and, in the foreground, numerous stumps reveal the Federal soldiers' "willingness to work," as a September 21, 1938 newspaper caption in the *Chattanooga Free Press* wryly states. One upshot was that the troops had

"hewed the trees (so) industriously" that it "made it unnecessary to 'clear' any land' when the town was reconstructed following the war.

CHATTANOOGA FREE PRESS, CHATTANOOGA, TENN., WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1938.

Making Way for Rossville

Here's an interesting wartime view of the spot on which Rossville is now located. The trees on the side of the ridge look very much as they do today. The stumps in the foreground show how the Federal soldiers, whose willingness to work Dr. McCallie praises so highly, hewed the trees industribusly and made it unnecessary to "clear" any land to build Rossville some years later. The John Ross House, very much as it stands today, is vaguely discernable at the right of the picture.

The McFarlands, like other families in the valley, seem to have evacuated the area in advance of the arrival of the troops. According to Dantzler (Walker County History Committee, 1984, p. 270):

> Mr. Xzanders Gordon McFarland … was a slave holder so when the Civil War took his two oldest sons into the army, he gathered his slaves, his four teenage daughters and his stock and went to South Georgia for safety.

Nothing is specifically stated about Thomas G. McFarland and his family in Dantzler's report, but in the Stafford history of Rossville one can find the following tale:

> Elizabeth McFarland, like many southern women, helped to nurse the sick and wounded, until she became ill with camp fever. Thomas G. was very depressed over the death of his wife. Late in 1863, with his six motherless children it was necessary, for their protection, gathered his few remaining slaves and started the long wagon trek to Thomas County in the southern part of Georgia. The cannons roared so near he hastily gathered family possessions together, plus food and clothing to carry them through.
>
> The McFarland family returned to the area soon after the Civil War ended. In the spring of 1876, on a bleak cold day, he came face to face with what remained of his home and land. He was no longer a young man when he realized he was burdened with security debts to the men he had befriended, many of whom the war had impoverished. Thomas G. was forced to sell 640 acres of his land here to pay those debts.

Despite the harsh circumstances, the McFarlands ultimately returned and began the arduous task of rebuilding their infant settlement and restoring their "most excellent" and "pure and fertile valley" to its former verdancy.

Ironically, the McFarland brothers, Thomas and Xzander, besides being in the mercantile business together and living within two miles of one another, also both served in the Georgia General Assembly and had voted *against* secession. But "when their state seceded they espoused the cause of the South wholeheartedly, every member of the CLAN from 16 to 35 joining the 'STARS AND BARS,'" William Crawford McFarland reported in a 1932 (Sartain, p. 414) Walker County history.

One of Xzander's 10 children with Lucy A. Boyle of Chattooga County—Chappell McFarland – had been killed at the battle of Missionary Ridge.

Xzander's younger brother, Thomas, had married Elizabeth Anderson of Sequatchie Valley, Tennessee in about 1846 and they had six children. Their eldest son, Anderson, not only served in the Civil War but also served as the first mayor of Rossville. Anderson's younger brothers, Foster and John McFarland, also served as Rossville mayors. Thomas in his later years participated in the 1877 Georgia Constitutional Convention.

A poem written for a "spend-the-day visit at May Crow's" in about 1942, stated, "McFarlands and Rossville mean one and the same, for far and wide is known that name." (http://mywebpages.comcast.net/c24m48b/mywebpages2/obrien/b734.html)

Dantzler (Walker County History Committee, 1984, p. 271) said that the McFarlands, for the most part, "moved to Walker County soon after it was organized and raised their families in or around Rossville. It would be very hard to separate The McFarlands from Rossville, or Rossville from the McFarlands," as family members gave their name to "churches, streets, road gaps, lakes, buildings, etc."

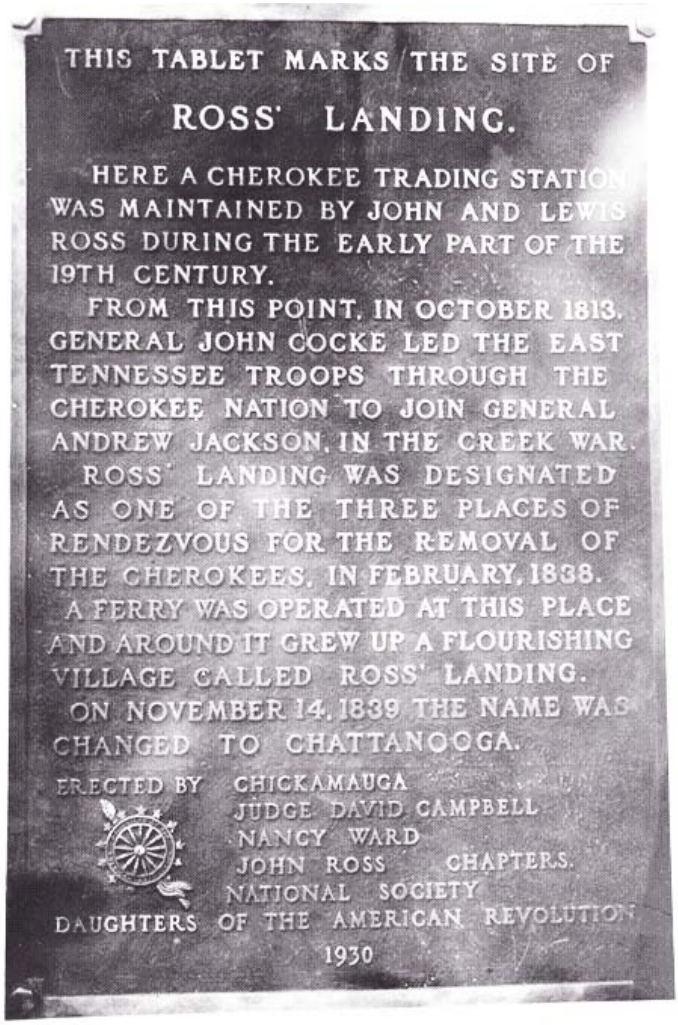
Xzander's grandson, William Crawford McFarland, wrote that the two brothers, "though opposite in a number of ways, ... lived and worked in cordial relationship for over half a century, serving their community, their county and state, until the autumn of 1877, at the ripe old age of 85 and 84, they were gathered to their fathers" (Sartain, 414).

THE ROSS HOUSE as rendered in 1875 by Edward King and James Wells Champney (King, 1875). This picture, which was widely distributed in newspapers, was likely the source for some of the confusion regarding the location of the eastern chimney at the Ross House (the fencing may also be inaccurate since later photographs show a "worm fence," which was much more common in the South than the fence shown here). If one studies the actual photographs carefully, one will notice that each and every one of them, from the period of the Civil War to the time of the home's relocation in 1963, shows the left-hand (eastern) chimney imbedded in the structure of the home, and not on the far end, as pictured here. The only time the chimney would have been located at the far left end of the home would have been before the addition was tacked on, sometime in the 30-year period between the time of Removal (1838) and the Civil War (1864).

As Rossville and Chattanooga grew, the Ross House became more and more a relic of the past. But it seemingly never lost its association with the Ross family in the public mind.

In 1930, in fact, Ross' grandson Robert Bruce Ross, 82, of Park Hill, OK was invited by Penelope Johnson Allen and the Daughters of the American Revolution to Rossville and Chattanooga to participate in the unveiling of the Market Street Bridge marker commemorating the location of Ross' Landing. Robert Bruce Ross had served as a personal secretary of John Ross and "attended him on many of his official appearances in Washington" during his final years as chief, descendants claimed.

THE ROSS HOUSE, early 20th century.



The *Chattanooga Sunday Times* on Mar. 23, 1930 reported, "GRANDSON OF ROSS MUCH ENTERTAINED" and that the ""Scion of Famous Cherokee Ruler" was the "Object of Attention" as he spent a week touring "points of historic interest … with courtesies which many residents and organizations are seeking to bestow upon him."

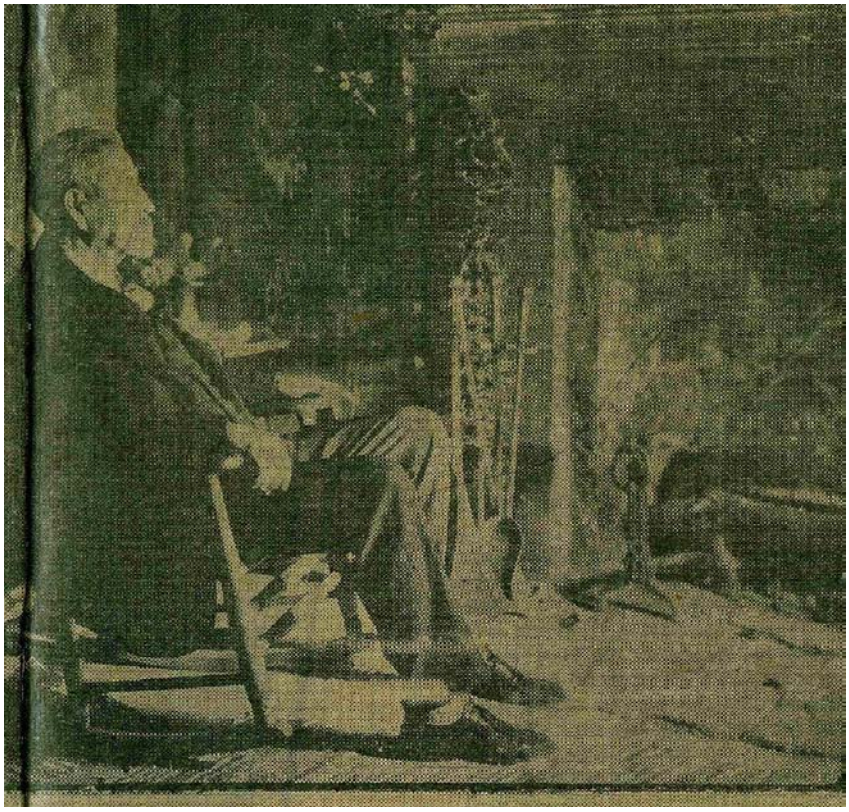
The DAR chapter members treated Ross with deference, as "devoted granddaughters" would treat a "stately grandfather," the newspaper reported. Ross accepted "all the attention and courtesies being showered upon him," they said, explaining:

> He is quiet and reserved … He is tall and venerable. In face and figure, he shows traces of both his Scotch and his Indian ancestry. While not talkative, he is friendly and frequently his remarks and replies display a sense of humor.

One place Ross visited was the Ross House, and this may have marked the first return of a Ross family member to the old Ross abode since the Removal, nearly a century earlier.

Walter Cline took a picture of Ross sitting by the fire in what local residents had dubbed the "council chamber" of the house. The picture carried with it the following caption:

> As he sits he dreams of the long ago past, when his people of the Cherokee Indian tribes lived happily in this valley and when Chief John Ross was a figure of importance and vigor in the councils of the Cherokees, foremost of the Indian tribes…
>
> And as he dreams, there appears in the wood smoke as it rises from the cheery old log fire a vision of the noble John Ross.



Descendant Mary Ross, who was supposed to accompany her grandfather on his trip east, said that it was her "favorite picture" of him. It achieved a special poignancy due to the fact that Ross "lived only a few days after his return" to Oklahoma, she said. The newspaper called the photo "Dreaming of Days of Cherokee Splendor." (John Ross House Association, np).

A copy of the photograph was given to Mrs. R. B. Cooke at a DAR luncheon she hosted for Ross during his visit. The newspaper reported:

> Mrs. Cooke, in responding fervently to the gift, said that it would be another treasure to place in the old Ross house. She recalled that she had played there as a child 10 years old, told a number of entertaining little incidents which have linked her interest to it since days when it stood alone in a forest with not another house in sight. She said earnestly that she had never enjoyed living anywhere as much as within its stories walls and asked that everyone interested in history help her to preserve it as a monument to the past.

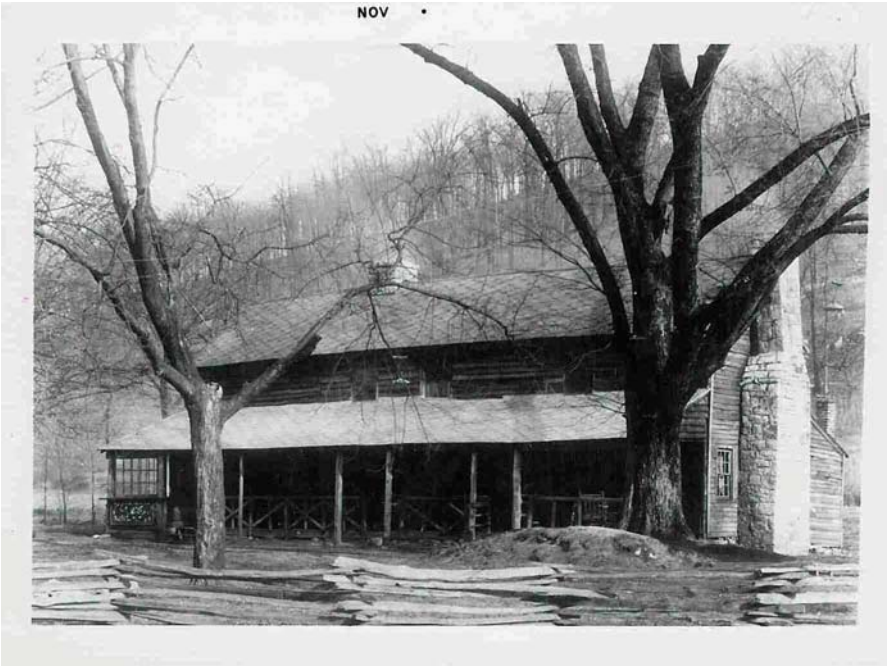
Ross then stated that his father, Allen Ross, had been born at the Ross House.

Foster V. McFarland, son of Thomas G. McFarland, was also a guest at the luncheon (His younger brother John had inherited the house from their father, but he had died in 1911.) He "greeted Mr. Ross and told him that he had been born in the Ross house, his father having bought it

from Chief Ross. He stated that he is perhaps the oldest white person now living who had been born in the Ross house, being now 77 years old."

Foster then "conducted Mr. Ross and the other guests through the house and related many interesting facts and traditions about the place."

The association of the McFarland house with John Ross dated from a very early period and even from Ross family sources. Besides John B. Gordon's and John Sanders' early accounts and McFarland oral history, along with the Mary Scales evaluations, previously related, a nephew of Chief Ross wrote a letter that was published locally in the April 10, 1920 edition of *The Lookout*, drawing a direct connection with his uncle to the home of the McFarlands.



THE ROSS HOUSE, undated photo.

Ross "lived in the log cabin at McFarland's at Rossville," the nephew, William P. Ross (1920), plainly states. (It should be mentioned, however, that in the same sentence he erroneously cites Ross' birthplace as Lookout Mountain, while most reliable sources place Ross' birth at Turkey Town.)

The "interesting letter," coming from "Muskogee, Indian Territory," was "received some years ago by a well-known Chattanoogan," the lead of the story cryptically relates.

The nephew states that Ross' grandfather, John McDonald, was "an Indian trader from the clan of McDonald of the Highland Chiefs, Inverness, Scotland," and that his grandmother was "Anna Shorey of the Cherokee Bird Clan."

The nephew interestingly and erroneously states that the "good influence of John McDonald saved American lives in the War of the

Revolution and, after the war, from the hands of Spanish Indian warriors or raiders in the valleys and mountains of Tennessee." In fact, as McDonald's letters clearly illustrate, McDonald was allied with the British and the Chickamaugas *against* the Americans, even to the extent of leading military expeditions against them (Pate, 1969, pp. 88 and 91-93; Coker, 1986). Also, rather than saving Americans from Spanish-allied Indians following the war, as the nephew seems to believe, McDonald was in fact acting as a Spanish agent and supplying these "raiders" with guns and ammunition.

He continues to frame McDonald as a hero in his colorful retelling of the rescue of young Daniel Ross from Bloody Fellow:

> It is reported to me that John McDonald saved the life of Daniel Ross, a young Scotchman who came from Sutherlandshire, Scotland, and in crossing the ocean when a boy his mother died on the water and was buried in the sea. And Daniel Ross, an orphan boy, landed in Baltimore, Maryland. And coming to manhood he joined Mayberry's Trading Expedition down the Tennessee River, who, at Citico Landing, were met by a party or war party of Spaniards and Indians under War Leader Bloody Fellow and would have scalped them had not John McDonald, the Highland Chief, stopped the warriors. He claimed John Ross as his countryman, whom he made a clerk in his trading store and gave in time his Cherokee daughter, Mollie McDonald, to be the bride of Daniel Ross who became a merchant and started and paid a private school at Chickamauga for the education of his children, one of whom was John Ross, who learned the lessons of reading, writing, arithmetic…

Nowhere in the letter does the nephew state that it was McDonald who built the John Ross House, or that it was constructed in 1797.

The myth of McDonald, the "heroic Highland Chief," and the establishment of the John Ross House was soon afterward developed and expanded upon by a number of writers, especially Rachel Caroline Eaton, a woman of Cherokee ancestry who selected John Ross as the subject for her dissertation, followed by local residents Zella Armstrong, J. Sartain, and, perhaps most significantly, Penelope Johnson Allen. Ruskin, although she initially attributed Brown alone for her historical "facts," may have later directly or indirectly drawn on most or all of these stories for her mythos that she presented as a forceful public relations campaign tool to save, preserve, and restore the house in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Eaton's dissertation appeared in book form in 1914. The account repeats the tale of young Daniel Ross' rescue from the Bloody Fellow by McDonald and is perhaps the earliest source for a humorous tale that was oft-repeated in later years (sometimes erroneously relocated to the Chattanooga / Rossville area) about a young John Ross attending a Green Corn Ceremony in Wills Town and being taunted by young Cherokee boys as being an "Unaka," or "white boy," after which time he insisted on wearing proper Indian clothing (Eaton, 1921, pp. 3-4). But, for our

purposes, it is perhaps most interesting to note what it fails to mention; namely it makes no mention of the Ross House at all, instead only stating vaguely that Ross and McDonald "travelled in different parts of the Cherokee Nation, establishing trading posts and conducting successful business enterprises." (She does state that Ross lived in Rossville, but she also blurs all distinctions of geography by stating that it was his "father's home" [Eaton, 1921, p. 21] in which he lived and that Rossville, in fact, later became known as Chattanooga.)

Eaton (1921, pp. 3-4) does contribute one element that would become grafted into the mythology of the house at a late date, however, by describing the process whereby Daniel Ross decided to establish a school in his home:

> …(T)he problem of educating his children began seriously to concern Daniel Ross. There were no schools in the Cherokee Nation and, because of hostility between the Indians and the backsettlers, there was great hesitancy on the part of conservative chiefs to adopt any European customs. A few of the more progressive members of the tribe, however, were beginning to realize that in order to cope successfully with the white man they must understand his language, customs and laws. The broader policy prevailed in the great council to which Ross presented a request to establish a school on his own premises, and import a schoolmaster. The request was granted. John Barber Davis was employed as teacher, and the school, started about the end of the eighteenth century, was the beginning of a new era in the history of the tribe. It was in this school and under this schoolmaster that John Ross laid the foundation for good English, both oral and written, which is his later life often astonished statesmen, baffled politicians, and served him well in his long career in Cherokee national affairs.

Eaton (1921, p. 3) does not place the school at the Ross House, or even in the Chattanooga Valley area, but rather hundreds of miles away in Maryville, TN.

Zella Armstrong, an editor and writer for *The Lookout* in the 1920s, followed suit when she stitched together an early mythology of the Ross and McDonald connections with the area; but she, too, fails to mention any link between McDonald and the construction of the Ross House, and neither does she mention a construction date of 1797.

An article called "Some Interesting John Ross History" that appeared in the Nov. 3, 1923 edition of *The Lookout* painted the following picture:

> …John McDonald, the father of Mollie, was living about fifteen miles from Sitico … We know the spot by the same pronounciation (sic) but different spelling …
>
> A few years after the birth of John, his father, Daniel Ross, moved away from the settlement which is now our own county, to the Maryville district, because schools there were excellent and he desired his little family

> to have the best education possible. This section was still in Indian territory while Maryville was already a settled community with the advantages of schools and churches. From Maryville John and Lewis Ross were sent to Kingston to school where they evidently had more advanced opportunities. They spent their teens in this small city, though then it was a thriving town, and one of the most important points in Tennessee. In Kingston they worked in a grocery store while continuing their studied and learned business methods that proved invaluable in later years.
>
> They decided to go in business for themselves while still young and selected for their enterprise a place farther down the river from Kingston where they could visualize an opportunity as many a man has since visualized fame and fortune at that place they chose in such quiet assurance of success, we know as our beloved Chattanooga.
>
> They set up a warehouse to store their goods and they established a landing place on the mighty Tennessee and then they established their own homes nearby … From this beginning we have the names of our early history, Ross' Landing, Ross' Warehouse, and Rossville, or Village, and Ross' Road, or, as we know it, Rossville Road. This was the beginning of Chattanooga's commerce.

It's very interesting to note that, although McDonald is specifically referenced, he is in no way connected with the construction of the Ross House, and it is *in fact implied that the house was built by Ross himself and wasn't begun until after John Ross finished his studies in Kingston.* This would put the construction date in the early 19th century rather than in the late 18th century.

THE JOHN ROSS HOUSE in 1924.

In his 1932 history of Walker County, James Alfred Sartain (1932, p. 10) puts into print for the first time, apparently, the assertion that it was McDonald who built what later became known as the Ross House:

> John McDonald … married an Indian woman and established himself at Rossville where he built what is now called the "Ross House" …
>
> When he reached his majority, John Ross fell heir to his father's patrimony and lived in the house his grandfather had built, still standing at Rossville. This he improved and enlarged and made it his home till his people were driven from their fatherland and sent west of the Great River.

It's worth noting that Sartain calls the inheritance "his father's patrimony." As previously stated, Cherokee society would have had inheritance coming down through the mother, and this would have clearly been the case in this instance. It's also worth noting, again, that a 1797 construction date is not mentioned.

Sartain gets almost every historical fact wrong. He implies that McDonald immediately established himself at Rossville following his marriage to an "Indian woman." His wife was half-white and they lived on Chickamauga Creek in the earliest years of their marriage, not at Rossville.

There's no evidence that Ross "improved and enlarged" an existing home or "room." It will be shown in an upcoming chapter that the enlargement of the house occurred many years after Ross left the home.

Lastly, Ross did not "make it his home till his people were driven from their fatherland." Ross moved to Head of Coosa in 1827 and remained there for about seven years, then moved again to the Red Clay, TN area, where he remained until the Removal to the West.

Penelope Johnson Allen (1936) probably following Sartain, attributed McDonald with the construction of a "room" of the Ross House, in a 1936 article for a Chattanooga newspaper. However, she puts the construction of the "room" at 1770, which is clearly wrong, since American troops burned Chickamauga Town and all nearby buildings in 1779. McDonald's commissary, in fact, would have been their prime target, and it was in fact located on Chickamauga Creek and not at what is now Rossville.

PENELOPE JOHNSON ALLEN

Allen had motivation to construct a good tale for the Ross House, since it was apparently being threatened by the construction of a "filling station." The preamble for the article pointed out the stakes:

> The recent proposal to erect a filling station near the old John Ross House in Rossville has brought this historic building back into the news columns. Mrs. Allen has prepared this article to make clear just what is the history of this one-time home of the great Cherokee chief.

Allen calls the home an "ancient edifice" and says that the "oldest part of the house is said to be a room which was erected by John McDonald when he selected this site for a trading post about the year 1770." She gives no source for this information, but possibly it was Sartain.

> In choosing the location of his new trading post, the canny Scotchman was probably influenced by the abundance of game in this region and its geographical advantages. For as far back as 1770, from the gap where Trader McDonald built his log cabin, the great war and trading path of the Indians ran north and south, and intersecting paths led east and west which gave access to the coast in two directions and tapped a country which yielded rich revenue to those doing business with the native Americans.

She acknowledges that McDonald fled to the western side of Lookout Mountain following the defeat of the British in the Revolution, but says that "ABOUT the year 1800, John McDonald moved with his family back to his first location, which was then called Poplar Spring, and here he and his wife lived the rest of their days."

Allen, again, provides no sources for this information. As previously noted, it is extremely unlikely that any buildings erected by McDonald prior to the Revolution would have still been in existence following the Revolution, and – again -- these would have been at Chickamauga Creek, not at Rossville.

Allen is also the first person, apparently, to provide an account of young John Ross having been a "great favorite with his grandparents." After the death of his mother, she claims, Ross "went to make his home with them." Again, no source is provided.

Allen continues the tale:

> John McDonald, was advancing in age and the management of the trading post in the gap was turned over to this promising young grandson, who was later to become the great leader of his people.
>
> At some point during this period a four and a half-story hewn log building was erected for a storehouse in which the business of John McDonald and his grandson, John Ross, was carried on. This old building stood on the roadside just where the old gate in front of the house entered and some of its foundation stones were to be seen as late as the nineties.

During the valuations in 1834 no such massive "four and half-story" warehouse was noted, although a much smaller storehouse, converted into a residence, was claimed. As previously explained, this was likely the residence that Mr. and Mrs. McDonald moved to following the sale of their plantation on Chickamauga Creek to the Brainerd Mission. Allen makes no mention of McDonald having lived on Chickamauga Creek, admitting only that McDonald sold to Brainerd some "cleared land

… a few miles distant from his house (at Rossville)." The Brainerd journal entries make it quite clear that McDonald was in fact living on Chickamauga Creek, in a finished house, when they purchased the place in 1817. In fact, in 1818 the place is also described as having included a grist mill, a saw mill powered by a canal, a "commodius barn," and several other buildings. (Walker, 1993, pp. 105-107).

Allen also discusses in this 1936 article the origin of the Rossville Post Office:

> On April 1, 1817, the United States government established a postoffice at the McDonald place which was officially named Rossville and John Ross was appointed postmaster.
>
> THE postoffice at Rossville received a semi-weekly mail by stage from Nashville, Tenn., to Augusta, Ga., and it has been handed down by old settlers that twelve horses were required to haul the stage coach with its passengers and baggage over the point of Lookout mountain.

Allen repeated Sartain's contention that John Ross "enlarged the house which his grandfather built." It was Ross who "added the 'council-chamber,' twenty-three feet long, which for years had only one door to it. As a precautionary measure, he later added two other doors, one of which opened into his bedroom which occupied the center of the house."

In this bedroom "an old-fashioned hanging mantel shelf occupies the space above the fireplace," Allen said.

In later years, local residents would claim that the top story on the opposite side of the house – only 16 x 16 -- was the "secret council chamber, rather than the room Allen appears to be describing.

Also, the swinging mantel Allen describes in this article is not in the center upstairs bedroom but was on the first floor, in the living room, according to the current president of the John Ross House Association, Larry Rose.

John P. Brown published his famous book, *Old Frontiers*, in 1938, along with an essay the same year, using much of the same information, in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 32). His contribution to the mythology was the following, used in footnote 33 of the article:

> John Ross was born at Kanagatugi, Turkey Town, on Coosa River opposite the present Center, Ala., Cherokee County, in 1791. Ann Shorey, daughter of William Shorey, interpreter at Fort Loudoun, and a Cherokee woman, married John McDonald, British Agent at Chickamauga. Their daughter, Mollie McDonald, married Daniel Ross, a trader among the Cherokees. Chief John Ross was their third son. At the time of his birth, the lower Cherokees were at war with the Americans. McDonald, at the close of the Revolution in 1783, had made arrangements with the English trading firm Panton-Leslie & Co. at Pensacola to secure supplies for the Cherokees. To that end, he located at Turkey Town, which was on the main trail to Pensacola, that he might keep the supplies coming regularly. About 1797, after conclusion of peace, he moved to what is now Rossville, Ga., and built the house still standing, where Chief Ross grew up. Ross was well educated, by private tutor; at the Presbyterian school maintained by

Rev. Gideon Blackburn at Kingston; and at a seminary at Maryville now known as Hiwassee College.

The accretions to this early mythology of Eaton, Armstrong, Sartain, Brown, and especially Allen, would steadily build and fully emerge as a complete epic tale, fit for pageantry, just in time for Ruskin's campaign to save the structure in the 1950s and 1960s.

ROSSVILLE at the turn of the century.

As for the town itself, Rossville was given an official city charter from the state of Georgia in 1905, the same year that Peerless Woolen Mills was established. The mill, begin by John L. Hutcheson, (along with the Richmond Hosiery Mills, established in 1896 by Garnett Andrews), would become the economic engine of the town, much as the John Ross House and its storehouse and post office and other connected businesses at Ross' Landing had served as the town's engine in an earlier era.

"My father started Peerless Woolen Mills with $130,000," Hutcheson's son remembered in a later newspaper article (John Ross House Association, np). "That was for the building, the machines, the whole works."

Richmond Hosiery employed 2,000 people by the 1920s and produced 2,000,000 dozens pairs of hose annually; but it was Peerless that would have no peer, employing almost 3,000 people by World War II and becoming the largest woolen mill in the world, producing millions of

blankets and millions of yards of materials for U.S. military uniforms each year (John Ross House Association, np).

The city council issued franchises to the Rossville Telephone Company and Chattanooga Railway and Light Company in 1912. In 1913, the first electric street lights were established in Rossville. Water and sewer service was established in the 1920s (John Ross House Association, np).

While the McFarlands continued to own the John Ross House, on into the third generation, eventually it became more and more dilapidated and served as home to numerous tenants, some of whom gave birth there. We've already mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Ray Crow. Crow, a former Rossville mayor, moved with his family from Athens, TN to the Ross House, according to Ruskin (1958). He lived there for several years as a child at the turn of the 20th century and then again as a young married adult. "When we were married we lived in the house for eight years," said Mrs. Crow. "My husband wired the place for lights. The logs were boarded over inside and out when we moved there. The tourists nearly ran us crazy wanting to see the house." Fred Hirst was born in the house on October 29, 1902 and Rev. Charles E. Rice, who grew up to become an Episcopal priest and writer of some renown, was born in the house in 1929. His book of essays, *The View From My Ridge*, is still in print, and it contains many remembrances of life in Rossville during the early 20th century, from a child's perspective.

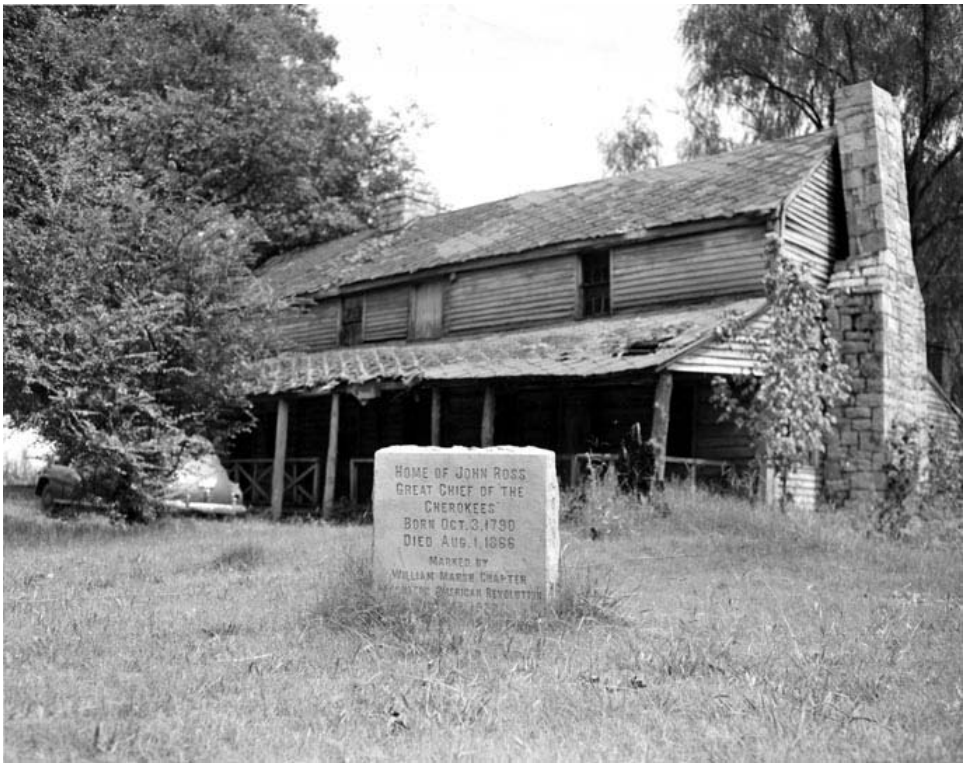
"In season we had fresh tomatoes, potatoes, corn, beans, peppers, strawberries, cucumbers, cantaloupe, onions, and okra," Rice (2003, p. 16) says. (One wonders if Rice or the other Rossville residents of the time realized that nearly all of their food staples were of Native American origin).

He continues (p. 16):

> We raised chickens, several hogs, and Grandma milked at least one cow from season to season. And we usually had a few ducks that paddled around the branch. In ambitious moments I found space to cultivate fishing worms and crawfish. An occasional wild rabbit or squirrel made further food eating. And "Pap" cultivated a grapevine and peach, apple, and cherry trees. A wild cherry tree tall over the corner of the smaller house.
>
> We built a cobblestone fence across the front of the acre. A swing hung from a big elm tree in the front. And a hedge tree provided a place for hours of climbing and imagination. I thought we had the best yard in the world. I knew every tree and ditch and knew where the muddy rainwater would run through the yard. We hallowed every inch of that ground with play and work.
>
> Every man needs a piece of earth to know intimately …
>
> (p. 4) The ridge itself challenged our imagination and skill. Every hollow and spring branch and steep path were touched by our footprints. We built huts and dammed up streams. We caught crawfish and sought snakes under

> moss overhanging running waters. We discovered well-hidden scenes of nature's beauty and jealously kept them secret.
>
> We ran barefoot through green pastures and caught June bugs or made kites of sagebrush. We had abandoned mines to recklessly explore and the ruins of an old cement plant to climb about. We had thorn thickets, pine thickets, and a maze of red clay ditches which were made for our play.
>
> The railroad itself was one long playline. We knew every culvert and often crawled in them to await the next train. We put pennies on rails, counted crossties, and walked barefoot on steel from crossing to crossing. We climbed trees and made swings that would soar high over deep gullies. We ate green peaches and picked wild blackberries. We made wagons and sped down the slopes of the ridge. We found roomy caves underneath hollow stumps and we drank clean water while lying face down in a spring. All this belonged to our vast playground.
>
> But the ground does not make the play. We sought and found our playmates in terms of mutual imagination. Better to play alone than be with those who do not see the magic possibilities of the playground. In these days, as now, some do and some don't. The world of man is cleft by that elusive difference.

It's perhaps a great irony that, while in the 1860s the entire area surrounding Rossville had been laid waste and the Ross House was the only thing left standing, 100 years later, Rossville had grown and prospered to such an extent that it had entirely eclipsed the Ross House, forcing it into the shadows of much larger, economically vital buildings. After a century of service – to generations of the McFarlands and then to various tenants –it was the Ross House itself that had been laid waste.

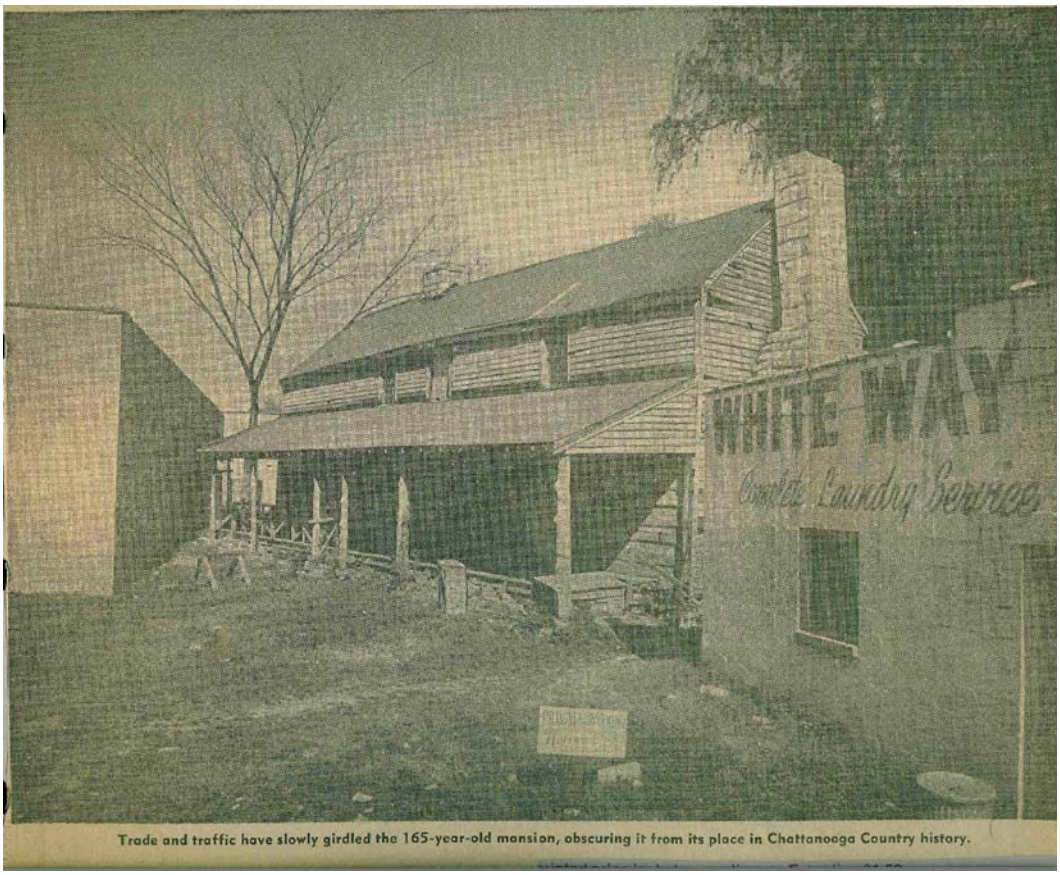


THE JOHN ROSS HOUSE in 1952.

The John Ross House Association: Rescue and Restoration

In 1947, Gordon McFarland, third-generation owner of the Ross House, sold the property to the Morgan Brothers, local grocers, with the understanding that the house would not be torn down for 25 years (Ruskin, 1963, pp. 56-57; a copy of the warranty transfer deed is on file in the archives of the John Ross House Association).

The now dilapidated house continued to be used as rental property, with tenants renting various portions of the house, as commercial properties encroached upon the structure and hemmed it in (Ruskin, 1963, p. 53).



Trade and traffic have slowly girdled the 165-year-old mansion, obscuring it from its place in Chattanooga Country history.

The "White Way."

By the mid-1950s it became apparent that the house could not persevere under such conditions for much longer. Frank M. Gleason contacted the Georgia Historical Commission in February, 1955, informing the commission that the owners of the John Ross House would sell the historic structure for $15,000. Gleason told the commission that

the house was "a matter of state interest" and that funds should be procured for its purchase and restoration. But the commission informed Gleason that the funding to purchase the home would have to be raised privately (Jewett, 1961).

A meeting was held in Chattanooga in September 1955 by the Chattanooga Historical Association, including Rossville residents interested in saving the house. At the meeting they agreed that it would be necessary to raise about $15,000, and that they were committed to doing so. Once the money was raised, the house would be turned over to the Georgia Historical Commission for development and interpretation by the state (Jewett, 1961).

But when the Commission sent a historical architect to inspect the house, he informed the board that "it would cost about $5,000 to move the house to the nearby spring and about $23,000 to restore the building," in addition to the base $15,000 purchase price. "The Commission, already involved at several sites, felt it did not have the money," Executive Secretary Sidney Jewett (1961) reported later. "At the same time," Jewett said, "efforts to raise the purchase price seem to have died."

The Commission gave up on the project at that point, she said, even though local interest continued.

Two years later, in the fall of 1957, at the apparent prompting of two John Ross descendants, Gertrude Ruskin entered the picture, fresh on the heels of her successes with both New Echota near Calhoun, GA and the Chief Vann House near Chatsworth. (Ruskin, 1963, pp. 53-56). But after an initial wave of interest and enthusiasm and the formation and incorporation of the John Ross House Association, she, too, seemed to hit a wall (Ruskin, np; Williams, 1973).

Despite early victories such as obtaining the house free of charge in exchange for its being moved off the Morgan Bros. property, Ruskin knew she could not run an effective campaign to relocate and restore the house from her home in Decatur. She knew she needed a "man on the ground" in Rossville to make the dream of saving the Ross House a reality. She also knew fundraising would be the key element for the project's success, so after a series of false starts she chose a respected local banker for this important task. Ruskin hand-picked Lou Williams as treasurer for the organization in 1958, nominating him during a meeting which he hadn't even bothered to attend (Ruskin, np).

Ruskin urged others to help Williams fill the leadership void following the death of the Association's first president and she began contacting people she thought might be able to help secure the future of the house. One of those was John L. Hutcheson Jr. of Peerless Woolen Mills, owner of the spring and wooded area directly behind the Ross House. Ruskin obtained the following commitment in a letter dated Oct. 1, 1959:

> It is my intention to convey this property to the Rossville Memorial Center, s non profit organization, which handles

> most of the Peerless Woolen Mills' outside activities. The Rossville Memorial Center will in turn lease free of charge to the John Ross House Association that portion of the property that will be required for the house and other buildings. This lease will remain in effect as long as the Chief John Ross House Association keeps the house in good repair and open to the public.

While visiting Hutcheson to obtain the written commitment, Hutcheson strongly recommended that Gleason, an early proponent of saving the house, serve as the John Ross House Association's new president and even called him into his office to urge him to do so. Gleason's refused. It was then recommended that Gleason's wife serve as president, but she answered with "a curt 'no.'" Hutcheson said that Ruskin or her husband Sidney should consider filling the position, but they continued to maintain that local leadership was needed if the project were to be a success (Ruskin, np).

But Ruskin continued to be the prime mover, even without the official title of president. She contacted Senator Cartter Patten, whom Ruskin described as "a recognized authority on historical restorations." She was particularly interested in "his excellent crew of workmen," headed by Osborne Morgan whom she hoped to engage in the task of dismantling and moving the Ross House (Ruskin, 1963, p. 61). Morgan, who called the moving and restoration of historic homes his "hobby," had overseen work on five to 10 houses for Patten and his mother, Sarah Key Patten, in Tellico Plains (Peck, 1962a).

In late November, 1959, Patten took Morgan to Rossville to view the John Ross House for the first time. Morgan told Patten that he thought it would cost "from $6,000 to $7,500 to dismantle and re-assemble this house, (and) an additional $2,500 to replace and refinish the interior," for a total of about $10,000 for restoration and relocation. This was significantly less than the $45,000 estimate faced by the Georgia Historical Commission several years before, but it was still a daunting figure (Patten, 1959).

"When I looked at the sagging roof, broken windows, warped foundation, I wondered if I was capable of doing the job," Morgan later recounted (Ruskin, 1963, p. 61).

Patten (1959), too, had grave doubts about the practical possibility of saving the house:

> I have never been certain that there was genuine constructive interest in the preservation of this historic house, particularly on the part of those most vitally concerned in Rossville. The few general meetings I have attended seemed disorganized and concerned with jockeying for position or something. When we went to the John Ross House on Monday, an apparently drunk man, who said he was living in the house, tried to run us away and we had to find a young man named Morgan, who operates a warehouse and possibly owns the property, to let

> us in. It is quite possible that this argumentative drunk will manage to burn the house down.
>
> It appears that is this house is to be saved, something should be done quickly.

Even though Patten said that he was "dismissing the John Ross house" from his mind, he did promise to increase his financial participation from $100 to $500, should the John Ross Association, by some miracle, come up with enough donors to get to the $10,000 target.

"If there is not real interest, which I suspect is the case, the drunks and the drive-ins will shortly take over anyway," Patten (1959) quipped.

By 1961 Ruskin (np) was hitting another wall and she pleaded with Williams – fresh off obtaining a key $2,500 contribution from a Chattanooga foundation -- to take the helm of the ship before it sank.

"There is no leadership at Rossville," she exclaimed in a June letter to Ross family members. The entire Rossville and Chattanooga area had "let down" the effort, she said.

The John Ross House Association, she insisted, would have to be completely reorganized.

"Since you were frank and confidential in your letter to us, we will be the same with you," Ruskin wrote to Williams on Aug. 8, 1961. "We think all the old officers should go and new ones be elected who will work and not just wag their tongue."

One officer had vowed "not (to) solicit for money," she said, while another's health was in question; two others had not "done anything to promote the Ross house project; and yet another officer, while perfectly likeable, Ruskin said, "will not answer letters and leaves or loses half her minutes when she attends meetings."

The latest president of the Association – whom Ruskin complained had not "contributed a nickle (sic)" -- volunteered to resign and urged Ruskin's husband, Sidney, to assume the leadership of the organization. "Sidney insisted, as he always has, that someone from (Rossville) should serve as president," Mrs. Ruskin said.

"Sidney and I both think you are the very person to lead us in this restoration of the Ross house," Ruskin told Williams. "We want you rather than Mr. Hutcheson or anyone."

Whatever Williams should decide regarding the organization, Ruskin pledged that she and her husband would "stand solidly" behind him. A reorganization meeting was planned for September, 1961.

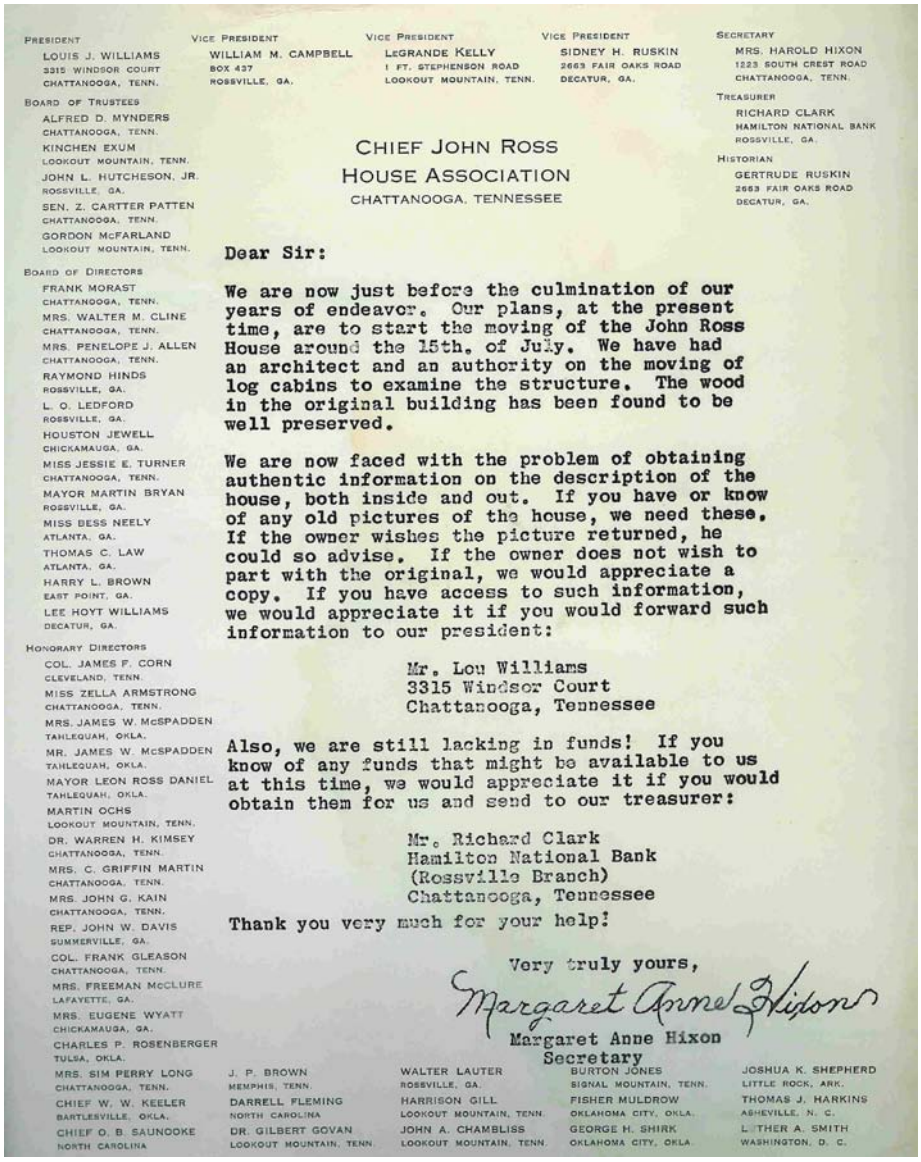
"You are the leader and know the lay of the land and the hidden dangers to detour around," Ruskin told Williams. "In other words we will work with the devil if he will help us save the Ross house and restore it to its former homespun beauty."

"Possession of the old structure gave impetus to our efforts to raise the (funds) for the work," Williams (1973) later wrote.

"I had to go more than once to certain friends to get sufficient money to finish the job which took a much longer time than we had bargained for," Williams said.

The John Ross House Association was working against a looming deadline.

"With only two or three years left under the (25-year protection) clause the Morgans generously deeded the property to the Association with the understanding that it would be moved off the ancient site," he said. "The old building, almost ready to fall down, and surrounded by new and modern business structures on all sides and although a historic landmark was an eyesore to all its neighbors."



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CHIEF JOHN ROSS
HOUSE ASSOCIATION
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

Dear Sir:

We are now just before the culmination of our years of endeavor. Our plans, at the present time, are to start the moving of the John Ross House around the 15th. of July. We have had an architect and an authority on the moving of log cabins to examine the structure. The wood in the original building has been found to be well preserved.

We are now faced with the problem of obtaining authentic information on the description of the house, both inside and out. If you have or know of any old pictures of the house, we need these. If the owner wishes the picture returned, he could so advise. If the owner does not wish to part with the original, we would appreciate a copy. If you have access to such information, we would appreciate it if you would forward such information to our president:

Mr. Lou Williams
3315 Windsor Court
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Also, we are still lacking in funds! If you know of any funds that might be available to us at this time, we would appreciate it if you would obtain them for us and send to our treasurer:

Mr. Richard Clark
Hamilton National Bank
(Rossville Branch)
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Thank you very much for your help!

Very truly yours,
Margaret Anne Hixon
Margaret Anne Hixon
Secretary

J. P. BROWN
MEMPHIS, TENN.
DARRELL FLEMING
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The Chattanooga Free Press reported in 1962 (Peck, 1962a):

> Even though the clause has not expired, the encroachment of progress and the vulnerability of the house to age and vandalism injected an element of urgency into the association's efforts to ensure its preservation. When Williams assumed leadership of the project, he pushed the machinery into high gear, whipped up interest and support – and the immediate transplanting appears certain.

The same article waxed poetic as it recounted the history of the house and the efforts leading to its impending relocation:

> For 165 years it has stood – the John Ross House – buffeted by fortune and the elements. Now it is going to have a place in the sun.
>
> The old mansion was built by John McDonald, trader among the Cherokees, for his Indian wife. It was their grandson, Chief John Ross, who turned the house into a tradition – and the house itself that backed him up by its durability.
>
> The walls have encompassed the entire spectrum of human existence. Love and hate, hope and disillusionment, anger, defeat, triumph and intrigue have mingled in its once-gracious rooms. The cries of the newborn, the weeping of death, the hymn of praise and the whispering of sanctuary are steeped in its tired old timbers.
>
> The civilized, the half-breed and the savage found common ground within its confines. It was the well-spring of tears for the Cherokee Nation after its eighth-Indian chief fought for freedom of his people – and lost.
>
> Trade and commerce were negotiated in it, battles plotted, hospitality offered freely by its masters.
>
> It has been lived in, loved, confiscated, lost and won by lottery, degraded, and finally abandoned and pushed to the wall by the hand of time.
>
> Now an awakening citizenry has bestirred itself to assure that this old house – venerable link between Chattanooga's and Rossville's past, present and future – will be rescued from its disrepair and preserved in dignity befitting its history and its years.
>
> Now it is to be placed in the hands of a master craftsman under whose supervision it will be dismantled and marked piece by piece, wooden peg by wooden peg, stone by stone, timber by timber. The carpenter's knife will pare away the rot and blemishes and will hew out new pieces to replace the imperfect ones beyond salvage.
>
> The entire structure will be reassembled on a wooden hillside not 150 yards from its present site. It will be on home ground still, but no longer will it be elbowed and overshadowed and pressed in by 20th century trading posts. No longer will its back-yard willow weep over an accumulation of drifting trash.
>
> Instead, the house will rest beside the cool and beautiful old "Poplar Spring" of John McDonald's day, a spring whose waters bountifully supplied the Cherokees and Rossville's early settlers, as well as the occupants of the John Ross House, when its timbers were still green.
>
> Sunlight and shade will dapple it and its windows will open once more to clean, fresh air. The clamor of traffic will be muted, drowned out now and then by the mockingbird and thrush. The fragrance of honeysuckle will replace the odor of exhaust fumes.

> The house now sits a few yards from the Tennessee-Georgia state line on the main highway as it enters the gap from the west. It can hardly be seen from the highway, obscured by a bank, drugstore, restaurant, a grocery, a laundry, and a side parking lot.
>
> Transplanting of the house is expected to begin shortly. Target date for completion is Oct. 3, birthday of Chief John Ross.
>
> When it is restored and moved, it will be a fitting monument to an era and to a great man who loved the land it stands on and the people who gave him birth. It will be a monument to be visited by school children and adults who may draw back the curtain of history and see a bit of it caught there in detail.

The work began July 9, 1962, when donations finally reached the $10,000 mark. “The restoration of the old house proved to be every bit as fascinating as the history behind it,” Ruskin (1963, p. 62) said. “Every board taken down seemed about to reveal some mystery.”

She called the restoration process “creative genius.” Osborn Morgan’s work crew consisted of his sons, Bobby, James, and John Morgan, as well as fellow Tellico Plains residents Richard and Cecil Self, Lawrence Nichols, and Bill Thomas. Also placed on the work crew were locals Roy March of Chickamauga and Joe Tipton, Bill Fleagal and Bill Fleagal, Jr. of Rossville (Ruskin, 1963, p. 62).

“We were not interested in restoring the house as it stood,” said Williams (1973). “We wanted to restore it to as near its original condition as possible and with the aid of the old photographs and Mr. Morgans skill and such work, this is what we did.”

The Chattanooga Free Press (Peck, 1962a) reported:

> The John Ross House, at best, will not be an easy one to move. It is a two-story structure with a one-story el at its eastern end. It has three stone chimneys. A porch runs the entire length of the long housefront, its shed-like roof supported by cedar posts. The downstairs of the main house has three rooms, the center one having once been a dog-trot. The upper story has three rooms, one unfinished. The entire house was put together with wooden pegs – not a nail in it. The logs of its basic structure have been boarded over, inside and out. In some of the rooms paper was applied, now peeling and dirty.
>
> But through the dilapidation the character shows. The house has a proud and genteel aura, somehow, in spite of its shabbiness.

The newspaper covered the dismantling and relocation of the house in a series of articles in the summer and fall of 1962. The dismantling of the house, the newspaper reported, was a “tedious and painstaking process.”

> Each of the five-inch thick post oak timbers in the 58-foot 8-inch long house had to be taken down and marked with a numbered metal tag. Each peg which had been used to hold the timbers, each fireplace stone, each

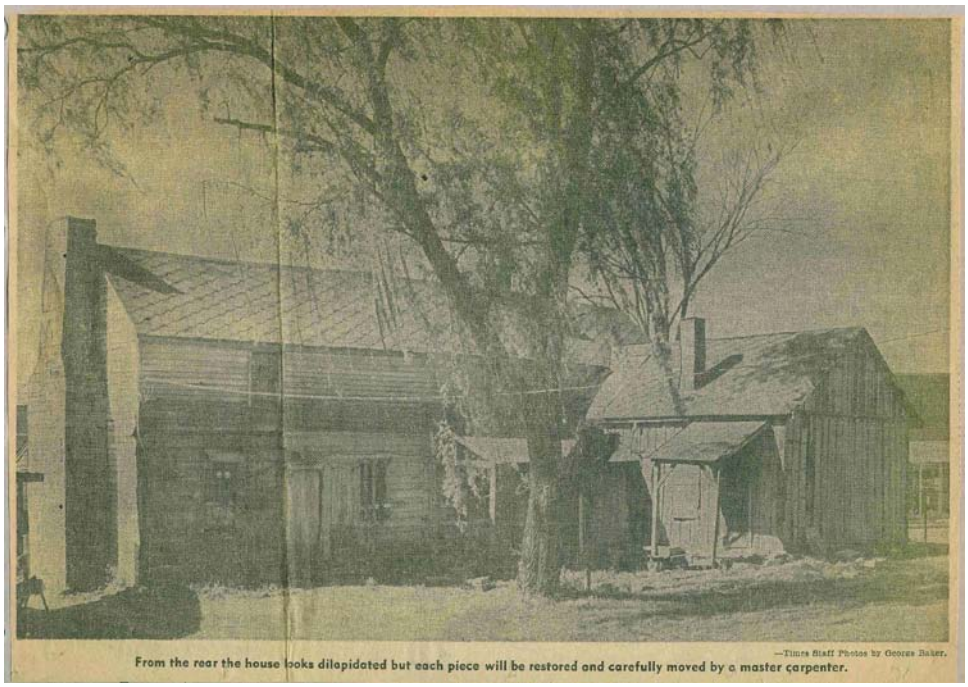
> door and window frame – all had to be marked in the order of removal so that they could be put back together again in exactly the same place where they were put 165 years ago. Some new pieces have been found necessary and these are being made just the way they would have been made on that long-ago day when the house first took form.

Williams (1973) reported that "when the front porch was dismantled – the one at the rear had long since been removed – the stringers under the porch floor were straight, long pine logs about five inches in diameter and all had the original bark on them. I think this is remarkable if, indeed, they were the original stringers."

Early on a decision was made to re-open the dogtrot on the lower level, to "relocate" one Ross House chimney and to completely do away with another.

"The easternmost room had a beautiful fireplace with a rounded stone opening kept intact by a keystone," Ruskin (1963, p. 63) said. "The cornice in this room is clearly of a later date than the original structure and this with the random-width boards to seal the logs will not be replaced. These random-width boards were nailed on at a later date as evinced by the use of factory-made square nails."

So the easternmost "el" room of the Ross House, therefore, was not part of the reconstruction. Morgan and the Association relied on old pictures to guide them with regard to another chimney.



THE JOHN ROSS HOUSE just prior to its relocation in 1962. This is the only photo I've been able to locate that clearly shows the "el" at the back of the home that was not included in the relocation and restoration.

"We gathered some old photographs of the house through the courtesy of the National Park Service, Mr. Kinchen Exum and others," Williams (1973) said, "and all showed clearly that originally the place had a chimney at both ends with the usual dog-trot or breezeway in the center. But when work began there was only one chimney and the breezeway had been made into another room."

Williams continues:

> When the rough, random-width old whitewashed pine boards which had been added to the inside rooms were removed from the end without a chimney we could plainly see that the logs were smoked up and slightly charred indicating plainly that there once was a fireplace there. It had been moved to the opposite end of the room next to the enclosed dogtrop (sic) to give warmth to the new as well as the original room.

"Most of the old houses that we take down and move," Morgan told the newspaper, "have fires around the chimney at some time. We find the chimney timbers burned down to different degrees."

Morgan pointed to the "absence of timbering at the opposite end of the house matching the fireplace and the chimney," which he interpreted as evidence that "the fireplace had been moved from its original place once."

The newspaper (Peck, 1962a) also reported:

> Mrs. Harold Hixon, secretary of the association and frequently a guide for the many people who come from widespread area to visit the site of the restoration of the historic old structure, said she has heard stories of her great-grandmother climbing up and pouring water on the timbers around the chimney of the house each night before putting the children to bed.

"After the roof came off and the weatherboarding, then came the tedious job of marking log by log, window by window, square pegs in round holes," said Morgan. "All were marked in order of removal and carefully moved to the new location."

Under Morgan's "watchful eye," news reports (Peck, 1963c) said, "the house was dismantled and marked with metal tags, piece by piece, tag by tag, stone by stone, timber by timber, board by board. The rot and blemishes were cut away and new places hewn out to replace the imperfect ones beyond salvage."

THE CHATTANOOGA TIMES: CHATTANOOGA, TENN., TUESDAY, AU

Handed-Down Skills Give Warmth to Old Bones of John Ross House As Historic Jigsaw Puzzle Comes Together Again on Its New Site

OSBORN MORGAN CHECKS THE WORK

OLD FIREPLACE TAKES SHAPE AGAIN

Hardwood Boards Rived With Froes Provide Authentic Roof

By MARION PECK

The skeleton of the old John Ross House, which has known the vagaries of the weather and the human race for 165 years, is rapidly taking on substance at its new site some 150 yards from the ground on which it was built originially.

The pegged timbers are up and ready for chinking. Hand-split boards, rived with the hand-hammered blade of a froe and a hand-hewn dogwood mallet, are now going on the roof. The heavy chimney field stones are being fitted into place.

It was John McDonald, trader among the Cherokees, who built the house for his Indian wife in 1797. It was their eighth-Indian grandson, John Ross, who undertook the first major renovation and enlargement of the house a generation or so later. And now it is Osborn Morgan

SHADING TREES GUARANTEE DIGNITY AS HISTORIC HOUSE RISES AGAIN

By late summer, the newspaper reported that the "skeleton" of the Ross House was "rapidly taking on substance" at its new location:

"The pegged timbers are up and ready for chinking," the *Chattanooga Times* reported in August. "Hand-split boards, rived with the hand-hammered blade of a froe and a hand-hewn dogwood mallet, are now going on the roof. The heavy chimney field stones are being fitted into place."

A completely new roof was constructed for the Ross House, using the methods with which the original roof would have been made, Morgan said.

"Since the house was of the 1797-1828 period the roofing was put down in the manner used then; boards were nailed down in 3's in such a way that rain could not penetrate, although open sky could be seen through the cracks," said Ruskin (1963, p. 62).

Morgan was quick to point out that the handmade roofing materials were properly called "boards," not "shingles." (But it's interesting to note that while those in charge of the relocation and restoration of the John Ross House insisted that houses of the period were roofed with "boards" and not "shingles," the house is labeled as having a "shingled roof" in the 1834 valuation.)

The newspaper (Peck, 1963b) went into some detail about the process:

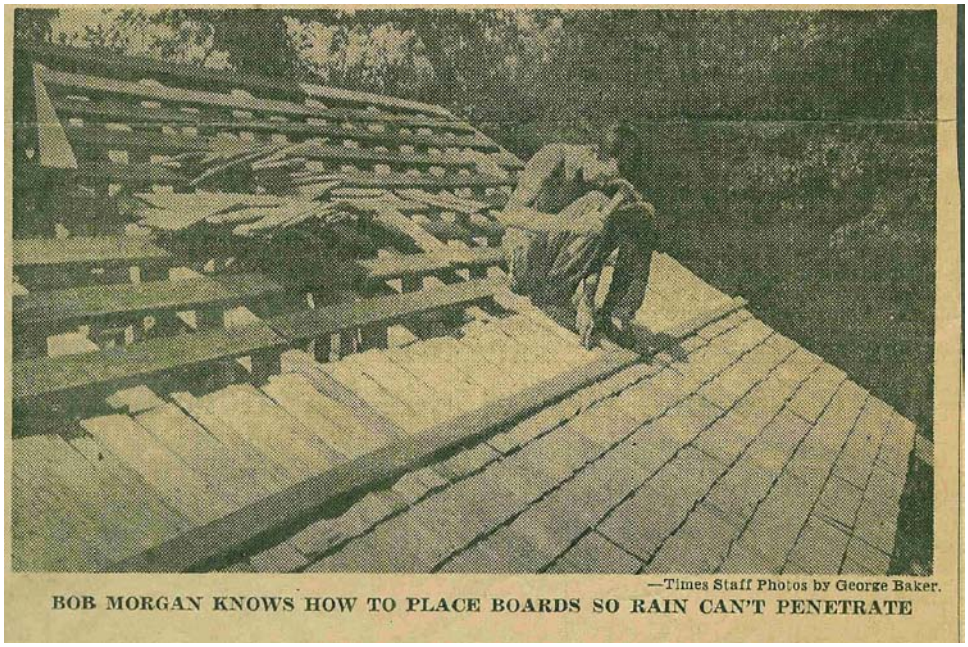
> Their making is an all-but-lost art, the likes of which few people in this or or the past generally have ever seen.
>
> Hardwood trees are felled, sawed into sections and brought to the house site. In this case, the trees are willow oak, contributed by John L. Hutcheson Jr. from his Greenfields property. Hutcheson, his brother Lewis Hutcheson and Mrs. Roy Anderson, owners of the Greenfields Co., donated the 40 acres of land on which the house is being restored.
>
> The tree boles are halved, then quartered and the heart is taken out with an axe or mallet. The pieces are cut again, down to 16ths. The 16ths then are taken individually and placed in the fork of a "board break." The board break is an eight-foot or so section of a small tree with as perfect a fork as possible beginning at about the middle of the section. The board break is placed on a couple of tree boles at chopping height.
>
> The 16th sections, braced in the board break, then are rived with a froe which is struck and driven down by a hand-hewn tough dogwood mallet. When the last two boards are rived from each 16th, the wood is "turned" back and forth as the froe is driven in so that it will be kept in the center. The turning process keeps both boards the same thickness, each running about a quarter to three-eighths of an inch in thickness.

JOHN MORGAN USES A FROE TO RIVE BOARDS FOR THE NEW ROOF

John Morgan, son of Osborn, rives the boards, an art handed down from his father, who learned from his own father. He can do between 1,600 and 1,800 a day. It takes between 11,000 and 13,000 to roof a house the size of the John Ross House. Another son, Bobby Morgan, is one of the three men putting the boards on the roof.

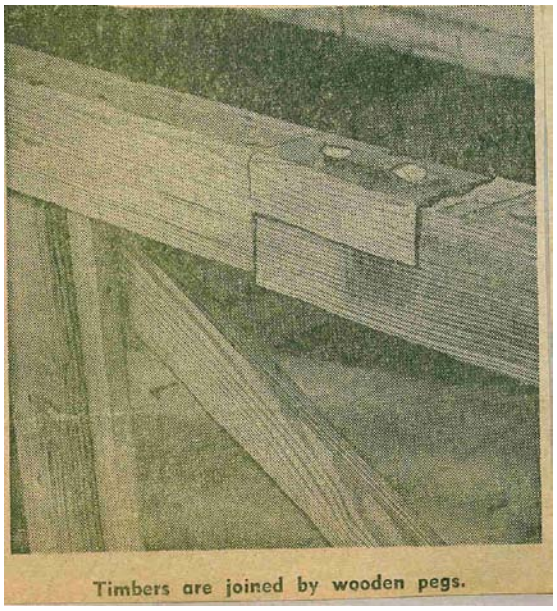
After riving, the boards are smoothed and made uniform in width with a hand-axe. This process is being done by Bill Thomas, recognized as the foremost bear and boar hunter in the Tellico (P)lains area.

The roofing process is equally fascinating. Roofers include Self, Lawrence Nichols and Bobby Morgan. The roof of the John Ross House is steep and great care must be exercised. The boards are nailed down in threes, so that they overlap in such a manner that the rain cannot penetrate. Osborn Morgan said he has seen such roofs “where you could look up and see the stars at night but it still wouldn’t rain through.”



It's all a matter of knowing how to place the boards, he said, a secret well known to the builders of John Ross' time.

It's interesting that although the phrase "not a nail in it" is repeated again and again in newspaper accounts and brochures, factory nails were found in the house before it was moved and nails were explicitly used again in the roof construction. The descriptive phrase, then, of "not a nail in it" is not entirely accurate.

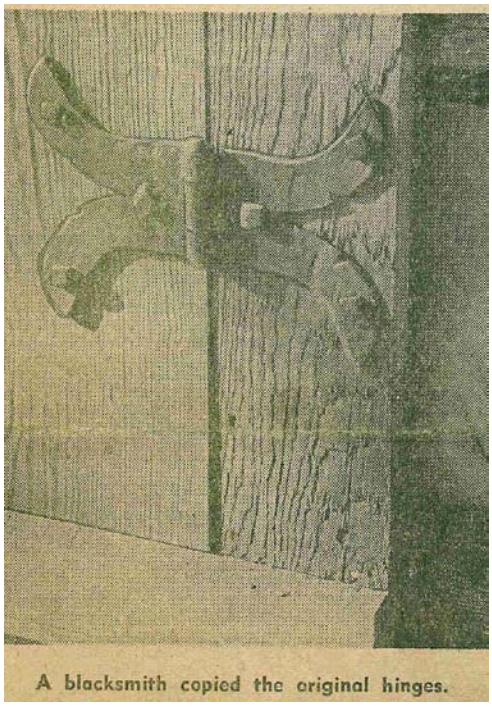


A decision was made by "Miss Bess Neely," an acquaintance of Ruskin's who also happened to be an interior decorator, that "only one

door was original" at the Ross House, so she "suggested that it be stored for safe keeping." (Ruskin, 1963, p. 63). The new replacement doors were copied from it. (It's interesting to note that, according to the missionaries at Brainerd, most Cherokee homes at the supposed time of the Ross House's construction had no doors at all. Apparently no one now knows where the one remaining "original" door is now located.)

Miss Bess Neely also drew a pattern for new rods and brackets to be hammered by Ira "Doc" Henry, a retired fourth-generation Tellico blacksmith, based on a "similar one on exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City," Ruskin (1963, p. 63) said.

Henry "picked up the blacksmith's hammer for the first time in 30 years," according to a newspaper account, "and at Morgan's request hammered out 88 pieces (44 complete hinges) for the 11 windows of the house. He used one of the original hinges taken from the old house as a pattern" (Peck, 1962c; Ruskin, 1963).



A blacksmith copied the original hinges.

The rare door hinges and latches were donated by Harrison Gill, a local architect, all supposedly having come from dismantled houses of the 18th century. Henry also repaired some of the original Ross House door hinges (Peck, 1962c; Ruskin, 1963, p. 64).

New wooden shutters were handmade from the original ceiling boards by Lou Williams, Harvey Ross, Floyd Pollard and George Shaw (Peck, 1962c; Ruskin, 1963).

The work was completed on Oct. 5, 1962. A contemporary newspaper account (Peck, 1962c) gives the following details:

> EVERY detail was given careful attention. The major portion of the house, including the timbers, is constructed

> of the original woods – scarred and mellowed but still strong. The entire downstairs flooring is the same that came with the house, as is the stairway with its steps grooved and eroded by the feet of the passing generations, and its banister worn and polished by long-gone hands.
>
> The supports for the front porch, which extends the entire length of the house, are the same; the back porch supports have been hand cut and trimmed after the fashion of the old ones. The railing around the front porch is of the original design. The fireplaces at either end of the structure are the same, the stones having been replaced in their exact original position. The hearths are of the same fieldstone. The mantels are sections of logs sliced in half and one is an original.
>
> The timbers have been chinked with clay, to which cement was added for extra strength. The dogtrot, for many years enclosed, now is open to the breeze as it first was in the day of the Cherokee.
>
> The doorways in the house are low – about five feet six inches high – and the average person must stoop slightly to enter. A doorway has been cut into the upstairs "secret" room for which no visible means of entry was ever found. Workmen said the only evidence of any entryway were two slight grooves in one of the timbers "where it looked like something may have been let down at times."
>
> The upstairs floors are of new planks but are pegged as the old ones downstairs. They are stained brown mahogany, but the old ones downstairs are not stained, simply coated with linaloe oil.
>
> ENTERING the completed house, even without the period furnishings the association is hopeful of collecting for it, is somewhat like stepping backward in time. There is harmony about the structure, with nothing discordant. The fragrance of the wood brings a dimly-remembered feeling of serenity and the house seems peopled with invisible guests.
>
> Grace, beauty and gentility overflow its rooms and bring peace of heart. Almost can be heard the sound of a rocker squeaking on the back porch and shelly beans dropping in the pan, the sound of woodchopping, of katydids, of mocking birds, of hounds baying in the distance.

The John Ross House soon welcomed its first official visitors, "a troop of Brownies and a troop of Cub Scouts." The newspaper called them "the vanguard of perhaps thousands of children and adults who will today and tomorrow and in the years left to the world climb the steps, cross the porches and wander through the rooms of the John Ross House…

"Once again the John Ross Mansion – and now it can be truly recognized as a mansion of its day – stands in dignity and grace, available host to all who are interested in the origins of the land."

"(N)ow that the job is completed, I am proud that I had a part in restoring one of our great landmarks, one so long neglected," said Morgan. "It stands today as proud as the day when it was first built 165 years ago" (Ruskin, 1963, p. 62).

Their efforts were capped off by opening ceremonies, attended by an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 people.

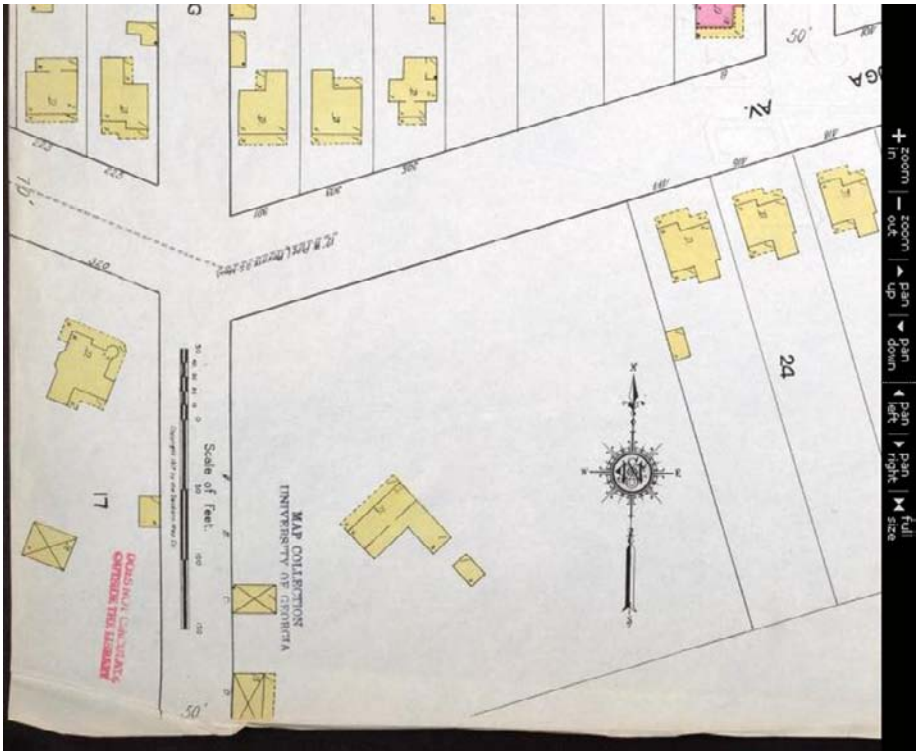
OPENING DAY CEREMONIES at the John Ross House.

All of these preservation efforts came to a head in 1974 when the John Ross House was recognized as a National Historic Landmark. The official ceremony with the presentation of a plaque by the U.S. Department of the Interior did not occur until five years later, on June 1, 1979 (John Ross House Association, np).

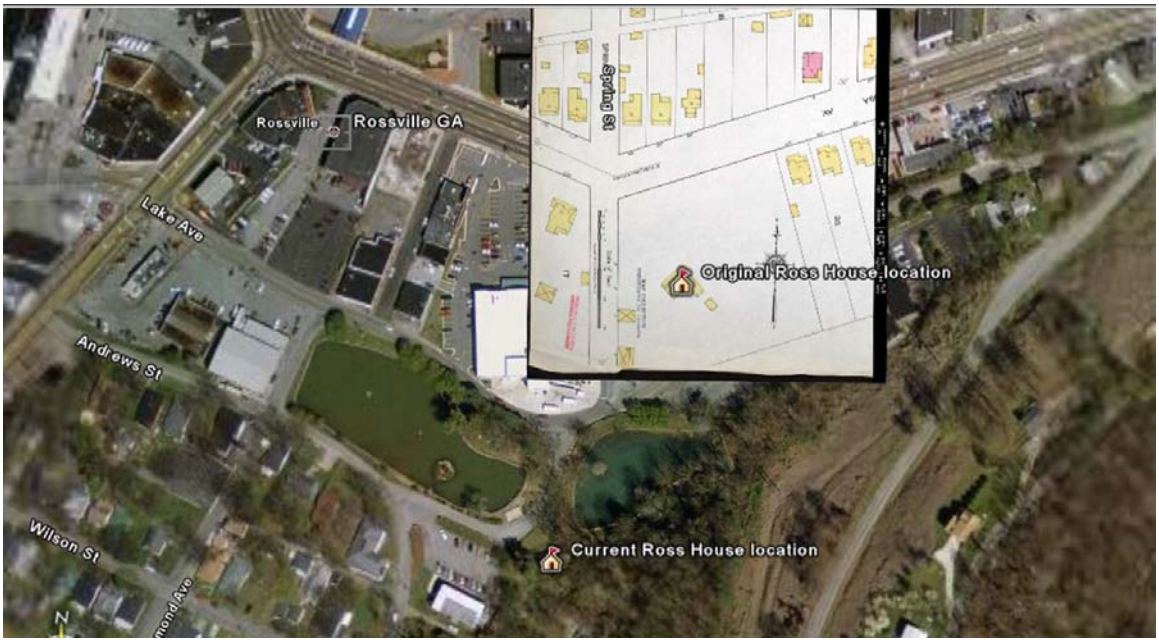
"The years of work by you and your predecessors have paid off," said President Don Phillips in a May 21, 1979 letter to Mrs. O. L. Miller. "The Chief John Ross House has been designated a national historic landmark and will be officially presented the certificate and plaque on June 7, 1979 at 12 noon," he said. In later years the house was also added to the National Register of Historic Places and certified as part of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Hard work, indeed, has its rewards (John Ross House Association, np).

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK (1979) -- John Ross House Association President Don Phillips, Rossville Mayor Charles Sherrell, and Lou Williams, former JRHA president.

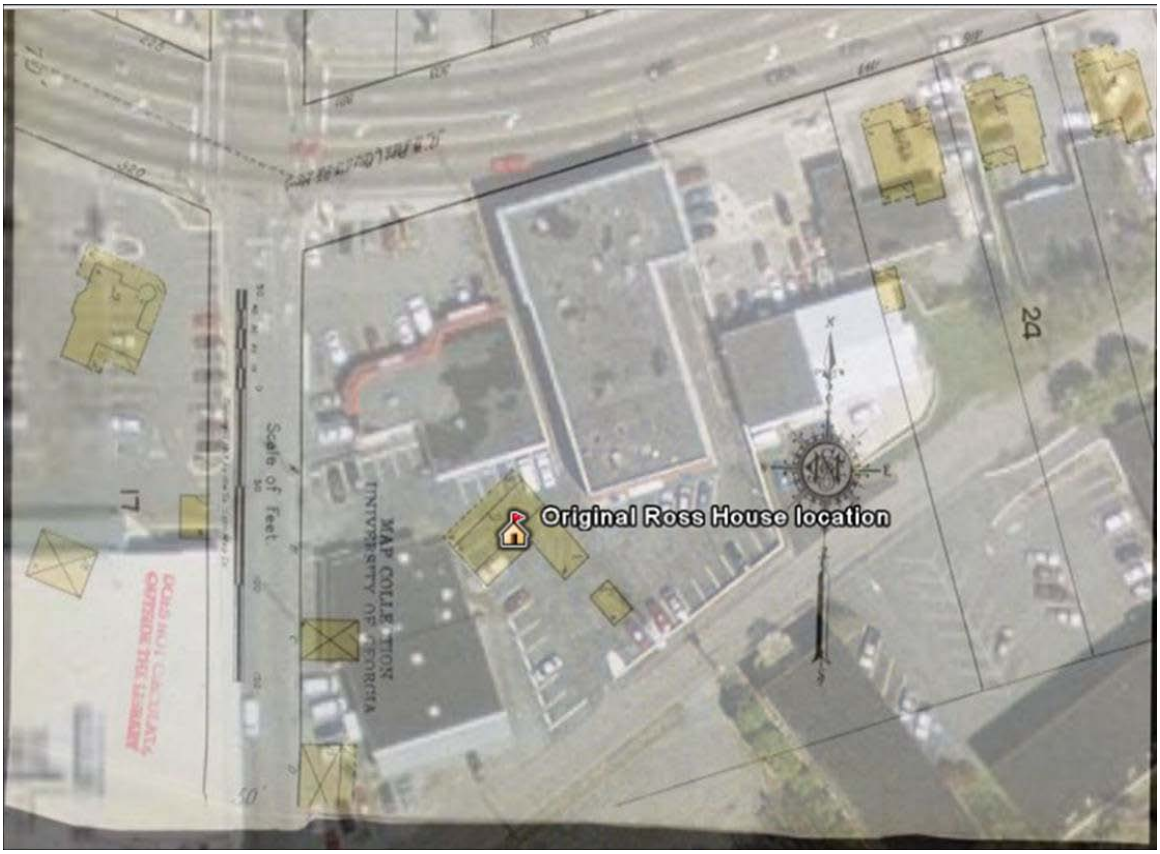
CERTIFICATION CEREMONY for the John Ross House being added to the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail (fall 2006).



ORIGINAL POSITION – This 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows the original location of the John Ross House, the L-shaped building at the intersection of Spring Street and Chickamauga Ave. (formerly the Federal Road), facing northwest.

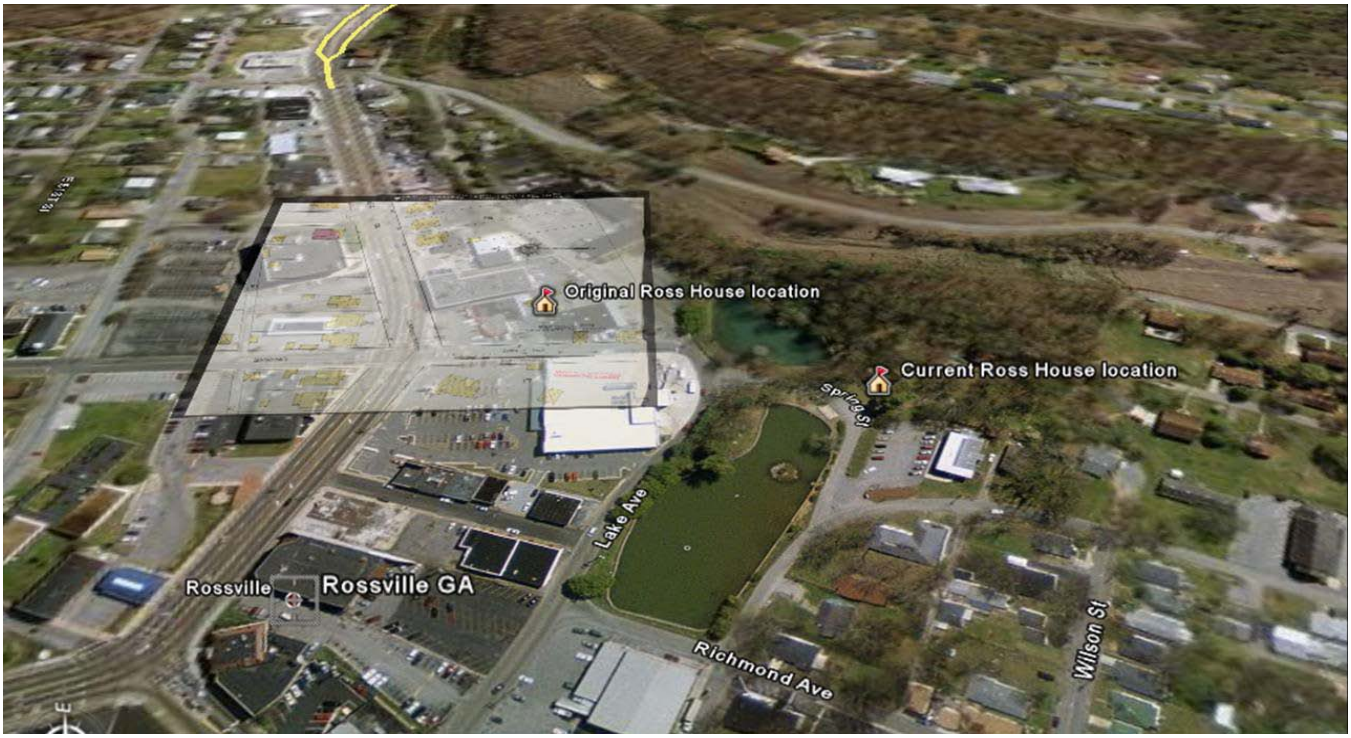


TWO LOCATIONS – This aerial overlay from Google Earth shows the original location (34°58’56 N x 85°17’02 W) ***of the John Ross House at top and the new location*** (34°58’51 N x 85°17’05 W) ***at the bottom.***



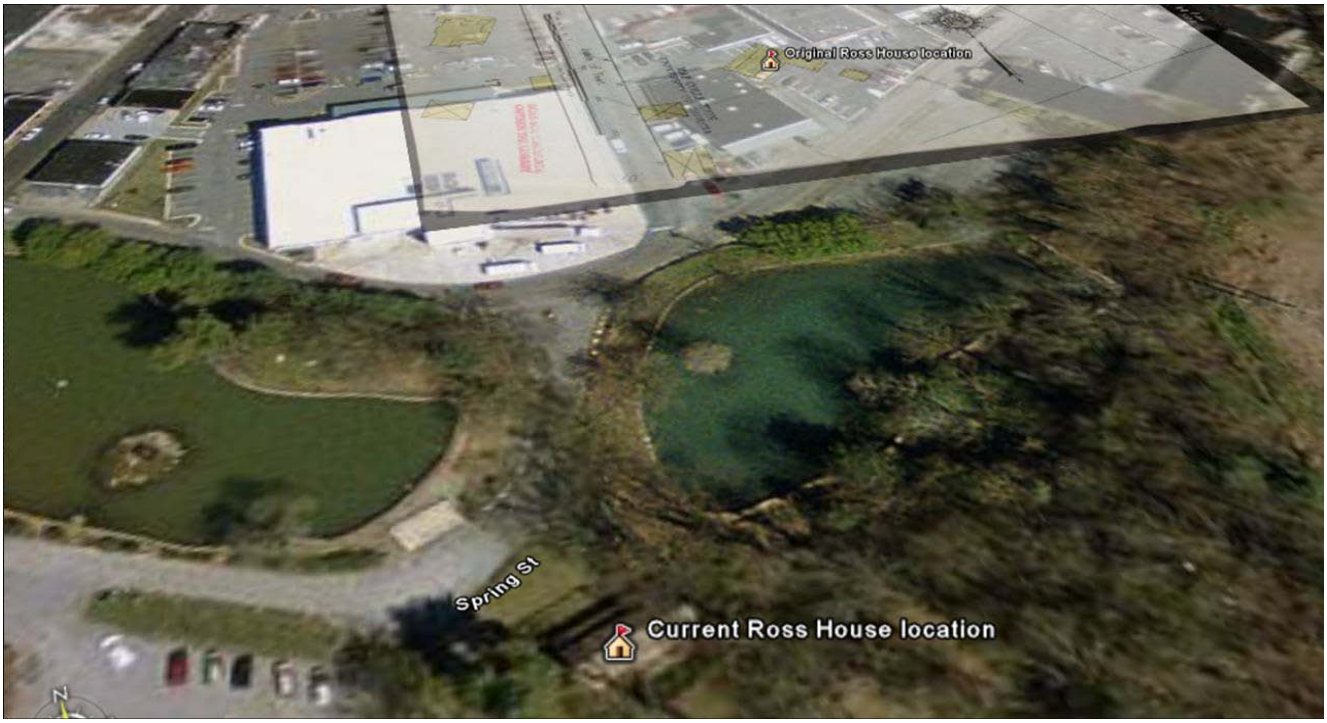
THE ORIGINAL LOCATION is now a parking lot sandwiched between various commercial developments.

A VIEW from Spring Street, looking to the East, at the Chickamauga Ave. intersection.



THE TWO LOCATIONS, as seen when looking east from an aerial perspective.

THE TWO LOCATIONS, as seen when looking to the south from an aerial perspective, as if one were traveling from Chattanooga.



IF ONE WERE AT THE CURRENT LOCATION of the John Ross House, on Spring Street, sitting on the front porch, looking for the original location, one would look out past the springs, to the Northeast. The distance between the two locations is 171.80 yards, or .10 miles, or 157.10 meters, according to measurements taken on Google Earth. The spring was part of the original 160 acre lot purchased by the McFarlands from the Land Lottery winner.

The Myth of the John Ross House: Re-examined

> You're (going) back to your old home.
>
> But the village has changed so much you can't recognize it. The dirt roads are now asphalt, and there are pre-fab buildings, all new and exactly the same… You are lost in these barren forests and can't find your old home.
>
> I remember that every day on my way to school I had to pass a stone bridge, and the lake was right next to it. Even when there was no wind, there were waves lapping all the time, and I used to think they were the backs of swimming fish. I never imagined that the fish would all die, that the sparkling lake would turn into a foul pond, that the foul pond would then be filled in, and that I would not be able to find my way to my old house.
>
> I ask where Nanhu Road is. But people look at you with surprise, as if they can't understand what you are saying … Later, I find an older man and ask him where the lake used to be. If I know where the lake was, it will be easy to find the stone bridge, and when I find the stone bridge, it will be easy to find Nanhu Road, and when I find Nanhu Road, I'll be able to feel the way to my old house.
>
> The lake? Which lake? The lake that was filled in. Oh, that lake, the lake that was filled in is right here. He points with his foot. This used to be the lake. So we're standing on the bottom. Was there once a stone bridge nearby? Can't you see that there are asphalt roads everywhere? The stone bridges were all demolished and the new ones use reinforced concrete. You understand. You understand that what used to be no longer exists.
>
> ---Gao Xing Jian, *Buying a Fishing Rod for My Grandfather*

Time is relentless. It transforms not only our physical reality, but often robs us even of our memories of what used to be. Time ultimately effaces everything.

Even what we think we know is often wrong, as proven by a cursory scan of websites focusing on the John Ross House:

> The home served as post office, country store, schoolhouse, and council room during the period that Ross lived in it.
> http://roadsidegeorgia.com/site/rosshouse.html

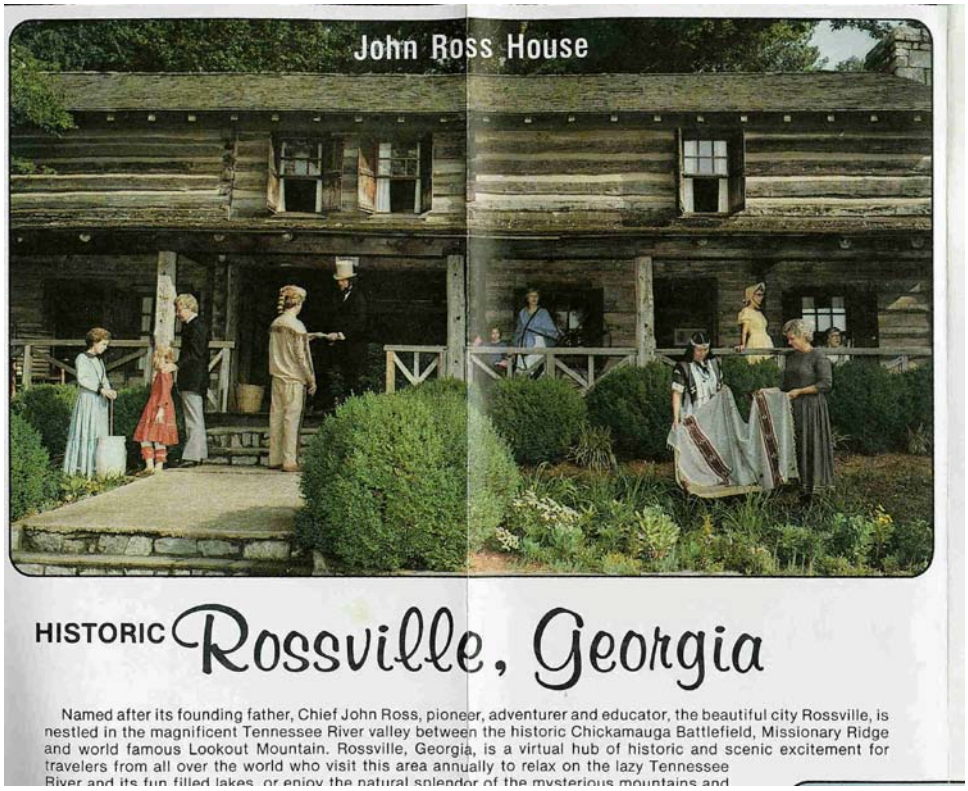
> In 1832, Ross returned from a trip to Washington to find that his plantation had been taken over by Georgia whites who had won it in the lottery for Cherokee land. He moved back into (the Ross House in Rossville), where he stayed until removal. How do you think he would have felt returning to his old home under these circumstances?
> http://www.cr.nps.gov/NR/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/118trail/118visual2.htm

> John Ross, a powerful Chief of the Cherokee Nation, lived in a one-story log house on the Coosa River near Rome, Georgia.
> http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/pad/defenders/ross2.htm
>
> This two-story log house was built by John McDonald, Ross's maternal grandfather, and was the first school in north Georgia. Ross lived here as a child…
> http://www.travelpod.com/cgi-bin/guest.pl?tweb_UID=burtonll&tweb_tripID=great_trip_10&tweb_entryID=735784200&tweb_PID=tpod

This myth of the John Ross House has been played out publicly in annual pageants and parades. Even as far back as the 1920s, pageants celebrating the lives of John McDonald and John Ross were popular, as this notice from *The Lookout* illustrates:

> An historical pageant will be given Saturday evening at Rossville under the direction of the Young Women's Christian Association War Council. A grandstand, which will seat 1,500 spectators, has been erected, and on the opposite side of the lake a large stage and bandstand have been arranged. Approximately 600 residents of Rossville community will take part in the entertainment. Including the electrical display, the cost of staging the pageant will exceed $1,200, it is understood.
>
> The pageant is original, and will depict the history of Rossville during and since the days when it was but an Indian settlement, and will be an interesting and valuable contribution to the history of the section. Some of the principals are John Ross, for whom the town is named … Sequoyah … John McDonald … "Spirit of the Wilderness" … "Spirit of Youth and Progress" … "Indian Maiden" … "Indian Chief" … The pageant will close with a patriotic speech by Marcus Rubin.

The town instituted an annual "John Ross Day" parade and celebration. Just after the Ross House was relocated in the early 1960s, a new group of local artists banded together to form the Rossville Arts Association and put on an original pageant unpretentiously called "Floret Qui Laborat (The Story of John Ross)," presented at the newly relocated home site itself, lending it an added air of "authenticity" (John Ross House Association, np).



Helen Cooper, "a young employe (sic) of a large Chattanooga insurance company," spent a year writing the outdoor drama, her "first writing venture of this type," according to contemporary newspaper accounts. The two-hour pageant contained 30 scenes "staged from the life of what many persons consider 'just another Indian,'" one newspaper account stated. There was a cast of about 100 people – "and surprisingly, not a single actor will be a Cherokee," news reports said (John Ross House Association, np).

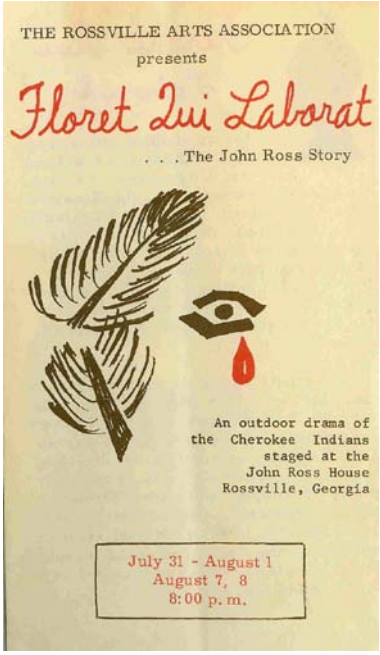
"It tells the story of John Ross' life, and introduces various aspects of Cherokee history and local history into the telling," one report said.

Characters included John Ross, John McDonald, Molly McDonald, Ghi-Goo-U, William Shorey, Anna Shorey McDonald, Daniel Ross, Sequoyah, Andrew Jackson, Schoolmaster John Barbour Davis, and many others, including massive numbers of "Indians and Settlers," "Indian Dancers," and "Scottish Dancers."(John Ross House Association, np).

The "Indian Dancers" were in fact "Cherokee dances presented by a group of young men from the University of Georgia, the University of Chattanooga, and the Order of the Arrow, Tallidandaganau Lodge 293, a Boy Scout organization."

"To accommodate various phases of the pageant, six levels of stages have been set up" alongside the John Ross House, it was reported.

"The John Ross House has only recently been restored and removed to a scenically beautiful site at the foot of the ridge back of Rossville," the report said (John Ross House Association, np).



According to the program, scenes included “In the Beginning,” “Another Adventurer,” “Danger In The Forest,” “The Rescue,” “Another Beginning,” “First Recorded Marriage,” “Birth of John Ross,” “Schooldays,” “War,” “John Ross’s Service,” “Cherokee Alphabet,” “Treachery And Greed,” “Laughter In The Hills,” “Andrew Jackson,” “The Tragedy of The Cherokees,” and “Chief John Ross Forever.”

“THE STORY OPENS with the arrival in America of Ross’ grandfather, John McDonald,” a newspaper account stated, “and includes a version of the famous ‘Trail of Tears’ in 1863 when the Cherokees were forced from their lands to Oklahoma.” (The Removal actually occurred in 1838) (John Ross House Association, np).

“It was splendid to gather with friends in the twilight, splendid to see the lights reflected in the still sheen of the pond and to see the 18th century house so beautifully reconstructed (except, alas, for the chimney which is the only apparent and glaring failure of the reconstruction),” said one member of the audience, Ulrica Whitaker (John Ross House Association, np).

Though the play was “too long” and the seating uncomfortable, she said, the pageant still “Played in a more than adequate fashion,” she said. Of “greatest excellence” was “the scene with schoolmaster Davis,” said Whitaker. “Also of great appeal were the wedding scene, all the dances, and the solo renditions of the old-fashioned songs by the musicians.”

Barbara’s Walker’s “moving renditions of frontier folk music lent graceful support to the on-stage activity,” wrote another attendee, Robert Carter.

“The dance scenes, provided by Chief Buck Driver and his fellow members of the Order of the Arrow, were singularly effective,” said a third member of the audience, Clarence Bruce.

The "stage trickery" of the director, Betty Peruchi, "metamorphosed what could have been a dry and documentary" story "into an often-delightful evening for an audience of about 250 Friday night," said Carter (John Ross House Association, np).

Whitaker complained of a lack of "suspense" in the well-known story.

"Faced with the stilted immobility of pageantry, the directrix presented a controlled display of sound and color …

One "need of the script" was a proper ending, complained Bruce, was "an end that is obviously an end," since the audience didn't seem to know when the play was over and sat "still, silent, until a voice, bereft of all dramatic subtlety, came from the loudspeaker, 'We hope you've enjoyed…' and people began gradually stirring and moving from their seats." (John Ross House Association, np).

A scene from "Sequoyah!"

"George Mabry gave a sound performance as the near-legendary Ross, effectively aging as the pageant galloped through the chief's life," Carter said. "One regretted that the part gave Mabry no range, binding him to an often-disturbing train of moral formulae."

However, a "cornball comedienne," Clarabelle Jamison, spiced up the evening as a "frontier woman whose purpose was, delightfully, to entertain rather than teach history," he said (John Ross House Association, np).

"For one who loves history, and who loves the community, it was exciting to discover elements of greatness in this presentation of local history," said Whitaker. "It was exciting to find the beauty of the setting revealed so magnificently."

"The play made such an impression that I became absorbed in reflections as to how (in my opinion) it might be further improved," Whitaker said.

Strangely enough, she said, "THERE was the house, and THERE was John Ross, and in all the two and one-half hours he did not once go in or out of his home!

"I should like to see the play changed slightly, to be more in the terms of the house; the builders of the house, the use of the house, and the sad departure from the house" (John Ross House Association, np).

This kind of very public repetition of the falsehoods underpinning the Myth – on the Web, in printed texts, and on stage -- gives them the veneer of reality due to their oppressive ubiquity. But we do not know for a fact that "John McDonald built his home in 1797." There's no contemporary evidence (or at least none that I've so far discovered) that Ross and McDonald were living east of Lookout Mountain prior to 1800 (excluding McDonald's residency at Chickamauga Town prior to and during the American Revolution). Indeed, there's no evidence that it was McDonald who constructed the Ross House.

The home itself likely did not serve as a trading post – any building constructed before 1794 almost certainly would have been burnt to the ground in one of the colonial militia raids of the area -- although there was a large storehouse on the grounds that Ross and the McDonalds (or possibly the Scales) apparently later renovated into a residence. This storehouse may have been a precursor to the warehouse and store that Ross ultimately operated to the north, on the Tennessee River, at Ross' Landing, or it may have operated simultaneously and in conjunction with the river-based warehouse.

The home was almost certainly not the boyhood home of Ross, nor was it the home of Ross following his ignominious ejection from his residence at Head of Coosa. Ross' boyhood homes were at Turkey Town, then Wills' Town, then likely at the McDonald home on Chickamauga Creek, possibly followed by some short time at the foot of Lookout Mountain, followed then by an extended residency at private schools to the north, in Tennessee. Again: if Ross did, as some legends say, live for a time with his McDonald grandparents, it would have been at their home on Chickamauga Creek, several miles to the east, and not at the Ross House in Rossville.

What the Rossville house was was the home of Ross as a young man, in his 20s and early 30s, when he was developing his economic interests at Ross' Landing and his nascent political career under the tutelage of an ailing Charles Hicks, who lived just a few miles to the east, in Fortville.

The Ross House did not serve as North Georgia's first school (or even Rossville's first school). Depending on how "school" is defined, that distinction would likely go to one of Blackburn's schools or to the Moravian mission school at Spring Place.

The house may have briefly served as a kind of early U.S. Post Office, but apparently a separate building was constructed as early at 1819, so its career as a postal center would have been extraordinarily brief.

There is no evidence that John Ross added onto the home during his residency. The house was undoubtedly expanded, but that occurred after Ross' occupancy. This is borne out by comparisons of the measurements of the house taken during the valuations and measurements taken during the home's restoration and relocation. At no point would it have been considered a "mansion."

There would not have been a need for a "secret council room" at the Ross House for the simple reason that Ross was not principal chief of the Cherokees during the time that he lived there. The "secret room" is a result of the odd add-on that occurred following the Cherokee Removal and was apparently used as an attic.

The "tunnels" that were described by area residents were probably not really tunnels but entrenchments left over from the Civil War.

The house did serve some military functions both during the Removal and during the Civil War. But it was never a major headquarters of a commanding general, Confederate or Federal.

All of this is not to say that the Ross House is not a historically significant structure. It most assuredly is. The Ross House is one of the oldest structures in the region, if not the oldest, and was, without much doubt, the home of John Ross during the time of his early adulthood. The home also served as a key player in the Civil War battles of Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge, "one of the landmarks of the war," as one participant described it. These facts alone qualify the Ross House as historically significant. Its status is not diminished one iota by the disassembly of the myths surrounding it. Rather, the large body of myth that's amassed surrounding the house is a testament to the importance placed upon the structure by the people whose lives are connected to it.

The John Ross House Today

Ruskin made an interesting observation during the process of relocating the Ross House. “Opinions differ about which part of the house was built first,” she said (Ruskin, 1963, p. 63). “It is really two log houses put together with a dog trot. Our decorator, Miss Bess Neely, thinks the western section was the first part built, judging from the joining of the logs.”

A dendrochronologist from the University of West Georgia, Dr. Georgina DeWeese, concurred during a site visit in March 2007 that the John Ross House is actually two separate buildings, built at two distinct times. The original house, she hypothesized, is the larger half of the house, now the southwesternmost portion (but it would have been considered the “western section” at the time that Neely and Ruskin first encountered the home, before restoration and relocation); this main section of the home is constructed of large oak timbers, as one would expect from the period, while the northeasternmost, smaller portion of the house is of mixed construction, including cedar logs, and the timbers are much smaller than those of the main house. DeWeese said that cedar logs are inferior for construction and were typically used in slave cabins, which is not at all what one would expect to see in the residence of John Ross, successful merchant and future chief of the Cherokee Nation.

The fact that the larger half of the house is the original house is also evidenced by the size of the house as measured during the valuations made just prior to Removal. While the house was originally recorded as being “1 Large dwelling house by 38 by 16 two story high,” the house is measured today still at 16 feet deep but fully 50 feet wide, a discrepancy of 12 feet. There is really no way that the northeastern portion of the home could be the original house, because the original house is also recorded as having “ten Glass windows, seven below and three above,” but the northeastern portion has only a single window on the first floor and no windows at all on the top floor (the so-called “secret council room”).

Adding what is now an open dogtrot area to the southwestern half of the house, one gets a total width of about 35 feet, which is still three feet shy of the width as measured in the 1830s. However, the two fireplaces at either end may also have been calculated in the width, which would put the two measurements in approximate accord.

The northeastern half of the house, meanwhile, is less than 16 feet wide (equal to its depth); even adding in the dogtrot, the width would be a little under 27 feet, which is still fully 11 feet shy of the original recorded width. Again, the northeastern portion (left-hand side of the house) does not conform to the original measurements.

Apparently the house as observed prior to Removal did not have an open dogtrot. What now serves as the dogtrot area was actually being used as a "smaller room adjoining the Kitchen." What's more, it wasn't unsided, but was "well fram'd and weather boarded, the two rooms below neatly seald with pine planks." A picture of the house taken by Barnard during the Civil War confirms that the house was sided from an early period, as even at that early date the siding appeared old and tattered. So the "rough, random-width old whitewashed pine boards" that then-president Lou Williams derided were apparently actually part of the original construction.

So what we now have at the John Ross House is not an authentic reproduction of the house as it appeared during the time of John Ross' residency, but rather an image of what a log cabin "should" look like, as re-imagined by Ruskin and Rossville residents during the 1960s. As then-president Lou Williams (1973) clearly stated: "We were not interested in restoring the house as it stood. We wanted to restore it to as near its original condition as possible and with the aid of the old photographs and Mr. Morgans skill and such work, this is what we did."

The fireplace that was relocated during the 1960s reconstruction is also an indicator of the original dimensions of the house. If one studies the photographs of the John Ross House closely, ranging from the Civil War era up until the early 1960s, one can plainly see that, when looking at the house from the front, there is a chimney on the outside of the house on the right-hand side, but the leftmost chimney is actually enclosed within the house. This would be consistent with an extension or second structure being simply "tacked on" to an existing house.

Williams (1973), Ruskin, and the John Ross House Association reached a different conclusion:

> When the rough, random-width old whitewashed pine boards which had been added to the inside rooms were removed from the end without a chimney we could plainly see that the logs were smoked up and slightly charred indicating plainly that there once was a fireplace there. It had been moved to the opposite end of the room next to the enclosed dogtrop (sic) to give warmth to the new as well as the original room.

They apparently misinterpreted the evidence. The chimney had never been "moved to the opposite end of the room" to "give warmth to the new as well as the original room." The chimney was right where it had always been. The "charring" they observed could have come from any number of causes. Since there were also "missing timbers" on the wall that could indicate the prior existence of a fireplace, one could argue that the 16-foot "add-on" to the original Ross House was once a separate house or structure with its own fireplace that was later removed when it was melded with the Ross House structure. (It's also possible that this extension was the building described in the 1830s as "1 new cabbin a [Kitchen] 19 by 17 board roof loose plank floor finish'd as common worth $25. But since it

was described as "new," it still probably should not be considered as original to the period of the Ross residency, since he left the house in 1827 or 1828.)

Thanks to the science of dendrochronolgy and the work of Dr. DeWeese, we can now ascribe with confidence a certain date of construction for this original portion of the John Ross House.

DeWeese, in a Mar. 2007 site visit, collected 14 core samples from logs on the original portion of the house. Although she plans on writing a paper on her findings, this paper was not completed at the time of the writing of this NPS report. She also intends to collect at least 10 more core samples, if possible, to confirm her findings. However, DeWeese shared the following preliminary information and gave her permission for it to be included in this report:

John Ross House Preliminary Investigation of Construction Date using Dendrochronological Techniques

Fourteen increment cores representing thirteen logs were extracted from the John Ross House. These cores were taken from the older lower level of the house. The younger lower level of the house was not sampled because it contained small red cedar logs mixed with oak logs, an indication of building youth.

Of the 14 cores taken, three of them could not be dated using dendrochronological techniques. This was the

case because one core did not have enough rings, the second core contained a branch node which cannot be dated around, and the third core contained too much rot.

Of the 11 cores that did date, they represented 11 separate logs. Seven of the 11 cores were cut around the year 1817. The two logs that have cutting dates of 1800 and 1807 were likely salvaged from an earlier structure or could be missing sapwood. The log with a cutting date of 1789 is likely missing sapwood, so 1789 represents a premature cutting date.

Core Name	Total Number of Years	Outer Date	Cutting Date
JREB03R	89		1815
JREB04L	89		1816
JRN06R	80		1819
JRN04L	59		1817
JRSBEAM	59	1800	
JRS04L	68		1816
JRW01LB	25		--
JREB04R	72		1816
JRN04R	51		1816
JREB03L	53	1789	
JRN06L	75	1807	

-- Does not represent a complete core, so could not be used to determine cutting date.

"Seven of the logs we cored have cutting dates clustered around 1817, meaning they were cut in 1816/17," said DeWeese (personal communication through email).

"So, I would say the John Ross house was built in 1817," she said.

1817 is also precisely the date at which John Ross changes the headings of his letters from "Chickamogga" to "Poplar Spring," and then later to "Rossville." It was also the year Ross was named U.S. Postmaster of Rossville. Remember, as well, that the earliest record I've been able to locate of John Ross entertaining guests at his own home was recorded by Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury on Nov. 25, 1816, wherein he advises Samuel Worcester to "take the main road from Georgia to West Tennessee and proceed on to Mr. John Ross's near Lookout Mountain, on the Tennessee River." (Walker, 1932, p. 24) Eaton (1921, p. 24) gives the date of Ross' travels to New York and Baltimore to procure goods for his Rossville store as the "autumn of 1816." The series of period maps, too, clearly shows that "Ross" or "Ross's" was originally located at the home of Daniel Ross on the Tennessee River, in the early 19th century, and only after 1820 did the placename of "Ross" or "Rossville" shift to the southeast, more in line with the current Rossville.

So it would seem, then, that the John Ross House was likely built in late 1816 and perhaps finished in early 1817 by none other than John Ross himself, or by someone in his employ (Whether or not this was house was constructed on the same location as the previous William Shorey house, using salvage logs from its structure, must remain, at this point, purely speculative.) In any case, we are no longer put in the position of having to account for the residents of the house prior to the occupancy of John Ross, because there apparently weren't any, since the house simply did not exist as we know it before 1816/17.

It should also be pointed out that 1817 was the date the McDonalds sold their house on Chickamauga Creek to the Brainerd Mission and moved to their grandson's place, in late January, as established in the Brainerd Journal (Phillips, 1998, pp. 27-28). So it is entirely possible that John Ross lived with his grandparents, the McDonalds, at their house on Chickamauga Creek while he was constructing his new home, and then it is also possible that the McDonalds moved in with him at about the same time that he himself moved into the newly-constructed Ross House.

A storehouse on the property was converted into a residence of about the same size as the Ross House, but assessed at only half its value. Did the McDonalds, then, move into the converted storehouse or live out the rest of their days with Ross in the main house? Who can say?

It's even possible, I suppose, that an elderly McDonald built the Ross House, after all. But if he did, it was in 1816/17, not 1797.

THE INTERIOR: ORIGINAL HOUSE (SOUTHWESTERN SECTION): FIRST FLOOR

MAR. 2007 – The main living room in the John Ross House as it appears today.

The house, as originally described, had "two first rate stone chimneys having five fire places, two below and three above." The southwestern portion which likely comprises the original extent of the John Ross House currently has only one chimney and two fireplaces; one below and one above.

The lower level or first-floor fireplace was the one which had what Ruskin described as a "swinging mantel." There is some indication of the operations of this mantel in the irregularities of the ceiling directly above the fireplace, but the mantel is no longer "swinging." Ruskin and Williams failed to indicate why this feature of the house, which was admittedly unusual, was not reconstructed following the relocation of the house.

The fireplace is probably original, "the stones having been replaced in their exact original position," those who conducted the 1962 restoration / relocation said. Today the plaque signifying the house's National Historic Landmark status sits in this fireplace. "The hearths are

of the same fieldstone," newspaper reports stated, which probably means they are not entirely original. "The mantels are sections of logs sliced in half and one is an original," the same newspaper report indicated. No one today knows for certain which is the original mantel, but this could be determined scientifically.

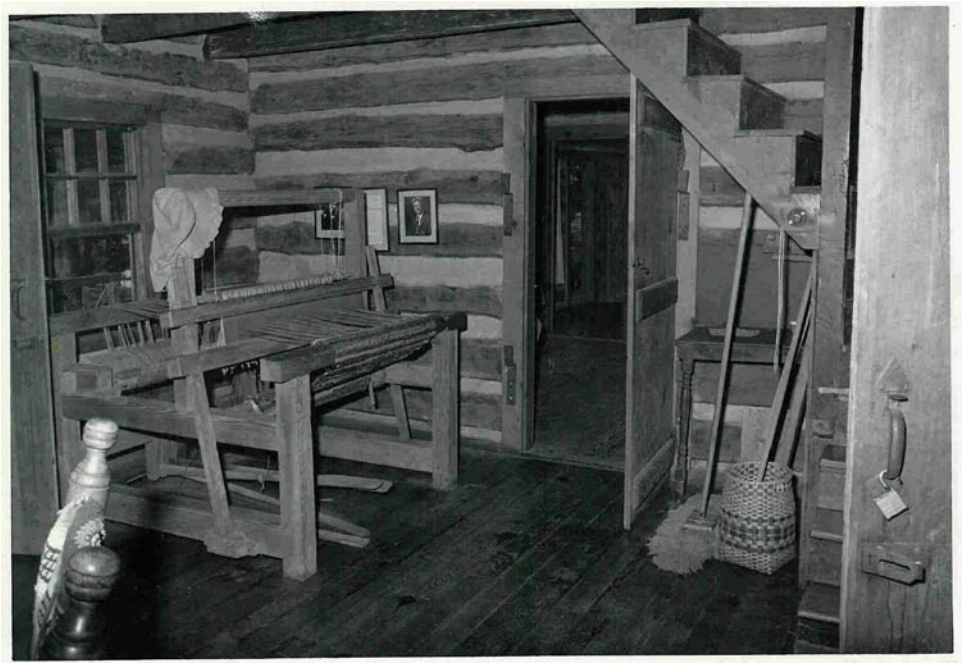
The first floor originally had "two rooms," with "one very large." Today the "very large" room would likely equate with what is now the entire first floor (of this original portion of the structure).

The first floor of the John Ross House, as originally configured, had "Glass windows, seven below," having "12 lights in each 8 by 10." These were sashed and shuttered, with iron hinges. The shutters and hinges were replaced during the reconstruction / relocation, but were patterned on the originals. There are currently four windows in this room (the missing three windows may have been located in what is now the open dogtrot area, which would likely have been the smaller room described in the valuations.).

The downstairs flooring is likely original and is coated in linaloe or linseed oil.

This downstairs room has been furnished by the John Ross Association with a number of items which I will attempt to inventory (although the records of the John Ross House Association are spotty and rely mainly on the memories of Margaret Ann Hixon; I have amplified her recollections with material about the collections included in the book about the John Ross House by Ruskin [1963], by Ruskin's correspondence, and by various newspaper articles):

■ Chestnut bookcase – In 1986 "some old books were purchased by the association to put in our Chestnut bookcase donated by Mrs. Harold Cash," Frances Jackson reported in a letter dated Mar. 18, 1986.

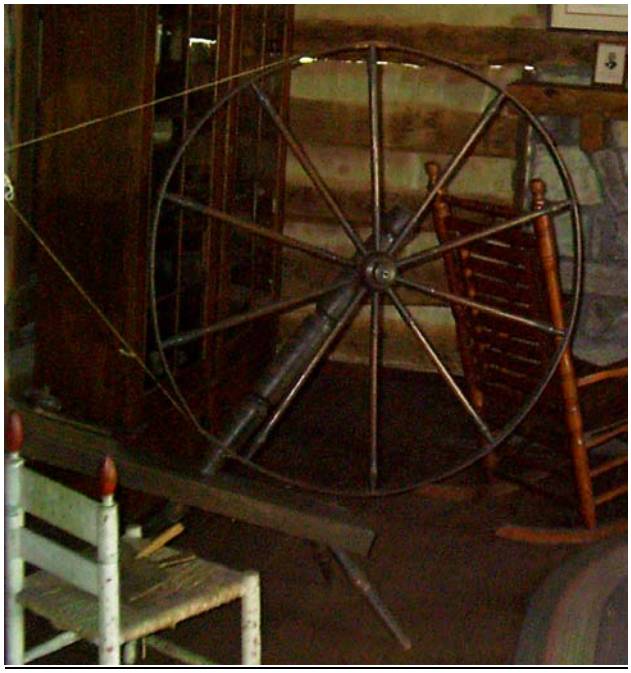


■ Loom – "From someone's attic in LaFayette, GA." Set up by Mrs. Jim Gardner prior to 1981. Margaret Ann Hixon reported that the loom was donated by a "Mrs. Weatherly, or was it Weatherby, or maybe Weatherford?" Ruskin said, however, that "The Thurman family has contributed a hand loom which was used by Elizabeth Jane Cassaday Wall in Walker County, Georgia, some time after 1825. It is probable that the loom had been made by her ancestors and used by them in Tennessee and Virginia."

ARTIFACTS PRESENTED—Ken Clay, second from left, is shown presenting a collection of Indian arrowheads to the Chief John Ross House Association. The priceless collection is permanently on display at the house located in the heart of Rossville. From left, Jack Harper, tour guide for the historical house; Mrs. Frances Jackson, president of the association; and Mrs. O.L. Miller, historian for the association. (Staff photos by Buddy Houts)

■ Ken Clay Point Collection – In June, 1982, Ken Clay, then serving as director of the Bonny Oaks School, donated an "Indian arrowhead collection" that he began accumulating when he was five years old. Clay told the North Georgia Neighbor newspaper that he "found the arrowheads while digging in the ground where Rossville High School is now located." Clay said always thought he would save them for his son, "but this way, may (sic) son can enjoy them and so can many other people." The Association announced that the "priceless" new collection would be "displayed on the mantle of the house…"

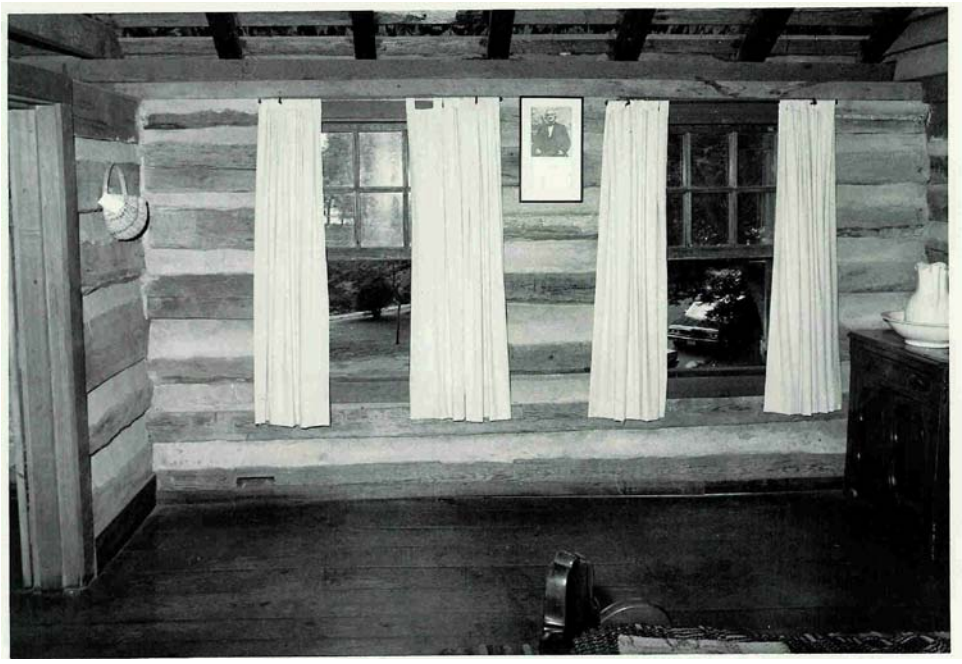
■ John Ross Portrait Gallery – There are a number of portraits spanning the life of Ross in this collection, which is presented on the mantel, but one in particular, depicting an aged Ross, is considered rare. "While on trips to Oklahoma I tried to find Ross-connected things for the house," Ruskin said in a letter to Williams. "I may have told you that the great-grandson, Mayor Ross Daniel, has promised to give a rare picture of Ross (it is on loan to a museum out there at the present) which hung in his father's office, to the Ross house when it is restored." Ruskin later obtained the photograph, which she said had "been on display at the Murrell Mansion at Tahlequah." The picture was presented in memory of Ross Daniel's late father, who was Indian Agent at Tahlequah for over 35 years, Ruskin said. "This large picture in a heavy gold frame had hung in his father's office until his death," she said. "Mayor Daniel said he felt his father would have wanted it hung in the Ross house."



■ Spinning Wheel (natural wood finish) – Mrs. Harold Cash of Chattanooga donated it prior to 1981.

■ Rocking chairs – Walter Lauter and the Rossville Community Center donated them prior to 1981.

■ The John P. Brown Cord Bed – This bed was donated to the house via Ruskin by the author of the 1930s classic history, *Old Frontiers*. (This is the same Brown that Ruskin claimed had provided most of her source information for the history of the house). Ruskin said Brown described the period cord bed and coverlet like so: "This coverlet was women (sic) in Georgia by my grandmother, Mrs. Harriet (Harmon) Brown, some time between 1830 and 1850. She lived and was married as Harriet Harmon to Ezekiel Brown, near the present Odessadale, Georgia. She have the coverlet as a wedding present to my mother, Martha (Nichols) Brown, who was married to my father, Alexander F. brown, at Griffin, Georgia, in 1867. My grandmother, Mrs. Harriet Harmon Brown, was living at the time she gave my mother the coverlet at Nacogdoches, Texas, where my grandfather, Ezekiel Brown, had moved with his family and slaves by covered wagon in 1850." Years later the Association members seemed to have forgotten the history of the bed, as Margaret Ann Hixon merely states that a "man in Memphis, TN" by the name of "Mr. Brown" donated it.

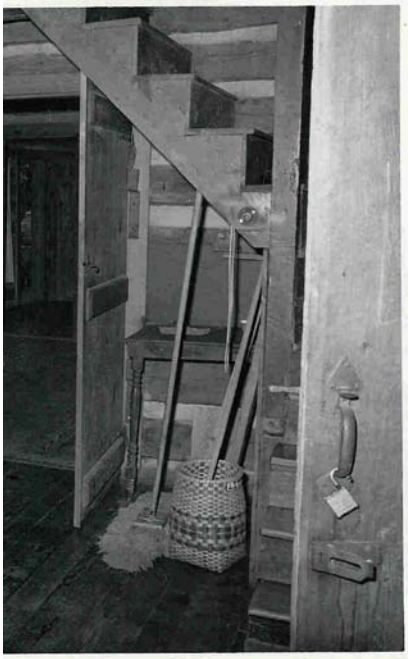


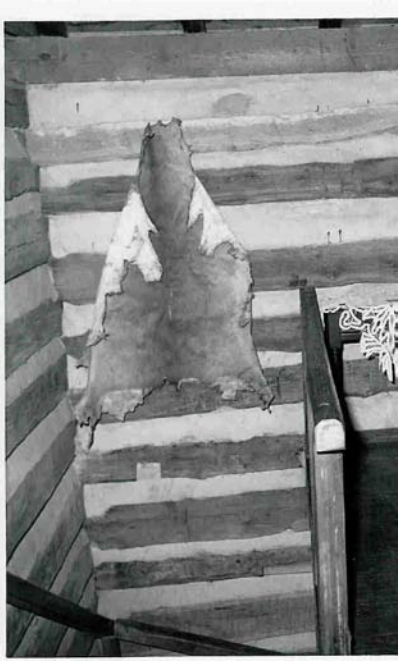
■ Curtains – Frances Jackson provided curtains for all the windows in the house prior to 1981.

The smaller room on the first floor mentioned in the valuations, now possibly the dogtrot, was "adjoining the Kitchen," which had been newly constructed, probably during the 1830s.

The two rooms on the first floor were "neatly seald with pine planks, with chair & wash boards, well floord above and below…"

A stairway in the northeastern corner of the large room on the first floor is also mentioned in the valuations as "a good set of stairs."





THE INTERIOR: ORIGINAL HOUSE (SOUTHWESTERN SECTION): SECOND FLOOR

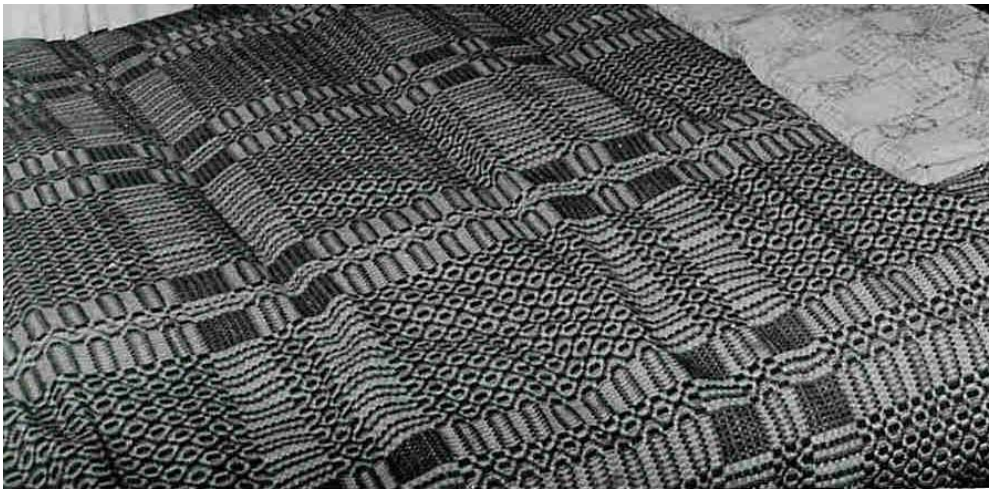
There are two rooms on the second floor, but apparently one of those rooms was used as a "closet" in the 1830s. Upstairs there were originally three windows, but now there are six, with four in what may have once been the "closet," directly over the dogtrot, and two in what may once have been the only bedroom (there were, however, some "plank partitions" mentioned in the valuations).

The floor on the second story is not original, having been replaced during the restoration / relocation.

Here's an inventory of the two upstairs rooms (excluding the northeast addition, the upper story of which was never finished and is now used for storage, and rumored to be John Ross' "secret council room"):

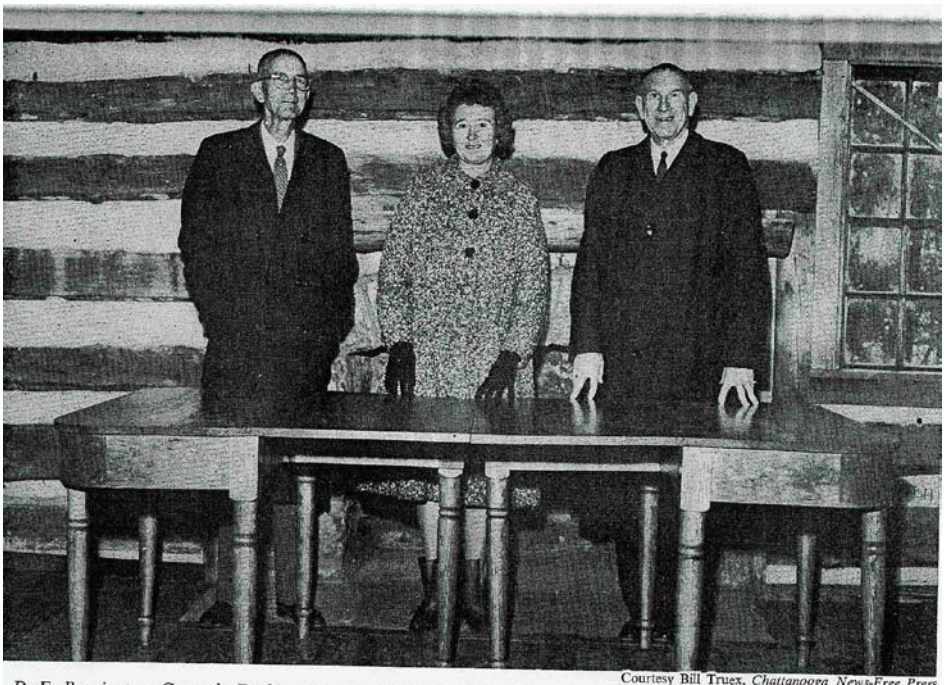
■ The John Ross Bed (in the "closet" area directly above the open dogtrot) – Descendants of John Ross sold the bed to the John Ross House Association. Margaret Ann Hixon: "The task of stripping and refinishing it was given to Earl McCracken Co. Seven coats of paint had to come off. It is described as a gorgeous portrait bed. Mrs. McCracken has a picture of her husband standing by the walnut bed among the yellowed photographs in her office." Ruskin tells of how she came by the bed: "I was able to

locate, after a year's search, the John Ross bed.... According to Robert Bruce Ross, great grandson of John Ross, the bed was given by Ross to his daughter, Annie, as a wedding present. Robert Bruce Ross and his wife, Marguerite, are curators of the Murrell Mansion at Park Hill, near Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The John Ross bed is a large wooden bed, 6'10" long and 5'3" wide."



■ Woven spread – "Heirs in Oklahoma" sold it to the John Ross House Association prior to 1981.

■ The John Ross House Photo Gallery – There are a number of pictures in the same room housing the John Ross bed, showing the John Ross House at various points in history, including an oversized reproduction of the Barnard photograph taken during the Civil War. Copies of these pictures are on the cover of this report and scattered throughout.



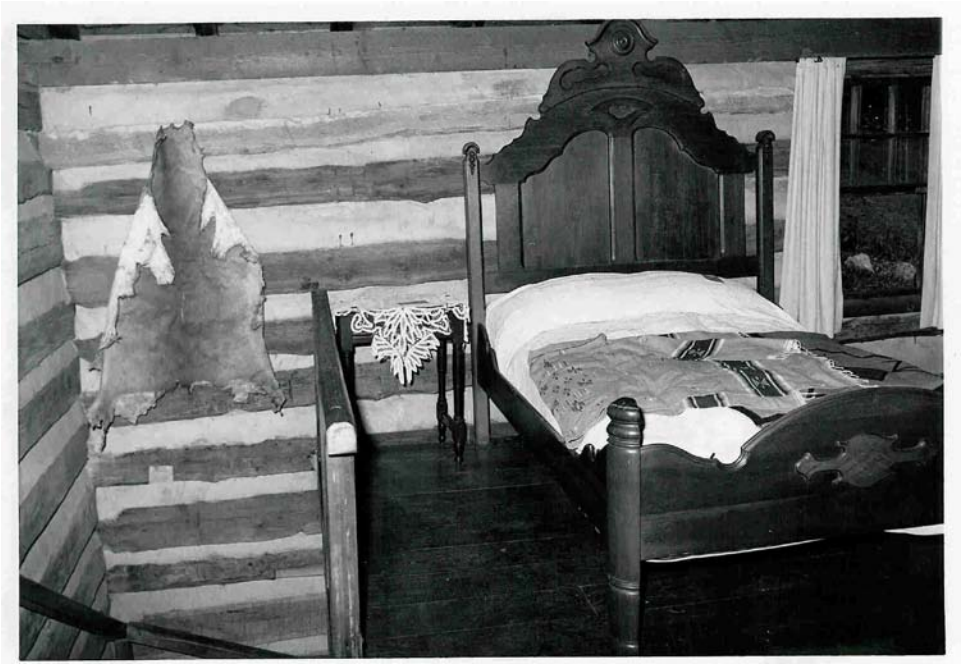
Courtesy Bill Truex, *Chattanooga News-Free Press*

D. E. Pennington, Gertrude Ruskin, and Sidney Ruskin with replica of an original Ross Table presented to the John Ross House by D. E. Pennington, Chairman of Committee, Dalton Lodge No. 105, F&AM; Western Chapter No. 80, RAM; Walton C. Griffin Council 36, R&SM; St. Johns Commandery No. 19, KT.

■ The John Ross Table Reproduction – Half of a reproduction of a table purported to be owned by John Ross is in one upstairs room and the other half is in the other upstairs room. According to Ruskin, "The dining table is an authentic reproduction of an original Ross table which we were unable to obtain. The table was made by Nation's Cabinet Shop in Dalton for four Masonic bodies at Dalton and donated by the Masons to the memory of the late Tom Law." The original Ross table remained in the Boyles family until 1985, when it was finally donated to the John Ross House Association. It is located downstairs in the northeastern (non-original) section of the house, which has been made into a kitchen / dining room.

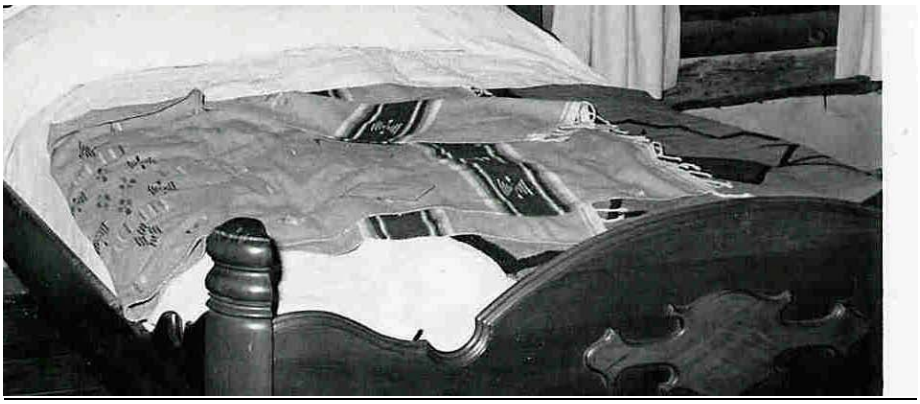
■ Wash stand (not pictured) – Kinchen Exum donated it.

In the larger bedroom to the southwest:



■ Bed – Kenchen Exum donated it prior to 1981.

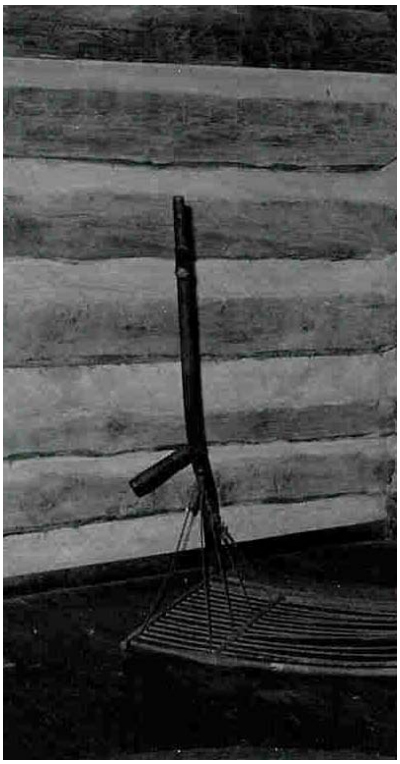
■ Antique Scarf – Mrs. Luther Adcock donated it prior to 1981.



■ Multicolored throw – "a museum piece," donated prior to 1981.

■ Spinning Wheel with black finish – Unknown donor, prior to 1981.

■ "Bench with rockers" and several straight chairs – John L. Hutcheson donated them prior to 1981. Another chest he donated at the same time wound up missing during a 1981 inventory.



■ Scythe – unidentified donor, given prior to 1981.

■ Sequoyah Gallery – various items related to Sequoyah and his syllabary.

THE INTERIOR: NON-ORIGINAL HOUSE EXTENSION (NORTHEASTERN SECTION)

The northeastern section of the house was not included in the original valuations (unless one of the other outbuildings, such as the kitchen, wound up being later incorporated into the house) so it is impossible to make comparisons.

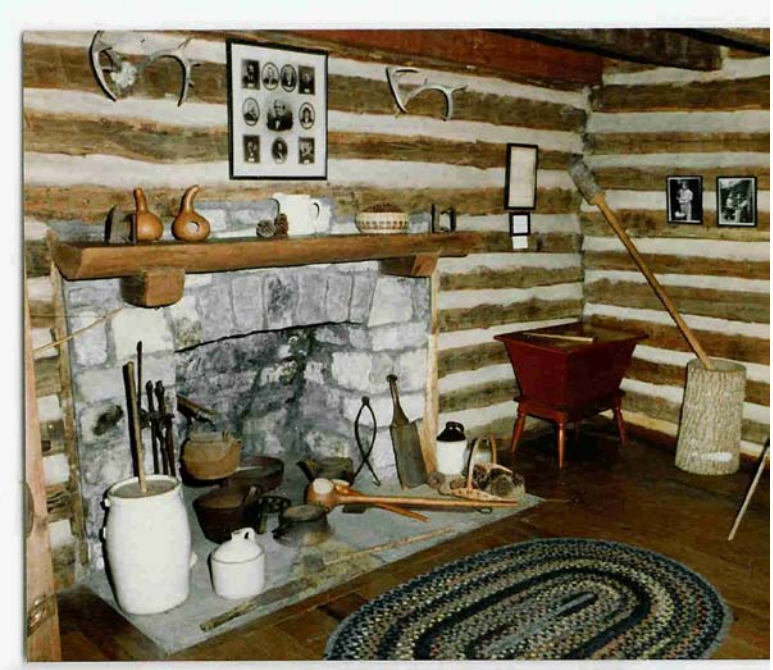
Currently there is a fireplace with a mantle on the northeastern side of the room and a single window (on the front of the house, bottom floor). The top floor had no windows at all, and not even a door, until one was made during the relocation / restoration. As Ruskin described it: "Upstairs there was a secret room without windows, doors, or flooring. A workman said the only evidence that the room was ever used was two slight grooves in one of the timbers where something may have been let down. In the restoration there was a doorway added to the secret room so that visitors would be able to see inside."

The downstairs room currently houses the following items:

■ The John Ross Dining Room Table – In July, 1985, Sally Norton Boyles and Rosemary Boyles Bonnell, on behalf of the Boyles Estate, placed on "permanent loan" to the John Ross House Association a dining room table, purportedly originally obtained from the house prior to the Cherokee Removal. "It was purchased at public auction prior to the infamous removal of the Cherokee's (sic)," Boyles and Bonnell said in a later dated July 11, 1985. The table was purchased "circa. November 1834," they said, "Wilson Norton journeying to the auction in Rossville by horse and wagon and returning to his home at Norton in near zero weather, almost freezing to death." The table was placed on loan "as a tribute to Chief John Ross" and in "memory of the pioneer settlers H. Wilson Norton and his wife Margaret McGaughey and their descendants…" The table "may not be sold, loaned, divided, or in any way mistreated, defaced, or abandoned," they stipulated. Ruskin had originally wanted to obtain the table in the early 1960s, soon after the relocation / restoration, but was unable to do so, and they had a replica commissioned instead. "I hope the Boyle brothers will give us an original table belonging to Ross," she wrote to Williams on Aug. 16, 1961. "You must go with me when you ask for it as I believe you are an ace persuader."

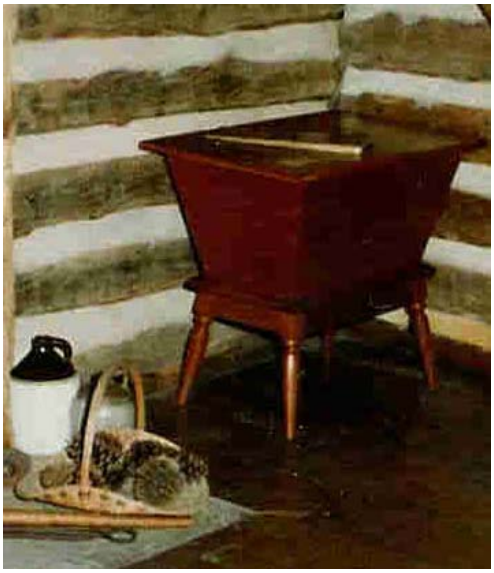
■ John Ross Kitchen Utensils (on the John Ross Table) – According to Ruskin, "The first gift to the Ross House was a soup tureen and four salt

and pepper dishes, a water pitcher and four glass-footed sherbet dishes – all from the table of Chief Ross and presented by J.D. Foreman, a descendant of John Ross and his second wife." Hixon merely stated that the "Ironstone dishes and pressed glass" were "purchased from the descendants of John Ross at the same time that the John Ross bed was purchased."



■ Cooking Utensils – "Lanier Billups gave a safe, a trunk, castiron pots and utensils for cooking on an open fire, a splint-bottomed chair, a number of ironstone jugs, several animal hides, irons, a pie-top table, andirons, and a flintlock musket," said Ruskin. "All items were given in memory of his late mother, Mrs. Alice Houston Billups, a member of the Baron DeKalb Chapter, DAR and Agnes Lee Chapter, UDVC.

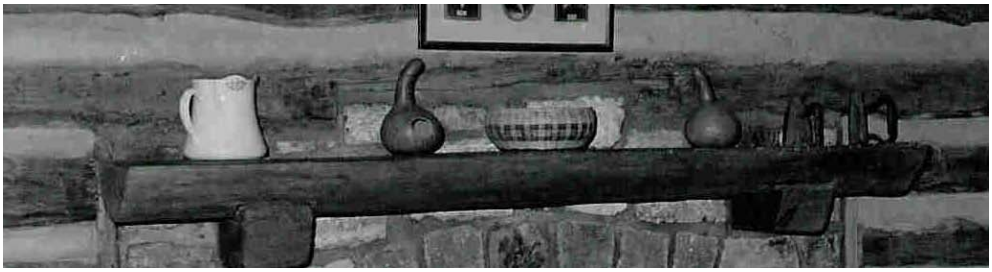
■ Child's chair – Susie Barnes Frances donated it prior to 1981.



■ Flour Bread Bin – Olsey Sawnooke, Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokees, donated it prior to 1981.

■ Kitchen rug – The rags were prepared by the Girls' Club of Rossville, under the direction of Margaret Hudson, then crocheted by Mrs. O. L. Miller.

■ Old kitchen chair (not pictured) – Mrs. Harold Cash donated this chair, with "a wide cane bottom," referred to as "a museum piece," prior to 1981.



■ "Modern Cherokee wall ornaments and mantle pieces" – Dave Scarborough donated them prior to 1981.

Chief John Ross Bequest

The Chief John Ross Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution recently presented a letter written by Ross, once chief of the Cherokee Nation, to the John Ross House Association. Participating in the presentation of the letter, given in memory of Mrs. Winona Hinshaw Campbell, were, from left, George Campbell, Mrs. W. A. Jackson and Mrs. Charles W. Lyon. Dated Dec. 20, 1830, the letter is addressed to George W. Crawford, then attorney general of Georgia, and concerns a proposed effort to obtain an injunction to restrain Georgia from enforcing its state laws within the Cherokee Territory.

■ Ross-and-Cherokee-related Documents and Photographs (A Gallery) – The walls of this "kitchen" area on the first floor also feature a gallery of various elements, including an original letter written by John Ross, photographs of various members of the Ross family, a framed article written on the Ross House by the Ruskins for the "The New Age," a framed copy of the official Cherokee tribal seal, pictures of various Cherokees engaged in a number of activities, items related to the Masons, and other items.

THE INTERIOR: OTHER VARIOUS FURNISHINGS

Just as Ruskin appears to have been the prime mover when it came to the preservation and relocation of the Ross House, even to the point of personally selecting the local leadership of the Association, she was also instrumental in efforts to furnish the completed house, as shown in her correspondence with Williams.

"I hope you will insist that all gifts to the Ross house be cleared through me," she told Williams in 1961. "Such gifts will have to be just right as to size and etc., tone acceptable."

She told Williams that her new acquaintance, "Miss Bess Neely," would be an invaluable resource when it came to deciding what should go into the newly renovated house.

"I am getting a list of needed items from Bess," she said.

> I interested my interior decorator friend, Miss Bess Neely, in Indians and the Ross house to the extent that she had agreed to decorate the Ross house on her own free time and to give the draperies. I took her to Rossville once and she measured the windows for the draperies and this old man who lives in the house (one side of it) insulted us while we were doing it.
>
> She was an officer in the American Institute of Decorators and still is in some capacity. She has taught Interior Decorating at the High Museum of Art. Of course she has given numerous lectures on the various periods and, if you agree, after the September meeting has dispensed with the business of reorganizing, it might be well to have Bess make a few remarks about her idea for furnishings for the Ross house.
>
> I called Bess about furnishings for the Ross house and told her about you. Bess and I plan a trip to the Ross house next Tuesday, August 29, and will arrive around 11 A. M. Do you think you could possibly meet us out at the house? Bess wanted to do some measuring and whatever it is that decorators do and she wants to do it now before the structure is moved.

Ruskin said that Neely would help to give that House that "touch of reality," since "everything was either used in that time or has been authentically reproduced." Every object, she said, "has within it many stories."

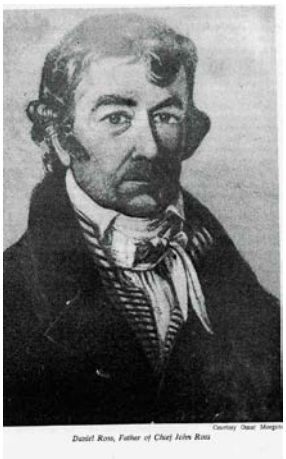
Ruskin and Hixon describe a number of items that I am unsure about how to place in the house or whether they are even any longer located in the house at all. (Apparently Ruskin took with her some articles when she was asked to resign from the board, for unknown reasons, following the restoration / relocation). Following is a listing of items that were apparently donated at one time or another and may still be found somewhere in the John Ross House (a more thorough inventory should be undertaken at some point):

■ Corn Shuck – Ruskin said, "I was able to acquire an authentic corn shuck tick with the aid of a relative, Mrs. Lewis Bryan. She went to se the Governor Vance house, built of logs only four years before the Ross House, and restored near Asheville, North Carolina. She asked who made the ticks for it and was able to obtain the same pattern. But Mrs. Bryan had to conduct a diligent search for materials since corn shucks just are not used for ticks now. Attempting to enlist the aid of another relative she was told, 'Law, honey, there hain't enough shucks on the whole branch to stuff a tickin'! Why don't you go to Sears Roebuck and buy a good mattress?' Luckily for the Ross House Mrs. Bryan finally found enough shucks for a tick --- not at Sears."

■ Wild Cherry Dough Board – Ruskin said, "I went to see Mr. Harold Duck of the Indian Agency at Cherokee to see if the woodworking class of the Cherokee High School might be able to make a replica of a dough

board for the Ross House. Using a pattern Miss Neely had sent, the class made and presented a beautifully finished dough board of wild cherry."

■ Cane Wallhanging – Ruskin said, "The three daughters of the late Chief Standingdeer presented a beautiful handwoven wall hanging of cane. They presented it in memory of their late father, the famous Chief Carl Standingdeer, an ace shot with the bow and arrow, who was Chief of the Archers for many years before his death."



■ Daniel Ross Photo – Ruskin said, "The picture of Daniel Ross is one I found unexpectedly during a trip I made to California. It was given to me by Omar Morgan of California to be presented to the Ross house."

From Ruskin:

> Many other rare and valuable gifts have been presented to be used in the Ross House. And other items of interest may one day be seen in the little museum proposed for the Ross grounds. These will be, among other things, a shuttle and a small carved pestle found during ht edismntling of the Ross House. The Coin Club of Chattanooga is presenting to the future museum a collection of pieces ranging from the time Ross lived here to the year of his death.
>
> While on trips to Oklahoma I tried to find Ross-connected things for the house …There are pictures of the Lewis Ross family I have located and letters and other rare material which I could not ask for until I knew the house would be saved.
>
> At Cherokee, I will see the school about making a duplicate of a suitable piece of furniture for the Ross house. They do beautiful work.

Here are other items listed by Ruskin in her book, *John Ross, Chief of an Eagle Race* (pp. 83-84):

GIFTS PRESENTED THE JOHN ROSS HOUSE

Interested citizens of Georgia, Tennessee and other states for moving and restoring the John Ross House, about $16,000.

Cherokee Indian students, Cherokee High School, Cherokee, N. C., made and presented a dough board.

Leon Ross Daniel, Mayor of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and great, great grandson of Chief John Ross, a large, rare photograph of John Ross in a gold frame.

Sequoyah Indian Weavers of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, hand-loomed curtain material.

Miss Bess Neely, official decorator, made and presented four pair of curtains for parlor at Ross House, Atlanta, Ga.

Edith and Lewis Bryan, corn shuck tick, Asheville, N. C.

Omar L. Morgan, picture of Daniel Ross, father of John Ross, Newhall, Calif.

George M. Clark, Sr., picture of John Ross after McKenny and Hall print, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Chief Carl Standingdeer's three daughters, a cane wall mat: Mrs. Cecelia Taylor, Virginia Standingdeer, and Mrs. Roxanna Stamper, Cherokee, N. C.

Mrs. Lester Price, a fine specimen of gourd grown on her farm near Asheville, N. C.

Lester Price, bull tongue plow point found on his farm near Asheville, N. C.

J. D. Foreman, three rare old books, picture of Houston Benge Teehee, pitcher, four glass-footed sherbets, four salt and pepper dishes, soup tureen, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Mrs. J. P. Brown, small rope bed, Memphis, Tenn.

J. P. Brown, hand-loomed coverlet, Memphis, Tenn.

Elizabeth Carmichael Jones, MacDonald coat of arms, hand-painted by Mrs. Jones, Atlanta, Ga.

Virginia Lane Brown, Cherokee Testament, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Amanda Crowe, hand-carved bear by Amanda Crowe, Cherokee, N. C.

Mrs. William Crutchfield, hand-painted picture of Ross House by Mrs. Crutchfield, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Gertrude Ruskin, Indian basket, Indian corn, map, hand-loomed Indian mat, candle mold, peg lamp, black iron kettle, 2 tablespoons, Indian doll, Ross Restoration Scrapbook, mortar and pestle, Ross coat of arms (hand-painted), meal scoop, ironstone coffee pot, dairy dipper, silver butter dish, two wool hand-loomed Indian rugs, 4 hand-loomed napkins, Cherokee Hymnal and the last picture taken of John Ross and presented Gertrude Ruskin by his two great granddaughters: Jennie Ross Cobb and Anne Ross Piburn.

D. E. Pennington, chairman of committee to make a replica of an original Ross dining table: Dalton Lodge No. 105, F&AM; Western Chapter No. 80, RAM; Walton C. Griffin Council 36, R&SM; St. Johns Commandery No. 19, KT; all of Dalton, Georgia.

Sam H. Pedigo, carpentry service, Rossville, Ga.

Walter M. Cline, print in color of restored Ross House, Chattanooga, Tenn.

The Chattanooga Times, black and white print of Ross House before restoration.

Rossville Exchange Club, Book of Appreciation and stand, Rossville, Ga.

Schroeder's Garden Center, plants for landscaping grounds at Ross House, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Garden Clubs of Rossville, work of landscaping the Ross grounds.

Harrison Gill, hand-forged latches and hinges, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Lou Williams, George Shaw, Harvey Ross and Floyd Pollard made and presented shutters and doors for Ross House.

Kinchen Exum, print of Ross House from *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, May, 1874, Lookout Mountain, Tenn.

Cherokee Historical Association, 2 black and white prints of Indians, Cherokee, N. C.

The Waynesville Mountaineer, print of Pocahontus Club of Claremore, Okla., Waynesville, N. C.

Chattanooga News-Free Press, picture of John Ross table (replica).

John Morgan, clock, Tellico Plains, Tenn.

Darrell Fleming, Seal of Cherokee Nation, Cherokee, N. C.

Lanier Billups, pie-top table, pots and utensils for cooking on an open fire, churn, safe, chair, plow, reaper, animal skins, jugs and irons.

Mrs. Eugene Wyatt, scholar's desk, Chickamauga, Ga.

Mrs. Frank Gleason, United States Flag, Chattanooga, Tenn.

John Ross Chapter, D.A.R., a framed picture of John Ross, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Mrs. Luther Adcock, hand-loomed table cloth, Rossville, Ga.

Mrs. Edward Chambers, small hand-loomed Indian mat, Rossville, Ga.

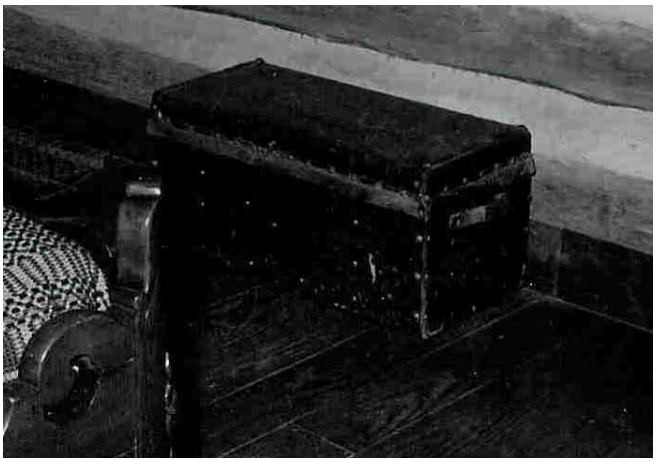
Volunteer Chapter, United States Daughters of 1812, ironstone bowl and pitcher, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Mrs. Lee Weatherly, hand-loomed coverlet, Lafayette, Ga.

Mrs. Nora Roper, iron, Rossville, Ga.

Lillian Thurman King, Lee Thurman Weatherly, Lucile Thurman, Maude Thurman Daniel and Roy Thurman presented a hand loom similar to one in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, Lafayette, Ga.

Hixon described the following items in a 1981 inventory, filed in the archives of the John Ross House Association, and these articles may or may not still be located in the John Ross House today (again, a more thorough inventory is needed to determine which items are still extant):

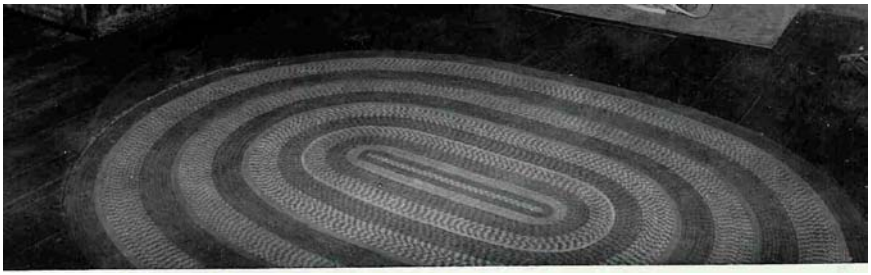


■ Chest – "Ed Chapin's first wife" donated a chest, prior to 1981.

■ Feather bed – Mr. and Mrs. Conroy Ryan donated it prior to 1981.

■ Federal period bookcase – Unknown donor, given sometime between 1984 and 1985; constructed between 1820 and 1830.

■ "Chest or trunk" – unidentified donor, prior to 1981.



RUGMAKER — Mrs. Alma Glenn, seated, looks admiringly at the rug she made and donated to the John Ross House the same year the house opened in 1963.
Holding the rug, from left, are Mrs. Fay Peacock, president of the Chickamauga Homemakers Association; and Margaret Shelton, Mrs. Glenn's daughter. (Staff photo by Steve Grider)

■ Braided rug – Mrs. Paul Ellis donated it prior to 1981, or perhaps Mrs. Alma Glenn in 1962.

I also found mentions of the following donated items in clippings from the John Ross House Association scrapbooks:

■ A Cherokee Testament written in syllabic characters by Sequoyah and donated to the association by Miss Virginia Browne in 1962 (Peck, 1962c). (This may be a part of the Sequoyah collection in the upstairs bedroom).

■ Twelve chairs – Russell Freeburg of Chickamauga Avenue donated 12 chairs to the John Ross House Association in 1977. "We had not expected such generosity and would have been appreciative of the chance to get some used chairs," said President Don Phillips in a May 10, 1977 letter.

Picnic Table Placed At Ross House

PLACEMENT OF PICNIC TABLE—The Rossville Business and Professional Women's Club, on behalf of its community involvement committee that was assisted by the city of Rossville, has announced the placement of a picnic table at the John Ross House.

Pictured looking over the new table are, from left, Mrs. Doris White, Don Phillips, president of the John Ross House Association, who accepted the table on behalf of his group; Mrs. Helen Cook, president of the business and professional women's club; Rossville Mayor Charlie B. Sherrill, Mrs. Jewel Stafford, head of the community involvement committee; Mrs. Joyce Wall and Mrs. Sue Dedmon. (Photo by Jimmy's Photo)

■ Picnic Table – In August, 1977 The Rossville Business and Professional Women's Club presented a picnic table to the Association. "Additional picnic facilities were needed in the area for tourists and local citizens," the Walker County Messenger reported.

BOWL PRESENTED — The Rossville Business and Professional Women's Club recently presented a dough bowl that was hand carved around 1830 to the Chief John Ross House Association. In addition to the period bowl, the club also donated a check to the association.

From left are Barbara Catlett, president of the club; Doris White, project chairwoman; and Frances Jackson, president of the Chief John Ross House Association. (Staff photo by Steve Grider)

■ Dough Bowl – In March, 1986, the Rossville Business and Professional Women's Club presented a "dough bowl that was hand carved around 1830" to the John Ross House Association.

If some of these items are unaccounted for, it's possible that they were placed into storage at one time or another, but no one on the board today knows where that storage facility may have been. (Larry Rose, personal communication, Mar. 2007).

The grounds, once described as a "beautiful tract of land" resplendent with "wisteria, sweet olive, English ivy, dogwood, and many other plants and trees," (Ruskin, 1963, p. 57) are now mostly mud. The Ross House is fenced in to protect it from vandals, as are the springs. There is a cave in the ridge behind the house but visitors are not encouraged to enter it due to the danger of the stairs leading to its entrance.

This state of affairs is in stark contrast to the vision Ruskin originally had for the site, which she shared with Williams in a letter dated Aug. 8, 1961. "Making the best use of the land will be the hard decisions to make," Ruskin said.

> …(T)here are so many things one can do to devleope (sic) the 7-acre tract which has two houses on it. One could be used for living quarters of the caretaker or curator … possibly a Cherokee family who knows how to meet the public or can be trained for it. The other house could be

> used as a weaving shed to show the tourist how the art developed from finger weaving by the Indian to present day textiles … Mr. Kelly might be interested in a blacksmith shop for the place and show some modern plows as contrasted with the old. The possibilities are limitless.

Ruskin suggested in an Aug. 16 letter that a landscape architect be hired and that the John Ross Garden Club follow his or her recommendations. "I do feel that is all important before a blade is cut down or any bull-dozing done," she said.

> They let a bunch of convicts loose out here at Stone Mountain and a landscaper told me they cut down everything, even beautiful wild azaleas. A flower is just a weed to destroy to some and let's avoid disturbing the new site anymore than we have to. Don't you agree?

In the Aug. 8 letter Ruskin said that the spring and cave could also be developed in some way to facilitate tourists and shows.

> You say you are going out to see the Ross house for the first time and the spring at the mouth of the cave. It seems to me we ought to develope (sic) the cave and put a cement platform in front of it so that Boy Scouts could put on dances (Indian) on special occasions. They might even put on my authentic Indian drama which I wrote at Agnes Scott College…
>
> If a stage is made in front of the cave, perhaps the water from the spring can be used in such a way as to make a pretty waterfall … the Garden Clubs in Chattanooga and Rossville could help here but someone who knows what they are doing should lead. It seems to me that we could have a concession stand or trading post like in Indian days (I have an article saying there was one in front of the Ross house)) and sell books pertaining to the Indian and their handcrafts. The cook-house was a room apart and we ought to have this, I think. In other words, show how the Indian actually lived at that time. I'm collecting recipes now from the Ross family so we can cook a meal over the open fire. This might be done once or twice a year and made a real affair.

Most of this never came to pass.

The John Ross House is currently only open to the public during the summer months, for four hours each weekday, except by appointment. This is largely by necessity since it would require massive volunteer hours. Most of the volunteers are older and it would be unreasonable to expect them to sit for hours in a house that has no electricity and no air conditioning. In spite of this, during the summer the house is open generally between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. With more aggressive marketing, which of course takes money and manpower, the John Ross House could undoubtedly be integrated most successfully into the burgeoning local tourist trade, which employs 11 percent of Hamilton County, TN workers. Nearby Rock City alone pulls in 420,000 visitors a year and employs

about 100 people. Ruby Falls, the Tennessee Aquarium, and even the recently developed Ross' Landing are also big tourist destinations. Everyone visiting these destinations should also be directed to the Ross House (although I'm certain the thought of having to deal with hundreds of thousands of tourists a year would put Ross House volunteers into a state of panic, and ultimately that would not be desirable with regard to the continued preservation of the house).

The members of the John Ross House Association deserve much credit for ensuring even this level of access to the public, since it is undoubtedly a very taxing responsibility.

The John Ross House Association, like many volunteer historical organizations, could use more support. They have, for nearly half a century, single-handedly shouldered the burden of preserving and protecting this national historic treasure.

The John Ross House has never really been afforded the respect it deserves, especially outside of the town of Rossville, whose people deserve the thanks of the nation for their heroic efforts to preserve the house when nearly everyone else failed to recognize its immense significance. The House is still slighted on a regular basis, perhaps as a direct result of all the mythology that has built up around it over the centuries, which basically makes Ross out to be a sometime visitor at the home of his grandparents. For instance, the otherwise excellent *Cherokee Heritage Hills Guidebook* by Barbara Duncan and Brett Riggs, while noting the James Vann House in Chatsworth, Chieftains' in Rome, and New Echota in Calhoun, fails even to mention the John Ross House. James Vann was a violent drunk and a thug. Chieftains', horribly misnamed, was the home of a man most Cherokee consider to be a traitor to the Cherokee people, the leader of the so-called Ridge Party, and is barely recognizable today because of 20th-century alterations to the structure. New Echota is little more than an imaginative reconstruction. The John Ross House, on the other hand, looks much like it did when John Ross lived there, from 1816 to 1827, and was the home in which was forged the political conscience of perhaps the most significant leader of the Cherokee Nation.

Perhaps it is fitting that the house is forced to fight for respect, indeed its very continued existence, since its original owner was in exactly the same position. It is disheartening when one reads Ross' correspondence and contrasts the hopeful tone of what was written in his early years of residency at this house with the bitter, disillusioned notes he penned on the eve of the Removal.

■ **July 3, 1819, from Rossville** – "I hope the time is now at hand when the dark cloud of prejudice (which has so long hung over the Heads of Indians) will vanish – and tongue of calumny which have been pointed at their intellectual powers silences into shame … I trust the period is not very far distant when the Cherokees will evince the world, that American

Indians, are capable of civilization and improvement in the highest degree – time and good management will realize this fact. Could I entertain the least particle of doubt in my mind of the practicability of their improvement in civilization &c – I should feel shame in acknowledging myself as an American and a descendant of this nation." (Moulton, 1985, pp. 36-37)

■ **July 2, 1836, from Washington City** – "…I still strongly hope we shall find ultimate justice from the good sense of the administration and of the people of the United States. I will not even yet believe that either the one or the other would wrong us with their eyes open. I am persuaded that they have erred only in ignorance, and an ignorance forced on them by the misrepresentation and artifices of the interested… The Cherokees, under any circumstances, have no weapon to use but argument. If that should fail, they must submit, when their time shall come, in silence…" (Moulton, 1985, p. 455).

The integrity of the John Ross House has lately been questioned by some. One of the purposes of this paper was to determine whether perhaps the John Ross House has less historical significance than has been assumed. During the course of this research we have found that, by contrast, the John Ross has far more historical significance than has been assumed. It was built in 1816/17 specifically for John Ross and his family, perhaps by Ross himself. The John Ross House is a chrysalis. John Ross entered this house a young businessman, freshly returned from his first trip to Washington, D.C. He emerged from this house 11 years later as principal chief, the leader of his people during their most trying hour, the head of perhaps the largest peaceful demonstration of civil resistance against prejudice and greed that the nation has ever seen. As such, the John Ross House has earned its place in American history and demands our respect.

“Sacred Space” Revisited (The Power of Place)

All mythologies start out local. These myths are usually based on local legends that, in turn, are loosely based on historical facts.

To the ancient Israelites, the “promised land” was the land on which they were living. When they talked of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, they could point to the place where it happened. It was not simply a story in a book, but a real occurrence that happened at a real place – and not some distant land across the ocean, but a place within easy traveling distance. For Muslims, the annual Hajj is so resonant precisely because the pilgrims are going to the actual place where Abraham was commanded by Allah to construct a house of worship. Ancient Buddhists could visit the site of the Bodhi tree. “This,” they could say with assurance, “was the very spot where the Buddha attained enlightenment.”

The Native Americans, too, sanctified their land. The Appalachian mountains were created by a giant buzzard flapping its wings too low to the ground. The Uktena snake haunted specific mountain passes, as its nemesis, the Tlanuwa bird, lived in a specific cave high above the Tennessee River. When the two mythic creatures did battle, their mangled bodies left pockmarks in the rocks. They are still there for everyone to see.

By this means, through what mythology scholar Joseph Campbell called “Land Nam,” (“land naming” or “land claiming”), the features of the landscape in which a people live are sanctified and made holy.

A specific aspect of this practice, which occurs in cultures all over the world, is identifying the place of emergence. On some Indian reservations, even today, Campbell (1990, p. 35) says, “a specific place is identified … as the place of emergence. It wasn’t the place of emergence; it is the ritual symbol of the place of emergence. And you consider the emergence mystery when you address yourself to that place … The land is consecrated. It is a holy land in this way.”

For Americans, the ritualized “place of emergence” became Plymouth Rock. It doesn’t matter that Jamestown was settled by the English nearly two decades earlier and that there were Spanish settlements such as Pensacola and St. Augustine even before that. It doesn’t matter that the pilgrims likely did not even land at the place that’s been so designated. (It certainly doesn’t seem to matter that people were living in America for over 10,000 years prior to 1620). Symbolically, for most Americans, Plymouth Rock is the place of emergence for this nation.

For Rossville and its residents, the Ross House serves an identical function (much in the same way that Ross’ Landing has been sanctified in Chattanooga). It was the first house hewn from the wilderness (or at least the oldest surviving one). The street on which it was located became the

main street of the town that later developed around it. When local pageants are conducted and ceremonies are held, they are performed at the Ross House, and it is fitting that this is so. The modest log house has become, for lack of a better term, a holy place. And we can now say with a fair amount of certainty that John Ross himself founded Rossville with the construction of this house in 1816/17.

Therefore, the Ross House could also be considered a place of emergence for the Cherokee. Although Cherokee culture and history predates the construction of the Ross House, the Cherokee emerged as a modern nation-state during the time of this home's construction. Their greatest leader is almost universally recognized as John Ross, and this house is his earliest place of residence as a young adult – his first home. It is the place where he established his business savvy that would serve him so well in later years when he negotiated on behalf of his nation with the U.S. government. It is the place where he first developed his political conscience. It is the home of origin, not for the child John Ross, but for the adult John Ross, who, it could be argued, serves much the same role in history in the minds of today's Cherokee as George Washington or Martin Luther King, Jr. serves for many others. John Ross is, for the Cherokee Nation, a Founding Father. Therefore, the John Ross House should be celebrated in the same manner as is Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, or the log cabin of Abraham Lincoln, or the birthplace of Martin Luther King. Exhibits should be prepared for the house that fully celebrate the life of Ross and the epic struggles of the thousands of Cherokee in their civil fight and unprecedented large-scale passive resistance to remain in their homeland.

The experience one has of Elvis Presley by visiting Graceland is a vastly different experience one would have of the man than one would get by reading a book about him, or even by listening to his records or watching his motion pictures. To visit actual concentration camp locations in Europe is far more haunting than even the best-produced Hollywood movie about the Holocaust. There is something immediate and gripping about physical location. This is what is often called the "Power of Place."

CAREY TILLEY AND LARRY ROSE, John Ross House Association president, at the Ross House on the first day of this NPS research project, in early 2006.

Carey Tilley, director of the Cherokee Heritage Center in Park Hill, Oklahoma (and the original applicant for the CCSP which resulted in the paper you are now reading), spoke movingly about the Power of Place in a newspaper editorial published while he was still at Chieftain's Museum in Rome, Georgia:

> Historic sites have the ability to inspire people, to evoke emotion. They are not time machines but they do have the power to connect us with our past on a level that is difficult to duplicate. To illustrate: several years ago, I had the privilege of visiting the Gettysburg Battlefield. On a quiet summer evening on Seminary Ridge I reflected on the devastation that took place on the field below. I imagined the night before the final battle. I thought about the decisions of the Commanders and the officers that were to order charges in which they knew men would lose their lives. I thought about those men. What must have been going through their minds? Amidst their aches, illnesses, and homesickness did they understand that the role that they played on the following day would alter the course of American history? I gained a new appreciation for those people on that visit and a heightened understanding of the impact that events that took place on the very ground where I stood had on our Nation. That is "the power of place". It cannot be found in a book.

This is precisely why it is so important that places like the Ross House be recognized as Historic National Landmarks and certified as

additions to the Trail of Tears. Places like the Ross House have specific voices, a story to tell, a story that can only be told by the place itself. Even if the vicissitudes of time erode our memories and distort our written histories, this can ultimately be corrected by diligent research. But no amount of historical research could restore the Ross House itself. That takes the dedicated efforts of countless individuals like Gertrude Ruskin and Lou Williams who recognize that vision, combined with action, can stymie nature's relentless indifference; that some things are truly important to us and, once lost, are lost forever.

These are the people who, as Ross House native Rev. Rice (2003, p. 4) so poignantly put it, "see the magic possibilities" of the grounds around them, and "hallow" those grounds with "play and work."

"Some do and some don't," he said. "The world of man is cleft by that elusive difference."

Some say it is a shame that the John Ross House is not still on its original site; that it is out of context. One must remember, however, that it was John Ross himself who initiated the first commercial enterprises that ultimately, over a century later, proved so successful that they shoved their parent house to the side.

I, for one, say that it is fitting that the John Ross House today stands between a cave and a spring, because both are traditionally considered primary places of emergence by the Cherokee themselves.

"There is another world under this," one Cherokee myth states (Mooney, 1992, p. 240), "and it is like ours in everything--animals, plants, and people--save that the seasons are different. The streams that come down from the mountains are the trails by which we reach this underworld, and the springs at their heads are the doorways by which we enter, it, but to do this one must fast and, go to water and have one of the underground people for a guide."

I will close with an excerpt from the Cherokee Myth of Selu and Kanati (Mooney, 1992, pp. 242-243), which speaks about all of creation springing from a cave, much as one could say that all of Rossville and Chattanooga sprang from this unassuming little house:

> When I was a boy this is what the old men told me they had heard when they were boys.
>
> Long years ago, soon after the world was made, a hunter and his wife lived at Pilot knob with their only child, a little boy. The father's name was Kana'tï (The Lucky Hunter), and his wife was called Selu (Corn). No matter when Kana'tï went into the wood, he never failed to bring back a load of game, which his wife. would cut up and prepare, washing off the blood from the meat in the river near the house. The little boy used to play down by the river every day, and one morning the old people thought they heard laughing and talking in the bushes as though there were two children there. When the boy came home at night his parents asked him who had been playing with him all day. "He comes out of the water," said the boy, "and he calls himself my elder brother. He says his mother was cruel to him and threw him into the river." Then they knew

that the strange boy had sprung from the blood of the game which Selu had washed off at the river's edge.

KANATI at the cave of emergence
(www.meredith.edu/nativeam/kanati_&_selu)

Every day when the little boy went out to play the other would join him, but as he always went back again into the water the old people never had a chance to see him. At last one evening Kana'tï said to his son, "Tomorrow, when the other boy comes to play, get him to wrestle with you, and when you have your arms around him hold on to him and call for us." The boy promised to do as he was told, so the next day as soon as his playmate appeared he challenged him to a wrestling match. The other agreed at once, but as soon as they had their arms around each other, Kana'tï's boy began to scream for his father. The old folks at once came running down, and as soon as the Wild Boy saw them he struggled to free himself and cried out, "Let me go; you threw me away!" but his brother held on until the parents reached the spot, when they seized the Wild Boy and took him home with them. They kept him in the house until they had tamed him, but he was always wild and artful in his disposition, and was the leader of his brother in every mischief. It was not long until the old people discovered that he had magic powers, and they called him I'näge-utäsûñ'hï (He-who-grew-up-wild).

Whenever Kana'tï went into the mountains he always brought back a fat buck or doe, or maybe a couple of turkeys. One day the Wild Boy said to his brother, "I wonder where our father gets all that game; let's follow him next time and find out." A few days afterward Kana'tï took

> a bow and some feathers in his hand and started off toward the west. The boys waited a little while and then went after him, keeping out of sight until they saw him go into a swamp where there were a great many of the small reeds that hunters use to make arrowshafts. Then the Wild Boy changed himself into a puff of bird's down, which the wind took up and carried until it alighted upon Kana'tï's shoulder just as he entered the swamp, but Kana'tï' knew nothing about it. The old man cut reeds, fitted the feathers to them and made some arrows, and the Wild Boy--in his other shape--thought, "I wonder what those things are for?" When Kana'tï had his arrows finished he came out of the swamp and went on again. The wind blew the down from his shoulder, and it fell in the woods, when the Wild Boy took his right shape again and went back and told his brother what he had seen. Keeping out of sight of their father, they followed him up the mountain until he stopped at a certain place and lifted a large rock. At once there ran out a buck, which Kana'tï shot, and then lifting it upon his back he started for home again. "Oho!" exclaimed the boys, "he keeps all the deer shut up in that hole, and whenever he wants meat he just lets one out and kills it with those things he made in the swamp." They hurried and reached home before their father, who had the heavy deer to carry, and he never knew that they had followed.
>
> A few days later the boys went back to the swamp, cut some reeds, and made seven arrows and then started up the mountain to where their father kept the game. When they got to the place, they raised the rock and a deer came running out. Just as they drew back to shoot it, another came out, and then another and another, until the boys got confused and forgot what they were about. In those days all the deer had their tails hanging down like other animals, but as a buck was running past the Wild Boy struck its tail with his arrow so that it pointed upward. The boys thought this good sport, and when the next one ran past the Wild Boy struck its tail so that it stood straight up, and his brother struck the next one so hard with his arrow that the deer's tail was almost curled over his back. The deer carries his tail this way ever since. The deer came running past until the last one had come out of the hole and escaped into the forest. Then came droves of raccoons, rabbits, and all the other four-footed animals-all but the bear, because there was no bear then. Last came great flocks of turkeys, pigeons, and partridges that darkened the air like a cloud and made such a noise with their wings that Kana'tï, sitting at home, heard the sound like distant thunder on the mountains and said to himself, "My bad boys have got into trouble; I must go and see what they are doing."
>
> So he went up the mountain, and when he came to the place where he kept the game he found the two boys standing by the rock, and all the birds and animals were gone…

The Cherokee, too, are gone from this place.

But some things, miraculously, remain. Like Ross himself, and the Cherokee as a people, they simply refuse to submit.

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