1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Fort Armistead

Other Name/Site Number: Camp Armistead; 40MR708

Street and Number (if applicable): [redacted]

City/Town: Coker Creek  County: Monroe  State: Tennessee

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 1, 6

NHL Criteria Exceptions: N/A

NHL Theme(s): I. Peopling Places

1. family and life cycle
2. health, nutrition, and disease
3. migration from outside and within
4. community and neighborhood
5. ethnic homelands
6. encounters, conflicts, and colonization

Period(s) of Significance: 1832-1838

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6): Cherokee, Euro-American

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder: N/A

Historic Contexts: Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion, Jacksonian Democracy, and Indian Removal
3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

[X] Yes

___ No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Acreage of Property: 36.36 ac

2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places):

Datum if other than WGS84:

Latitude: Longitude:

OR

UTM References:
3. Verbal Boundary Description:

[Description of the boundary, including specific landmarks and measurements]

[Diagram of the boundary with specific coordinates and labels]
4. **Boundary Justification:**

The site boundaries submitted for nomination include 36.36 acres in three adjacent parcels and one subadjacent parcel purchased or otherwise acquired by the USDA Forest Service for the express purpose of preserving and managing the Fort Armistead archeological site and its proximate associated landscape (see Map 3). These parcels include the documented limits of the Fort Armistead archeological site (40MR708) as currently defined by archeological research, and encompass distinct traces of the road system that served Fort Armistead, its predecessor, Meroney’s Stock Stand, and successor, Camp Coker Creek. The five branches of that road system emanate from the Fort Armistead site and extend to the northern, western, southern, northeastern and southeastern bounds of parcels 1-3, and touch on Parcel 4 (see Map 3). These roads were integral to the functions of Fort Armistead, Meroney’s Stock Stand and Camp Coker Creek, and are considered to be contributing elements of the larger site landscape.
5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Armistead is of national importance by virtue of its association with events that have made a significant contribution to broad national patterns of United States history (Criterion 1). Use of Fort Armistead is demonstrably associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears, which is related to the larger theme of Jacksonian Democracy and Indian Removal. Indian Removal is itself associated with the broader theme of Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion. The setting of Fort Armistead retains considerable integrity, from its undeveloped character to its position on the Unicoy Turnpike, a contributing element of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail designated in 2009. To date, Fort Armistead is among the few federal military installations associated with Cherokee Removal to be identified archeologically, and its integrity is unmatched in comparison to other Removal Period forts in the southeastern United States. For this reason, Fort Armistead is also nationally significant under Criterion 6 for its capacity to yield nationally significant information about the fort and its inhabitants throughout the period of significance, and more broadly, on the logistics and communication network that played a large role in affecting the character of the Removal process. Although no above-ground remains of the fort survive (other than as subtle ruins), subsurface elements of Fort Armistead’s architecture, such as foundations and sub-floor storage areas, retain exceptional archeological integrity and the layout of the fort complex and the character of its buildings and structures can be ascertained using archeological methods. In addition, intact artifact deposits present the potential to provide information about the activities of the fort’s occupants and visitors.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Fort Armistead site is located on lands held, occupied, and traversed by indigenous peoples for millennia. It is situated within the boundaries of what at the time was officially recognized as former Cherokee Nation and is a place particularly significant to the present-day Cherokee Nation, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Fort Armistead played a role in the forced removal of thousands of Cherokee people on the Trail of Tears via the Unicoy Turnpike, but also figured in the removal experiences of ancestors of peoples of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, the Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town, and other indigenous tribes of the Creek Confederacy. The infamous and controversial 1835 Treaty of New Echota led to cessions and dispossession of Cherokee ancestral homelands, including the land upon which Fort Armistead is located, and consigned most Cherokees to an inhumane forced removal now referred to as the Trail of Tears.

PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

FORT ARMISTEAD IN HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Fort Armistead property is of national significance under Criterion 1 for its strong association within the broad contexts of Manifest Density and Westward Expansion in U.S. history, and more specifically for its association with the themes of Jacksonian Democracy and Indian Removal. As the first enduring federal military presence in the Cherokee Nation, Fort Armistead represents a violation of Cherokee sovereignty that was justified by contemporary parties using ideas that would later be articulated as elements of the United States’ Manifest Destiny. As a military installation established by the Jackson administration after the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Fort Armistead functioned as part of a logistics and communication
network that played a large role in affecting the actual character of the Removal process. Finally, and of no less importance, Fort Armistead derives its significance from being a stop on the Unicoi Turnpike, encountered by imprisoned Cherokees from the Valley Towns of North Carolina as they were escorted under military guard to the federal Indian Agency in present-day Charleston, Tennessee. As the final stop in the Appalachian Mountains, Fort Armistead would be the last place these detainees spent the night in a familiar landscape before descending into the exposed valleys and plains below.

Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion

The national significance of Fort Armistead’s historical development and evolving usage is best understood within the thematic contexts of Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion of the early nineteenth century. The term ‘Manifest Destiny’ was coined by the journalist John L. O’Sullivan in 1845 to express the exceptionalist sentiment developing among American citizens during the first half of the nineteenth century, that the people and institutions of the fledgling nation were preordained by divine will to spread across the continent of North America and beyond. By the time O’Sullivan was writing, the southeastern Indian Nations were largely dispossessed and displaced, and it was commonplace for schoolbook authors and literary magazine contributors to conclude that Providence or Progress had demanded the removal of such “disagreeable neighbors” (Satz 1975:55). The idea of Manifest Destiny was consistent with, if not emergent from, international legal understandings established among European nations during the colonization of the New World. Originating in negotiations among Spain, Portugal, and the Vatican, these policies held that when European nations discovered new lands, they automatically gained sovereign political, commercial, and property rights over the Indigenous inhabitants by virtue of being Christian and “civilized” (Miller 2006:9). Although Indigenous groups retained the right to use and occupy their lands, their title could be extinguished either by sale to the colonizing European nation or through a “just war.” During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was also established that a European country must demonstrate “actual occupancy and current possession” of discovered lands for its claim to be valid, a requirement which led to the development of “symbolic possession activities” that ranged from constructing forts to burying coins in bottles (Miller 2006:19-20).

As a result of the American Revolution, the United States acquired England’s exclusive right to purchase American Indian lands in the colonies. While there was no question in the minds of American officials that Indian titles would eventually be obtained to facilitate westward expansion of the United States, late eighteenth-century leaders exhibited less impatience for this to occur than their early nineteenth century counterparts. In 1783 George Washington proposed that Indigenous peoples would retreat in the face of white settler encroachment much like wolves (Miller 2006:39). However, Washington and Henry Knox introduced a “civilization” policy that aimed at pacifying threats from Indigenous peoples by integrating their communities into a new national economy. Thomas Jefferson supported an even more proactive “civilization program” through which Indigenous peoples would be transformed into yeoman farmers willing to sell their resultantly obsolete hunting grounds (Binder 1968:100). Other policies of the young republic encouraged westward movement of settlers into lands ceded by treaty. In the 1780s, Congress passed a set of ordinances that stipulated how self-governing territories could evolve into states and funded a series of road projects in the early nineteenth century. By 1818, the Cumberland Road extended from Maryland to the Ohio River, while in the South, two federal roads connected Georgia to Kentucky and New Orleans, respectively. Although provisions for the segment of the Federal Road that passed through Cherokee territory were included in 1790s treaties, it was not until 1803 that details were negotiated. Most Cherokees opposed the road, reasonably fearing that Americans passing through Cherokee land would soon want to own that land. Despite the fact that only fourteen of over 100 Cherokee leaders favored right-of-way in the 1803 negotiations, the United States considered permission granted (McLoughlin 1986:86-88).
Between 1810 and 1830, Euro-American populations west of the Appalachian Mountains drastically increased, and four new states were added to the Union. The combined population of Illinois and Indiana grew from 37,000 to 500,000, and Mississippi and Alabama from 40,000 to 445,000. By 1830, 2 million people lived in Ohio, Tennessee, and Georgia (Perdue and Green 2005:16). This population increase altered the political landscape of the United States, creating a large voting block that agreed with Andrew Jackson’s assertion that “national security” demanded the removal of the remaining Indigenous peoples (Satz 1975:10). Similarly, concerns for national security—particularly the protection of private and common property—led the Cherokees to develop an increasingly formalized political system, culminating in the passage of a constitution in 1827 and institution of a nation-state that announced itself on the world stage with the publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper (Perdue 1991:59). This nation-building seems to have particularly offended Americans who were convinced that Indigenous peoples were inherently and immutably uncivilized. In a famous essay that helped make him the winning candidate to oversee Cherokee Removal as Jackson’s Secretary of War, Lewis Cass asked “What has a Cherokee to fear from the operation of the laws of Georgia?” (Perdue and Green 2005:120). Georgia’s attempts to regulate activities within the Cherokee Nation did not diminish when the Supreme Court ruled that sovereign Indian Nations were not subject to state laws in *Worcester vs. Georgia*. No sooner had the decision been issued than Georgia began a lottery to distribute unceded Cherokee lands which attracted 85,000 entries (Williams 1993:52).

Fort Armistead was not the first federal military occupation of Cherokee territory—that distinction belongs to Camps Eaton and Hinar, occupied by federal troops for three months in late 1830 while they worked to remove gold speculators from southern Cherokee lands (Hill 2005:21, Williams 1993:32-35)—but Fort Armistead was rather the first enduring federal military presence within the Cherokee Nation. The post was established as Camp Armistead in July 1832 during military policing operations to remove gold prospectors from Coker Creek and Cherokee Valley Towns at the request of the governor of North Carolina. Fort Armistead’s strategic location on the route between the Cherokee Agency at present-day Charleston, Tennessee and the Cherokee Valley Towns evidently led Secretary of War Cass to view it as an important station to maintain. While Principal Chief John Ross and other Cherokees supported the use of federal troops to remove squatters and speculators from Cherokee lands in theory, Ross expressed skepticism that the 1830 policing action was intended solely for this purpose (Ross 1985:191-2). There is no existing documentation to suggest that the Cherokee Nation had approved the existence of a permanent military installation at Coker Creek. From its establishment until July 1835, the Fort Armistead outpost served as what might be considered, in terms of discovery, an act of “actual occupancy.”

In the contexts of Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion, the establishment and evolving usage of Fort Armistead is an instantiation of the developments of a national pattern of disregard for Indigenous sovereignty brought about by frenzied land speculation supported by the state. The establishment by the state of Camp Armistead in 1832 was purportedly intended to protect Cherokee property rights. Ironically, the continued occupation and evolving usage of the site figured into broader processes undermining Cherokee sovereignty to occupy their homelands and ultimately realizing their removal.

*Jacksonian Democracy and Indian Removal*

The forced removal of people from their homes for political, economic, racial, or cultural reasons is a mass phenomenon that has occurred throughout the world, particularly during the modern era as new technologies, capitalist economies, racism, and the triumph of popular national sovereignty became prevalent (Bessel and Haake 2009:3). The forced removal of southeastern Indigenous peoples under the Jackson administration had its roots in all of these phenomena and illustrates the precarious condition of minorities in popular democracies – a point well taken even at the time of removal (Schoolcraft 1851:318-319). While forced removal occurred during
Jackson’s administration, the concept of relocating southeastern Native peoples *en masse* to the western territory as a federal undertaking was first articulated by Thomas Jefferson. In August 1803, after the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson observed that “the best use we can make of [Louisiana] for some time, will be to give establishments to the Indians on the East side of the Mississippi, in exchange for their present country” (Miller 2006:91). As a property lawyer, Jefferson was well versed in the principles of discovery used to legalize land transactions in the Americas, and as a congressman and secretary of state, Jefferson played a large role in the late eighteenth-century negotiations by which states relinquished rights they claimed regarding the power to extinguish Indian title (Miller 2006:60-66). However, through these negotiations the states, and not the federal government, were understood to possess Indian land titles themselves. While Jefferson observed that “the Indians had the full, undivided and independent sovereignty as long as they choose to keep it, and that this might be forever” (Miller 2006:68), states began pressuring the federal government to extinguish Indian titles almost immediately. Georgia, for example, agreed to relinquish its claims to the territory west of the Chattahoochee River in exchange for the agreement that the federal government would work to extinguish all Indian land ownership in the rest of the lands it claimed. This agreement, called the Compact of 1802, was also negotiated by Jefferson.

Over one hundred treaties with Indian Nations were ratified by the Senate between 1789 and 1825, many of which ceded lands to the United States. By the late 1820s, however, the majority of Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole remaining in the southeast were resolute to preserve the use of their remaining lands. As economic and political development increased in these nations, the surrounding states came to treat them as competitors and were frustrated by Indigenous refusals to return fugitive slaves (Satz 1975:4). While Andrew Jackson’s emphatic support of Indian Removal helped him win the White House in 1828, he did not go unopposed in his attempt to push associated legislation through Congress. While much of the resistance to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 may have been opposition to Jackson himself, speakers against the bill tended to be more accurate in their descriptions of treaty histories and constitutional authority than its supporters (Meyers 2000:63). Unlike the Senate, which voted along party lines, the vote in the House was so close that Jackson chose to withhold his veto of funding for the popular Maysville Road project until the bill passed (Hershberger 1999:30). When it did pass, by 102 to 97, Jackson obtained a half million dollars to effect Indian removal.

Indigenous governments pursued a variety of strategies to resist removal. All attempted maneuvers of diplomatic resistance ultimately failed, including rejection of specific terms set forth in proposed treaties and prolonged deliberations. In response to this opposition, the War Department simply directed treaty commissioners to select the particular chief or faction with whom the U.S. would deal, effectively disregarding tribal sovereignty (Satz 1991:34-35). This approach invariably led to the empowerment of groups or individuals that had not been able to achieve majority support through means approved by their own governments, such as Greenwood LeFlore of the Choctaw and the Pro-Treaty Party of the Cherokee. Two other strategies of resistance involved military and legal undertakings, enacted by the Seminole and Cherokee, respectively. Under the direction of several leaders including the famed Osceola, the Seminole fought a seven-year war with the United States. Although approximately 4,000 Seminoles were forcibly removed from Florida during the course of the war, a treaty was not signed with the two to three hundred that remained in South Florida in 1842 when the federal government decided to end its involvement in what had been a costly war (Mahon 1967: 313-318). A strategy unique to Cherokee resistance was the use of litigation in the Supreme Court against Georgia’s encroachment on Cherokee territory and sovereignty. Although this approach ultimately did not prevent removal, Chief Justice Marshall’s 1832 clarification of Indigenous sovereignty in *Worcester v. Georgia* became a cornerstone of federal Indian policy after World War II (Perdue and Green 2005:80).

Federal fiscal policy and administrative organization played a large role in shaping the actual experiences of Indigenous peoples during the process of removal. The main priority of the Jackson administration was
affecting Indian Removal in the most cost-effective manner possible, following “the prevailing belief that retrenchment and good government were synonymous” (Satz 1991:41). However, the practice of accepting the lowest bid for goods and services, particularly rations, did not necessarily result in cost-effectiveness, as settlers in the areas where these materials were needed knew they were in a good position to profit by compelling the government to accept their prices. Choctaw removal alone cost just over the five million dollars allotted in the 1830 Removal Act (Satz 1975:87). In order to lower costs, government agents acquired foods for the Indians that were considered inedible by their own standards. Lieutenant Gabriel Rains, for example, tried to supply Choctaw arrivals in the West with salt pork from a military commissary that had been condemned four or five years earlier (Satz 1975:80). In addition to the problems with funding, the character of forced removal was greatly influenced by individual field officials who exercised considerable discretionary powers.

Another significant factor affecting the character of Indian removal was the nature of the communication infrastructure that was in place during the 1830s. Removal occurred at the edge of America’s expanding transportation network, and field agents were dependent on express riders for commands and funding. Officials constantly complained about the irregularity of the mails at their posts and delays in the transfer of funds from Washington (Satz 1975:75-77). Fort Armistead, as a military post along the Unicoy Turnpike, was an element of the transportation and communication network that was integral to the character of Indian Removal under the Jackson and Van Buren administrations. In this context it is exemplary as one of many remote “nodes” that enabled the entire network to function, providing overnight shelter and protection for messengers and cargo traveling to and from the Cherokee Valley Towns.

The Cherokee Trail of Tears

The particular pathos of Cherokee Removal arises from the fact that many Cherokees had attained—one could say surpassed—the standards of “civilization” put forth in Thomas Jefferson’s proposals. By 1835, the over sixteen thousand Cherokees in the nation and their fifteen hundred enslaved people cultivated more than 44,000 acres of land and raised over half a million bushels of corn (Perdue and Green 2005:50). While many Southern Indians of this period were also aspirant planters (and slave owners) and entrepreneurs, the Cherokee were particularly distinguished by their embrace of literacy and programmatic nation-state building. According to an 1835 census, 18 percent of Cherokee households possessed at least one person who could read English, and over half contained someone who read Cherokee using Sequoyah’s syllabary. These individuals constituted the readership of the Cherokee Phoenix, which in 1828 became the first newspaper published in an American Indian language. The ratification of a written Cherokee constitution in 1827 underscored the gap between Anglo-American expectations regarding Indigenous people’s capacity for sophistication and their actual abilities, while also demonstrating the poor logic that underpinned Jefferson’s claim that “civilized” Indigenous farmers would happily sell their extensive hunting grounds. The 1827 constitution asserted Cherokee nationalism by delineating the geographic boundaries of the Nation, and in 1829 the council committed to writing a law that imposed the death penalty for anyone who sold land without authority to do so (Perdue and Green 2005:14). While the equation of a particular homeland with a people and government is an important tenet of nationalism, the Cherokee application of this concept in the 1827 constitution differed from that of the United States in that all Cherokee lands were defined as “common property of the citizens of the Nation” (Article 1, Section 2). Individuals owned improvements to the land, such as houses, but not the land itself.

The rapid rise of the formal Cherokee nation-state from traditional structures of autonomous towns and coalitions saw development of new political alliances and rivalries. Within this new order, traditional headmen and other “influential chiefs” still held sway in the older communities, while elected officials tended to district and national level matters (Rifkin 2005). The national leadership focused attention on the Federal government’s unremitting pressure to exact complete cession of Cherokee territory and effect wholesale removal, a push
driven to crisis by the state of Georgia’s criminal encroachments and wholesale disregard of Cherokee sovereignty. Disagreements over Cherokee national response to this crisis fueled dissent in Cherokee leadership, which soon gave way to full-blown political schism (Perdue 1991). In 1832 the dissident faction, led by Major Ridge, his son John Ridge, and former editor of the Cherokee Phoenix Elias Boudinot formed a pro-treaty party. When elected leaders of the Cherokee government, refused to negotiate a removal treaty, the United States turned to members of that minority Treaty Party. The Ridges and their cohorts signed the Treaty of New Echota in December 1835, which ceded all Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi and consigned the Cherokee people to emigration to the “Arkansas country.” The signing of the treaty brought forth a wave of protest organized by Chief John Ross, who petitioned Congress up to the eve of removal in 1838. The efforts by Ross and the Cherokee nationalists swayed American audiences and spawned broad efforts among Northeastern intellectuals, abolitionists, and Whigs for the “Cherokee cause” (Saunt 2020). The effectiveness of Ross’ arguments regarding the invalidity of the treaty, as well as opposition to Jackson, resulted in a close vote in the Senate wherein the treaty was ratified only by a one-vote margin (Cave 2003: 1352).

Hopes for abrogation of the treaty persisted within the Cherokee Nation up to the spring of 1838, when only 2,000 (of a population of 17,000) Cherokees had left for the West. Committed to upholding Jackson’s Indian policy, President Van Buren directed General Winfield Scott to enforce removal as stipulated in the treaty. Having encountered problems using civilian agents during the Choctaw Removal, Secretary of War Cass had turned the entire process of Indian Removal over to the military in 1832 (Satz 1975:78). Further, since Choctaw Removal had been characterized by confusion, delays, and high costs, the Van Buren administration sought to achieve the forced removal of the Cherokees in the most expeditious manner possible (Satz 1975:101).

Approximately seven thousand federal troops and state militia were mustered to round up the remaining fifteen thousand Cherokees. These soldiers were directed to take the Cherokees as they were found, “without permission to stop either for friends or property” (Garrison 2009:45). The detainees were forcibly marched along roads to the nearest fort or military encampment, and then marched in larger groups to one of three embarkation depots on the Hiwassee and Tennessee Rivers. In the southern portion of the Cherokee Nation, the main artery of travel to these depots was the Federal Road, while Cherokees living in the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina traveled the Unicoy Turnpike to Fort Armistead (Hill 2005:13; Riggs and Greene 2006:66).

The Cherokee Trail of Tears was only a single instance of forced Indian Removal initiated under the auspices of Jacksonian democracy. Yet this period of Cherokee history is an integral part of American history as a whole for it highlights the brutal consequences of settler nationalism, countering the prevalent myth of benign, intrepid westward expansion. Cherokee commitment to “civilization” and non-violent resistance during the debate over removal throw into particularly sharp relief the discrepancy between American ideology and policy during this period. To date, Fort Armistead is the only military post associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears that evinces substantial archeological integrity and content.

**ARCHEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FORT ARMISTEAD**

As the only military post associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears that evinces substantial archaeological integrity and content, the site of Fort Armistead is nationally significant under Criterion 6 for its demonstrated capacity to yield unprecedented data illuminating the period and events that occurred here. Future studies can address specific research questions concerning Fort Armistead, and the experiences of those who passed through, as well as broadly informing a national understanding of the material remains of Indian Removal forts. Because the landscape and archeological features possess exceptional integrity, research conducted at Fort Armistead may ultimately provide a model for the identification and interpretation of other fort sites.
Previous Research on Indian Removal Forts

At present, little is known of the organization, architecture, and artifacts associated with Indian Removal forts because very few have been identified archeologically. This situation is due in part to the short-lived character of some of these posts, as well as the establishment of communities at these locations immediately following Removal. Recent attempts to locate Cherokee Removal forts in Georgia using both archeological survey techniques and remote sensing have yielded little success. As part of a project to document the Federal Road in north Georgia funded by the Georgia Department of Transportation, the locations of three potential fort sites were subject to Phase I shovel testing and metal detection (Reynolds et al. 2006). The potential locations of Fort Campbell in Forsyth County, Fort Newman in Pickens County, and Fort Gilmer in Murray County had been identified based on archival research and local oral tradition, but no materials associated with any of these posts were identified as a result of the survey. Similar efforts at likely locations of Fort Cumming in Walker County, Fort Hetzel in Gilmer County, and Fort Hoskins in Murray County also failed to yield any artifacts or features that could be attributed to a Removal period post (Hobgood 2009). A 1994 Phase I survey of a possible location for Fort Wool was inconclusive (Larson 1994), and a geophysical survey of the same area in 2004 failed to identify any anomalies that could be attributed to the fort (Haley and Johnson 2004). Another geophysical survey at the likely locations of Fort Hoskins in Murray County and Fort Means in Floyd County did not identify any overtly fort-like anomalies (Gale 2010). Efforts in North Carolina and Alabama have been less extensive, but have yielded similar results; Riggs and Greene (2006) were unable to identify features or artifacts in the purported locations of Fort Butler, Fort Hembree, or Fort Lindsay (with the exception of a single marked grave). Surveys of the Fort Likens site in Alabama have yielded scant evidence of period occupation, but no direct evidence of the fort itself (Sharon Freeman, personal communication, 2013).

The unique research potential of Fort Armistead is apparent in light of these efforts, as it is currently the only Cherokee Removal fort known with intact subsurface architecture and relatively undisturbed artifact distribution. This will allow for the inclusion of Cherokee Removal infrastructure in broader analyses that take into account chronological, environmental, and cultural variables associated with Removal. Potential sources of comparative archeological material include Fort King, Fort Foster, Fort Mitchell, and Fort Gibson, all of which have removal-period components. This work is still in its infancy, with most analyses of Removal components taking place only in the past fifteen years. While exploratory excavations were undertaken at Fort Mitchell beginning in 1957 (Chase 1974), and at Fort Foster in 1974 (Baker 1974), lack of comparative material hindered broader examinations of Removal archaeology. A set of masters’ theses examining the iron, faunal, and botanical remains recovered from Fort Mitchell during John Cotter’s 2000-2002 excavations are among the first detailed analyses of materials from Creek Removal contexts (Cremer 2004, Lowe 2013, Stickler 2004). Recent excavations at Fort Gibson promise to yield similar studies (Bement and Rhea 2007). A comparative historical archaeology of Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole Removal posts will enable analyses of the effects of violent and non-violent resistance on Removal infrastructure and daily life at these installations. It will also be possible to examine the effects of environmental variables and changing missions on post architecture, provisioning, and activities.

Research Questions

Archeological research at Fort Armistead, in combination with continued archival research, has the potential to yield nationally significant information about Indian Removal period infrastructure. Such information is essential for developing a detailed narrative of Indian Removal that is grounded in the material realities that both structured and were transformed by a federal undertaking that accomplished the coerced seizure, detention, and expulsion of Cherokee citizens from their lawfully-held improvements and lands. As the archeological integrity of Fort Armistead is exceptional, so is the potential resolution at which questions regarding the site’s
occupational history, organization, and use may be answered. This information will in turn be useful not only for the interpretation of the Fort Armistead property itself, but also for the identification and investigation of Removal period forts elsewhere in North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. The following research questions are examples of the kinds of information that should be obtainable given Fort Armistead’s integrity:

1. What was the plan of Fort Armistead? What building and structure functions can be established based on locational, architectural, and artifactual evidence?
2. What was the sequence of construction? How were structures built by members of the Coker Creek community prior to the military occupation incorporated into Fort Armistead?
3. Can activities associated with the fourth artillery occupation of Fort Armistead be distinguished from those of the subsequent infantry occupation?
4. What would be the likely spatial and material patterns of areas used to detain Cherokee prisoners in removal posts? Can the likely area used to detain Cherokee prisoners at Fort Armistead be identified?
5. How does the plan of Fort Armistead compare to other Indian Removal period encampments? Did the mountain setting of Fort Armistead influence the organization and design of the fort, and if so, how?
6. What activities did the troops occupying Fort Armistead undertake? Did they augment their government-rationed food and supplies, and if so, in what manner and to what ends? Can on-duty and off-duty activities be differentiated?
7. What aspects of Fort Armistead’s architecture are associated with its role as an infrastructural node in the Appalachian Mountains? What characteristics of the fort may have hindered its role in this regard?
8. What was the nature of the interaction between the federal troops at Fort Armistead and the surrounding community of Coker Creek? How is this relationship manifested archeologically?

Archeology, Tribal Perspectives, And Oral Tradition

Archeological research conducted with Indigenous collaboration and the input of oral traditions can add to our understanding of the significance of sites related to the Removal period and the Trail of Tears such as Fort Armistead. While the material traces of Fort Armistead have been explored through archeological methods, tribal oral tradition has provided new perspectives on the site’s significance. Increasingly, historians, archeologists and descendent communities have collaboratively sought more robust, balanced understandings of the past lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples through the fundamental revisioning of the traditional goals, methods, stakeholders, and audiences for archeological research (Echo-Hawk 2000, Atalay 2006, Guebard 2016, Tushingham et al. 2019, Gould et al. 2020). These efforts demonstrate the capacity to augment or complement the findings of archeological methods with richer, multivocal evidence and perspectives.

The scientific evidence collected from archeological investigations can be said to be rigidly chronometric, physically enduring, and spatially precise. However, it is also frequently fragmentary, and subject to depositional and preservational bias, sampling error, and the “shifting paradigms of interpretation” (Crowell and Howell 2013: 5). While the abstracted appraisal of patterned cultural use at a place can provide scientific and humanistic insight, these methods of knowing are not likely to provide us with holistic knowledge of cultural, spiritual, or symbolic meaning of places situated in either historic or contemporary contexts.

Interpretations of archeological data “can be given wholeness, relevancy, and value when it is augmented, challenged, or simply accompanied by memory from oral traditions or the traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous peoples” (Tushingham et al. 2019). In contrast to the abstractions of archeological knowledge, oral traditions offer situated perspectives steeped in the specificity of peoples, events, and places. Embedded in
Indigenous language and memory, knowledge from oral traditions of place is holistic, replete with cultural references and group perspectives (Gould et al. 2020:7). Such perspectives can offer a rich and critical counterpoint to the abstractions of archeological knowing. Indigenous oral traditions and archeological knowledge, though vastly different, can provide richer, more humanistic, and more discerning understandings of a place’s significance when used together.

Indigenous perspectives intertwine land and memory, and encompass long, deep, and continuous relationships to places and landscapes. In such a perspective, situated on land which was once at the center of the Cherokee ancestral homelands, the Fort Armistead site’s significance to Indigenous peoples may be inextricable from landscape features, material traces, and beliefs which transcend the period of occupation and physical remains of the fort. The Unicoi Turnpike, running past the site, follows a trace much older than the fort, and, along with the fort site, represent more than the means of effecting forced deportation to the former Indigenous populations.

**COMPARISON OF FORT ARMISTEAD TO SIMILAR PROPERTIES**

The significance of Fort Armistead as a historic property can be evaluated by comparison to similar sites in terms of property type, historic association, and integrity. To this end, comparable properties designated as National Historic Landmarks or listed on the National Register of Historic Places with significant connections to the history of Indian Removal, and the themes of Westward Expansion, Jacksonian Democracy and Forced and Voluntary Population Movements were considered in relation to significant aspects of the site of Fort Armistead. Additionally, comparable properties associated with relevant aspects of Cherokee history in eastern North America were considered in this analysis.

A number of military establishments with significant and comparable historical, geographic and physical aspects to the site of Fort Armistead are designated as National Historic Landmarks or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ten listed or designated U.S. forts with comparable histories were established before 1840. Two of these, Fort Smith National Historic Site (NHL, 1960) in Sebastian County, Arkansas, and Fort Gibson (NHL, 1960) in Muscogee County, Oklahoma, played significant roles in Cherokee Removal. In contrast to Fort Armistead, the significant Removal-period history of these sites concerns the reception of peoples displaced from Eastern homelands, as well as Federal efforts to establish a military presence in the frontier territory at the terminus of the Trail. Fort Smith, established in 1817, functioned as a garrison and supply depot to aid in securing the region’s military presence. Fort Gibson, located in eastern Oklahoma, was established in 1824 for the express purpose of facilitating Indian Removal by policing the interactions between the Southeastern peoples moving west and other Indigenous groups already present in the area including the Osage (Agnew 1980). Forts Armistead, Smith, and Gibson altogether represent the dual components of Removal—the extrication of Indigenous peoples from the East, and their establishment in the West—and comparisons of these properties have the potential to answer important questions regarding the means by which Indian Removal was accomplished. Although the first Fort Gibson is bisected by a modern road, recent archeological testing has identified surviving foundations similar in design to those identified at Fort Armistead (Bement and Rhea 2007).

Three NRHP listed federal fort sites in Tennessee are substantially connected to Cherokee history: Fort Southwest Point (NRHP, 1972) in Roane County, Hiwassee Garrison (NRHP, 1978) in Rhea County, and Tellico Blockhouse (NRHP, 1975) in Monroe County. The Tellico Blockhouse Site is the location of a federal garrison and trading post (1794-1807) established on the northern border of the Cherokee Nation. The post served as the location for the signing of a number of treaties and as a port of entry and exit for frontier lands to the west. Fort Southwest Point (1797-1811), built at the northwestern corner of the Cherokee Nation, policed the frontier for intruders on Cherokee lands, and served briefly as the federal agency to the Cherokees.
Hiwassee Garrison was established following the decommissioning of Tellico and the downsizing of Southwest Point. It housed the U.S. Cherokee Agency from 1807 until about 1817. Like their predecessors at Fort Southwest Point, troops stationed at Hiwassee Garrison enforced treaty provisions by removing illegal white settlers from Cherokee land and prevented other unsanctioned intrusions on the Cherokee Nation.

Seven properties associated with Westward Expansion are considered notable due to their association with treaty events between the U.S. and the Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Cherokee Nations, respectively. Sites associated with the Creek Nation include Fort Jackson (Plaquemines County, Louisiana; NHL, 1960) and the Fort Mitchell Site (Russell County, Alabama; NHL, 1990). Located at the site of the eighteenth-century French outpost Fort Toulouse, Fort Jackson was the place where the treaty ending the Creek War was signed in 1814. Fort Mitchell, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1990, is more comparable in historic association to Fort Armistead, as the second iteration of this fort was specifically associated with Creek Removal. It is the only comparable property with significant archeological integrity associated with the physical infrastructural network required to move, shelter, and feed Indigenous peoples as they were deported. However, like Tellico Blockhouse and Hiwassee Garrison, the archeological signature of Fort Mitchell reflects the additional administrative and commercial functions of the complex including a trading post and the headquarters of the local Indian Agency. Fort Mitchell, moreover, is associated with Creek, not Cherokee Removal. Hiram Masonic Lodge No.7 (NHL, 1973), also associated with Removal, is the location where Jackson obtained the Chickasaw Treaty to emigrate peoples west of the Mississippi, though this treaty was never ratified. The property associated with Choctaw Removal is the Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty Site in Noxubee County, Mississippi (NHL, 1996), where Choctaw leaders signed the first treaty to be ratified under the Indian Removal Act in 1830. Unlike Forts Mitchell and Armistead, however, it was not a part of the material infrastructure that enabled Removal. Finally, three properties associated with the Cherokee Nation in this category are Sycamore Shoals in Carter County, Tennessee (NHL, 1964), the Long Island of the Holston in Sullivan County, Tennessee (NHL, 1960), and the aforementioned Tellico Blockhouse. All are associated with treaties that led to the cession of territory by the Cherokee and the opening of the Cumberland Gap, and thus are associated with a period that is earlier in the history of Euro-American – Cherokee relations than Fort Armistead.

Of seven properties associated with Indian Removal, three are associated with the Second Seminole War, one with Choctaw Removal, and three with Cherokee Removal. Two Seminole War properties—Dade Battlefield Historic Memorial (Sumter County, Florida; NHL, 1973) and Okeechobee Battlefield (Okeechobee County, Florida; NHL, 1961), are battlefields associated with specific conflicts. The third, Fort King Site (Marion County, Florida; NHL, 2004), is most similar to Fort Armistead in terms of being a military installation associated with Removal. Fort King was the location of negotiations between Seminole leaders and Gen. Wiley Thompson for removal terms prior to the outbreak of the war. While Fort Armistead does not have a comparable diplomatic association, it does possess greater physical integrity than the Fort King site, which has been subject to plowing.

Four properties associated with Indian Removal are directly connected with the history of the Cherokee. These include Calhoun Mine in Lumpkin County, Georgia (NHL, 1973); New Echota (Gordon County, Georgia; NHL, 1973) the Red Clay Council Ground in Bradley County, Tennessee (NRHP, 1972); and Rattlesnake Springs (Bradley County, Tennessee; NRHP, 1975). The Calhoun Mine is the location where gold was discovered at Yahoola Creek in 1828, sparking the Great Intrusion in the Taquohee District of the Cherokee Nation (Williams 1993:30). New Echota, designated the seat of the Cherokee Nation in 1825, was the location where leaders of the Treaty Party signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835. New Echota was also the location of Fort Wool, which, beginning in 1837, served as headquarters and supply depot for Removal operations in Georgia. A 1994 Phase I survey of a possible location of Fort Wool did not identify any artifacts or features that could be attributed to the fort (Larson 1994), so its integrity as it relates to that of Fort Armistead cannot be
determined at this time. Associated with the history of Rattlesnake Springs in Bradley County Tennessee is Fort Cass, built in 1835 to coerce the Cherokee into forced deportation and to serve as one of a number of fortified encampments or emigration depots. The site of Fort Cass is heavily developed, but subsurface features may survive (Riggs 2020). In 1831, the National Council ground of the Cherokee Nation was relocated from New Echota, Georgia to the Chattooga site in Alabama; and then between 1832 and 1838 it was moved to the Red Clay Council Ground in southeast Tennessee. This remained the Cherokee capital until they were forcibly removed in 1838. Leading up to forced removal, Cherokee were concentrated and detained under military guard at Red Clay. While a tremendously significant site for the Cherokee Nation during this time period, the historic property served a different role from that of Fort Armistead during the Removal period. Moreover, archeological survey has yet to establish significant buried features associated with this history at the site. Rattlesnake Springs (Bradley County, Tennessee; NRHP, 1975) is the nearby site of a massive concentration and incarceration of expelled Cherokee who assembled here in 1838 before undertaking the journey on foot along the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma. Archeological survey at the site of Rattlesnake Springs has not established the presence of physical remains associated with the history of removal.

The National Historic Landmark Theme ‘Forced and Voluntary Population Movements’ has been used to describe a diverse assortment of properties, as might be inferred from the name itself. Of the sixteen properties listed, twelve are sites and districts associated with seventeenth and eighteenth century Northeastern Indian communities. These properties document the voluntary movement of groups in response to intensifying trade and political relationships with European colonists. The three remaining properties are the Dancing Rabbit Creek Treaty Site, Fort King, and Fort Mitchell, which are discussed above. The final property in this group is Yuchi Town (Russell County, Alabama; NHL, 1996), a Yuchi settlement until 1837, when many members of this community were included in the Creek Removal. Fort Armistead would be unique among these properties as a military installation utilized during Cherokee Removal.

These comparisons demonstrate that there are no properties listed on the National Register or designated as National Historic Landmark properties that duplicate significant aspects of the site of Fort Armistead in terms of its property type, historic association, and integrity. It is complimentary to Fort Mitchell, which is associated with Creek Removal in the eastern United States, and Fort Gibson, which is associated with military efforts to enforce federal policy within relocated Indian Nations in the west. Landmarks that are associated with Cherokee history in the East—Sycamore Shoals, the Long Island of the Holston, and New Echota—have all been recognized based on their association with important treaty events. Fort Armistead, however, is an element of the military infrastructure that compelled their enforcement. The site of Rattlesnake Springs, if found to contain intact archeological components, may overlap with some aspects of the Criterion 6 data potential of Fort Armistead, though altogether its property type and historic significance are not comparable.

CONCLUSION

Fort Armistead is a nationally significant property due to its historic association with the Cherokee Trail of Tears, and the association of the events which took place on the site to national themes of Jacksonian Democracy and Westward Expansion. There are no National Historic Landmarks that duplicate Fort Armistead in terms of its property type, historic association, and integrity. Fort Armistead’s exceptional integrity contributes to its high research potential, as contexts created by discrete activities during its period of significance can be discriminated at a finer resolution than is possible at most archeological sites. Fort Armistead therefore has the potential to provide nationally significant information about the role of military infrastructure and organization during Indian Removal. From an interpretive perspective, the roadways and ruins visible on the surface of the site today have the potential to viscerally connect site visitors with significant events of the past that shaped both Cherokee and U.S. history, serving as witness and reminder of those who traveled the Unicoi Turnpike.
6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property
Private:
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal: X

Category of Property
Building(s):
District:
Site: X
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

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**PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESGRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY**

(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated)

**SUMMARY**

The Fort Armistead Site (40MR708) is an archeological site representing the remains of a nineteenth century military complex located on a 36.36-acre tract owned by the U.S. Forest Service in Monroe County, Tennessee (Map 1). Documentary accounts indicate periodic U.S. Army occupation of the site between July 1832 and October 1838, inclusive of episodes during the forced Cherokee deportations of 1838 known as the Trail of Tears. The property derives its national significance from this historic association. Other archeological components which do not contribute to the national significance of the site include a Middle Archaic period (ca. 8000‒5000 years B.P.) component, a commercial livestock stand (1831‒1832), and a Confederate Army battalion encampment (1862‒1863). In addition to the remains of structures associated with these occupations, the Fort Armistead tract contains intact segments of the Unicoi Turnpike, the primary thoroughfare that connected the upper Savannah River region around Taccoa, Georgia, and the Valley Towns region around present-day Murphy, North Carolina with the western side of the Appalachian Mountains via Tellico Plains, Tennessee (Map 3). Most of the Fort Armistead parcel is wooded, while the surrounding area is a mix of woodlands, fields, and home sites associated with the unincorporated community of Coker Creek. No standing architecture survives at the Fort Armistead Site; following use during the Civil War, the property appears to have reverted to open pasture, then later re-established with a forest ecosystem. Test excavations confirm that the site has never been plowed. The Fort Armistead property therefore possesses exceptional integrity for an Indian Removal period outpost. Preservation and enhancement of these conditions are the goals of USDA Forest Service management.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

The Coker Creek locality is positioned as a cove-like valley in the western foothills of the Blue Ridge physiographic province. This perched valley follows the Miller Cove fault, and is
bounded by the Mocking Crow and Pine mountains to the northwest and the Unicoi Mountains to the southeast. Site elevation is approximately 1650 ft (503 m) AMSL; within two miles of the site, the crest of the Unicoi Mountains rises to 3200 ft AMSL, while nearby Rural Vale, at the foot of Mocking Crow Mountain, is 880 ft AMSL. The tract is wooded in secondary or tertiary growth, with oak and maple predominating and heavy understory growth of rhododendron and mountain laurel (Photograph 1 and 2). A perennial spring branch that feeds Conasauga Creek borders the western edge of the site; bold springs that issue from the northwestern and southwestern corners of the hill slope probably supplied site occupants and likely presented attractive conditions for site occupations through time. The setting of Fort Armistead is similar to that of a number of Cherokee Removal period fort sites in nearby southwestern North Carolina, all of which are situated on the brows of commanding level hilltops, with adjacent ample water sources and direct access to period wagon roads (Riggs and Greene 2006: 36).

The upper Coker Creek Valley is underlain by the Wilhite Formation, which consists of greenish to bluish-gray banded siltstone with some interbedded shale, slate, phyllite, and very fine to fine-grained arkostic sandstone, with coarse-grained sandstone and fine conglomerate in the lower part of the formation (Hale 1974, Plate 1). The Fort Armistead site sits atop a vein of fractured quartz bedded within the Wilhite Formation. This resistant vein appears to be the controlling structure for the Fort Armistead landform, a spur that extends from a broad, level saddle in the low ridgeline. The two large springs that issue from the base of this spur mark the interface of the quartz vein with the predominant sandstone and conglomerate. The incidence of loose granular and particulate gold in weathered debris atop the Wilhite Formation in Coker Creek is particularly significant in the history of the Fort Armistead site, as the military cantonment was established on the site in 1832 in response to an illicit gold rush that overran Cherokee lands in 1830. The Wilhite formation also provided the fieldstones used to construct the foundations and hearths of the Armistead military complex.

The Fort Armistead property exhibits remnants of a xeric, or dry-habitat adapted, Chestnut Oak (*Quercus prinus*) – Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*) – Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) vegetative community along the spine of the spur, with the slopes, hollows, and spring areas supporting a mesic, or moist-habitat adapted, Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) – Great Rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*) association. The xeric oak and maple community is locally found on narrow, irregular ridge tops ranging from 403 to 513 m, and is accompanied by an understory of black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) and red maple seedlings, deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*), and greenbriar (*Smilax* spp.). The overstory of the hemlock and rhododendron community, which typically occurs on slopes with an average elevation of 383 m, may also contain red maple, Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and white oak (*Quercus alba*) (Yoke and Rennie 1996:331-333). The density of rhododendron growth in these areas often limits the diversity of understory species. While the flora on the Fort Armistead property can be defined with respect to documented plant communities, it appears to have been moderately to heavily modified by clearing and succession, with significant regrowth of Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*) over mountain-laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) on the level portion of the landform and birch (*Betula* sp.) over rhododendron on the slopes. This is not surprising because the area was likely cleared coincident with nineteenth century occupation of the parcel. Lt. Chiliab Smith Howe, who was stationed at Fort Armistead in May 1835, wrote to his fiancée that the fort was located [redacted] and that the “ridge (Unaka Mountain) upon which the line runs I see from my window,” suggesting an expansive viewshed.1 This viewshed likely increased in size during military occupation of the site from 1832 to 1838, with troops harvesting timber as needed.

Indigenous terrestrial fauna of the upper Coker Creek and upper Conasauga Creek valleys are typical for lower elevation settings in the southern mountains. Of the numerous bird species that nest in oak-hickory mountain

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1 C.S. Howe to Julia Howe, May 25, 1835, in the Chiliaab Smith Howe Papers #3092, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
reservoir lands, wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) was the most likely to be of interest to the soldiers stationed at Fort Armistead. Common mammal species in the area include black bear (*Ursus americanus*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*), eastern gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), while the springs on the property would have provided habitat for amphibians such as American and Fowler’s toads (*Anaxyrus americanus* and *A. fowleri*) and a variety of salamanders. (Tennessee Valley Authority 2009: 61-63) Eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*) would have been the most enticing reptile in the vicinity for culinary purposes. Since the Fort Armistead property was likely cleared during the period it was occupied, mammals that thrive in successional habitats, such as cottontail rabbits (*Sylvilagus obscurus*), woodchucks (*Marmota monax*), and striped skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*) may also have been present.

HISTORICAL OCCUPATIONS AND APPEARANCE

Fort Armistead is of national importance because it functioned as an element of the infrastructure network that was used during Cherokee Removal. For this reason, Fort Armistead’s period of significance commences with the construction of the “Unicoy Turnpike Road” (ca. 1816-1819) across the Cherokee Nation from Tugaloo, Georgia to Chota, Tennessee. Subsequent to its abandonment by commercial sponsors in the 1820s, this wagon road was maintained by the U.S. army and in 1838 used as the primary deportation route for Cherokee prisoners from North Carolina who were transferred to the Fort Cass internment camps at the Cherokee Agency in Tennessee. The turnpike passed through Coker Creek Valley and across the ridge of the Armistead property, where intact roadbed segments are still readily apparent. The presence of the turnpike drew commercial ventures to the region, resulting ultimately in federal military intervention and Cherokee Removal.

**Commerce and Trespass (1816-1832)**

Charley Buffington, a biracial Cherokee who lived near Nacoochee, Georgia in 1816, testified “on the Unicoy Road… there was very much travelling…by the whites with carriages & waggons & droves” (Buffington 1843). Entrepreneurs established stock stands with inns, taverns, and stores at ten-mile intervals along the turnpike to serve this burgeoning traffic (Riggs and Greene 2006:47). During the 1820s, other trans-Appalachian turnpikes opened, such as the North Carolina-Tennessee Turnpike along the Little Tennessee River, and the brisk traffic on the Unicoy abated. The Unicoy Turnpike Company apparently lost interest in the enterprise, and the road lapsed into disrepair. In 1832, Federal Cherokee agent Hugh Montgomery, appalled at the condition of the road, wrote Secretary of War Lewis Cass to propose a military takeover of the main road into the Valley River region. Despite multiple episodes of road maintenance by U.S. troops, visitors continued to complain about the “roughness” of the mountain road throughout the 1830s (Riggs and Greene 2006:47-50).

Soon after completion of the Unicoy road, the Cherokee Nation ceded the vast Hiwassee District to the United States in the 1819 Calhoun Treaty, and the Coker Creek area, which had formerly been near the center of the Cherokee Nation, was suddenly near the border of American territory. This transfer of ownership, along with the existence of the Unicoy Turnpike, facilitated the speculation that occurred after the discovery of gold in placer deposits at Hot Water Creek in 1827. By 1830, the gold strike had proliferated into a full-fledged frenzy, when hundreds of prospectors overran Coker Creek without regard for their trespass on Cherokee national territory. Gerard Troost, Tennessee State Geologist, later reported that he had observed hundreds of men “engaged in the washing of the materials of the rivulets, gulleys and other low places” of the Coker Creek
region and opined that “it was to be expected that a place like this, which was considered as Uncle Sam’s property, would have been ransacked in every direction for gold.”

Although no evidence of gold prospecting on the Armistead property has been identified, the Coker Creek gold rush sparked a minor boom in service industries such as Joseph Milligan and Phillip Meroney’s stock stand. This business was erected along the turnpike on the Armistead property in 1831. While Meroney ostensibly provided food and lodging to travelers and stock drovers on the turnpike, he also kept more than 40 gallons of whiskey on hand “for his personal use”—and likely to supply the prospectors.

Accounts of Meroney’s facility, “one of the best stands then on the road,” clearly indicate multiple structures on the property, but offer no additional detail. Because this “house of entertainment” was situated for lodging and feeding travelers on the turnpike, and for stabling and feeding their horses and other livestock, there were certainly more or larger facilities on-site than those of a typical mountain farmstead. Establishments such as Meroney’s likely included a house for the proprietor and his family, a dining hall/tavern, a kitchen building, one or more additional cabins for accommodation of travelers, stables, corn cribs and fodder houses, and stock pens adequate to contain the herds of hogs, cattle, or other livestock that drovers moved along the turnpike.

Military Occupation and Cherokee Deportation (1832-1838)

The character and intensity of occupation at the Armistead property changed abruptly with the onset of military occupation in July 1832. According to Secretary of War Lewis Cass, the Governor of North Carolina had applied to President Jackson for assistance in removing “intruders upon that part of the Cherokee Country within the limits of that state.” General Walker Keith Armistead accomplished this task. However, instead of withdrawing from the Cherokee Nation, Armistead left Companies A and B of the Second Artillery Regiment under command of Captain Francis S. Belton at a post designated “Camp Armistead” to police the “Coqua creek mines.” Monthly post returns indicate a garrison of 85-90 enlisted men and officers at Coker Creek through 1832—the sole federal military force in the Cherokee Nation (Prucha 1964: 57). Belton’s command established at the stock stand, and the army commandeered Meroney’s buildings and other facilities. Meroney complained that the officers used his home for their dining hall and appropriated his personal stock of liquor.

As indicated by the spoliation claim of Gideon Morgan, the troops also appropriated two double log houses (four log pens) from the ridge between “Hot Water and Liberty, both branches of Coker Creek” and moved the buildings approximately 1.5 miles to Camp Armistead. Robert Tunnell, the local postmaster, described one set of these as “2 comfortable houses about 18 feet square floored and lined with plank two comfortable chimneys & a passage between the rooms 10 feet wide floored with plank.” Addition of Morgan’s buildings to the Meroney Stand complex likely supplied much of the shelter necessary for post operations. The position of these relocated buildings at Camp Armistead is currently unattested, but their installation may have established the regular row of buildings that defines the primary organizational structure evident in the archeological record. These floored buildings may have been erected on stone piers, although many such log structures were built with basal logs in sill trenches.

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3 Joseph Milligan and Philip D. Meroney, Claim for spoliation of property, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 75, Folder 110.
4 Lewis Cass to Hugh Montgomery, May 2, 1832. Correspondence on the Subject of the Emigration of Indians, between the 30th November, 1831 and the 27th December, 1833 (Senate Doc. 512), Duff Green, Washington, DC 1835.
5 Joseph Milligan and Philip D. Meroney, Claim for spoliation of property, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 75, Folder 110.
6 Spoliation claim of Gideon Morgan
The configuration and physical composition of the Fort Armistead post are not explicitly attested by the documentary record. Military correspondence and other records indicate a formal change in status from “Camp Armistead” to “Fort Armistead,” presumably indicating the addition of some type of defensive fortification. This construction likely occurred in the spring of 1834, when Companies C and F of the Fourth Infantry occupied the post; company returns from this period show an increased frequency of men assigned to “extra duty.” Assistant Quartermaster Lt. Samuel Rogers Alston indicates his post as “Fort Armistead” in an August 31, 1834 communication, and Lt. John Hooper observed in November 1834 that “Camp Armistead” simply needed a guard house and a wagon and team, to “be as comfortable as at any post,” suggesting a complete array of facilities appropriate to two companies of the Fourth Infantry. However, Lt. Chiliiab Smith Howe observed on May 25, 1835, that “Fort Armistead is nothing but a collection of log huts,” and in 1836, Brig. General John Ellis Wool wrote that, “I would also station two companies in North Carolina, either at Camp Armistead or near the mouth of Valley River….If we establish a post at this place or Camp Armistead, winter-quarters must be built for the troops.”

Frontier posts such as Fort Armistead may have been built according to established architectural criteria, as suggested by directives sent to field officers to establish Cherokee Removal-era garrisons that cite enclosures of “the standard plan.” However, no such plans have been located to date. Col. J.J. Abert, the chief of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers (1838-1861) wrote in 1843 that an “ideal” frontier station should be able to “furnish shelter for such inhabitants of the vicinity as may seek its protection in times of danger” as well as “protect its stores of ammunition, clothing, and provision” and “furnish comfortable quarters for the garrison.” To accomplish these objectives, he recommended a fort “should therefore cover more ground than is usually allowed for the numbers who will occupy it, and for its defences need not be other than a stockaded work, with block house flank defences.” He recommended the fort have “a quadrangular form, with block-house flank defences at two or more of its angles” and further prescribed:

There should be an interior open space, for the mustering, inspecting, and drilling of the troops. This space should be surrounded by the quarters, barracks, and stabling; the whole should be enclosed by a strong stockade, with its block-house flank defences, which stockade should not be nearer than thirty feet of the exterior line of barracks, quarters, and stables. One side of the quadrangle (or the centre of it, if the enclosure be extensive) could be occupied by a citadel block-house, as a magazine and place of deposite for the public stores. This, if on a side, should of course be on the one least exposed to attack. Around the whole stockade a ditch should be excavated, in which the sinks of the garrison could be established. The plane of the enclosure should be made to drain into this ditch, and the ditch adapted to drain into the river. Two wells should be sunk inside the garrison, and be supplied with pumps. From the stockade, for about 1,000 feet in every direction, the ground should be cleared of all its timber. This should be cultivated by the garrison in grain and garden stuffs, and part of it should be devoted to a gymnasmium—exercise being as necessary to bodily health and content of mind as wholesome food.
The extent to which Fort Armistead instantiated these frontier post “ideals” has yet to be established but will be possible given the site’s exceptional integrity. Because the Armistead post was never considered to be on a defensive footing, it is unlikely the post was picketed or stockaded. Instead, Fort Armistead was probably an “open station” like that depicted in an 1837 sketch of Fort Butler at present-day Murphy, North Carolina (Figure 1). This drawing illustrates a two-story blockhouse offset at the west end of a row of closely spaced one-story log buildings. Another probable two-story building with an end chimney appears offset at the east end of the row, which fronts to the south on an open parade ground flanked on the south by two or three low structures.

Fort Armistead was occupied episodically by U.S. Army personnel after 1834, when Fort Cass was established as the seat of the Indian Agency in present-day Charleston, Tennessee. However, Fort Armistead retained its strategic importance as a federally-maintained way station on the Unicoy Turnpike. With the signing and ratification of the Treaty of New Echota in December 1835, military presence and operations in the Cherokee Nation increased substantially, and Fort Armistead saw sporadic military use as the army prepared for deportation of, and potentially violent resistance from, Cherokee citizens. In the summer of 1836, Gen. John Ellis Wool’s expedition from Fort Cass to the Valley River region of North Carolina, largely comprising East Tennessee Mounted Volunteers, passed Fort Armistead en route to suppress rumored (but fictional) Indian uprisings. In the fall of 1836, Wool advocated establishment of a post as headquarters for the military removal of Cherokees from North Carolina, and favored either re-occupation of Armistead or construction of a new post at the mouth of Valley River. Wool’s troops ultimately took post at Camp Huntington on the Unicoy Turnpike at the mouth of Valley River; this garrison became Fort Butler in October 1837.

In April 1837, Wool directed East Tennessee Mounted Volunteers to pursue and capture several hundred Creek Indian refugees from the 1836 “Second Creek War” episode of Creek Indian removal. These refugees hid in the Hanging Dog Mountains to escape compulsory emigration. Military records suggest that the Tennessee militia troops occupied Fort Armistead from April 1837 through March 1838, and Armistead may have served as the base in the search for the Creek refugees (Haveman 2009, 2016). This occupation by Tennessee troops may account for the depiction of Fort Armistead on a circa October 1837 map of the Cherokee Nation (Figure 2).

Federal records scarcely mention Fort Armistead again until early June 1838, when a detachment of Captain Peake’s company of East Tennessee Mounted Volunteers was detailed as an express corps stationed at “Old Fort Armistead” to ensure that missives between Fort Cass and Fort Butler were efficiently transmitted. Maj. General Winfield Scott and his aide, Lt. Robert Anderson, lodged overnight at Fort Armistead on June 13, 1838 in their return to Fort Cass from Fort Butler, where they had witnessed the outset of the military removal operations in North Carolina. Within a week, detachments of prisoners collected at Fort Butler began their trek to the Fort Cass “emigration depot” via Coker Creek, Tellico Plains, and Athens, Tennessee (Phelps 2000). These detachments, while predominantly Cherokees, included a few enslaved peoples of African descent held by Cherokee families, as well as Cherokee citizens of African descent and those of European descent, whites and blacks married into Cherokee families, and other native peoples identified as Catawba, Creek or Natchez who lived in Cherokee communities. While some were compelled to emigrate by their citizenship or affinity

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11 Lt. Abner Hetzel to Corpl. Waters, June 7, 1838. Letters Sent and Received by Captain Abner R. Hetzel, compiled 1830 - 1847, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, entry 352, US National Archives and Records Administration.

12 The 1835 War Department Census of the Cherokee Nation indicates that families removed from North Carolina included 21 enslaved people of African descent; 15 whites, 206 citizens of Anglo-Cherokee descent, and 23 citizens of Afro-Cherokee descent. Other native peoples, including Natchez, Creek and Catawba families, are indicated by scattered narrative accounts and Indigenous oral histories (e.g., Mooney 1902; Sam 1982).
to the Cherokee Nation, others marched under bondage, doubly exposed by systems that promoted chattel slavery and systems that promoted seizure of indigenous territory.

Contingents of 100 to 1250 prisoners and their military escorts marched a total of eighty miles and bivouacked along the route during the seven-to-eight-day trip to Fort Cass. Fort Armistead was from Fort Butler—the most arduous portion of the journey to Fort Cass—yet several detachments reached this station within three days (Phelps 2000:32). Because the entire 80-mile journey lasted seven to eight days, the march must have included days of rest at suitable locations, such as Fort Armistead, where facilities and supplies were available.

One such group, conducted by Captain Lucien B. Webster, arrived at Fort Armistead on June 22, 1838. Webster described the journey to his wife, Frances:

> I left Fort Butler on the 19th in charge of 800 Cherokees. I had not an officer along to assist me, and only my own company as a guard. … I experienced no difficulty in getting them along other than what arose from fatigue, and the roughness of the roads over the mountains, which are the worst I ever saw. I arrived with about one hundred more than what I started with. Many having joined me on the march… We were eight days in making the journey (80 miles) and it was pitiful to behold the women and children, who suffered exceedingly, as they were all obliged to walk … I had three regular ministers of the gospel in my party, and … we have preaching or prayer meeting every night while on the march, and you may well imagine that under the peculiar circumstances of the case, among those sublime mountains and in the deep forest with the thunder often roaring in the distance, that nothing could be more solemn and impressive. And I always looked on with … awe, lest their prayers which I felt … ascending to Heaven and calling for justice to Him who alone can & will grant it … [might] fall upon my guilty head as one of the instruments of their oppression.

Another group, under command of Capt. Jacob Peake with his company of East Tennessee Mounted Volunteers, left Fort Butler on July 4, 1838 and arrived at Fort Armistead on July 6. Peake received “A Requisition for Forage for twenty-two Indian horses from the 6th to the 8th July 1838” issued by Asst. Quartermaster Lt. Abner Hetzel at “Camp Armistead, Tennessee,” indicating that the group remained at Coker Creek for parts of three days. More than 3,000 emigrants/deportees from the North Carolina mountains passed by or stayed at Fort Armistead in June and July, 1838. Claims later filed against the fund allocated for the New Echota treaty also indicate the deaths of Cherokee emigrants at Coker Creek in 1838.

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14 Lucien B. Webster to Frances Webster, June 28, 1838. Museum of the Cherokee Indian Archives


16 “A Requisition for Forage for twenty-two Indian horses from the 6th to the 8th July 1838.” RG 217, Entry 712, US National Archives and Records Administration.


Once these major waves of prisoner emigrants passed through, the station appears to have lain dormant until small military expeditions deployed from Fort Cass returned to the mountains in September to search for Cherokee fugitives who had either eluded the first army sweeps or had escaped from the Fort Cass depot. These expeditions passed and repassed Fort Armistead from September through November, 1838, and occasionally used the fort as a base of operations for searches in North Carolina’s Unaka and Hanging Dog Mountains.19

Although the Cherokee emigration officially closed in December 1838, Superintendent of Cherokee Emigration Nathaniel Smith continued his attempts to enroll and organize a group of the Cherokee fugitives that remained in North Carolina for voluntary emigration. Testimony in claims cases for the value of rations issued to these prospective emigrants in January and February 1839 indicates that several hundred enrollees received rations, and that “Coco Creek was the place designated by the Superintendent, where affiant [John Timson] was informed and believes they remained and was subsisted for some days until the Superintendent was relieved from service.”20 Timson’s testimony implies that several hundred prospective Cherokee emigrants mustered at Coker Creek—most likely at Fort Armistead, where the abandoned government-owned facility with barracks and other shelters presented available space for the assembly of large groups.

PAST IMPACTS AND CURRENT CONDITION

Immediately after Cherokee Removal, the Fort Armistead site passed into private ownership with the sales of the Ocoee District lands. Alban Jones, who may have been present on or near the property during the 1838 removal, appears to have obtained the Fort Armistead parcel as part of gold lots 7 and 10 (80 acres) in Ocoee District Range 5[E], Township 1[S], Section 18.21 Jones lost the property as debt lien to J.A. Coffin & C.W. Coffin & Co. of Sweetwater, Tennessee in 1853. Jones’ widow, Mary W. Jones, apparently paid the debt, and obtained a promise for title, then sold the land to John C. Vaughn (without title). Vaughn, without having paid Jones, sold the land to Lemuel Burgess, but never received payment, and reassumed the property.22 Vaughn, who later became a Confederate general, may have installed A.T.W. Payne and family as tenants on the Coker Creek property prior to 1861.

The outbreak of the Civil War brought renewed interest in Coker Creek as a military base to monitor and control traffic along the state line. Beginning in July 1862, Confederate troops of Walker’s Battalion of the Thomas Legion (69th Regt. North Carolina), some of whom may have been of Cherokee descent, established at “Camp Coker Creek” to muster troops and suppress “Toryism” (pro-Union activity) in the surrounding mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina.23 Although no known maps attest the location of “Camp Coker Creek,” archeological evidence documented at 40MR708 indicates the station, or a Civil War era encampment

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21 Lt. John Phelps, in traveling the Unicoi Turnpike on June 20, 1838, reports lodging in Coker Creek at “the Jones, a man who appeared to do nothing else than watch his three daughters. They had apparently become very impatient of their restraints.” The Diary of Lt. John Phelps, edited by Sarah H. Hill. Journal of Cherokee Studies 21:5-79. U.S. Treasury records indicate that Alban Jones provided lodging and sold forage to the express riders who carried dispatches between Fort Butler and Fort Cass. In 1849, Alban Jones granted lien to 80 acres (gold lots #7, 10, R5, T1, Sec 18, Ocoee Dist.) on or near Fort Armistead to James A. Wright (trustee) for debts owed Coffins & Co. Monroe County Deed Book O, Monroe County Records, Madisonville, TN. Jones died in 1853 prior to clearing the debts, and his widow (Mary W. Jones) sold the property to Elizabeth Houston, creating conflicting titles contested for the next 25 years.

22 Deposition of Elizabeth Houston Payne, January 19, 1875, in case Elizabeth Payne v. Edwin Hall, Monroe County Chancery Court, Madisonville, Tennessee.

of comparable scale, was established on the site of former Fort Armistead to take advantage of the commanding position on the turnpike, and, perhaps, to use any facilities that survived on the hilltop. Camp Coker Creek served as the winter headquarters for Walker’s Battalion, and several hundred enlistees trained at various intervals at Camp Coker Creek before redeployment. A.T.W. Payne, a Coker Creek Unionist, recounted piloting fellow “Tories” around “Walkers battalion of rebel soldiers that was stationed at Coco Creek.” Payne also claimed that “I had all I had when the war began taken from me by the rebels. My wife was whipped by the rebels…. They took $15 from her…They took a wagon and a yoke of steers. The same men took them that robbed & whipped my wife. This was 1863 at Coco Creek.”

With the movement of Walker’s Battalion to posts in the Tennessee Valley in March 1863, Camp Coker Creek was abandoned, but the site was passed and repassed by both Union and Confederate forces that moved along the turnpike for the remainder of the war. Captain Goldman Bryson’s infamous irregular partisan company of First Tennessee National Guard appears to have organized at Coker Creek in August 1863, possibly at the site of old Fort Armistead and the former Camp Coker Creek. A.T.W. Payne, who appears to have lived as tenant or squatter on the property at the time, was Bryson’s brother-in-law, and became second lieutenant in the company. Bryson’s raiders terrorized Confederate sympathizers in the border region, much as Walker’s troops had harassed Unionists, until Confederate Brigadier General John C. Vaughn and a company of the 8th Tennessee Cavalry pursued Bryson’s men up the Unicoi Turnpike—through Vaughn’s own Fort Armistead property—to Beaverdam Creek (present-day Unaka, North Carolina). They routed Bryson’s guerillas, and summarily executed 17 prisoners from Bryson’s company. Bryson escaped to his home at Six Mile Creek, but was tracked and killed by a Confederate company of Cherokee Indians. A company muster roll taken from Bryson’s body was subsequently used as a guide for identifying and executing members of Bryson’s “gang” who had escaped the Beaverdam Creek fight. These included one of Payne’s brothers; A.T.W. Payne himself may have been spared this fate by prior association with Vaughn. Payne fled with his family to the federal lines at Loudon, Tennessee, and remained in Loudon until 1868.

After the war, “Vaughn proposed to … A.T.W. Payne… that if he, Payne would pay Mrs. Jones three hundred and sixty-seven ($367) dollars… he, Vaughn would transfer to said Payne his rights in said land.” Payne took money from his new bride, Elizabeth Houston, and went with Vaughn to pay Jones in Athens, Tennessee. Mary Jones then moved to Texas and soon died, and J.A. Coffin died in 1871, without ever executing a deed or conveying formal title to the Fort Armistead property to Jones, Vaughn or Payne. In 1872, Edwin Hall won a judgment against A.T.W. Payne, and the Fort Armistead parcel was forfeited. Elizabeth Houston Payne contested the forfeiture, and disputes over the land continued for years while the Paynes remained on the property.

As late as 1876, The Tennessee State Gazetteer and Business Directory indicated that Coker Creek was “also known as Camp Armistead” and included A.T.W. Payne as keeping a “general store.” During the twentieth century, local residents of Coker Creek maintained oral traditions about the location of the fort and associated features, although the “Fort Armistead” and “Camp Coker Creek” names were apparently forgotten. Coker Creek informants told Ashley (1911:81) “that a company of soldiers was stationed near the site of the present post office of Coker Creek to keep the white men out. Incidentally, it is said, the soldiers made a market for local produce that largely made up for the shutting off of the incomes from the gold digging.”

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25 Deposition of Elizabeth Houston Payne, January 19, 1875, in case Elizabeth Payne vs. Edwin Hall, Monroe County Chancery Court, Madisonville, Tennessee.
26 Kenneth Dalton, Coker Creek, personal communication, 1990.
The persistence of this traditional historical memory in the Coker Creek community about “the stockade where they kept the Indians” ultimately prompted the documentary research and archeological investigations that have confirmed site 40MR708 as the long lost seat of Fort Armistead, Camp Coker Creek, Meroney’s Stand, and the Unicoi Turnpike.

Current Condition

At present, the Fort Armistead property is an uninhabited, predominately forested parcel owned by the U.S. Forest Service. The site is covered in second-growth (or third growth) timber, but soil conditions on the core site surface indicate that the site long stood in unforested state (probably as pastures). Soil stratigraphy indicates that the site surface has never suffered plowing or other broad-scale mechanical alteration, nor has it extensively eroded. Because of this unique (for the southern Appalachian region) landscape history, numerous cultural features survive and remain evident as microtopographic anomalies distributed across the site surface. Many of these cultural features were discovered and documented in the course of a close-interval contour mapping survey of the site accomplished by pedestrian coverage with a total station and prism over the period between 2008 and 2012 (Maps 5-8; Figure 3) (Riggs et al 2014). Surface anomalies of probable cultural origin were mapped in detail, with data points collected at 25 cm to 50 cm intervals. This process utilized an arbitrary site grid system for spatial control and reference, with a datum designated North 500 meters East 500 meters (N500/E500) situated near the presumed site center. The following description of cultural features at Fort Armistead utilizes this grid for purposes of spatial reference.

Roadways, which are largely evident as entrenched roadbeds, are the most prominent cultural features on the Fort Armistead landscape (see Map 6). Several of these roads appear to have served as connectors or alternate routes for the Unicoi Turnpike. The hilltop is transected north-south by an entrenched roadbed (Map 6: Roadbed A) that local informants identify as “the old turnpike.” Test excavations and geophysical survey identified Fort Armistead-era buildings flanking this roadbed, an indication of its contemporaneity with the fort occupation (1832-1838). In the southern half of the mapped area, this roadbed is abandoned and overgrown with rhododendron (Photograph... Another period roadbed (Map 6: Roadbed B) transects the Fort Armistead hill from northeast to west. The western portion of this road runs down the slope at right angle to the fort building row to a spring branch. Another roadbed (Map 6: Roadbed C) skirts the base of the Fort Armistead hill; from its eastern connection with Roadbed A at grid N406/E574, it runs westward through a small hollow past the southernmost spring, then continues west to intersect present-day TN 68. This lower roadbed links to Roadbed B via Roadbed D, which climbs the slope from grid N417/E477 to N475/E529. Roadbed D fronts the Meroney’s Stand complex and is clearly contemporaneous with the stand and the fort.

Other microtopographic anomalies include soil berms, soil platforms, stone piles, surface depressions and pits. At the western edge of the hilltop, a complex of berms, pits, depressions and large fieldstones occupy a linear swath between N470/E450 and N519/E500. These include an L-shaped berm (Feature 8) on the brow and front slope of the hill and a large (4 m x 4 m), deep rectangular pit. Test excavations and comparative documentary research suggest this pit (Feature 1), was the post’s powder magazine. Immediately across (NE) the entrenched roadbed from Feature 1 is a small soil mound or platform with an adjacent pit; these are situated at the southwestern edge of a large rectangular depression edged with low soil berms. North and northwest of this rectangular depression are jumbles of large field stones arrayed along the brow of the hilltop. Together, the anomalies northeastward from Feature 1 form a coherent rectangular complex that measures 51 m (167.3 ft) along a N27°E alignment by 5.5 m (18 ft) (N117°E), with clusters of stone blocks that constitute an 8.7 m x 5.5...
m rectangular ell or bulge. The topographic position, scale, and consistency of alignment within this complex appear comparable to the linear organization of buildings illustrated in the 1837 drawing of nearby Fort Butler (see Figure 1), where a row of buildings was arrayed along the brow of a hill. This cluster of features on the western side of “the old turnpike” roadbed is thus interpreted as the remains for Fort Armistead proper.

Other anomalies represent occupational phases both earlier and later than Fort Armistead. On the southern slope of the site area, investigators documented a pile of field stones (Feature 5) at N453/E507 and a rectangular depression (possible cellar, designated Feature 7) at N437.7/E502.5. These features are thought to represent the remains of facilities associated with Joseph Milligan and Phillip Meroney’s stock stand; tests of the possible cellar yielded abundant domestic refuse. East of Roadbed A (the “old turnpike”) is a 1950m² complex of 31 field stone piles arrayed as four rows, with piles spaced at 2-4 m intervals. These low (15cm-35cm) stone piles are typically small, ranging from 2.5 m to 3 m in diameter. Test excavations of four of these features revealed that they are hearths associated with the Civil War, “Camp Coker Creek” occupation of Fort Armistead. Coincident with the southern edge of this configuration of stone piles is a 9 m x 8 m x 25cm rectangular soil platform (Features 10, 11, 13). Immediately west of this platform is a large (3.8 m x 2.9 m), 50 cm deep depression (Feature 2) that may represent another substructure cellar. Investigation of these features revealed that they represent superimposed elements of three occupational periods: the foundation of a building associated with Fort Armistead capped with post-1838 fill, into which were excavated the floor and hearth of a Civil War hut.

The general stratigraphy of site 40MR708 has been investigated through the excavation of nine test units located in non-feature matrices. These tests documented soil stratigraphy and artifact content of deposits within the central site area. These excavation units revealed a thin, poorly developed A-horizon over stony clay loam subsoil, with artifact content restricted to the uppermost 8-10 cm of soil. None of these units exhibited indications of plow disturbance. These artifacts are generally representative of the materials recovered in feature contexts, apart from hearths, which contain carbonized plant and bone debris, and the discrete midden deposits, which contain a greater quantity and diversity of items.

Archeological testing of twenty-one cultural features demonstrated that soil conditions across the site surface were similar throughout the nineteenth century site occupations (as evidenced by intact deposits that sealed A-horizon surfaces). These tests also provided strong evidence for contextual integrity of site deposits and documented meaningful and discretely patterned material content in deposits associated with cultural features.

INTEGRITY

The Fort Armistead property retains a high degree of integrity more than sufficient for conveying its historic significance for designation as a National Historic Landmark under Criteria 1 and 6. Many important elements of Fort Armistead’s setting are still in place. Intact features of the landscape include the visible remains of buildings, the two springs that provided Fort Armistead’s occupants with fresh water, and a relatively intact cultural landscape of road segments connecting the site to major transportation networks including the Unicoy Turnpike. Together, these features promote the site’s capacity to convey its association with the Cherokee Trail of Tears to the viewer and lend a strong sense of feeling of place and setting. The high degree of archeological integrity suggests the property retains the capacity yield information regarding a number of questions of national significance.
Archeological Integrity

Archeological evaluations of the Fort Armistead property from 2008 through 2012 determined that excavated contexts and artifacts represent both the military and commercial/civilian occupations of the site from the 1830s through the Civil War; very little material postdating these periods was identified (Riggs et al 2014). Hence the site is unusually “clean” in an archeological sense, a condition that greatly enhances the interpretability of the record of military occupation. Moreover, it appears that the site has experienced only low intensity agricultural use as pasturage and selective timbering since the Civil War—a practically unique condition, and dramatically different from that of other military facilities associated with the 1838 Cherokee Removal, most of which have been destroyed by subsequent urban development. Therefore, the well-preserved archeological contexts at the Fort Armistead site present one of the best available means for reconstructing accurate and detailed plans of these facilities on the Cherokee “frontier.”

The re-occupation of Fort Armistead during the Civil War introduced non-contributing elements to the property. However, analysis of feature and artifact distribution has established that these occupations are for the most part spatially discrete—Fort Armistead was located on the west side of the main period road across the landform; Camp Coker Creek lay east of that road (Valiunas 2012). Because these components are largely spatially discrete, each retains substantial spatial integrity (in distributions of contexts and artifacts) and contextual integrity (in terms of intact matrices). Activity on the property can be easily distinguished archeologically between the abandonment of Fort Armistead and the Civil War based on the existence of a filling episode that, stratigraphically, must have occurred between those two events. Modern disturbances to the archeological integrity of the property, also of minimal impact, are associated with the maintenance of a forest road through the site.

Natural disturbances to the property include slight erosion of the hillslope and bioturbation associated with successional flora. Erosion was documented in excavation units located at the base of the ridge, on the western periphery of the site. This slope wash was likely greatest during and immediately after the Fort Armistead occupation of the site when the hill and surrounding area was largely deforested. Excavations have also shown tree growth to have disturbed some features, but this disturbance is minimal.

National Historic Landmark Aspects of Integrity

To be eligible for NHL designation, a property must possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Archeological properties nominated under Criterion 6, must retain intact deposits or other sources of data that have already yielded, or may be expected to yield, nationally significant information. Documentary research and archeological testing have established that archeological site 40MR708 is, indeed, the location of Fort Armistead. This assessment is based on maps that depict the general location of the fort, archival records that associate Fort Armistead with the parcel in question, the presence of archeological deposits and features including linearly-arranged ruins.27 Thus site 40MR708 is the location military facilities identified as “Camp Armistead” and “Fort Armistead” (respectively) were constructed. Fort Armistead also retains much of its original design, specifically with regard to the plan and organization of space. The foundations of buildings associated with Fort Armistead remain in situ, making it possible for the original locations of standing architecture to be identified. These foundations also retain evidence of the scale at which

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27 In 1849, Alban Jones granted lien to 80 acres (gold lots #7, 10, R5, T1, Sec 18, Ocoee Dist.) described as “on or near Fort Armistead” to James A. Wright (trustee) for debts owed Coffins & Co. Monroe County Deed Book O, Monroe County Records, Madisonville, TN. The line defining those two gold lots bisects the Fort Armistead site.
the post was built as well as the technology and materials used to create the buildings. In addition, the probable powder magazine pit, an original architectural element, survives largely intact.

An important element of Fort Armistead’s setting is a period connector road or alternate branch of the Unicoi Turnpike (i.e., Roadbed A) that runs through the property. This element—visible today as an entrenched, linear depression—strongly conveys the property’s significance as an infrastructural node along the turnpike. The immediate significance of the relationship between the turnpike and Fort Armistead is witnessed by the reactions of Cherokee guests as they enter the property via the intact roadbed (see Photograph 6). The landscape features of the roadbed and Fort Armistead ruins atop the ridge (with the assistance of interpretation) evoke a visceral connection to the past evident in visitors’ whispered comments such as “they walked here,” and “this is where our grandmothers were,” and in ad hoc ceremonies of group song and prayer. While the significance of this connection will vary by visitor, the ability of the Fort Armistead property to convey its historic association is greatly enhanced by both its archeological integrity, visible landscape features, and overall environmental setting. The springs on either side of the ridge, also significant elements of Fort Armistead’s setting, remain intact and are easily discernable for present-day visitors. The role of Fort Armistead as an outpost is similarly conveyed through the wooded character of the area surrounding the site. The boundary of the property has been defined as a parcel larger than the core fort site itself, thereby capturing the associated road system and maintaining an effect of temporal isolation regardless of any changes in surrounding land use. Within the site area itself, selective management of successional vegetation may make it easier for visitors to envisage the cleared character of the site during its period of significance.

Fort Armistead also possesses a high degree of integrity with regard to materials and workmanship, with in situ elements of military structures and other facilities. This is largely due to the site’s exceptional state of preservation as an archeological resource. Because the property does not appear to have been plowed, subsurface architectural features of the site are intact. With regard to workmanship, Fort Armistead can specifically provide information about military vernacular construction in the 1830s. Investigations of both the suspected powder magazine and the foundation of a building (Feature 10) suggest that most of the log structures at the fort were supported by stone foundations, and surviving elements illustrate masonry components of these architectures.

Finally, Fort Armistead possesses a direct historical association with Cherokee Removal. During early stages of research concerning the property, this connection was asserted based on its physical proximity to the Unicoi Turnpike and the knowledge this was the primary thoroughfare that connected the Valley Towns region with the western side of the Appalachian Mountains via Tellico Plains, Tennessee. This link remained only an inference, however, until documents specifically mentioning Fort Armistead in association with a specific deportation event were recently identified. (Riggs 2014) This group, under command of Capt. Jacob Peake with his company of East Tennessee Mounted Volunteers, left Fort Butler on July 4, 1838 and arrived at Fort Armistead on July 6.28 Peake received “A Requisition for Forage for twenty-two Indian horses from the 6th to the 8th July 1838” issued by Asst. Quartermaster Lt. Abner Hetzel at “Camp Armistead, Tennessee,” indicating that the group remained at Coker Creek for parts of three days.29 Continued archival research will likely provide more references to Fort Armistead prior to and during Removal. Somewhat ironically, the obscurity of direct documentation is a testament to Fort Armistead’s role as an infrastructural node, or waystation in the

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29 “A Requisition for Forage for twenty-two Indian horses from the 6th to the 8th July 1838.” RG 217, Entry 712, US National Archives and Records Administration.
communication and transportation network of the 1830s. While essential for the functioning of the whole network, this remote station was taken for granted and thus unremarked upon by most of its contemporaries. Once specifically identified as an encampment site for Cherokee deportees, Fort Armistead is a place where Cherokees leaving North Carolina rested on the way to Fort Cass, and the property retains sufficient integrity to communicate this historic association to an observer.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Initial identification and definition of the Fort Armistead site (40MR708) was predicated by local informants, Kenneth and Kathleen Dalton, who contacted Brett Riggs in 1990 requesting information about a supposed “stockade where they kept the Indians” on the Dalton’s property in Coker Creek. During a consequent site visit, Mr. Dalton pointed out landscape features such as the “old turnpike” roadbed and ruins of the presumptive fort identified by local resident Clifford Peel (b. 1911), who had been informed of the military station by his grandfather, James H. Peel (b. 1842). Moreover, Mr. Dalton possessed a small collection of artifacts from the site that were consistent with occupations dating to the 1830s, including U.S. Army uniform buttons. The Daltons’ query prompted an archival search, which yielded Hugh Montgomery’s 1832 report on the establishment of a garrison at the “Coqua creek mines” and Milligan and Meroney’s spoliation claim and accompanying testimony regarding Meroney’s stand and the establishment of Camp Armistead.

In 1999, Mr. Russell Townsend (then of Sequoyah Birthplace Museum) undertook a metal detector survey of the probable fort area but realized limited success due to equipment defects. Inclusion of the site in studies for the Cherokee Heritage Trails Initiative (an NEH-funded project that partnered the North Carolina Arts Council with the Museum of the Cherokee Indian) spurred Mr. Quentin Bass (USDA National Forest Service) to spearhead efforts for federal acquisition of the fort property to assure preservation management.

In 2007, the USDA Cherokee National Forest entered into a multi-year challenge-cost share agreement with the University of North Carolina Research Laboratories of Archaeology to perform inventory and evaluation of archeological resources on the Fort Armistead property. Between 2008 and 2012, the Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA) conducted multiple short-term archeological investigations (Riggs et al 2014). Initial goals of archeological inquiry were to determine if site content and contexts at 40MR708 are consistent with military occupations dating to the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, and thereby referable to Fort Armistead. Once positive site identification was accomplished, survey and testing aimed to establish site and component boundaries, determine site structure and content, and evaluate the integrity of deposits. These goals, characterized within the rubrics of definition and inventory, were aimed at positively establishing criteria of archeological significance and integrity pursuant to directives codified in EO 11953 (36 FR 8921, 3 CFR, 1971-1975) and Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470h-2). In order to accomplish the project goals, investigators instituted a research plan that consisted of three components:

a) Detailed contour mapping to document the immediate site physiography, including microtopographic features that represent ruins of the fort construction;

b) Comprehensive, systematic metal detection survey to estimate artifact density and characterize site structure; and

c) Test excavations of potential fort ruin features and high density artifact deposits, as defined by microtopographic mapping and metal detection survey, to determine contextual integrity.
and sample site content. All collections made during the course of this work are curated at the RLA.

Results of the microtopographic survey are described in the “Current Condition” section of this nomination. Systematic metal detection survey with limited recovery was conducted across approximately 6.6 acres near the center of the tract. This survey entailed gridding the area into 100m² blocks (where practical), then sweeping overlapping transects within the defined blocks with a Fisher M-Scope 1270 unit to define discrete metal locations. These locations were individually marked with pennant flags and then mapped with a total station to create the dataset (Maps 5-7). Because the majority of these metal “hits” were defined and mapped without recovery, the metal detection dataset does not provide precise distributions of specific functional sets that allow spatial definition of activity patterns. Moreover, approximately 90% of the identified objects are cut nails indicative of architectural use. Therefore, it appears reasonable to project the majority of metal signatures as representative of architectural debris, and reflective of the locations of buildings or debris from buildings.

The topographic and metal detection surveys documented spatial integrity as evident in the correspondence between arrays of surface anomalies and distributions of metal artifacts. Test excavation of a sample of these loci served to demonstrate the integrity of site deposits and determine their material content. A total of 88 square meters were excavated from 2008 to 2012, resulting in the investigation of 20 cultural features (Map 5).

Investigations of the Fort Armistead site to date have focused upon the central fort area. Documentation and evaluation efforts are continuing on the periphery, consistent with the USDA Forest Service plans to dedicate the entire 36.36-acre tract to the preservation, research, and interpretation of the Fort Armistead archeological complex. In support of these goals, the Forest Service has dedicated considerable effort and expense toward active site protection, including closure to public access, installation of 24-hr video monitoring systems, and clearing of underbrush and tree cover from key areas to facilitate surveillance.

**ANALYSIS**

Analysis of feature stratigraphy and artifact content to date has allowed for the attribution of fourteen of the investigated features to one of four site occupation phases: Meroney’s Stock Stand (1831-1832), Fort Armistead (1832-1838), a mid-nineteenth century domestic occupation (1838-1862), and Camp Coker Creek (1862-1863). Materials from a Middle Archaic (ca. 8000‒5000 years B.P.) occupation and twentieth century distilling and hunting activities have also been identified on the property, but no distinct feature contexts associated with these periods have been identified.

*Meroney’s Stock Stand (1831-1832)*

One investigated feature appears to be the remains of a facility that was part of Meroney’s Stock Stand. Feature 7 is a substructure cellar pit located on the southern slope of the site, approximately 50 meters west of the Unicoy Turnpike roadbed and 10 meters east of a smaller road that branches off the turnpike. Test excavations of a 70 cm by 54 cm x 88 cm triangular section of this feature revealed a straight, vertical pit wall, and indicate the presence of a rectangular feature 1.5 m x 1.5 m in size, and greater than 80 cm deep.
The size, morphology and content of Feature 7 closely corresponds to nineteenth century subfloor cellars documented in numerous domestic contexts in the southern Appalachian Mountains.30 Commercial ceramics recovered from the test excavation of Feature 7 are consistent with assemblages dating to the late 1820s–early 1830s and indicate deposition during the Meroney’s Stand/Fort Armistead phase of site occupation. However, the artifact assemblage recovered at this facility displays a markedly different character from Feature 6 and other trash deposits near the fort core area. Feature 7 and the area immediately surrounding the cellar pit produced almost 40% of the commercial ceramics recovered from the site to date (Valiunas 2012:65), indicating greater focus on kitchen and food consumption activities in the settings that produced the Feature 7 assemblages, and consistent with domestic household assemblages in the southern mountains. It appears likely that Feature 7 is associated with the 1831-1832 site occupation by the Phillip Meroney family, who operated the stock stand on the Unicoy Turnpike at Coker Creek that the U.S. Army occupied and seized in 1832.

Fort Armistead (1832-1838)

Five investigated features can be attributed to the Fort Armistead occupation of the site. Feature 1 is the post’s powder magazine, and Feature 8 is a soil berm that appears to be constructed of fill from the excavation of the magazine pit. Feature 6 is a discrete midden deposit located on the western slope of the property. Features 10 and 23 are foundation ruins associated with fort complex buildings.

Feature 1 is a large (3.6 m x 3.7 m x 2.1 m deep) rectangular pit located near the southeastern corner of the hilltop (Photographs 7, 8). No spoil pile from the excavation of this 28 cubic meter pit is apparent, but the surface adjacent to the west side of the pit is artificially leveled with fill dirt, which terminates with the Feature 8 berm. The base of this pit is rubble-filled with hammer-dressed schist slabs; this debris probably represents the collapse of an original stone wall lining. Intact sections of this dry-stone wall lining are present in the lower portions of the pit. A one-meter square test excavation at the interior southeastern corner of Feature 1 revealed a prepared sand and gravel floor with wooden plank remnants beneath the rubble. Bottle and vial fragments from this basal deposit are consistent with those in the frontslope trash deposit (Feature 6), indicating likely association with the Fort Armistead site component.

Feature 1 appears to have been originally excavated as a square, two-meter-deep pit with vertical walls that were subsequently lined with hammer-dressed field stones. The sandy gravel that caps the clay bottom of Feature 1 is an alluvial sediment that appears to have been purposely introduced and surfaced with wooden planks. These probably represent an original prepared sand floor with wood planking. A cluster of metal objects around the pit opening may represent hardware associated with a former superstructure positioned over the pit.

The scale and subterranean plan of Feature 1 appears consistent with gunpowder magazine construction for field fortifications as described in nineteenth century military manuals. Col. Dennis Mahan, the chief fortification engineer at West Point (1824-1871) noted (1887:54) that:

> Powder magazines, when practicable, should be placed below the surface of the ground, and should never be exposed to the direct fire of the enemy. … The interior of the magazine, the

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floors, and the doors and windows are built with a view to security from fire; and to preserve
the powder from dampness, by a good system of drainage around the foundations…

Excavations at the contemporary Second Seminole War-era Fort Foster documented a similar rectangular (2.5 m x 3 m, one-meter deep) powder magazine walled with hewn timbers and floored with planks situated at the center of the fort complex (Baker 1974:22). Because Feature 1 at Fort Armistead is positioned at the end of a probable building row, a location typically reserved for blockhouse structures in such frontier stations, the magazine may have been situated beneath a substantial structure, consistent with Mahan’s recommendation for placing small magazines beneath bastions in small fortifications. (Mahan 1887)

Feature 8 is a linear berm of soil about 15 meters long and one meter wide that is located approximately 10 meters downslope (west) of Feature 1. The berm parallels the main line of Fort Armistead construction and appears to reference the fort orientation. Test excavations through Feature 8 revealed a massive fill of subsoil sediments atop a thin, intact A-horizon. Materials recovered from the surface of this fill date to the Fort Armistead occupation. Feature 8 terminates an artificially leveled platform that extends westward from Feature 1, and probably represents the placement of spoil from the excavation of Feature 1 (a 28 cubic meter excavation). The Feature 8 berm may have functioned to retain the leveled platform and prevent slope erosion, or may simply represent the portion of Feature 1 spoil that was not leveled.

Most of the artifacts attributable to the Fort Armistead occupation derive from Feature 6, a shallow, but dense sheet midden located on the western edge of the site, about 20 meters downslope from Feature 1. Metal detecting in this area identified a relatively discrete concentration of artifacts approximately 25 m² in extent.

The Feature 6 midden deposit, which includes likely represents a trash dump created during the Fort Armistead occupation of 40MR708. The predominance of thermally-altered artifacts in the deposit, and absence of in situ thermally altered soil suggest this location served as a dump for hearth cleanings rather than as a trash burning area. Other overbank disposal areas are documented at N475/E454 and N525/E518, indicating a pattern of downslope refuse disposal proximate to the main fort area.

Features 10 and 23 are foundations associated with two Fort Armistead-period buildings. Feature 10, which is located immediately east of the Unicoi Turnpike roadbed, is capped by a 30cm thick platform of spoil. Test excavation of a 16m² portion of this spoil deposit revealed the northwest corner of a trench-laid drystone foundation oriented N16°E (Photograph 9). The excavated portion of the building measures 2.6 meters by 2.4 meters.

After demolition of Feature 10 superstructure, the foundation stones were robbed down to the original ground surface, and the remnant foundation was strewn with burned debris (Feature 12) and covered with about 30 cm of spoil (Feature 13).

A Civil War-era hearth (Feature 15) associated with the Camp Coker Creek occupation intrudes the spoil layer above Feature 10, an indication that the foundation predates the Civil War era site component. Container glass and windowpane fragments associated with the foundation trench and the surrounding A-horizon resemble those recovered from Feature 6, and can be attributed to the Fort Armistead site component.
Trench-laid stone foundations like Feature 10 are uncommon in mid-nineteenth century domestic contexts in the southern mountains, but are well documented in contemporary frontier military contexts, such as second Fort Wayne and Fort Gibson (OK), and a military standard for such constructions is indicated (Bement and Rhea 2007). Moreover, the orientation of the Feature 10 foundation approximates (but does not precisely match) that of the main Fort Armistead complex, and it appears likely that the Feature 10 superstructure was constructed as an outlying building on the opposite side of the fort from the hilltop row. Contemporary maps of nearby Fort Butler indicate the quartermaster’s office and hospital as similar outlying facilities.

Feature 23 is a linear, rubble-filled ditch within the primary building row area of Fort Armistead. Excavation of 10 square meters in this area exposed a 4.2 m x 1 m rubble filled trench oriented N120°E, approximately aligned with the transverse (short) axis of the main fort complex. A 75-cm-wide cross-section of this feature revealed a vertical sided trench filled with unmodified blocks of metasandstone and schist.

This trench feature approximately spans the width of the Fort Armistead building complex and is interpreted as a mudsill support for an interior or cross sill within one of the Fort Armistead building cribs. It is believed that outer foundation lines of this complex are trench-laid, drystone foundations (buried under marginal berms), while the cross sills used mudsill construction.

Mid-Nineteenth Century Domestic Occupation (1838-1862)

Site occupation after Cherokee Removal but prior to the Civil War is inferred from the deposits (Features 12 and 13) that superimpose the Feature 10 foundation. Feature 12, a deposit of burned material, contains Fort Armistead-period artifacts, but clearly caps the robbed foundation, and postdates the demolition of the Feature 10 superstructure. Feature 13, a massive fill that covers an area of about 80 square meters, superimposes Features 10 and 12. A 4 by 4-meter section of Feature 13 documented a matrix of redeposited subsoil with large blocky schist debris. The Feature 13 matrix probably derives from nearby Feature 2, a large ovoid surface depression located immediately adjacent to Roadbed A. This pit measures approximately 2.5 x 3.5 meters and resembles subfloor cellar pits often associated with nineteenth century residential cabins in the southern mountains.

Feature 15, a Civil War-era hearth with stone-lined firebox, clearly intrudes into the northern edge of Feature 13 and thus provides a relative sequence, placing the Feature 13 deposit between the abandonment and destruction of a Fort Armistead-era building (post-1838) and the re-occupation of the site by the Confederate battalion in 1862-1863.

Camp Coker Creek (1862-1863)

Six features can be attributed to the Camp Coker Creek occupation of the Fort Armistead property. Five of these features are stone-lined hearths (Features 4, 14-16) or sill-trenches adjacent to hearths (Feature 18). The sixth, Feature 3, is a possible sink (latrine). The four Camp Coker Creek hearths investigated to date represent a subsample of 31 features arranged as four linear arrays on the east side of the Unicoy Turnpike (Map 7). These low, 1.5 – 2 m diameter fieldstone piles occur at 3 m-3.5 m intervals and are oriented approximately N107°E. Feature 15 is one of the better-preserved examples of the Camp Coker Creek hearth features (Photograph 9). It is a trapezoid oriented with its opening about 20° northeast. The southern, back side of Feature 15 is 70 cm wide
and its opening, 65 cm to the northeast, is 1 meter wide. Feature 15 is associated with Feature 18, a log mold (with carbonized wood remains) that appears to represent a timber set as a front curb to the hearth. Features 4, 14, and 16 also revealed intact clay hearth surfaces bounded by fieldstones. These materials clearly postdate the Fort Armistead component, but are consistent with a Civil War-era Camp Coker Creek site component.

The linear arrays of stone piles identified as hearth remnants evince spatial arrangements comparable to those documented at a number of Civil War-era military winter encampments (see Geier, et al. 2006) and are consistent with camp order prescribed in Union and Confederate General Regulations manuals for the 1860–1865 period. Such hearths typically correspond to the location of winter “huttage,” small ad hoc structures with wooden wall and canvas roofs. The arrangement, construction, and artificial content of these features support the interpretation of this location as the site of Camp Coker Creek, the 1862–1863 winter headquarters of Walker’s Battalion of the Thomas Legion (Confederate, 69th North Carolina Infantry).

Feature 3 is a three-meter long linear depression and associated soil berm located on the hill slope near the northern edge of the site, directly aligned with the northernmost row of Camp Coker Creek hearths, and 19.8 m (65 ft) west of the end of the camp array. Testing of a one-meter section of the depression exposed an 80 cm wide, 40 cm deep basin with lens-like deposits. Alignment of Feature 3 with the hearth rows is consistent with the placement of sinks (latrines) specified in Confederate military manuals (albeit much closer to the end of the encampment than specified).

CONCLUSION

The Fort Armistead site is deeply significant to the Indigenous American experience, and the broader American experience, as a tangible landscape that embodies the traumatic 1838 deportation of Cherokee people, and which evokes visceral response, even as an emptied space. Unlike other known military sites associated with the Cherokee Removal, the Fort Armistead site retains remarkable integrity as an archaeological landscape, marked by readily discernable spatial organization of landscape features and intact depositional contexts. These qualities reinforce the site’s immediacy and effectiveness as physical synecdoche for America’s dispossession and displacement of Native peoples in the excesses of the Jacksonian era—a calamity that shook the moral foundations of the American republic.

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