National Trails Intermountain Region News
October 2014

National Park Service
US Department of the Interior

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

Project Updates - Protection, Development, and Promotion

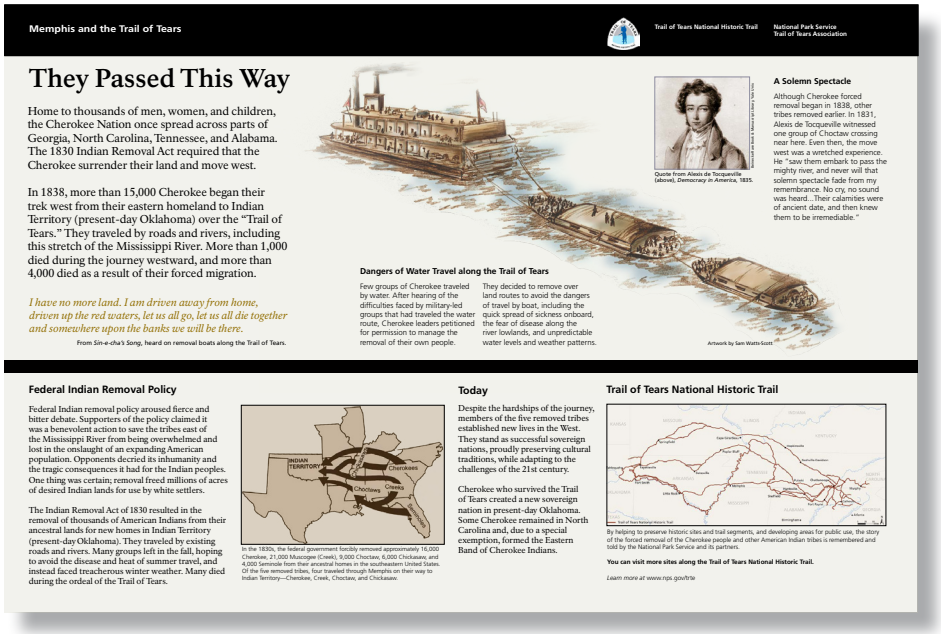
Introducing: the New NTIR Website!

The website is live! This new tool communicates our mission and services to our partners along the nine distinct national historic trails and the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program that NTIR administers. Learn how we can help you protect, develop, and promote national historic routes.

Each NTIR team has a feature page (coming soon) that describes the skills or expertise they provide with links to more information. The website will be the central information hub for the wide range of partners who manage lands and share stories along these historic routes. Go to: **www.nps.gov/ntir**

Junior Ranger Program

Russell Cave National Monument received funding to implement a junior ranger program. A framework for the program has been developed and badges ordered. A Student Conservation Association intern will work with the park, NTIR, TOTA, and the Cherokee Nation during the next year to create a program that is partly trailwide orientation and partly local for northeast Alabama, northwest Georgia, and southeast Tennessee.



Memphis and the Trail of Tears

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

National Park Service
Trail of Tears Association

They Passed This Way

Home to thousands of men, women, and children, the Cherokee Nation once spread across parts of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. The 1830 Indian Removal Act required that the Cherokee surrender their land and move west.

In 1838, more than 15,000 Cherokee began their trek west from their eastern homeland to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) over the "Trail of Tears." They traveled by roads and rivers, including this stretch of the Mississippi River. More than 1,000 died during the journey westward, and more than 4,000 died as a result of their forced migration.

I have no more land. I am driven away from home, driven up the red waters, let us all go, let us all die together and somewhere upon the banks we will be there.

From *Sin-a-cha's Song*, heard on removal boats along the Trail of Tears.

Quote from Alexis de Tocqueville (above), *Democracy in America*, 1835.

A Solemn Spectacle

Although Cherokee forced removal began in 1838, other tribes removed earlier. In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville witnessed one group of Choctaw crossing near here. Even then, the move west was a wretched experience. He "saw them embark to pass the mighty river, and never will that solemn spectacle fade from my remembrance. No cry, no sound was heard…Their calamities were of ancient date, and then knew them to be irremediable."

Dangers of Water Travel along the Trail of Tears

Few groups of Cherokee traveled by water. After hearing of the difficulties faced by military-led groups that had traveled the water route, Cherokee leaders petitioned for permission to manage the removal of their own people.

They decided to remove over land routes to avoid the dangers of travel by boat, including the quick spread of sickness onboard, the fear of disease along the river lowlands, and unpredictable water levels and weather patterns.

Artwork by Sam Watts-Scott

Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it had for the Indian peoples. One thing was certain; removal freed millions of acres of desired Indian lands for use by white settlers.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the removal of thousands of American Indians from their ancestral lands for new homes in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). They traveled by existing roads and rivers. Many groups left in the fall, hoping to avoid the disease and heat of summer travel, and instead faced treacherous winter weather. Many died during the ordeal of the Trail of Tears.

In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States. Of the five removed tribes, four traveled through Memphis on their way to Indian Territory—Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and, due to a special exemption, formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments, and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte

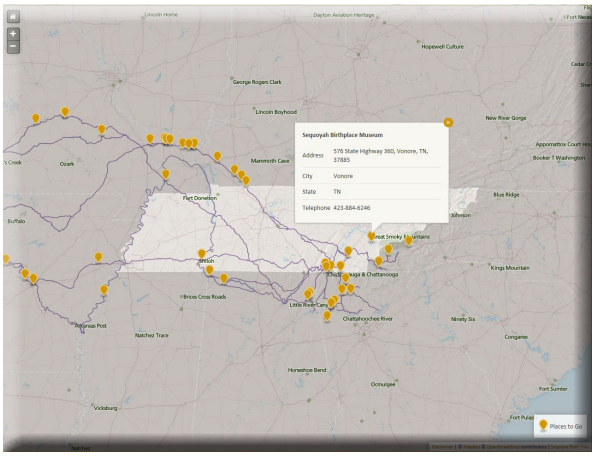
During the Fall 2014 TOTA conference, the bus trip includes a stop at the Memphis waterfront for the unveiling of a new Trail of Tears National Historic Trail (NHT) wayside exhibit about early removal and the water route in the Memphis area.

Exhibits

- Laughlin Park in Waynesville, Missouri has seven waysides underway. Installation is scheduled for Spring 2015.

New Mapping Project Underway!

GIS staff are working on the final steps of an interactive mapping project for the Trail of Tears NHT. Later this year there will be at least two interactive maps that can be embedded into trail and partner websites. The interactive maps will highlight sites along the trail for the visiting public.



Design & Development Projects

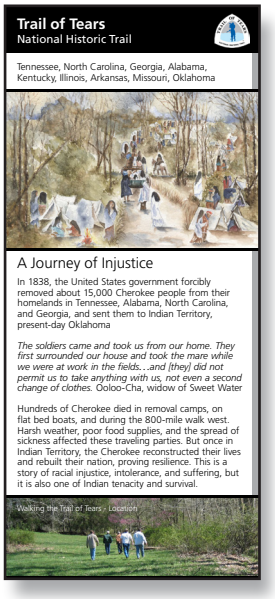
- City of Huntsville, Alabama: A sign plan marking seven miles of the Benge Route from Blevins Gap Road into the city center with 29 original route signs has been approved.
- Benge Route through Kentucky: A sign plan is in progress for 60 original route signs across 36 miles.
- Hamilton County, Tennessee: A sign plan is in progress for 17 signs across 30 miles of original route, following the Taylor Route.
- Hopkinsville, Kentucky: Eight original route signs across 10 miles were installed.
- Stone County, Missouri: 13 original route and crossing signs were installed across five miles. Dedication held on May 31st.
- Twin Forks Trail, Tennessee (Old Jefferson Trail segment): 15 signs, including 12 pedestrian, two original route, and one site identification, to be installed across 1½ miles were ordered. Dedication to be held in October.
- Giles County Trail of Tears Interpretive Center, Pulaski, Tennessee and Vann Cherokee Cabin, Cave Spring, Georgia: A site identification sign was installed for each.

- A design charette in Charleston, Tennessee was held in March focusing on the area of historic Fort Cass, the largest of the Trail of Tears emigrating depots. Members of the community, the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee, and TOTA were attendance. The development concept plan is set to be completed in the spring.

- In August, the Charleston-Calhoun-Hiwassee Historical Society received notice that they were awarded a $200,000 recreational trails program grant to fund the development for part of the charette design, which included a small interpretive trail segment, trailhead parking, and signage.

Publications

We finalized the design for a new rack card and it is being printed. The rack card will be utilized by visitor and welcome centers located off the trail.


Trail of Tears
National Historic Trail

Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Illinois, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma

A Journey of Injustice

In 1838, the United States government forcibly removed about 15,000 Cherokee people from their homelands in Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina, and Georgia, and sent them to Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma

The soldiers came and took us from our home. They first surrounded our house and took the mare while we were at work in the fields…and [they] did not permit us to take anything with us, not even a second change of clothes. Ooloo-Cha, widow of Sweet Water

Hundreds of Cherokee died in removal camps, on flat bed boats, and during the 800-mile walk west. Harsh weather, poor food supplies, and the spread of sickness affected these traveling parties. But once in Indian Territory, the Cherokee reconstructed their lives and rebuilt their nation, proving resilience. This is a story of racial injustice, intolerance, and suffering, but it is also one of Indian tenacity and survival.

Walking the Trail of Tears - Location

New Certifications

- Nashville 1823 Toll Bridge Abutments, Tennessee (3/20/14)
- Giles County Trail of Tears Interpretive Center, Pulaski, Tennessee (4/22/14)
- Paducah Waterfront, Kentucky (7/29/14)
- Wilson-Erwin House, Charleston Vicinity, Tennessee (8/20/14)

National Trails Intermountain Region

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Comments? Write to:
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