

**GREATER JEFFERSONTOWN**  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

August 2018

Vol. 16 Number 4

**August Meeting -- 12:30 P.M., Monday, August 6, 2018.**

We will continue to meet during the day at **12:30 P.M.** in the Jeffersontown Library, 10635 Watterson Trail. The Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society meetings are held on the first Monday of the even numbered months of the year. Everyone is encouraged to attend to help guide and grow the Society.

**August Meeting**

**Kentucky's Native History - Persistent Myths and Stereotypes.** The many cultural contributions Native Americans have made throughout Kentucky's history, as well as the impact of lingering stereotypes.

The program will be presented by Tressa Brown, who received her B.A. in Biology and Anthropology at Transylvania University and her M.A. in Anthropology from Arizona State University. She is currently the coordinator for the Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission and the Kentucky African American Heritage Commission. She has worked for the past 25 years providing Native American educational programming for schools and the public, both in her current position as well as in her previous position as Curator at the Salato Wildlife Education Center.

Her primary focus has been to identify the stereotypes and myths about Native Americans in general and Kentucky's Native people in particular. Her position at KHC is to provide accurate information to educators and the public about the diversity of Native cultures as well as the issues affecting Native people in contemporary society.

**GJHS on Facebook**

Thanks to Anne Bader GJHS is now on Facebook and Facebook .com. Please look at all she has put on it.

**June Program**

**The Cherokee Trail: Another Trail to the California Gold Rush** was presented by Berl Meyer, a longtime resident of the Jeffersontown area and he has a master's degree in geology with a minor in history. He is an avid Civil War buff and has led a geology fieldtrip to the Perryville Battlefield to explain how the geology of the area influenced the battle. Berl is the past president of the Colorado/Cherokee Trail Chapter of the Oregon California Trail Association. At the present time he is the newsletter editor and webmaster of this area's chapter of OCTA. The website address is [www.octa-colorado.org](http://www.octa-colorado.org). Another website for the Cherokee Trail is [www.cherkoetrail.org](http://www.cherkoetrail.org), the website for historians Jack and Pat Fletcher where besides from Berl's presentation, some information in this article was found.

The OCTA describes the route on their website as, "The Cherokee Trail (also known as the Trappers' Trail) was a historic overland trail through the present-day U.S. states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana that was used from the late 1840s up through the early 1890s. The route was established in 1849 by a wagon train headed to the gold fields in California. Among the members of the expedition were a group of Cherokees. When the train formed in Indian Territory, Lewis Evans (his son, Marcus, was fatally wounded at the Battle of Perryville.) of Evansville, Arkansas, was elected Captain. Thus, this expedition is sometimes written as the Evans/Cherokee Train. At this time the trail is not a National Historic Trail which is an officially recognized trail with national historic significance in the United States. This Cherokee Trail should not to be

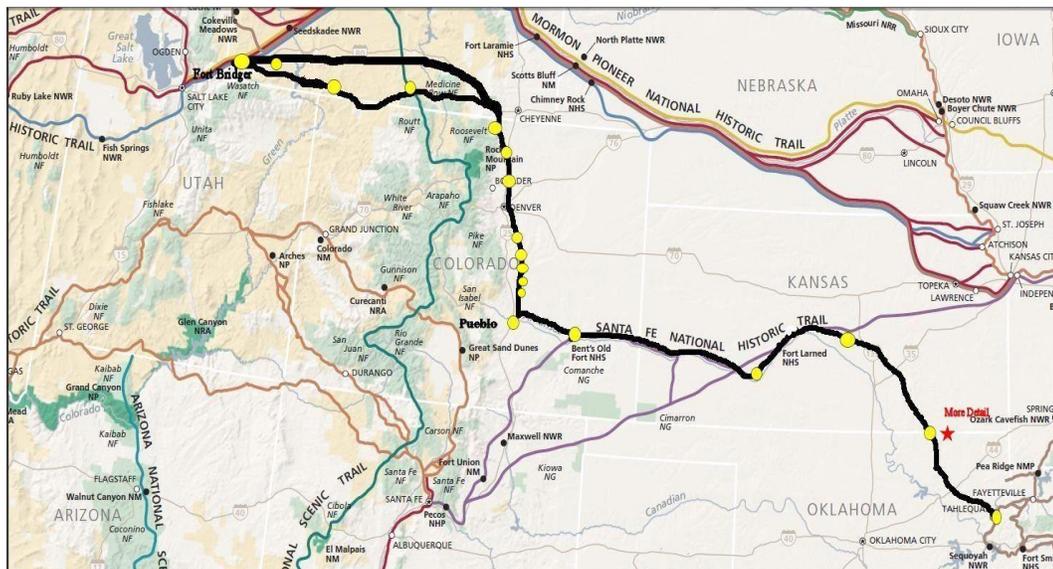
confused with the Cherokee Trail of Tears that was traveled by the Cherokee Indian Nation on their forced march to reservations in Oklahoma ordered by President Andrew Jackson.

The route of the trail ran from the Grand River near present day Salina, Oklahoma, northwest to strike the Santa Fe Trail at McPherson. From there it followed the Santa Fe Trail west, then turned north along the base of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains over the Arkansas/Platte River divide and descended along Cherry Creek (Colorado) into the valley of the South Platte River. The original 1849 trail followed the east side of the South Platte River to present-day Greeley then west via a wagon road to Laporte in Laramie County. From Laporte, the wagon road was built north past the present-day Virginia Dale Stage Station to the Laramie Plains in southeastern Wyoming. The trail was then blazed westward and northward around the Medicine Bow Range crossing the North Platte River then turning north to present day Rawlins. The trail proceeded west along the route of present Interstate 80 finally joining the Oregon, California, and Mormon trail near Granger, Wyoming”.

National Historic Trails are designated to protect the remains of significant overland or water routes to reflect the history of the nation. Most of them are scenic highway routes and are not hiking trails, although they provide opportunities for hiking and other outdoor activities along their routes. They are part of the National Trails System. National Historic Trails are authorized under the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. The OCTA is working to get the Cherokee Trail designated a National Historic Trail by Congress.

Dudley Gardner, in his Wyoming History: The Cherokee Trail, Part 1, wrote "Neither the number of wagons nor the number of people that eventually used this road to cross the Sierra Madres makes this trail significant. What makes this road unique is that Native Americans and their traveling companions did not just cross the Continental Divide; they made a path over the mountains and through the Wyoming Basin."

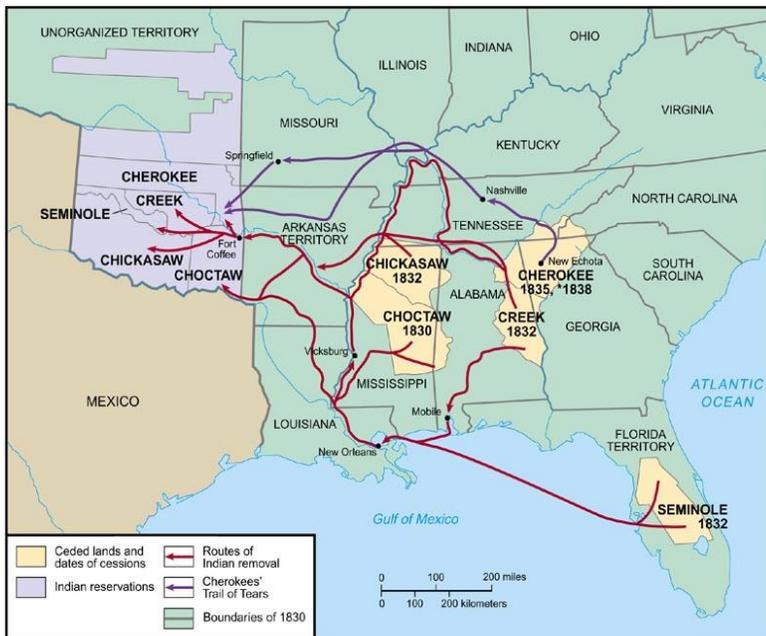
The trail has its origins in the 1849 California gold rush where in just four days an Irishman made \$26,000 dollars and in Bear Valley a group of a dozen Mexicans hit a \$200,000 vane of gold. Before gold was discovered, a large plot of land in the sea port town of San Francisco could be purchased for \$15.00, after the discovery it cost \$45,000.



If you go to the Fletcher’s website for the Cherokee Trail and pull up this map, there is an explanation of the dots along the trail.

The California gold rush was the nation’s third gold rush, the first was the 1799 North Carolina gold rush on Indian land, and the second was the 1828 Georgia gold rush on Cherokee land that resulted in the 1830

Indian Removal Act by President Andrew Jackson that forcibly removed the Cherokee Indians from their lands in the southeast states. That resolution created the better known Cherokee Trails of Tears over which thousands of Cherokees were forced marched 1,000 miles out to reservations in Oklahoma. Part of that trail passed



#### INDIAN REMOVAL

against the Plains Indian tribes prior to the Civil War. U. S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Phillip Sheridan and John Sedgwick, all generals to be, served in the West and traveled the trail before their action in the Civil War. Sedgwick was killed at the Battle of the Spotsylvania, Virginia Courthouse on May 8, 1864, right after teasing his men, who dodged the bullets as they whistled by, saying laughingly, " What! what! men, dodging this way for single bullets! What will you do when they open fire along the whole line? I am ashamed of you. They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance."

The Cherokee Trail starts at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, goes up through western Kansas, through eastern Colorado into Wyoming, ending at Fort Bridger, Utah. There it split into trails that led to various parts of California. For many Cherokees that meant north to what became Cherokee, California, that is close to the town of Oroville where the dam collapsed in 2017. So many Cherokee went to California to prospect for gold that California has more Cherokee place names than any other state.

There are still visible ruts in the ground at many places that are marked with medium sized stone markers, almost all of them are on private land and are preserved. One area is near El Dorado, Kansas. As with all the old trails out west, the Cherokee Trail followed the paths and crossed many different historic trails, such as the Oregon Trail, the Chisholm, the Santa Fe, the Kansas, the Kaw, the Valley of the Cottonwood, the Coronado, the Mennonite Immigrant, the Central, and the Pioneer, just to name a few . And as with all the different trails the Cherokee had varying routes and cutoffs over time.

There are monuments all over marking where the different trails crossed, coincided, or were near each other. One is located in Goessel, Kansas, stating that nearby was the Fort Smith, Arkansas to California Road, also called the Cherokee Trail, also called the Old Indian Trail that was abandoned during the Civil War. The Oregon, California, Mormon, and Pony Express Trails all shared part of a route and are marked that way. There is a marker in Kansas along Turkey Creek marking the start of where the Cherokee and Santa Fe Trails started sharing a route.

Fort Zarah in Kansas was the first place wagon trains could resupply along the Santa Fe/Cherokee Trail. It also was an outpost that supplied protection for the wagon trains. Pawnee Rock was one of the highest places in Kansas. At Ash Crook Crossing on July 4, 1846, Susan Magoffin, who wrote a diary about her travels along the Santa Fe Trail, and was the daughter of Kentucky Governor Isaac Shelby, had a miscarriage when a cart

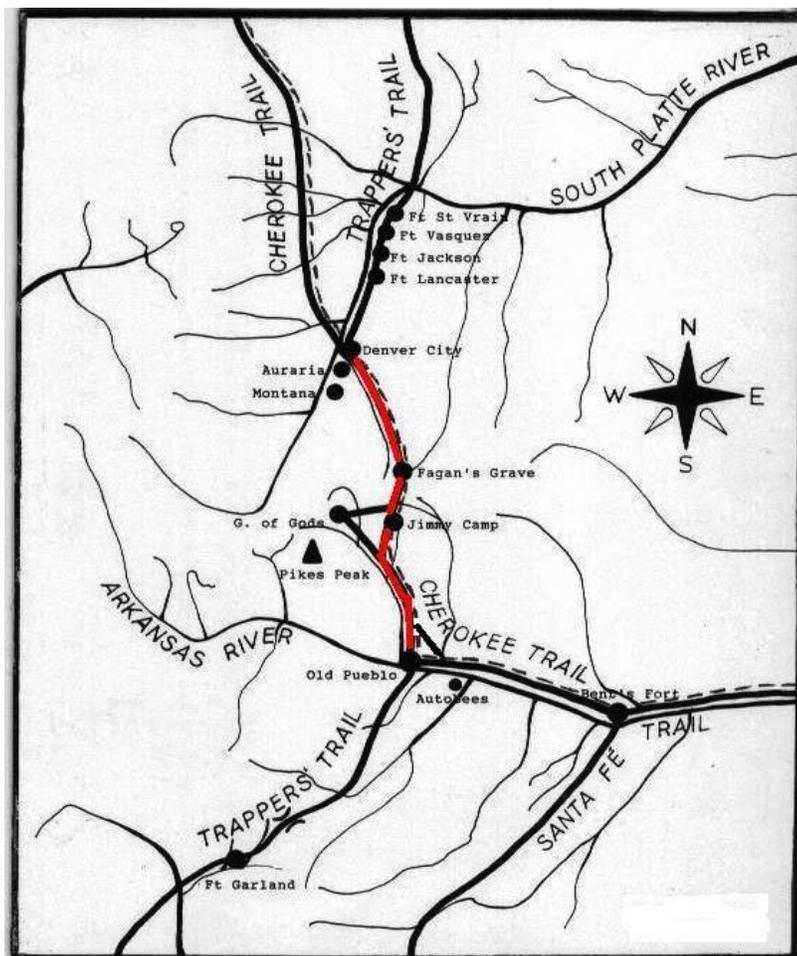
through western Kentucky. The Indian Removal Act also effected tribes in what became Wisconsin. A fourth of the Indians forced to migrate died before reaching the Oklahoma reservations.

Come 1850 the Cherokees in Oklahoma became part of the California gold rush. After all they were the first to mine the gold in North Carolina and Georgia and the Cherokee Gold Trail picked up where the Trail of Tears ended.

Those crossing the country traveled mostly in covered wagons. Conestoga wagons were also used and both were pulled usually by oxen which were better suited to the task.

The military used parts of the trail in campaigns

she was riding in rolled over tossing her out. Every trail had a "Point of Rocks" as a marker, and in 1981 the one along U. S. Highway 50, was partially dynamited apart to build the highway.



Crossing over into Colorado the trail preceded on to El Pueblo, now just Pueblo, then north along the front range of the Rocky Mountains on the old Trappers' or Divide Trail. This trail, from Santa Fe to Fort Laramie, ran east of Colorado Springs, over "the divide" between the Arkansas and South Platte rivers watersheds, then north down Cherry Creek to the South Platte River, where Denver now stands.

Bent's Old Fort, half way between Pueblo and the Kansas/Colorado line on U.S. Highway 50, is where you can talk with Kit Carson's great-grandson, John. Past the fort is Potato Hills, an old coral reef that got its name because it reminded someone who's last name was Powell, in 1860, of a giant sweet potato. Next in line is Rocky Ford, named by Kit Carson and now famous for the Rocky Ford cantaloupe and its watermelons.

People were always looking for cutoffs to make the trail shorter - one was the Chico Creek Cutoff. Problem even though it was shorter, there was no water, so most

followed the trail to El Pueblo and the junction of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas River. The Trail followed Fountain Creek north for quite a way past Pike's Peak and on to Jim's Camp, east of Colorado Springs, named in the 1840s for Jimmy Daugherty, a trader. In 1858 a person, last name Voorhees, wrote in his diary, "We got to what is called Jim's camp. There is a fine spring and lots of pine wood there. It is on the Cherokee trail, to Calafomy."

Berl told us that part of the problem of getting the Cherokee Trail named to the National Trails System is that there was no written history, i.e., diaries, letters, etc., to document the trail. Well it was discovered that after the gold ran out some of the Cherokees migrated back to North Carolina, taking their diaries with them. Under several of the pictures that Berl had in his presentation were quotations taken from the written accounts of the persons travelling on the Cherokee Trail.

Black Squirrel Creek was named for the black squirrel. "This creek is near the crest of the high divide between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers. It is a small creek, but always affords good water." Marcy, 1858. The black squirrel actually came from Kansas, Mariville, Kansas being the black squirrel capital. North of the Black Squirrel Creek crossing is the Black Forest. We pushed through an extensive tract of pine woods. Large black squirrels were leaping through the branches." Parkman, 1846. In June 2013, the most destructive fire in Colorado history started in the Black Forest, destroying over 500 homes with the loss of two lives.

Fagan's Grave is one of the very few grave sites along the Cherokee Trail. "We passed a perpendicular rock today, 500 feet high at the base of which was a tomb of recent origin, occupied by some unfortunate itinerant,

at its head, stood a wooden cross, bearing the inscription, "Charles Michael Fagan, 1858." Tierney, 1858. Fagan had died of hypothermia – froze to death.

Following Fagan's Grave was another Point of Rocks and Blackfoot Cave. "night finds us at a Blackfoot cave, snugly chambered in a spacious cave." Sage, 1842. At East Cherry Creek are more preserved wagon ruts, again on private land, with a marker placed there by the Cherokee Historical Society. At the spot where Russellville, Colorado used to be, is marked by a lone cabin and a still visible and accessible part of the Cherokee Trail.

The Cherry Creek Bridge at Franktown is a bridge to nowhere over a creek that is dry as a bone. There was enough money to build a nice looking bridge supported by a graceful arch, but not enough to put a road across it. It is used by bicyclists. "Wood, water and grass abundant throughout the valley of Cherry Creek." Marcy, 1858.

The next few places on the trail Berl talked about were what were called Mile Houses – at 20, 17, 12, and 4 miles from Denver. They all have a structure on site except for 12-Mile House, and all of these were old stagecoach stops. Of 4-Mile House, Villiard in 1859 wrote in his journal, "Four miles from the town (Denver), we reached a neat little tavern...Here there were two or three ranches in the process of establishment...Our next sign of life was the evidence of death-the unfenced cemetery of Denver on the top of a ridge."

North of Denver the Cherokee splits off the Santa Fe and if you look at the picture, the eastern fork, or the Trappers' Trail, opened in the 1849 has four forts, Lancaster, Jackson, Vasques, and St. Vrain, so the trail was called the Four Forts Trail, also.

Fort Lupton, first called Fort Lancaster, established in 1837, was one of several trading posts established along a 13-mile stretch of the South Platte River in the late 1830s, was named for Lancaster Lupton, a soldier and West Point graduate, turned into a trader. He resigned his commission and returned to the South Platte area and set up his trading business. The fort has been rebuilt. "Fort Lancaster, the trading post of Mr. Lupton...was beginning to assume the appearance of a comfortable farm." Fremont, 1843.

There is really nothing left of Fort Jackson except the known site. On the other hand Fort Vasques is a historical museum run by the Colorado Historical Society, and the highway runs on either side of it. "...reached the fort of Messrs. Subletter and Vasques, the place of our destination...it is built of double Spanish bricks." Smith, 1839

The only thing left of Fort St. Vrain, established in 1837, and located at the confluence of Saint Vrain Creek and the South Platte River is a historical marker notes the place where Old Fort St. Vrain was located. Among those who helped to establish the fort was Ceran St. Vrain, after whom it was named. "We made a ferry boat at St. Vrain ft (sic)...and took it down to the crossing. This boat was large enough to carry the largest of our wagons without unloading them....we sout(sic) out of this without road, trail or guide through the plains and hills." Pyeatt, 1849.

Going back to the trail split, Berl covered the 1850 branch of the Cherokee Trail, starting with the South Platte River crossing at Ralston Creek, which was named after a man who found gold there.

At Church's Stage Stop, Westminster, the only thing remaining is the well. It operated as a stage stop roughly from 1861 to 1869. Generals Grant, Sherman and Sedgwick passed through this stop. This was also part of the Overland Trail.

At the junction of the Laporte and Cache la Poudre rivers the 1840 and 1850 branches come back together.

“we stood at 5 pm on the south bank of the Cache la Pote River seventy miles from Denver, and by far the most formidable stream between the South Platte and the Laramie.” Greeley, 1859.

The next place of interest along the trail is the campground in Owl Canyon amid millions of years old red bluffs uplifted out of a long gone sea. “Followed up the river 8 mile or so when it turned to the right up a valley of red bluffs to the right and high steeping hills to the left....camped on the right in a gorge made by a small branch passing through the red bluffs.” Quesenbury, 1850

Steamboat Rock was another campground along the way. “Jutting out into the plain, resembled most perfectly a steamboat, wanting only the chimneys to render the image complete, the hull, the water line, the bow sprit, the wheel house with its green line, the texas and hen coop were all there. This I named Steamboat Rock.” Patterson, 1859

Virginia Dale has a story to tell, a stage stop on the shared Cherokee and Overland Trails. Built in 1862 by Jack Slade, a notorious gunslinger, known for cutting off the ears of people he didn't like, and nailing them to the fence. It is still preserved today.

Crossing into Wyoming the trail crosses the Great Divide Basin, the most desolate area you could think of. There is nothing there, including water. The trail split, one section turned north along the eastern side of the Great Basin leading toward the Oregon Trail. This route provided more access to water and grass for the animals. This route was covered in dense sage grass that made going difficult. The southern route continued west across the dry Red Desert and followed pilot points to guide the wagons. From what were called the Five Buttes they could see the next pilot mountain. The route was difficult, with high, steep vertical rises, then steep drops back into the washes.

John Lowery Brown, a Cherokee in the 1850 wagon train wrote in his journal how the trail changed from day to day, how they went twenty five miles one day before they found any water. In another entry he penned that the trail was the roughest they had seen, and at the end of the day, after only twenty miles, they came upon a dry creek bed. To find water they dug down in the creek bed.

This 1850 trail and its variants is what became the Cherokee Trail out to Fort Bridger and was followed by many others for many years. The Cherokee continued on to California through the Donner Pass, not in the winter, and spread north and south through early California to be followed by many others. That is why California has so many places with Cherokee names. Think Sequoia, as in tree!

### **Contact Us**

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