Baker Recounts Early Efforts for Recognition of Trail of Tears

In the May 2003 issue of this newsletter, TOTA’s Immediate Past President Riley Bock documented the administrative history of the Trail of Tears Association. As a follow up, Beverly Baker gives us her perspective on the early efforts to get the Trail of Tears legislated as a national historic trail. It was Beverly and her late husband, Walter, whose initial interest in the Trail of Tears in Kentucky that led to the legislation that established the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

A casual read of the travel section in the Louisville Courier Journal one Sunday in December of 1985 started me on an extraordinary journey, the recognition of the Trail of Tears as a national historic trail. While reading that blurb that indicated a feasibility study was being made, the idea that Hopkinsville would play an important role in the Trail story in Kentucky began to simmer in my mind.

After attending a local tourism meeting in January of 1986, nothing was mentioned about the study. So I inquired with the local congressman to be sure that I had read the article correctly. I was advised that this was correct and that I had not dreamed it up. Then I began contacting local and state tourism departments; state legislators; schools, and officials from local, city and county governments. I also spoke with anyone who would listen to this idea and what it could mean for Hopkinsville.

Letters of support were requested from these various groups and persons to be sent to the Kentucky legislative delegation, National Park Service Director William Mot, and Senator (?), McClure, under whose committee this feasibility study fell. A school project on our local history was undertaken, specifically on the Trail of Tears, and a letter-writing campaign by that course's students, in support of the trail study, began. These were all sent to Senator McClure. Many contacts for support of the Trail were made during 1986 and 1987, including Senator Wendell Ford of Kentucky.

On February 5, 1987, Senator Ford stated that he would introduce a bill to designate the Trail of Tears as a national historic trail. After committee hearings and voting, President Ronald Reagan signed Bill S.578 into law on December 16, 1987. This was really a big day for me and my late husband, Walter Baker, who was of Cherokee descent. It was also a big day for the many individuals who worked with me on this project because they believed in its purpose of historical preservation. So many times, as with the Trail of Tears, something is a part of local history, and so few people know about it. It is not even taught to students as a part of their heritage.

One of the true benefits of the Bill was the establishment of an advisory council and, then, the establishment of the Trail of Tears Association. This is where the story begins for many of us who have worked on this project for their own personal reasons or as one representing a Trail state or area. As a member of the advisory council for many years, a charter member of the Association, and a board member since the Association's inception, the experience has been phenomenal. The opportunity to visit historic places along the trail, some of which are known widely and others not well known at all, has been an education. And the people! Some have been here from the beginning, and others have come and gone. But all had a story to tell from their perspective on how the incidents affected them or their region.

Personally, my involvement helped me to establish the Trail of Tears Commemorative Park (TTP) in Hopkinsville, as well as the non-profit commission that supports that park. I worked closely with Walter on the development of the powwow that supports

See BAKER, page 4

Beverly Baker and her late husband, Walter, began lobbying for the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail in 1986.
Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

Honor efforts and contributions of those who have contributed countless hours to Trail research and preservation. I had considered naming several of the people and their contributions but quickly realized that there would not be enough space in this column and, further, that there are so many quietly working away whom I am not even aware. I do want to offer my thanks to all of you and would like for you to know that your work is appreciated.

At the 2005 National TOTA Conference at the new Cherokee Casino in Catosoa, Oklahoma. The conference was well attended and many enjoyed the evening activities and field trips, which included trips to the Will Rogers Memorial, hosted by the Claremore Pocahontas Ladies Club, the Muskogee Creek Nation, where a memorial ceremony was conducted honoring Chief Samuel Checote, and the Gilcrease Museum for dinner and an address by Governor Bill Anoatubey of the Chickasaw Nation. Thanks to the planning committee.

The chapter would like to express its appreciation to the planning committee members for providing a wonderful slate of speakers and subject material.

The last newsletter, the Oklahoma chapter has held magnificent ceremonies honoring seven survivors of the Trail of Tears. This total of one hundred survivors have been honored by the chapter since the beginning of this project. Also, two sites have been identified where the Cherokees were mustered out in arriving in Oklahoma. These sites have been submitted to the National Park Service for assistance in signage and interpretation.

The Oklahoma chapter will hold the 2005 Spring meeting in Barteville, Oklahoma, on April 23, 2005, at which time three board of directors will be elected. A marking ceremony for two survivors of the Trail will be conducted following the meeting.

We look forward to a busy and fruitful 2005.

Missouri (continued)

The chapter’s Bylaws Committee met on January 27 to draft changes to the chapter’s bylaws. The draft of the bylaws is being completed and will be presented to the membership in February. The proposed changes will make the chapter’s bylaws consistent with those of the Association and will bring about several changes in the chapter. Some of the proposed changes include the separation of the Secretary/Treasurer into two separate offices, the establishment of regular quarterly meetings of the membership through the year, and one place on the board is set aside for a representative of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (to be appointed by the EBCI). We hope to elect a secretary to add to our existing officers this spring.

The chapter is currently partnering with the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) on their Federal Road project, which involves a commemoration of the road’s 200th anniversary. Phase I, a study designed to provide interpretation of the historic and cultural highlights of the Federal Road through public outreach and education, will be completed. As students from the University of Mississippi will be doing the research for the DOT. Doug Mabry, the chapter’s research committee chairman, is coordinating the project with the DOT, Federal Highway Administration, National Parks Service (NPS), Georgia Department of Natural Resource’s Historic Preservation Division, and a host of other interested parties. We are fortunate to have many members who have firsthand knowledge of the locations of the original roads. These individuals will be working with DOT personnel to document these roads and associated historical sites. In an effort to better inform the membership, the DOT will be providing a program on their Federal Road project for the March 12th chapter membership meeting.

In addition to this project, the chapter is planning a 2006 on collection camps and forts. As part of that effort, the chapter will meet with Aaron Mahr, Steve Burns (both from the NPS), and Carey Tilley (chapter member and Director of Chieftain’s Museum) in Rome to visit owners of the two forts sites there.

Arkansas

The Arkansas chapter has scheduled two public programs for 2005. May 7th in Camden and July 23rd in Russellville. The May program will emphasize Chocow钮 removal routes across south Arkansas, overland and on the Ouachita River, converging at Camden, then known as Ecore.

Fahre. It starts at 2:00 p.m. in the fellowship hall of First United Methodist Church.

The all-day program in July will include a state symposium and annual membership meeting. Sessions will be at Arkansas Tech University’s Museum of Prehistory & History in the morning and at Lake Dardanelle State Park in the afternoon. As a key site in the Arkansas River Valley, the Russellville area saw removal groups from all five southeast tribes. It is on the water route of the Trail of Tears. In addition, the ferry at Dardanelle enabled overland detachments to decide whether to travel south of the river to Fort Coffee or north of the river to Fort Gibson.

Chapter officers elected at last summer’s membership meeting will serve until July 2006. They are president Katy Sloan of Paragould, a journalist; vice president Sarah Keating, interpreter at Lake Dardanelle State Park, Russellville; secretary Carolyn Kerby, Jacksonville, an independent researcher; and treasurer Pat Proctor of the Historic Arkansas Museum staff, Little Rock. Past president Dan Littlefield of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock also serves on the chapter board.

Chapter’s partners continue to make outstanding contributions. The Arkansas Native American Press Archives continues its Indian Removal Through Arkansas research, constantly augmenting its repository of overland routes. The Department of Arkansas Heritage and its Arkansas Historic Preservation Program continue to add road segments to the National Register and develop waysides. Arkansas State Parks continues with interpretation plans for several parks, especially Lake Dardanelle and Village Creek.
Trail Finds New Partner in Fish & Wildlife Service

Many national historic trails, including the Trail of Tears, pass through National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). In the past, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has not been a partner for these trails. This has changed with the appointment of Nathan Caldwell to a position as the national trails coordinator for the USFWS. On January 10, 2005, Aaron Mair and John Conboy from NPS, and Paul Austin and Jerra Quinton from TOTA, met with representatives of the Army Corps of Engineers and the USFWS in Memphis to discuss how the NPS and USFWS can work together. Both agencies were interested in preserving the Trail of Tears route and to develop it for visitor use.

Numerous on-the-ground projects have been completed, such as signing the route, visitor-use development, interpretive way-finding, and more. In late March we received our budget figures for the current fiscal year. For the Trail of Tears our base budget number is $384,000. This year we had an increase of $29,000 for computer mapping of the Trail that is identified as "non-base." At this time the new dollars are not considered base funds for upcoming years. The Partnership for the Trail of Tears, of which the Association is a member, played a key role in obtaining funding increases for Congress for several national trails.

We anticipate two new staff members joining us in the next few weeks. Brooke Taralli is a student intern in Landscape Architecture, Planning, and Interpretation.

Jere Krakow

National Trails System Office Superintendent's Message

At the National Park Service office for the National Trails System, in Santa Fe, I am settled into my home base now. As many of you know, my wife and I moved from Utah to New Mexico last September. With five national historic trails administered from here, and four administered from Salt Lake City, I am directly involved in a web of trails across much of the nation.

During the past few months we have been working with our partners within the Park Service technical experts from the Harpers Ferry Center to complete negotiations for the Trail of Tears film contract. The approximately 20 minute film, an overview of the Trail of Tears, is intended for use in numerous venues. Rich-Heupe Films, Inc. of Dallas (a Native American owned corpora- tion), was awarded the contract in February 2005. We anticipate the Trail of Tears Association will be active in the key compo- nents of the film. The completion is sched- uled for June 2006. It is a much anticipated film for which the Association worked hard for many years to obtain funding.

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SAVE THE DATE!!!

10th Annual TOTA Conference & Symposium

October 31 - November 3, 2005
Marriott at the Convention Center
Chattanooga, Tennessee.
Conference Hotel: Marriott
Room Rate: $88 single/double
Parking: $8/day self-parking or $30/day valet parking

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail News

Vision Becoming Reality - Using Partnerships to Develop the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

Despite this tragic event in our Nation’s history, the Cherokee and other South-eastern tribes built successful communities that exist today. Old trails, historic build- ings, and other sites have been preserved to commemorate the sorrowful journey.

A variety of local, state, and national efforts have commenced to preserve, develop, and interpret Trail resources. A growing awareness of this important story—and those of other removed tribes—has stimulated interest in national- historic trails administered from Salt Lake City, I am directly involved in a web of trails across much of the nation.

A new brand identity image has been created for the National Trails System Office Superintendent’s Message.

Additional sites have been certified and the T rail and to develop it for visitor use.

The AHPP currently is doing fieldwork for other possible sections of the Cherokee T rail of T ears in Arkansas. In early February, AHPP historians identified another stretch of the Springfield to

AHPF Aids Two Arkansas Sites with National Register Listing

Two sections of the Springfield to Fayetteville Road were that nominated to the National Register of Historic Places by the State Review Board of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPF), an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, have been listed on the Register. Both sections were traveled by Cherokee detachments using the Northern Route. In April, the AHPF will present a road segment in Johnson County, Arkansas, that was traversed by the Whitley Detachment for possible National Register nomination. The AHPF is currently doing fieldwork for other possible sections of the Cherokee-Trail of Tears in Arkansas. In early February, AHPF historians identified another stretch of the Springfield to Fayetteville Road, the Northern Route, as well as two possible sections of the Van Buren to Evanville Road traveled by the Bell Detachment. The agency is continuing work on the possibility of including new lake sections as part of the Water Route.

A new brand identity image has been created for the National Trails System Office Superintendent’s Message. It is USFWS policy that both images be used together. A new brand identity image has been created for the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is USFWS policy that both images be used together.

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An eighth-grade class from Baltimore, Maryland, just finished a project in which each student submitted a poem on their recent lesson on the Trail of Tears. Their teacher, Ms. Chanda Bloom, contacted the Association and asked if these poems could be judged and printed in a publication by the Association. The Association agreed, and after having a small committee judge the poems, the top three were picked, in no particular order, to be published in this edition of Trail News. One is an acrostic poem, one is a narrative poem (telling a story), and one is an “I Am” poem. Enjoy!

MR: Year after year, Association members have become increasingly important to me. I look forward to seeing them, photographing them and learning of their interests, achievements and concerns.

JQ: What has been, you feel, your most distinguishing attribute as an Association member? In what ways do you feel you best contribute to the Association and the Trail?

MR: My photographs, my paintings, and my journals have become increasingly important to friends and family. These notes would not be complete without a tribute to Deborah Ann Light, whose foundation provided encouragement and funds for photographic equipment and other expense. Her enthusiasm and interest have brought much joy to me. She has informed me, “You know you have a book there.” It is a pleasure to realize my voluminous notes and reports have afforded her a measure of joy and satisfaction.

JQ: What words would you like to offer the present and future generations of possible supporters of the Trail of Tears to encourage their involvement?

MR: The Association was created for the purpose of establishing removal routes, but it has also become an important unifying element, drawing us together, creating enduring friendships strengthened by the love of our unique heritage. The Association could end when the final marker is put into place, but I do not foresee this. The Association has provided a means whereby our common heritage has united and given us a means of communicating deepest feelings.

I’m a Survivor! by Candice Barkeine

I am a survivor of the Trail of Tears. I wonder about my family and friends that have it even worse. I hear the cries and screams of the unfortunate children. I see the hopeless people wondering and looking. I want a home and a decent place to live. I am a survivor.

I pretended that I’m as big as the mountains. I feel anger and determined to get out of this life and start a new one. I make a difference when I help tired, troubled, upset people who have just lost a loved one.

I worry that my family and I will not make it through, like the people who have lost their lives in a midwinter event. I cry because of the terrible things they did to us by making us move out of our homes and leave everything behind.

I am a survivor.

I understand that I must take care of my family and walk for miles until my feet are bare and raw from the hard, sandy, dusty mines. I say, “This is no life for any man or women and their children!” I dreamed about the courageous events I wish to encounter. I try to be friendly and gentle under all circumstances. I hope for a better future, and for my children to have a great life on this earth. I am a survivor!

Jerra Quinton: When did you first become interested in the Trail of Tears and involved with TOTA?

Mary Riesberg: A Cherokee heritage dominates the fabric of my life. My father’s deep pride in this heritage was transferred to his nine children as they confirmed and assured them that they were “part Indian,” at a time in our history when such a statement was not popular. The Trail of Tears Association came to my attention while taking a graduate class in religion at the University of Missouri. Another student, also Indian, informed me that there was a Trail of Tears State Park. Without delay I drove to the Trail of Tears State Park and was put in contact with Bob Friedrich, Sr., whose enthusiasm only heightened my desire to contribute. Bob provided me with a membership application form. I joined I drove to Little Rock for the 1996 conference. Such excitement! That Little Rock meeting was a high point in my life.

JQ: What has been your most rewarding experience during your involvement with the Association and/or the Trail?

MR: My people walked, fought a war, and lost. I walked on foot. It was like we had no shoes. No houses. We packed us By the thousands Into tiny wagons. We rode, cried, starved, ached, and died. When we reached Our destination Few remained. It was like we had fought a war. And lost. Changes? Contact:

Beaver Baker, Jack Baker, Mark Christ, John Conoboy, Jerra Krakow, Jerra Quinton, Mary Riesberg, Andrea Sharon, and the Trail of Tears Association state chapters.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

January - December

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES $25.00

Membership in the Trail of Tears Association automatically includes membership in one state chapter. Additional state memberships are $10 each.

 Payments to the Trail of Tears Association are tax deductible under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue code.

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Are you a current member of TOTA? If not, please join TOTA today!

National Park Service National Trails System Office - Santa Fe

The National Trails System Office - Santa Fe administers the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, and the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program El Camino Real de Tierras Adentro National Historic Trail is administered jointly by the National Trails System Office - Santa Fe and the New Mexico State Office of the Bureau of Land Management. These trail and corridor programs are administered in partnership with American Indian tribes, federal, state, and local agencies; non-government organizations, and private landowners.

National Parks:

National Trails System Office - Santa Fe PO Box 728

Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

Phone 505-988-6888

E-Mail bld_administration@nps.gov

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

Many of the projects accomplished along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail are receiving funding from the National Park Service Challenge Cost-Share Program. Your project might qualify, too. Give us a call and we will send you a project proposal form and instructions. Projects should support the programs and goals of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail as set forth in the Comprehensive Management and Use Plan. Site-specific projects can generally only be funded for certified sites. Projects can be related to resource protection, management, visitor use facilities, interpretation, education, or research. Projects require a 50/50 match of federal and nonfederal funding. However, the nonfederal match can include the value of volunteer time and other in-kind services, donated equipment and supplies, and so forth. If you’re not sure whether or not your project will qualify, call us anyway, and let’s talk.

If you have a possible project, contact John Conoboy right away by mail or phone (505-988-6733).

Remember, Challenge Cost-Share funds are not a grant, but rather are funds for mutually-agreed-upon national historic trail projects.

Project proposals should be received at the National Trails System Office - Santa Fe by March 15, 2005.