

## **Cherokee History Class # 5**

**April 26, 2016**

### **Historical Places in Middle Tennessee**

#### **Mansker's Station:**

**Kasper Mansker settled the Goodlettsville TN area in 1780. It was on the west side of Mansker Creek where he built his first station, which the inhabitants would leave in the winter of 1780-1781 due to increasing attacks from Indians associated with the ever present Native American Chickamauga forces under Cherokee Chief Dragging Canoe. Shortly after Mansker left the first station, it was burned to the ground by the Chickamauga. In 1783, Kasper Mansker returned to the area and built a second station on the east bank of Mansker Creek.**

**At this location he lived with his wife Elizabeth and others, including Isaac Bledsoe. Kasper Mansker like others such as John Donelson, James Robertson, and Isaac Bledsoe, helped form the beginnings of local government.**

**He was a signer of the Cumberland Compact, which created the first government in the settlement. In 1784, Mansker was elected to serve as the first Captain in Davidson County. At the age of 62, Kasper Mansker volunteered to serve in the War of 1812, returning home shortly after fighting in the Battle of New Orleans. Mansker lived at his home in Sumner County until his death in 1821 at the age of 75.**

#### **Clover Bottom:**

**In the fall of 1780, the bottom lands along the Stones River and around the Tennessee State Historical Commission offices at Clover Bottom Mansion in Donelson Tennessee, were the scene of one of the very first attempts to harvest both corn, and cotton crops, by the newly arriving white settlers (the Gower Party). The Gower's were a part of Col. John Donelson's Flotilla to the French Lick, and had ventured east from the French Lick along the Bluffs, to the fertile lowlands along the Stones River looking to hopefully take advantage of the rich soils to be found there. They had planted their crops and left the area for the remainder of the growing season hoping to reap the rewards of their efforts in the fall. Unfortunately the Chickamauga had discovered the fields long before the settlers returned and simply had to lay low and wait for their return. When the Gower party did return, it cost them almost everything including their lives. While several in the party were killed, several were taken prisoner and the rest escaped including Col. John Donelson. It would take a few more years before the area was safe enough to return which Donelson did and claimed a huge tract of land that encompassed in excess of 1500 acres that became the Donelson and Hermitage suburbs of today.**

#### **Fort Nashborough:**

As has already been discussed in previous classes, the Robertson / Donelson parties were the first permanent white settlers to reach the future site of Nashville Tennessee in 1779. The “French Lick” had been known by French Trader’s perhaps as early as the early 1700’s. The Shawnee Indians from the lands to the north in Kentucky and beyond the Ohio River had established a trading post along the river near the location of the great mineral or salt springs we know of today as the Sulphur Dell Baseball Park. Move ahead 50 to 60 years to the Robertson & Donelson Parties. They had long dealt extensively with the hostile Cherokee Forces from back east at Fort Watauga, and their rafting expedition along the Tennessee to the Ohio, and then down the Cumberland River to Middle Tennessee was also plagued with repeated attacks by disgruntled Chickamauga Cherokee and their allies for a large part of the entire voyage. By 1781 several large detachments of Chickamauga under Dragging Canoe attempted to destroy the fortified settlement with limited success. Despite repeated attempts and countless settlers lost to hundreds of brutal attacks in the immediate area, the Chickamauga simply could not overcome the resistance put forth by the settlers on the bluff and by 1794, the attacks drew to a close.

#### **Bledsoes Fort:**

Bledsoe's Station (also called Bledsoe's Fort) was an 18th-century frontier fort located in what is now Castalian Springs, Tennessee. The fort was built by long hunter and Sumner County pioneer Isaac Bledsoe (c. 1735–1793) in the early 1780s to protect Upper Cumberland settlers and migrants from hostile Native American attacks. While the fort is no longer standing, its location has been verified by archaeological excavations. The site is now part of Bledsoe's Fort Historical Park, a public park established in 1989 by Sumner County residents and Bledsoe's descendants.

Bledsoe's Station was one of a series of outposts built in the Upper Cumberland during the first major migration of Euro-American settlers into the Middle Tennessee area following the American Revolution. The fort was a convenient stopover along Avery's Trace— the main road connecting East and Middle Tennessee at the time. The flood of settlers into the region brought inevitable conflict with the region's Native American inhabitants, and dozens of settlers were killed in the late 1780s and early 1790s. Isaac Bledsoe's brother Anthony was killed in an ambush at the fort in 1788 and Isaac himself was killed while tending a field just outside the fort in 1793. The end of the Cherokee–American wars the following year ended much of the violence and reduced the fort's necessity.

#### **Buchanan’s Station & Ridley’s Blockhouse:**

The 1792 assault on Buchanan’s Station was not a simple raid, but a full-blown Indian attempt to wipe out the Nashville settlements, backed by Spanish arms and supplies, some four hundred Cherokees, Creeks and Shawnees under a noted mixed blood Cherokee leader named John Watts advanced upon Nashville from their towns on the lower Tennessee River. Supposing that the outlying station built by an original founder of Nashville, John Buchanan, could be disposed of quickly, the Indians attempted a surprise attack at midnight. The station contained only a handful of defenders, some fifteen men, who manned the port-holes while the women and children, led by Sarah Buchanan, poured lead for

bullets, reloaded muskets and rifles, and supplied sustenance. In a furious fight the Indians attempted to storm the palisade and set fire the roof of the blockhouse, but they were repelled in an encounter of perhaps two hours. Among significant casualties, the Indians lost Cheeseekau, the Shawnee leader who had taken Ziegler's Station, and who was the older brother and mentor of the famous Tecumseh, also present as a young warrior. During the battle, Cheeseekau, an especially fearless warrior, was shot near the fort. As he lay dying, he reportedly continued his efforts to set the logs ablaze by fanning the flames with his last breaths. Others killed in the battle were the Shawnee Warrior, brother and mentor of the great Tecumseh, and the White Owl's Son, brother of Dragging Canoe. The Chickamauga chief John Watts was himself shot through both thighs but was removed from the battleground in a litter and later recovered. A large scale Attack was never attempted again.

Perhaps the wisest thing John Buchanan ever did was to marry Sarah "Sally" Ridley in 1791. Born in 1774, Sally was among the first white females born in what would become Tennessee. Her father, Revolutionary War veteran Captain George Ridley, brought his family to the Cumberland settlements about 1790. They soon established Ridley's Station in the area of today's Nolensville Road and Glenrose Avenue.

#### **Robertson's Station:**

Known as the "Father of Tennessee," James Robertson was one of the founders of Nashville and largely responsible for its early success and development. Born in Virginia, Robertson was a farmer, explorer and surveyor, and agent to the Cherokee and Chickasaw tribes. He was one of the leaders of the Watauga settlements in what is now East Tennessee before he and John Donelson were engaged by Richard Henderson to lead the first group of settlers to this area in 1779.

By 1787, Chickamauga aggression toward the settlement of Nashville and the surrounding area were reaching a pinnacle point. The Native war parties of the Chickamauga were becoming more and more ruthless in their attacks and were determined to make the white settlers suffer horrible emotional losses as well. The abduction and murdering of innocent women and children were common place and they even inflicted this brutality on Payton Robertson, one of the sons of James and his wife Charlotte. He was caught off guard and murdered very near their Richland Creek Station home. This house was standing as late as 1907, and the site is marked today by a granite monument erected by the DAR in the 1930's near the intersection of Robertson Road and Stevenson Street in West Nashville.

#### **Black Fox Camp & Spring:**

Until 1794 the land that is Rutherford County was the seasonal hunting and fishing ground of the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Shawnees, Creeks, and Choctaws. Early maps depict the Nickajack Trail and the Creek War Trace converging near present-day Murfreesboro at the spring camp of Black Fox, or (Unoli) a noted Cherokee chief by 1801. After a series of treaties negotiated between settlers and native tribes failed, militia under Nashville founder James Robertson wiped out Black Fox's camp again in 1794. Legend has it that Black Fox upon hearing the approaching Militia, jumped into the large fresh water spring and swam beneath the ground through the aquifer some three miles to the

north where the cave system emerges at the modern day Discovery Center (Murfree Spring) near downtown Murfreesboro. A well preserved portion of the ancient Nickajack Trace, a Native American Trail to the lower Cherokee towns in northern Georgia. This was later adapted as a settler road and can still be seen plainly at the site of Black Fox Camp which is now also owned and maintained by the City of Murfreesboro as a neighborhood park.

#### **Sevier Station:**

Founded in 1791 by Valentine Sevier, the brother of Governor John Sevier in what would become Montgomery County / Clarksville, TN. The Sevier family and a large number of their fellow settler companions faced unsurmountable tragedy and hardships in their attempt to first settle the wild territory northwest of Nashville on the Cumberland River. Native resistance was just as prevalent and perhaps more intense because of the smaller numbers of settlers in the area to protect one another. Random attacks by large parties of defiant Cherokee, Shawnee, and Creek Indians.

Valentine Sevier and his wife Naomi lost 7 children, two grandchildren, and a large number of close friends between 1791 and 1795 while trying to endure and adapt to their circumstances. Mr. Sevier was plagued by severe arthritis and other ailments passed away in 1800 in Clarksville. Mrs. Sevier now traumatized and emotionally broken after enduring so much, returned to East Tennessee to live with her surviving children and she lived to be over 100 years old.

#### **The Avery Trace:**

The earliest settlers and explorers into Middle Tennessee generally came into the Upper Cumberland territory by way of the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky and then from the North coming down the Red River Valley out of Kentucky into the Nashville Basin and Sumner County and then filtering back East about as far as Castalian Springs in Sumner County. For many years it was simply too dangerous for anyone to live further east of this. The other alternative was to raft down the Tennessee River to the Ohio, and then pole up the Ohio and the Cumberland to the Nashville area. With the exception of a few trappers and explorers, virtually no one entered the Upper Cumberland from the east, either on land or down the Cumberland River until much later in our state's history. Even official British and French exploring parties came down the Ohio and then up the Cumberland to get to the area.

Based on requests from the Cumberland settlers, North Carolina decided in the 1780s to cut a road through the wilderness to connect the settlements in the East and the ones in the Cumberland Valley. The road would run from Fort Southwest Point (Kingston) to Nashville. As previously mentioned it was built between 1787 and 1788 and was a very primitive track that was not suitable for proper wagon travel. For many years afterwards this road was still the second choice to the trip through Kentucky. It was too rugged, and too dangerous because of the aggressive Native American presence, settlers could only safely travel in the company of the militia that sent regular escorts for them through the route) and it offered no inn's between Kingston TN and Castalian Springs. The North Carolina Military Trace (alternately known as Fort Blount Road and Avery Trace) that was completed in 1788 passed through Smith County on the North side of the Cumberland River.

### **Indian Captivity – The Neely's of Neely's Lick (East Nashville):**

In July or August, 1780, William Neely and his nineteen year old daughter Mary, and some neighbors were at the spring 'making salt, when three Natives slipped quietly to the water's edge, killed William and dragged Mary to their canoe. Taking her with them, they traveled almost three days and met up with the rest of their party. They decided to give Mary a choice... she could become the wife of one of the young men or be a slave to a Chief's wife. Mary chose to be the slave, and the tribe honored her decision. First they guarded her closely and tied her hands at night; but as they got further from Middle Tennessee they took less precaution. The Indians were so far away from her home by then that they did not watch her too closely. During her third winter with the Indians a French family in the vicinity of Detroit Michigan helped Mary escape, and they passed her to the British. She found herself a British POW. She escaped from them in Philadelphia, found her way south to the Wilderness Trail and found a family going to Virginia and traveled with them.

All the time Mary was gone, her brother Samuel traveled the "Trail" asking, "Have you seen a white girl who might have escaped from the Indians?" One man said, "Yes, one was working at Old Man Spears' home." Samuel went to the Spears home on a Sunday morning and found Spears. As Samuel sat with him discussing his lost sister, Mr. Spears pointed out three women walking down the lane toward them and asked Samuel if he knew any of them. Samuel said, "Yes, the one in the middle is my sister." Mary learned for the first time that her mother and a brother had also been killed by Indians and that it was not safe yet along the Cumberland River so the family had moved to a fort in Kentucky. Eventually the Indians relented in their patrols of the area, and the family moved back to Neely's Bend on the Cumberland River.

Neely's Lick became Larkin's Sulphur Spring and finally, Neely's Bend. Today there is a State Historical Marker on Gallatin Pike telling the story of William and Mary Neely and of course, Neely's Bend remains to this day.

### **The 1783 Chickasaw Treaty of Nashville:**

The Chickasaw Treaty historical marker at the intersection of Morrow Road and Terry Drive in Nashville, Tennessee, commemorates a treaty with the Chickasaw Nation signed near here in 1783. The Chickasaw Nation played a key role in the early history of Nashville and the United States. The Chickasaws lived primarily in Northern Mississippi. Western Tennessee and part of Middle Tennessee were important hunting areas for the tribe. Chickasaw territory occupied a strategic position on the Mississippi River and later became the southwestern border of the young United States. During the Revolutionary War, the Chickasaw Nation supported England. They controlled the Mississippi River and land routes to the western frontier of the United States. 1780 was also the year that the Robertson/Donelson party founded Nashville, and the Chickasaws conducted some of the early Indian raids on the Nashville. The Chickasaw-English relationship soured during the Revolutionary war, and when the United States finally defeated the English, Chief Piominko, the most influential Chickasaw leader, allied the tribe with the Americans.

The alliance between the United States and the Chickasaws was absolutely crucial to the survival of the settlements centered near Fort Nashborough. During the 1780's the Nashville settlements were under constant attack by the Chickamauga's and the Nashville settlements came very close to being wiped out. If the powerful Chickasaws had continued attacks on these settlements as well, the settlers would have had to abandon the area. If this had happened the overall security of the United States would have been threatened because of Spanish designs on this part of the frontier.

The importance of the relationship between the Chickasaws and the Nashville settlements is illustrated by a resolution passed by the governing committee of the settlements in 1783 that required all traders not to infringe on the rights of the Indians. In 1795, when the Chickasaws were attacked by the Creeks, who were allies of the Spanish, the Nashville settlements sent a volunteer force to help defend the Chickasaws. The Chickasaws successfully repulsed the attack and inflicted heavy losses on the Creeks. The Chickasaws later requested that the United States pay the expenses of the volunteer force. Andrew Jackson submitted the request to Congress on behalf of the tribe, and the volunteers were paid. James Robertson and Chief Piomingo became close friends and legend has it that Piomingo even sent Chickasaw laborers to aid Robertson in building his large brick home on his Richland Creek Plantation in West Nashville. A granite DAR marker exists at 5916 Robertson Avenue, in Nashville, TN that marks the former location of Robertson's Plantation homes.

#### **The 1830 Chickasaw Treaty at Franklin:**

After his Indian Removal Act was passed in May of 1830, President Andrew Jackson invited the Chickasaw Nation to a treaty council to be held the following August in Franklin, Tennessee. During their stay, the Chickasaw delegation met Jackson in the Franklin Masonic Hall, a National Historic Landmark which still stands at 115 2nd Ave South in Franklin.

The Choctaw Nation originally proposed the council and requested that Jackson meet with them in person. The Choctaw backed out at the last minute because of internal disagreements, but Jackson did travel to Franklin to meet with the Chickasaw leaders. This would be the first treaty negotiation under the Removal Act and a successful outcome was important to the President, who was a charismatic and influential figure among the Chickasaw. Some of the older Minko's (chiefs or headmen) had served under Jackson's command at the Battle of New Orleans and the Creek War, during the War of 1812. They called him "Sharpe Knife". Jackson appointed John Coffee and John Eaton as treaty commissioners. Coffee was a close friend who had also served with Jackson in 1812. Eaton, Jackson's Secretary of War, lived in Franklin.

The Chickasaw delegation was led by Levi Colbert - Itawambe Miko (Bench Chief), and included George Colbert, James Colbert, John McLish, Captain William McGilvery, Captain James Brown, Isaac Alberson, Topulka, Ishtayatubbe, Ahtokowa, Hushtatabe, Innewakche, Oaklanayaubbe, Ohekaubbe, Immolasubbe, Immohoaltatubbe, Ishtekieyokatubbe, Ishtehiacha, Inhiyouchetubbe, and Kinheche. President Jackson met and welcomed the Chickasaw delegation when they arrived in Franklin on August 20, 1830. The council formally began on August 23, 1830 in a church a few blocks from Eaton's house. Jackson didn't attend the proceedings in person, leaving the negotiations to Commissioners Eaton and Coffee.

Finally on August 27, at the request of the Chickasaw leaders, Jackson met with them at the Franklin Masonic Hall, which was located behind Eaton's house. McLish addressed a brief statement to Jackson, saying "your words have sunk deep into our hearts" and after due consideration "we are now ready to enter a treaty, based upon the principles as communicated to us by Major Eaton and General Coffee." Jackson replied that he had "traveled a long distance that he might see them face to face", and he now had to return to Washington and would leave the details of the negotiations to the Commissioners.

For a full account of the outcome of the 1830 Chickasaw Treaty of Franklin, please visit the Native History Association's website at:

[http://www.nativehistoryassociation.org/franklin\\_treaty.php](http://www.nativehistoryassociation.org/franklin_treaty.php)