## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction** ....................................................................................................................... 1
**Management Summary** ........................................................................................................ 1
**Historical Overview** ........................................................................................................... 1
**Scope and Methodology** ..................................................................................................... 4
**Study Boundaries** ................................................................................................................ 4
**Summary of Findings** .......................................................................................................... 4

### Landscape Historical Context
1826-1838: The Red Clay Council Ground and the Railroad ............................................... 7
1839-1860: Post Removal Settlement ................................................................................... 10
1861-1865: Civil War at Red Clay ......................................................................................... 12
1866-1927: Reconstruction and the Return to Rural Life ................................................... 13
1930-1949: Establishing Red Clay’s Location ....................................................................... 15
1959-1980: Park Development ............................................................................................... 16
1982- Present: Red Clay Revisited ......................................................................................... 19

### Features & Existing Conditions
- James Franklin Corn Museum and Interpretive Center .................................................... 23
- Council Spring (Blue Hole Spring) .................................................................................... 24
- Reconstructed Council House ............................................................................................ 26
- Reconstructed Sleeping Cabins .......................................................................................... 27
- Reconstructed Cherokee Farm ........................................................................................... 28
- Amphitheater ....................................................................................................................... 30
- Picnic Shelter ....................................................................................................................... 30
- Eternal Flame ....................................................................................................................... 31
- Mini-theater ........................................................................................................................... 31
- Forest and Viewshed ........................................................................................................... 32
- Trails ..................................................................................................................................... 34
- Trail Tree ............................................................................................................................... 34
- Intermittent Spring ................................................................................................................ 34
- Overlook Tower .................................................................................................................... 35
- Pier ....................................................................................................................................... 35
- Threatened and Endangered Species .................................................................................. 36
- Railway Corridor .................................................................................................................. 37
- Ranger Houses ...................................................................................................................... 37
- Maintenance Building ......................................................................................................... 39
- Old Maintenance Barn ......................................................................................................... 39
- FORC Shed ............................................................................................................................ 39
- Remnants of Previous Owners ............................................................................................. 40

### Analysis and Recommendations
........................................................................................................................................ 41

**Appendix A: Red Clay Ownership** .................................................................................. 44

**Endnotes** ............................................................................................................................. 45

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![MTSU Center for Historic Preservation](image)
INTRODUCTION

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

In 2017, the Center for Historic Preservation (CHP) at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and the National Trails Intermountain Region (NTIR) of the National Park Service (NPS) entered into an agreement for the completion of a cultural landscape inventory and assessment of Red Clay State Historic Park. This study identifies characteristics, features, and associations that make Red Clay a historically significant landscape of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail (according to National Register criteria). The report also documents the landscape history, existing conditions, and integrity analysis within the study area.

After a series of laws were enacted in Georgia between 1828 and 1830, which deprived the Cherokee Nation of their lands, their courts, and their seat of government, the tribal leaders endeavored to find a new place to hold their councils. The 1831 National Council was held at a meeting site in Alabama called Chattooga. However, Chattooga was not centrally located enough for most of the Cherokee. Beginning in 1832, the National Council was held at another site, the Red Clay Council Ground, in southeast Tennessee. This remained the Cherokee capital until they were forcibly removed in 1838. The years of the Red Clay Councils were highly contentious, as the Cherokee debated removal, fought legal battles, were monitored by the U.S. Army, and were finally rounded up into concentration camps prior to removal.

More than a century later, the state of Tennessee purchased 263 acres of land that was the former Red Clay Council Ground in order to build a park in memory of the momentous events that occurred there. This report focuses on the area that is now Red Clay State Historic Park. Prior relevant documents concerning the planning and historical significance of this Trail of Tears landscape that inform this study include the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Use Plan created in 1992, Dr. William R. Snell’s “Annals of Red Clay Council Ground, Bradley County, Tennessee” written for and funded by the Tennessee Historical Commission in 1975, Dr. Brian M. Butler’s “The Red Clay Council Ground,” published in the Journal of Cherokee Studies in 1977, and Red Clay and Rattlesnake Springs: A History of the Cherokee Indians of Bradley County, Tennessee, written by James Franklin Corn in 1959.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The present-day Red Clay State Historic Park was part of the Cherokee Nation until their forced removal to Indian Territory in 1838. Beginning in 1828, the state of Georgia began passing laws intended to force the Cherokee out of their territory within the state’s borders, including a law that made attending political meetings a jailable offense. Red Clay’s location, just inside the Tennessee border, made it a safe place for the council to meet.

Eleven National Councils were held at the Red Clay Council Ground between 1832 and 1837. Although the majority of the Cherokee wished to stay on their ancestral land, a small faction argued for removal. In December 1835, this faction signed the Treaty of New Echota, which gave the tribal lands in the east to the United States in exchange for land in Indian Territory, $5,000,000, and other concessions. Delegations were sent to Washington, D.C., to try to nullify the illegal treaty; however, the United States ratified it. The Cherokee people learned of their fate at one of the Red Clay Councils.
Figure 1. Map of Red Clay State Historic Park. The map shows the Council Spring, reconstructed Cherokee buildings, the interpretive center, the railway, and park trails. Courtesy of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and Tennessee State Parks.
As Georgia continued to make life intolerable for the Cherokee, hundreds of people sought refuge at Red Clay. After the U.S. Army began rounding up the Cherokee to put them in internment camps in May 1838, the people who had gathered at Red Clay were compelled to remain there until they were forced to remove later that year.

After Removal, most of what is now Red Clay State Historic Park became farmland. There were two initial land grants that were sold by the State of Tennessee that make up the park’s property. The two properties were eventually sold by the respective families who purchased them. These properties were bought and sold, split, and sold again many times over the years, with most of the owners retaining their piece of the property for less than five years.

The only portion of Red Clay State Historic Park that was ever developed is the railroad corridor that runs through the eastern portion of the park. Only a 1.11-acre section of railroad land in the southeast corner of the property belongs to the park. It was initially owned by the Hiwassee Railroad Company. This company had planned this railroad corridor, less than a half mile from the Red Clay Council Ground, prior to Cherokee Removal. Before the Hiwassee Railroad’s goal of connecting Knoxville, Tennessee, to Dalton, Georgia, was accomplished, the company went bankrupt and was sold to the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad Company (ET&G). ET&G finished the line proposed by its predecessor and built a section house on the present park’s land with the depot within fifteen feet of the property. The rest of the railroad corridor has a right-of-way through the park.

Despite Red Clay’s remote location, the park’s railroad property was the site of at least three skirmishes during the Civil War. The depot and the adjoining rails were destroyed during one such action. The site became a staging area for the Army of the Ohio as they readied themselves to join General William Tecumseh Sherman’s March to the Sea. The depot and rail lines were rebuilt in the post-war era, though it is uncertain how long the depot and section house were used. Trains continue to run on the rail line.

Red Clay’s history also includes that of enslaved Africans and African Americans. Both Cherokee and post-Removal settlers owned enslaved people at Red Clay. In more modern times, there may have been an African American church on the park property. Several maps depict a cemetery at or near the park’s southwestern corner. According to local lore, the cemetery belonged to an African American church that was burned in the 1950s.

The park property continued to be used for farming and pasturage until the Cherokee Red Clay Association was established in the 1960s. In 1964, the organization’s most prominent member, James Corn, purchased 150 acres of the property to preserve it from potential commercial development. Due to the advocacy of the Cherokee Red Clay Association, the State of Tennessee began purchasing the parcels of land that now comprise Red Clay State Historic Park. In 1974, the Red Clay Council Ground was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Red Clay State Historic Area was opened to the public in 1979 and was later given park designation.

In 1984, Red Clay State Historic Park hosted the first Joint Council of the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. After 147 years, the Cherokee were reunited at the place where they had first learned they had no choice but to leave their ancestral home. On the 25th anniversary of this historic reunion, in 2009, the two tribes met for another Joint Council at Red Clay. On the 175th anniversary of their removal, Red Clay hosted the first Tri-Council of the Cherokee comprised of the three federally recognized Cherokee tribes: the Cherokee

Introduction

RED CLAY STATE PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDY
Nation, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, and the United Keetoowah Band.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This cultural landscape report grew out of previous partnerships between the National Trails Intermountain Region (NTIR) of the National Park Service (NPS) and the CHP at MTSU and Red Clay State Historic Park, namely the Phase I renovation of the museum in the James Franklin Corn Interpretive Center and Museum at Red Clay State Historic Park.

Archival research was pursued through various archives including the Museum of the Cherokee Indian Archives (Cherokee, North Carolina), the Moravian Archives (Winston-Salem, North Carolina), the History and Archives Branch of the Bradley County (Tennessee) Library, the Tennessee State Library & Archives (Nashville), and the Chattanooga (Tennessee) Public Library’s Local History Section. Digital archives, such as the Tennessee Virtual Archive, the Knox County (Tennessee) Public Library’s Digital Collection, and the Georgia Archives Virtual Vault, were also used.

Fieldwork was conducted in order to provide a thorough investigation of the landscape. Although very little development has occurred on this property, its Removal-era viewshed may have changed due to the destruction of Cherokee buildings, construction of the railroad, modern roadways, and the park itself. As of this writing, photographic documentation of the site has not been found prior to the 1960s, so what the historic landscape looked like is uncertain, although historic descriptions of the property and historic maps have provided some insight.

STUDY BOUNDARIES

Red Clay State Historic Park is located in the southwest corner of Bradley County and lies along Tennessee-Georgia border at an elevation of 800-1000 feet in elevation. The park is in the Valley and Ridge physiographic province, which is typified “by a washboard topography of parallel ridges which trend in a northeast-southwest direction.” The park lies in a narrow valley around a half-mile wide. The valley is drained by Mill Creek, which runs through a section of the eastern edge of the park, flows southward, and is a tributary of the Conasauga and Coosa river system. The Council Ground was thought to lie in the western part of the valley around the site’s only natural character-defining feature, the Council Spring (also known as the Blue Hole Spring). The Council Spring has a clear, deep pool, blue in color, that feeds a small stream that flows southeast and joins Mill Creek. The size of the pool has diminished; however, a 1933 study found that more than 400,000 gallons of water flowed from the spring each day. Other character-defining features are the James Franklin Corn Interpretive Center and Museum, the reconstructed Cherokee Council House, a reconstructed Cherokee farm, park trails, and the Norfolk Southern Railroad line. Although the Council Ground may have only covered about 50 acres, the study area includes the entire 263-acre park property.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In 1836, there were 91 log buildings on the Red Clay Council Ground and along Council Ground Creek. After approximately 2,000 Cherokee took shelter at Red Clay in 1838 prior to removal, it seems likely that there were many other shelters built on the site. Although the park boasts seven reconstructed Cherokee buildings, the current landscape is quite empty compared to its pre-removal state. The Council Spring, has lowered over the past 181 years; however, it is still the defining feature of the
site. The John Franklin Corn Interpretive Center and Museum and reconstructed Cherokee buildings offer visitors the chance to learn about the site’s significant role in Cherokee and American history. Most importantly, Red Clay State Historic Park is often used by members of the three federally recognized bands of Cherokee for cultural celebrations, as a place of remembrance, a location for sacred rituals, and a site for their Joint Councils.
Figure 2. Map illustrating Red Clay State Historic Park’s location on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.
LANDSCAPE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1826-1838: The Red Clay Council Ground and the Railroad

In December 1819, New Town (New Echota) was established as the seat of government for the Cherokee Nation. However, in 1828, the state of Georgia passed legislation that made all Cherokee laws within their borders null and void as of June 1, 1830. This was exacerbated by the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The Georgia legislature also made it illegal for Cherokees to meet for any purpose apart from ceding land. To avoid being imprisoned, the 1831 Cherokee National Council met at Chatooga in Alabama. This site was not centrally located enough for the majority of the Cherokee Nation, so it was decided to move the seat of government to Red Clay.\(^3\)

The reasons that the State of Georgia and the United States government wanted all Native Americans to be removed west of the Mississippi River included the need for more land for settlers, the need for more farm land for rich planters who had exhausted their soil further east, the fact that gold was discovered in East Tennessee and North Georgia, and the desire to exploit other natural resources. In “Coveted Lands: Agriculture, Timber, Mining, and Transportation in Cherokee Country Before and After Removal” (2012), Vicki Rozema makes the argument that the reasons for removal were more varied and complex than previously thought. The motivation most significant to Red Clay is that Americans wanted to build a railroad through the heart of the Cherokee Nation.\(^4\)

In 1826, the U.S. government asked the Cherokee to allow a survey of their lands to determine the practicability of building a canal through the Cherokee Nation. In a letter written by Assistant Principal Chief Charles Hicks to Colonel Hugh Montgomery, Indian Agent of the Cherokee Purchase, in December 1826, Hicks gave the following answer:

The General Council, after maturely deliberating on the subject, and with a full sense of the great importance of internal improvement, have decided that no individual State shall be permitted to make internal improvements, within the sovereign limits of the Cherokee nation; and as the application is

supposed to be made in behalf of a State, and that no State would undertake to cut a canal through the nation without first securing the right of soil and jurisdiction over the ground where the canal would pass, and which right the Cherokee nation can never surrender, it is deemed inexpedient to grant a privilege to make a survey for the object of ascertaining the practicability of such a work; therefore the General Council have refused to grant the application.\(^5\)

Although the Cherokees and their Creek and Chickasaw neighbors had previously allowed roads to be built through their territories, they had seen how new roads led to more and more settlers illegally squatting on their lands and running illicit ferries and taverns. This ultimately resulted in land cessions being demanded and by 1826, the Cherokee had precious little land left.\(^6\)

The Cherokees’ refusal to allow improvements by outsiders on their lands may have been a factor in efforts by Euro-Americans to remove them. According to the autobiography of Wilson Lumpkin, the governor of Georgia from 1831 to 1835, the “whole plan of this [Hiwassee] railroad was well matured in my mind in the year 1826, while taking a general reconnaissance of the State, with a view to entering on works of internal improvement, in company with Mr.
After the state of Georgia forced the Cherokee seat of government out of its boundaries, there were eleven National Council meetings held at Red Clay between 1832 and 1837. The Cherokees were eager to preserve their sovereign rights within their nation. To that end, they tried using the American legal system, as well as direct supplication to the Secretary of War and the President, to maintain their rights, although their efforts ultimately failed.

In July 1834, a meeting of a group of potential Georgia investors was held to plan the building of a railroad through the Cherokee Nation along a stagecoach line. And, by August 1834, a relatively small faction of Cherokees, known as the Treaty Party, began advocating in Council for the tribe to remove west of the Mississippi. Their petition was rejected by the Council; however, on December 21, 1835, the Treaty Party signed a removal treaty at New Echota.

The General Assembly of Tennessee wasted no time in exploiting this new development. They incorporated the Hiwassee Railroad Company on January 30, 1836, making it the first East Tennessee railroad company to be granted a charter. Two days later, on February 2, 1836, a special council meeting was held at Red Clay where the council

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**Figure 3.** Range 1 West, Fractal Township 2 South of the Ocoee District. Note the vertical line representing the proposed route of the Hiwassee Railroad. The red highlighted parcel of land was purchased by John B. Marston in 1839 and the yellow highlighted parcel was purchased by Frank Kincannon and John D. Traynor in 1841. Courtesy of tngenweb.org.
members rejected the Treaty of New Echota. In July 1836, a group of supporters of the Louisville, Cincinnati, & Charleston Railroad met in Knoxville to discuss a proposition to connect the Hiwassee and Western & Atlantic Railroads. The Georgia representatives agreed to connect these railroads near the Red Clay Council Ground. Tensions were running high throughout the spring and summer. In an effort to prevent a Cherokee uprising, Brigadier General John Wool ordered troops to take up “a position at or near the Council ground at Red Clay in Tennessee” and that twenty days’ rations for 300 men be taken to the Red Clay Council Ground for the meeting scheduled for September 15, 1836. This military camp was positioned “within a quarter mile of the council-ground.” Wool reported that at least 3,000 Cherokee were in attendance, and noted, “I can only look on and guard against any disturbances which might grow out of so large an assemblage of Indians.”

From March to June 1837, a survey of the Cherokee Nation within the borders of Tennessee (later known as the Ocoee District) was conducted and maps of the area were produced. The map of the section of the Ocoee District containing the Red Clay Council Ground depicts the projected railroad tracks through the area. The railway runs through part of the eastern section of the present-day park. And, the very southeastern section of the park once belonged to the Hiwassee Railroad Company.

A few months after the survey was finished, in August 1837, the Cherokee held the last Council at Red Clay prior to their removal. Although several delegations had been sent to Washington, DC, to plead their case, to no avail, it was determined that another delegation should try. This last effort to remain on their ancestral land ultimately failed.

On May 28, 1838, the U.S. Army began forcibly rounding up Cherokees. The Army moved their captives to concentration camps in Tennessee and Alabama. Dr. Elizur Butler, the director of the Red Clay mission (which was located a few miles away from the Council Ground), discovered several hundred Cherokees had fled Georgia and were camped at the Red Clay Council Ground on June 4. He also noted that there was a military camp approximately one mile from the Council Ground. Maj. Genl Scott’s operations, in 1838 by 1st Lieutenant Erasmus Darwin Keyes. Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration and Jeff Bishop.

Figure 4. Detail of View of Posts & Distances in the Cherokee nation, to illustrate Maj. Genl. Scott’s operations, in 1838 by 1st Lieutenant Erasmus Darwin Keyes. Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration and Jeff Bishop.
operations, otherwise known as the Keyes Map (see Figure 4), depicts a fort at Red Clay. This “fort” was most likely the encampment of Cherokee refugees with their military guard.

On June 10, General Nathaniel Smith, the superintendent in charge of Cherokee Removal, wrote to Colonel Lindsay at Red Clay, “Of Cherokee immigrants, there are now assembled at this place over 2200, and 500 more are within the distance of one or two miles. I very respectfully enquire of you whether it would not be best to suffer the 2,000 now at Red Clay Council Ground to [illegible] there a short time where they can be comfortably sheltered and provisioned.”

According to a medical report for the period from July 17 – August 17, 1838, the Cherokee camp at Red Clay was “a detachment of Camp Ross” and was still inhabited by Cherokee awaiting removal. The report lists several illnesses that were contracted by the detainees at Red Clay and Camp Ross (modern-day Cleveland, TN), as well as how many people had been given care by the military medical staff and how many died. It is not known how many specifically died while interned at Red Clay, but those that did were likely buried there.

General Smith was not only the superintendent of the Removal, he was also a commissioner for the Hiwassee Railroad, as well as a stockholder. There was at least one other Hiwassee Railroad stockholder directly involved in the removal: Major Albert S. Lenoir. Major Lenoir was an issuing agent at New Echota in 1836 and 1837, before being reassigned to Ross’s Landing along with the Cherokee who had been forced into the concentration camp there. These men had a blatant financial interest in depriving the Cherokee people of their homeland.

Sometime after August 17, 1838, the refugees encamped at Red Clay were moved to one of the emigration depots, but they eventually joined their countrymen on the Trail of Tears.

1839-1860: Post-Removal Settlement

After the Cherokees were removed from the Ocoee District, the land was divided into 160-acre lots that were then sold through a land-grant system by the State of Tennessee. The land that now makes up Red Clay State Historic Park was sold in two land grants (see Figure 3). One was purchased in 1842 by John B. Marston.

John Byars Marston (1797-1878) was born in Greenville, South Carolina, to Reuben Franklin Mastin and Sarah Blackwell. John B. and his brother, Thomas White Marston, had moved from South Carolina to McMinn County, Tennessee, by 1830; however, John B. continued to move further south. In 1833, he served in the first grand jury held in Murray County, Georgia. He was listed as the postmaster of the Red Hill post office located in Murray County (now part of Whitfield County), Georgia, in 1834.

When land in the Ocoee District came open for purchase, John B. and his brother, Thomas White Marston (1799-1856), purchased many tracts of land together and separately. They were likely land speculators, since they jointly purchased nearly 2,000 acres of land, much of it non-contiguous, between 1839-1842, in the Ocoee District. Additionally, John B. purchased more than 1,400 acres as the sole owner. The 1860 census shows that John B. was a farmer and his real estate was worth $7,500. He also owned eleven enslaved people who were valued at $5,400.
The second tract of Ocoee District land sold by the State of Tennessee after the removal of the Cherokee that is now part of Red Clay State Historic Park was purchased by Frank Kincannon and John D. Traynor on July 30, 1841. Francis “Frank” Kincannon (c.1803-1846) was born in Virginia to George and Ann Scott Kincannon. It appears that Frank lived in Bradley County, Tennessee, as early as 1836, when he was elected the first Register of Deeds for the county, a position he maintained until his death in 1846. He purchased several tracts of Ocoee District land between 1839-1840, including the tract that would eventually make up a significant portion of Red Clay State Historic Park. Kincannon did not enjoy his land very long, as he died on October 1, 1846, and was buried in Fort Hill Cemetery in Cleveland, Tennessee. Whether John Traynor purchased Kincannon’s share of the property prior to his death is unknown; however, the land the two men purchased together would eventually be known as the “Traynor land.”

John D. Traynor (1803-1851) immigrated from Ireland at the age of fourteen, along with his family. His father was a lawyer who established a law practice in Knoxville, Tennessee. John was living in Rhea County, Tennessee in 1833, where he married Mary Ann Cozby the next year. Traynor began purchasing large tracts of land in the Ocoee District in 1839.

Upon John Traynor’s death, his widow became the executrix of his will and guardian of his minor children. Mary Ann is cited in several legal documents buying and selling land in Bradley County. In a Memorandum of Agreement recorded in 1859, Mary Ann gave permission for the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad to lay pipes from a large spring, on a portion of the Traynor lands, to the railroad track. It is uncertain whether this refers to Mill Creek on the Traynor property, which now makes up a significant portion of Red Clay State Historic Park, as the rail line runs beside this creek for more than four miles. John Traynor owned properties all over Bradley County, and there is no legal description of the property in the Memorandum. However, this same document may shed some light upon what agricultural pursuits took place on the Traynor lands that make up portions of the park. The Memorandum of Agreement states that there were “horses, mules, cattle, [and] pigs.” It is possible that the same kind of livestock was pastured at the Traynors’ Red Clay property.
Due to the Panic of 1837 and the inexperience of the Hiwassee Railroad company’s leadership, the company had financial difficulties that led to the railroad’s construction taking much longer than anticipated. After reorganizing the company and its leadership in January 1847, the Hiwassee Rail Road Company requested a revision of its charter on February 4, 1848. One of the changes made was to its name. When the Tennessee General Assembly approved the new charter, the Hiwassee Rail Road Company became the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad Company (ET&G). The changes to the company were successful and the railroad between Loudon, Tennessee, and Dalton, Georgia, was completed by 1852. The line from Loudon to Knoxville was completed in 1855.

Although there are no remains visible today, Red Clay once had a section house along the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad line. In some, but not all, of the early railroad schedules the depot is called State Line (see Figure 5) rather than Red Clay. Since Red Clay was the only settlement on the Tennessee-Georgia state line along this rail line, Red Clay is the only depot that State Line can refer to. None of these early references to the depot say which side of the state line the building was actually on. It is therefore uncertain whether the original depot was in Red Clay, Tennessee or Red Clay, Georgia.

1861-1865: Civil War at Red Clay

During the Civil War, the town of Cleveland, Tennessee, about twelve miles north of Red Clay, was strategically important due to its position at the junction of the Georgia and East Tennessee railroads and for the protection of the Hiwassee River bridge. It was so important that Abraham Lincoln said, “To take and hold the railroad at or east of Cleveland, Tennessee, I think is as fully as important as the taking and holding of Richmond.” The rail line through Red Clay was one of the only two direct routes into North Georgia (see Figure 6).

John B. Marston was too old to fight in the Civil War; however, on October 16, 1863, he did sell five bushels of corn and 100 lbs. of hay to the Confederate Army, possibly to support the Chattanooga campaign. Corn and hay may have been grown on his Red Clay land.

The Hiwassee Railroad undoubtedly moved men and materiel through Red Clay for the Confederacy, and, after Cleveland was captured by the Union on November 26, 1863, in the culmination of the Chattanooga campaign, the rail line was too valuable to leave alone. In an account of what took place at Red Clay on November 27, Brigadier General Adin B. Underwood of the 33rd Massachusetts Infantry Regiment wrote, “At Red Clay Station a few hours were devoted to this pleasant diversion [destroying a section of railroad], and soon three miles of sleepers were reduced to fire wood, and the rails to old junk. There being no further use for cars and the depot, they were burned. Neither Longstreet nor Bragg could now get any comfort from that railroad.”

In February 1864, rumors began circulating that Confederate General Joseph Johnston had sent men from Dalton to intercept Union General William Tecumseh Sherman’s men on their way to Jackson and Meridian, Mississippi. General Ulysses S. Grant sent a reconnaissance mission towards Dalton to determine Johnston’s strength. Among the troops sent south, General Matthias of the XV Corps was ordered on February 23rd to send six of his regiments from Cleveland to Red Clay to reinforce General Cravat's men. On February 23, General Johnston wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, “General Wheeler reported during the night a Federal Army at Ringgold and a body of
10,000 at Red Clay, fourteen miles on the Cleveland road. After several days of skirmishing, it was ascertained that Johnston had a superior force and the Union troops who had camped at Red Clay fell back to Blue Springs and Cleveland.

After several days of skirmishing, it was ascertained that Johnston had a superior force and the Union troops who had camped at Red Clay fell back to Blue Springs and Cleveland.

The rest of the Union army arrived at Red Clay on May 4-5, 1864. The troops set up a supply station along the railroad; however, it is uncertain if they used the station house. After the Army of the Ohio began moving south to Varnell’s Station and Tunnel Hill, Georgia on May 7, the supply station was moved from the railroad at Red Clay to that of Ringgold, Georgia.

1866-1927: Reconstruction and the Return to Rural Life

The war caused John B. Marston’s fortunes to suffer since he lost his enslaved people and his real estate dwindled in value from $7,500 to $2,000. It is uncertain how long he kept his other properties; however, the land he owned that is now a significant portion of Red Clay State Historic Park remained in his possession until his death in 1878, at which point his widow, Nannie Whittle Marston, and his two sons, John J. and Thomas W. Marston, inherited it. The reason John B. kept the property may be that he and his family lived across the state border near Red Clay, Georgia, according to the 1860 and 1880 censuses, and it would have been easier to farm than the properties he sold in more remote areas.

The Bradley County Courthouse was burned during the war, resulting in all the deeds and other records being destroyed. After the war, the Register of Deeds asked property owners to help rebuild the deed books. John
D. Traynor’s widow, Mary Ann Traynor, is listed on several deeds, but none appear to be the Red Clay property. The earliest this property appears in the deed books is in 1912, when J.F. Weatherly sold the 160-acre property to J.D. Riddle.66

The Red Clay lands first granted to Marston, Kincannon, and Traynor were never commercially developed. The Marston lands remained in the family for nearly forty years. They were sold several times, however, the records of ownership are easy to follow (see Appendix A). The Kincannon-Traynor land, known as the Traynor land, has a much more complicated history of ownership. The land was sold, resold, split, sold, rejoined, and sold again. Many of the owners only kept the land a few years, though most seem to have used it for farming and pasturing livestock. The deeds are difficult to follow; however, a diagram detailing the ownership history has been developed (see Appendix A).

After the war, the East Tennessee & Virginia Railroad merged with the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad to form the East Tennessee, Virginia, & Georgia Railway on November 26, 1869.67 The Tennessee State Line Railroad Company was sold to the East Tennessee, Virginia, & Georgia Railway on March 5, 1886.68 However, the East Tennessee, Virginia, & Georgia Railway soon went bankrupt and was purchased by the Southern Railway Company. The one-acre southeast section of Red Clay State Historic Park was part of the acquisition.

According to a 1916 newspaper article, the Red Clay Station “was the old eating station, and was noted for the excellent meals served.”70 The question of whether the Red Clay Station was on the Tennessee or Georgia side of the state line is made clear in a Right-of-Way and Track Map published by the Southern Railway Company in 1927 (see Figure 7).71 A close inspection of the area of detail along the state line shows that the section house and depot were located on the Tennessee side of the line (see Figure 8).
Therefore, the section house was on the southeastern corner of what is now Red Clay State Historic Park. It is uncertain when the building was removed from the property, although a 1934 newspaper article states that the depot was “recently torn away.” It is likely that the section house was destroyed at the same time.

1930-1949: Establishing Red Clay's Location

![Figure 9. Red Clay Council Ground historical marker dedicated by the Georgia Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1935. The marker still stands on the wrong side of the state line.](image)

In March 1930, several chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution held a dedication ceremony for a historical marker at Ross’s Landing in Chattanooga, Tennessee. This was the site of one of the emigration depots where the Cherokee departed for Indian Territory on the Trail of Tears. The guest of honor at this ceremony was Robert Bruce Ross, the grandson of Chief John Ross. While visiting southeast Tennessee for this grand event, Robert Ross took the opportunity to visit the Red Clay Council Ground and was photographed at the Council Spring (see Figure 10).

![Figure 10. Robert Bruce Ross, grandson of John Ross, at Council Spring, 1930. Courtesy of the Chattanooga Sunday Times.](image)

Perhaps the dedication of the historical marker in Chattanooga inspired Daughters in Georgia to commemorate Cherokee history closer to home. While the historical evidence demonstrates the location of the Council Ground had been on the Tennessee side of the state border, by 1935, nearly a century after the Cherokee were removed, there was
confusion as to which side of the state line the Council Ground had actually been located. This confusion likely resulted from the fact that shortly after Removal, a small town was established on the Georgia side of the border and was called Red Clay after the Council Ground. The confusion was exacerbated, because a small log cabin was moved from the Council Ground onto private property just across the state line in Georgia to be used as a smoke house. The cabin was known as “the Council House,” though it fits none of the descriptions of the Council House. It was likely used as shelter for John Ross, another council member(s), or even the government agent, Reverend John F. Shermerhorn.

In 1935, the Georgia Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, began planning to erect a historical marker to memorialize the Red Clay Council Ground in Georgia. A flurry of articles erupted in the media making arguments for the true location. Though the Daughters “invited the Tennessee Society D.A.R. to join them in placing a marker on the state line at a point between the site of the Council House and the Council Spring,” however, the Daughters erected their monument on the corner of the state line and the highway that runs south toward Dalton on the Georgia side of the state line, where it remains today (see Figure 9). Nonetheless, the location of the Council Ground was established by the historical research and writing by John Morgan Wooten in 1934-1935.76

1959-1980: Park Development

The history of Red Clay’s development into a state park is at times as confusing as its record of ownership. The Red Clay Council Ground had become forgotten by most of the area’s inhabitants by the 1950s. At this time, the small town of Red Clay, Georgia, had fallen into obscurity itself. In 1959, however, James F. Corn (known as Colonel Corn due to his rank when he served in the U.S. Army) published Red Clay and Rattlesnake Springs: A History of the Cherokee Indians of Bradley County, Tennessee. Corn, a retired lawyer, local and state politician, and Bradley County historian, became interested in the Cherokee when he happened upon a stack of old papers in a used bookstore. The papers were documents from the U.S. Senate pertaining to the Cherokee. This intrigued Corn and set him on a course that would define the latter part of his life.77

Corn soon found an ally in his efforts to bring attention to Red Clay. In August 1963, Polly Rice Martinez, a retired businesswoman who lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee, brought a group of area socialites to her family’s old home in Red Clay, Georgia, to discuss restoring Red Clay and establishing it as a memorial to the Cherokee. Martinez’s initial idea was to build a site that straddled the state line with the cooperation of Bradley County, Tennessee, and Whitfield County, Georgia. On June 15, 1964, Colonel Corn purchased the 149.62-acre tract of land on which the Council Spring sits from George Gray.79 Though Corn was the owner, he asked to remain anonymous when Martinez announced the purchase two weeks later.80

To this end, the Cherokee-Red Clay Association (see Figure 11) was officially incorporated in the State of Tennessee in December 1964.81 At their first meeting, two presidents were elected, one from Tennessee and one from Georgia. At this meeting, Corn was elected as the group’s secretary, and he publically announced that he had purchased the Red Clay land.82 Soon thereafter, all mentions of the Georgia president end. Presumably this was because the group was never incorporated in Georgia.
Members of the Cherokee-Red Clay Association began an advocacy and media campaign to gain political and financial support for Red Clay’s preservation. In January 1970, the Bradley County Quarterly Court agreed to purchase the Red Clay land from Corn for the purpose of developing the area into a recreation area and tourist destination.

In 1971, the Tennessee Commissioner of Conservation, William Jenkins, received a visit from the president of the Cherokee-Red Clay Association, Tom Rowland, and the chairman of the Bradley County Conservation Board, John Tyler, and other local leaders. During this appointment, the local advocates of Red Clay convinced Jenkins of the site’s importance. According to Rowland in a 1976 article, “Jenkins was most helpful to us. Realizing the importance of the property, he worked closely with former Gov. Winfield Dunn in getting money appropriated to purchase additional land surrounding the Red Clay site.”

As the development of the site progressed, community members began offering Native American artifacts to the group in hopes of them being included in a museum. By October 1972, Red Clay had been classified as an archeological area, and the preliminary planning study had been completed. Archaeological excavations began in the summer of 1973.

Figure 11. Cherokee-Red Clay Association’s first meeting. Photograph by W.C. King. Courtesy of The Chattanooga Times.
archeologist with the Tennessee Department of Conservation's Division of Archaeology partnered with historian William R. Snell’s students from Lee College (located in Cleveland, Tennessee) to excavate the area around the Council Spring. They hoped to discover the location of the Council House; however, they did not find it. Excavations were repeated in 1974 and 1975, with no discernable evidence of the Council House or any other structures, though the areas excavated were limited to the south, east, and west areas around the Council Spring. The archaeologists did uncover a large cooking area, as had been described by an English visitor to the 1837 National Council, and many shards of 1830s-era porcelain dishware. In 1975, William Snell completed his report “Annals of Red Clay Council Ground, Bradley County, Tennessee” for the Tennessee Historical Commission.

While the state agencies were working to study the area, Colonel Corn was still working to preserve the site. In September 1972, Corn nominated the Red Clay Council Ground to the National Register of Historic Places. On January 25, 1974, the Red Clay Council Ground was entered on the National Register of Historic Places.

There were a few farm structures on the property: a partially built cinderblock building and an old wooden house that had more recently been used as a barn. None of these structures dated before the 1910s, and it is unknown who built them. These structures were demolished during the landscape development of the park.

In 1974, the State of Tennessee purchased much of the land surrounding the Red Clay Council Ground owned by Bradley County. In an effort to celebrate the bicentennial of the United States, the Bradley-Cleveland Bicentennial Commission organized the dedication of Red Clay. On May 8, 1976, representatives of the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, as well as local and state dignitaries met at the Red Clay Council Ground to dedicate the site as a state park. At this dedication, it was announced from Governor Ray Blanton’s office “that an Indian museum to be located on the park grounds would be called the James F. Corn Sr. Museum of Indian History.” Though this dedication took place in 1976, the groundbreaking did not occur until April 26, 1978 (see Figure 12).
reconstructed Council House, a picnic pavilion, over three miles of nature trails, and a 500-seat amphitheater.\textsuperscript{98}

Despite the fact that the park had already opened, the last piece of land had yet to be purchased. The very southeastern 1.11 acres of property remained under the ownership of the Southern Railway Company until it was sold to the State of Tennessee to be added to Red Clay State Historic Park on July 2, 1980.\textsuperscript{99}

1982-Present: Red Clay Revisited
Soon after the park opened, it began a tradition of annual Cherokee festivals. In 1982, the park held its first Cherokeefest. The event featured Cherokee arts and crafts; bow and arrow, ati-ati, and blowgun demonstrations; dancing and storytelling; and history lectures by local historians Dr. Roy Lillard and Dr. William Snell.\textsuperscript{100} Cherokeefest eventually changed its name to the Cherokee Days of Recognition by 1986, although many of the activities remained the same.\textsuperscript{101} The annual festival continued for nineteen years.

On Friday, April 3, 1984, a Joint Council of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma convened at the Red Clay Council Ground for the first time since that final council in 1837 (see Figure 13). Torches were lit from the Eternal Flame in Cherokee, North Carolina, and were hand-carried nearly 150 miles by ten runners on what was called “The Eternal Flame Run.”\textsuperscript{102} The torches were used to light the council fire at Red Clay at the first joint council of the Cherokee people in 147 years.

Figure 13. Council members from the Cherokee Nation and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians at the first Joint Council, April 3, 1984. Photograph courtesy of Red Clay State Historic Park.

Figure 14. Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Chad Smith, carries the eternal flame of the Cherokee Nation to Red Clay, April 18, 2009. Photograph by Dan Henry. Courtesy of The Chattanooga Times Free Press.
In 2002, the state legislature delayed passing a state budget. This resulted in Red Clay not being able to hold its annual Cherokee Days of Recognition festival. Two of Red Clay’s supporters from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Richard Crowe and Louise Many, died within the previous year, so instead of the Cherokee Days, a one-day Cherokee festival and memorial was held on August 3. The annual festival resumed in 2003 and continues each year, although it is now called the Cherokee Cultural Celebration (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Members of the Warriors of AniKituhwa dance group performing the Hunting Dance at Red Clay State Historic Park’s Cherokee Cultural Celebration, August 4, 2018.

To ensure that the Cherokee Cultural Celebration is not canceled due to state finances again, it is now financed primarily by the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, and the United Keetoowah Band. In addition to the Cherokee Cultural Celebration, the park hosts an annual 19th-Century Cherokee Christmas event and a one-day lecture symposium each spring. The Friends of Red Clay group, established in 2007, hosts an annual pow wow each fall, as well.

In the intervening years, there have been two other councils held at Red Clay. The weekend of April 17-19, 2009, saw the 25th anniversary of the first Joint Council. The event was commemorated with a variety of Cherokee cultural events: storytelling, dancing, stickball, and the second Joint Council to be held at the Council Ground in over a century and a half. Once again runners, including the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Chad Smith, carried the Sacred Fire to Red Clay (see Figure 14).

In August 2015, the Principal Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, and the United Keetoowah Band met at Red Clay and held a Tri-Council (see Figure 16). For the first time in 175 years, the three federally recognized bands of Cherokee were reunited at Red Clay.

In addition, the Remember the Removal Bike Ride was first made by adolescent members of the Cherokee Nation in 1984. The ride became an annual event for the Cherokee Nation in 2009, and in 2011, they were joined by members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee. On their journeys each year, the riders stop at various Trail of Tears sites, and at the unmarked graves of their ancestors who died along the way. Red Clay is always a stop on the trail (see Figure 17). As of this writing, 175 people have made the ride.
Although Red Clay State Historic Park lies in a very rural section of southeast Tennessee, it draws tourists from far afield. In all, the various activities hosted by the park, as well as the normal flow tourists, attract more than 200,000 visitors each year.

Figure 16. From left, United Keetoowah Band Principal Chief Georgia Wickliffe, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians Principal Chief Mitchell Hicks, and Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker exchanging gifts at opening of the Tri-Council at Red Clay. Courtesy of Native News Online.net.

Figure 17. Remember the Removal riders prepare to leave Red Clay State Historic Park, June 5, 2017. Photograph courtesy of The Chattanooga Times Free Press.
Figure 18. Map of resources at Red Clay State Historic Park.
1) James Franklin Corn Museum and Interpretive Center

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 19.** The James Franklin Corn Museum and Interpretive Center. Courtesy of Red Clay State Historic Park.

The James Franklin Corn Museum and Interpretive Center (34.99417, -84.94544), constructed in 1979, is located at the entrance to the park. It is a two-story, wood-frame building, with a T-plan core and a partially enclosed wrap-around porch. The porch extends to an octagonal gazebo to the west. The T-plan core of the interpretive center contains a small museum, a theater that seats 80 people, a gift shop, ranger offices, restrooms, and an upstairs reading room. The theater was renovated in 2017. Currently, a new interpretive film is in the final stages of editing. The museum has several new interpretive panels, installed in 2015 and developed by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University.

The interpretive center’s wrap-around porch is furnished with rocking chairs and vending machines, while the gazebo contains a map of the park. An interpretive trail begins by walking south out of the gazebo. Four flagpoles are located to the northwest of the interpretive center. The center pole flies the American and Tennessee flags. It is flanked by poles flying the flags of the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, and the United Keetoowah Band.
2) Council Spring (Blue Hole Spring)

The English geologist, George W. Featherstonhaugh offered this description of the Council Spring at Red Clay upon his visit to the National Council in 1837:

The situation was exceedingly well chosen in every respect, for there was a copious limestone spring on the bank of the stream, which gave out a delicious cool water in sufficient quantities for this great multitude.\textsuperscript{112}

The Council Spring (34.99299, -84.94602) is located in a tree-lined depression and flows from under a limestone shelf. Its unique mineral content lends it an unusual blue hue. At the time of the archaeological excavations in the 1970s, there was a sinkhole immediately north of the spring that had developed in the 1940s due to geologic activity.
The sinkhole caused a deepening of the spring’s conical-shaped basin, which is currently about 14 feet deep. Irrigation wells used on farms in the surrounding area are fed by the same aquifer as the Council Spring, resulting in the footprint of the pool to have diminished to its current diameter of approximately 20 feet. The spring feeds a small creek, known historically as the Council Spring Creek. This, in turn, flows into Mill Creek, a tributary of the Conasauga and Coosa river system. The trees lining the spring’s basin are not thick enough to obscure the view of the spring. However, due how deep the spring is situated, it is not visible unless the viewer is looking down into the basin.

A U.S. Geological Service Survey in 1933 determined that the spring has a daily flow of 414,720 gallons of water. In June 1975, the Council Spring’s water, which maintains an average temperature of 56 degrees, was tested and found to contain bacterial contamination. The test results, however, did not specify what type of bacteria were contaminating the spring, just that the water should be boiled or chlorinated before being ingested. Despite this, water from the Council Spring has been used as drinking water at the Joint Councils and the Tri-Council with no adverse effects reported.

The Council Spring is also used by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee for their Going to Water ceremony. When this occurs, the park’s personnel rope off the area to give the practitioners privacy for this sacred rite. The Cherokee also use the spring in a more relaxing ritual. Each August at the Cherokee Cultural Celebration, young men play a traditional game of stickball. After their game, and with permission of the park manager, the young men cool off with a swim in the spring.

Figure 22. Young Cherokee men cooling off in the Council Spring after a game of stickball. Courtesy of Red Clay State Historic Park.
3) Reconstructed Council House

According to the 1836 Cherokee Nation Property Evaluations, the Red Clay Council House was made of round logs and measured 18’ x 30.’ This verifies the account of the Featherstonhaugh, who described the Council House as being:

…a simple parallelogram formed of logs with open sides, and benches inside for the councilors.\textsuperscript{118}

The reconstructed Council House (34.99304, -84.94563) measures 20’ x 40’ and corresponds with Featherstonhaugh’s description in that it is a rectangular structure with open sides and is furnished with wooden benches, although not with the dimensions recorded in the 1836 property evaluation.

The Council House at the park today was built with a wooden rail along the outside of its support posts except at the entrance, facing the Council Spring. One six-foot section of rail on the rear of the structure is currently missing. There are several mud dauber nests on the inside of the roof. Apart from these issues, the Council House is in good condition.
4) Reconstructed Sleeping Cabins

According to Featherstonhaugh, the “hut” he was assigned to stay in during the 1837 council had pine needles carpeting the floor and only a bed with pine needles for a mattress. He wrote:

*Our log hut had been so hastily run up that it had neither a door, nor bare evidence of an intention to add one to it, and its walls were formed of logs with interstices of at least six inches between them, so that we not only had the advantage of seeing every thing that was going on out of doors, but of gratifying every body outside who was desirous of seeing what was done within our hut, especially the Indians, who appeared extremely curious.*

The *1836 Cherokee Nation Property Evaluations* describe 49 cabins of varying degrees of size and quality built on the Council Ground, in addition to two sheds, six stables, two store houses, a smoke house, a corn crib, a kitchen, the Council House, and a Committee House. Many of the cabins belonged to Cherokee who lived in other areas. These buildings may have been used by them during council meetings or rented to others, like the one Featherstonhaugh stayed in.

Despite the dozens of cabins in the 1836 property evaluations, only three of the sort described by Featherstonhaugh, have been reconstructed on the grounds of the park. The three reconstructed sleeping cabins (34.99331, -84.94514) each measure 10’ x 15’. They are constructed on stone pier foundations and built with modern, round, peeled logs with saddle notches. Like Featherstonhaugh’s hut, these cabins lack chinking, doors, and windows. They all have dirt floors and gable roofs with hand-split wood shake shingles.

Like the Council House, the cabins show evidence of insect infestation. Abandoned paper wasp and dirt dauber nests cling to the inside of the roofs.
5) Reconstructed Cherokee Farm

Reconstructed Farm House
The farm house (34.99282, -84.94477) is a two-story, single-pen structure that measures 24’ x 24’. It stands upon a stone pier foundation and is constructed of modern timbers hewn on the vertical faces and peeled on the horizontal faces with half-dovetail notches. It has a gable roof with hand-split wood shake shingles and a central gable-end chimney made of stone on the east elevation. Unlike the reconstructed sleeping cabins, the farm house was chinked with wood chips and clay-lime mortar. It has a porch running along the length of the north side of the house.

There are two windows located on the structure’s north elevation on the first floor. On the building’s south elevation there are two windows located on the first floor and two on the second floor. A single window is located on the structure’s west elevation on the second floor. There are central openings on the house’s north and south elevations, allowing access to the interior.

The farm house is furnished with items typically found in early-nineteenth-century frontier homes, such as a wooden table and chairs, a bed, a spinning wheel, and cooking implements. In recent years, park personnel have planted a three-sisters garden next to the farm house. The house is in good

In addition to the hastily built sleeping cabins used by council attendees, there were several people who lived and farmed on the Council Ground. The park planners have reconstructed three buildings to represent a typical Cherokee homestead: a farm house, a barn, and a corn crib. These three structures were built in 1979 and are relatively accurate reconstructions of early-nineteenth-century log buildings using modern materials. All three stand upon stone piers. Pier foundations, as opposed to continuous foundations, were typically found on log buildings located in areas with warmer, humid climates, such as Tennessee. Airflow underneath the building helped to cool the structure in summer and also, helped to keep sills and joists from rotting. In the center of these buildings is a fire pit with benches built around them.

Figure 28. Reconstructed Cherokee farm house with the remains of a three-sisters garden beyond the porch.
condition, although the back steps need to be repaired as one has evidence of wood rot.

**Reconstructed Barn**
The barn (34.99260, -84.94467) is a double-crib, two-story structure constructed from squared timbers using half-dovetail notches. A lack of chinking between the logs allows for airflow. The barn has a gable roof with wood shingles. Each crib measures 10’ x 16’ with a 10’ drive-through passage in between the cribs. The barn stands upon a stone pier foundation; however it is still low enough to the ground to allow animals easy access to the cribs. The entire floor on the ground level is dirt. The cribs are joined on the second floor with a large central opening on the barn’s east side for hay storage. The roof extends past the barn’s west wall, creating an overhang.

There is timber-framed shed addition on the south side of the building measuring 8’ x 10’. It has a central opening allowing access to the shed’s interior. Park personnel intend to turn the shed into a Cherokee blacksmith’s shop. The building is in good condition.

**Reconstructed Corn Crib**
The corn crib (34.99250, -84.94485) measures 9’ x 15’. It stands upon a stone pier foundation and is constructed of modern, squared timbers with half-dovetail notches. Well-designed early-nineteenth-century corn cribs were elevated at least eighteen inches off the ground, not only to reduce the infiltration of rodents, but also to encourage airflow.

The corn crib has a gable roof with wood shingles. The roof extends past the crib’s north wall, creating an overhang. Overhangs were common features of corn crib construction and helped deter the entry of rainwater into the building. There is a central opening on the crib’s north elevation allowing access to the interior. A lack of chinking allowed airflow throughout the building in order to dry the corn.

![Figure 29. Reconstructed barn.](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

![Figure 30. Reconstructed corn crib.](https://via.placeholder.com/150)
6) Amphitheater

The amphitheater (34.99254, -84.94808), constructed in 1979, is a series of stepped wooden benches built into the hillside. It was the venue for the outdoor drama “Cry of the Owl,” which was performed in the 1980s. The park is currently working with faculty at Lee University to update the script in order to stage the play in the near future. The amphitheater can be reserved and is often used for music and theater productions. It was renovated in 2017, with new benches made of milled lumber, electrical outlets, and lighting. It seats up to 500 people.

[Figure 31. Amphitheater where outdoor drama “Cry of the Owl” was staged in the 1980s.]

7) Picnic Shelter

The picnic shelter (34.99328, -84.94825), constructed in 1979, is a wood-framed structure with open sides. The shelter has a water fountain, a grill, and restrooms located on the east end of the structure, as well as bear-proof trash receptacles. The east end of the picnic shelter also features a fireplace vented by a chimney through its metal hip roof. The structure contains twelve picnic tables, which accommodate up to 100 people and can be reserved a year in advance. The picnic shelter has a parking lot to its north. There are eighteen individual picnic tables scattered under nearby trees to the north and east of the picnic shelter, each with a grill. The individual picnic tables are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

[Figure 32. Picnic shelter.]
8) Eternal Flame

The Eternal Flame (34.99346, -84.94650), the fire lit from the torches carried by the Cherokee runners from Cherokee, North Carolina to Red Clay at the Joint Council in 1984, is housed in a small stone structure that resembles a chimney. The chimney measures 5’ x 3’ and stands upon a concrete pad. The fire is fed by natural gas from a propane tank approximately 100 feet away. The plaque reads:

*Eternal Flame of the Cherokee Nation. This fire is a memorial to those people who suffered and died on the infamous “Trail of Tears.” It also commemorates the reuniting of the Eastern and Western Cherokee Nations here at Red Clay. Aug. 7, 1837 – Apr. 6, 1984.*

*Figure 33. The Eternal Flame at Red Clay State Historic Park.*
9) Mini-Theater

There is a smaller amphitheater (34.99323, -84.94612) located northwest of the reconstructed council house. Constructed in 1979, it is used for storytelling during the Cherokee Cultural Celebration and for educational programs. It consists of three semi-circular rows of wooden benches built into the hillside and seats 30 people.

Figure 34. Mini-theater after rain.

10) Forest and Viewshed

In George Featherstonhaugh’s description of the Council Ground, he stated:

What contributed to make the situation extremely picturesque, was the great number of beautiful trees growing in every direction, the underwood having been most judiciously cut away to enable the Indians to move freely through the forest, and to tie their horses to the trees.

The viewshed described by Featherstonhaugh is no longer intact. The section of the park where the Council House and the other reconstructed buildings are located has been cleared of most trees and is kept mowed throughout the year. The area to the south and west has a lovely forest with various kinds of oak, maple, and hickory trees, as well as dogwood, Virginia pine, black gum, hazelnut, black walnut, red elm, sycamore, wild plumb, pear, mulberry, mayapple, elder, red elm, black cherry, red ash, beech, red cedar, and black willow. Though the undergrowth is not thick, it includes a good deal of sawbrier (Smilax glauca) and blackberry vines, which catch at one’s clothing, and brush such as flame azaleas, sassafras, and several varietals of fern, which may result in the woodland being less navigable than it was in 1837. When plants are in full leaf, one can make
According to the 1836 Cherokee Nation Property Evaluations, there were 72 log structures at the Red Clay Council Ground and another 19 along Council Ground Creek. These buildings included dozens of round and hewn log cabins, stables, kitchens, storehouses, corn cribs, smoke houses, a blacksmith’s shop, the Council House, and a Committee House. Many of the cabins may have been built to accommodate their owners for the Council meetings, although they may also have been rented to others in attendance, like the one George Featherstonhaugh slept in.

As previously stated, approximately 2,000 Cherokee took shelter at Red Clay prior to removal in 1838. These refugees were at Red Clay for at least three months before being relocated to one of the emigration depots. In those three months, it is likely that they built many other shelters on the site.

Of course, the original log structures are long gone. They would have given Red Clay a much busier landscape and viewshed when the National Councils were in session than is experienced there now.

Figure 35. Aerial view of Red Clay State Historic Park. Most of the parkland is wooded. The only areas that are relatively free of trees are toward the east central section, where the interpretive trail and most of the buildings, and meadow are located, and the southeast corner.

their way through the undergrowth, however it is not cleared away enough to allow the freedom of movement described by Featherstonhaugh.

In describing the other buildings at Red Clay, Featherstonhaugh wrote:

… we soon found ourselves in an irregular sort of street consisting of huts, booths and stores hastily constructed from the trees of the forest, for the accommodation of Cherokee families, and for the cooking establishments necessary to the subsistence of several thousand Indians.
11) Trails

Red Clay State Historic Park has an interpretive trail that leads visitors from the Interpretive Center to the Eternal Flame, the Council Spring, and the reconstructed buildings. The interpretive trail is paved with asphalt, apart from the wooden stairs down to the Council Spring.

There are two circular nature trails: the Council of the Trees Trail and the Blue Hole Trail. The Council of the Trees Trail is 1.7 miles long, while the Blue Hole Trail is just 0.3 mile. There is a short connector trail between the two nature trails that is 0.15 mile long. These three trails wind through the forest, which is primarily deciduous, containing a variety of oaks, maples, and elms. In summer these trees offer respite from the heat for the park’s many hikers. Though woodland makes up approximately 85% of the park (see Figure 49), the undergrowth is relatively light which gives the forest an open, inviting feeling even in summer. The trails have dirt surfaces, except a part of the Blue Hole Trail that passes through swampy soil. This section of the trail has a wooden boardwalk. The trails are well maintained and frequented by visitors.

12) Trail Tree

Native Americans are believed to have bent saplings to point as a way of making signs to guide others toward various places. Although there has been little academic scholarship on trail trees, the manipulation of trees by Native Americans to communicate messages is well documented. Trail trees typically have been bent a few feet from the ground at a sharp angle.¹²⁸

There is one trail tree (34.9918268, -84.9460973) that may date to the 1830s. It is a red oak located just off of the Blue Hole Trail. The base of the trunk is approximately 2 feet in diameter and stands approximately 60 feet high.

The trail tree points north toward the Council Spring. The age of the tree is uncertain. In order to determine the accurate age of a tree, a forester must take a core sample to conduct dendrochronological testing.

13) Intermittent Spring

There is a small, unnamed intermittent spring (34.993304, -84.946884) that only flows when there has been a lot of rain. It is not located on a trail and is not marked.
14) Overlook Tower

The overlook tower (34.98904, -84.95098), constructed in 1979, sits upon a rise along the Council of the Trees Trail at an elevation of 980 feet above sea level. It is constructed from limestone in the shape of a crenelated castle tower with steel safety railing and stands 15 feet tall. The overlook tower affords hikers a beautiful view of the surrounding woodlands in winter, although the viewshed is obscured by the surrounding deciduous trees in summer.

Figure 38. The Overlook Tower along the Council of Trees trail. Photograph courtesy of Red Clay State Historic Park.

15) Pier

Due to beaver activity on the southeast section of the park, there is a swampy area near the confluence of the Council Spring Creek and Mill Creek. This area of the park has a good deal of mosquitos in warm weather. There is a wooden pier (34.99089, -84.94555) built for visitors to look out into the swamp. It is uncertain when the pier was constructed. It measures 10’ x 3’ and is in good condition.

Figure 39. Pier that looks out into swamp at Red Clay.
16) Threatened and Endangered Species

Red Clay State Historic Park is the home to two species of threatened and endangered flora and fauna: the swamp lousewort (*Pedicularis lanceolate* Michx.) and the Conasauga blue burrower crayfish (*Cambarus cymatilis*).

The swamp lousewort is a hemiparasite, a plant that gets some of its resources from other plants through its root system, while also using photosynthesis. It favors habitats with wet, but not saturated, soil. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the swamp lousewort is a threatened species in Tennessee, though it could become endangered, as it is in other states.

The Conasauga blue burrower is only found in wet meadows along Mill Creek in Bradley County, Tennessee (part of the Conasauga River system), and Murray and Whitfield counties, Georgia, within a 15-mile area. Red Clay is currently the home of twenty-five colonies of Conasauga blue burrowers and is the only protected habitat area. These crayfish build complex burrows down to the water table rather than living in or along surface water like some other species of crayfish. For this reason, the Blue Burrowers’ burrows are found on open meadows with a high water table, such as those on the south part of the park. In order to protect this habitat, the grass is allowed to grow relatively tall between each mowing with a brush hog that is raised to a high setting.
17) Railway Corridor

What began as the Hiwassee Rail Road is now the Norfolk Southern Railway. While the original materials used to construct the railway were replaced numerous times over the years, most notably after the Civil War when it was heavily damaged and rendered impassable, its orientation remained unchanged.

![Figure 42. Railway corridor that passes through eastern section of the park.](image1)

18) Ranger Houses

There are two houses on the park property for park personnel to live in and both are currently occupied.

**Ranger House #1**

Ranger House #1 (34.995099, -84.944149) is a 1,700-square-foot, single-story, ranch house with an asphalt-shingle gable roof. It was constructed in 1979. The house has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and stands on cinder block piers. Central openings on the house’s east and west elevations, as well as an opening just east of center on the south elevation, allow access to the interior. The east and south openings exit onto wood decks with wood stairs leading to the ground. There is a metal fireplace and chimney just south of the east center opening that is finished with a stone hearth.

A chain link fence encompasses an area on the exterior of the structure’s west elevation. Wood siding finishes the exterior of the house, as well as the chimney. Stains are present on the wood siding on the east and north elevations, as well as faded patches, most notably on the chimney. These areas require cleaning and painting/wood staining.

![Figure 43. Ranger House #1.](image2)
**Ranger House #2**

This house (34.988314, -84.947104) and the land it sits on were purchased by the Tennessee Department of Conservation from Theodore Roosevelt Thomas in 1974. Thomas bought the property in 1964 from Fred and Oma Springfield, who owned the property for four years. They had purchased it from J.W. and Cassie Eslinger, who owned it from 1943 to 1960. The Eslingers were most likely the people who built this house, though the exact date of its construction is unknown. The house is currently occupied by the park’s fulltime maintenance worker and is in good condition.

Ranger House #2 is a 1600-square-foot, single-story, brick ranch house with an asphalt-shingle hip roof. It has three bedrooms, one bathroom, and a single-car garage and stands on a continuous foundation. There are central openings on the house’s east and west elevations allowing access to the interior. The roof extends past the house’s east wall, creating an overhang. A modern gutter system draws water away from the foundation, which will help prevent damage.

![Figure 44. Ranger House #2.](image)

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**Cottage**

Approximately 15 feet north of Ranger House #2 is a small, single-story, timber-framed cottage (34.988452, -84.947092). The cottage measures 30’ x 20’ and rests upon a continuous foundation and has a stone root cellar. It has a gable roof with asphalt shingles. The roof extends past the cottage’s north wall, creating an overhang. It is unknown when this structure was constructed; however, it was likely built when the property was owned by the Riddle family (1910-1940). It is currently unoccupied and is used for storage.

The roof overhang shelters a small porch on the north elevation with a central opening to allow access to the interior. The porch has lattice covering its east elevation, possibly to allow vining plants, such as roses, a vertical purchase. The stone root cellar is built into a slight rise in ground elevation to take advantage of the cool ground temperature for food storage. The root cellar has an opening on the southern edge of the east elevation, allowing access to the interior.

The cottage is surrounded by overgrown brush along with a tree growing against the foundation on its south elevation. The tree has branches growing against the roof. These plants should be removed to prevent damage to the foundation and roof.

![Figure 45. Cottage’s eastern elevation.](image)
19) Maintenance Building

The maintenance building (34.995489, -84.944567), constructed in 1979, measures 80’ x 30’. It was built with cinder blocks with an asphalt-shingle gable roof. The maintenance building stands on a continuous, poured concrete floor with two floor drains. The majority of the structure’s interior is an open bay, with storage areas on the east and west ends, as well as a bathroom and shower facility on the west end. A 12-foot central opening on the building’s north elevation allows vehicles access to the interior, while a smaller opening slightly west of this allows human access to the interior. A wood-burning stove is vented by a small chimney on the north elevation, though the stove is now inoperative. There is an open-sided, wooden lean-to with a metal roof built along the east elevation to park vehicles under.

20) Old Maintenance Barn

The old maintenance barn (34.988731, -84.945675), constructed in 1979, measures 100’ x 50’. It is an open-sided structure with a metal gable roof. Wood siding covers the gables on the north and south elevations. This building is used to store large items, although it sees little use in recent years. There is damage to the roof and wood siding on the south elevation that needs to be repaired.

21) FORC Shed

On the west side of the old maintenance barn is the Friends of Red Clay (FORC) shed (34.988681, -84.945801). The FORC group uses the shed for the storage of items it uses at its activities held at the park, such as the annual powwow. The FORC shed is a pre-fabricated, wood building that measures 10’ x 20’ with a metal gambrel roof. It stands on cinder block piers. A central opening on the shed’s east elevation allows access to the interior.
22) Remnants of Previous Owners

On the southeast section of the park property, there are remnants of two homes that belonged to previous owners. On the corner of the property are three large maple trees that once marked the corners of a yard belonging to the Eslinger family. Behind the maples are the remnants of a well. The well has been partially filled in; however, the soil ends approximately 12-inches from the top of the well. It is suggested that the well be completely filled in to prevent potential injury.

Approximately 200 yards west of the well, are the remains of a stone wall with steps leading up to where a house once stood. This is on land that had been owned by the Thomas family. They only owned the property for a decade, so this wall and steps likely belonged to one of the previous owners, possibly the Weatherly family (unknown-1910) or the Riddle family (1910-1940). The wall is heavily overgrown, making it difficult to measure the length, although it is two feet tall.

Figure 48. Partially filled well that once belonged to Eslinger family.

Figure 49. Two of the three large maple trees marking the corners of a yard that once belonged to a member of the Eslinger family.

Figure 50. Overgrown stone wall and steps leading to where a home once stood.
ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Red Clay State Historic Park is a distinctive and important cultural resource associated with the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. It meets the National Park Service (NPS) definition of a cultural landscape as “a geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein), associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.” There are four general types of cultural landscapes recognized by NPS, which are not mutually exclusive. Red Clay State Historic Park is a mix of a historic site landscape, an ethnographic landscape, and a historic designed landscape in that it is the site of nationally significant historic events associated with a particular people who continue to use it as a heritage resource, as well as two central features of the landscape being the engineer-designed railroad corridor and the designed park itself.

This report has considered vegetation and topography, noting such key features as water sources, open park land, and forested areas. The cultural landscape component that is integral to the significance of the resource is the land adjacent to the Council Spring, the spring itself, the linear corridor defined by the tracks of the historic Hiwassee Rail Road (presently the Norfolk Southern Railroad), and the reconstructed Cherokee buildings.

Although the site has been in continuous use for more than 180 years, the lack of significant development has left the Red Clay Council Ground cultural landscape relatively intact. Having identified several character-defining features of the landscape, this report recommends that future archaeological analysis, public interpretation, and historic preservation efforts be focused on the following:

1. Archaeological analysis of historic buildings and sites. As early as 1863, a railway section house was in use on the property that is now Red Clay State Historic Park. The depot appears to have been just off of the property, however that is uncertain. Although the depot was burned in November of that year, it was rebuilt and in use, along with a section house, until at least 1927. These two buildings no longer exist, although they are represented on a 1927 Right-of-Way and Track Map published by the Southern Railroad Company (see Figure 6). In addition, maps of the area depict a cemetery, which local lore attributes to an African-American church that was burned in the 1950s. This report recommends further archaeological analysis of the relevant areas of the park, including ground-penetrating radar, and, if possible, to identify the community to whom the cemetery belonged.

2. New park interpretation. When the park interpretation was developed in the late 1970s, it focused exclusively on the national councils that took place between 1832 and 1838, the years that Red Clay was the seat of government of the Cherokee Nation. Recent research has uncovered several other themes that could be interpreted at the park. It is recommended that the park begin interpreting the following themes: the Cherokee councils that happened at Red Clay prior to 1832, the railroad history of the site, Red Clay’s Civil War history, the history of enslaved Africans and African Americans, agricultural history, and the history of the park itself. In addition, it is suggested that a new interpretive trail be developed toward the southeast perimeter of the park that includes interpretation of the site’s railroad, Civil War, and agricultural history.
3. **The intact railroad corridor.** In 1834, potential investors and railroad officials began planning a railway through the Cherokee Nation. In 1836, the Hiwassee Railroad Company received its charter, although the company was reorganized under the name of the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad Company in 1847. In 1852, this company completed construction of the rail line that passes along Red Clay State Historic Park. The railroad corridor only passes through a small section of the park's property; however, it is historically significant as a reason for the Cherokee Removal, as well as to the Civil War history and transportation history of the region. Although the rails are now steel, rather than the iron that was originally laid, it is still a single-track corridor with the original alignment intact.

4. **Extant vegetation and features.** As stated previously, the lack of development has resulted in Red Clay’s landscape remaining relatively intact over the past 181 years; however, the viewshed and built environment are much changed. There have been modifications in the tree lines due to agriculture and the park’s development, although the types of extant flora are likely similar to the flora at the time of removal. To allow an unobstructed view from the observation tower, the viewshed would have to be cleared of trees. This is an unlikely goal due to the damage it would do to the forest and the difficulty of getting the necessary equipment to that part of the park. In order to determine the age of the trail tree it is recommended that a forester conduct dendrochronological testing. And although the site’s most notable natural feature, the Council Spring, has dropped over the years, it continues to produce a significant amount of water flow. The continued preservation of these natural features is part of the park’s conservation mission.

5. **Threatened and endangered flora and fauna.** Red Clay State Historic Park is the only governmentally protected land to be home to the endangered Conasauga blue burrower crayfish. As this species only resides in a fifteen-mile area, the park should continue to monitor and protect its extant colonies of blue burrowers. The swamp lousewort is a threatened species of plant in Tennessee and should likewise be monitored.

6. **Reconstructed Cherokee buildings.** It is the desire of the park personnel to build a blacksmith’s forge onto the end of the barn at the park’s reconstructed Cherokee farm. This project would be acceptable since there was at one time a prosperous Cherokee who owned a blacksmith’s shop on the Council Ground.\(^\text{135}\)

7. **New structures.** Although there are no current plans for new construction at Red Clay, it is recommended that construction of more modern buildings/structures should be avoided, especially where they may intrude on the contributing features of the park. If new structures are built in the future, it is suggested that they have the outward appearance of one of the dozens of log structures that had been at Red Clay during the 1830s.

8. **Soundscape.** As stated previously, Red Clay State Historic Park’s rural location has protected the site from industrial development apart from the railway corridor along and through the eastern side of the property. The atmosphere and soundscape at Red Clay is typically quiet apart from birdsong along the trails and the occasional passing train.
If the Cherokee Blacksmith’s Shop becomes a reality, it is thought that the ringing of the park interpreter’s hammer will attract visitors to see how iron tools and implements were made in the past at Red Clay. For those hiking the trails, the sound of the blacksmith’s hammer will be dissipated by the trees.

It is unlikely that the area around Red Clay will be developed in the foreseeable future; however, if it there were development on the borders of the park, increased traffic and industrial noise could potentially damage the serene soundscape.
APPENDIX A: Red Clay Ownership

The years listed are the years owned by each person. Most of the deeds list husbands and wives, however for the sake of brevity only the first person on the deed has been listed for most of them.

Kincannon & Traynor
Land Grant
1910 - 1921
John Frank Weatherly
unknown - 1914
J.C. Knifley
1914 - 1924

John David Riddle
1910 - 1912
1910 - 1921
R.H. Underwood
1921 - 1923
J.A. Guinn
1924 - 1924

1914 - 1924
John David Riddle
1924 - 1940
Grover Martin
1940 - 1943

Zora C. Ford
1888 unknown
First National Bank of Dalton
Unknown - 1944

State of Tennessee
1974 - present

John B. Maston
Grant #658
Purchased 9/7/1839
John J. Marston
Thomas W. Mastrin
Nannie M. Taylor
John J. Taylor
1878-1888

J. Frank Hall
1944 - 1945

George S. Gray
1945 - 1963 & 1964
Fred Springfield
Oma Dean Springfield
1963 - 1964

James F. Corn
1964 - 1970
Irma Corn
Theodore Roosevelt Thomas
1964 - 1974

Bradley County
1970 - 1977

State of Tennessee
1974 - present

Mastron Land Ownership Tree
The years listed are the years owned by each person.

George Gray
1878 - 1888

Lola Godfrey
1947 - 1947
Louis Godfrey
1947 - 1949
Lola Godfrey
1947 - 1974

Fred Springfield
Oma Dean Springfield
1963 - 1964

Henry Godfrey
unknown - 1947

Theodore Roosevelt Thomas
1964 - 1974

State of Tennessee
1974 - present

Weston Godfrey
unknown - 1947

John J. Taylor
1878 - 1888

Cassie & Barbara Esslinger
1960 - 1974

Fred & Oma Springfield
1960 - 1964

First National Bank of Dalton
Unknown - 1944

J. Frank Hall
1944 - 1945

George S. Gray
1945 - 1963 & 1964
Fred Springfield
Oma Dean Springfield
1963 - 1964

James F. Corn
1964 - 1970
Irma Corn
Theodore Roosevelt Thomas
1964 - 1974

Bradley County
1970-1977

State of Tennessee
1974-present
ENDNOTES

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Endnotes
Endnotes

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