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BRADLEY COUNTY HISTORY OF TENNESSEE

CHICAGO AND NASHVILLE: THE GOODSPEED PUBLISHING CO., 1887

Bradley County lies south of the Hiwassee River, and is bounded on the north by Meigs and McMinn counties, on the east by Polk county, on the south by the State of Georgia, and on the west by James County. Its greatest length is about twenty five miles, and the greatest width twenty-two miles. It embraces an area of 340 square miles. Its surface consists of a series of parallel ridges and valleys extending in a southwesterly course from the Hiwassee River to the Georgia line. The ridges are neither high nor abrupt, and the soil upon them, which not as fertile as that of the valleys, is well adapted to agricultural purposes, the valleys are each drained by a creek and its tributaries. Those emptying into Hiwassee River are Canda, Chestua and Mouse, which together drain about two-thirds of the county. The remaining one-third slopes to the southward, and is drained by Coahulla, Sugar and Mill Creeks.

The territory now embraced in Bradley county lies in the central part of what was once known as the Ocoee District, which embraced that portion of the State south of the Hiwassee and Tennessee Rivers. In 1819, the Cherokee Indians having ceded to the United States the lands north of the Hiwassee, an agency was established upon the site of the present town of Charleston, which became known as the "Cherokee Agency". Col. Return J. Meigs, of Revolutionary war fame, was the agent of the government until 1823, when he died, and was succeeded by Gov. McMinn. At the latter's death, Hugh Montgomery was appointed agent. Some years before the establishment of the agency John Walker erected a log house on the hill where the academy now stands, and had sold goods there, but lived on the other side of the river. Soon after the arrival of Col. Meigs, Lewis Ross, a brother of John Ross, the Cherokee Chief, opened a store in what has since been known as the Barrett house and continued in business there until the removal of the Indians. He married Miss Holt, a member of an old Virginia family. Another prominent merchant was John L. McCarty. A tavern was kept by John Cowan. About 1832 several white persons entered the Nation, as it was then called, and attempted to make settlement, but the most of them were compelled to withdraw. A few who had married Cherokees or half-

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Submitted by: Joyce Disharoon

Pages: 5

breeds were already scattered throughout the territory. These encroachments made it evident to some of the more intelligent of the Cherokees that they would be compelled to vacate their lands, and for a consideration they proposed to cede them to the United States, and to remove to a reservation west of the Mississippi, but a large part of the tribe, the leader of whom, John Ross, the principal chief of the Nation, strenuously opposed the measure. The leaders of the party in favor of the cession were Maj. Ridge, and his son, John Ridge, Elias Boudinotte, James Starr, William and Johnson Rogers and John Walker, Jr. all of whom were of mixed blood. They held a council at Red Clay in August, 1834, and without the sanction of Ross made a treaty ceding the lands to the United States. This was considered an act of treason by the other faction, and they resolved to put the leaders to death, a resolution which they finally succeeded in carrying into effect. The first victim was John Walker, Jr. He was a well educated gentleman, who in 1824, had married Miss Emily S. Meigs, a granddaughter of Col. R. J. Meigs, who resided upon a farm about two and one-half miles north of the present site of Cleveland. As he was returning from the council in company with Maj. R. C. Jackson, now of Knoxville, he was fired upon by two Indians in ambush, and fatally wounded. He succeeded in reaching his home, however, where he died nineteen days later. His murderers were tracked to their homes, arrested and lodged in jail at Athens. They were half-brothers, James Forman and Addison Sprinston. After lying in jail for some time they were released by Judge Keith, who decided that the court had no jurisdiction in the case.

The treaty signed by the Ridge party was deemed valid by the United States Government and settlers began to enter the Nation in large numbers, but John Ross still refused for some time to sanction it, and it was not until May 23, 1836, that the final ratification took place. As soon as this was accomplished troops were sent into the nation to gather up the Indians preparatory to their removal. Gens. Scott and Wool were in command with headquarters in Charleston. Barracks and other buildings were erected there, covering an area of nearly ten acres, around which was a stockade. As the Indians were brought in they were camped around the place, where they died in large numbers. Their removal was begun in 1837, but not completed until the following year.

The survey of the lands in the Ocoee District was begun under the act of the Legislature in the spring of 1837 by John B. Tipton, surveyor-general. His deputies were John Kennedy, J. C. Tipton, Thomas H. Calloway, J. F. Cleveland and John Hannah. The base line for the survey began at a large mass of limestone on the Hiwassee river opposite

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Pages: 5

Charleston, and ran 20° west of south, to the Georgia line, passing through Cleveland.

In November, 1838, an entry-taker's office was opened at Cleveland with Luke Lea as entry-taker, and P. J. R. Edwards as land register.

The lands were placed upon sale at prices ranging with the time in which it was entered. For the first four months the price was \$7.50 per acre: the next four months \$5, after which it was reduced to \$2 and \$1, and finally the last was sold in 1841 at one cent an acre. The settlers from the older counties came in rapidly, and Bradley County soon became quite thickly populated. In 1837, the Hiwassee Railroad was begun, but was not completed to Cleveland until the summer of 1851. In the fall of that year it reached Charleston, and in 1856 was opened to Knoxville, the name meantime having been changed to the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad.

The organization of churches was begun several years before the removal of the Cherokees. In this work the Methodists claim priority. They began some time in the twenties, and succeeded in making many converts. Rude [sic] houses of worship were erected, regular circuits established, and camp-meetings frequently held. One of the first preachers was Dr. J. B. McFerrin, now of Nashville, Henry Price, a local preacher, was permitted to live in the Nation after 1832 or 1833, and being somewhat familiar with the Cherokee language, he sometimes preached to the Indians, and was active in two or three of their camp-meetings. The first circuit rider for the white congregation was M. J. Hawk, who began his labor in 1836. About 1830 the Presbyterians established a mission school four miles northwest of the present site of Cleveland, with William Holland as teacher, and services were held there regularly by a Mr. Worcester and Mr. Butler, ministers from the mission at Brainard's near Chattanooga. The first Baptist church was organized about a mile from this mission school by Daniel Buckner. The first white Baptist churches were Corinth and Blue Springs, organized in 1838 or 1839. At about that time Hiram Douglass, William Bell and the Templetons, Cumberland Presbyterian preachers, began their labors in the county.

Bradley County was organized on the first Monday in May, 1836, just previous to the cession of the Ocoee district by the Indians. It then embraced all of Polk County and a portion of James. At the first term of the county court an election was ordered for the selection of a seat of

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Pages: 5

justice, and two places, Andrew Taylor's and "Deer-in-the-Water", were put in nomination. The former place was chosen and named Cleveland, in honor of a Revolutionary hero. Soon after the town was laid off and a log courthouse erected upon the southwest corner of the public square. This served the county until 1839, when the present brick building was erected. It was then one of the best structures of the kind in East Tennessee, and is still in a good state of preservation. A jail was erected in the same year, the criminals previous to that time having been sent to McMinn County. This jail was used until about 1850, when the present one was built.

The first officers chosen were Rev. Henry Price, clerk of the circuit court; William Carter, sheriff; John H. Robertson, clerk of the county court; James Lauderdale, trustee; and Frank Kincannon, register. The succeeding officers have been as follows:

Sheriffs - Alexander A. Clingan, 1837-38; James Lauderdale, 1838-40; A. A. Clingan, 1840-46; Charles I. Price, 1846-48; Thomas L. Bates, 1848-54; John H. Kuhn, 1854-60; Isaac Low, 1860-66; C. D. Champion, 1866-68; P. M. Norwood, 1868-72; Isaac Low, 1872-76; George B. Hays, 1876-80; A. J. Carson, 1880-1882; W. G. Stockburger, 1882-84; H. J. Parks, 1884.

Clerks of the county court – Joseph H. Davis, 1856-66; Samuel Hunt, 1866-70; J. H. Rucker, 1870-84; F. A. Frazier, 1884.

Clerks of the circuit court – John H. Payne, 1848-64; J. C. Tipton, 1864-74; W. H. Curry, 1874-78; R. W. Seludge, 1878-86, A. J. Fletcher, 1886.

Registers – William H. White, 1843; **; Stephen Hemstead, 1848-52; J. W. Hicks, 1852-66; A. B. Norton, 1866-70; J. W. Hicks, 1870-86; A. A. Ragsdale, 1886.**

Trustees – Eli King, 1838-40; John Woods, 1840-42; John H. Payne, 1843; **; A. R. Potts, 1856-58; Perry Roberts, 1858-60; James H. Newman, 1860-64; John F. Hayes, 1864-71; A. J. White, 1871-74; J. W. Gass, 1874-76; A. J. White, 1876-82; J. A. Denton, 1882-84; M. L. Julian, 1884.**

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Pages: 5

Clerks and masters – James Berry, 1840-56; William Hunt, 1856-62; D. C. McMillan, 1862-64; A. J. White, 1864-70; W. H. McKamy, 1870.

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Submitted by: Joyce Disharoon
Pages: 5