

Marion County, Tennessee

In the Beginning

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Hundreds of settlers moved through mountain gaps, many coming into Western North Carolina through Watauga, Swannonoa, and Butt Mountain Gaps.

The Great Wagon Road to the Carolina frontier.

Early settlers used these routes to reach western North Carolina.

The early settlers crossed the mountains and moved into the Great Appalachian Valley.

Once upon a time, the area of Tennessee was covered by a great inland sea. During a series of cataclysmic upheavals, giant folds (like an accordion) rose and the sea drained. The draining sea left a wide fertile basin, and the folds became known as the Great Smoky and Cumberland Mountains. As a lush forest sprang from the basin, soil and groups of Indians settled here.

In the 1700s four or five Indian tribes inhabited this area and by then this region belonged to the British Colony of North Carolina. New immigrants to America looking for new lands to settle, began forming groups to penetrate these vast open lands, but the Blue Ridge Mountains were barriers to travel. For that reason it was easier for the new settlers to come into the area of (now) Tennessee from the north than from the east. Many of these early settlers, therefore came from Virginia, or “overland”, by way of the Kentucky route.

Starting as early as 1768 several families came in To the north east corner of this area from the Uplands of North Carolina. They banded together as the Watauga Association in 1771 and spread over the eastern part Of the section. This became the first written constitution of North America.

The mountain gaps through Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia.

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1. Rockfische Gape.
2. White's Gap..
3. Mowbray Gap..
4. Fancy Gap
5. Watauga Gap
6. Swannanoa Gap
7. Butt Mountain Gap
8. Cooper's Gap
9. Cumberland Gap.

Continued:

1st Permanent Settler in New Country

(Now State of Tennessee)

1769 Captain William Bean

Captain William Bean is credited with being the first permanent white settler in this new country, which later became the State of Tennessee.

In the year 1769 **Captain William Bean** had moved his family into the new country. He built a cabin on a point between Boone's Creek and Watauga River, just above the mouth of the creek. This is where Bean had camped while hunting with **Daniel Boone**, and he was familiar with the area. High rock formations and thick growth hid his cabin from the river. It was a good place
With water from the creek and springs nearby plentiful.

It was here that **William** and **Lidia (Russell) Bean** Became parents of **Russell Bean**, the first white child of (now) Tennessee.

William Bean was acquainted with military training of the time and held a Captain's rank in the Virginia Militia. He was a born leader and a man of means. His

name appears frequently in the organization and affairs of the Watauga Association and Washington County. Many relatives and friends from Virginia soon settled around the **Bean** family. Among them were **John** and **George Russell**, (brothers of **Mrs. Bean**), **William Bean Jr.**, and **John Bean, William's** sons and others.

[Descendants of the **Bean** family live in our area, of the (now) Marion County, Tennessee.

Patsy Barker Beene (Mrs. L. Phillip Bean) of South Pittsburg is the current Marion County Historian.]

An artist's conception of the Bean cabin in 1769
[drawings and article from the "Overmountain Men" by Pat Alderman]

A marker was placed on the original site of the **Bean** cabin by the **Sevier** Chapter of the D.A.R.

The Stone pillow holding the marker was constructed from rock out of the original **Bean** cabin chimney. The waters of Boone Lake now cover this site.

1772 The Watauga Association

The Watauga Association was formed in 1772 by The first settlers to provide government along the Watauga river. The pioneers drew up one of the first written constitutions in North America.

Watauga Fort, also named Fort Caswell was located near the present

Continued

In the Beginning, Continued:

town of Elizabethton. No description of the Fort is available other than it was a group of cabins arranged in rectangular shape and connected by stockade walls of sharp pointed poles firmly in the ground, and with in reach of its guns was a Court house and jail.

With the threat of the war (Revolutionary) coming on the pioneers speedily pushed the building of new forts and strengthening those already started.

Returning to the family of **William Bean**; later, during the siege of Fort Watauga **Mrs. Wm Been** was captured by Indians as she was hurrying on horseback to the safety of the Watauga Fort and was taken to their camp on the Nolicucky river, where the Indian warriors

threatened to kill her. The chief wanted information about the settlements which they had planned to attack, so they forced **Samuel Moore**, another white captive to question **Mrs. Bean** on the location of all forts and stations and other information.

Mrs. Bean convinced the Indians that the forts were strong enough to withstand any attacks as they had large forces and plenty of food in storage. The Indians gave up the fight, but **Mrs. Bean** and **Samuel Moore** were taken back to the Cherokee Towns in the Overhill Country. **Moore** was tortured to death in the town of Tuskegee, while **Lydia Bean** was taken to Togue where she was condemned to be burned. She had given up all hope as she was bound to the stake and the fire lighted, when suddenly **Nancy Ward “Beloved Woman”** of the Cherokee Council, appeared and scattered the burning embers and stomped out the fires. After untying **Mrs. William Bean, Nancy Ward** turned to the subdued warriors land remarked: “It revolts my soul that the Cherokee Warrior stoops so low as to torture a woman”. **Lydia Bean** stayed with **Nancy Ward** and taught the Cherokee women how to make butter and cheese before she was returned to the settlements.

Seige of Fort Watauga in 1776 – Lydia Bean about
To be burned at the stake. [Overmountain Men –Pat Alderman]

Virginia – North & South Carolina

Most early settlers came from Virginia, North and South Carolina. Many German families settled in several Of the counties west of Chattanooga, where their descendants still live. Land in the middle and western parts of the Tennessee area was more suitable for agriculture, therefore, many who were not farmers continued to move westward as new treaties were signed and new lands were opened.

Continued:

In the Beginning: Cont'd.

Early Avenues 1768-1798

1775 April 19 REVOLUTIONARY WAR (1775-1785)

The frontier settlements were so busy fighting Indian attacks they gave little attention to the American Revolution. When threats grew serious they crossed the mountains and met the enemy at Kings Mountain. After defeating the British, the settlers returned to their homes and continued their efforts of pushing the frontier ever westward.

1775 The Treaty of Sycamore Shoals (Henderson Land Purchase)

Birthright. The older Cherokee leaders agree to sell the area of Kentucky and Valley of the Cumberland to the Transylvania Company on March 17, 1775. The sale was vigorously opposed by one young Cherokee leader called “**Dragging Canoe**”. He was the son of the great Cherokee leader **Attakullakulla**, and said to be grandson of **The Principal Cherokee Chief Moytoy**.

The Cherokee lands belonged to all Cherokee, and were not “property” to be sold according to the white man

ways. But **Henderson** convinced the old leaders they only were seeking a small portion of these lands and would not pass beyond the mountains. The goods and trinkets displayed before the trusting Indians was so enticing they were soon convinced and ready to sign away their birthright. In spite of the protest and dire prediction of what would follow if they signed away the Cherokee lands, which they had no right to do, the old chiefs signed the treaty anyway.

This as **Dragging Canoe** predicted, was only the beginning, as treaty after treaty would soon follow.

Western Settlements

Proposed or Organized

1775-1785

In the Beginning - Cont'd.

Treaty of Sycamore Shoals

1775 March 17th. Judge Richard Henderson &

Co. (Transylvania Land Co.)

buys lands in the Cumberland Valley from the Cherokee Indians in a land purchase called the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals. This purchase included the whole tract of land between the Kentucky and the Cumberland rivers. This cut the Cherokee's off from the Ohio River and all their rich Kentucky hunting grounds. The Transylvania Co.

had neither the right, charter, power, nor sovereignty to make a treaty. This was not really a treaty, since the Cherokee Indians sold him the land and he received a deed.

1775 March 19th. Charles Robertson concludes

the Watauga Purchase in which the Cherokee Indians deeded a large block of land to him on the waters of the Holston and Wataugah Rivers. The Watauga Assn. becomes Washington District.

1775 March 25th. Jacob Brown made three land

purchases from the Cherokee Indians in the area along the Nolichucky river, south

Marion Co., Tennessee – Cherokee Territory

west of present day Jonesborough, Tennessee.

These are included in the Watauga Purchase Book, Old Book A.

1776 Feb. 27th. Washington County

The settlers chose to become a part of North Carolina. The northern boundary line extends clear to the Mississippi River. Washington District annexed to North Carolina. North Carolina army fought and won the Battle against British troops at Moors Creek Bridge, near Wilmington.

1776 April 12th. 1st State Constitution Adopted.

North Carolina provincial Congress, meeting at Halifax directed its delegates to the Continental Congress to vote for independence.

1776 The Indian War

A large British naval and military force attacked Charleston South Carolina. Simultaneously a body of Cherokee, led by Tories in Indian disguise ravaged the exposed frontier of South Carolina, killing and burning as they went. The British were repulsed, whereupon the Indians withdrew. About the same time seven hundred Cherokee warriors were advancing. **Old Abram** & 300 warriors attack

Submitted by Nomie Webb

the Nolicucky and Watauga. **Dragging Canoe** would take another force into Long Island country. **Raven**, with a small force would move into Carter's Valley, then moving into the Virginia territory, all Sides killing and burning as they went. Nancy Ward (Beloved Woman of the Cherokee Council) was concerned of the ravages of war for her people and on her white friends, warned the settlers, who were able to repulse the attacks.

Continued:

In the Beginning. Con'td.

1776 July Throughout the rest of the year, the leaders in the Border States determined to strike such a determined blow at the Cherokee as should render them passive while the struggle with England continued. Forces were mobilized and expeditions from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia entered the Cherokee Nation from several directions; burning towns, destroying foodstuff, killing livestock, cutting down fruit trees and killing Indians. From the Virginia border to the Chattahoochee, the chain of destruction was complete

1776 The Cherokee War terminated with Peace Treaty

1777 May 27th. By a **Treaty at DeWitts Corners** in South Carolina, the Lower Cherokees surrendered nearly all their territory in that state.

1777 July 20th. By a **Treaty at Long Island** the Middle and Upper Cherokees ceded everything east of the Blue Ridge, together with all the disputed territory on the Wataugah, Nolichucky, Upper Holston, and New Rivers. North Carolina then passed a new law authorizing sale of 640 acres to each settler at fifty shilling per 100 acres, plus 100 acres for his wife & each child. **John Carter** became the public entry taker for the counties west of the mountains. All settlers on the Watauga and Nolichucky were required to take new titles. **Dragging Canoe** and his followers refused to attend this meaningless Treaty.

1777 Washington County, North Carolina.

Washington District North Carolina, becomes Washington County, N.C. Named in honor of **George Washington**. North Carolina legislature divided the land which became Washington County, (eventually embracing all of what is presently Tennessee.) One half of the area is mountains. Jonesborough is the county seat and the first town in what was now Tennessee.

By this time the Indians had become dependant on the English for items to trade. Traders of unsavory character from the East often found the Cherokee unable to pay their obligations; thus the Cherokees were sometimes forced to grant their land to them to settle their obligations.

With each new Treaty, and peace agreement more white settlers poured into the newly opened Indian lands. Agreements were made that the new settlers would not go beyond the borders, but each time the settlers again encroached on Indian lands. The Cherokee had no one to enforce the laws when they tried to regain their own Treaty lands. Cont'd.

In the Beginning: Continued:

Dragging Canoe Breaks from Cherokee's

1777 Again in 1777, the older chiefs ceded more land as peace overtures. Thoroughly disgusted, **Dragging Canoe** and his followers strongly opposed the Indian land sales. Meanwhile his followers grew in numbers and bitterly attempted to resist the continuous influx of colonial settlements all along the new "Tennessee" frontiers.

Dragging Canoe refused to be a party to any more treaties and land cessions. He would fight for his people's birthright and heritage. There would be no more new settlers encroaching on Indian lands. His father **Attakullakulla**, and the older chiefs, **Oconostota**, **Willanaugh**, and **Onistositah** did not understand that the white man would never stop until they had taken all the Indian hunting grounds, killed the buffalo, and wild game that belonged to all the Indians, destroyed the forest lands and tamed the wild rivers. The old chiefs were set in their ways of trust, but they had no right to sell the Indian lands without the say of all their people.

1777 Springtime.

Gathering all his fellow opposers, and their families, with their animals and meager possessions, **Dragging Canoe** and his band seceded from the Cherokees, said goodbye forever to their families, villages, friends and homelands in the Overhill country, calling themselves "Chickamaugas", these former Cherokee Indians, traveling afoot, mounted, by canoe, packhorse and travois, poured southward, down to their new home with **Dragging Canoe**, the leader who would fight for their lands. Their chosen site, already the home of **J. Stuart's** deputy, **John McDonald**, **Dragging Canoe** and his people from Great Island settled at the old town of Chickamauga

two miles from the mouth of Chickamauga Creek. His brother, **Little Owl** chose a site farther up stream, near the present Graysville, Georgia. The Settico people located on the Tennessee River near the creek mouth at the beautiful old townsite which they renamed Settico after the home they had abandoned on the Little Tennessee River. The Toquo Warriors likewise gave the name of their old town, Toquo, to the new home.

Judd's Friend, the old chief who had visited England, gave his support to the new movement. He was seventy five years of age, but wielded powerful influence. Other prominent chiefs who joined **Dragging Canoe** were **Willenawah**, who had helped to starve the Fort Loudoun garrison into submission; **Bloody Fellow**; **Scolacuta** or **Hanging Maw**; **Kitegiska**, brother of **Oconostota**; **Young Tassel**, later to become famous as **John Watts**; **Lying Fish**; **Tsaladihi**, and the **Buck**. **Old Tassel**, who had succeeded **Oconostota** as speaker for the Nation, sympathized with the seceders, although he did not actively cooperate.

Many visiting Creek Indians, white Tories (or Loyalists) from the Carolinas, and others joined with the Chickamaugas. They made raids on the new white settlers all up and down the Tennessee river and Virginia frontier.

In the beginning: Cont'd.

Tennessee river and Virginia Frontier. Making true the “**Dragon Canoe’s**” prediction at the Sycamore Shoals Treaty in 1775 that **Colonel. Richard Henderson** and the land hungry early settlers had bought a beautiful fair land, but would find that it was a “*dark and bloody land.*”

1778

By the end of 1778 **Dragging Canoe** had more than 1,000 warriors. The principal British agent in these lower Chickamauga towns at that time was trader **John McDonald** (grandfather of **John Ross**).

Few white men were then familiar with The Mystical country to which Dragging Canoe had fled; but strange stories were told by the Indians. They themselves, it is said, moved some of their earlier villages because of fear of the unknown, or some greatly dreaded spirit, which was not strange, for the country was, indeed, awe inspiring.

It was here the Tennessee River, in some bygone geological era, had forced a passage through tall ranges of the mountains, and because of its rapid descent and unnaturally compressed waters, broke into a series of whirlpools and rapids, which roared, boiled and dashed madly against the great

boulders forming the river’s treacherous, irregular bed. These wild waters began at the base of another of nature’s masterpieces, Lookout

Mountain, which towers above the winding waters and rich valleys, often clothed in clouds land mists, or standing out grandly in clear weather, as a mighty watchtower which commands mile after mile of indescribably beautiful countryside. Its ancient patterns below the mountain forming a perfect outline of an Indian moccasin. The lands around and below it a memorial to the Indians who fought so bravely to hold them.

Patrick Henry solicited the support of the government of North Carolina to chastise the Chickamauga Indians.

Moccasin Bend on the Tennessee River below Lookout Mountain. Beyond lies the Grand Canyon of the South and the Cherokee Valley of Dragging Canoe.

Photo courtesy Jesse Jones Marion Co.,TN.]

In the Beginning: Cont'd.

1779 Sullivan County is created from Washington Co.

1779 The assembles of Virginia and North Carolina appointed commissioners to extend the Virginia and North Carolina Boundary Line when western Settlement made it a necessary measure. Both N.C. And Virginia surveyors ran the line, resulting in two Parallel boundary lines with authority of neither state Established. Crimes committed in the interstitial two Mile region could not be punished. The decision was The “**Walker**” line as the true one . (in 1791)

1779 **Dragging Canoe** became recognized as the leading chief in the entire south- eastern part of the United States in opposition to American Settlement.

In the face of continued raids on the new settlers the governor of the new state of Virginia,

1779 By the early part of 1779 **Patrick Henry**, ordered **Col. Evan Shelby** to raise 300 men in his district go to Chickamauga and “totally destroy that and every other settlement near it occupied by the offending Chicamauga Indians.” 200 men from N.C. were to join the expedition under **Maj. Charles Robertson** of Washington Co., in the N.C. senate.

On **April 10th, 1779** the flotilla began its descent on the Holston River. At dawn one morning about the middle of April the fleet reached the mouth of Chicamauga Creek, undetected by the Indians and entered the town of Chickamauga. This town which was nearly a mile long was Governed by **Dragging Canoe** and **Big Fool**. The Indians about 500 strong taken completely by surprise fled to the Mountains. **John McCrosky** of Sevier County, with a part followed the across the river and dispersed a camp on Laurel Creek. **Little Owl’s** town and others were burned in the same manner. What could be taken with them as Captured supplies was carried away, what could not was Either burned or destroyed as **Col. Montgomery’s** men Floated down the Tennessee to join **Clark**. The remainder Of the force began their homeward march by a new land route north of the Tennessee River. (11 towns destroyed) Of this march, the author “**Ramsey**” says.

“They passed by the place since known as Post Oak Springs, crossed the Emory and Clinch a little above their confluence, and the Holston some miles above its junction with the French Broad. They were the first troops that had seen the richest lands of the present Hamilton, Rhea, Roane and Knox, and the north part of Jefferson counties., as they were seen in all the beauty and verdure of May., it is not strange that a new and increasing current of emigration was at once turned to this beautiful and inviting country.”

Dragging Canoe had been called the “**Savage Napoleon.**” After destruction of his towns by **Shelby** he justified that title. Another Indian leader after so crushing a defeat would have asked for peace, but this was not so with **Dragging Canoe.**

Cont’d.

In the Beginning: Con’td:

The destruction of the Chickamauga Towns by **Shelby** had been successful, but the Indian loss in manpower had been small. [One account says 14 Indians]. Crops had not been planted, the scanty stores carried through the winter were the only food stuffs destroyed. the British supplies had been taken, but new supplies could be brought quickly from Pensacola. **Cameron** himself appeared with 50 Tories, to encourage the Indians.

1779 April – May How “Sale Creek” got it’s Name

After the 11 Chickamauga towns were burned one evening, shortly after they started homeward, Shelby’s men

made camp along a small stream and auctioned off the Indian plunder they were carrying. This small stream later received the name “Sale Creek”.

The most serious feature for **Dragging Canoe** was That the white warriors had found their way into his towns. The Great Spirit however, had provided a remedy. Down the Tennessee River past Chatanuga Mountain the swift current dashing against the mountain, recoiled upon itself, and hemmed in between the steep banks, fought its way through the great Whirl and Suck to the wilds of the Cumberland Mountains. The swirling course of the river, called by the Cherokees *Untiguhi*, the Boiling Pot, could not be passed by boats except with grave danger. Chatanuga Mountain was high [two thousand feet] rough and impassable. The path between mountain and river could be defended by few against a host.

The town destroyed by **Shelby** were partially re-Occupied, but the **Savage Napoleon** led the bulk of his Warriors around the base of Chatanuga Mountain and located in the sites which soon came to be known as the Five Lower Towns of the Cherokees. He would put his Back to the mountain (whiteside) and face the river, and there he would control everything coming down the river. The sites of the towns were in Creek territory, but this made little difference, many of his followers were Creek. However, he sent a delegation headed by his brother **Little**

Owl to request permission of the great Creek Chief **Alexander McGilivray**, who gave his consent. The Five Lower Towns were old Indian townsites, extending back to and beyond the time of **De Soto**.

He was friendly with the British, French and Spanish, but for the Americans who would take His lands he had only undying hatred, bullet, tomahawk, and arrow. For fifteen years, until his death, he made good his boast to **Henderson**. ***You have bought a fair land, but-
You will find it dark and bloody!***

The Five Lower Chickamauga Towns

1. Lookout Mountain Town “Stecoyee”

Located on the west base of Lookout Mtn. north of Trenton, GA., about 15 miles from the mouth of Lookout Creek (now) Hamilton Co., bordering (now) Marion County, Tennessee.

The Five Towns of Dragging Canoe

- 1. Amo-Gayunyi (Running Water Town),**
- 2. Ani Kusati-yi (Nickajack Town) 3. Amo-yeli-gunhita (Long Island Town),**
- 4. Stecoyee (Lookout Mountain Town),**
- 5. Kagunyi (Crow Town).**

Cont'd.

In the Beginning: Con'td.

Dragging Canoe chose his headquarters to be Running Water Town. He gathered the most formidable foes of the new settlers as his chiefs.

The Cherokee name for Lookout Mountain was *Tali-danda-ganu'* meaning “Two looking at each other” or two mountains facing each other. The Creek name for it was *Chado-na-ugsa* “Rock Coming to an end” hence The word Chattanooga.

2. Running Water Town “Amo-Gayunyi”

Dragging Canoe’s Headquarters, here he put his back to the mountain facing the river, insuring complete control. *(now Ladd’s Mountain at Whiteside by Running Water Creek)* Running Water Town was located on the South Bank of the Tennessee River, twelve miles downstream from the dangers of the “**Suck**” the “**Boiling Pot**” the “**Pan**”, and the treacherous “**Tumbling Shoals**”. The river snaked through the canyon bluffs, just below the “**Narrows**”, where the river cuts a deep swath through the mountain and steep cliffs rise from the river on both sides. Using only a hand full of warriors guarding from the cliffs above and the bushes along the river banks Dragging Canoe would have his revenge

Steep cliffs rose up on both sides of the “**Narrows**” where the Indians hid & looked down on the Tennessee river below. Cont’d.

The treacherous river, snaking through Dragging Canoe lands-Contd. In the Beginning: Con’t.

3. Nickojack Town “Ani Kusati-yi (Old Creek Place)

Located on the Tennessee River’s south shore, three miles west of Running Water Town. The cavernous Nickojack Cave gave added safety to the site, plus secret entrance ways that only the indians who lived there would have access to. Lush cleared areas to grow their corn and tend their horses was at hand.. Dragon Canoe’s brother, Turtle-at-Home would operated a ferry close by, making easy access to both sides of the river.

The aboriginal name for Nickajack Cave was *Tecallassee*. (a Creek Indian name meaning Old Crossing Place)The history of this cave is a mixture of bloody and well authenticated stories and of endless legends and superstitions. So strong were the early superstitions that even the Indians would

glide swiftly by in their canoes, and avoided stopping near this gloomy spot. The farthest reaches of its caverns under the mountain have never been fully recorded. Now it would serve well as one of the chosen towns for Dragging Canoe