

The Matt Gardner Homestead Museum Is Now Located On A National Historic Trail

On March 30 of this year, President Barack Obama signed into law the **Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009** which included legislation that expanded the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail by 2,845 miles, more than doubling it in size. This expansion included two Cherokee removal routes that came through Giles County known as the Benge Route and the Bell Route. Elkton (and the Matt Gardner Homestead) sits on the Benge Route which followed along an old turnpike and an old stage road that came through the center and north of town. The old stage road is a well-preserved but abandoned roadbed that is over 1.5 miles long and ten to twelve feet wide with four to five foot high embankments. Along this roadbed are the remains of the Early Benson House which was built around 1820 and served as a stagecoach stop. This section of the stage road was abandoned in the early 20th century and is now private property. The Benge Route is named for the conductor of the detachment, John Benge. This was the only group to follow this route. The detachment of about 1200 Cherokee departed Ft Payne, Alabama, October 1, 1838, and disbanded in Indian Territory, January 11 1839. The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail is part of a network of 30 historic and scenic trails which make up the National Trails System. One more addition to the long list of items telling the whole story of the property that would become Matt Gardner's home. (Read about Giles County's Trail of Tears history at www.trailoftearsapulaski.com.)



This painting depicts the Cherokee Indians crossing the Elk River in the fall of 1838 on the infamous Trail of Tears. The bridge in the background is the current old iron bridge and would not have been there at the time of the removal. Their crossing would have utilized a ferry system that was in operation in 1838. It is not known if a bridge was there in 1838, however, there have been several bridges at this location during Elkton's 200 year history.

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Did You Know? The Cherokee language has no curse words or obscenities.

To make a tax deductible donation...visit www.mattgardnerhomestead.com

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Historian
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Elkton, Tennessee

**Our New Opening
Date is June 26, 2010**

Matt Gardner Homestead Museum

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Elkton, TN 38455
www.mattgardnerhomestead.com
Your Address Line 4

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MGHM News!

New Partnership!

The Matt Gardner Homestead Museum has a new partnership with the Giles County Extension Service. In the future the extension will come along side the museum to help with its plans to re-establish a working garden at the farmstead reminiscent of its past. They will provide help with gardening accessories, guidance on gardening, as well as education for future staff members on pesticide safety, maintaining a healthy garden, and a lawn free of insects and weeds. We look forward to working with Kevin Rose and his staff now and on future plans and endeavors. The Extension Service of Giles County consists of off-campus teaching programs of both The University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University. Bringing research-based information about agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H, and Community Resource Development is their main focus for the community of Giles County. To learn more visit their site at <http://giles.tennessee.edu>.

Upcoming Events:

October 17—Elkton Mile Long Yard Sale

October 24—1st Annual Folk Life Festival

The festival held on the farmstead will feature period demonstrations, history, material and information on folk crafts as well as some hands-on activities. There will also be inexpensive vendor sales of the crafts. The festival is in conjunction with :

October 24—8th Annual Trail of Tears Volksmarch

— a free 10K walk showcasing historical points of interest in the town. The walk starting point is the Matt Gardner Homestead.

Don't Miss Out on the Fun!

New Book Coming!

In an effort to let others know about Giles County's diverse history and past culture, MHGM president, Carla Jones along with co-author Tonya Hull in partnership with Arcadia Publishing Company will produce and published an Images of America pictorial history book entitled *African Americans of Giles County Tennessee*. Look for more information on this book in our next newsletter.

Coming Soon!

Jewel Bailey, one of our board members and a great-granddaughter of Matt Gardner, was recently interviewed by members of the Elkton Historical Society. Her memories of Matt Gardner and the farmstead will be included in a statewide oral history project called *We the People of Tennessee—Stories of Land and Place*. This project is a collection of stories centering on the connection between land, place, and community in Tennessee. The Elkton Historical Society in cooperation with Humanities Tennessee has been involved with this project for quite some time. Elkton Historical Society president, Carolyn Thompson, stated they recently completed interviews with people in our community telling stories about the area and its history from an individual perspective. "We are developing a virtual driving tour on a website managed by Humanities Tennessee that will feature 14 virtual stops (or places) throughout our community using photos and sound clips from the interviewees to tell something about that particular place", said Carolyn. "The community, the Elkton Historical Society, and the MGHM are very excited about this unique project and the opportunity to learn more of the history of our town." The transcripts of the interviews will also be available online. As soon as this website is up we will post it to the newsletter and on the Matt Gardner Website at www.mattgardnerhomestead.com

For more information about Humanities Tennessee's programming, please visit their website at



www.HumanitiesTennessee.org



Photo courtesy Carla Jones

Preservation Efforts Continue!

Preservation and repair of the kitchen and dining room flooring and foundation were completed in April. These two rooms are now secured and stable for future visitors to the museum. Again we would like to thank the Tennessee Wars Commission (TWC) for their continued support of the museum preservation efforts. Before and after pictures will be available in the next issue of the newsletter and on our website.