After the Cherokee Removal in 1838, the council grounds were sold to settlers, who divided it into multiple farms. In 1852, the completed East Tennessee and Georgia Railroad passed through the eastern half of what is now Red Clay State Historic Park, with a passenger depot located at the Tennessee and Georgia border.

During the Civil War, both Confederate and Union troops used this valuable railroad corridor. At least three skirmishes took place within the present park boundaries. Following its victory in the Battle of Chattanooga, the Union army destroyed the depot and tore up some of the track on November 27, 1863. The railroad rebuilt a passenger depot and section house on the southeast corner of the park property during Reconstruction.

“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.”

– Colonel Adin B. Underwood, 33rd Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, U.S. Army, 1881
Like their white planter neighbors, some Cherokees owned enslaved people of African descent to work their land and to serve their households. There were likely 19 enslaved people who lived at Red Clay in 1835.

Three years later, during the Cherokee Removal, these enslaved people traveled west with their owners. White farmers and planters reintroduced slavery to Red Clay after they acquired the land following the Cherokee Removal. Most enslaved people were likely engaged in farming and animal husbandry.

During Reconstruction, freedmen built Andrews Chapel Methodist Church on the Tennessee-Georgia boundary at the southwest corner of the park. As the town of Cohutta grew, the church’s congregation in 1923 placed the building on log rollers and used mules to move it to Cohutta.

You can still see Andrews Chapel by driving 2.4 miles south on Red Clay Park Road. The church is on the east side of the road.

“We did all the work on the church and stuff back then. A lot of work me and my dad did. He was a building man. He built the steeple and the bell tower. I know they would ring that bell every Sunday.”

– Billie Prater, Andrews Chapel Trustee, 2016
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