

David Vann, Cherokee Chief



By Kristi Reed



WHERE DID VANN LIVE?

Historical documents place Vann's home at the site where my home now stands.

Sources

- In November of 1834, Thomas Blackburn sold lot 870 to Luke Johnson. The deed references lot 870 as being the “lot where David Vann’s buildings stand.”
- James Lake, who owned the property from 1849 until his death in 1863, described the property in his will as the old Vann Place. An account by his granddaughter in the Lake family history also references it as once belonging to Vann.
- An 1869 newspaper article recounts a trip to Cave Spring via the Selma, Dalton and Rome Railroad. The author writes about stopping at the depot and seeing the beautiful Lake House which he described as “once the seat of Indian Chief Vann”.
- National Register listing and multiple other sources reference the property as being home to David Vann.

What did the house
look like?

We have a very good
description of the house
in the Cherokee
Valuations.

David Vann 29
Vanns Valley

Dwelling House 44 by 18 ft.

2 stories high ciled and breather
boarded, painted inside & outside, two

rooms on each floor with passage
between, neat stairs, Portes 10 by 10

on each side. 2 Brick chimnies four
fire places, 11 Windows or lights

in upper story, 12 Windows 15 Lights
lower story, front doors lighted on

each side and above with glass
panes, cellar walled with Bricks

The whole underpinned with rocks 3800-0 -



What it might have looked like

Two stories high (44'x18'), weather boarded, painted inside and out with two rooms on each floor. It had a 10x10 portico on each side, two brick chimneys, four fireplaces, a front door lighted on each side and above with glass panes and a brick walled cellar and “the whole underpinned with rock.”

Running Waters

John Ridge's home is very similar to the description of David Vann's house.



HOUSE BUILDER, AND CABINET MAKER.

J. S. W. WHITE, from the city of New York, respectfully informs the citizens of the Cherokee Nation, that he intends carrying on the business of **HOUSE BUILDING AND CABINET MAKING** in a manner superior to any that has been done, & in the most fashionable manner, equal to that of N. York or Baltimore, and Superior to any work of the kind in this part of the Country. He will work as cheap as any workman, and in a better manner than can be done. He has got Mahogany and materials of the best quality.

N. B. He will take apprentices in the above business. Any native who will come with good recommendation, and of steady habits will be received and taught in the above business.

Persons wishing to build can be supplied with a plan and elevation of any house that may be wanting.

For further information please apply to Messrs. David Vann and John Ridge.

Nov. 12, 1828.

37 tf.

What happened to Vann's house?

Vann's house had a brick walled cellar and the house was “underpinned with rock.”

This wall is in the basement of our house in what would've been the cellar. It does not match the construction of the current house.





1800-1825

Son of Avery Vann and Margaret
McSwain Vann

- Nephew of James Vann
 - Cousin of Rich Joe Vann
 - Father was a planter and a
businessman
-



Creek and Indian War

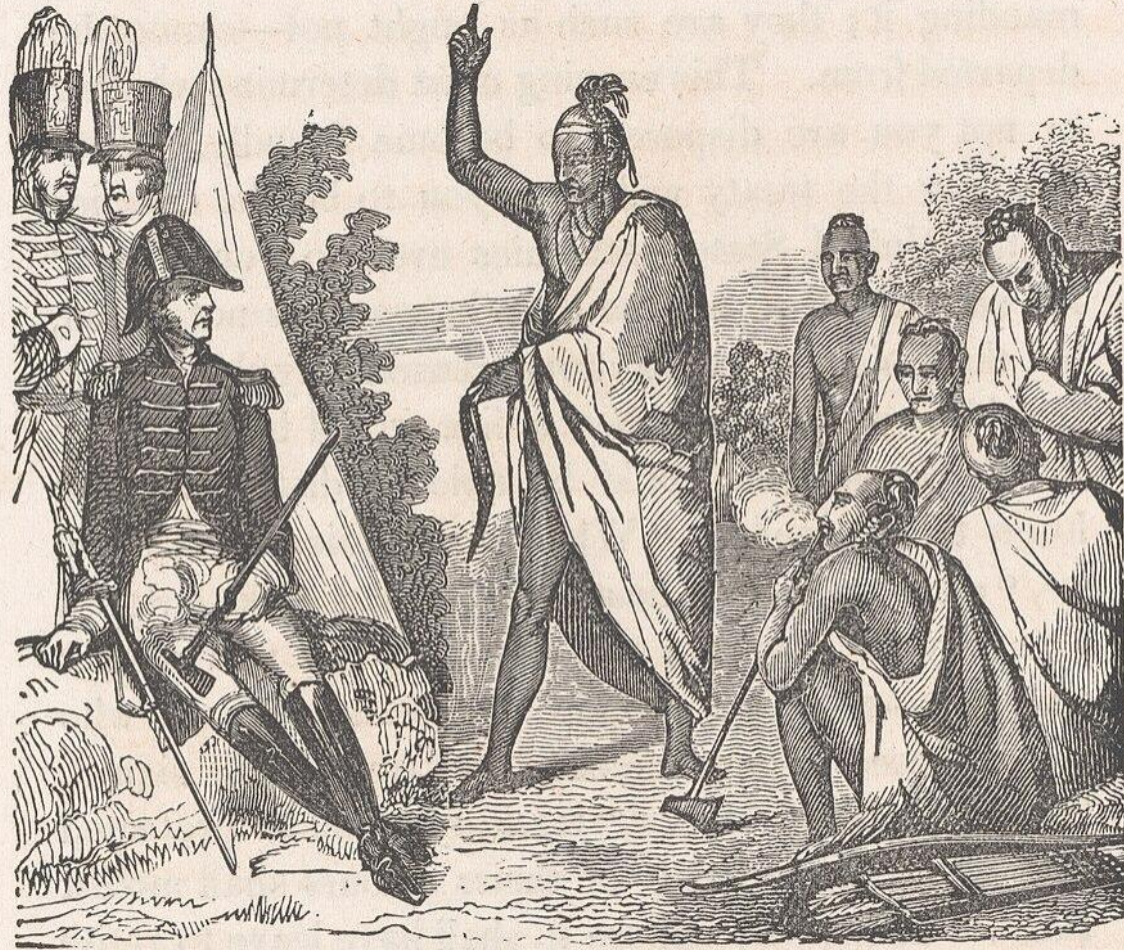
Avery Vann fought with the Tennessee Militia under Andrew Jackson and alongside Major Ridge.

When David was 14, the Creek attacked and burned down their home.



Treaty of Fort Jackson

In August of 1814, the Creeks were forced to cede 23 million acres of their territory (their remaining land in Georgia and much of central Alabama) to the United States government as part of the Treaty of Fort Jackson. After this treaty, the Creek council enacted a law making any further land cessions a capital offense.



Treaty with the Creeks.

c1847



Vann and the Creeks

In February of 1825, Chief William McIntosh, another wealthy planter and businessman, signed the Treaty of Indian Springs ceding a large amount of Creek territory to the U.S.

Opothle Yoholo

Opothle Yoholo, one of the Upper Creeks who had fought against Jackson urged the Creek Council to pass and carry out a death sentence on McIntosh.

By the end of 1825, David Vann would be working for Opothle Yoholo and the people who supported the assassination of McIntosh—the same people his father fought against in the war and the same Creek faction that had destroyed his childhood home.



The Job: Help the Creeks Negotiate with the U.S. Government

- \$10,000 for Major Ridge due to the perceived benefit of having fought alongside Jackson
- \$15,000 for John Ridge
- \$15,000 for David Vann

The delegation of 15 Creeks and the two Cherokees set off for Washington, D.C. where they stayed at Brown's Indian Queen Hotel located on Pennsylvania Avenue

This began weeks of negotiations between the Creek delegation and the U.S. Government.



BROWN'S INDIAN QUEEN HOTEL,
WASHINGTON CITY

North side of Pennsylvania Avenue about midway between the Capitol and the President's House a few doors east of the Centre Market. The front is an imitation of France alone. The Design for this excellent and extensive Establishment will readily strike every individual conversant with its beauties. Having Room's equal to most superior to any in the City, and a fine front on the Avenue, a Chamber, still at both, and a Pleasant Carriageway. Every attention will be paid to those who may honour us with a call. The General Stage Office is immediately West of the principal Entrance. A good Stable is attached to the Hotel.

Map Drive,
OCT 27 '22
Library of Congress



“They all shook hands with me again and took leave—They are almost all good-looking men—Dressing, not as the Cherokees entirely in our Costume; but somewhat fantastically.”

- President John Quincy Adams

Negotiations between the Creek delegation and the U.S. Government began on November 30. John Ridge made clear that the Creeks were willing to negotiate, but would not exchange their lands for territory in the west. They would only sell it. The U.S. wanted all of the Creek land within Georgia, but the Creeks were only willing to cede lands east of the Chattahoochee River. The impasse continued for several weeks.



Vann's Portrait

While Vann was in Washington, Col. Thomas McKenney, the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs, commissioned Charles Bird King to paint the portraits of prominent Indian leaders. McKenney believed the Native Americans were on their way to becoming extinct and the portraits were one way of preserving that culture. Vann was among those selected to have his portrait painted by King.

On January 24, 1826, Opothle Yoholo and the Creek National Council ceded territory bordering Georgia to the United States in the Treaty of Washington. David Vann and John Ridge, who was listed as the secretary of the Creek delegation, were two of the witnesses who signed the treaty.

Treaty Aftermath

The Georgians in Congress were upset that the treaty overturned some of the provisions of the Treaty of Indian Springs. They were particularly upset about Vann and Ridge being paid with treaty money. Vann and Ridge were accused of “fraud and bad faith.”



Visit from Richard Blount

Richard A. Blount, who had been appointed to a boundary line commission by Gov. Troup to survey the boundary line between the state of Georgia and Alabama, visited David Vann's house in August of 1826.

We passed the Cherokee line, the day before yesterday; and have as yet experienced no interruption from the Indians; nor, have we reason to apprehend any."

"P. S. August 3d, 1826.—We are now at the house of **David Vann**, one of the celebrated Secretaries of the Creek Delegation; and, although advanced about 20 miles into the Cherokee country, the deportment of the Indians has been thus far quite kind and conciliatory towards us.

☞ We are about 5 miles from the nearest part of Coosa river; and about 10 miles from **Vann's Ferry**."



An Evening with David Vann

Blount spent the evening at Vann's home where he enjoyed a dinner of bacon, snap peas, stewed chicken and milk. After dinner, one of the men in Blount's party asked if they could go visit the saltpetre cave.

‘This Dark Mansion of the Little Bats’

“We encroached
upon the gloom
above the bats and
put many in motion
and some made
their escape to the
regions of light.” -
Richard Blount



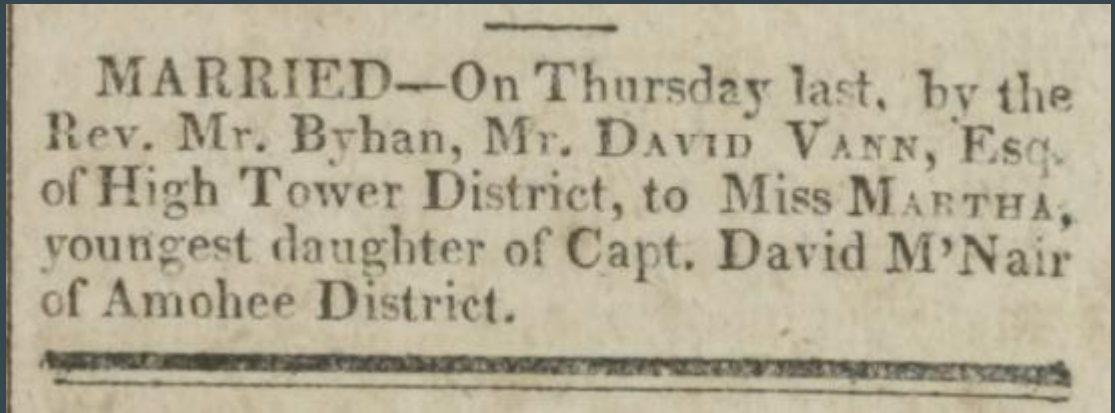
1827

- U.S. assumed all Creek territory in Georgia had been ceded.
- Western boundary had not been surveyed leaving Creeks in possession of 192,000 acres.

Within a few months of Blount's visit, Vann and Ridge were once again working on behalf of the Creeks., urging them not to sell their remaining land in Georgia. This drew the ire of U.S. officials. Ultimately the Creeks were pressured into selling the land.

1828

- Vann elected clerk of the Cherokee National Committee
- John Ross elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation
- Andrew Jackson elected President of the United States



Vann married Martha McNair, daughter of David McNair (who fought alongside Avery Vann during the Creek War) and Delilah Amelia Vann (daughter of David's uncle Chief James Vann).

Gold Discovered: The Georgia Journal, August 01, 1829

So it appears, that what we long anticipated has come to pass at last, namely, that the gold region of North and South Carolina, would be found to extend into Georgia. And another anticipation of ours will hereafter come to pass, namely, that it will be a sad day for Georgia, when the precious metals are found in any great abundance in her soil. The best thing that the Legislature could do, would be to prohibit under severe penalties, the working of any gold or silver mines in the State. Those who live to see the result will be convinced to their sorrow that this advice is not founded on a slight or partial consideration of the subject.

Certificate of Abraham Birdwell.

ALABAMA,

Jackson County, }

February 9, 1830.

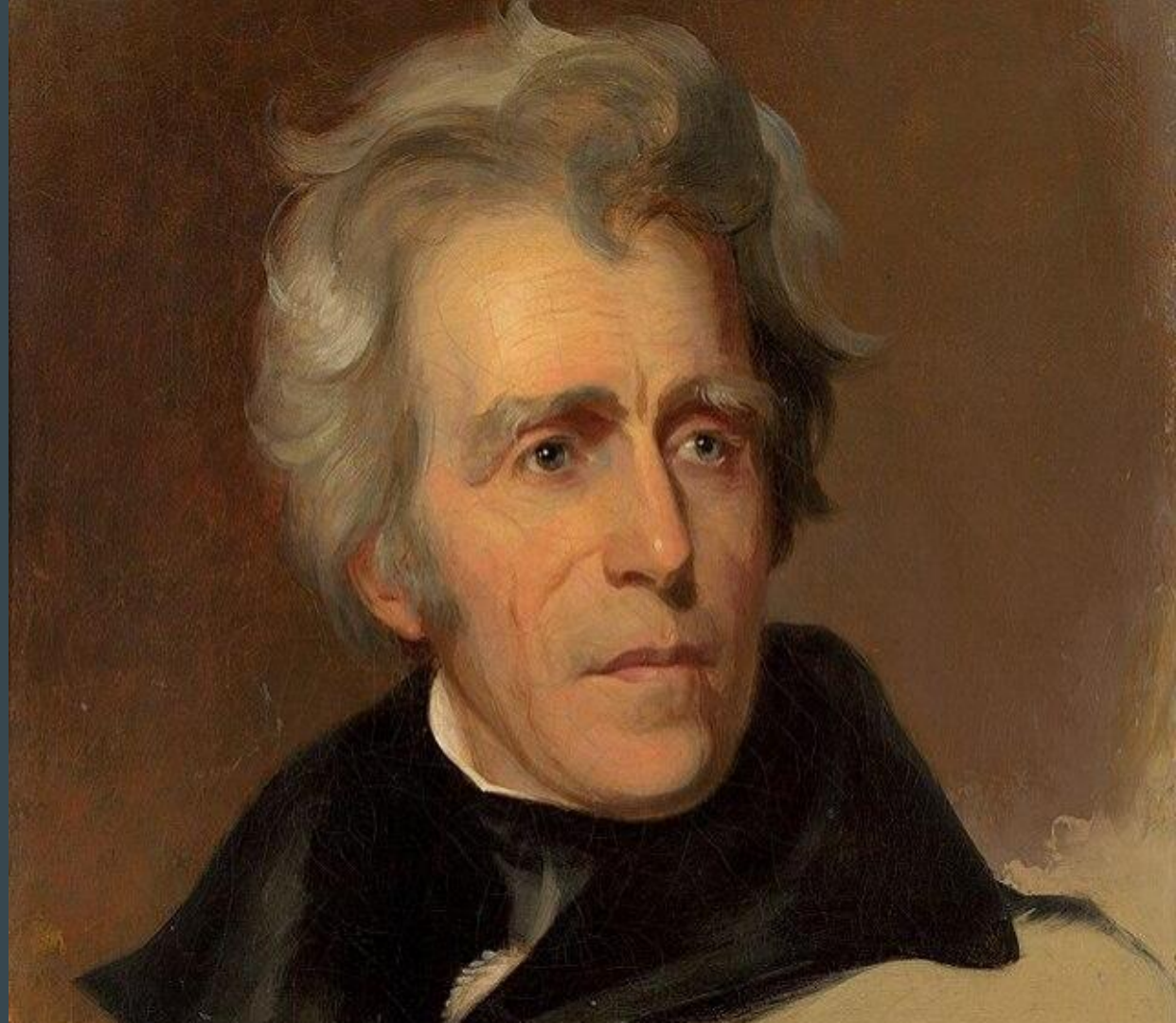
I, Abraham Birdwell, of said State and county do hereby certify, having been into the State of Georgia, and on my return home, through the Cherokee nation, and on and within the territory claimed by Georgia as Creek land; and on Thursday, the 4th, present instant, had my attention attracted by the burning of houses, and by a company of Cherokees, under the command of Major Ridge, a Cherokee Chief; on inquiry of Ridge, thro' Mr. David Vann, another leading character of the nation, I was informed that Major Ridge was authorized by John Ross, principal Chief of the Cherokee nation, to the burning and otherwise destroying the houses, &c. occupied by the intruders, saying that they were a parcel of scoundrels and rogues, and

BEAVER DAM INCIDENT

In February 1830, the most notable act of Cherokee resistance occurred in Vann's Valley.

Indian Removal Act

In May of 1830, the United States Congress passed the Indian Removal Act which was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson.



Letter to the People of the United States | July 1830

“Shall we be compelled by a civilized and Christian people, with whom we have lived in perfect peace for the last forty years, and for whom we have willingly bled in war, to bid a final adieu to our homes, our farms, our streams and our beautiful forests? No. We are still firm. We intend still to cling, with our wonted affection, to the land which gave us birth, to which, every day of our lives brings to us new and stronger ties of attachment ... On the soil which contains the ashes of our beloved men we wish to live – on this soil we wish to die.”



GALLEON VANN

Vann Description

a “white man, dressing in the garb of civilization, well-educated, well-informed, and, indeed, but slightly tinctured with Indian blood.”


1831 Tensions Continue to Rise

- David Vann was sent to secure the release of Beanstack from the Carroll County jail in February.
- Vann was arrested in July. John Ridge was quoted as saying he had seen Vann, John West, Thomas Woodward and a Mr. McCoy “chained together in pairs, and fastened with locks.”

in vilaney now you d——d clay bank
rascals if you dont move yourselves
to the Arkansas I will have some of
your scalps, and I will have off yours
and Dave Vann's * * some good
razor strops and bridle raigos you
d——d scunks of hell.

Yours with indifference

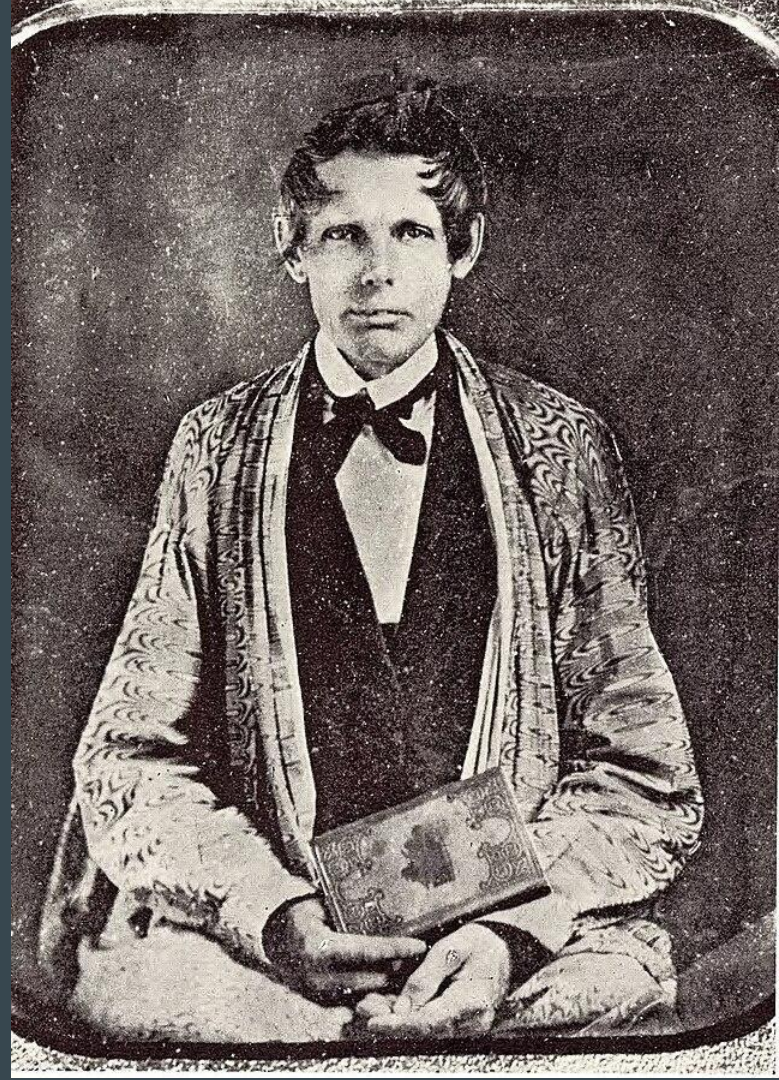
RALPH SCRUGGS.

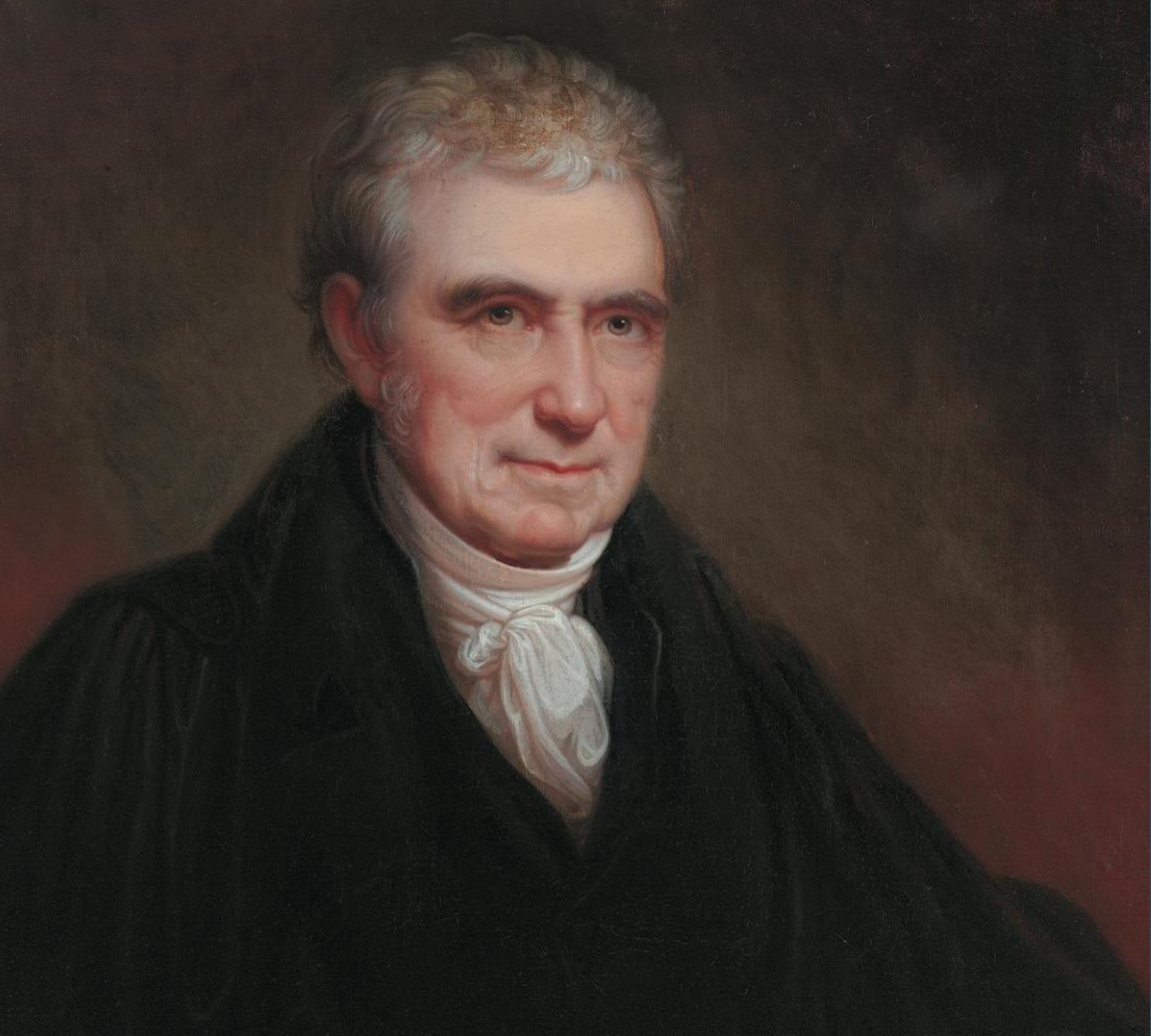
 [Pointing to a representation
of a tomahawk]

A Landmark Case

The State of Georgia had passed several laws aimed at limiting the rights of the Cherokee. One of these laws was a requirement that white men living in Cherokee territory had to have a license. Samuel Worcester and 10 other missionaries protested the license requirement and Gov. Gilmer ordered them arrested.

They were tried, convicted and sentenced to four years of hard labor at the state penitentiary in Milledgeville.





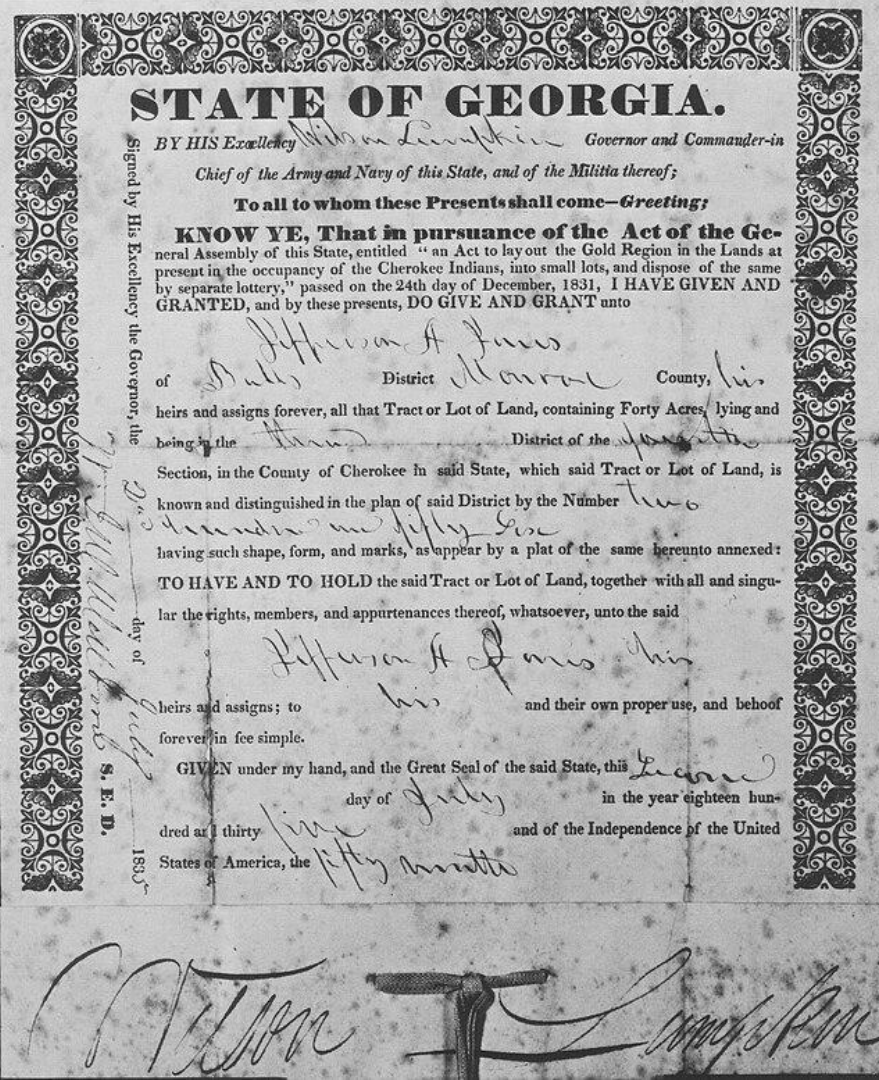
Worcester v. Georgia

U.S. Supreme Court led by Judge John Marshall declared that Georgia had no right to attempt to enforce laws within the Cherokee nation.

Andrew Jackson was reported to have said: "John Marshall has made his decision: Now let him enforce it."

1832 Gold Lottery

Thomas Blackburn of
Upson County won lot
870, the lot described
as being where David
Vann's buildings stood.





The Ross Party

John Ross and his followers believed it would be possible to negotiate a deal with the United States which would allow the Cherokee to keep their property. The Ridges became increasingly convinced that removal was the only viable solution.

Vann Impeached

In 1834, Vann - along with the Ridges - was impeached for "their opinions and policies that would end Cherokee life on the land of their fathers."

them were of the purest kind. Respectfully,
October 2, 1832. E. BOUDINOT.

Thus was the press muzzled and the avenue by which we could reach the people closed against us! Although we could not get a hearing in that way, we still persisted and continued to give the alarm, as opportunities presented. Attempts were made to discuss the matter in the Councils of the Nation. There were members of these Councils who had independence enough to speak their minds. But what was the result? These members, namely, Messrs. Major Ridge, John Ridge, and **David Vann**, were *impeached* for holding *opinions* that were contrary to those entertained by the authorities. Not having access to the records of the Council, I am not able to give a copy of what was proffered as an impeachment—but it was a curious paper. The charge was not for *acts*, but for *opinions*. At the proper time the persons charged demanded a hearing, and called upon the National Committee to try them for the offence alleged against them. What is a little singular, *they would not try them* nor withdraw the impeachment, for no other reason, I apprehend than that discussion might be elicited, to avoid which seemed to be their object, while they kept the individuals arraigned before them *under censure*, and finally to effect their expulsion. This they soon accomplished. The persons impeached left the Council in disgust. *This was the second triumph over discussion.* It was enough to alarm those who foresaw the point to which these things were tending. It was a most extraordinary spectacle, to see a few leading men acting in this extraordinary way, under cover of the *will of the people*, when those people were purposely kept from discussion and truth by which alone they could be enabled to exercise *the will to good and beneficial purposes.*

Soon after this the friends of free discussion met, and adopted the following resolutions as containing principles by which they professed to be actuated.

RESOLUTIONS

Though his land had already been given away in the Gold Lottery and then sold again afterward, David Vann remained in physical possession of the property in 1835. Vann was listed in the Cherokee Census as residing at Cedar Creek in a household consisting of “Six halfbloods, 13 slaves, 3 readers of English and 2 of Cherokee, 1 weaver, 1 spinster.”



Treaty of New Echota

The Treaty of New Echota was signed on Dec. 29, 1835. The Cherokee were promised \$5 million for their lands and were to receive 7 million acres in the west.

David Vann refused to sign.

1836

► Treaty of New Echota was ratified by the U.S. Senate by a one-vote margin. Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and Davy Crockett were among those who protested against ratification

► The U.S. government sent Philip Hemphill and James Liddell to document the property the Cherokee were being forced to relinquish.

1837

► The Ridge family headed west in March of 1837 with approximately 700 other Cherokees.

1838

► An estimated 250 Cherokee families went west in early 1838. In May, those who remained began to be forcibly rounded up to be moved west.

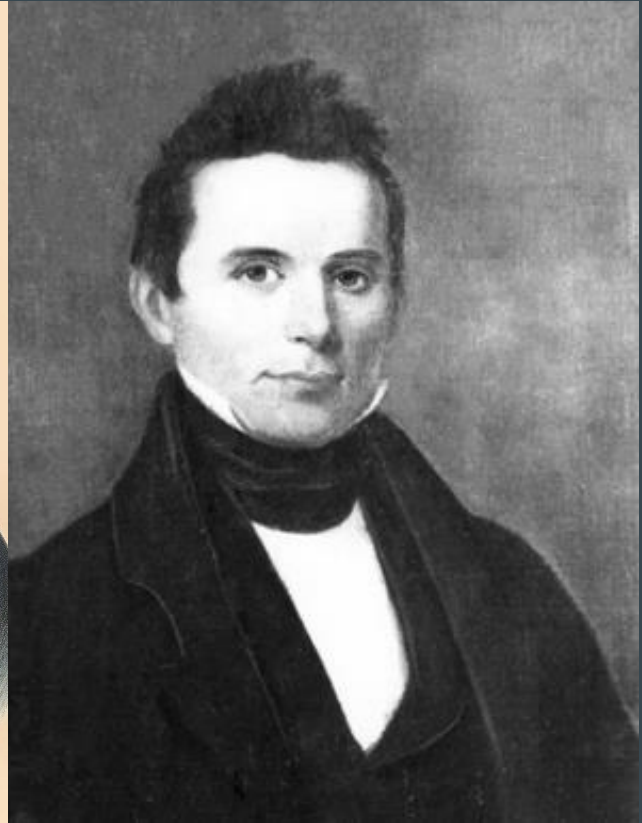
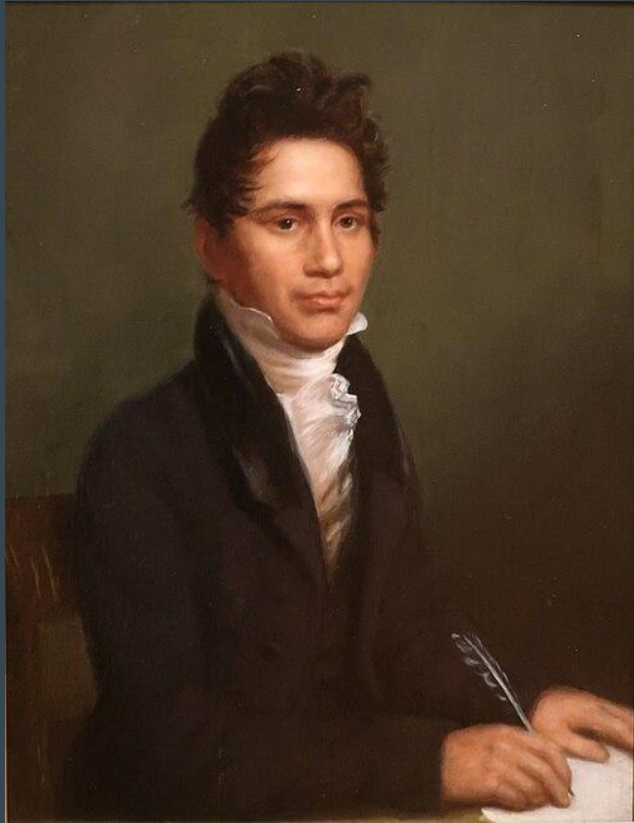




When did Vann leave his home?

A History of Rome and Floyd County recounts that Alexander Harper and his sister Elizabeth were playing “with a lot of pearls and wampum in a bureau drawer at David Vann’s home” when they heard someone ask Mrs. Vann if she were not afraid the “pale-faces” would drive the Cherokee out. She replied, “No. Right now I could sound the war whoop and a thousand braves would answer from forest and field.” The story continues, “Little did she realize how soon the Indians were to march sullenly by for the west as Alexander and Elizabeth hung on the fence and waved them farewell.”

June 22, 1839 - John Ridge, Major Ridge and Elias Boudinot Assassinated



The 'Arrival of Distinguished Strangers'

After being elected treasurer of the Cherokee Nation in 1839, Vann spent two years in Washington working with John Ross, Lewis Ross and John Benge to settle claims against the U.S. government related to the removal.

the Spanish tongue. [Commercial.

ARRIVAL OF DISTINGUISHED STRANGERS.—John Ross, 1st Chief, Lewis Ross, 2d Chief, John Benge, the Great War Chief, and David Vann, Treasurer of the Cherokee tribe of Indians, arrived in Pittsburg on Monday evening, and took lodgings at the Exchange Hotel. These gentlemen have been resident in Washington City for the last two years, and are now on their way to their new residence, west of the Mississippi, having succeeded in finally arranging all their difficulties with the Government.

BRASSER'S CANYON.—The season of coughs and colds is now

1843 Election Violence Leads to Near-Fatal Injuries for Vann

THE WESTERN FRONTIER.—We have received the painful intelligence of the death of David Vann, Treasurer of the Cherokee Nation. He died at his residence at the Saline, on the 2d inst. of the wounds inflicted upon him by a lawless mob on the 8th ult. In the death of Mr. Vann, his friends, and the nation generally, have met with a great loss.

We learn that a large number of Indians of different tribes are collecting upon the Arkansas, near the Santa Fe trail. Fears are entertained that their object is not a good one. We see, and the government will too, ere long, the necessity of a military post at that point: and none but mounted troops will answer for that service.

[Nat. Intel.]

David Vann was brutally attacked during the 1843 Cherokee election certification at Sam Bell's home.

He was beaten with clubs and hit in the head with a brickbat.

Several individuals intervened and were able to prevent John Work from landing a “finishing stroke from a bowie knife.” Vann was so seriously injured that it looked as if he might not survive.

1844

- Vann was serving his second term as treasurer.
- Selected as a delegate of the Clay Club of Washington, D.C.
- Suffered an “unprovoked, dastardly and assassin-like” attack by John Adair Bell.

WHIG MASS MEETING TO NIGHT



THE CLAY CLUBS

There was John Ross with his Scotch face, followed by the fat, aldermanic old gentleman Richard Taylor, his genteel nephew W. S. Coosly, and those handsome quadroons, (for they are little more) Walker, McVair, David Vann, John Drew and Richard Field. Then came the treaty party, headed by a remarkably handsome man, six feet high, George W. Adair, their chief, who was followed by that fierce and brave brother of the lamented Elias Boudinot, Stand Watie, John A. Bell, Joseph M. Lynch, (the latter are a couple of keen merchants, neither of whom would ever be suspected of having Indian blood,)

1845-1849

Vann was elected to a third term as treasurer in 1847 and served as a delegate to Washington in 1846 and 1849 as the Cherokee continued to pursue settlement of claims against the U.S.

we start back I shall not stop at any
place if William should wish to stop in
Philadelphia he can do so & I will go on
we will leave here in the morning for
Boston. I have no news to write but what
you have already heard about the landing
of Gen. Lopez in Cuba
your friend & obt. Servt
David Vane

Letter to John Drew - May 1850



1850 Visit to the Lake House

“I wrote a few lines to Major Richardson a few days ago requesting him to save me some peech seed from my old orchard (those large white peeches) ... Give my respects to your family and accept for yourself my best wishes for your health and prosperity.

Your friend and obt. svt., David Vann.”

1851 Visit to Silver Mine

In a letter dated Feb. 2, 1851, William Smith wrote David Vann concerning their silver mine in Alabama. The letter references Vann's departure from Gunter's Landing and Smith's subsequent acquisition of a lot they wanted. The letter also mentions that Col. Cunningham M. Penningham, with whom he and Vann had traveled with to visit the mine on Sand River, had taken 8-10 pounds of the best ore they could find in hopes of getting it assessed.



51-36
Know all men by these presents that I
David Vann by the authority vested in me
by law do hereby grant John Drew license
to practice law in all the Courts of the
Cherokee Nation he having complied
with the law by paying twenty dollars.
Nov 19th 1851
David Vann
Treasurer

Vann Elected to Fourth Term as Treasurer in 1851

1861: The Civil War Begins

David Vann was a slave owner and closely aligned with the Confederate Party. During the Civil War, he enlisted in Company C of Drew's Regiment, Second Cherokee Mounted Volunteers, commanded by Captain John Porum Davis. This unit was pro-Confederacy and affiliated with Stand Watie.

December 23, 1863: The Death of David Vann

“He was at home; a party of six men rode up to his house, just at dark, called him out on the porch, and shot him through the head just above the left eye. He died instantly. His wife and daughter were present. The latter walked alone that night to Mrs. Williams’, from ten to fifteen miles, to obtain help to bury him. The deed is charged upon six white men, supposed to be Texans or Missourians.”

- from the papers of Chief John Ross



Vann's Legacy

