

QUALLATOWN, N.C.

A CONFEDERATE CHEROKEE INDIAN COMMUNITY

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The Cherokee Indians have a rich history in North Carolina. In the early 1800s, the Cherokee adopted a tribal governing structure that included a written constitution. They also adopted courts, schools and a written language all their own. In 1838, the desire for more land and the discovery of gold caused the U.S. government to move most of the Cherokees along the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma. Of the more than 16,000 Cherokee that were forced to move, nearly half died along the way.

A few of the Cherokee remained in the Blue Ridge Mountains by hiding in the rough terrain. In 1850, it was estimated 1,000 Cherokee were living in the North Carolina area.

With the help of William H. Thomas, a storekeeper in the area, the Cherokee began to purchase land. This land would eventually total more than 57,000 acres. In 1870, the Cherokee formed a corporation to be able to purchase more land. In 1876, the U.S. government first surveyed this land and identified it as the Qualla Boundaries, which would later be put in a land trust for the eastern band of the Cherokee. Figure 1 is a portion of the 1884 post road map showing the Quallatown location.

The first post office was opened in Quallatown in 1839. The second postmaster was William H. Thomas, the storekeeper who was helping the Indians purchase land. Quallatown was first located in Haywood County, approximately 3½ miles southwest of the present day town of Cherokee. In 1851, the county boundaries changed, and it became located in Jackson County.

In 1852, James W. Terrell (Figure 2) came to Quallatown where he and Thomas (the aforementioned storekeeper and postmaster), who was then in the state Senate, became partners in the tanning business. After a year, he sold his interest in the business to Thomas and became the manager of all of Thomas' businesses in Quallatown, including a store, tanyard, boot and shoe shop, a blacksmith's shop and a wagon-making shop. He was also serving as postmaster by this time,



Figure 1 (above).

Figure 2 (right).



having been appointed in 1852. He would serve throughout the war as the official Confederate postmaster. Figure 3 is the only known cover posted in Quallatown during the war. The typical straw Confederate paper is the identifying trait of the Confederate-era cover.

James Whaley Terrell has an interesting history himself. His grandfather was Joel Terrell, who *“was wounded at the battle of Guilford when he was only sixteen; his great grandfather John Williams was at Yorktown with General Washington; his mother’s grandfather Kilpatrick fought under General Morgan at Cowpens; his mother’s other grandfather Thomas Wharey was a prisoner of the British during the war.”*

After the Cherokee removal, Terrell became the disbursing agent for the Cherokee Indians. He would travel from Knoxville across the Smoky Mountains carrying saddlebags full of gold that was due the Indians, under the terms of the Treaty of New Echota. During these trips, he would often stay in the homes of strangers. Once, while his family was away from home, his house was burned to the ground, presumably by thieves. No gold was ever recovered.

In April 1862, Terrell joined the “Thomas Confederate Legion,” made up of native Cherokee Indians and mountaineers from North Carolina and Tennessee. The legion was raised by Col. William H. Thomas, who resigned his position in the Senate to lead this unit. Their purpose was to defend the mountain passes from East Tennessee into Western North Carolina. The unit was the last unit in North Carolina to capitulate at the end of the war. There is a marker at White Sulphur Springs near Waynesville indicating the spot where on May 6, 1865, the last shot was fired. In an autobiographical sketch, Capt. Terrell claims to be the one who fired that shot. Figure 4 is a photo of the monument on the site where this shot was fired.



Figure 4.

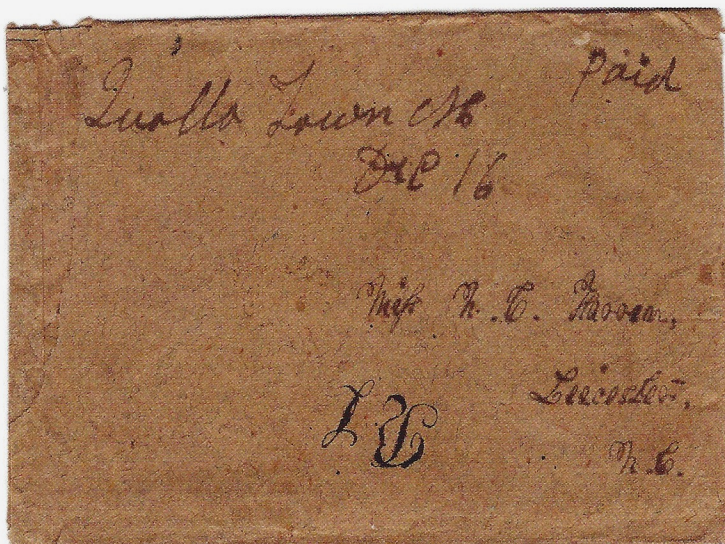


Figure 3.

After the war, Terrell continued an active life in the mountain area. He served many political jobs including North Carolina legislature, director of the Western North Carolina Railroad and Jackson County Board of Education chairman. Capt. Terrell died at the home of his daughter on Dec. 26, 1908, in his home town, then called Qualla, N.C.

SOURCES:

Jackson County Heritage North Carolina, Vol 1, 1992.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualla_boundary

<https://docsouth.UNC.edu/commland/monument/277/>

www.ncpedia.org/qualla-boundary

North Carolina Post Offices and Postmasters, Vol. II, 1996, Vernon Stroupe, editor.