

Chief Vann House and the Trail of Tears

The next meeting of the Georgia Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association will be held at the Chief Vann House in Chatsworth, GA on Saturday, November 8, 2008 at 10:30 AM. Following the meeting, attendees will have the opportunity to tour the house and grounds. If you would like to bring a picnic lunch, there is a picnic area not too far from the Vann House. We will also provide directions to restaurants in Chatsworth.

The Chief Vann House, called the “Showplace of the Cherokee Nation”, was built in 1804 by James Vann, one of the richest men in the United States at the time. The son of a white father and Cherokee mother, he was one of the few Cherokees who could read English. He became a wealthy farmer, slaveholder and respected negotiator for the Cherokee Nation.

In 1800, he convinced Moravian missionaries to build a mission and a school in Spring Place near the yet-to-be-built house. Due to skillful negotiations with the U. S. government, the Federal Road built in 1805 passed by his tavern and ferry on the Chattahoochee River as well as by his home in Spring Place.

Unfortunately he had a weakness for alcohol and treated his wives (several) and slaves poorly. He also had a quick temper and reportedly killed several men including a brother-in-law. This side of his nature finally caught up with him when he was murdered at Buffington’s Tavern in 1809 at the age of 43. At that time he owned about 200 slaves and hundreds of acres of farmland.

Chief Vann’s eldest son Joseph, who had been educated by the Moravians, inherited the house. “Rich Joe” Vann also became a prominent Cherokee statesman. In 1835 he and his family were forced out of the house by the Georgia militia. He settled in the Cherokee territory in Oklahoma where he lived until killed in a steamboat explosion in 1844.

The house had fallen into disrepair by the 1950s. Restoration began in 1951 and was completed in 1963. It is on the Georgia Register of Historic Places and also a certified site on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. It was the first brick home in the Cherokee Nation. This two-story classic mansion is decorated with beautiful hand carvings and features a remarkable “floating” staircase along with many fine antiques.

Please come to our meeting on Nov. 8th and learn more about the Chief Vann House and the projects currently being worked on by the Trail of Tears Association. Our meetings are free and open to the public. You need not have Native American ancestry, just an interest and desire to learn more about this fascinating and tragic event. The Chief Vann House is located west of Chatsworth at the intersection of Georgia Hwys. 225 and 52-A. This is northeast of Calhoun and almost due east of Dalton.

The phone number for the Chief Vann House is 706-695-2598. For more information about the Trail of Tears Association, visit the National website at www.nationaltota.org, the Georgia website at www.gatrailoftears.org or contact Linda Baker at 770-704-6338 or badnil@alltel.net.