

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**
**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

RECEIVED 2280

AUG 21 2007

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property
historic name Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)other names/site number Blythe Ferry Site; Trail of Tears Roadbed
2. Location
street & number Highway 60 at Tennessee RiverN/A ☐ not for publicationcity or town Birchwood☒ vicinitystate Tennessee code TN county Meigs code 121 zip code 37308
3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Bridgette H. Ellis 8/16/07
Federal Preservation Officer and Senior Vice President, Office of Environment and
State or Federal agency and bureau Research, Tennessee Valley Authority

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Richard H. Combs 8/16/07
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.☐ See continuation sheet☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National
Register.☐ other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Eileen H. Beall10.3.07

Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)

Name of Property

Meigs County, TN

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private

☐ public-local

☐ public-State

☒ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☐ building(s)

☐ district

☒ site

☐ structure

☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

0

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Resources of Meigs County, Tennessee

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: water-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation NA

walls N/A

roof N/A

other EARTH, STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Attached Sheets.

Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)

Meigs County, TN

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register.)

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations NA

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☒ previously listed in the National Register

☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Native American

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

circa 1838

Significant Dates

1838 – Cherokee Removal

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
Name of Property

Meigs County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.53 acres Graysville, Tenn. 111 NE

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>680818</u>	<u>3920058</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>16</u>	<u>680970</u>	<u>3919758</u>

3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Archambault/Historic Preservation Planner
organization Southeast Tennessee Development District date January 26, 2007
street & number 535 Chestnut Street, 3rd Floor telephone 423-424-4266
city or town Chattanooga state TN zip code 37402

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Tennessee Valley Authority, c/o Federal Preservation Officer
street & number 400 W. Summit Hill Drive telephone 865-632-2101
city or town Knoxville state TN zip code 37902-1499

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
 Meigs County, TN

VII. Narrative Description

Listed in the National Register on January 5, 1983, Blythe Ferry is located in Meigs and Rhea counties on Blythe Ferry Road near Tennessee State Highway 60. It was used from the early nineteenth century until 1994. Now owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) it is situated near the future site of the Cherokee Memorial Visitors Center and Park and the site of the Hiwassee Wildlife Bird Refuge, which is operated by the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA). On September 14, 2006 the National Register approved additional documentation for Blythe Ferry. This additional information recognized the significance of the site's association with the 1838 Cherokee removal, the Trail of Tears, and officially removed the barge and ferry from the nomination. At the same time, criterion B was added due to the historic significance of William Blythe.

The revised Blythe Ferry nomination has a period of significance from circa 1809 to 1940. The areas of significance are Native American ethnic heritage, exploration/settlement, military history (Civil War), social history, transportation, and politics/government. Criteria A and B are included in the nomination. The purpose of this amendment is to extend the nominated boundary to include a section of an existing roadbed in Meigs County, which was used as a Cherokee Removal Route along the Trail of Tears in 1838. The roadbed is an early 19th century dirt wagon road with naturally occurring rock. The roadbed abuts the listed property and extends approximately two tenths of a mile southeast of the nominated Blythe's Ferry landing and is located directly southwest of the present asphalt covered Blythe Ferry Road. The Trail of Tears roadbed is currently overgrown with trees and brush, but maintains some visible areas demonstrating physical evidence of this early 19th century transportation route.

This stretch of roadbed retains the original setting, feeling, and association of wagon roads that were widely prevalent in the region in the early 1800s. Earth and rock, not modern paving materials, characterize the roadbed. The rural setting of the roadbed has been maintained, as it is characterized by agricultural use and woodlands.

The original nominated boundary on the south side of Blythe Ferry landing (Meigs Co.) begins on the south bank of the Tennessee River, 150 feet northeast of the centerline of Tennessee State Highway 60. The ferry landing is located at an opening on a rocky bluff directly southwest of Blythe Ferry Road near a small rock outcropping. Directly southeast of the ferry landing and rock outcropping is a paved parking area, which connects to Blythe Ferry Road. The original nominated boundary is approximately twenty feet wide, extending northeast to Blythe Ferry Road and southwest into a shallow inlet. The Trail of Tears roadbed extended boundary abuts this present National Register boundary running southeast between Blythe Ferry Road and the shallow inlet.

The Trail of Tears roadbed proposed to be added to the nomination extends approximately two-tenths mile southeast of the Blythe Ferry's south landing and parking area to the entrance sign for the Cherokee Memorial Park, and approximately twenty feet south of the ferry landing towards the shallow inlet. As a result of the flooding to create Chickamauga Lake, a portion of the roadbed's south boundary is inundated by water during the spring and summer months, however, this only affects approximately a five-foot width of the roadbed. The Trail of Tears dirt roadbed runs parallel with the present Blythe Ferry Road until it is termi-

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nated by the asphalt covered Blythe's Ferry Road near the Cherokee Memorial Park entrance sign. At this point, the roadbed's integrity has been affected by modern paving materials causing it to lose historic significance. The two-tenths mile segment of roadbed being nominated retains it integrity of location and setting, where it is in its original location and the surrounding countryside retains it general physical appearance from its period of significance.

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Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
Meigs County, TN

VIII. Statement of Significance

The boundary increase for the Blythe Ferry nomination is being nominated under criterion A for local significance for its association as a removal route for the Cherokee during the 1838 Trail of Tears. The extended boundary still maintains the characteristics of an early 19th century road, which include setting, feeling, and association. It also demonstrates the conditions of the road during the Cherokee Removal. In 1838, the roadbed and attached ferry site were used to transport approximately 9,000 Cherokees, hundreds of black slaves, and more than 300 Creeks. This extended roadbed boundary significantly enhances the Blythe Ferry National Register nomination and property, because it provides physical evidence of the Trail of Tears and Cherokee social history.

The roadbed at Blythe Ferry, near the confluence of the Tennessee and Hiwassee rivers, serves as a physical reminder of the government's removal policies for the Cherokee in 1838. In addition, the trail, and adjacent property, owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority, is representative of the social history and ethnic heritage of the Cherokee people. The historical significance of existing Trail of Tears' roadbeds has been well documented in the "Historic and Historic Archaeological Resources of the Cherokee Trail of Tears" National Register Multiple Property Submission in October of 2003.

The existing two-tenths mile Trail of Tears roadbed, located at Blythe Ferry near Birchwood in Meigs County, Tennessee, serves as the physical remains of a portion of the Northern Route, which crossed the Tennessee River and led west on the long journey to Oklahoma. In the summer of 1838, a group of Cherokees, Creeks, and enslaved African Americans traveled west from Fort Cass in Charleston, Bradley County, Tennessee to the banks of the Tennessee River, where some detachments were delayed a few months due to the low water levels at Blythe Ferry.

The roadbed and its significance can be better understood within the context of the acts and treaties that were established in the 1830s, which created the forced removal of the Native Americans from their homeland. The plan to remove the Native Americans in the southeastern United States was made official when the U.S. Congress, under President Andrew Jackson, passed the Indian Removal Act in May of 1830.¹ The act gave land west of the Mississippi River to the Five Civilized Tribes, who included the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Chickasaws, and Choctaws, in exchange for their territory in the southeast. In 1835, the Treaty of New Echota established a deadline of May 23, 1838 for the removal of the Cherokees. However, the physical, forced removal was delayed until the late summer of that year.

The first detachment to cross the Tennessee at Blythe Ferry was led by Hair Conrad (Hair Conrad Cabin NR 9/13/76) the last week of August 1838, and the final detachment, led by Peter Hildebrand, crossed the river at this location in early November. This route was used because of the well-established road leading to the ferry crossing at the river. Ferry operations, started by William Blythe and his family, began in this location circa 1809 and Blythe continued to operate the ferry until 1839. Blythe Ferry served as an important thoroughfare across the Tennessee River between Knoxville and Ross's Landing (NR 6/27/74) for business and travel.²

¹ United States Government, Indian Removal Act of 1830, Chap. CXL VIII.

² Holmes, Tony. "Early Cherokee ferry crossings of the eastern Tennessee River basin." *The Journal of East Tennessee History*, Vol. 62. East Tennessee Historical Society Publications: Knoxville, 1990, p. 78. See also, Martin, Sarah and Van West, Dr. Carroll, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form,

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John Ross organized thirteen detachments, comprised of approximately 1,000 Cherokees each.³ At least two of the detachments traveled as far as the Tennessee River at Blythe Ferry in late August, and seven more detachments followed, where they were forced to wait for the next two months.⁴ The three detachments, which included the Lt. Edward Deas, Lt. R.H.K. Whitely, and Capt. G.S. Crane parties in June of 1838, embarked from Ross's Landing, which is located approximately thirty-five miles south of Blythe Ferry along the Tennessee River.⁵ These detachments traveled mostly by water aboard steamboats to Indian Territory via northern Alabama, Memphis, and central Arkansas. During some cases of low water levels, detachments had to travel overland.⁶

An encampment of approximately 9,000 Cherokee, hundreds of black slaves, and more than 300 Creeks waited at Blythe's Ferry, located below the mouth of the Hiwassee River near the old Cherokee town of Cayouka on Hiwassee Island, from September until mid-November until the rains were able to raise the water levels in the Tennessee River.⁷ While multiple groups were departing for the West from Ross's Landing in October, the Cherokee's inevitable fate in Meigs County was delayed.⁸

The portion of the Trail of Tears at Blythe Ferry near Birchwood in Meigs County, Tennessee remains an extremely important section because it served as a heavily used thoroughfare during Cherokee removal.⁹ Although the Cherokee removal began with the Indian Removal Act of 1830, it officially became reality when the Cherokee and Creek Indians began the journey west, crossing the Tennessee River in route to Park Hill, Oklahoma via Pikeville, McMinnville, and proceeding to Nashville; Hopkinsville, Kentucky; Golconda, Illinois; and Cape Girardeau, Missouri.¹⁰

The road that existed from Fort Cass in Charleston to Blythe Ferry near Birchwood followed the Hiwassee River and ran close to present-day state routes 308 and 306. The present Georgetown Road, which connects Cleveland and Blythe Ferry, follows the same approximate course as well. Because of modern highway construction and flooding to create Chickamauga Lake, many sections of the road have disappeared or have been significantly altered. Thus, the originally nominated property and the boundary increase are an important extant representation of the Trail of Tears and it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A.

"Blythe Ferry," (Additional documentation), September 14, 2006, Section 8 Page 3.

³ Moulton, Gary. *John Ross: Cherokee Chief*. The University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1978, p. 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Thomason, Phillip, and Parker, Sara. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. "Historic and Historical Archaeological Resources of the Cherokee Trail of Tears, October 2003, Section E, Pages 19-20, 76-79.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷ Duncan, Barbara R. Duncan and Riggs, Brett H. *Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2003, p. 282.

⁸ Moulton, *John Ross*, p. 99.

⁹ Holmes, "Early Cherokee ferry crossings of the eastern Tennessee River basin," p. 78.

¹⁰ Moulton, *John Ross*, pp. 99-100, and Ehle, John. *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation*. Anchor Books: New York, 1988, p. 352.

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Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
Meigs County, TN

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Duncan, Barbara R. Duncan and Riggs, Brett H. *Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2003.

Ehle, John. *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation*. Anchor Books: New York, 1988.

Holmes, Tony. "Early Cherokee ferry crossings of the eastern Tennessee River basin." *The Journal of East Tennessee History*, Vol. 62. East Tennessee Historical Society Publications: Knoxville, 1990.

Martin, Sarah and West, Dr. Carroll Van, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Blythe Ferry." (Additional documentation.) September 14, 2006.

Moulton, Gary. *John Ross: Cherokee Chief*. The University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1978.

Thomason, Phillip and Parker, Sara. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Historic and Historical Archaeological Resources of the Cherokee Trail of Tears." October 2003.

United States Government, Indian Removal Act of 1830, Chap. CXL VIII.

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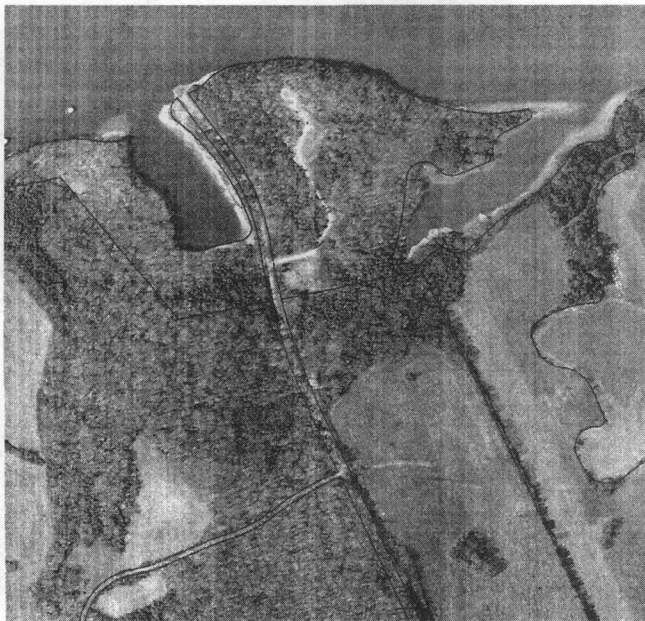
Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
Meigs County, TN

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal boundary description and boundary justification:

The Trail of Tears roadbed nominated boundary is located at Blythe Ferry on the Tennessee River and along Blythe Ferry Road near Birchwood, Tennessee in Meigs County. The Blythe Ferry nominated boundary increase is listed on the Meigs County Tax Map 65, part of Tax Parcel 2. The boundary increase includes 1.53 acres of land, which is owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The Trail of Tears roadbed extended boundary abuts the present National Register boundary running southeast between Blythe Ferry Road and the shallow inlet to the Cherokee Memorial entrance sign where the roadbed is terminated. It is approximately two-tenths of a mile long and 20 feet wide.

The original nominated boundary on the south side of Blythe Ferry landing (Meigs Co.) begins on the south bank of the Tennessee River, 150 feet northeast of the centerline of Tennessee State Highway 60. The ferry landing is located at an opening on a rocky bluff directly southwest of Blythe Ferry Road near a small rock outcropping. Directly southeast of the ferry landing and rock outcropping is a paved parking area, which connects to Blythe Ferry Road. The original nominated boundary is approximately 20 feet wide, extending northeast to Blythe Ferry Road and southwest into a shallow inlet.



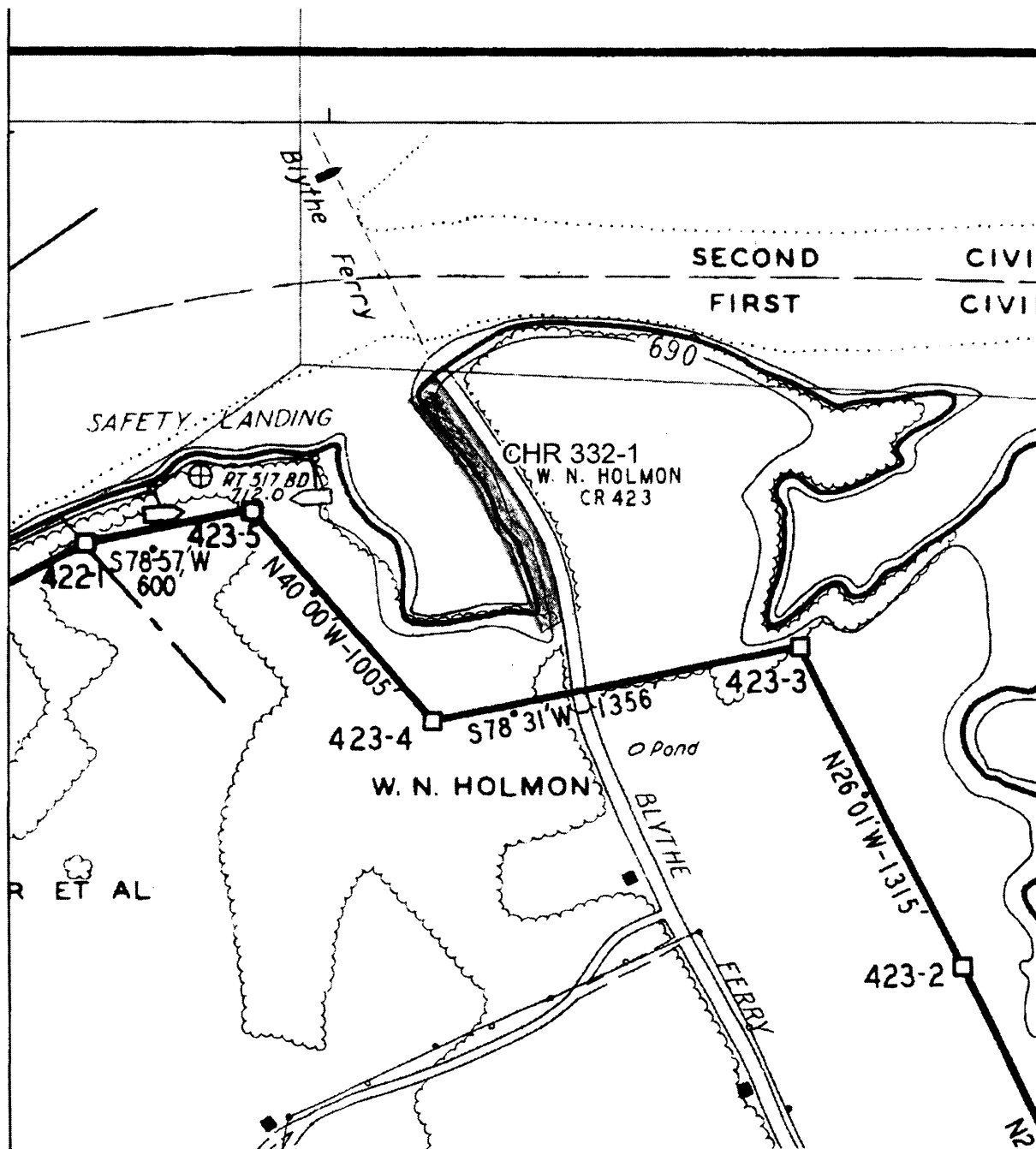
orthophoto of nominated area

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Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
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Tax map 65 1" = approx. 650' N↑

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Blythe Ferry (boundary increase)
Meigs County, TN

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs by: Paul Archambault
Southeast Tennessee Development District
Chattanooga, TN 37402

Date: December 2006

1 of 14

Trail of Tears roadbed/parking area, view SE

2 of 14

Blythe Ferry landing, view NE towards Rhea County

3 of 14

Blythe Ferry landing, view S towards shallow inlet and Highway 60 bridge

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End of Trail of Tears roadbed, view SE

5 of 14

Edge of Trail of Tears roadbed, shallow inlet located south, view SE

6 of 14

Trail of Tears roadbed, view SE

7 of 14

Trail of Tears roadbed with overgrowth, view SE

8 of 14

Trail of Tears roadbed edge, shallow inlet located S

9 of 14

Trail of Tears roadbed with overgrowth, view NW

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View towards Blythe Ferry, roadbed located north, view NW

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End of Trail of Tears roadbed at Blythe Ferry Road/Cherokee Memorial sign, view E

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Blythe Ferry Road, Trail of Tears roadbed below left, view NW

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Blythe Ferry Road, Trail of Tears roadbed below left, view NW

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Trail of Tears roadbed along Blythe Ferry Road, view SE