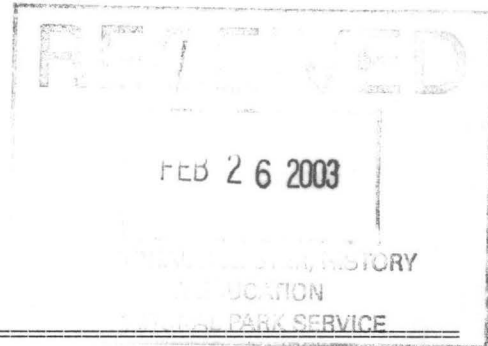


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

193



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Memphis to Little Rock Road – Village Creek Segment

Other Name/Site Number: CS0039

2. Location

Street & Number: East of Lake Austell within Village Creek State Park

Not for Publication: NA

City/Town: Newcastle

Vicinity: X

State: AR County: Cross/St. Francis Code: AR037/AR123 Zip Code: 72396

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-state

Category of Property: Structure

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing Noncontributing

___	___	buildings
___	___	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
___	___	objects
___	___	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Archeological Resources Associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

 2/21/03
Signature of certifying official Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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):

for Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Daniel J. Van
April 11, 2003

6. Function or Use

Historic: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related

Current : RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: outdoor recreation
TRANSPORATION pedestrian-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification: No style

Materials: foundation Earth roof NA
walls NA other NA

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary:

The Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment – Village Creek State Park is a remnant of the early nineteenth century road built to connect Little Rock with the Mississippi River through the vast swamps of eastern Arkansas. The 1.5-mile segment running through Village Creek State Park is the best surviving stretch of that road and, with its towering earthen borders, one of the most dramatic.

Elaboration:

A 1.5-mile segment of the Memphis to Little Rock Road traverses the loess soil of Crowley's Ridge at Village Creek State Park; the entire segment is within park boundaries. Its eastern terminus lies on the west bank of Village Creek at the site of a modern suspension footbridge in Section 18, Township 6 North, Range 4 East. It goes northwest, cuts sharply south, then follows a gentle northeasterly course through the southwest corner of Section 7, Township 6 North, Range 4 East and the southeast corner of Section 12, Township 6 North, Range 4 East to its terminus in the north central section of Section 13, Township 6 North, Range 4 East at the park boundary at the edge of a deep ravine east of the area where State Road 306 and State Road 284 form a junction.

The road segment is unsurfaced, though parts travel through mown grass segments between dramatic areas where the loess soil is cut to depths of approximately 30 feet. The road is between 20 and 25 feet wide throughout its length. With the exception of the modern footbridge and a railroad tie stairway where a hiking trail enters the road segment, there are no modern intrusions. Most of the roadbed is included in the Military Road Trail, including those sections with the most dramatically eroded banks, but after the trail cuts north the Memphis to Little Rock Road segment continues westerly into an area that includes other sections with steep bank cuts. An intensive survey of the entire route of the Bell Detachment of the Cherokee Trail of Tears conducted by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and Dr. Duane King of the Museum of the Southwest utilizing historic maps, historical accounts and modern quad maps concludes that the Village Creek State Park section of the Memphis to Little Rock Road is the most-intact extant section of the road in the entire state.

The Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment – Village Creek State Park conforms to the route of the original road built to connect Little Rock with the Mississippi River as built by A. Carr in 1828 and thus has excellent integrity of location. It retains the physical characteristics of an early nineteenth-century roadbed, including its original widths and embankments and unimproved surface materials, giving excellent integrity of design, materials and workmanship. Its location in an unimproved area atop Crowley's Ridge in east Arkansas provides for unsurpassed integrity of feeling, setting and association. The Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment – Village Creek State Park is in a class of its own among identified extant sections of the Cherokee Trail of Tears in Arkansas.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: National.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA

Areas of Significance: Ethnic Heritage: Native American
Exploration/Settlement
Transportation

Period(s) of Significance: 1828-1838

Significant Dates: NA

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Anderson B. Carr, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

SUMMARY:

The Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment – Village Creek State Park is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with National significance by virtue of its status as one of the most-intact surviving segments of the roads traversed by the Bell Detachment during the Cherokee Removal. Its association with the earlier Choctaw, Creek and Chickasaw Removals augment its importance, as does its role in the opening of eastern Arkansas as a means of westward emigration. The property is being submitted for National Register recognition under the multiple-property listing “Historic and Archeological Resources Associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears.”

ELABORATION:

Construction of the Military Road

The Memphis to Little Rock Road, also known as the Military Road, was authorized on January 31, 1824, when the U.S. Congress passed an act for construction of a road opposite Memphis, Tennessee, through the swamps of east Arkansas to the territorial capital of Arkansas at Little Rock.¹ Surveyors Joseph Paxton and Thomas Mathers and Memphis contractor Anderson B. Carr were hired to lay out a route for the proposed road.² Paxton and Mathers (Carr resigned from the team amid disagreement with the others about the best route to follow in crossing the White River) reported to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun on February 12, 1825, that they had selected the best possible route through eastern Arkansas, including the point where it would cross Crowley's Ridge, a loess soil ridge towering over the miasmal swamps of east Arkansas:

“Passing up the valley of Village Creek, this road rises the hills of St. Francis on a fine Slope and passes without any difficulties through the rich, Military lands to the river Languelle.”³

Lt. Frederick L. Griffith was appointed superintendent of the Memphis to Little Rock Road on January 27, 1826, with instructions to make a road “at least twenty four feet wide throughout” with all timber and brush removed and stumps cut as low as possible, marshes and swamps to be “causewayed with poles or split timber,” and ditches four feet wide and three feet deep to be dug on either side of the road. “The hills on the route are to be dug down and wound round in such a manner as to make them practicable for carriages or loaded wagons,” Griffith was instructed.⁴

Griffith advertised for contractors for the first section of the road, receiving criticism that Arkansas citizens were not informed and given an opportunity to bid on the road project.⁵ The *Arkansas Gazette* reported on July 25, 1826, that Griffith “entered into private contracts with Messrs. A. Carr, N. Anderson and W. Irwin of Memphis, for opening 60 miles of the road, commencing at the point where the road leaves the Mississippi, four miles above Memphis, at the rate of \$160 per mile, with considerable deviation from the original proposals; and for the four miles immediately above Memphis, with a Mr. Hunt, also of Tennessee. The 64 miles which have thus been contracted for will open the road nearly to Bayou de View. The work is to be commenced in September, and completed in January next.”⁶ This contract also spent everything remaining from the Congressional appropriation for building the entire Memphis to Little Rock Road. The first section of the road was finished and the second section started by September 14, 1826. Lt. Charles Thomas replaced Griffith as superintendent on the project in October 1826.⁷

Despite problems with the health of workers in swampy eastern Arkansas, Thomas reported to Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup on January 17, 1827, that Carr was making good progress on his road contract, which was to continue to the 64th mile from the Mississippi River, located west of the Languille River.⁸ The lieutenant complained bitterly of the Paxton and Mathers report, reporting inaccuracies in both their blazing of the trail and their description of the land through which it passed. “For instance,” Thomas complained, “they ‘positively aver’ after crossing the Saint Francis ‘that the road will no where be subject to inundation from any river &c’ when they were informed by persons well acquainted with the country & it is also evident from the water marks

on the trees, that the county is subject to be overflowed in some places as much as eight feet and by the Mississippi & St. Francis Rivers.”⁹ While Blackfish and Shell Lakes could be traversed by ferries, Thomas concluded that the areas west of the ridge around Bayou de View and the Cache River were impenetrable and that a new route would be needed to reach the crossing of the White River.¹⁰

While seeking approval for the change in the route, Thomas went ahead and contracted for 15 miles of road to be built between Little Rock and Bayou Two Prairie near present-day Lonoke.¹¹ After the route change was approved, Thomas contracted with William Strong to bridge the Languille River and build the road from the 64th mile to the White River ferry at present-day Clarendon.¹² Strong had established a home at the eastern base of Crowley’s Ridge in 1827, constructing a house that was “four stories high, contained 20 rooms, with a veranda extending entirely around it, supported by red cedar posts, eight inches in diameter . . . It was the largest and most costly of any structure in the State at that time.”¹³ The pioneer obviously planned to profit from the traffic that would traverse the only road between the territorial capital at Little Rock and Memphis.

Strong bid \$1,600 to “open the road from the sixty fourth mile to White River in 93 ½ mile” in January 1828 and Thomas reported that he had completed the rugged stretch by June 1, 1828.¹⁴ Carr also finished his contracts by mid-1828, including the section that traversed Crowley’s Ridge above Strong’s place.¹⁵ By the end of August, the remaining sections between White River and Little Rock were completed and Little Rock and Memphis were connected.¹⁶ Thomas, tired of the heat and swamps of Arkansas, requested transfer to a northern post; instead, he was posted to fight Seminole Indians in Florida.¹⁷

Though finished, the road faced harsh treatment, particularly in its eastern reaches, which were subject to severe flooding and were indeed impassable for several months each year. In 1832, Samuel Dickins and six other Arkansians petitioned Congress to repair the road, which would encourage settlement and protect local residents from Indian attack.¹⁸ On July 3, 1832, Congress appropriated \$20,000 for repairs to the Memphis to Little Rock Road, with Territorial Governor John Pope using the money to improve the road between Little Rock and Strong’s. More congressional funding was sought for the more extensive work needed on the eastern reaches of the road, and Congress appropriated \$100,000 and ordered a new survey of the road from Memphis to Strong’s.¹⁹

Lt. Alexander H. Bowman was the third subaltern to tackle the difficult route through east Arkansas, arriving in Memphis in June 1834 with instructions to make contracts for improvements on the road between “a point on the Mississippi River, opposite Memphis, and terminat[ing] at the house of Wm Strong on St. Francis.” Bowman requested and in late 1835 received permission to construct an embankment “twenty four feet wide at the top, with suitable slopes, which shall be three feet above highest water” in the first four miles of the road, “creating a continuous levee, from the bank opposite Memphis to the highlands on the South Side of Grandee lake.” After one contractor abandoned the project after three-quarters of his 300-man crew fell ill in the July heat, Bowman hired a second contractor who used oxen and scrapers to create the embankment.²⁰ Though the initial miles opposite Memphis proved difficult, 23 miles of the road were completed by November 1834. After Arkansas became a state on June 15, 1836, Bowman was transferred to other duties as maintenance of the road became a local, as opposed to a federal, concern. During the years of federal involvement, it should be noted, Congress spent \$267,000 of the \$660,000 appropriated for territorial Arkansas’s transportation needs on

construction of the Memphis to Little Rock Road.²¹ The eastern section of the road would continue to suffer the effects of persistent flooding for years to come, with the *Arkansas Gazette* observing in 1837 that “Emigrants continue to flock to this part of the country but they do so at the risk and cost of passing the most disgraceful bogs, wilderness, and swamps that can be found.” The newspaper also advertised on May 23, 1837, that “the contractor on the Memphis and Little Rock Road (Wm. Strong, Esq.) advertises for one thousand laborers to go on that road for purposes of its completion.”²² For all intents and purposes, however, the road that would later become part of the Cherokee Trail of Tears between Memphis and Little Rock was complete.

Though this study focuses on the road’s importance to the Cherokee Removal, the building of the Memphis to Little Rock Road also opened an overland route between the Mississippi River and the state capital, the importance of which led the *Gazette* to observe: “We venture to assert that that there is no one single subject of so much importance to Arkansas as the having of good roads from the interior of the country, to the Mississippi river.”²³ Fifty-three years later, the writers of *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* acknowledged the road’s impact:

In 1832, the United States Government constructed a road west from Memphis to Little Rock, over which they moved the Indians from the States east of the Mississippi River. . . and immediately after its construction [it] became the grand highway for emigration for western points. This was the only passage through the Wilderness, as the Mississippi bottoms were called at that time, and Texas received its flood of pioneers from over this highway, as did Kansas, Nebraska and Western Missouri; so from the time of its completion till 1860 there was hardly a day of any month in all those years, but what, from any point along its path, long trains of wagons could be seen slowly wending their way beneath the overhanging trees, and through the swamps that often lay for many miles along their track.²⁴

Choctaw Removal Along the Memphis to Little Rock Road

Between 1786 and 1825, the Choctaw Nation and the United States government negotiated eight different treaties in which the Choctaws ceded rights to their ancestral lands in what is now the State of Mississippi. On October 27, 1830, a ninth treaty, the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, surrendered remaining Choctaw claims in Mississippi, setting the stage for the tribe’s removal to Indian Territory.²⁵ The first contingents of some 4,000 Choctaws set out under civilian leadership in November 1831, generally following land and/or water routes beginning from Memphis, Tennessee, or Vicksburg, Mississippi. None of these apparently utilized the Memphis to Little Rock Road in their travels. By March of 1832, 3,749 Choctaws were registered at four stations in Indian Territory.²⁶

In an effort to cut costs and increase efficiency, the next removal contingents were placed under the authority of the U.S. Army. While they would again depart from Memphis and Vicksburg, at least part of the emigrating Choctaws would travel by the Memphis to Little Rock Road.²⁷ On September 26, 1832, the *Arkansas Gazette* ran an advertisement for sealed proposals for prospective suppliers of rations and forage for the removal parties, stating that some would move “from Memphis, Tennessee, via Strong’s to Mouth of Cache on White

River, A.T.”, a route that would take them through the road section in what is now Village Creek State Park. “The calculation at present,” the *Gazette* article notes, “is that the Indians will reach the Mississippi by the 1st of November next.”²⁸

The Choctaws who rendezvoused at Memphis were split into two parties who would meet their fellow emigrants at Rock Roe on the White River. Though steamboats were available, many of the Indians were fearful of cholera and chose to travel overland under the command of Capt. William Armstrong. Following the Memphis to Little Rock Road, they entered a nightmarish landscape where fall flooding caused them to travel through knee- to waist-deep water for more than 30 miles. The parties consolidated at Rock Roe and by December 2, 1832, the last of the emigrants passed Little Rock. On December 5 the *Gazette* reported that “about 1200 Indians and 80 wagons ... who came through the Mississippi swamp from Memphis, and who design locating in the vicinity of the Arkansas, are probably now within about 75 miles of Fort Smith.” By February 5, 1832, around 5,000 Choctaws were in Indian Territory at the conclusion of the second phase of removal. The final phase of removal in 1833 would not involve the use of the Memphis to Little Rock Road.²⁹

Creek Removal Along the Memphis to Little Rock Road

Seven Creek chiefs signed a treaty in Washington, D.C. in March 1832, ceding all of the traditional Creek lands east of the Mississippi River to the U.S. government, thus culminating decades of negotiations and intratribal factionalism regarding ownership of the Creek homelands.³⁰ It was reported that year that 2,500 members of the Creek tribe moved west, leaving 20,000 more to be removed.³¹

The first major contingent to move through Arkansas was a party of 630 Creeks under the command of Capt. John Page in 1834. The party originated in Alabama, but split in January at Memphis, with the majority boarding steamboats for transport via the Mississippi, Arkansas and White rivers while another party drove the group’s pony herd along the Memphis to Little Rock Road. Poor boating conditions caused the riverine travelers to take almost three weeks to reach Little Rock, where they stopped on February 24, 1835. They camped north of the Arkansas River to await the overland group under William Beattie of the Sanford Emigrating Company. The reunited party left the Little Rock area on March 1. Only 469 of the 630 Creeks in the Page party were alive when it reached Fort Gibson on March 28, 1835.³²

A second party of 511 Creeks, conducted by Beattie but accompanied by Lt. Edward Deas of the U.S. Army, who sought to ensure the emigrants were properly supplied, left Alabama in December 1835. They reached Memphis and crossed the Mississippi on December 31. Again, the party split, with most traveling by boat as, Deas reported on January 1, 1836, “the Party with the Ponies were ... assembled opposite the town ... to proceed west through the Mississippi Swamp.” The Indians traveled by boat arrived near Little Rock on January 8 and five days later Deas reported that “the Party with the Ponies ... arrived within a quarter of a mile of this place this afternoon in good condition. This is the first time we have heard of them since leaving Memphis.” The group proceeded westward, arriving at Fort Smith on January 22 after delays caused by low water on the Arkansas River.³³

Several parties of Creeks headed west in Fall 1836, and a lack of transport led to some 13,000 Creeks

bottlenecked at Memphis in October. These groups were led by Capt. M.W. Batman, Lt. R. B. Screven, Marine Lt. John T. Sprague, Deas, and John A. Campbell. Sprague sought to steal a march on Batman and Screven, who had arrived at Memphis before him, to ensure his party received adequate measures of the scanty supplies set out for the Creek emigrants. Sprague put 1,300 people, mostly women and children, aboard the steamboat *John Nelson* and two flat boats and sent between 600 and 700 men with the group's horses along the Memphis to Little Rock Road through the Mississippi Swamp. Most of the overland group joined their river-borne companions opposite Little Rock on November 4, though many of the men stayed in the swamp to hunt bear. Sprague sent agents after these stragglers and brought them to the camps opposite Little Rock in mid-November. The Sprague party reached Fort Gibson on December 7, having lost only 29 people during the journey.³⁴

Screven's party of 3,142 Creeks also split at Memphis, with most going to Rock Roe by boat while the horse herd followed the Memphis to Little Rock Road, arriving opposite Little Rock on November 20.³⁵

Deas party, which numbered 2,320 when it left Alabama, set out from Memphis on November 5, 1836, intending to split as had the earlier groups. A sizeable group of Creeks refused to board the boats, choosing instead to follow the horse herd along the Memphis to Little Rock Road under the leadership of a conductor who Deas appointed. The water-borne party waited at Rock Roe, but only a portion of the overland party arrived with the conductor. After waiting two weeks, Deas set back toward Strong's place on the St. Francis River to round up the stragglers. He found 300-400 starving, stranded Creeks, some of whom had been with the parties of Batman and Screven, scattered along the route and arranged for their escort to join the rest of his band. Deas's main group arrived opposite Little Rock on November 27 and stayed there until December 9, allowing most of the stragglers to rejoin them. After moving three miles, he learned that another large group was still a few days behind him, so he again encamped until December 17. The Deas party finally arrived at Fort Gibson on January 23, 1837. His was the last major Creek removal party to travel the Memphis to Little Rock Road.³⁶

Chickasaw Removal Along the Memphis to Little Rock Road

On October 20, 1832, representatives of the Chickasaw Nation, under pressure from the U.S. government and white settlers anxious to move into the Chickasaw homelands in northern Mississippi and Alabama, signed the Treaty of Pontotoc in which the tribe ceded its property for sale as public land. The government would hold proceeds while tribe members decided where they wanted to move in the West.³⁷ An exploring party of 21 chiefs left Tusculum on October 16, 1833, crossing the Mississippi River at Memphis and then heading to Little Rock and on to Fort Towson – a journey that would have traversed the newly constructed Memphis to Little Rock Road.³⁸ Negotiations with the Choctaw Nation to procure western Choctaw land failed, as did similar parleys in November 1835. Finally, in January 1837 the Choctaw Nation sold a large strip in the western part of Choctaw lands in the Indian Territory for the use of the Chickasaw, also allowing the tribe to enjoy most of the privileges of Choctaw citizenship.³⁹

On March 9, 1837, A. M. M. Upshaw of Pulaski, Tennessee, was appointed superintendent of the Chickasaw removal. Upshaw established three camps in the Chickasaw Nation, and on July 4 he led a party of some 500 emigrants to Memphis.⁴⁰ John M. Millard, assisted by W.R. Guy, Capt. Joe A. Phillips and Dr. C. G. Keenan,

took over as the conductor of the party and crossed the Mississippi River to Arkansas.⁴¹ Millard, expecting additional Chickasaws to join his group and awaiting anticipated rations, tarried on the Arkansas side for three days before heading west on the Memphis to Little Rock Road. By the 9th of July they had crossed Blackfish Lake and by the 11th had traversed the section of road that now runs through Village Creek State Park. Millard's journal entry for the 11th reads:

Camp Marietta 3 Miles West of St. Francis –

*This has been a laborious drive today, but a good fortune has taken us through the great Mississippi Swamp, without any serious accident or ill luck but some slight injury to the wagons, which, as we remain here tomorrow can be easily repaired. The Sick who were sent by water to this place are convalescent – one yet remains on the sick report. All are doing well.*⁴²

The party remained at "Camp Marietta" on the 12th, with Millard reporting:

*We did not move today, but passed the time adjusting the baggage, examining the rolls and attending to other indispensable business.*⁴³

The Millard Party set out on the 13th and apparently followed the Memphis to Little Rock Road to the crossing of the White River, though they might have deviated somewhat in heading further south to the Rock Roe bridge. They apparently rejoined the road, however, as they arrived at Mrs. Black's public house in modern-day Monroe County on July 22. Traveling some nine miles per day, the party of 516 Indians, 551 ponies and 13 wagons arrived at modern-day North Little Rock on July 24. The party split up there, with Millard, Morris and Keenan taking 150 Chickasaws and all of the baggage on board the steamer *Indian* for transport to Fort Coffee in the Indian Territory, Guy leading a party of 30 Chickasaws, 100 horses and two wagons by land for the same destination, and the remaining Chickasaws, led by chief Sealy, headed southwest, "determined to go by Red River and stop, when and where they pleased."⁴⁴

After arriving at Fort Coffee on August 2, Millard returned to Little Rock and set out in pursuit of Sealy's detachment, finding "many of them very sick" only 35 miles from Little Rock. After battling a lack of provender and the depredations of horse thieves, the frustrated Millard finally threatened the slow-moving Chickasaws with the prospect of a full military escort if they did not follow his instructions. After much hardship, the remaining Chickasaws finally arrived in the Indian Territory and Millard left the party on September 10, 1837.⁴⁵

Millard rejoined Upshaw in Memphis, where the latter had assembled some 4,000 additional Chickasaw emigrants, most of whom would travel west by steamboat. Millard led another party along the Memphis to Little Rock Road, leaving Memphis around December 3.⁴⁶ The winter journey was more difficult as the Millard Party encountered the same difficulties that had bested the road's builders 10 years earlier. A correspondent to the *Arkansas Gazette* wrote the newspaper on December 11, 1837, that:

Capt. John Millard, conductor of a party of Chickasaw Indians, reached Strong's last evening,

with almost 300 Indians, 38 wagons, and 1100 Indian ponies. – The balance of his party, supposed to be from 700 to 800 in number, is still in the swamp, and will not reach here for some days owing to the desperate condition of the road. Capt. Millard thinks that not less than 70 or 80 Indian ponies have been bogged and left dead in the mud. This party will remain at this place for several days—indeed until the balance of the party comes up. The whole party of Indians, we understand, will come by the way of this place [Little Rock] – or rather, the opposite bank of the river.”⁴⁷

This party apparently followed the Military Road to Little Rock and would have traversed the section through today’s Village Creek State Park. After arriving at Little Rock, Millard convinced some of his charges to take steamboats the rest of the way to the Choctaw Nation, while the remainder traveled overland with their horses and oxen.⁴⁸

Cherokee Removal on the Memphis to Little Rock Road

The Cherokees who had signed the Treaty of New Echota traveled separately from their fellow tribesmen in a detachment that mixed-blood Cherokee John Bell conducted and for which U.S. Army Lt. Edward Deas was chief administrator. This detachment of some 660 Indians left the emigrating depot at Fort Cass near Charleston, Tennessee, on October 10, 1838. It was the only Cherokee Removal detachment that would take the Military Road from the Mississippi River to Little Rock and beyond.⁴⁹

Deas reported that the Bell Detachment had crossed the Mississippi by November 24, 1838, noting that he “shipped up the Arkansas River a considerable quantity of the Baggage, Potware &c. &c, on very low terms, which I think will result in a good deal of saving in time and expense.”⁵⁰ This report is the last known to survive from Deas during his travels with the Bell Detachment, but historian Duane King has assembled Deas’s expense vouchers from the National Archives, providing an account of where and when the Bell Detachment traveled along the Memphis to Little Rock Road.

Deas’s vouchers show that the party crossed Blackfish Lake on November 28, when he paid H.N. Ferguson to ferry the Cherokee across. Four vouchers show that the party purchased supplies from William Strong. Voucher #98 shows that on November 29 & 30, Strong ferried 650 Cherokees across the St. Francis River. Voucher #34 shows that on November 30, 1838, Deas purchased 50.5 bushels of cornmeal at \$1 per bushel and 1,776 pounds of beef at 4 ½ cents per pound for at total of \$130.42. Voucher #99, also dated November 30, shows Strong sold Deas 59 bushels of corn at \$1 per bushel and 1,016 bundles of fodder at \$4 per hundred bundles for at total of \$99.64. Each of these vouchers was paid off on December 2. An unnumbered voucher dated December 1, 1838 reads: “Recd of Dr Eddington Four dollars for 1 gallon of French Brandy for the Cherokee Emigration.” Based on these vouchers, it probably was between November 30 and December 4 (the date of the last voucher paid in St. Francis County) that the Bell Detachment traveled the well-established Memphis to Little Rock Road segment that now traverses Village Creek State Park.⁵¹

The Bell Detachment traveled 707 miles in 89 days and disbanded at Vinyard Post Office (present-day

Evansville) in Washington County, Arkansas, on January 7, 1839. Twenty-one of the 660 Cherokee Indians who began the journey in Tennessee died en route.⁵²

The Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment – Village Creek State Park is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with National significance by virtue of its status as what is probably the most-intact surviving segment of the roads traversed on the Bell Detachment during the Cherokee Removal. Its association with the earlier Choctaw, Creek and Chickasaw Removals and its role in opening eastern Arkansas to west-bound migration augments its importance. The property is being submitted for National Register recognition under the multiple-property listing “Historic and Archeological Resources Associated with the Cherokee Trail of Tears.”

9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property:

The roadbed runs through approximately 27 acres, but the physical acreage of the road itself is less than 10 acres.

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>708650</u>	<u>3891228</u>	B	<u>15</u>	<u>708461</u>	<u>3891179</u>
C	<u>15</u>	<u>708298</u>	<u>3891409</u>	D	<u>15</u>	<u>708135</u>	<u>3891501</u>
E	<u>15</u>	<u>707992</u>	<u>3891750</u>	F	<u>15</u>	<u>707945</u>	<u>3891635</u>
G	<u>15</u>	<u>707856</u>	<u>3891621</u>	H	<u>15</u>	<u>707754</u>	<u>3891683</u>
I	<u>15</u>	<u>707623</u>	<u>3891685</u>	J	<u>15</u>	<u>707323</u>	<u>3891827</u>
K	<u>15</u>	<u>707235</u>	<u>3891772</u>	L	<u>15</u>	<u>707117</u>	<u>3891780</u>
M	<u>15</u>	<u>707080</u>	<u>3891731</u>				

Verbal Boundary Description:

The property consists of a 30-foot wide strip of land connecting the following UTM points on the Wittsburg, Arkansas, quad map: A 15/708650/3891228; B 15/708461/3891179; C 15/708298/3891409; D 15/708135/3891501; E 15/707992/3891750; F 15/707945/3891635; G 15/707856/3891621; H 15/707754/3891683; I 15/707623/3891685; J 15/707323/3891827; K 15/707235/3891772; L 15/707117/3891780; M15/707080/3891731.

Boundary Justification:

The property boundaries encompass the visible roadway as determined through field survey and GPS documentation on February 23, 2001, by Mark Christ, Holly Hope, Jim Files and Zac Cothren of the AHPP staff.

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Mark Christ/Community Outreach Director

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: February 21, 2003

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

¹ Jennova Meals, "Paths of the Past: The Old Military Road in East Arkansas." Research Paper, 2.

² Julia Ward Longnecker, "A Road Divided: From Memphis to Little Rock Through the Great Mississippi Swamp." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XLIV, No. 3 (Autumn, 1985) 205.

³ Clarence E. Carter, comp. and ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States, XIX, Arkansas Territory, 1825-1829* (Washington, D.C., 1954) 769.

⁴ Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XX, 187-8.

⁵ Meals, 4-6.

⁶ *Arkansas Gazette*, July 25, 1826, p. 3, col. 2.

⁷ Meals, 6-7.

⁸ Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XX, 369; Duane King e-mail, July 8, 2002.

⁹ Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XX, 369.

¹⁰ Meals, 10.

¹¹ Longnecker, 210.

¹² Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XX, 570.

¹³ Robert W. Chowling, *History of St. Francis County* (Forrest City, AR: Times-Herald Publishing Co., 1954), 8.

¹⁴ Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XX, 585, 693.

¹⁵ Longnecker, 210.

¹⁶ Meals, 12.

¹⁷ Longnecker, 206.

¹⁸ Longnecker, 213.

¹⁹ Longnecker, 213-4.

²⁰ Longnecker, 215-217.

²¹ Meals, 15; S. Charles Bolton *Arkansas 1800-1860, Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1998) 43.

²² Michael B. Dougan, *Arkansas Odyssey* (Little Rock, AR: Rose Publishing Co., 1994) 119; *Arkansas Gazette*, May 23, 1837, p. 2, col. 1.

²³ *Arkansas Gazette*, May 23, 1837, p. 2, col. 1.

²⁴ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890), 396.

²⁵ Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr. "The Choctaw Removal of 1831: A Civilian Effort" *Journal of the West* Vol. 6, April 1967, 237.

²⁶ Jordan H. Glenn, "Choctaw Colonization in Oklahoma" *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. 54, Spring, 1976, 27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

²⁸ *Arkansas Gazette*, September 26, 1832, cited at http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/FT_Indian_Removal/Newspapers/FT_IR_Choctaw_3.htm, downloaded October 20, 2002.

²⁹ Glenn, "Choctaw Colonization," 29-30; *Arkansas Gazette*, December 5, 1832, cited at http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/FT_Indian_Removal/Newspapers/FT_IR_Choctaw_3.htm, downloaded October 20, 2002.

³⁰ William J. Savage, Jr. "Creek Colonization in Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, vol. 54, Spring 1976, 39-41.

³¹ Information from http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/FT_Indian_Removal/Site%20Reports/NLR/nlr_creek.htm downloaded January 16, 2003 (referred to hereafter as ANPA Creek Report).

³² ANPA Creek Report.

³³ ANPA Creek Report; Gaston Litton, ed. "The Journal of a Party of Emigrating Creek Indians, 1835-36," *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 7, May 1941, 235,237.

³⁴ ANPA Creek Report.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 197.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 204-6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴² J.M. Millard Journal, September 23, 1837, copy supplied by Dr. Dan Littlefield, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Foreman, 207-9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 209-12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 213-4.

⁴⁷ *Arkansas Gazette*, December 19, 1837, downloaded June 26, 2002, from http://www.anpa.ualr.edu/FT-Indian_Removal/Newspapers/FT_IR_Chickasaws.htm).

⁴⁸ Foreman, 214.

⁴⁹ Duane King, "The Emigration Route of the John A. Bell Detachment of Treaty Party Cherokees within the State of Arkansas, November 25, 1838 – January 7, 1839," Research Paper, 2001, 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28-9; copies of vouchers from National Archives supplied by Duane King.

⁵² King, "Emigration Route," 4.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 03000193

Date of Listing: April 11, 2002

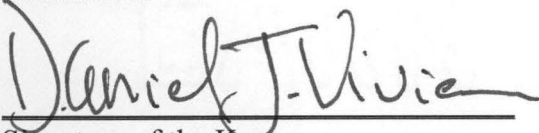
Property Name: Memphis to Little Rock Road – Village Creek Segment

County: Cross

State: Arkansas

none
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for 
Signature of the Keeper

April 11, 2002
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 10. Geographical Data

The nominated property occupies less than ten (10) acres.

The Arkansas State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Memphis to Little Rock Road--Village Creek Segment

MULTIPLE NAME: Cherokee Trail of Tears MPS

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Cross

DATE RECEIVED: 2/26/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/14/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/30/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/12/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000193

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT ☐ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Memphis to Little Rock Road – Village Creek State Park is significant under Criterion A as one of the most intact sections of road used during the Cherokee Removal along the Trail of Tears. In October 1838, a detachment of some 660 Cherokee left Fort Cass near Charleston, Tennessee, and moved westward, traversing the segment of road now within Village Creek State Park between November 30 and December 4. This section of road also derives significance from its association with earlier removals of Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw peoples and its role in westward settlement. The road retains integrity from its period of significance and reflects the history of the Trail of Tears.

RECOM./CRITERIA A

REVIEWER Daniel Vivian

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE (202) 354-2252

DATE April 11, 2003

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/☒ see attached SLR ☒/N



Memphis to Little Rock Road-Village Creek State Park Segment
Newcastle vic, St. Francis Co, AR
Photo by Z. Cothren
Feb. 2001
Negative on file at AHPP
View from southeast, east end of road



Memphis to Little Rock Road - Village Creek State Park Segment
Newcastle vic, St. Francis Co, AR

Photo by Z. Cothren

Feb. 2001

Negative on file at AHPP

View from southeast, east section of road



Memphis to Little Rock Road-Village Creek State Park Segment
Newcastle vic., St. Francis Co, AR

Photo by Z. Cothren

Febr. 2001

Negative on file at AHPP

View from northwest, east section of road



Memphis to Little Rock Road-Village Creek State Park Segment
Newcastle vic, Cross Co, AR

Photo by Z. Cothren

Feb. 2001

Negative on file at AHPP
View of upper west center of nominated roadbed



Memphis to Little Rock Road - Village Creek State Park Segment

Newcastle Vicinity, Cross Co, AR

Photo by Z. Cothren

Feb. 2001

Negative on file at AHPP

View from east toward western end of road



Memphis to Little Rock Road - Village Creek State Park Segment

Newcastle vic., Cross Co, AR

Photo by Z. Cothren

Feb. 2001

Negative on file at AHPP

View from west near line separating Range 3 East from Range 4 East



Memphis to Little Rock Road-Village Creek State Park Segment

New castle vic. Cross Co., AR

Photo by Z. Cothren

Feb. 2001

Negative on file at AHPP

View from west south west of Lake Austell



Memphis to Little Rock Road-Village Creek State Park Segment
New castle vic., Cross Co, AR
Photo by Z. Cothren
Feb. 2001
Negative on file at AHPP
View from northwest in east section



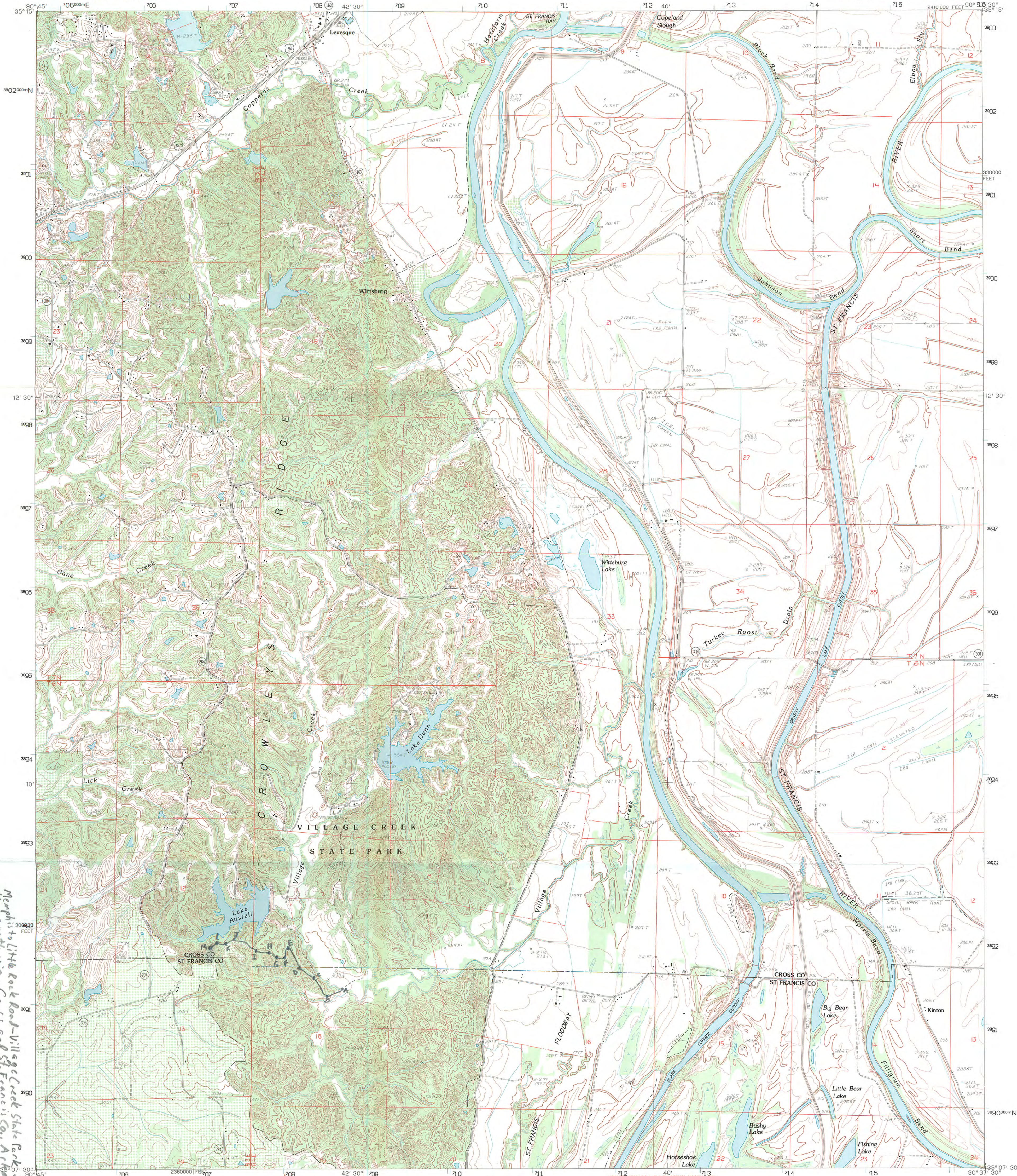
Memphis to Little Rock Road - Village Creek State Park Segment
Newcastle vic., Cross Co., AR
Photo by Z. Cothren
Feb 2001
Negative on file at AHPP
View from northwest in east section



Memphis to Little Rock Road-Village Creek State Park Segment
New castle vic, St. Francis Co, AR
Photo by Z. Cothren
Feb. 2001
Negative on file at AHP
View from northwest in southeast section



Memphis to Little Rock Road - Village Creek State Park Segment
Newcastle vic, St. Francis Co, AR
Photo by Z. Cothren
Feb. 2001
Negative on file at AHPP
View from west of non-contributing bridge at east end
of road



PRODUCED BY THE UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
CONTROL BY.....USGS AND NOS/NOAA
COMPILED FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN.....1979-80
FIELD CHECKED.....1982. MAP EDITED.....1984
PROJECTION.....LAMBERT CONFORMAL CONIC
GRID: 1000-METER UNIVERSAL TRANSVERSE MERCATOR.....ZONE 15
10,000-FOOT STATE GRID TICS.....ARKANSAS, NORTH ZONE
UTM GRID DECLINATION.....1°20' EAST
1992 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION.....2°00' EAST
VERTICAL DATUM.....NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
HORIZONTAL DATUM.....1927 NORTH AMERICAN DATUM (NAD 27)
The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North
American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5-minute intersections
is given in USGS bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by
dashed corner ticks
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of any
Federal or State reservations shown on this map
No distinction made between houses, barns, and other buildings
Photoinspected from 1990 source; no major culture or drainage
changes observed. Boundaries revised and names verified 1992

PROVISIONAL MAP
Produced from original
manuscript drawings. Infor-
mation shown as of date of
photography.

SCALE 1:24 000
1 000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10000
MILES
1 000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10000
FEET
1 000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 8000 9000 10000
METERS
CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 AND 10 FEET
CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 FOOT
OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST FOOT
To convert feet to meters multiply by .3048
To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND THE ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204

CONTOUR INTERVAL			QUADRANGLE LOCATION		
1	2	3	1	2	3
4	5	6	4	5	6
7	8	9	7	8	9

ROAD LEGEND
Improved Road
Unimproved Road
Trail
Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

WITTSBURG, ARKANSAS
PROVISIONAL EDITION 1984
MINOR REVISION 1992

35090-B6-TF-024