

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY-NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC Cherokee National Capitol

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER



NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN Tahlequah

VICINITY OF

STATE Oklahoma

CODE 40

COUNTY Cherokee

CODE 021

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Cherokee County -  
NAME c/o Board of County Commissioners

Info also available from:  
Mr. Martin Hagerstrand  
Cherokee National Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

Box 515

CITY, TOWN Tahlequah

VICINITY OF

STATE Oklahoma

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cherokee County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Tahlequah

STATE Oklahoma

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Building Survey

DATE

1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Currently at HABS, Dept. Interior, 1100 L St. NW.

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cherokee National Capitol Building-Description excerpted from HABS report by Michael Tomlan and John Hnedak, 1975.

The Cherokee National Capitol building, was constructed from 1867 to 1869 according to plans and specifications drawn up by a C.W. Goodlander. It served as the headquarters for Cherokee government from the time of its completion until 1907 when Oklahoma became a State. [REDACTED]

in Tahlequah, the structure is a fairly well preserved, late example of the Italianate style, unusual in Oklahoma. With overall measurements of about 51 feet across its front and 68 feet along its side, the 2-story, rectangular building is five bays wide and 7 bays deep. The walls are of red brick, laid in common bond (eight courses of stretchers to a single course of headers), with wooden trim, painted white. The plane of all 4 of the walls is broken into a tripartite (Palladian) scheme. Each elevation is composed of a pedimented center pavilion flanked by two secondary wall surfaces. The elevations are further varied by a paneling of brick pilasters (a single brick thick) which frame the bays.

A hipped roof with its ridge perpendicular to the principal facade covers the building and is intersected by four gables, one over the central unit of each elevation. The simple boxed cornice has a denticulated fringe, interrupted by paired brackets set over the brick pilasters. The entire entablature is of wood, painted white.

An enclosed porch, of brick in common bond, has been added to the center front bay of the first story and provides a vestibule entrance. This one story, gable-roof unit, carries a pediment and denticulated cornice similar to those on the main building. A concrete platform has been installed at the rear entrance.

The front entrance contains double doors, each with a large single pane of glass in its center and a four-light transom above. The rear doors are identical although the transom is different; for a large single pane has been inserted across the entire width of the doorframe. There is also a basement door at the bottom of a flight of concrete steps just to the right of the rear platform. Segmental arches cap the first floor windows; semi-circular arches those on the second floor. Both are executed in brick and painted white. In general, the windows of the structure are double-hung, single-pane sash.

There are several exceptions to the window arrangements mentioned. On the second story pairs of narrow, roundheaded windows fill the center bay of both the front and rear facades. The window opening in the center bay on the first story of the north wall seems to have been made larger. In addition, two windows on north wall (first and second stories, third bay from the front) and one on the south wall (first story, third bay from the front) have been bricked in; and two windows on the first story of the rear facade on either side of the door have been blocked with plywood to mount fans for restrooms.

At the present time, there is only one chimney, which has been added to the rear

(CONTINUED)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1907	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Native American culture and change (Plans & specification)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1867-1907                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      C.W. Goodlander

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cherokee National Capitol Building

[REDACTED], the Cherokee National Capitol is a two-story brick structure which served as the council house for meetings of the Cherokee National Council from the time of its completion in 1869 until 1907 when Oklahoma became a state. The building stands as a symbol of the Cherokee's ability to adjust their aboriginal culture to the changing circumstances thrust upon them by European arrival in North America.

### HISTORY

During late prehistoric/early European contact times, the Cherokee Indians claimed virtually the entire region of the Southern Appalachian Mountains from the interlocking headstreams of the Kanawha and Tennessee rivers southward almost to the site of Atlanta. The tribe's first encounter with Europeans dates to the Hernando de Soto expedition in 1540. During the colonial period, the Cherokee found themselves in a crucial position between the French and the British. Even during this early period they were forced to sign treaties ceding their land to the European settlers. By the time of the American Revolution, the Cherokees were allied with the British, for British traders lived among and intermarried with the Cherokee. In their relations with the United States government from the end of the Revolution until 1838, the Cherokees found themselves under continued pressure to cede additional portions of their territory.

During these early years of contact with Europeans, the culture of the Cherokee began to undergo some changes. At first, these changes took the form of a reliance on trade goods, but with increased intermarriage and greater contact, the Indians began to adopt certain practices such as agricultural techniques, Negro slaveholding, loom weaving, etc.

The Cherokees recognized the advantages of education of their youth; and by 1821, Sequoyah—a part Cherokee—had developed a Cherokee syllabary. Sequoyah knew no English; and because the alphabet was so well-adapted to his native language, within a few months thousands of previously illiterate Cherokee were able to read and write their own language. By 1828, the Cherokee had established a national newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, printed in both English and Cherokee.

Building on the aboriginal tradition of an agricultural economy and life in orderly towns with an informal type of representative government, in 1820 the Cherokee adopted a republican form of government modeled after that of the United States. They issued

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Eaton, Rachel Caroline, 1914, John Ross and the Cherokee Indians, Menasha, Wisconsin, George Banta Publishing Co.

Fleischmann, Glen, 1971, The Cherokee Removal, 1838, New York.

(CONTINUED)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY [REDACTED]

UTM REFERENCES

A	[REDACTED]	B	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	ZONE EASTING NORTHING		ZONE EASTING NORTHING		ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C	[REDACTED]	D	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	ZONE EASTING NORTHING		ZONE EASTING NORTHING		ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

[REDACTED]

(CONTINUED)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

Description from HABS Tahlequah Project, 1971

NAME / TITLE

Francine Weiss, Staff Archeologist, Landmark Review Project (revised 1980)

ORGANIZATION

HSS HCRS

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L St. NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*[Signature]*

DATE

10/12/82

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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## #7 (Description (Continued))

facade. It is a square unadorned brick tube rising along the left of the center block to about half the height of the roof.

Little is known of the original interior of the building. It was designed to house the National Senate and Council, the Executive Department, the Supreme Court, and the Superintendent of Schools. It is known that in 1886 several rooms of the upper story were used for executive purposes. The Supreme Court also occupied rooms on the second floor, and the main floor contained the Senate and Council Chambers and the Office of the National Treasurer.

Modifications have been made over the years. There are indications that the stairway was not in its present position. About the turn of the century, some of the windows were bricked up; this change probably reflects some interior modifications. One of these bricked windows on the south side in the second story was apparently reopened at a later date. In 1904, a disastrous fire gutted the interior of the building, and additional interior changes probably occurred at that time.

There have also been changes in the exterior of the capitol. At least two dormers were added to the original structure sometime prior to 1900. In addition, a one-story, frame, Italianate cupola crowned the building. It was 10-foot square with double round arch windows on each side. Its roof consisted of four intersecting pedimented gables. A small flagstaff projected from the center of the cupola's roof. The building also had eight chimneys (four each on the north and south sides).

The present exterior appearance of the building probably dates to post-1928.

A fire in 1928 resulted in fire-proofing and the construction of a new roof identical to the original but with all steel rather than frame structure. The cupola and dormers were not rebuilt after the fire. The heating system in the building was apparently changed resulting in the removal of the eight old chimneys and the addition of the one currently in evidence. The enlargement of the front entrance may also have occurred at this time.

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#8 (Significance - Continued)

a code of laws and in 1827 adopted a national constitution. According to Glen Fleischmen (1971, p.3), the Cherokees in the Southeast had accomplished "what seemed to be a cultural and ethnological phenomenon, a primitive people changing into a civilized nation in two generations." These advances in the direction of what we call "civilization" led to the labelling of the Cherokee as one of the Five Civilized Tribes.

Despite these acculturative processes, the Cherokees began to feel continued pressure for their land in the Southeast. In fact, by the 1820's, a small portion of the tribe has already moved west into the area of what is now Arkansas; this group eventually was to become known as the "Old Settlers" or Arkansas or Western Cherokee. After 1828, these early immigrants were forced to move even further west into the area of present-day Oklahoma. In the 1830's the pressures for land in the East intensified, and in 1838, the remaining Eastern Cherokee's were forcibly "removed" from their homeland and had no choice but to join their western kinsmen some 800 miles away. In preparation for the "removal," an estimated 17,000 Cherokee were gathered into stockades by some 7000 Army regulars, militia and volunteers under the command of General Winfield Scott. It is asserted that over 4000 Cherokee deaths occurred as a direct result of this forced movement known as the "Trail of Tears."

Finally arriving in Oklahoma in 1839, the Cherokee were beset by factional differences. Three groups emerged, the "Old Settlers," the Treaty Party, and the Ross or National Party. The latter, headed by John Ross, the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, was the largest of the three and blamed the other groups for arranging the disastrous treaty leading to the "Trail of Tears" and Cherokee "removal" from the East. Ross called for a council meeting in 1839 to reconcile the factions. Initially, the meeting was not too successful, and three members of the Treaty Party—John Ridge, Major Ridge and Elias Boudinot—were assassinated. Ross is not believed to have been connected with the murders. It should be pointed out that Cherokee law prescribed the death penalty for anyone signing away tribal land without the people's authority, and many of Ross party supporters therefore believed that the actions of members of the Treaty Party justified the murders.

Despite these early problems, the Cherokees set out to rebuild their Nation and culture and to restore confidence in their government. Shortly after the murders, a general convention of eastern and western Cherokee unanimously passed an act of union. The Cherokee had brought with them to Indian Territory a high educational level, a bilingual standard, and a government modeled after that of the United States.

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#8 (Significance - Continued)

In 1839 they established a capital at Tahlequah, and a constitution similar to the one they had brought with them from the East was adopted. Printing was begun of a new newspaper called the Cherokee Advocate, a replacement for the Cherokee Phoenix. The National Council quickly began to act on such issues as establishing a judiciary, a code of punishment for criminal offenses, and a school system. Representatives were also sent to Washington, D.C., to attempt to settle claims for their former land, but the U.S. Government did not reimburse the Cherokee for their Georgia property until 1850.

The first gatherings in 1839 in the new capital city of Tahlequah were held in the open. Shortly thereafter, an open log shelter was built to house the council, and cabins for various government purposes were constructed along its flanks. By the mid-1840's, the open structure had been replaced by a log building to serve as the council house, and in 1845 a brick Supreme Court building was completed nearby.

Internal political disputes continued among the Cherokees during the years prior to the Civil War. The Cherokees initially attempted to remain neutral during the conflict and although they eventually officially declared themselves allies of the South, the loyalties of the population remained divided. With the exception of the Supreme Court Building, most of the public structures of Tahlequah were destroyed during the war years. With the end of the hostilities, the Cherokees again began to return to normal functioning. In 1867, the National Council noted to approve construction of a more permanent, brick Capitol Building which was completed in 1869 and occupied shortly thereafter. The Supreme Court moved into the new structure, and the Cherokee Advocate, which had suspended publication before the war and resumed printing in 1870, took up headquarters in the vacated Supreme Court Building as did the Tahlequah District Court. This press building was rebuilt using the same walls after the fire in 1874, and in the same year, a jail was constructed. The emphasis which the Cherokees placed on education continued as evidenced by the construction of male and female seminaries.

However, by the latter years of the 19th century white settlement had increased in the area, and the Cherokees fell under U.S. Government pressure to accept individual land allotments and to dissolve tribal government. In the early 1900's over the protests of the Cherokees and other Indian groups in the area, Cherokee sovereignty was abolished by the U.S. Government, and Oklahoma became a State in 1907.

present time. Despite this change in use, the Capitol stands as a symbol of the resourcefulness and flexibility of the Cherokee who, despite years of injustice, adapted so successfully to the changing conditions brought on by European arrival in North America.

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#9 (Bibliographical References)

Foreman, Grant, 1933, Advancing the Frontier, Norman.

\_\_\_\_\_, 1934, The Five Civilized Tribes, Norman.

Hnedak, John and Michael Tomlan, Historic American Buildings Survey, Tahlequah Project, Cherokee National Capitol, MS., 1975

Luddy, Frederic Q., 1961, The Cherokee Removal; A Controversy in American History.

Mooney, James, 1975, Historical Sketch of the Cherokee, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press.

Royce, Charles C., 1887, The Cherokee Nation of Indians, Bureau of American Ethnology, 5th Annual Report, 1883-1884, Washington, D.C.

Starkey, Marion Q., 1946, The Cherokee Nation, New York.

Starr, Emmet, 1921, History of the Cherokee Indians and their Legends and Folklore, Oklahoma City.

Wardell, Morris L., 1938, A Political History of the Cherokee Nation, 1837-1907, Norman.