

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Georgia</b>
COUNTY: <b>Floyd</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**"Chieftains;" Major Ridge House**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Major Ridge House**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**80 Chatillon Road**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Rome**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**7th**

STATE: **Georgia** CODE: COUNTY: **Floyd** CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Junior Service League of Rome, Georgia**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**P.O. Box 1003**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Rome**

STATE:  
**Georgia**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Floyd County Clerk of Courts Office, Deed Book #482**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Courthouse, West Fifth Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Rome**

STATE:  
**Georgia**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

About 1792 a Cherokee chief built a hand-hewn log cabin on the east bank of the Oostanaula River. Today "Chieftains," as the house has come to be known, is a two-story white frame mansion with one-story wings which now faces Chatillon Road, two miles north of Rome, Georgia. Encased within that Georgian facade, is the original cabin which faced the river. Constructed of hand-hewn logs nine to ten inches thick, there were two rooms and a hall on both first and second floors. Through the years the original log structure underwent considerable modifications. Visiting Major Ridge's home in 1830, General D. D. Brinamade made this notation in his Creek Path Journal: "The house is an elegant painted mansion with porches on each side as is the fashion of the country...." In 1837 an evaluation survey made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs described Major Ridge's home as a two-story, eight room structure, 54 by 29 feet, with four brick fireplaces, "Finished in a neat style." The outside was painted with a balcony on the side and a glass door leading to it. Also there were turned columns and 30 glass windows. The parlor was located upstairs and was finished in a "first rate style." Major Ridge's property further consisted of many outbuildings, two Negro houses, 223 acres of land, ornamental shrubs, a nursery, a vineyard, and a ferry. In 1863 "Chieftains" was sold to Addison A. Jones who remodeled the house into a "charming modern residence." An 1896 photograph shows a porch across the front and a one story addition attached to the kitchen. In 1923 the house was sold to J. H. Porter who again remodeled "Chieftains." The Atlanta architectural firm of Lockwood and Poundstone added one-story side wings. It was at this time that the house received its Georgian Colonial "restyling."

"Chieftains" today has a small dug out basement and two stories. It is of white clapboard and has three chimneys. It is 54 feet in depth and 38 feet across the front which now faces south. The two-story wings on each side measure 28 by 20 feet. There are seven rooms downstairs, two enclosed porches, one bath and two halls. On the second floor, there are three bedrooms, one hall, one bath, one enclosed porch and a large attic under the roof on the eastern side. The walls are plastered and are over 11 inches thick in some places where the original hewn logs are underneath. The pegged staircase with turned posts is thought to date to Major Ridge's time.

Now owned by the Junior Service League of Rome, they plan ultimately to restore "Chieftains" to its appearance at the time Major Ridge lived there. Meanwhile, the League plans to use the house as a museum for the history of the Cherokees in Floyd County and Rome.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1797-1838**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal          | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric         | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce            | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Major Ridge's biographer has said, ". . . the impact of Ridge's example upon his tribesmen would be hard to overrate. Until his final stand on western emigration toppled him from a pinnacle of esteem, the Cherokees had held him as a hero, a farsighted torchbearer, the apostle of tribal salvation through enlightenment."<sup>1</sup> His signature on the Treaty of New Echota was the pretext of forced removal of his people by the "Trail of Tears."

A hero of the Creek War of 1814 during which he inherited the rank and name of Major, he quickly ascended to the position of Speaker of the National Council and became known as the "Greater Orator of the Cherokee Nation." He was a significant advocate of modifying Cherokee ways with Anglo-American culture and devoted his leadership to allying his people's ways with the religious and economic patterns of western civilization. He epitomized the adaptability of his people by becoming a prosperous merchant in his own right.

Shifting his allegiance from the intransigent John Ross, principal chief of the eastern Cherokee who opposed the removal of the Nation to the western lands, he led the pro-treaty faction which, despairing of continual resistance, attempted to achieve a reasonable settlement in the face of a rapidly deteriorating Cherokee position. In the evaluation of Indian removal, Major Ridge must stand equal and opposite to John Ross.

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<sup>1</sup>Thurman Wilkins, Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People, (New York, 1970), p. 3.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Foreman, Grant, Indian Removal, Norman, Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1953.

Wilkins, Thurman, Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People, New York, Macmillan Co., 1970.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		34 17 10	85 10 20	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian**

ORGANIZATION **Historic Sites Survey, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE **3/5/73**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1100 L Street NW.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE:

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Keeper of The National Register*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Major Ridge House (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (Continued) page 1

Biography

Indian Removal and the "Trail of Tears," as Ridge's biographer warns us, is often told, usually from the point of view of the Ross faction and is in need of reevaluation. Thurman Wilkins has done much in his recent biography to balance the accounts, and for this reason, Major Ridge is today a figure grown in significance.<sup>2</sup>

Probably born along the Hiwasee River in what is now Polk County, Tennessee, Ridge participated in the Creek War of 1814 in a contingent of Cherokees who attacked the Creek at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Emerging a hero with the rank of major, he earnestly began to "westernize" his people, learning English, encouraging his wife in the practice of Christianity, and sending his son to the Indian school at Cornwall, Connecticut. He became a speaker of the council and made a great impression with his talent for oratory.

In 1822, in partnership with George Lavender, also a Cherokee, Ridge established, on his property, the first trading post in the area of Rome, Georgia. At the foot of the knoll sloping down from his home, the partners operated a ferry across the river. By 1837, Ridge had developed a 223-acre estate with orchards, ornamental shrubs, and a nursery. He was a rich man.

In the earlier struggles with the Federal Government and the State of Georgia, he supported John Ross in opposition to further cessions of Indian land, but his sentiment began to shift in 1832. The previous fall at Red Clay the Cherokee had assembled a council to organize a protest against the confiscatory acts of Georgia and to complain of the conditions suffered by small groups voluntarily removing to the west. The Cherokees were disheartened at that time and in a mood to negotiate. Ridge joined Ross against such a move until better terms could be arranged. A delegation led by Ross was dispatched to Washington. Ridge and others allied to him were angered by Ross dilatory actions in negotiating a cession of lands for a proffered \$3,000,000. Returning from Washington, the Ross and Ridge factions submitted their positions to the council at Red Clay during the Spring of 1833.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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8. Significance

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The participants confronted each other with great bitterness and rancor. Ridge, as speaker of the council, stressed the importance of negotiating an arrangement which would save at least something for the Cherokee in the face of a rapidly diminishing position. He gave "a concise and well arranged history of their present condition compared with what it had been; the probability of their being called on in a few months, for the last time, to say whether they will submit always to the evils and difficulties every day increasing around them, or look for a new home, promising them freedom and national prosperity; advising them to bury party animosity, and in case they should conclude to seek a new home, to go in the character of true friends and brothers."<sup>3</sup>

By 1835, his opposition to Ross became so clear that he led a rival delegation to Washington arriving in February and prepared to negotiate for removal. J. F. Schermerhorn, appointed commissioner for the purpose, negotiated that treaty with Ridge agreeing that it would not be enforced until confirmed by the Cherokee in general council. The treaty provided for the cession of all Cherokee lands in the east for the sum of \$4,500,000. Armed with an address from President Jackson, Schermerhorn spent the summer and fall seeking support for the treaty but to no avail. In October, at the general council at Red Clay, the Cherokee rejected the Treaty.

The Ridge faction, charging the Ross group with intimidation and, according to local history, reassembled at the Ridge residence to consider the government's threatening call for a council at New Echota late that year, charging that all those not appearing would be counted in favor of the treaty. The group resolved to sign the treaty. On December 29, 1835, at New Echota, in the presence of admittedly few Cherokee, Major Ridge, made the fatal mark on the treaty document.

With the signing of the Treaty of New Echota, all caution was dropped by the settlers in invading Indian lands. The document became pretext for plunder, assault, eviction, houseburning, and rape. Ridge was furious. His signature was dangerous enough, now he had to face the embarrassment risking the very compensation which he settled on for the exchange of land. He addressed the President, complaining that the Georgians were instituting suit against his people for back rents and using the judiciary and its officers to endorse the extortion decreed by courts in which Indians could neither plea nor testify. "The lowest

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<sup>3</sup>Grant Foreman, Indian Removal (Norman, Oklahoma, 1953), p. 241.

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8. Significance

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classes of the white people," he reported, "are flogging the Cherokees with cowhides, hickories, and clubs. We are not safe in our houses--our people are assailed by day and night by the rabble. . . . This barbarous treatment is not confined to men, but the women are stripped also and whipped without law or mercy." He pleaded for protection, otherwise "we shall carry off nothing but the scars of the lash on our backs."<sup>4</sup> Little help came.

In 1838, in the most tragic of Indian migrations to the west, Major Ridge accompanied his people on the "Trail of Tears." In the new territory he was marked for execution by the Ross faction. In one day he, his son John, and his nephew, Elias Boudinot, were murdered for having incurred the death penalty for ceding Indian land without tribal authority.