

THE CISCA AND ST. AUGUSTINE TRAIL

The original Indian name for this trail has not been preserved. Indeed it is not likely that there was any name for the trail as a whole. The whites near Nashville called that portion in Tennessee the Nickajack Trail, because it led to the Nickajack town on Tennessee River.

THE MAIN TRAIL

(Trail No. 21)

This trail extended from Cisca, an Indian village somewhere in Tennessee about halfway between the waters of the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, to the old Spanish settlement of St. Augustine. The earliest mention of it is on "Franquelin's 1684 Map of La Salle's Discoveries." It carries the words "Chemin par [où] les Casquinampo et les Chaouanons vont en traite aux Espagnols" (Path traveled by the Casquinampo and Shawnee in trading with the Spaniards).

Source: "Indian Trails of the Southeast" by William E. Meyer

Franquelin got the data for his map from La Salle's reports, and La Salle in turn probably obtained his facts from the Shawnee and other Indians who had lived in Tennessee and had removed to Fort St. Louis, on the Illinois River, to be near the French. There are many errors in this map, as was to have been expected.

It is now impossible to locate the site of Cisca with absolute certainty, but a careful study of the above map, taking into consideration the trails which we know to have existed formerly, suggests that it was perhaps identical with the ancient Indian town at the Old Stone Fort, near Manchester, in Coffee County, Tenn. The trail shown on Franquelin's map is undoubtedly the trail leading from that Old Stone Fort, via Battle Creek and the Old Creek Crossing on the Tennessee River near Bridgeport, Ala.,⁷³ into Georgia. At any rate, the town at the Old Stone Fort was of great importance, as is shown by the size of its ruins and the fact that two great trails (the Cisca and St. Augustine from Georgia and the Great South Trail (No. 20) from Alabama) led to it. There is no other trail from Georgia corresponding to that laid down by Franquelin. If another of the great towns in middle Tennessee (for example one of those near Franklin, in Williamson County) had been Cisca the trail would show a decided bend to the west at the Old Stone Fort, but Franquelin's trail does not.

In Tennessee this trail ran from the Old Stone Fort via Pelham, Elk River, and Wonder Cave, crossed the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway branch (line a little southeast of Monteagle, and followed down Battle Creek, crossing Tennessee River, as has been said, at the Old Creek Crossing near the mouth of Battle Creek, close to Bridgeport, Ala. At the crossing it connected with a great network of trails which united many parts of Georgia and Alabama with the populous and numerous Cherokee towns in east Tennessee, and then continued in a southeast direction through Georgia to Augusta and from there to St. Augustine, Fla., over trails 82, 84, and 85 or 82 and 110.

The Tennessee portion of this trail is shown by all the better early maps of the State; notably the map by Gen. Daniel Smith in 1795 and Cary's "General Atlas," Philadelphia, 1814. Copies of both of these are in the State Library at Nashville.

From Cisca (or the Old Stone Fort) the trail passed, via Fort Nash, on the headwaters of Garrison Fork, not far from the present site of the village of Beech Grove, and then by Black Fox Spring (Murfreesboro) to the Great Salt Lick, at the present site of Nashville.

⁷³ See footnote on p. 751.

THE NICKAJACK TRAIL

(Trail No. 22)

As we have seen, the whites in middle Tennessee called that portion of the Cisca-St. Augustine Trail which was in Tennessee the Nickajack Trail, because it led to the Cherokee towns around Nickajack on Tennessee River. There were two prongs of this trail, one following the main line, the Cisca-St. Augustine Trail proper, the other, or North Prong of Nickajack Trail, branching off from the main line on the head of Hickory Creek in Grundy County. The latter went by Viola and Vervilla, approached the site of the present Smartt Station on the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway, crossed the railroad about 1½ miles southwest of Smartt, turned westward, and ran about 1 mile north of Hollow Springs, continuing until it joined the main Cisca-St. Augustine Trail at the site of old Fort Nash, on the headwaters of Garrison Fork. Fort Nash was built so as to command the travel over both prongs of this trail.

The following information in regard to the North Prong of Nickajack Trail in Warren County was furnished by Mrs. Blanche Bentley of McMinnville, who has collected a large amount of valuable data concerning the Indians and early whites in Tennessee:

"I am sure it passed Vervilla and near Smarts. When a girl, I was shown a fragment of the trail near Vervilla, where, faint and worn and shadowy as a ghost, it disappeared in the woods. A mile from the old General Smart house, according to the late G. M. Smart, it passed 'The Big Spring.' The remainder of the line in Warren County is approximated from information and tradition. The pathway near Vervilla and near the old Hannah High College was plainly visible as late as 1875. This trail was traveled by many Cherokees, when they were removed from their homes in east Tennessee to the Indian Territory in 1838. From a very old gentleman living in the West comes the memory that his two pioneer grandfathers, Obediah Jennings and Christian Shell, visited a camp of these Cherokees near the Barren Fork of Collins River, on this trail, and heard an impassioned speech from one of the Cherokees to his people, there gathered about him, bidding goodbye to the homes of their ancestors. Mr. G. M. Smart in his youth saw companies of the Cherokees passing by and stopping at 'the Big Spring.'"

THE CHICKAMAUGA PATH

(Trail No. 27)

The Chickamauga Path was one of several routes which led north from the Indian settlements in north Georgia and around Chattanooga. It crossed Tennessee River at the Old Creek Crossing (see p. 751) along with the Cisca-St. Augustine Trail (No. 21),

led thence up Battle Creek to the forks of the creek, near Comfort, and afterwards passed along the Cumberland Plateau by Coal-mont, Beersheba Springs, and the Rock Island crossing of Caney Fork River, to the prehistoric fortified Indian town at Cherry Hill, in White County. At the latter place it seems to have forked, the eastern fork probably intersecting the old Cumberland trail near the present Mayland on the Tennessee Central Railroad in Cumberland County, and passing on in a northerly direction until it met the great East and West Trail (No. 28) at the settlement near the present site of Jamestown, Fentress County. It was then possible to follow the latter trail westward to the long string of Indian settlements on the Obey and Wolf Rivers, or eastward by the settlements at B. R. Stockton Rock Shelter on White Oak Creek and at the mound at Rugby, to its intersection with the Tennessee River, Ohio and Great Lakes Trail (No. 29) at Glenmary. From Glenmary the Indian traveler could go north or south on the trail last mentioned, or he could continue eastward, on the East and West Trail, by an ancient Indian village site—of which three mounds still remain—on Brimstone Creek in the Brimstone Mountains in Scott County, and thence by the present sites of Clinton and Knoxville, to the Indian settlements of east Tennessee.

If there was indeed a western prong of the Chickamauga Trail from Cherry Hill, it probably led to the Cumberland Trace at the Officer Mounds near Algood in Putnam County and from thence west over the Cumberland Trace. No remains of such a road have been reported, but one probably existed, as there must have been some travel between the Cherry Hill and Officer towns.

The following information in regard to that section of the Chickamauga Path in Warren and White Counties was furnished by Mrs. Bentley:

"I feel sure of the correctness of this path where it comes to Caney Fork at Rock Island and starts northeastward through White County, and also to the south of Rock Island where it skirted the western side of Dyer's Gulch. The remainder of the route in Warren County is approximated from Captain John Kelly Roberts' outline. Old grants in Warren County call for the Chickamauga Path, according to Mr. W. H. Horton, former county surveyor.

"In coming northward from Battle Creek to Warren County this path probably crossed Cumberland Mountain near Beersheba Springs, and passed by these springs along a deeply imbedded path, which, from time immemorial, has led from the mountain top, near the great chalybeate spring, down to the valley below, in the direction of Rock Island. This path was there before 1836. This path probably led Beersheba Coin to the discovery of these healing springs.

“One of the early grants on Caney Fork near Rock Island calls for a line ‘where the Chickamauga Path crosses the river at McClure’s Ford (later called Hash’s Ford), near McClure’s Battle Ground, in a remarkable bend of the river.’

“The first comers were familiar with this trail. Its route is given by Captain John Kelly Roberts, who knew it well from tradition: ‘My grandfather, Reuben Roberts, who came to this section in 1794, knew the Chickamauga Path as did other early settlers. I have frequently heard its route outlined as beginning at the Chickamauga towns in northern Georgia and crossing the Tennessee near the mouth of Battle Creek; thence continuing north across the mountain into Warren County; following along the spur on the west side of Dyer’s Gulch and crossing the Caney Fork at Hash’s Ford (known seventy-five years ago as McClure’s Ford); thence leading away toward the northeast through White, Putnam and Fentress Counties. McClure’s Ford (now abandoned) was within three hundred yards of the stone fort, built by the early whites in the bend of the river, where McClure’s battle was fought with the Indians.’ Tradition says that along this path the Indians traveled when they removed from this section after their defeat at McClure’s Ford (Rock Island).”