

From: Fielding Lewis Chapter NSDAR Marietta GA fieldinglewischaptersndar@43686613.mailchimpapp.com
Subject: Virtual Vision Quest
Date: May 10, 2024 at 11:10 AM
To: dr.celineevans@gmail.com



VIRTUAL VISION QUEST

led by Wanda Patterson, Chair

American Indians Committee

Fielding Lewis NSDAR

May, 2024



[Also available on our website HERE](#)

Moravians minister to the Cherokee

Daughters of the Fielding Lewis Chapter of NSDAR recently took a field trip to sites important to Cherokee history in North Georgia. Park rangers at both New Echota and the Chief Vann House frequently referred to the diaries of the Moravian missionaries as the rangers guided our tours of these two state parks. The role of the Moravians in the development of the Cherokee Nation is little known, so this article will try to clarify that role and the importance of the Moravian diaries to our understanding of Cherokee in the Nineteenth Century.

The Cherokee put down their bows and arrows and took up attempts to adapt to a more civilized way of life after the 1785 Treaty of Hopewell. Some members of the Cherokee Nation became quite wealthy through trading, raising cattle, and cultivating large plantations with the help of Negro slaves. The Cherokee made rapid progress in developing a civilized, organized nation as they observed their white neighbors. They began to recognize the importance of educating their young and learning to speak and understand English. Because

many Cherokees had intermarried with whites, especially Scots and English, some members of the tribe already spoke some English and they began to hire tutors who would come to the Cherokee Nation to teach the next generation of Cherokee leaders.

In 1800 the missionary arm of the Moravian Church, headquartered in Salem, North Carolina, sent emissaries to the Cherokee Nation to persuade the chiefs to allow the Moravians to establish mission stations within the nation to share the word of God with the natives. Cherokee leaders were suspicious of any whites who wished to establish residences within the Nation, fearing that their purpose was monetary, not religious. Besides, the Cherokee people were uninterested in the white man's religion. The Moravians went home disappointed, but in late 1800 the Cherokee granted permission for the church to send its missionaries to build a mission station if they agreed to provide a school for Cherokee children. Permission for the missionaries to live within the Cherokee Nation had to be granted by the chiefs of the Nation, as well as representatives of the United States Government.

Two men were the first missionaries to arrive in late 1800, and they began to look for a place to create their mission station. Fortunately, they were befriended by a wealthy half-breed Cherokee, James Vann, who led them on a guided tour of various areas which he deemed appropriate for their intended mission establishment. Vann had no interest in religion, but he saw the need for education, and he supported the Moravians in their plan to establish a mission/school. At the time, Cherokee land was held in common by the entire nation, but individuals could claim portions of land provided they developed it and built structures, called "improvements" on it. A small tract of land adjoining Chief Vann's 800-acre plantation was soon to be available, so he purchased the "improvements" and gave them to the Moravians with the understanding that they would reimburse him when they could. The land was situated near lively springs which the missionaries would need, so they accepted Vann's deal.

As the missionaries planted crops and tried to improve the improvements by adding a small cabin for their living quarters, much time was occupied in writing long letters home to their Salem church superiors and keeping a detailed diary of their day-to-day activities in establishing the mission station and attempting to make contact with the natives. These diaries were written in German, the original language of the Moravian church. They were carefully archived at headquarters for over a century until two gentlemen, C. Daniel Crews and Richard W. Starbuck of the Moravian Archives in Winston-Salem, N.C., began to translate into English the diaries, plus piles of correspondence and official documents related to the Moravian missionaries and the Cherokee people. These translations, ten fat volumes to date, are a treasure trove of information about the time period from 1800 to 1838 when the Cherokee people were evicted from their homeland of generations and removed by force to land west of the Mississippi.

The first mission station, located next to the James Vann plantation, was called Springplace, due to the plentiful springs in the vicinity. Life was hard for the original missionaries because they had to clear land, plant crops, and wait for their gardens to grow in order to have more than the most meager meals, living primarily on bread and water for long periods of time. Items such as sugar, salt, and flour had to be ordered from distant places such as Augusta, waiting for someone to transport those necessities, sometimes months at a time. Their cabin and the primitive "huts" already located on their property were poorly built and uninsulated, so liquids inside the buildings froze during cold weather and ice formed on the inside walls of the cabin. These living conditions were detailed in the diaries, and future missionaries had to devote an enormous amount of time working in the fields and on the poorly constructed buildings comprising their mission station.

A constant area of labor was going to what the missionaries called "the bush" to cut wood to feed the fireplaces in their residences and fires for cooking. Besides cutting the wood, the intensive labor of carrying the wood from the bush to the mission was unending.

Spreading the gospel was difficult for the missionaries because they could not speak Cherokee. Their attempts to learn the difficult language were unsuccessful because the words were hard to pronounce and the language was not a written one. There was no list of vocabulary and no explanation of meanings. Thus, efforts at communicating the gospel were confined to Negro slaves and a few half-breeds who spoke a bit of English. Church officials constantly wrote letters demanding that the missionaries learn Cherokee, but they just didn't understand the difficulty of what they demanded. The frequent floods and heavy rains prevented the preacher's "listeners" from reaching the mission for services because they had to traverse streams and travel on pitifully inadequate roads from their far-flung homes to the mission to hear sermons in a language few understood. Yet they continued to come.

Adding to the problems facing the missionaries was the limited mail service in their area. They were required to send their diaries and letters to Salem, but their mail frequently was misdirected and often required months or even as much as three years to reach the intended destination. Orders for supplies, likewise, did not arrive for months at a time. For example, coffee was quite often difficult to get, and the missionaries ground okra seeds to substitute for coffee. Decisions made by the missionaries had to be reviewed by their church officials; thus, decisions about how to proceed were delayed for long periods of time.

Moravians came to Cherokee country to spread the gospel, not to teach school. However, Cherokee leaders had required a promise that the missionaries would conduct a school for Cherokee children. The church postponed opening school while they worked on their crops

and the mission station itself. The Cherokee leadership grew tired of waiting for the school and set December, 1804, as the deadline for opening school or else the Moravians would have to leave Cherokee country. To appease the Cherokee, their first group of students consisted of two children. Gradually students were added until the mission station began to teach four children. The Cherokee chiefs were pleased. Part of the reluctance of the Moravians was that they had to house, feed, and clothe the students, as well as conduct classes for kids, most of whom did not speak English. Those tasks included making the children's clothes from fabrics ordered from Salem, spending time washing loads of clothes each week, and cooking three meals a day using the produce they had to grow and preserve from their gardens. Besides the endless work to care for the children, the missionaries had great difficulty controlling the behavior of children who were accustomed to "running wild" with no discipline from their parents. The diaries are filled with details regarding how much time and money was required by two Moravian couples to care for the children in addition to trying to teach children who spoke a different language from their instructors.

Two of the exhausted missionaries left for Salem in 1805 and were replaced with a new couple, the Gambolds. John Gambold, a widower, was appointed to be the head missionary to the Cherokee; but before he could report for duty, the church leadership selected a new wife for him. The couple was married in Salem and traveled to the Cherokee Nation to begin their work there alongside the Byhams, who were already working at the mission station. John Gambold and his wife, Anna Rosina, were Godsend's to the mission. Brother Gambold was an indefatigable worker in the fields and behind the pulpit, and Sister Anna was an experienced teacher who charmed the Indian children and began to make small strides in educating the young Natives. The Gambolds got on well with the Cherokee people and their chiefs, as well as their neighbor, Chief Vann, but constantly faced problems in running the mission station. For example, Negro slaves repeatedly borrowed tools from the mission, returned them in damaged condition, or failed to return them at all.

In 1805 the Cherokee Chiefs struck a deal with the U.S. Government to allow a road to be constructed across Cherokee land. Agreement was dependent on agreeing that the Cherokee could operate the ferries and trading posts and collect the money from those enterprises. None of that money assisted the mission station. Chief Vann used his influence to see to it that the Federal Road passed near his plantation, but that posed problems for the missionaries. Travelers frequently stopped at the mission station as they traveled on the new road, spent the night, and ate meals with the missionaries. They did not pay anything for the missionaries' hospitality; thus, already limited supplies at the mission station were sorely depleted by their visitors. Likewise, Indians stopped by for meals, sat silently because they did not speak English, and went on their way without thanks. Since the Cherokee culture set great store by hospitality, the missionaries didn't want to offend the Indians by refusing to feed them or share their tools with them. As the mission fields and fruit trees began to bear, Indians freely gathered the mission crops for themselves, again

without asking permission or extending any sign of gratitude.

The Byhams, who now had two children of their own, requested that they be allowed to return to Salem, so the Gambolds were left to run the entire enterprise of the mission station alone and continue to teach Indian children. Because space and money were limited, four of the students boarded at Chief Vann's house, while four boys lived in a tiny, floorless cabin at the mission. A little girl lived in the Gambolds' cramped quarters. Floods, long, dry spells, wild animals (especially copperheads and rattlers), and theft of livestock plagued the Gambolds, but they soldiered on. It seems impossible that they could have been so dedicated, but the Gambolds continued to witness, teach, and preach for over nine years before the first Cherokee expressed faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized into the Moravian church. Margaret Ann was the widow of Chief Joe Vann, who had been murdered at Buffington Tavern in 1809. As was Cherokee custom, the widow Vann reverted to her maiden name; thus, the "first fruits" of the Moravian mission was Margaret Ann Scott. The Gambolds loved her and she became the daughter they never had. The second convert was Charles Hicks, who spoke English and served as interpreter for the church services at Springplace. He later became Chief of the Cherokee Nation and was a great supporter of the Moravian missions.

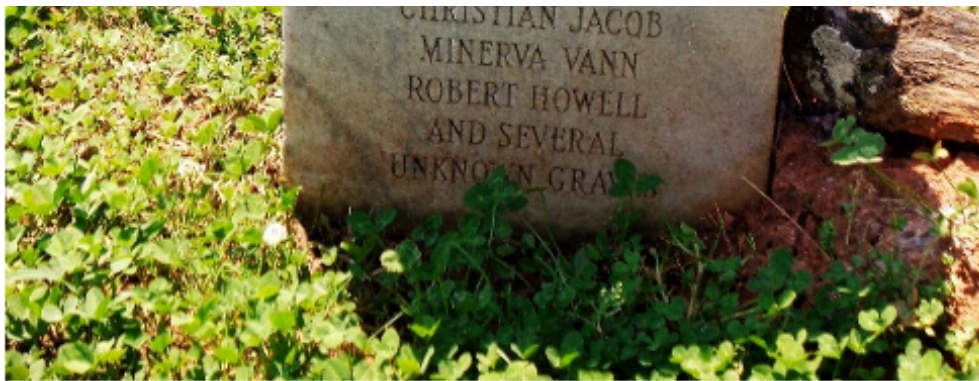
U.S. Government officials noticed the success of the Moravian mission and recognized their need for financial support, so the government began to award \$100 each year for the operation of the mission school. The amount of their contributions to the mission increased from time to time, as money became available and the success of the mission school became more well known.

Despite all the obstacles faced by the Gambolds, Sister Anna had great success in teaching her Cherokee students in the small school. Five teenaged boys were such promising scholars that they were accepted at a mission school in Cornwell, CT. In one of Sister Gambold's letters to Salem, she exclaimed, "So we have five students in preparation for the preaching of the Gospel! Oh, God! Our eyes are full of tears! We thought we were working in vain; we thought we had done nothing! To Him, to Him belongs the honor!" Buck Waitie became the star student of the school at Cornwall and adopted the name Elias Boudinot because of his admiration for the original Boudinot, who was President of the Continental Congress. He and the son of Cherokee leader The Ridge returned to the Cherokee Nation, where they became highly regarded leaders of their countrymen. Reading the writings of these two fellows is amazing, considering that their early education was in a primitive mission school. Elias Boudinot became editor of the CHEROKEE PHOENIX, the Nation's newspaper, in 1828, writing articles in both English and the newly invented syllabary invented by Sequoyah, a Cherokee who enabled the Cherokees to read and write their own language. The Moravian diaries contain glowing accounts of their students' successes.

Henry Steinhaur, an inspector of the church's mission schools, wrote in one of his letters to Salem, "The exertions of Brother Gambold and his wife are almost beyond credit. Besides providing food, raiment, shelter, and fuel for themselves; attending the school daily, acting as advisers and physicians to the whole neighborhood, entertaining every visitor, (and they are numerous who draw on their hospitality); writing letters, and on Sundays teaching, admonishing, etc., they find time even to oblige their friends in various ways. On my expressing a wish to see some of the botanical productions of the country, Sister Gambold sent me, last Autumn, between twelve and fourteen hundred specimens of dried plants, besides near a hundred packets of seeds, several minerals, specimens of the Indian manufactures of cane, etc., and a number of other curiosities; apologizing for not having done more.....And yet this person, banished as she is from civilized society, cheerfully labours year after year, with scarcely any promise of success, yet undauntedly persevering."

After sixteen years at Springplace, The Gambolds were assigned to begin a second mission station at Othcalogy, located south of Springplace near presentday Calhoun, GA. Prior to moving to Oochgeology, Anna Rosina Gambold passed away and was buried at God's Acre, the Moravian cemetery near the Springplace mission station. Sister Gambold was buried next to Margaret Ann Scott Crutchfield, first fruit of the Cherokee Nation. Chief Charles Hicks was buried at God's Acre, as well.





In the midst of his grief at losing his dear wife, John Gambold went to Oochgeelogy to begin preparations for opening a second mission there. Again the hierarchy of the Moravian church selected a new wife for the 62-year-old Gambold prior to his moving to the new site. After searching for a suitable location to build the mission, Gambold facilitated the purchase of a house built in 1821 by a member of the Springplace congregation. The two-story house served a residence for the missionaries, as well as a school for Cherokee children living in the area. According to the Georgia historical marker at the location of the Oochgeelogy mission, ".....This house was an active church and educational center for Cherokee adults and children. "

Gambold and his new wife continued to minister to the community at the mission (currently called Oothcaloga) with some success, having as many as 100 Cherokees and others in attendance at services and teaching children who lived at home and attended classes during the day. The two-story mission headquarters remained after the Cherokee Removal, occupied by various private citizens and their families until the building burned in 1976.





The Moravian diaries contain years of records of Springplace, written by Johann Schmidt, the missionary and his wife who took the Gambolds' place at the first Moravian mission. Schmidt was replaced by numerous missionaries and their helpers through the years. The two missions continued their service to the Cherokees until the tribe was forced to give up their homes and property and travel West on the Trail of Tears. No Moravian missionaries accompanied the Cherokees on the disastrous journey; however, they established mission stations in the land where the Cherokee settled and continued to serve their "listeners."

John Gambold ministered to his "dear Cherokees" for almost 30 years. He died in 1827 and was buried on a hill 100 yards east of the mission house at Oothcaloga. His grave stone was brought from Salem to mark the final resting place of the church's most dedicated missionary. The grave is distinguished by a marker placed by the Daughters of the Revolution, recognizing Gambold's service in the Pennsylvania militia during the American Revolution.

The little cemetery also holds the gravestones of family members of other people who occupied the mission site after Cherokee removal. The little cemetery is overgrown and is only accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Interested members of The Oothcaloga Mission -Morrow Cemetery Preservation Project are currently working to preserve the cemetery, repair broken markers, clear undergrowth and fallen limbs, make the road passible, and designate the site with an appropriate historical marker. When the project is completed, the cemetery will be nominated as a site on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

Dr. Céline H. Evans, Corresponding Secretary

Email: fieldinglewischaptersdar@gmail.com

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

