

Acknowledgments

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Library scans of historical documents and digital files were made with Adriana Barrios, alumna of UW-Madison MFA class of 2019. The colophon and envelope were printed in courier font on Mohawk paper by Sophie Loubere, UW-Madison MFA class of 2023. Library scans were printed on silk organza then dyed to the color of soil from North Carolina, sourced by my father.

I would like to acknowledge the Nellie McKay Fellowship for Faculty Development, University of Wisconsin-Madison, which allowed this project to take shape. This artist's book is dedicated to the memory of my dear friend and Cherokee artist, Shan Goshorn (1957-2018), who taught me courage in the face of great loss.

Each artist's book relates to one of ten volumes of historical documents in the National Archives. There are ten unique multiples of this artist's book.

You are holding book number No. 1.



Emily Arthur, 2021

Elder Press

Final Determinations: CHEROKEE BY BLOOD

Records of Eastern Cherokee Ancestry
in the U.S. Court of Claims
1906-1910



HERITAGE BOOKS, INC.

Colophon

Historical Documents

This artist's book is a direct response to a grouping of historical documents titled *Cherokee by Blood*, compiled by Jerry Wright Jordan, which is a multivolume set comprised of the *Eastern Cherokee Applications of the U.S. Court of Claims*. These are also known as *Records Relating to Enrollment of Eastern Cherokee by Guion Miller* and held in the National Archives.

Cherokee by Blood contains interviews conducted by the US Interior Department between 1906 and 1910. The purpose of the interview was to determine whether or not applicants could prove that they had a Cherokee family member who was forcibly relocated to the Indian Territories of Oklahoma and a direct ancestor named in the Treaty of New Echota.

These interviews and witness statements provide the primary experience of Cherokee descendants following forced removal from their homelands in the Southeast including Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. It is important to note that Native Americans were not citizens of the United States until 1924.

These historical documents contain stories of birth, dislocation, removal, uncertainty, loss and death. Witness statements describe Eastern Cherokee families hiding in the mountains and those who were driven out but desired to return home. One young Cherokee mother died twenty miles from the new nation in Oklahoma after walking from North Carolina. Her non-Native husband who taught their children "it was a disgrace to be connected to the Indians."

Despite sometimes overwhelming proof of Cherokee family lineage, the United States approved only twenty-three percent of the applications in their final determinations. Families who were approved gained the federal benefit of tribal enrollment and a

share in the settlement, which amounted to thirty-three dollars.

Many applicants who had indisputable Cherokee lineage were rejected. Rejections were illogical, racist and empowered by government policy. For example, Eastern Cherokee families who had arrived to Oklahoma before 1835, called "Old Settlers" were rejected. Under President Jackson thousands of Native people were marched west between 1836 and 1839 as part of the Trail of Tears. It is estimated that twenty-five to fifty percent of the Cherokee people died during this act of genocide supported by the Indian Removal Act, which declared that "no state could achieve proper culture, civilization, and progress, as long as Indians remained within its boundaries."

From My Perspective

These narratives are testimonies to survival and resilience in the face of an internal and external system of rejection carried out through government policy. These transcribed oral histories describe the shared generational trauma of my family.

Displacement and a concern for the environment are a result of my family heritage. The American Indian Cherokee and white descendancy of my family offer a multilayered perspective that I mine in my work. For this project, I selected the names of my ancestors to see what more I could learn about the place where I belong. Despite 19th-century government removal whereby East Coast Cherokees were relocated to the Indian Territories of Oklahoma, the history of our American diaspora is largely hidden and unknown.

This artist's book is part of a series of artworks that I have made to honor the testimony of witnesses and interviews of approximately 125,000 Eastern Cherokee families and individuals who filed applications against the United States in the Court of Claims as an effort to retain their Cherokee identity in the early 20th-century.