

# Sixkiller – Trail of Tears Memorial

Special Thanks to the Cherokee Phoenix and Mr. Will Chavez for permission to use this article



## Cherokee Phoenix

### And Indian Advocate

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VOL. XXV, No. 4 - Fall 2001

## Removal Survivors Remembered

### Trail of Tears Association honors survivors

*By Will Chavez  
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**Bill Kirk, of Des Moines, Washington, reads the biography of his great-great grandfather Taylor or Tail Sixkiller who is buried in the Lacie Cemetery near Westville, Okla.**



In solemn ceremonies held in May in rural Adair County, members of the Oklahoma Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association remembered and honored Cherokee survivors of the forced removal 163 years ago.

Family members of the survivors joined association members as small bronze plaques placed on the worn headstones were unveiled. The National Trail of Tears Association logo, the Cherokee Nation seal and the words: "In honor of one who endured the forced removal of the Cherokees in 1838-39" are engraved on the plaques.

Family members of the Trail of Tears survivors came from throughout the country to honor their ancestors and to read a brief biography about them.

Bill Kirk, traveled from Des Moines, Wash., to honor his great-great grandfather Taylor or Tail Sixkiller who is buried in the Lacie Cemetery about four miles north of Westville, Okla. The small cemetery sits under massive oak trees that protect and shade it. Kirk read a short biography of his ancestor.

"I was moved by being asked to this. I didn't

realize I was going to be asked to do this," said Kirk, who was born in Claremore, Okla. "It was an honor to speak about Tail Sixkiller, my great-great grandfather."

Tail Sixkiller was born about 1815 in Georgia, the son of Sixkiller. He was an elected member of the Cherokee National Council from the Going Snake District of the Cherokee Nation for many years. He died Nov. 12, 1889.

Ailey, or Ellen Keith Sixkiller was remembered by her great-great grandson Leroy Hammer of Lake Tahoe, Calif., who read a brief biography for his grandmother. She was born about 1835 in Georgia, the daughter of Sallie and Johnson Keith. She married John Duncan and Tail Sixkiller. She died Jan. 4, 1879. Hammer reminded those gathered of the "ethnic cleansing" that took place during the removal "extended beyond the Trail of Tears even until now."

Speaking of his Cherokee ancestors, Hammer said they have given him "strength and dignity" for his own life. He said his Sixkiller ancestors were simple farmers not famous Cherokees or politicians who served the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah. He is glad that ordinary Cherokee citizens who survived the forced removal are also being remembered.

Dist. 2 Councilman Harold "Jiggs" Phillips honored Trail of Tears survivor Martha Blackfox and read her biography. She was born about 1837 in Georgia, the daughter of Sun-na-go-yah and Cah-da-ni. She married Richard Tichahneeskee or Ketcher, and they had one son named George. She later married John Blackfox. She died April 16, 1902.



Sallie Walker was also honored at the Lacie Cemetery. She was born in Georgia about 1810. She and her first husband Johnson Keith had one daughter Ailey or Ellen. After marrying her third husband John Walker, she settled in the Going Snake District where she was known as a medicine woman. She died Sept. 10, 1897.

Another ceremony was held the same day at the Sixkiller Cemetery, a few miles north of the Lacie Cemetery. Three other members of the Sixkiller family were honored there including Soldier Sixkiller, who was born about 1829 in Georgia. He came with his parents Sixkiller and Betsy during the force removal. He married Katy Hair, and was a member of the Cherokee National Council from the Going Snake District in 1871 and 1873. He died Nov. 16, 1895.

Katy Hair Sixkiller was born in 1831 in the Cherokee Nation East, the daughter of James and Takey Hair. She was an active member of the Baptist church for more than 50 years. She died in the Going Snake District Dec. 30, 1900.

Peacheater Sixkiller was born about 1816 in Georgia. He was the son of Sixkiller, and married Ansequanah Sweetwater and then Sallie Rattlinggourd. He was a member of the National Council and died Aug. 29, 1892.

Cherokee gospel singers, Thomas and Jessie Still, sang Cherokee hymns at both honoring ceremonies, and Jack Baker, National President of the Trail of Tears Association took part in the honoring the survivors.

Baker oversees six state Trail of Tears Association chapters. The states include Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma. At the present time, Kentucky, Alabama and Illinois do not have state chapters, but the goal is to eventually have active chapters in all nine states that the Trail of Tears went through, Baker said.

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