

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 980

By Doss

A RESOLUTION to honor Ardeen Walters, founder of the Trail of Tears Retracement in David Crockett State Park.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly takes great pleasure in paying tribute to a gentleman who worked with purpose and commitment to rediscover a historical route, thus bringing an important episode in history to life for his fellow Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ardeen Walters of Leoma first became interested in the Trail of Tears while visiting relatives in Ardmore, Oklahoma; at a Native American trading post, he discovered a National Park Service (NPS) brochure that indicated the historical route went through Lawrenceburg; and

WHEREAS, in 1838 and 1839, as part of Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policy, the Cherokee Nation was forced to give up its lands east of the Mississippi River and to migrate to an area in present-day Oklahoma; the Cherokee people called this journey the "Trail of Tears," because of its devastating effects; and

WHEREAS, excited by the prospect of this historical route being near his home, Mr. Walters delved into research on the subject; and

WHEREAS, he read the document of John A. Bell (actually a detachment journal kept by Lt. Edward Deas), which noted that the Cherokees were near Pulaski in early November 1838, in Lawrenceburg by November 5, and at Knob Creek in Lawrence County on November 6; however, the course of Knob Creek at the time was unknown; and

WHEREAS, current maps were no help, and Mr. Walters struggled to find an accurate resource; finally he discovered an 1832 map of the area by Matthew Rhea that had been framed and was hanging on a wall in the State Library and Archives in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, the Rhea map depicted the old course of Knob Creek and helped prove that the Trail of Tears actually went through David Crockett State Park; although the old road bed is still visible today, without the Rhea map, it would have been difficult to prove that it was part of the historical route; and

WHEREAS, this portion of the Trail of Tears runs from Hope Spring through David Crockett State Park to Mr. O.A. Richardson's property and is one of the longest historical trails in the United States; and

WHEREAS, after the route was verified by the 1832 map, the coordinates were submitted to the NPS; both the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and NPS agree that this is the true Bell Detachment route through Lawrence County; and

WHEREAS, the grand opening of the Trail of Tears Retracement Hiking Trail was held at David Crockett State Park on November 2, 2013; the trail follows the original Bell Detachment route and runs 2.5 miles in the park; and

WHEREAS, with the help of Henry Phillips, former manager of David Crockett State Park, and Mr. O.A. Richardson, whose property abuts the park, Ardeen Walters retraced the physical details of one of the most significant and most tragic episodes in American history, and he is most deserving of our approbation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Ardeen Walters for retracing the segment of the Trail of Tears that runs through Lawrence County, which is the longest segment of the Trail of Tears on public property, and thank him for his hard work and research in rediscovering and preserving this historical route for the edification of present and future generations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.