

Cherokee Woman, Sally Vann Hughes

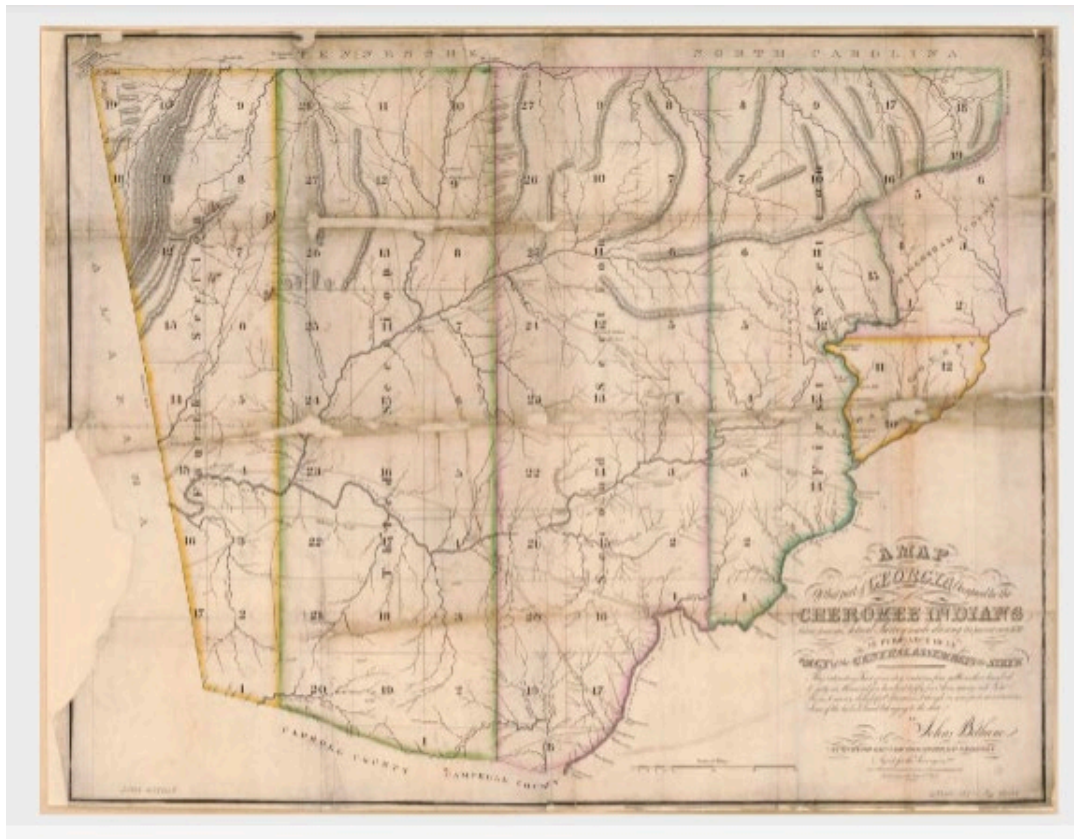
Cass County (Bartow's) First Native American Woman Entrepreneur

By Joe F. Head

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The search for Sally Hughes' history yielded several unexpected turns regarding details of her life. The trail immediately begins with the spelling varieties of her name as being; (AKA) Sally, Salley, Sallie, Sallee or Hews, Hughes, Hughs vs Vann. According to Ancestry there are no parents listed for Sally as of this writing. Further, the confusion regarding her lineage of marriages, unknown husband(s) first names and a son, George and grandson Ave Vann. Records reflect that her second son was a Hughes.

Emerson city history mentions "Sallie" Hughes as having married a Scottish settler and operating a ford known for her at the Etowah River. Local historians know well of her reputation before the Cherokee were removed. While largely forgotten to the general public, her story continues to live in the oral history shadows of Bartow County. This research of her life reveals that she suffered acts of discrimination, was ignored by officials and cheated, but she enjoyed a surprising status as perhaps being the wealthiest and most prominent Cherokee woman in old Cass County.

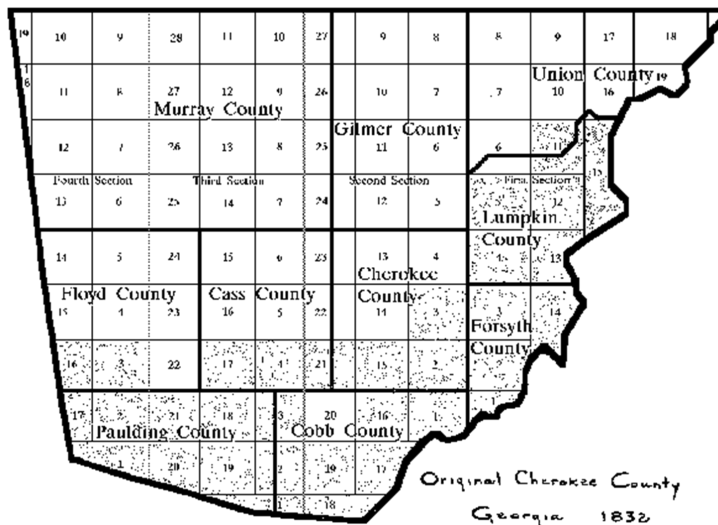


1831 map of NW Georgia of lands occupied by Cherokee Peoples (Digital Library of GA)

However, documentation about Sally Hughes is specifically mentioned in early notes from an appointed US government official, Benjamin Hawkins, who scouted the promising northwest Georgia territory. These records offer the earliest information about Cherokee inhabitants and a trail head to the origin of Sally Hughes. According to the 1835 Cherokee Census, page 94, Sallie and George Hughes are living along the Etowah River on property listed with a gold mine and owning two slaves.



Benjamin Hawkins



North Georgia and the Cherokee territory were considered a frontier by the young federal government. Col. Benjamin Hawkins was a highly educated French interpreter during the Revolutionary War, advisor to George Washington, former senator, and noted to be a meticulous journalist. He was appointed by the US government as Superintendent and Indian Agent of all the tribes south of the Ohio River. His mission was to scout the Southeastern Native territories and learn about its indigenous peoples. Unlike his peers, he chose to live among the tribes, most often with the Creek to study their society. He frequently visited the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee and Creek tribes. Among his objectives were to encourage trade, study tribal customs, language, economy, crops and to teach. When reaching the Etowah River he documents an encounter with two bright and industrious Cherokee women named Sally Hughes and a half-breed, Sally Waters, wife of the late Col. Waters. Additionally, he mentions hiring a black woman to travel with him and interpret among the Cherokee. From these two Cherokee women he learns of their needs, plight, crops, and worry regarding reprisals.

The Georgia Archives holds a document image of a handwritten four, page letter (and typed transcription) from Sally Hughes and Betsy Philips to Governor Gilmore, July 11, 1832. The letter protests an encroachment of a competing ferry built on the Etowah River by two white men, Jesse Day and John Dosson. The letter specifically references that these two men had turned the road in favor of reaching their ferry crossing at the river about a mile (east) above the Hughes ferry. It states that several cabins and a store had been built on the river. They further state that complaints had been filed previously with Sergeant Jacob Brooks who frequently traveled the area to enforce the laws, but claiming he had forgotten to submit their claim. The letter appeals to the Governor to respect their rights, as Indians, and requested the Governor to direct Col. Stanford, the Georgia Agent, to remove Day and Dosson from the Cherokee land and ferry. The letter does mention that the Sally Hughes ferry is jointly owned by

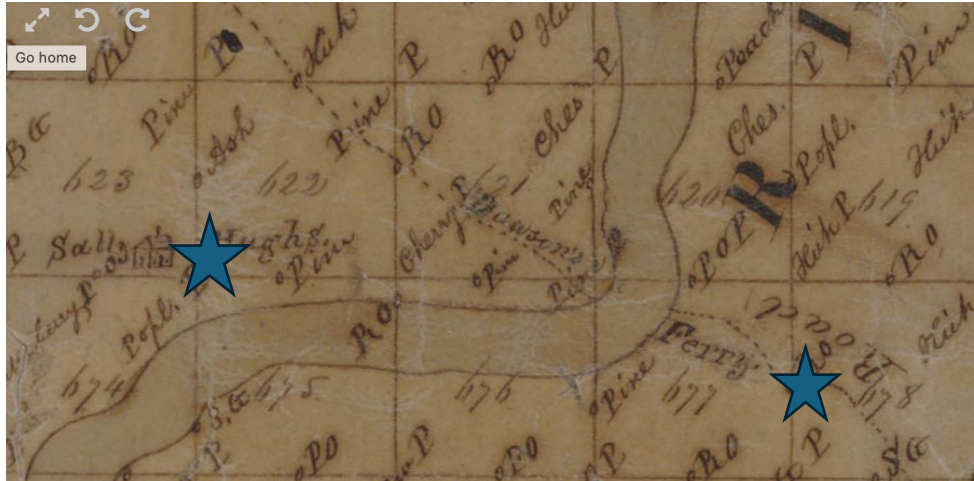
Wallennetta Charley Moore and Sally Hughes. Also, the letter is labeled in the Digital Library of Georgia as a letter written by “Cherokee Women” and is co-signed by Betsy Phillips and Sally Hughes “X” mark.

How Sally Hughes came in possession of the Etowah ferry can only be speculation? She possibly inherited it from her father or husband who may have built it, or she may have been able to construct it from her own devices with help from her partner, Charlie Moore? Several facts point to Sally as being the principal proprietor as evidenced by the written appeal she made to the Governor, map with her documented location, and a road bearing her name.

In 1828, gold was discovered in north Georgia (Dahlonega to Cedartown) and much of it was located in the Cherokee territory. In 1830 Congress passed the Indian Removal Act under President Andrew Jackson. In 1832, Cherokee lands were distributed to white settlers using a lottery system. The southern half of Cass (Bartow) County was surveyed into 40-acre parcels in favor of where gold may be found vs 160 agricultural acre lots in the northern half.

Sample image of a 1800's river ferry



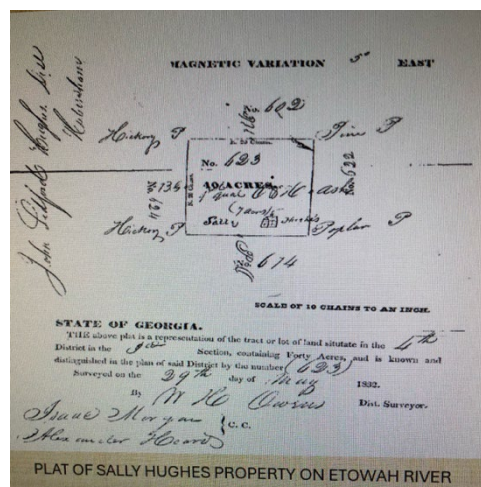


The ferry listed on the Etowah River bears the name of Dawson (various spellings) which became the dispute between Hughes and the two men that poached the site by redirecting road traffic in favor to use their ferry. It is not clear if this was the original Sallie Hughes ferry operation or the second location established by Dawson. Since the road was turned, it is possible the Dawson ferry was not the Hughes operation. (Blue stars indicate ferry location and Sallie Hughs home on Etowah))

1832, District Plat of Survey: Cherokee County, Section 3, Gold District 4, Courtesy of the Georgia Archives[vi]

Documentation indicates that the old Cherokee trail from the Sally Hughes Etowah River ferry, (Hwy 293) to Chatsworth (411 highway) was known as the Sally Hughes Road also known as current day Tennessee Street and Highway through Cartersville. This road “name-sake” is a tribute to the many legendary Cherokee trails that were famous among early pioneers traveling in the wilderness of Native American territory. However, the map reflects that the ferry is named for Dawson or Dosson as earlier mentioned in Sally’s letter to the governor.

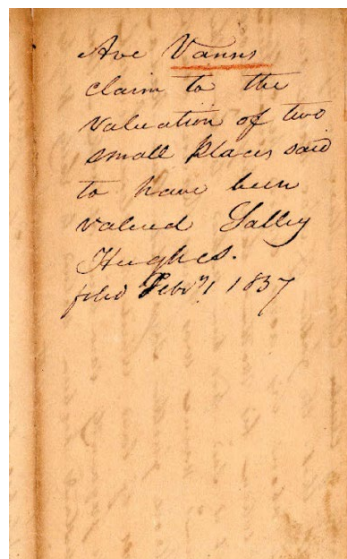
Plat of Sally Hughes land



The 1835 Cherokee Census/Roll lists Sally Hughes and her son George Hughes living on the Etowah River with 2 male slaves. According to the 1832 gold map, she resided on a 40-acre gold

lot number 623 west of her suspected ferry location and northwest of present day Emerson. It is possible her ferry was west between highway 293 and east of the lower smaller dam on the Etowah once operated by Thompson and Weinman mining company.

According to Patty Worley, genealogist, Sally Hughes (Ferry owner) was born about 1780 and had three granddaughters, Sallie Hughes, Jenny Hughes, Na-Key Hughes (¼ Cherokee) and two grandsons, David Hughes and Ave Vann living between 1845 – 1914. Her husband's grandfather was James Bernard Hughes, but no first name was found for her husband. However, she did marry a Vann prior to becoming a Hughes. Her first marriage had possible connections to the Chief Vann family of Chatsworth and a distant connection to Will Rogers one of America's greatest humorist. Rogers' mother was part Cherokee with roots in north Georgia. This marriage produced one male child, James Vann. The genealogical trail mentions a son James "Claw-see or Claw-sene Vann and a half brother, George Hughes, 1810 - 1851. She and her son George are listed in the Cherokee rolls of 1835 and living on the Etowah River in Cass County. A February 1, 1837 testimony (*copyright 2013, Polly's Granddaughter – TCB?*) from Elijah Moore states Ava Vann is the son of James Vann and grandson of Sally Hughes substantiating the ownership of two four acre tracts of land supported by a valuation document issued to Sally Hughes.



I hereby certify that the Aue Mann claimed
two small fields which were considered as part of the improve-
ments of Sally Hughes. Aue Mann is the grand son
of Sally Hughes, I was ~~with~~ residing with her when he

cleared one of the fields - the other belongs to his father
James Mann.

Sworn to & Subscribed before me this 1st Feb. 1837.
Elyah Moore
Jno. Pugh Pres. Court

The statement of Charles Moore in reference
to the above - says that the father of Aue Mann cleared
a small field of about six acres which he ^{remained there} cultivated
three years - and when his mother, Sally Hughes, ^{the son} died
it, and it is said her son passed to her. The
father of Aue Mann's name was James Mann, son of
Sally Hughes. Moore further says that Aue had a-
bout four acres of land, which he cleared himself
and cultivated - he frequently saw him at work - that
also he understood her son passed to Sally Hughes,
as part of her improvements.

Sworn to & Subscribed before me this 1st Feb. 1837.
Charles ^{his} Moore
Jno. Pugh Pres. Court

The valuation of the two documents above further support that Sally Hughes had a first son, James by a different man or husband. The following 1835 Cherokee census reflects Sally and her younger son George living on the Etowah River.

Wanquoee									
Big Jack	"	1	2		2	5			1
Charley Tehee	"	1	1		1	3			1
Big Whore	"	1	1	5	5	12			1
Tayluskee	"	3	1	1	1	6			1
Botton	Clower River	3	3	3	3	12			2
Ginny	"	2		3	3	5			1
Reacher	"		1	1	1	6			1
Chenowee	"	1	1		1	3			1
Watches	"	1	1		1	6			1
Sally Hughes	"				1	1	2	2	1
George Hughes	"		1	2	1	4			1
W. Carter	"	1	1	1	2	5			1

According to the Cherokee Home School Family blog, (established in August 10, 2020) *Teaching the Tadpoles*, posts the following under "About Us" :

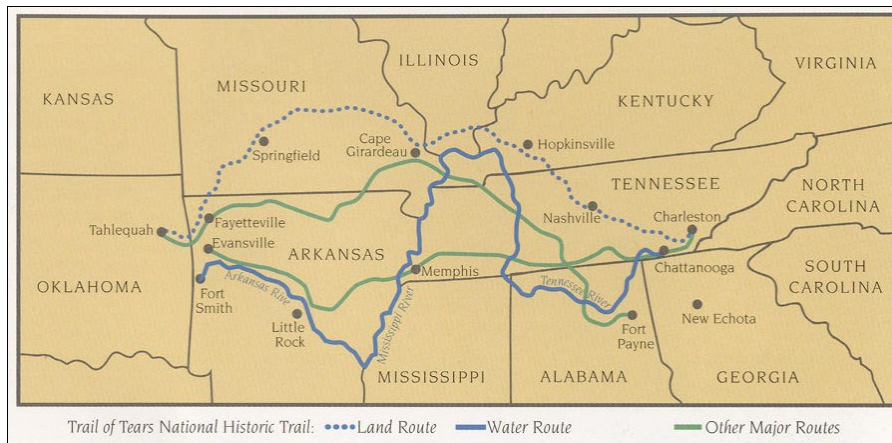
We are direct lineal descendants of the Ave Vann/Betsy Scott family that removed with the Major Ridge detachment voluntarily after the Treaty of New Echota was signed and before the forced removal today known as the Trail of Tears.

We are direct lineal descendants of savvy Cherokee businesswoman and ferry owner, Sally Hughes, who removed from the old Cherokee Nation to Indian Territory on her own before the forced removal. In genealogical terms, she's our 6th/8th great grandmother and our descent from her is well documented.

The Treaty of New Echota was ratified by Congress in 1835 requiring the Cherokee to remove from their land. They were given two years to voluntarily leave or be forcibly moved by troops in 1837. Many of the Cherokee did leave before the removal date, but others were rounded up, taken to collection forts or stations to begin a forced march to Indian Territory in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The collection point for Bartow (Cass Co) was called Fort Means on the banks of the Etowah River west of Kingston just in Floyd County along highway 293.

In 1838 there were many claims from women for their land, but they were mostly mixed bloods. There is evidence of Cherokee lands being "taken" by settlers long before this. Sallie Hughes was a wealthy ferry operator in Georgia. She was paid for her home before removal but lost her lands. A land speculator saw her thriving ferry business, so he went down the main road a half mile, turned the road and built a new ferry there, thus stealing her business and shutting her down. He then claimed all of her lands, saying she had abandoned them.
(Shadburn, Cherokee Planters)

Sally's name does not appear in Bartow history after 1837. However, Sally's granddaughter also named Sally (according to the Drennen rolls) with her siblings were entitled to compensation for losses incurred as a result of relocating to Indian Territory of approximately \$371.15. (\$14,500 in 2025). This time frame suggests she voluntarily relocated prior to the Trail of Tears with the peoples of the Cherokee Nation along with four other federally recognized tribes. (Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole)



The Trail of Tears was not a single path taken by all tribes. Its origins began from western North Carolina, Northwest Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas and Mississippi. There was not a specific starting point for the full body of Native Americans, but the trail did begin from villages, home places and farms that led to collective holding forts or stockades. After round ups were completed the militia moved the groups to larger collection areas and from there made their way west to Indian Territory in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

In summary, her story is yet to be fully discovered. However, she stands as perhaps the earliest woman entrepreneur in old Cass County. Her imprint remains in local oral history, census records, various property documents, river ferry owner, advocate for Cherokee rights, and holds the honor of having an early road (GA Hwy 293 to GA 411) named for her. Sallie's footprint is a significant historical symbol of a pioneer woman who became a wealthy individual, voice for Cherokee peoples allowing her to stand as an indelable legacy for Bartow women even today.

Bibliography

Participating Researchers

David Archer,	Retired Attorney
Keith Bailey,	Retired DNR Ranger
Sam Graham,	Local Researcher
Patty Worley,	Local Genealogist

Various Sources

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James Hughes	https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Hughes-21616#_note-4
Georgia Archives	Hughes Letter to Governor https://vault.georgiaarchives.org/digital/collection/adhoc/id/1762
Deeds	Bartow County Deeds Office? (<i>No findings: Hughes, Dawson, Day, etc</i>)
Ancestry	Valuation document, February 2, 1837
Book	Cherokee Planters in Georgia, Vol 2, 1832 – 1836, Don Shadburn
Journal/Book	Col Benjamin Hawkins Letters, GA Historical Society Vol IX, p 20-23
Ancestry	Salley Hughs family tree
TOTA	Historic Trail of Tears, Broc, National Park Service, nationaltota.com
US Census	1835 Cherokee Census, Etowah River, Bartow County Georgia
Article	<i>1835 Treaty of New Echota</i> , Joe Head, Bartow Author's Corner, Etowah Valley Historical Society
Map	District Survey Plat: Cherokee County, Section 3, Gold District 4, Georgia Archives[vi] (Labeled as Dawson Ferry)
Map	1831 map of NW Georgia of lands occupied by Cherokee Peoples (Digital Library of GA) https://www.loc.gov/item/2004633028/
Map	Cherokee County 3, Gold District 4 georgiaarchives.org/digital/collection/dmf/id/125/rec/128
Gold Lottery Map	https://www.williamlstuart.com/1832-georgia-gold-lottery/

Blog Thoughts from Poly's Granddaughter

Shadburn, Don. Cherokee Planters in Georgia 1832-1838; Cumming , GA, 1989

Blog Post <https://www.teachingthetadpoles.com/about>,

Indian Census US Indian Cherokee Census, 1852 - 59, Drennen Rolls