The Story of Hokes Bluff, Alabama
and Surrounding Areas

Volume 2

Author

Jill Boatwright

with help from students of Hokes Bluff High School
and
members of the Hokes Bluff community

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2012
Special Thanks

1999 Edition

Linda Sue Norris
M.C. Morris
Mariette Smith
Faculty at Hokes Bluff High
Mr. Mike Bailey
Deedra Pearson
Jill Brookes

2012 Edition

Courtney Entriken
Sammye Hill
Amy King
Keaton Langdale
Linda Sue Norris
Lillian Ward

Also to the many
people who took
time to share their
lives with us

“What lies behind us and lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson
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My name is Jill Boatwright. I have taught social studies at Hokes Bluff High School for 22 years. The first edition of this book was written in 1999 with the help of local citizens and students at Hokes Bluff High School. Without their help it wouldn’t have been possible. Many of the original citizens who contributed to the writing of the original book have passed on and are greatly missed. We dedicate this second edition in their memory.

I would also like to dedicate this book to my family, Brian, Nathan, Jay, and my parents Jimmy and Keatha Harwood Braddy. God has truly blessed me through all of you. Last but not least my sweet grandmother Chlone Bishop Harwood, who along with my dad, inspired me to love history as I do and who is the true source of why I chose to be a history teacher. I love you so much Grandmother.

I have spent my whole life researching my family history. While I have no direct families who settled in Hokes Bluff, I do have some connections. While researching for this book I have come across my great-grandfather’s name many times. He was a very well known preacher in Etowah County in the early 20th century. I have found his name listed in weddings, funerals and church events throughout Hokes Bluff. Lonnie Frank Braddy, Sr. resided in Tidmore Bend and later in North Gadsden. He lived to be 88 years old, dying in 1968, the same year I was born. People tell me wonderful things about him. Most people never knew he had a first name. He was simply Preacher Braddy. His son Lonnie, Jr. was my grandfather. Lonnie, Jr. married Willie Stevens who grew up on Sand Mountain. Preacher Braddy’s wife was Jessie Allsup. She was related to the Allsup family who resided in Hokes Bluff. Her parents, R.H. and Mary Allsup are buried in the Hokes Bluff Cemetery.

My mother’s parents were Lee and Chlone Bishop Harwood. They moved to Gadsden in 1929 from Arkansas when my grandfather was hired at the new Goodyear plant. Lee and Chlone lived in North Gadsden. My grandfather worked 35 years at Goodyear. He passed away in 1970. My grandmother spent time living with each of her children after his death. She passed in 1984. Lee and Chlone were the parents of Uneda (Norton), Clemmie, Wanda (Leach), Ronnie, Keatha (Braddy), and Betty (Jackson). Clemmie and Mary Harwood moved their family to Hokes Bluff in the 1950s. Their children Becky, Jeff, Debbie, Sandy, and Kelly grew up here. My parents moved to Hokes Bluff in 1967, the year before I was born. My sister Mandy and I also grew up in Hokes Bluff.
Preface

The idea for writing the original book began in early October 1998. Steve Millander and I discussed that it would be wonderful if we could get our students at Hokes Bluff High involved with a project about the history of Hokes Bluff. This project turned into an idea to write a book about our town’s history. The conversation then led us to Joe Barnes. We remembered a book he had written in the early 1960’s called the “History of Hokes Bluff, Alabama and Eastern Etowah County”. As we skimmed through the book, we were reminded of the love and dedication that Joe Barnes had for Hokes Bluff. He spent many years researching and documenting its history.

After reading through Joe Barnes’s book, Steve and I decided to get our students involved. Our first project was to have them do an interview with someone who had lived in Hokes Bluff for over thirty years. This was a great success. The kids came through. We had our starting point. The recollections of these people gave us ideas for our book. We then came up with an outline of just what we wanted in the book and the research began. Many hours were spent in libraries and records rooms. Also, precious time was spent with many Hokes Bluff citizens getting their best recollections of our storied past. The interviews were definitely the best part of doing the book. We were able to relive the memories of these people as we talked with them. The students who did the interviews will never forget the stories they have heard. This was a way to connect past to present. It is something that cannot be taught. It had to be experienced. There was no way to cover all the people that should have been interviewed, but we have tried to do our best. Thanks to all who shared their lives with us.

The second book is a republish of the first book with much added. Steve was unable to help this time. He is in the middle of getting another degree. My students and the community have been greatly involved. One special person who has helped so very much is Lillian Ward. She has spent a lifetime researching the families of Alford Bend and the Liberty Methodist Church. I have enjoyed spending time learning from her.

In these modern times most people forget about traditions and southern values, but here in Hokes Bluff you can step back in time and re-live some of these things. From country roads, to small shops, to family get-togethers, it is all here, and we are very proud of it.

So, as we begin the story of Hokes Bluff, we must travel as far back as possible and try to explain what is so special about this place in which we live. We will begin with the original inhabitants and then move on to the early settlers. Following that, many different things will be covered. Churches, schools, businesses, and the city government will all be a part of this book. It was a great undertaking, but we have enjoyed it all.
Chapter 1

Hokes Bluff, Alabama

Hokes Bluff, Alabama. Many people wonder why the town has such an unusual name. It is no ordinary name. Only one exists in the world. That characteristic fits this town perfectly, because the town is also unique. It is a true hometown, where everyone knows each other and where citizens take pride in keeping its traditional values and history alive through their own lives.

The town of Hokes Bluff is located in northeastern Alabama. It is in the county of Etowah and is nearby the town of Gadsden. The earliest known inhabitants were the Cherokee Indians. White settlers began to populate the area during the late 1830’s and early 1840’s. Most of the next one hundred years the Hokes Bluff area was mainly a farming community. In 1946, Hokes Bluff officially became a city. From then on, the town has grown into one of the most thriving communities in Etowah County.

Today, when one mentions Hokes Bluff, he or she could be including many spots that used to be distinct communities themselves, but have been swallowed up into the town or just thought of as being part of the town because they are so close by. Some examples are Ball Play, Alford’s Bend, Nooginville, Mayes Crossroads, and Ford’s Valley. When families moved from one of these spots to Hokes Bluff in the earlier days, it was considered moving to another community. Today, however, Hokes Bluff city limits covers many of these areas, and if it doesn’t, many people treat them like they are a part of it, especially those who live in other parts of the county or state.

Hokes Bluff gets its name from an early settler of northeast Alabama, Daniel Hoke, Jr. Daniel moved to Alabama with his family around 1835. The Hoke family settled in Jacksonville. Jacksonville, Alabama was the site of a stagecoach stop. It was a very important spot for many travelers who were beginning to come into this part of Alabama. It had been named after President Andrew Jackson, who had fought in the Creek Wars during the early 1800’s.

Daniel, Jr. and his parents, along with their other children, came from Lincoln County, North Carolina to open a mercantile store in Jacksonville. Daniel Hoke, Sr. had been born in York County, Pennsylvania, on November 26, 1773. He was the son of Johannes “John” Hoke who was a Revolutionary War veteran from Pennsylvania. Johannes was also born in York County in 1740. He died at a young age on October 27, 1781.

In his will, Johannes Hoke left his estate to his wife, Maria Sabrina Swope and their children Henry, Frederick, Sabrina, Daniel, John, and George. He had owned hundreds of acres of land in York County. Johannes Hoke’s father was Johann Jacob
Hoke. He was born in Germany around 1695. Sometime around 1728 he came to America with his wife and their children. They later settled in York County. Johann died around 1766.

### Children of Daniel Hoke, Sr.

*wife Barbara Ramseur Hoke*

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<td>Sarah</td>
<td>(1800-1881) m. Jacob Forney</td>
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<td>John D.</td>
<td>(1803-1873) m. Anna Whitaker</td>
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<td>George</td>
<td>(1805-1864) m. Martha Douglas</td>
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<td>Daniel Jr.</td>
<td>(1808-1876)</td>
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<td>Alfred</td>
<td>(1810-1883) m. Susan Abernathy</td>
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<td>Anna</td>
<td>(1812-1889) m. Miles Abernathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>(1815-1836) never married</td>
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<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>(1818-1879) m. Moses Dean</td>
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<td>Catharine</td>
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Daniel Hoke Sr. and many of his sons, including Daniel Jr., were merchants. Daniel Hoke, Sr. and a man named Abernathy, possibly Miles Abernathy, the husband of his daughter Anna, established a mercantile store called Hoke & Abernathy in Jacksonville during the late 1830’s. By the 1850’s, Daniel Sr. had given his share of the store to his sons.

Daniel Jr., for whom Hokes Bluff is named, was born in Lincoln County, North Carolina, in 1808 and moved to Jacksonville around 1835 with his family. He never married and had been crippled in a childhood accident. During the 1850s, as Daniel Jr.’s part in the mercantile business grew, he sought land near the Coosa River in what is now Hokes Bluff. Alabama Land Grants show that he purchased a portion of land in 1854, which contained the bluff from which the city gets its name. Daniel Jr. felt owning land on the Coosa River would provide him with an area to meet steamboat traffic from Rome, Georgia as it traveled to Gadsden. He then began transporting goods back and forth from the store in Jacksonville. Daniel Jr. never made permanent residence in Hokes Bluff. He probably constructed a small cabin for use during his trips to the bluff.

### Patentee Name

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<td>10 Feb 1854</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoke, Daniel</td>
<td>01 Jan 1859</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoke, Daniel</td>
<td>02 April 1860</td>
<td>Centre</td>
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Daniel Hoke, Jr. made early land transactions in what is today Hokes Bluff:

A business partner of Daniel, Jr.’s, William Wynne, is given credit for naming the area Hokes Bluff. This account comes from an article printed by *The Gadsden Times* dated January 16, 1894. The original name was Hoke’s Bluff. The possessive form of
the name was used until sometime around the turn of the 20th century. Afterwards, the name simply became Hokes Bluff.

Daniel Hoke, Jr.’s name is also mentioned on a probate record in Etowah County dated May 2, 1868. It reads as follows: Petition of Thomas J. Wofford, Sr. and Whitley T. Ewing to replace a seven foot dam with a ten foot dam on Big Cove Creek for a grist mill. Permission granted. Daniel Hoke’s and Agnes Posey’s land above the dam to be overflowed. (This grist mill later became Ewing’s Mill) This mill was located across from the old Chunn’s Lake swimming pool on Old Highway 278.

On the 1850 Census, Daniel Hoke, Jr. was listed as a resident of Jacksonville in the home of his brother John D. Hoke. His occupation was merchant and the value of his property was over $2000. By 1870, Daniel Jr. is still residing in Jacksonville but the value of his property had grown to $10,000, which is an enormous amount considering the south had just suffered through the Civil War and many southerners had lost everything.

Daniel Hoke, Sr. and another son Alfred Hoke are also listed on the 1850 Calhoun County Census. Daniel Sr.’s wife Barbara had died in September 1849 from complications suffered during a stroke, which had occurred a month earlier. Other information found on the Hoke family included the will of Daniel Hoke, Sr.. This will was found in probate records of Calhoun County. In the will, Daniel Sr.’s children are listed. Each of them received a portion of their father’s estate. Also willed were Daniel’s slaves. The following is a copy of Daniel Hoke, Sr.’s will dated April 12, 1858:

I Daniel Hoke of the County of Benton (Calhoun) and state of Alabama do make and publish my last will and testament.
I give and bequeath to my wife Barbara Hoke, during her lifetime the dwelling house together with all the out houses and all the lands adjacent via part of the NE 1/4 of Sec 22 T14 R8; also part of the NW 1/4 of said Sec. Town, Range and also part of the SW 1/4 Sec 15 T8 and also all the personal property to have use and enjoy during her lifetime.
To my eldest daughter Sarah I confirm what I have already given her and direct that my executors hereafter named here two hundred and forty dollars out of the proceeds of such property as may be on hand at the death of my wife.
To my son John I confirm what I have already advanced him.
To my son George I confirm what I have already advanced him.
To my son Daniel I confirm what I have already advanced him.
The provision for the above sons has been made in the transfer of my interest in the compartment
and firm Hoke and Abernathy, a stock of goods in Lincolnton, NC and a Negro girl Sylvia to my son John.
To my son Alfred I confirm what I have already given him.
To my daughter Ann I confirm what I have already given her.
To my daughters Eliza and Catherine I confirm what I have already given them and direct that the same sum be paid each of them in the same manner as directed to be paid to Sarah.
To my youngest son Joseph I now set apart and give three negroes - Wallace, Caesar, and Milsey and will and bequeath that my dwelling house with all the out houses and my part of the NW 1/4 of Sec22 T14 R8 and of the NW 1/4 of said sec township and range and of the SW1/4 of Sec15 said township and range and the undivided 1/2 of the 1/2 of NW 1/4 of Sec15 in T14 and R8 with the apprentances be his and his heirs forever.
It is my will that after the payment of my just debts the balance of my property be equally divided.
among my children
I hereby nominate constitute and appoint my sons John D. and George my executors to this my
last will and testament
Daniel Hoke, Sr.
12th day of April 1858

In the book, In the Name of God Almighty, I ... Hoke, Bequeath, by Jean
Berlekampf, Daniel Jr. is reported to have never married. Therefore, it would have been
the responsibility of his surviving brothers to take care of him and his estate, as he got
older. Record proves that is just what happened.

A probate record was found in Calhoun County dated October 1875, which was a
petition of Joseph L. Hoke, Daniel’s brother, to have Daniel declared Non Compis
Mentis. The actual record is as follows: October, 1875. Petition of Joseph L. Hoke for a
hearing to ascertain if Daniel Hoke, Jr. is Non Compis Mentis. Joseph L. Hoke is a
brother of Daniel Hoke who is over 67 years of age and more than 4 months ago
was striken with a paralytic stroke. October 15, 1875. Daniel Hoke judged to be Non
Compis Mentis.

Undoubtedly, Joseph had Daniel declared non compis mentis so that he could
oversee his estate. Daniel died three months later on January 9, 1876. He is buried at
City Cemetery in Jacksonville, Alabama along side his parents. No wife is listed for
Daniel at the cemetery.

Even though Daniel lived his last days not knowing all that he had accomplished
throughout his life, he left his mark in this part of Alabama. Hokes Bluff is known
throughout the state as a great place to call home.

To the left is an original letter written by Daniel Hoke’s brother
John to his son Daniel Forney in 1857. This letter
was sent to me by Dollie Brown of
Gadsden, who
found it at an
estate sale.
This is a view of Hoke Street in 1917. This was the road to Hokes Bluff. Notice how poor the driving conditions were. This was typical of many roads in the area around the time.

To the left is another original letter written by Daniel Hoke’s brother John to his son Daniel Forney in 1857. This letter was sent to me by Dollie Brown of Gadsden, who found it at an estate sale.
Chapter 2

The Original Inhabitants

The rich history of Hokes Bluff begins with its original inhabitants, the Native Americans. Most of the early history of these people is unknown because it was not written down. Their histories were passed by word of mouth. When the tribes were wiped out for different reasons, their oral histories were lost. Larger better-known tribes absorbed many of the earliest aboriginal tribes. There is no way to ever know exactly what group of Native Americans first populated what we now call Hokes Bluff.

When exploring Hokes Bluff, it is easy to see that this area was rich in Native American culture. Artifacts such as arrowheads, spear points, pottery, and many other types of articles have been found here for hundreds of years. Not only that, but there are also numerous burial grounds in the area.

Just looking at the landscape one can see that the area now known as Hokes Bluff and its surrounding areas must have been a prized possession of the Indians who lived here. The Coosa River, which flows down into the area from northern Georgia, takes its name from the Native American word “coosa” which means reed. Its unusual muddy color comes from the ores along the banks of its tributaries. The river must have been a great source of life for these original people. The great bluff in the center of Hokes Bluff, which overlooks the Coosa, undoubtedly had to have been a lookout point or ceremonial place. The view from this bluff is wonderful. Miles of territory can be seen. Long before Europeans realized how important this area was, the Native Americans called it home.

Most of the information we have about these early tribes comes from the journals of a Spanish explorer named Hernando De Soto. He explored a great deal of the southeastern United States during the late 1530’s and 1540’s. There are several theories on De Soto’s actual route through the south. One account states that his expedition entered present-day Florida near Tampa Bay in 1628, and slowly worked it’s way up through Georgia, eventually reaching present-day Rome, Georgia. Rome, according to this account, was at that time the site of an Indian village named Chiaha.

Hernando De Soto

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Another account of De Soto’s travels places Chiaha at a more northern site than Rome. This account places Chiaha near the Tennessee-Georgia state line. This account is similar to the first story, but it states that De Soto traveled more north and even had him entering into South Carolina.

In the first account, where Chiaha was placed near Rome, Georgia, De Soto followed the Coosa River down to Gadsden and then on southward. However, the second account does not have De Soto coming down the Coosa. It states that he came down Big Wills Creek from extreme northeastern Alabama. A study commission set up in the 1930’s by the federal government documented this account. It is the accepted theory.

However, if the first account is correct, then De Soto would have passed directly through Hokes Bluff. He and his men would have been the first Europeans to set foot in the area. Unfortunately, there is no way to prove this theory. No evidence has ever been found from De Soto’s expedition in or around Hokes Bluff.

One thing we can be sure of is that De Soto did come close to the area because he encountered Indians near Childersburg. That encounter is proven to have happened. Also, one thing that is important to us concerning De Soto is that he had great descriptions of the Indians who lived in northern Georgia and Alabama. These descriptions tell us about the people who inhabited the lands in northeastern Alabama. DeSoto’s journals give an interesting description of the Indians of this area. They are described as being athletic, active, and graceful. Also, it is said that it was rare to find an ill-formed or ugly Indian. Pearls were worn in the ears. Many of the men and women wore tattoos over a large part of their bodies. There are two Indian tribes that are connected with our area before the modern Cherokee and Creeks. They are the Coosas and the Chalaques. The Coosas inhabited the present-day counties of Calhoun, Etowah, Talladega, Coosa and part of Cherokee County. The Chalaques populated Chiaha and the area surrounding it. The Chalaques were probably ancestors of the modern Cherokee. Chalaque is the Spanish version of the word “Cherokee.”
The invasion of De Soto resulted in the destruction of a great portion of the Indian population in Alabama. Some were wiped out by battles with De Soto’s men. Others died from European diseases such as smallpox. Nevertheless, the area became available to be re-populated by other tribes. Two of these were the Cherokee and the Creek.

The Cherokee Nation was originally centered in Northern Georgia and Northwestern Carolina, with some bands living as far north as Virginia. The European settlers eventually pushed them further east during the 1600 and 1700’s. During this time period, many settled in northeastern Alabama. It is possible that some small tribes were already here. However, as Europeans moved into the Carolinas and Georgia the main villages were relocated to areas around northeast Alabama and northwest Georgia.

The Cherokee are of the Iroquoian family of American Indians. The Iroquois composed the Five Great Nations: Cayuga, Seneca, Mohawks, Oneidas, and the Onondagas. The Cherokees were the distant relatives of these tribes. There are several known meanings of the word “Cherokee.” The most familiar meaning comes from the Creek word “Chelokee” which means people of different speech. According to Albert Picket’s book, History of Alabama, the name Cherokee is derived from the Indian word “Chera,” meaning fire. The prophets of this nation were called Cherataghe which means men of divine fire.

The Cherokee people originally called themselves “Anikituaghi” which means “principal people.” They were hunters and farmers who lived in villages. They were intelligent and of medium stature. Their skin was an olive color but was usually painted with a variety of pictures. The Cherokee had many unique tribal activities such as the green corn dance, ball plays, and the unusual habit of indulging in a ceremonial black drink. It may have been for medicinal purposes or purification of some kind. Also in Picket’s book, it was rumored that tribes from as far away as Mexico may have traded with the Cherokee for this black drink.

Kinship was very important to the Cherokee. At birth every Cherokee became a member of an extended family or clan. There were seven clans, wild potato, bird, long hair, blue, paint, deer, and wolf. The clans were matrilineal. That meant that the person automatically became a member of the clan of his mother.

There were two important Cherokee towns in northeast Alabama by the late 1700’s. These were Will’s Town and Turkey Town. Will’s Town was named for a half breed called Redheaded Will, whose real name was William Webber. It was located near present day Valley Head in DeKalb County. Turkey Town was named after Chief Little Turkey. It was located along the northern banks of the Coosa River in an area known as the Coosa Valley. According to the book, History of Etowah County, it extended just south of Centre to below Gadsden.

Chief Little Turkey was at one point a principal chief in the Cherokee Nation. Turkeytown, as it is now known, was a very important Cherokee village during the late
1700’s and early 1800’s. However, once the capital of the Cherokee Nation was moved to New Echota, Georgia, around 1819, Turkeytown lost some of its significance. Turkeytown was a popular site in the Cherokee Nation for trade with the British and Americans. Andrew Jackson once visited Turkeytown. He met there to sign a treaty with the Cherokee in September 1816. The treaty opened parts of northern Alabama for settlement. The book, *History of Etowah County*, states that the area included what is now Lawrence, Morgan, and part of Blount, Colbert, Franklin, and Winston Counties.

Most of present day Hokes Bluff was occupied by the Cherokee. At one time, the southern border of the Cherokee Nation was along Big Cove Creek and very near where Highway 278 runs today. The Creek Indians were located on the other side of the border.

The Creeks were of different stock than the Cherokee. The Creeks were Muscogee. They originated in the Ohio River Valley. Following the devastation which occurred to the Indians in this area after De Soto’s visit, the Creeks or Muscogee, which they were originally called, began to prepare to move to these parts to re-populate it.

According to Picket’s book, they located between the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers to begin with and then spread into southern Alabama and western Georgia. The Creeks received their name because of the many beautiful rivers and streams, which flowed through their domain.

Creek warriors were larger than European men. They were proud, haughty, and arrogant. The women were short, modest, and pretty. The Creeks were fond of ornaments, which consisted of stones, beads, feathers, and earrings. They also wore
tattoos on the skin.

The most widely played game among the Creeks was the “ball play.” It occurred when warriors of one town challenged those of another. They then agreed to meet in one of the participating team’s home village. Prior to the game, each group would prepare as if going to war, even though they knew that it was only a game. As word spread about the game, many spectators from the tribes began to prepare to attend.

The warriors came to the game dressed in nothing but a “flap.” Each side began about a quarter of a mile apart and slowly advanced toward each other. As they did this, the warriors would sing and yell tribal songs and chants. When the two sides reached each other, they began to dance and intermingle. Then a loud artillery noise would sound and everyone would become silent. The warriors then fell back about three hundred yards apart. In the center of the crowd two poles were erected. Between these two the ball had to pass in order for a point to be scored. Each warrior was given two rackets of singular construction, resembling a ladle or hoop-net with handles nearly three feet long. The handle was of wood, and the netting was made of rawhide or the tendons of animals.
Ball Play Warrior

Play began as the ball, covered with buckskin, was thrown in the air. Warriors then rushed to the ball. The one who caught it then ran ahead and threw it in the air again in the direction of the two poles. It had to be thrown toward the direction of his hometown to be counted for his team. While the game went on, limbs and hair were pulled and many were trampled upon. Anything was done to obtain the ball and also to make sure he who had it dropped it before he could score a goal. The game usually went on for hours until someone scored anywhere from twelve to twenty points. During the process, many were hurt, and some were even killed. While the game went on, many people gambled away possessions betting on the game.

Obviously, this game of ball play is where Ball Play, Alabama, gets its name. Many stories have been handed down about this area. Some say the area of Ball Play in eastern Etowah and southwestern Cherokee Counties is named for a site where the Cherokee and Creek Indians played their version of the game. It has been said that the Creeks won a great portion of land in one of these games near Ball Play.

There is another legend, which states that Princess Noccalula, the daughter of Chief Little Turkey, had her fate decided by a game of ball played in this area. The story
goes that two young braves fell in love with Noccalula. Noccalula was only in love with one of them. The other, however, had been chosen by Noccalula’s father to be her future husband. Custom called for a game of ball to settle the dispute. The young men were ordered to play in the game on opposing sides. The winner would receive Noccalula’s hand in marriage. When the game ended, Noccalula’s chosen had lost the game. Rather than marry someone whom she didn’t love, she chose to jump off of the falls on Lookout Mountain to her death.

As the English settlers began to move into territories near the Cherokees and Creeks, many traditions and customs were exchanged. The Indians began accepting the Christian way of life. Many began to live similarly to the white settlers. Some even intermarried with these settlers. Many of the original settlers in northeast Alabama traded with the Indians before the Indians lost their lands.

In 1819, Alabama gained statehood. This encouraged more settlement. It also meant that the Cherokee and the Creek tribes would have to eventually give up their lands in northeast Alabama. By the early 1830’s, Indian families had begun to move west of the Mississippi. Many, however, resisted the pressure to move. Soon all of them would be forced to go. The Treaty of New Echota was signed in 1835. By agreeing to it, the Cherokee had to move its entire people west of the Mississippi within the next two years.

As the two years passed, most families had not moved voluntarily. Federal troops were sent in to forcibly remove the Indians. This removal was known as the Trail of Tears. It occurred in 1838 and 1839. The Trail of Tears was one of the most tragic events in our nation’s history. Thousands of civilized Cherokees and Creeks were forced out of their homes. They only could take with them what they could carry. No compensation was given to them for the land and possessions they left behind. Many were at one minute farming or keeping house and the next in shackles being led away
from their homes. In most cases, these people were no different than those settlers who were coming to take the land from them. The only real difference was the color of their skin. Many of these proud people died along the way while walking to the lands west of the Mississippi River. As they walked, some of the members of these tribes dropped petals of flowers representing the tears cried in this heartbreaking event.

Cherokees on the Trail of Tears in the 1830s painted by Robert Lindneux in 1942

Etowah County was part of land opened up for settlement in the late 1830s and early 1840s after the Indian Removal Act was passed which forced the Native Americans west.