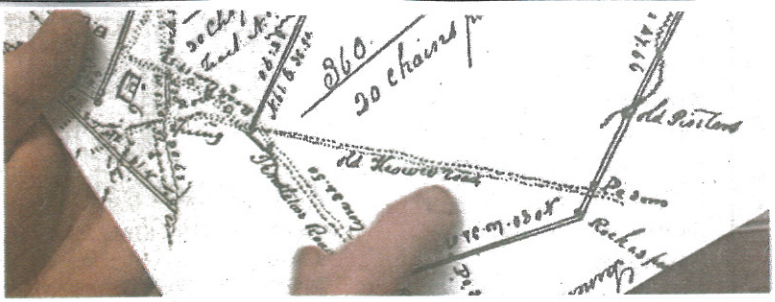
Historic Cherokee Path route discovered

Trail from Keowee to Charleston linked to Six Mile with an 1850-dated document



RON BARNETT

Dennis Chastain explains the significance of this plat he discovered showing the route of the Cherokee Path through Six Mile.

RON BARNETT
RBARNETT@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

Dennis Chastain has traced much of the route of the old Cherokee trading path that once ran from the village of Keowee to Charleston, and he has long believed it must have passed through what is now the town of Six Mile.

So when he heard about Six Mile's plans to restore the old home of the town's first mayor and turn a big chunk of property recently acquired by the town into a historical park, he wanted to verify what he thought was true about the trail's location.

After 10 hours of digging through old deeds in the Pickens County Courthouse, he discovered a plat dated 1850 that shows the roads through Six Mile.

One of those roads, running on the same route that is now Six Mile's Main Street, was labeled "Old Keowee Road." That was the name used at the time for what is now called the Cherokee Path.

"We finally hit the motherlode last Friday," Chastain told Six Mile Town Council during a special presentation Tuesday night.

"This is what I needed. This is documentary proof," he said. "It doesn't get any better than an old plat."

"This is a big deal."

James Atkinson, a member of the town council and representative of the Pickens County Historical Society, said he and other town leaders hadn't realized the old Indian path was part of their history.

"What Dennis talked about tonight is very much in line with our town's comprehensive plan – preserving the town's history and heritage and promoting it," Atkinson told *The Greenville News* after Chastain's presentation.

"Historic tourism, genealogical tourism is really, really big," Chastain said.

"You've got a story to tell," he said. "And that story now involves the fact that your Main Street is on the old, ancient Cherokee Path."

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Earlier in the meeting, Modern Woodmen of America, a member-owned fraternal financial services organization, had presented the town with a check for $2,500, matching what the town had raised toward its historical preservation project.

Chastain, a noted outdoorsman, local historian and writer, has studied the Cherokee Path extensively, discovering a dozen sections of it across the state that have remained undisturbed since it went out of use nearly 200 years ago.

"They looked like they did in the 1760's when Gov. James Glen marched 1500 men from Charleston, and 200 head of cattle to feed those 1500 men, and 50 wagons," Chastain said, showing some of the sites in a slide presentation.

At least one of them isn't far from Six Mile.

A section runs along the old Nimmons Bridge Road, next to a nearby bait and tackle shop, he said.

He also discovered the location of Gap Hill, a part of the Cherokee Path where a battle was fought in 1761 that several places in the area are named after.

And he found the site where those soldiers marching in the 1760's must have camped, in what is now a housing development near Six Mile called Puckett Mill.

From Main Street, Six Mile, the Cherokee Path ran along the route that is now Norris Highway. Old Pendleton Road branched off toward Clemson. A trail called the Warrior Path ran into the Cherokee Path where State 133 and North Main Street now run together at Six Mile Baptist Church.

"It's like a Spaghetti Junction of historical roads coming together in Six Mile," Chastain said.

The Cherokee Path is particularly important in South Carolina's history – so much so that one of the colonial governors called it "the key to Carolina."

"He understood that there was a lot more of them (Cherokees) than there were them (colonists), and at any point the Cherokees could literally wipe out the South Carolina colony," Chastain said. "He said establishing a relationship with the Cherokee was key to Carolina, key to survival of the colony."

As a result, the Cherokees traded with the British colonists rather than the French, who were pursuing their friendship as well.

"If the Cherokees had aligned with the French instead of the British, we'd all be having croissants for breakfast instead of grits," Chastain quipped. "So I'm glad it turned out the way it did."

Beyond the Keowee village and Ft. Prince George, the Path ran all the way to the Cherokee villages of Tennessee, establishing a link between the most powerful Indian nation of the time and colonial Charleston.

It ran all the way through the gates of the port city, down King Street, which remains a commercial center today, Chastain said.

"What do Saks Fifth Avenue and Six Mile, South Carolina have in common?" Chastain asked the crowd gathered in the council chambers.

"Not much," one observer replied, to the laughter of the audience.

"They're both located on the Cherokee Path," Chastain answered. "So already you're in a different neighborhood than you thought you were."

"Where else can you go to a council meeting and get a history lesson?" Mayor Roy Stoddard said.



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