



Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad

By Sam Keiser
Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area Graduate Assistant

Tuscumbia, Alabama

- Established by French settlers in the 1700s
- Was named after a Chickasaw leader in 1822
- Home of Helen Keller
- The birthplace of the TC&D Railroad



Tuscumbia Depot and Railroad Museum

The Muscle Shoals

- An almost 40-mile stretch of shallow rapids located between Decatur and Florence
- Made it nearly impossible for boats to travel along the river when the water was low
- Had various nicknames



TC&D Railroad



TC&D Origins

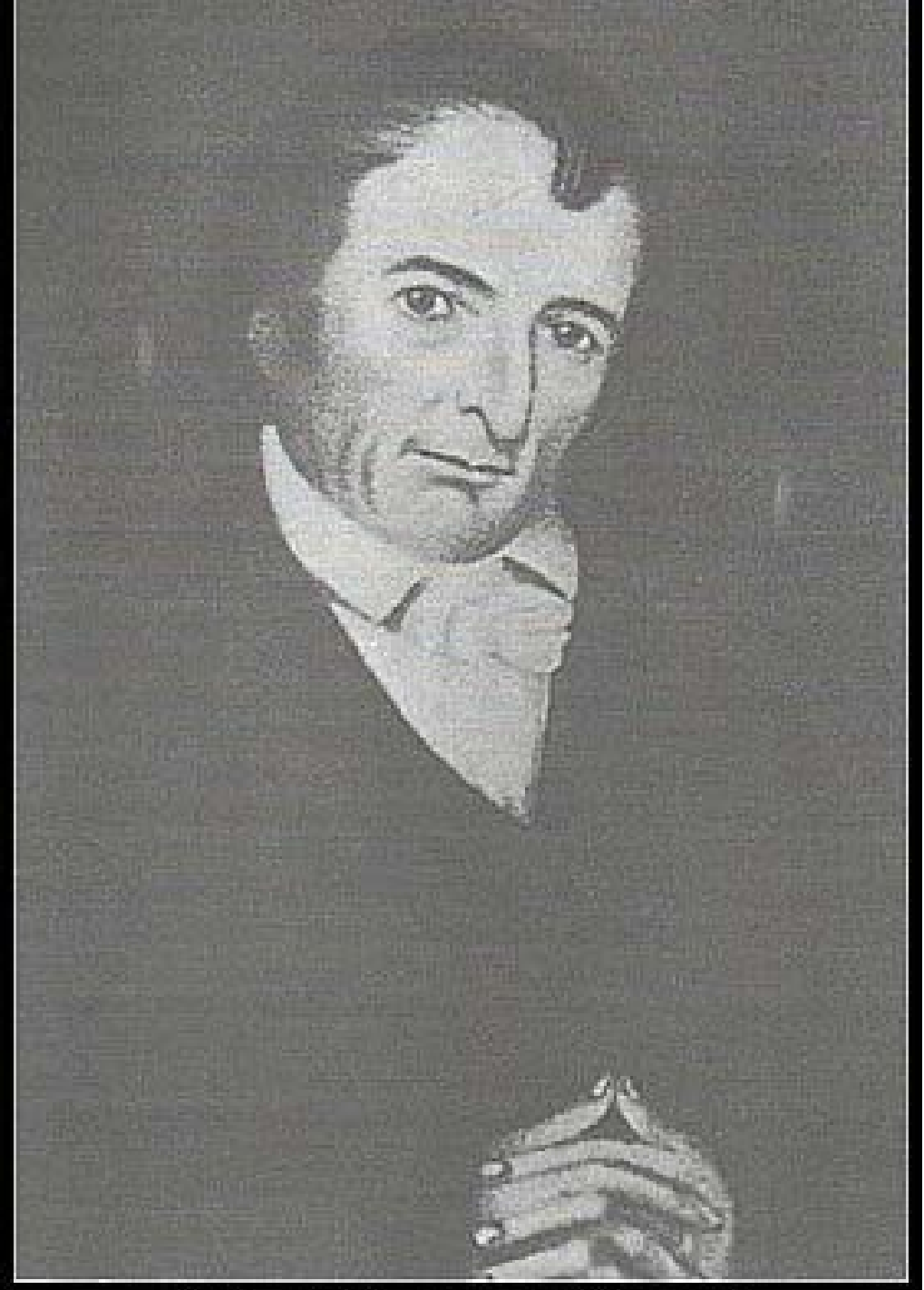
- First railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains
- Proposed to create a way to bypass the shoals
- Construction of the first portion of the railroad began in 1831 and was completed in 1832
- Originally 2.1 miles
- Ran from downtown Tuscumbia to Tuscumbia Landing
- 1832 the line to Decatur and Courtland was chartered

TC&D continued...

- At first only had two cars
- A horse or mule pulled the cars
- TC&D Railroad line to Courtland and Decatur completed in 1834
- First steam engine used on the railroad in 1834
- Transported cotton, lumber, and mail

Benjamin Sherrod

- Born January 16, 1777
- Born in Halifax, NC
- Planter
- President of TC&D Railroad
- Primary financier of the TC&D Railroad
- Died in 1847



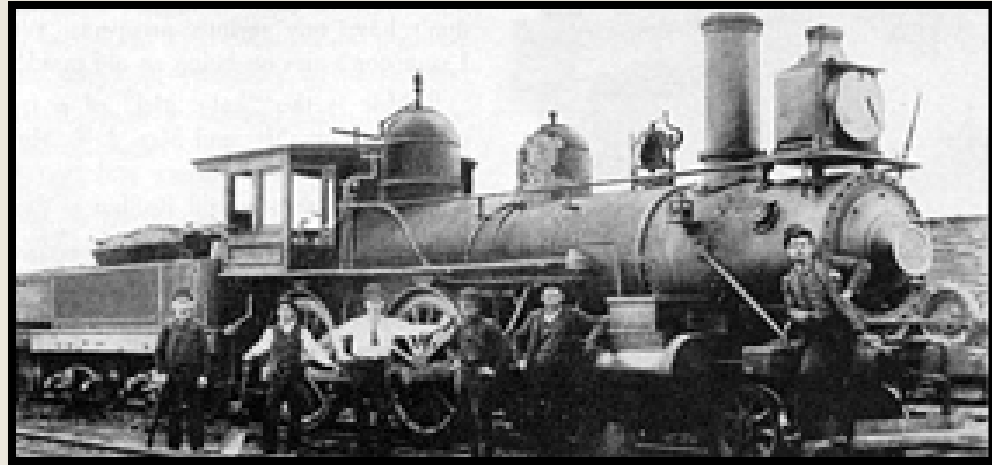
Trail of Tears

- The forced relocation of Native Americans in the 1830s from the southeast to Oklahoma
- Creek and Cherokee tribes
- Cherokees journeyed from Georgia to Decatur
- The tribes traveled on the TC&D Railroad from Decatur to Tuscumbia Landing

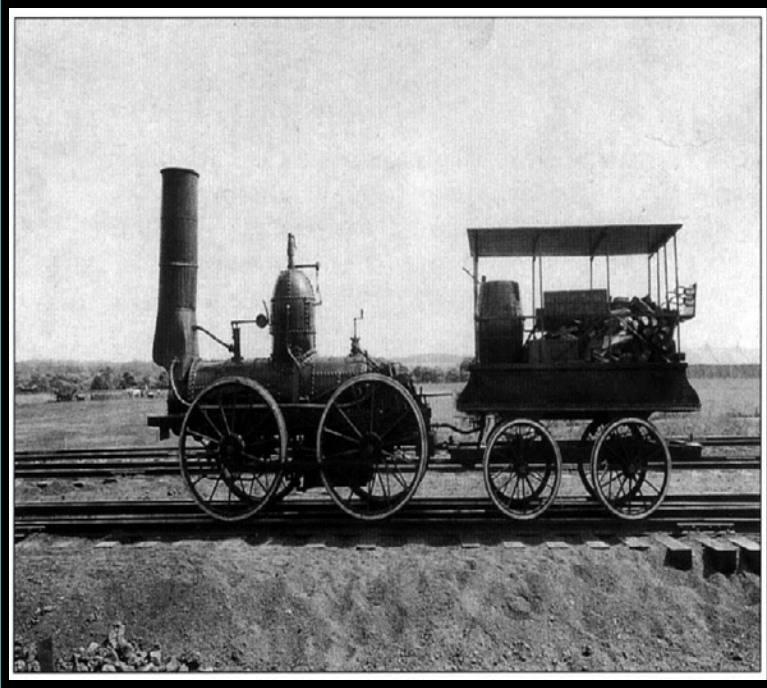


End of the TC&D

- Benjamin Sherrod died in 1847
- Railroad went bankrupt
- Railroad sold to vice-president David Deshler
- TC&D Railroad becomes the Tennessee Valley Railroad
- The railroad was sold to the Memphis Charleston Railroad



Legacy



- The TC&D Railroad was the first railroad built in Alabama and fourth in the country.
- The TC&D Railroad promoted faster trade by bypassing the Shoals
- The TC&D Railroad played a significant role on the Trail of Tears
- After being absorbed by Memphis and Charleston, the former TC&D Railroad helped connect the Mississippi river and the Atlantic Ocean.