



Stone Songs  
ON THE Trail of Tears  
*The Journey of an Installation*

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by PAT MUSICK with Jerry Carr and Bill Woodiel

## *Yokes on the Trail of Tears, an Introduction*

BY DONALD HARINGTON

ARTISTIC  
PERSPECTIVE

Nothing in the tragic history of the American Indian has seized the creative imagination as deeply as the Trail of Tears. Many poems, novels, stories, dramas, paintings, and, now, a stunning sculpture, testify to our enduring sympathy for the plight of the heroically dispossessed Cherokees, who were forced in 1838 to leave their beloved homeland and make a journey of unimaginable hardship and peril into strange new lands assigned to them in Indian Territory.

That journey crossed Arkansas. Or one detachment of about a thousand Cherokees, led by John Benge, one of thirteen native conductors taking various routes, entered northeast Arkansas at a place today called "Indian Ford" and traversed the northern part of the state until it reached the little town of Fayetteville and from there proceeded due southwest into Indian Territory.

Along the Benge Route three babies were born and thirty-three people died, and everyone endured severe hardships due to the extreme weather conditions (the government issued only one blanket per person) as well as disease.

The wheels of the wagons, no less than the imprint of many feet and hooves, left markings on the landscape along the old Military Road, so that it is possible today to trace the original Benge route almost along its entire length.

In her remote Madison County studio, sculptor Pat Musick worked for a year to research the Trail of Tears and to conceive of an original way to honor and commemorate it in an installation.

"Installations" are defined as site-specific work in which every element in the space of the environment of the work becomes a part of it. Thus, the project consisted not only of the five pieces of the sculpture, which the artist originally called *Stone Songs*, but also of the specific sites where the work would be erected temporarily.

Most people unfamiliar with the dizzying vagaries of modern (and postmodern) art have trouble grasping the concept of temporary, the idea that a work would not be created as a fixed, permanent monument but would, like snowfall in April, last only a little while.

Pat Musick's concept involved creating



## CATALPA SPRING, THE SPRING

Pure, clear spring fills mind  
and spirit.

Reflections upon the past.

Intimations of the future  
and the child's.

Crisp cress assuages hunger.

**MARCH 5. EARLY AFTERNOON. CATALPA SPRING.**  
We decide to do two shots of this beautiful site. I have time to reflect as we set up the second shot of the spring. For the first time I begin to realize that this project is larger than I had planned. There is so much more emotion involved than I had expected. As the sculpture moves from site to site, I am transported back to the 1830s and imagine how the Cherokees must have felt: sad, strong, silent.

