March TOTA Meeting at Rockdale Plantation

The next meeting of the Georgia Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association will be held at Rockdale Plantation in Gordon County, GA on Saturday, March 12, 2011 at 10:30 AM. This antebellum showplace, listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Major Freeman-Hurt House, was in extremely poor condition when owners Kerry and Sue Hix bought it at auction three decades ago. They refer to the now mostly restored log structure as "the oldest home in Gordon County." The Trail of Tears Association may have to see if it can entice a dendroarchaeologist to go out to the site to back up that assertion. But whether or not Rockdale Plantation turns out to be the oldest home, it almost certainly is the best example of a nearly intact Cherokee plantation property in North Georgia.

There are three main buildings on the Rockdale Plantation property: the “Big House,” the “Log Cook House” and the “Traveler’s Rest.” There are also foundations of buildings that were there in the past, such as a barn - located on the north end of the property, near Hwy. 411 - that was moved to Stone Mountain, Georgia. The three existing buildings are constructed primarily from logs that are hewn on all four sides. Some logs were in such bad condition that they had to be replaced. Kerry Hix is an historic log cabin restoration expert. In the past 39 years, he has located and restored, with exacting authenticity, over 150 rare log cabins dating from the time when the Revolutionary War was still recent memory. His work has been covered in national magazines such as Architectural Digest and Town & Country; regional publications like Mountain Living and Atlanta Homes and Lifestyles; and special professional magazines like Period Homes: The Professionals Resource for Residential Architecture.

Located on U.S. Hwy. 411 just south of Oakman, Rockdale Plantation has gone through a long list of owners, but most of them can trace their heritage back to Major James Freeman. Freeman was born Sept. 5, 1789 in Oglethorpe, Georgia and married Sarah Georgia Bailey in Morgan, Georgia on May 10, 1826. Their family moved to what is now eastern Gordon County, appearing on every U.S. Census between 1840 and 1870. James and Sarah’s children were Major Francis Marion Freeman, Ann Elizabeth Freeman (who later gained ownership of the house), Josephine Freeman, Maria L. Freeman, Benjamin White Freeman and Robert Freeman. What is truly exciting is that we have evidence which leads us to believe that the Rockdale Plantation's original owner was George W. Adair, one of the signers of the Treaty of New Echota.

The Hixes hope they can preserve all of this for future generations, but the fact of the matter is that they need our help. We’re looking forward to having them host the Georgia chapter of the Trail of Tears Association for our March meeting. As it turns out, we’ll be arriving just in time. Just a few days later, Kerry and Sue Hix may no longer have possession of the property. Come see this one-of-a-kind historic property while you still can!!

Please come to our meeting on March 12th and learn more about the history of the Rockdale Plantation and the projects currently being worked on by the Trail of Tears Association. Our meetings are free and open to the public. You need not have Native American ancestry, just an interest and desire to learn more about this fascinating and tragic event. For more information about the Trail of Tears Association, visit the National website at www.nationaltota.org, the Georgia website at www.gatrailoftears.org or contact Linda Baker at 770-704-6338 or at badnil@windstream.net. You can also find out more about Trail of Tears Association activities by visiting our blog at www.trailofthetrail.blogspot.com.