

Today in Columbus history, September 28, 1833, a notice appeared in the *Columbus Enquirer* calling for “sealed proposals” to be sent to John Martin*, superintendent, “to open a road through the Creek Nation of Indians from Line Creek in Alabama to Columbus Georgia.”

An Act of Congress called for a new road to be built off the Old Federal Road, which would be known as the “Upper Federal Road,” and for a superintendent to take bids on its construction.

This new road would veer away from the older road to higher ground and “be required to be cleared of all timber and well grubbed [sic] to a distance of forty feet on each side of the line of location; thus making an opening of eighty feet wide...” plus “side ditches, to draw the water from the road,” about which there are several more paragraphs of drainage requirements.

The old road “had become well-nigh impassable, especially through the swampy lowlands during the winter season,” which probably explains the emphasis in the *Enquirer* on the drainage ditches. (W.E. Martin, 21)



1. “An American Stagecoach,” from Basil Hall, *Forty Etchings from Sketches Made with the Camera Lucida in North America in 1827 and 1828* (Edinburgh, 1830), plate no. 40.

had been built across the Chattahoochee in Columbus and “most of the traffic [from the old Federal Road] was diverted from Fort Mitchell to the Upper Federal Road.” (Southerland, 81. Note: This must be the Dillingham Street Bridge, which John Godwin and Horace King had begun building by May of 1832.)

Line Creek had been the boundary between the Creek Nation and the United States’ territory since the end of the Creek War. This new road through Indian lands authorized by Congress was one of several actions taken by federal and state authorities in the wake of the passing of the Treaty of Cusseta in March of 1832, to make it easier for white settlers to get their hands on Creek lands.

On into Georgia, the new road met the Old Federal Road (also known as the “Southern Trail,” one of two Federal Roads in Georgia) at Fort Lawrence near the old Creek Agency. Then it continued northwest through Macon, Milledgeville, to Augusta and into South Carolina. [see map]

– Rachel Dobson

NOTICE.

By an act of Congress passed the 20th of February 1833 provision is made to open a road through the Creek Nation of Indians from Line Creek in Alabama to Columbus Georgia and in conformity with instructions from the Engineer Department, I will let out the same for contract in sections of five miles, on the first day of November next for which sealed proposals addressed through the post office to me at Montgomery Alabama will be received until that time.

The considerations which shall determine the choice of contract shall be the character of the bidder, as regards pecuniary responsibility and the low rate of his bid.

This road will be required to be cleared of all timber and well grubbed to a distance of forty feet on each side of the line of location; thus making an opening of eighty feet wide, and when necessary to assist the natural drainage, the construction of side ditches to draw the water from the road, will be required, which must be so placed that the outer edges shall form the lateral limits of the eighty feet opening, and made of such dimensions as the nature of the ground and the peculiarity of location shall require to obtain a good road.

The dirt in all cases from the ditches to be thrown in the middle of the cleared space to elevate the road above the natural surface of the ground. The water which might collect in these ditches shall be so drained to lower grounds by means of lateral ditches as will prevent water standing in them higher than within eighteen inches of the surface of the road.

When the line of location passes the sides of hills, the roadway or immediate track which under such circumstances will be reduced to the width of thirty feet, will be partly cut into the hill, so as to elevate the lower side of the road six inches higher than the upper part and not to exceed four degrees longitudinal slope, and provided with a ditch on the upper side to prevent the drainage from the ground above passing over the road. Culverts must be placed at suitable intervals to lead the water from this ditch which might otherwise collect in sufficient quantity to overflow the road and injure the ditch by rapid currents.

In the parts requiring causewaying solid timbers of a substantial and durable quality thirty feet long and at least four inches in diameter will be required to be laid in close contact upon the surface of the ground perpendicular to the line of location and covered with dirt in such a manner as to leave no part of the timber exposed. The parts requiring bridging more than the length of one sleeper in their construction is not now offered for contract.

In all other respects the road must be complete.

The contracts will specify the time the work will be complete, twelve months being thought sufficient for that object, this period from the date of the contract is suggested to those who may offer proposals.

When the work shall be one half done the contractor shall be entitled to receive one fourth of the value thereof and the whole amount of the contract so soon as the work shall be finished and accepted by the agent of the Government.

The sections of this road commencing at Line Creek and continue to Columbus in numerical order persons submitting proposals are requested to designate the part of the road by the appropriate number of the section.

The Agent reserves to himself the right to decline bids for contracts exceeding the amount of appropriation. The old and new roads being nearly on the same ground for the first sections of the line. It is conceived to be most advantageous to the public to have this part first made and with that object those desirous to engage in this work are invited to offer their bids.

Applicants not acquainted with the Agent are requested to accompany their proposals with testimonials of their ability to execute the work, and in all cases communications on this subject to ensure attention must be post paid.

September 20th 1833 JNO. MARTIN,
Superintendent.

September 22—18—33
Georgia Journal, Montgomery Advertiser & Planters Gazette, & Flag of the Union Tuscaloosa Ala. Will please publish the above until the first of November. And forward their accounts to the subscriber for payment. J. M.

STATUTE II.

Feb. 20, 1833.

CHAP. XLI.—An Act to authorize the laying out and constructing a road from Line Creek to the Chatahochee, and for repairing the road on which the mail is now transported.

Appropriation for post-road.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That the sum of twenty thousand dollars be, and the same is hereby, appropriated, to be paid out of any money in the treasury, for the purpose of laying out and making a post-road through the Creek nation of Indians, commencing at Line creek, in the state of Alabama, and terminating at the Chatahochee, opposite Columbus, in the state of Georgia.

Superintendent to be appointed.

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That, for the early accomplishment of this object, the President shall appoint a superintendent of said road, whose duty it shall be, under the direction of the President, to divide the same into sections of not more than ten miles each, to contract for, and personally superintend the opening and making the said road, as well as to receive, disburse, and faithfully account with the treasury for all sums of moneys by him received by virtue of this act, and the said superintendent shall receive, during the time he is so employed, at the rate of one thousand dollars per annum.

Salary.

Repairs.

SEC. 3. And be it further enacted, That, for the repairs of the road through said Creek nation, on which the mail is now transported, until the road authorized by this act is completed, the further sum of two thousand dollars, to be expended under the direction of the Postmaster General, be, and the same is hereby, appropriated.

APPROVED, February 20, 1833.

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

Left: “An Act to authorize the laying out and constructing a road from Line Creek to the Chatahochee [sic], and for repairing the road on which the mail is now transported.” 22nd Congress, Session II, Chapter 41-42, page 618.



2. Map of the Old Federal Road showing the Upper Federal Road. Courtesy UA Cartography.

SOURCES

Kathryn Braund, Gregory A. Waselkov, and Raven M. Christopher, *The Old Federal Road in Alabama – An Illustrated Guide* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2019).

If you're interested in following the remaining traces of the Federal Road in Alabama today, this book outlines a detailed tour.

Henry deLeon Southerland Jr. and Jerry Elijah Brown, *The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806-1836* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1989).

See page 63 for an in-depth description of the Hall's carriage. Basil Hall and his wife Margaret Hall reached the falls of the Chattahoochee River on March 31, 1828.

Kevin Harrell, "Federal Road in Alabama," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, December 22, 2010, <http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2999>

John Hayes, "Federal Road," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/business-economy/federal-road>

John S. Lupold and Thomas L. French Jr., *Bridging Deep South Rivers – The Life and Legend of Horace King* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

William Elejius Martin, "Early History of Internal Improvement in Alabama," 127-268, in *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Colonial and Economic History, vol. XX*, J.M. Vincent, et al, editors (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1902) (from the Internet Archive)

Mary E. Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks – Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

*Was "John Martin" the same as John Hawkes Martin (1818-1900), author of "Columbus, Geo., etc."?