

Unicoi Turnpike Trail

Side Trip

12. Belltown (Caney Creek) Massacre



Then – Although Fort Loudoun was built at the request of Cherokees living at Chota, relations between the Overhill Cherokees and the colonial troops deteriorated after only two years. In 1760 the Cherokees laid siege to the fort. After five months, the fort surrendered under terms that allowed the garrison to return to South Carolina. After spending the night on the bottoms of Cane Creek near Belltown, the garrison woke to find the Cherokee guides gone and their party surrounded. Cherokee warriors attacked at dawn, killing about 25 soldiers. Attakullakulla, a respected Cherokee leader, asked that John Stuart be spared, describing him as a “true friend.” Although this event has been characterized as a massacre, the Cherokees considered it retaliation for an earlier killing of Cherokee hostages at Fort Prince George in South Carolina. Note: Belltown was likely named for a Cherokee man named Bell Rattle whose home once sat beside the old Unicoi path near the present day community of Belltown.

See Trail Map for location

Now – As modern travelers wind through the old community of Belltown they will glimpse what the countryside might have looked like when the Unicoi Path led travelers to and from the Overhill Cherokee settlements. A wooden sign placed beside the road marks the approximate location where the massacre took place. The site is located on private land but it is visible from the road.