



October 2020

## *License Plate to Brown's Tavern Uncovers Trails of History*



*This battlefield preservation supporter visited Hamilton County's oldest structure on its original foundation – **Brown's Tavern**. Cherokee leader John Brown had the Tavern constructed in 1803 on 640 acres owned by his father. Brown operated both the Tavern and the nearby ferry. The Tavern site is now a stop on the **Cherokee Trail of Tears National Historic Trail** along the branch of the Federal Road now known as Brown's Ferry Road.*



*The **Tavern** served travelers along the federal road with meals and lodging – typically the first floor for food and gatherings and the second flooring for sleeping. Local lore suggests that travelers, including cattle drovers, spent*

the evening around a wide fireplace on the first floor, and "halloowing...could be heard from morning till night." (from autobiographical account cited in James W. Livingood's *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1976*. According to another legend **Cherokee Chief John Ross (Tsan-Usdi)** spent his wedding night in an upper room at Brown's Tavern.

An 1805 treaty with the Cherokee provided for building the first wagon road through the Cherokee nation, a fork of which passed Brown's Tavern and crossed the Tennessee River at Brown's Ferry. In 1838 the Tavern witnessed several Cherokee detachments pass along this, the "federal road," during the **Trail of Tears** en route to Oklahoma.

### ***The Tavern During the Battle of Wauhatchie***



The 1901 Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Park Commission Map depicts the J Fryar Home (Brown's Tavern) near the "October 28 PM" notation and adjacent to the federal road leading to Brown's Ferry.

By October 1863, Brown's Tavern, now the home of a family named Fryar, found itself at the epicenter of events surrounding the opening of the "cracker" or supply line for the Army of the Cumberland trapped inside Chattanooga. In the dark early morning hours of October 27, approximately 1800 Federal troops floated down the Tennessee River in wooden pontoon boats, landing at Brown's Ferry, roughly a mile from the Tavern. After a short fight for possession of the Ferry, the Federal forces built a pontoon bridge at the Ferry site, establishing a foothold in Lookout Valley which provided the shortest and best route to their supply bases at Bridgeport and Stevenson Alabama.

Additionally, on October 28, parts of two army corps, reinforcements under General Joseph Hooker from the Army of the Potomac in Virginia marched into Lookout Valley to reinforce the beleaguered Army of the Cumberland. Hooker's men marched down **Brown's Ferry Road** to establish contact with the men of the Brown's Ferry amphibious assault, camping in the area around Brown's Tavern. Generals Hooker, Howard, and Schurz made their headquarters in the yard, while the Tavern itself served as a Commissary depot. Late on October 28 and into the early morning hours of October 29,

the Confederates attacked a small, isolated portion of Hooker's men who had been left to guard the Wauhatchie rail junction, about three miles from the Tavern. During the resulting engagement, known as the **Battle of Wauhatchie**, the area immediately around the Tavern, served as the command post from which Hooker and his subordinates dispatched reinforcements to the Wauhatchie fight. During the winter of 1863-64, Federal troops went into "winter quarters" in Lookout Valley and the Tavern was said to have been used as a supply storehouse.

### *Preservation Success*

The American Battlefield Trust (ABT), having secured matching grants from the Tennessee Civil War Sites Preservation Fund (Tennessee Historical Commission/ Tennessee Wars Commission) and the American Battlefield Protection Program (National Park Service), recently purchased the Brown's Tavern property. Funds from the sales of the "Save Our Battlefields" license plate also were donated to ABT for preservation of this property.

ABT soon will donate the property to the National Park Partners ([www.npp-ccm.org](http://www.npp-ccm.org)). The National Park Partners will continue the mission to preserve and interpret the site.

*Note: The Tavern is not open to for public visitation at this time however periodic special interpretive programs will be held at the Tavern once the Covid-19 crisis has passed.*

### ***FEATURE BATTLEFIELDS IN EVERY COUNTY***

If you have a "Save our Battlefields" license plate, please consider stopping by and taking a photo of your plate at a battlefield or other battle-related Civil War site in your area... we're especially interested in sites that don't always get the historians' spotlight! If you're looking for a site in your area, we can help find one nearby – just email us - or if you've already got that special photo please send to [info@tcwpa.org](mailto:info@tcwpa.org).



You can purchase the license plate at your County Clerk's office for \$36.00 plus your regular registration fees. Proceeds from the sale of the plate will help protect and interpret important battlefields in Tennessee.

For more information, visit: [tcwpa.org/license-plate](http://tcwpa.org/license-plate)

---

***The Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association preserves and interprets Tennessee's Civil War Battlefields and their contributing landscapes for present and future generations.***

Become a member: [tcwpa.org/join](http://tcwpa.org/join)    Make a donation: [tcwpa.org/donate](http://tcwpa.org/donate)    [Purchase a license plate](#)



