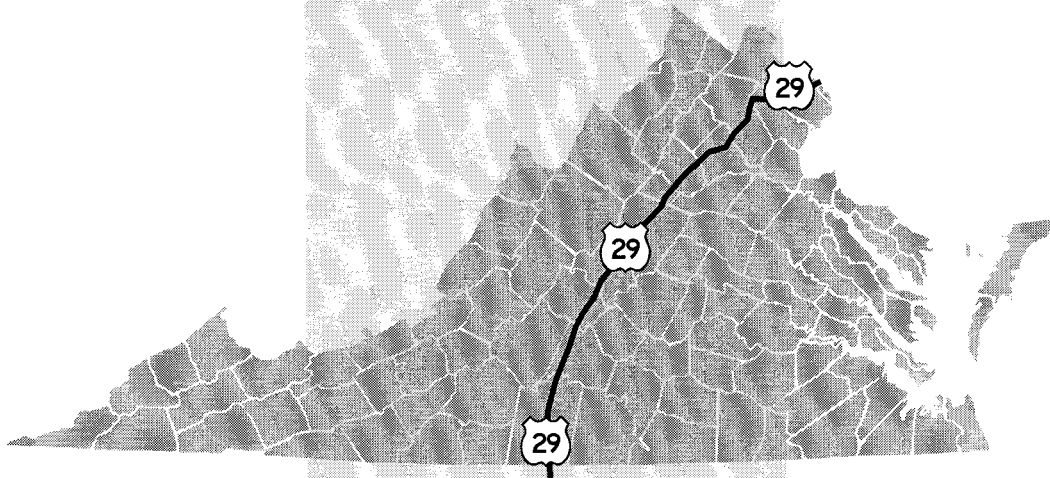


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**DRAFT NOTES
ON THE SEMINOLE TRAIL (U.S. 29)
IN VIRGINIA**



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According to McCary the indians that inhabited Virginia prior to English settlement were linguistically Algonquian, Iroquoian and Siouan. The general areas are indicated on his map attached as Figure 1. ⁽¹⁾ Harrison in his extensive work on Old Prince William which extended as far west as Fauquier County likewise describes the indians as Algonquian and Iroquois. ⁽²⁾ Specific tribes associated with Piedmont Virginia are largely Saponi, Manahuac, Tutelo, and Occaneechi. No mention is made in any county or state histories consulted of habitation or travel in the Virginia area by Seminoles. Despite this, U.S. 29 between Warrenton and the North Carolina line in 1928 was designated "The Seminole Trail". This designation was approved as Senate Bill 64 on February 16, 1928, which stated

1. Be it enacted by the general assembly of Virginia that that part of the Virginia State highway system, beginning at the North Carolina line and leading through Danville, Chatham, Alta Vista, Lynchburg, Amherst, Lovingston, Charlottesville, Ruckersville, Madison and Culpeper to Warrenton, be, and is hereby designated and shall be, hereafter, known as the "Seminole Trail".

No supporting arguments were found in the Senate Journal or other public documents in the University of Virginia Library. Likewise no documentation or descriptions were found in tourist oriented publications.

Thus a question remains as to the origin and validity of the designation. Attempts to find supporting evidence in published sources on American Indians were likewise unsuccessful. The most extensive

documentation of Southeastern indian trails was published by Myer in 1928.⁽³⁾ His map is attached as Figure 2. On this map a very approximate indication of the current route followed by U.S. 29 is shown. U.S. 29 has its northern terminus at Ellicott City, Maryland and its southern terminus at Pensacola, Florida. The trails identified by Myer that are closest to U.S. 29 are as follows:

- #46 - Saura-Saponi
- #80 - Occaneechi
- #77 - Lower Cherokee Trading Path prior to 1775
- #125 - Alabama - Mobile

The first three are definitely not named for the Seminole Nation.

Local inquiries suggest that the basis for the Assembly's action was that the trail was used by Seminoles who periodically travelled from Western Florida northward. No documentation of this theory has been found, but it is well established that some indians went on visits to a series of friendly tribes, covering from 1,000 to 2,000 miles, being absent from home for several months at a time. In times of war special missions went much further. Tecumseh, or his agents, covered the entire area from the Seminole region of Florida to the tribes on the headwaters of the Missouri. The Great Indian Warpath (Myer #36) ran from Alabama to the Great Lakes.⁽⁴⁾ Another complication was that the indians were somewhat nomadic, particularly the Saponi who move their villages.

Most of the early accounts of indian life and organization were by the colonists and British travelers who did not visit Spanish territory where the Seminoles lived. This undoubtedly contributes to the lack of specific information.

According to Colonel Howard McCord,⁽⁵⁾ the word "Seminole" means refugee and the Nation was formed by remnants of three earlier groups, the Creeks, Timucua, and Calusa who were joined by black slaves and renegade whites in isolated western Florida. The formation of the Seminole nation thus occurred after settlement, and as a group they were not associated with the Nation's prehistory as were the other groups.

A review of the Richmond Times Dispatch and the Charlottesville Daily Progress for the month of February, 1928 indicates that the action of the General Assembly passed without notice. The February 17th Dispatch summary of Assembly actions states

"Five local and uncontested bills were passed in a block. These were Senate Bills No. 64, 110, 182, 201 and 216".

To date no documentation for the origin or validity of the designation "Seminole Trail" has been found. It is possible to speculate that it had its origins in attempts to promote tourist travel to western Florida by offering an alternative to U.S. Route 1 (that led to eastern Florida. Undoubtedly there must have been a "Seminole Trail Association" but thus far attempts to locate it have not been successful.

Thus the history of the Seminole Trail remains as cloudy as that of the Indians laying the basis of our current road network.

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5. Richmond Times Dispatch, Feb. 1928.
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7. Miscellaneous County and State Histories.