Survival on the Trail of Tears

For the Cherokee traveling on the Trail of Tears, survival depended upon access to wood and water. With little time to gather these necessary supplies on their overnight stops, the weary travelers would have sought out places to make camp for the night. They could cook food and stay warm at night with ample supplies of firewood close at hand.

In the winters on the trail, it was too cold to hunt for buffalo and deer. Rations were in short supply and, as a result, many people starved to death. The tribes could only drink fresh water when they came to a fresh water source, such as a lake or a pond. The tribes became extremely dehydrated, which was another cause of casualties on the Trail of Tears.

"...halted at Waynesville, MO 4 o’c P.M. encamped and issued corn and fodder, beef and cornmeal. Weather extremely cold."

-B. B. Cannon’s diary, December 9, 1837