

The Trail Where They Cried

The Cherokee Nation once spread across Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. It was home to thousands of men, women, and children. The 1830 Indian Removal Act required that the Cherokee surrender their land and move west. Many actively opposed the act and refused to move.

In the spring of 1838, soldiers established forts and camps across the Cherokee homeland and swiftly rounded up every Cherokee they could find. The Cherokee knew this was coming, and chose to resist removal by waiting in their homes to be forcefully evicted by militias. In the camps, they suffered from exposure, disease epidemics, inadequate sanitation, and heartbreak, remaining prisoners in the camps until their final deportation to the West.

“The soldiers came and took us from home. They first surrounded our house and they took the mare while we were at work in the fields and they drove us out of doors and did not permit us to take anything with us, not even a second change of clothes. . . They marched us to Ross’ Landing, and still on foot, even our little children, and they sent us off.”

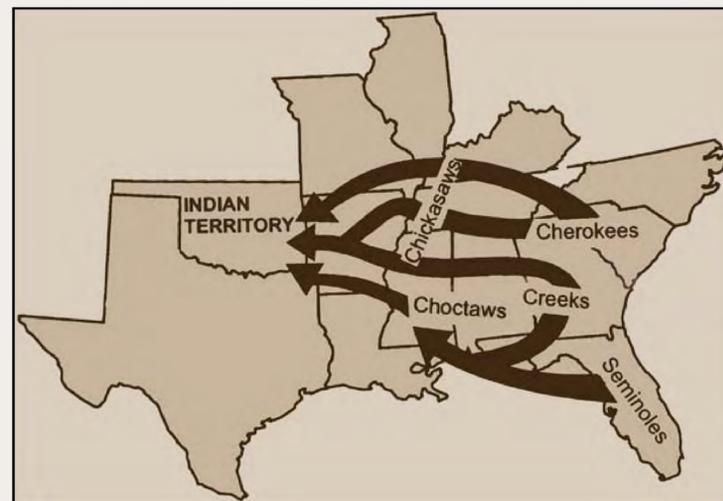
Oo-loo-cha, widow of Sweet Water, 1842



Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it had for the Indian peoples. One thing was certain; removal freed millions of acres of desired Indian lands for use by white settlers.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the removal of thousands of American Indians from their ancestral lands for new homes in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). They traveled by existing roads and rivers. Many groups, hoping to avoid the disease and heat of summer travel, left in the fall and instead faced treacherous winter weather. Many died during the ordeal of the Trail of Tears.



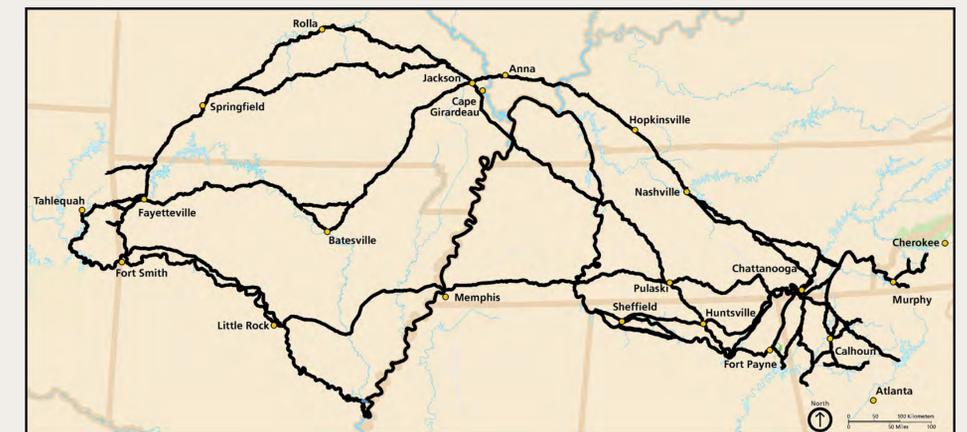
In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee; 21,000 Muscogee (Creek); 9,000 Choctaw; 6,000 Chickasaw; and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and due to a special exemption formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte



“First Blood Shed by the Georgians”

Seventeen white families from Georgia and Alabama illegally took possession of Cherokee homes here in the Beaver Dam settlement in February 1830. Cherokee Chief John Ross responded by sending a mounted police force, the Light Horse Brigade, to evict them. Major Ridge, David Vann, and the brigade went from home to home, forcibly evicting white intruders and burning empty Cherokee structures to discourage future settlement. Retaliation came the following day in the death of one Cherokee and the imprisonment of others.

Beaver Dam marked the most prominent instance of active Cherokee resistance to unauthorized white settlement on Cherokee lands. The log structure across the street stood as witness to the event; it is one of the last remnants of Beaver Dam in today’s Cave Spring and Vann’s Valley. After this incident, the Cherokee sought only political solutions to intrusions from Georgia and no longer attempted to forcibly evict whites.

CHEROKEE PHOENIX AND INDIANS' ADVOCATE:

FIRST BLOOD SHED BY THE GEORGIANS!!
Since writing the above, we have been told by a gentleman who passed this place as an express to the agent, from the principal chief, that a Cherokee has, at last, been killed by the intruders, and three more taken bound into Georgia! We are not prepared this week to give the public any particulars respecting this unpleasant affair. The general facts are, however, these, the particulars of which will be given in our next. A company of Cherokees, among whom were some of our most respectable citizens, constrained by the repeated aggressions and insults of a number of intruders, who had settled themselves far in the country, & likewise by the frequent losses sustained by many of our citizens in cattle and horses from their own countrymen, who are leagued in wickedness with our civilized brothers.

“...a Cherokee has...been killed by the intruders, and three more taken bound into Georgia!...A company of Cherokees...started the other day, under the authority of the Principal Chief to correct, at least part of the evil...They found...17 families of intruders, living, we believe, in Cherokee houses. These they ordered out and after safely taking out their bedding, chairs, &c. the houses were set on fire. In no instance was the least violence used on the part of the Cherokees.”

Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate, Wednesday, February 10, 1830

is from the Philadelphia Gazette. William Meredith, Esq, in offering of the resolution, said, he had, for a Government.—He in strong terms a Mr. Bettle said that expressions in the paper had read, would the rest of the besides, objected to being made of tearing it might memorial dwelt on and great care had to avoid giving unnecessary offence.



Major Ridge



David Vann



The Green Hotel, in front of you, contains within it an original log structure that predates Cherokee removal, possibly as early as 1810.



This Cherokee delegation visited Cave Spring in 2011, recognizing its connection to the story of removal. The structure is located on an original route of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.