Santa Fe, Oregon, & California
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Apprehension and Conflict

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 required that many American Indian Tribes in the eastern part of the United States be moved to the Great Plains Region west of the Missouri River—lands identified as the "Permanent Indian Frontier." Also called the Great American Desert, the plains were to be a permanent home for many of these tribes. The only non-Indians permitted to legally live in the Permanent Indian Frontier included the military, licensed traders, and missionaries.

From the late 1830s to the early 1860s, tens of thousands of freight and emigrant wagons passed through these Indian lands on their way to the west. Emigrants leaving Missouri often noted in their diaries that they were *"leaving the United States and entering the wilderness,"* a reality that most viewed with apprehension.

By the mid 1850s, Indian Nations living in territories west of here, felt their lifestyles increasingly threatened. The impacts of western expansion greatly diminished the vast herds of big game, vegetation, and other resources critical for survival and tribal independence.

Twenty-four years after the Indian Removal Act, another act—the Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854—opened the Kansas region to settlement by non-Indians, and the "Permanent Indian Frontier" was gone forever.

Many of the American Indians, north and east of the Ohio River, were moved to the Kansas and Nebraska region as a result of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. (Map created by National Park Service.)

Conflicts between emigrant travelers and Indians were generally not experienced until the early 1850s and 60s. ("Emigrants Attacked by Comanches" - ID#32246 from the Denver Public Library - Western History Collection.)

Apprehensive, armed, and prepared for conflict, emigrants were often surprised to discover that the tribes in eastern Kansas were largely agrarian and helpful. (Illustration is courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society.)