Cherokee removal

Cherokee removal, part of the Trail of Tears, refers to the forced relocation between 1836 and 1839 of the Cherokee Nation from their lands in Georgia, Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Carolina to the Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma) in the Western United States, which resulted in the deaths of approximately 4000 Cherokee.

In the Cherokee language, the event is called Nu na da ul tsun yi (the place where they cried); another term is Tlo va sa (our removal). However, this phrase was not used by Cherokees at the time, and seems to be of Choctaw origin. The Cherokees were not the only American Indians to emigrate as a result of the Indian Removal efforts. American Indians were not only removed from the American South but also from the North, Midwest, Southwest, and Plains regions. The Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creek Indians (Muskogee) emigrated reluctantly. The Seminoles in Florida resisted removal by guerrilla warfare with the United States Army for decades (1817–1850). Ultimately, some Seminoles remained in their Florida home country, while others were transported to Indian Territory in shackles. In contrast, the Cherokees resisted removal by hiring lawyers (see Worcester v. Georgia).

The phrase "Trail of Tears" is used to refer to similar events endured by other Indian people, especially among the "Five Civilized Tribes". The phrase originated as a description of the voluntary removal of the Choctaw nation in 1831. [1]

In the fall of 1835, a census was taken by civilian officials of the US War Department to enumerate Cherokees residing in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, with a count of 16,542 Cherokees, 201 inter-married whites, and 1592 slaves (total: 18,335 people). In October of that year, Principal Chief John Ross and an Eastern visitor, John Howard Payne, were kidnapped from Ross' Tennessee home by a renegade group of the Georgia militia. Released, Ross and a delegation of tribal leaders traveled to Washington, DC to protest this high-handed action, and to lobby against the removal policy of President Andrew Jackson. In this power vacuum, U.S. Agent John F. Schermerhorn gathered a group of dissident Cherokees in the home of Elias Boudinot at the tribal capitol, New Echota, Georgia. There on December 29, 1835, this rump group signed the unauthorized Treaty of New Echota, which exchanged Cherokee land in the East for lands west of the Mississippi River in Indian Territory. This agreement was never accepted by the elected tribal leadership or a majority of the Cherokee people. In February 1836, two councils convened at Red Clay, Tennessee and at Valley Town, North Carolina (now Murphy, North Carolina) and produced two lists totaling some 13,000 names written in the Sequoyah writing script of Cherokees opposed to the Treaty. The lists were dispatched to Washington, DC and presented by Chief Ross to Congress. Nevertheless, a slightly modified version of the treaty was ratified by the U.S. Senate by a single vote on May 23, 1836, and signed into law by President Jackson. The treaty provided a grace period until May 1838 for the tribe to voluntarily remove themselves to Indian Territory.

Georgia gold rush

Further information: Georgia Gold Rush

These tensions between Georgia's and the Cherokee Nation were brought to a crisis by the discovery of gold near Dahlonega, Georgia, in 1828, resulting in the Georgia Gold Rush, the first gold rush in U.S. history. Hopeful gold speculators began trespassing on Cherokee lands, and pressure began to mount on the Georgia government to fulfill the promises of the Compact of 1802.

When Georgia moved to extend state laws over Cherokee tribal lands in 1830, the matter went to the U.S. Supreme Court. In Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831), the Marshall court ruled that the Cherokees were not a sovereign and independent nation, and therefore refused to hear the case. However, in Worcester v. State of Georgia (1832), the Court ruled that Georgia could not impose laws in Cherokee territory, since only the national government — not state governments — had authority in Indian affairs.
President Andrew Jackson has often been quoted as defying the Supreme Court with the words: “John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it!” Jackson probably never said this, but he was fully committed to the policy. He had no desire to use the power of the national government to protect the Cherokees from Georgia, since he was already entangled with states’ rights issues in what became known as the nullification crisis. With the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the U.S. Congress had given Jackson authority to negotiate removal treaties, exchanging Indian land in the East for land west of the Mississippi River. Jackson used the dispute with Georgia to put pressure on the Cherokees to sign a removal treaty.[2]

**Georgia and the Cherokee Nation**

The rapidly expanding population of the United States early in the 19th century created tensions with Native American tribes located within the borders of the various states. While state governments did not want independent Indian enclaves within state boundaries, Indian tribes did not want to relocate or to give up their distinct identities.

With the Compact of 1802, the state of Georgia relinquished to the national government its western land claims (which became the states of Alabama and Mississippi). In exchange, the national government promised to eventually conduct treaties to relocate those Indian tribes living within Georgia, thus giving Georgia control of all land within its borders.

However, the Cherokees, whose ancestral tribal lands overlapped the boundaries of Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Alabama, declined to move. They established a capital in 1825 at New Echota (near present-day Calhoun, Georgia). Furthermore, led by principal Chief John Ross and Major Ridge, the speaker of the Cherokee National Council, the Cherokees adopted a written constitution on 26 July 1827, declaring the Cherokee Nation to be a sovereign and independent nation.

The Cherokee land that was lost proved to be extremely valuable. Upon these lands were the alignments for the future rights-of-way for rail and road communications between the eastern Piedmont slopes of the Appalachian Mountains, the Ohio river in Kentucky and the Tennessee river valley at Chattanooga. This location is still a strategic economic asset and is the basis for the tremendous success of Atlanta, Georgia, as a regional transportation and logistics center. Georgia’s appropriation of these lands from the Cherokee kept the wealth out of the hands of the Cherokee Nation.

The Cherokee lands in Georgia were settled upon by the Cherokee for the simple reason that they were and still are the shortest and most easily traversed route between the only fresh water sourced settlement location at the southeastern tip of the Appalachian range (the Chattahoochee River), and the natural passes, ridges, and valleys which lead to the Tennessee river at what is today, Chattanooga. From Chattanooga there was and is the potential for a year-round water transport to St. Louis and the west (via the Ohio and Mississippi rivers), or to as far east as Pittsburgh, PA.
Treaty of New Echota

Further information: Treaty of New Echota

With the landslide reelection of Andrew Jackson in 1832, some of the most strident Cherokee opponents of removal began to rethink their positions. Led by Major Ridge, his son John Ridge, and nephews Elias Boudinot and Stand Watie, they became known as the "Ridge Party", or the "Treaty Party". The Ridge Party believed that it was in the best interest of the Cherokees to get favorable terms from the U.S. government, before white squatters, state governments, and violence made matters worse. John Ridge began unauthorized talks with the Jackson administration in the late 1820s. Meanwhile, in anticipation of the Cherokee removal, the state of Georgia began holding lotteries in order to divide up the Cherokee tribal lands among white Georgians.

However, Principal Chief John Ross and the majority of the Cherokee people remained adamantly opposed to removal. Political maneuvering began: Chief Ross canceled the tribal elections in 1832, the Council threatened to impeach the Ridges, and a prominent member of the Treaty Party (John Walker, Jr.) was murdered. The Ridges responded by eventually forming their own council, representing only a fraction of the Cherokee people. This split the Cherokee Nation into two factions: those following Ross, known as the National Party, and those of the Treaty Party, who elected William A. Hicks, who had briefly succeeded his brother Charles R. Hicks as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation to act as titular leader of the pro-Treaty faction, with former National Council clerk Alexander McCoy as his assistant.

In 1835, Jackson appointed Reverend John F. Schermerhorn as a treaty commissioner. The U.S. government proposed to pay the Cherokee Nation US$4.5 million (among other considerations) to remove themselves. These terms were rejected in October 1835 by the Cherokee Nation Council meeting at Red Clay. Chief Ross, attempting to bridge the gap between his administration and the Ridge Party, traveled to Washington with a party that included John Ridge and Stand Watie to open new negotiations, but they were turned away and told to deal with Schermerhoerne.

Meanwhile, Schermerhorn organized a meeting with the pro-removal council members at New Echota, Georgia. Only five hundred Cherokees (out of thousands) responded to the summons, and, on December 30, 1835, twenty-one proponents of Cherokee removal (Major Ridge, Elias Boudinot, James Foster, Testaesky, Charles Moore, George Chambers, Tahyeske, Archilla Smith, Andrew Ross (younger brother of Chief John Ross), William Lassley, Caetehee, Tegaheske, Robert Rogers, John Gunter, John A. Bell, Charles Foreman, William Rogers, George W. Adair, James Starr, and Jesse Halfbreed), signed or left "X" marks on the Treaty of New Echota after those present voted unanimously for its approval. John Ridge and Stand Watie signed the treaty when it was brought to Washington. Chief Ross, as expected, refused.

This treaty gave up all the Cherokee land east of the Mississippi in return for five million dollars to be disbursed on a per capita basis, an additional half-million dollars for educational funds, title in perpetuity to an amount of land in Indian Territory equal to that given up, and full compensation for all property left in the East. There was also a
clause in the treaty as signed allowing Cherokee who so desired to remain and become citizens of the states in which
they resided on 160 acres (unknown operator: u'strong' km$^2$) of land, but that was later stricken out by President
Jackson.

Despite the protests by the Cherokee National Council and principal Chief Ross that the document was a fraud,
Congress ratified the treaty on May 23, 1836, by just one vote.

**Voluntary removal**

The Treaty provided a two year grace period for Cherokees to willingly emigrate to Indian Territory. A number of
Cherokees (mostly members of the Ridge faction) accepted government funds for subsistence and transportation.
Many travelled as individuals or families, but there were several organized groups:

1. John S. Young, Conductor; via river boats; 466 Cherokees and 6 Creeks, left March 1, 1837; arrived March 28,
   1837; included Major Ridge and Stand Watie.
2. B.B. Cannon, Conductor; overland; 355 persons (15 deaths); left Oct.15, 1837; arrived Dec.29, 1837; included
   James Starr.
3. Rev. John Huss, Conductor, overland; 74 persons; left Nov.11, 1837; arrival unknown.
4. Robert B. Vann, leader; 133 persons; left Dec.1, 1837; arrived March 17, 1838.
5. Lt. Edward Deas, Conductor; by boat; 252 persons (2 deaths); left April 6, 1838; arrived May 1, 1838.
6. 162 persons; left May 25, 1838; arrived Oct. 21, 1838.
7. 96 persons; date left unknown; arrived June 1, 1838.
   7, 1839.

There are muster rolls for groups # 1, 3 – 6 and daily journals of conductors for groups # 2 and 5 among records of
the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the National Archives. Despite the government blandishments, only a few hundred
volunteered to accept the Treaty terms for Removal.

**Forced removal**

Many white Americans were outraged
by the dubious legality of the treaty
and called on the government not to
force the Cherokees to move. For
example, on April 23, 1838, Ralph
Waldo Emerson wrote a letter to
Jackson’s successor, President Martin
Van Buren, urging him not to inflict
"so vast an outrage upon the Cherokee
Nation."[3]

Nevertheless, as the May 23, 1838,
deadline for voluntary removal
approached, President Van Buren assigned General Winfield Scott to head the forcible removal operation. He arrived
at New Echota on May 17, 1838, in command of U.S. Army and state militia totalling about 7,000 soldiers. They
began rounding up Cherokees in Georgia on May 26, 1838; ten days later, operations began in Tennessee, North
Carolina, and Alabama. Men, women, and children were removed at gunpoint from their homes over three weeks
and gathered together in camps, often with very few of their possessions. Another soldier, Private John G. Burnett
later wrote "Future generations will read and condemn the act and I do hope posterity will remember that private
soldiers like myself, and like the four Cherokees who were forced by General Scott to shoot an Indian Chief and his
children, had to execute the orders of our superiors. We had no choice in the matter.”

This story is perhaps a garbled version of the episode when a Cherokee named Tsali or Charley and three others killed two soldiers in the North Carolina mountains during the round-up. The two Indians were subsequently tracked down and executed by Chief Euchella's band of Cherokees in exchange for a deal with the Army to avoid their own removal. The Cherokees were then marched overland to departure points at Ross’s Landing (Chattanooga, Tennessee) and Gunter’s Landing (Guntersville, Alabama) on the Tennessee River, and forced on to flatboats and the steamers “Smelter” and "Little Rock". Unfortunately, a drought brought low water levels on the rivers, requiring frequent unloading of vessels to evade river obstacles and shoals. The Army directed Removal was characterized by many deaths and desertions, and this part of the Cherokee Removal proved to be a fiasco and Gen. Scott ordered suspension of further removal efforts. The Army-operated groups were:

1. Lt. Edward Deas, Conductor; 800 left June 6, 1838 by boat; 489 arrived June 19, 1838.
2. Lt. Monroe, Conductor, 164 persons left June 12, 1838; arrival unknown.
3. Lt. R.H.K. Whiteley, ca. 800 persons left June 13, 1838 by boat, arrived Aug. 5, 1838 (70 deaths).
4. Captain Gustavus S. Drane, Conductor, 1072 left June 17, 1838 by boat, 635 arrived Sept. 7, 1838 (146 deaths, 2 births).

Muster rolls for groups # 1 and 4 are in the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and # 2 in records of the Army Continental Commands (Eastern Division, Gen. Winfield Scott's papers) in the National Archives. There are daily journals of conductors for groups # 1 and 3 among Special Files of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

**Internment camps**

The deaths and desertions in the Army's boat detachments caused Gen Scott to suspend the Army's Removal efforts, and the remaining Cherokees were put into eleven internment camps, mostly located near Ross' Landing (now Chattanooga, TN) and at Red Clay, Bedwell Springs, Chatata, Mouse Creek, Rattlesnake Springs, Chestooe, and Calhoun (site of the former Cherokee Agency) located within Bradley County, TN and one camp (Fort Payne) in Alabama. Cherokees remained in the camps during the summer of 1838 and were plagued by dysentery and other illnesses, which led to 353 deaths. A group of Cherokees petitioned General Scott for a delay until cooler weather made the journey less hazardous. This was granted; meanwhile Chief Ross, finally accepting defeat, managed to have the remainder of the removal turned over to the supervision of the Cherokee Council. Although there were some objections within the U.S. government because of the additional cost, General Scott awarded a contract for removing the remaining 11,000 Cherokees under the supervision of Principal Chief Ross, with expenses to be paid by the Army.

**Reluctant removal**

Chief John Ross organized 12 wagon trains, each with about 1000 persons and conducted by veteran full-blood tribal leaders or educated mixed bloods. Each wagon train was assigned physicians, interpreters (to help the physicians), commissaries, managers, wagon masters, teamsters, and even grave diggers. Chief Ross also purchased the steamboat "Victoria" in which his own and tribal leaders' families could travel in some comfort. Lewis Ross, the Chief's brother, was the main contractor and furnished forage, rations, and clothing for the wagon trains. Although this arrangement was an improvement for all concerned, disease and exposure still took many lives. This is the part of the Removal usually identified as The "Trail of Tears."
1. Daniel Colston, Conductor (first choice Hair Conrad became ill); Asst. Conductor Jefferson Nevins; 710 persons left Oct.5, 1838 from Agency camp and 654 people arrived at Woodall's place in Indian Territory on Jan. 4, 1839 (57 deaths, 9 births, 24 deserters).

2. Elijah Hicks, Conductor; White Path (died near Hopkinsville, Kentucky) and William Arnold, Asst. Conductors; 809 persons left Oct.4, 1838 from Camp Ross on Gunstocker Creek and 744 people arrived Jan.4, 1839 at Mrs. Webber's place in Indian Territory.


5. Situake, Conductor; Rev. Evan Jones, Asst. Conductor; 1,205 persons left Oct. 19, 1838 from Savannah Creek camp and 1,033 arrived Feb. 2, 1839 (at Beatties' Prairie, Indian Territory. (71 deaths, 5 births).


7. Moses Daniel, Conductor; George Still, Sr. Asst. Conductor; 1,031 persons left from Agency camp on Oct.23, 1838 and 924 arrived March 2, 1839 at Mrs. Webber's (48 deaths, 6 births).

8. Chuwaluka (a.k.a. Bark), Conductor; James D. Wofford (fired for drunkenness) and Thomas N. Clark, Jr. Asst. Conductors; 1,120 left Oct.27, 1838 from Mouse Creek camp and 970 arrived March 1, 1839 at Fort Wayne.


10. George Hicks, Conductor; Collins McDonald, Asst. Conductor; 1,031 left Nov. 4, 1838 from Mouse Creek camp and 1,039 arrived March 14, 1839 near Fort Wayne.

11. Richard Taylor, Conductor; Walter Scott Adair, Asst. Conductor; 897 left Nov. 6, 1838 from Ooltewah Creek camp and 942 arrived March 24, 1839 at Woodall's place (55 deaths, 15 births). Missionary Rev. Daniel Butrick accompanied this detachment, and his daily journal has been published.

12. Peter Hildebrand, Conductor; James Vann Hildebrand, Asst. Conductor; 1,449 left Nov. 8, 1838 Ocoe camp and 1,311 arrived March 25, 1839 near Woodall's place.


There exist muster rolls for four (Benge, Chuwaluka, G. Hicks, and Hildebrand) of the 12 wagon trains and payrolls of officials for all 13 detachments among the personal papers of Principal Chief John Ross in the Gilcrease Institution in Tulsa, OK.
Deaths and numbers

The number of people who died as a result of the Trail of Tears has been variously estimated. American doctor and missionary Elizur Butler, who made the journey with the Daniel Colston wagon train, estimated 2,000 deaths in the Army removal and internment camps and perhaps another 2,000 on the trail; his total of 4,000 deaths remains the most cited figure, although he acknowledged these were estimates without having seen government or tribal records. A scholarly demographic study in 1973 estimated 2,000 total deaths; another, in 1984, concluded that a total of 6,000 people died.\[4] The 4000 figure or one quarter of the tribe was also used by the Smithsonian anthropologist, James Mooney. Since 16,000 Cherokees were enumerated on the 1835 Census, and about 12,000 emigrated in 1838, ergo 4000 needed accounting for. Note that some 1500 Cherokees remained in North Carolina, so the higher fatality numbers are unlikely. In addition, nearly 400 Creek or Muskogee Indians who had avoided being removed earlier, fled into the Cherokee Nation and became part of the latter's Removal.

An accounting of the exact number of fatalities during the Removal is also related to discrepancies in expense accounts submitted by Chief John Ross after the Removal that the Army considered inflated and possibly fraudulent. Ross claimed rations for 1600 more Cherokees than were counted by an Army officer, Captain Page, at Ross' Landing as Cherokee groups left their homeland and another Army officer, Captain Stephenson, at Fort Gibson counted them as they arrived in Indian Territory. Ross' accounts are consistently higher numbers than that of the Army disbursing agents.\[5] The Van Buren administration refused to pay Ross, but the later Tyler administration eventually approved disbursing more than $500,000 to the Principal Chief in 1842.

In addition, some Cherokees traveled from east to west more than once. Many deserters from the Army's boat detachments in June 1838 later emigrated in the twelve Ross wagon trains. There were transfers between groups, and later join ups and desertions were not always recorded. Jesse Mayfield was a white man with a Cherokee family went twice (first voluntarily in B.B. Cannon's detachment in 1837 to Indian Territory; unhappy there, he returned to the Cherokee Nation; and in Oct. 1838 was Wagon Master for the Bushyhead Detachment. An Army disbursing agent discovered that a Cherokee named Justis Fields travelled with government funds three times under different aliases. A mixed-blood named James Bigby, Jr. travelled to Indian Territory five times (three as government interpreter for different detachments, as Commissary for the Colston detachment, and as an individual in 1840). In addition, a small but significant number of mixed-bloods and whites with Cherokee families petitioned to become citizens of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, or Tennessee and thus ceased to be considered Cherokees.
During the journey, it is said that the people would sing “Amazing Grace”, using its inspiration to improve morale. The traditional Christian hymn had previously been translated into Cherokee by the missionary Samuel Worcester with Cherokee assistance. The song has since become a sort of anthem for the Cherokee people.[6]

**Personal narratives**

Samuel Carter, author of Cherokee Sunset, writes: "Then… there came the reign of terror. From the jagged-walled stockades the troops fanned out across the Nation, invading every hamlet, every cabin, rooting out the inhabitants at bayonet point. The Cherokees hardly had time to realize what was happening as they were prodded like so many sheep toward the concentration camps, threatened with knives and pistols, beaten with rifle butts if they resisted."[7]

Another Cherokee, this time a child called Samuel Cloud turned 9 years old on the Trail of Tears. Samuel's written memory is retold by his great-great grandson, Micheal Rutledge, in his paper *Forgiveness in the Age of Forgetfulness*. Micheal, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, is a law student at Arizona State University:

> I know what it is to hate. I hate those white soldiers who took us from our home. I hate the soldiers who make us keep walking through the snow and ice toward this new home that none of us ever wanted. I hate the people who killed my father and mother. I hate the white people who lined the roads in their woollen clothes that kept them warm, watching us pass. None of those white people are here to say they are sorry that I am alone. None of them care about me or my people. All they ever saw was the colour of our skin. All I see is the colour of theirs and I hate them.[8]

Ethics are always a subjective thing, but the sheer cruelty exhibited toward the Indian people seems hard to deny. However, not all Americans of 1838 closed their eyes to this sort of brutality. There were those Americans who were morally distraught at what they saw. Some spoke up publicly. One was Ralph Waldo Emerson. In his Letter To Martin Van Buren, President of the United States, April 23, 1838, he wrote:[9]

> In the name of God, sir, we ask you if this be so. Do the newspapers rightly inform us?... The piety, the principle that is left in the United States, if only in its coarsest form, a regard to the speech of men, – forbid us to entertain it as a fact. Such a dereliction of all faith and virtue, such a denial of justice, and such deafness to screams for mercy were never heard of in times of peace and in the dealing of a nation with its own allies and wards, since the earth was made. Sir, does this government think that the people of the United States are become savage and mad? From their mind are the sentiments of love and a good nature wiped clean out? The soul of man, the justice, the mercy that is the heart's heart in all men, from Maine to Georgia, does abhor this business.

In speaking thus the sentiments of my neighbors and my own, perhaps I overstep the bounds of decorum. But would it not be a higher indecorum coldly to argue a matter like this? We only state the fact that a crime is projected that confounds our understandings by its magnitude, -a crime that really deprives us as well as the Cherokees of a country, for how could we call the conspiracy that should crush these poor Indians our government, or the land that was cursed by their parting and dying imprecations our country, any more? You, sir, will bring down that renowned chair in which you sit into infamy if your seal is set to this instrument of perfidy ; and the name of this nation, hitherto the sweet omen of religion and liberty, will stink to the world.

You will not do us the injustice of connecting this remonstrance with any sectional and party feeling. It is in our hearts the simplest commandment of brotherly love. We will not have this great and solemn claim upon national and human justice huddled aside under the flimsy plea of its being a party act. Sir, to us the questions upon which the government and the people have been agitated during the past year*, touching the prostration of the currency and of trade, seem but motes in comparison. These hard times, it is true, have brought the discussion home to every farmhouse and poor man's house in this town; but it is the chirping of grasshoppers beside the immortal question whether justice shall be done by the race of civilized to the race of savage man, – whether all the attributes of reason, of civility, of justice, and even of mercy, shall be put off by the American people, and so vast an outrage upon the Cherokee Nation and upon human nature shall be consummated.
The "questions...agitated during the past year" refers to the Panic of 1837.

Another was John G Burnett, whose memories of what he had witnessed both haunted and enraged him till his last days. His own words explain best.

This is my birthday, December 11, 1890, I am eighty years old today...in May 1838, an army of 4000 regulars, and 3000 volunteer soldiers under command of General Winfield Scott, marched into the Indian country and wrote the blackest chapter on the pages of American history...The removal of Cherokee Indians from their life long homes in the year of 1838 found me a young man in the prime of life and a Private soldier in the American Army...I was sent as interpreter into the Smoky Mountain Country in May, 1838, and witnessed the execution of the most brutal order in the History of American Warfare. I saw the helpless Cherokees arrested and dragged from their homes, and driven at the bayonet point into the stockades...Children were often separated from their parents...And in the chill of a drizzling rain on an October morning I saw them loaded like cattle or sheep into six hundred and forty-five wagons and started toward the west....On the morning of November the 17th we encountered a terrific sleet and snow storm with freezing temperatures and from that day until we reached the end of the fateful journey on March the 26th, 1839, the sufferings of the Cherokees were awful. The trail of the exiles was a trail of death. They had to sleep in the wagons and on the ground without fire...The long painful journey to the west ended March 26th, 1839, with four-thousand silent graves reaching from the foothills of the Smoky Mountains to what is known as Indian territory in the West...At this time, 1890, we are too near the removal of the Cherokees for our young people to fully understand the enormity of the crime that was committed against a helpless race...School children of today do not know that we are living on lands that were taken from a helpless race at the bayonet point to satisfy the white man's greed. Future generations will read and condemn the act and I do hope posterity will remember that private soldiers like myself, and like the four Cherokees who were forced by General Scott to shoot an Indian Chief and his children, had to execute the orders of our superiors. ...However, murder is murder whether committed by the villain skulking in the dark or by uniformed men stepping to the strains of martial music. Murder is murder, and somebody must answer. Somebody must explain the streams of blood that flowed in the Indian country in the summer of 1838. Somebody must explain the 4000 silent graves that mark the trail of the Cherokees to their exile. I wish I could forget it all, but the picture of 645 wagons lumbering over the frozen ground with their cargo of suffering humanity still lingers in my memory.

[10] Burnett's story of the removal can not be validated. The documents show that he fabricated a large part of his claimed experiences. He did participate in the initial round up of the Cherokees as a Tennessee Volunteer and not as a U.S. military person. He claims to have seen the 645 wagons used by the tribe in the removal. Considering that there were ca 14 detachments, leaving from various places and at various times, never would there have been 645 wagons in one spot. Further he claims to have witnessed Mrs. Ross, on horseback, surrendering her blanket during a snow storm to protect a child, and subsequently dying as a result of her generosity. Burnett says Mrs. Ross was buried in an unmarked grave. At the time of Mrs. Ross death she was on the ship Victoria with her husband, John Ross and some 225 other people. She was not buried in an unmarked grave. Quatie Ross is buried in Little Rock in one of the town's early cemeteries. A picture of her grave marker can be seen on the web. (see 'John G. Burnett's Account' pp. 337–341 in "Cherokee Emigration: Reconstructing Reality", The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. LXXX, No. 3, Fall, 2002.
Aftermath

Cherokees who were removed initially settled near Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The political turmoil resulting from the Treaty of New Echota and the Trail of Tears led to the assassinations of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot; of those targeted for assassination that day, only Stand Watie escaped his assassins. The population of the Cherokee Nation eventually rebounded, and today the Cherokees are the largest American Indian group in the United States.\[11\]

There were some exceptions to removal. Perhaps 1,000 Cherokees evaded the U.S. soldiers and lived off the land in Georgia and other states. Those Cherokees who lived on private, individually-owned lands (rather than communally-owned tribal land) were not subject to removal. In North Carolina, about 400 Cherokees led by Yonaguska lived on land along the Oconaluftee River in the Great Smoky Mountains owned by a white man named William Holland Thomas (who had been adopted by Cherokees as a boy), and were thus not subject to removal, and these were joined by a smaller band of about 150 along the Nantahala River led by Utsala. Along with a group living in Snowbird and another along the Cheoah River in a community called Tomotley, these North Carolina Cherokees became the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, numbering approximately 1000. According to a roll taken the year after the removal (1839), there were in addition some 400 of Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama, and these also joined the EBCI.

The Trail of Tears is generally considered to be one of the most regrettable episodes in American history. To commemorate the event, the U.S. Congress designated the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail in 1987.\[12\] It stretches across nine states for 2200 miles (unknown operator: u'strong' km).

In 2004, during the 108th Congress, Senator Sam Brownback (Republican of Kansas) introduced a joint resolution (Senate Joint Resolution 37) to "offer an apology to all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States" for past "ill-conceived policies" by the United States Government regarding Indian Tribes. It passed in the U.S. Senate in February 2008\[13\]

In popular culture

• In 1971 the rock group Paul Revere and the Raiders issued a single that commemorated the forcible removal of the Cherokee Nation: "Indian Reservation (The Lament Of The Cherokee Reservation Indian)."
• Country-rock super-group Southern Pacific recorded a song titled "Trail of Tears" on their 1988 "Zuma" album.
• In 1974 John and Terry Talbot Mason Proffit wrote and recorded their song "Trail Of Tears" on the album "The Talbot Brothers".
• Swedish rock band Europe refers to the Trail of Tears in their song "Cherokee" on their album The Final Countdown.
• Popular US composer James Barnes published a tone poem for wind band entitled Trail of Tears (1989) that depicts the journey made by the Cherokee people. The piece includes the recitation of a mournful poem in the Cherokee language: Dedeeshkawnk juniqhoosaa, Dedeeshkawnk ahyoheest, Dedeeshkawnk daynahmohtee (Let us
mourn those who have died, Let us mourn those who are dying, Let us mourn those who must endure).

- Grammy winning guitarist Eric Johnson released a song entitled "Trail of Tears" on his 1986 album Tones.

Notes


[12] Trail Of Tears National Historic Trail (http://www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm) from the National Park Service


References


Documentary


External links

- Cherokee Trail of Tears (http://ngeorgia.com/history/nghisstt.html)
- Cherokee Heritage Documentation Center (http://www.cherokeeregistry.com)
- Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center (http://www.cherokee.org/Culture/History/TOT/Default.aspx)
- Archaeologists uncover abandoned Cherokee property (http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/01/0123_060123_cherokee_dig.html) from *National Geographic*
- The Trail of Tears and the Forced Relocation of the Cherokee Nation (http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/118trail/118trail.htm) from the National Park Service’s Teaching with Historic Places

Documents

- “Removal of the Indians” by Lewis Cass, January 1830 (http://www.cerritos.edu/soliver/StudentActivites/TrailofTears/web/cass2.htm)
- Cherokee Indian Removal Debate U.S. Senate, April 15–17, 1830 (http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/chdebate.htm)
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- "Andrew Jackson v. the Cherokee Nation" (excerpt from Andrew Jackson and his Indian Wars) by Robert Remini at historynet.com (http://historynet.com/ah/bljackson/index.html)
- Trail of Tears (http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2722&hl=y) (entry in the New Georgia Encyclopedia)
- New Echota Historic Site (http://gastateparks.info/echota/)
- Trail of Tears Commemorative Park, Hopkinsville KY (http://www.trailoftears.org/)
- Port Royal State Park, Montgomery County, Tennessee (http://www.state.tn.us/environment/parks/PortRoyal/index.shtml)
- Red Clay State Park, Bradley County, Tennessee (http://www.state.tn.us/environment/parks/RedClay/features/historic.shtml)
• Trail of Tears Commemorative Motorcycle Ride (http://www.al-tn-trailoftears.net/), a yearly event which claims to be “the largest annual motorcycle ride in America”, raises funds for college scholarships for Native American students

Audio

• Trail of Tears (http://www.thislife.org/pages/descriptions/98/107.html) a 1998 episode of *This American Life* featuring Sarah Vowell and her sister
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