Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears

The Cherokee had signed treaties with the United States guaranteeing their right to their land. They tried to adapt themselves to life with their white neighbors. By 1830, they had a written language and their government had a written constitution; many Cherokee practiced a European-American style of agriculture and had converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, most white Southerners wanted rid of them — and wanted their land. In 1836, the Cherokee were forcibly removed to what is now Oklahoma along what came to be known as the “Trail of Tears.” Only a tiny group remained in their ancient homeland.

In this chapter we’ll read the words of both Cherokee and whites. We’ll evaluate the changes taking place in Cherokee life, the reasons for their forced removal, and the costs of the Trail of Tears.

Section Contents

- The Cherokee and the Trail of Tears
- The Cherokee Language and Syllabary
- Andrew Jackson Calls for Indian Removal
- "We have unexpectedly become civilized"
- The Indian Removal Act of 1830
- Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia, 1831
- Chief John Ross Protests the Treaty of New Echota
- A Soldier Recalls the Trail of Tears
- The Legend of Tsali

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LEARN NC North Carolina History: A Digital Textbook

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2009

For Teachers:
Cherokee Nation Case Study, National Museum of the American Indian

For Grades 6-12.

Primary Sources:
President Andrew Jackson's Message to Congress 'On Indian Removal' (1830)

Artifacts:
Robert Lindneux’s *The Trail of Tears* painting (1942) depicts the cruel conditions of The Trail of Tears. This painting is held at the Woolaroc Museum, in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

3 January 2018

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