

# Cherokee removal

[People](#)



The Cherokee people were forced out of their land because of the settler's greed for everything and anything the land had to offer. Many Cherokee even embraced the "civilization program," abandoning their own beliefs so that they may be accepted by white settlers. Unfortunately for the Cherokee though, the settlers would never accept them as an equal citizen. A quote from historian Richard White says it very well, "The Cherokee are probably the most tragic instance of what could have succeeded in American Indian policy and didn't.

All these things that Americans would proudly see as the hallmarks of civilization are going to the West by Indian people. They do everything they were asked except one thing. What the Cherokees ultimately are, they may be Christian, they may be literate, they may have a government like ours, but ultimately they are Indian. And in the end, being Indian is what killed them. "The Treaty of Hopewell was set up in 1785 and was made with all the good intentions, but nobody to enforce the rules. It was set up to start setting up friendly relations with the Cherokee, but also to define the Cherokee borders.

It gave the Cherokees the right to expel of any unwanted person that was on their land. Even with this treaty though people of both Georgia and North Carolina moved onto the Cherokees land, taking as they pleased. This caused there to be battles between settlers and Cherokee. There was a big racial issue when it came to battles though. Whenever the settlers would win a battle it was called an Indian war, but when the Indians would win, it was called a massacre. Henry Knox soon stepped into the picture and he came

believing that it was inevitable that both “ civilized” and “ uncivilized” peoples should fight so much.

In order to ratify this he implemented a “ civilization program. ” As a part of this program, in order to be considered “ civilized” one had to dress, think, act, speak, work, and worship the same way. Knox felt the Cherokee just needed some time to learn these ways. Knox set up the Treaty of Holston in 1791 where it stated, “ That the Cherokee nation may be let to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters, the United States will, from time to time, furnish a gratuitously the said nation with useful implements of husbandry. For the Cherokee this meant leaving many of their traditions behind and embracing the American way of life in order to keep their land. In order to be “ civilized” Cherokee men had to cease hunting and attend to either the fields or herd livestock. This was due to the view by the settlers that the Cherokee men were lazy because the settlers viewed hunting as fun and a sport. Because many felt that working in the fields was something that is a woman’s job many turned to herding livestock as an alternative. Cherokee women were told that they could no longer work in the fields but should work in the household as a subservient.

Many of the Cherokee had a hard time with this as well because they felt that the women settlers were lazy and they did not want their women to be the same way. Soon though many Cherokee women began working in the household, cooking, cleaning, or sewing. The main way Cherokees could be considered “ civilized” was to accept Christianity. The U. S. government sent missionaries into Indian Territory to build schools. At these schools though

they not only taught literature, math, and English, but they also taught young Cherokees how to read using the Bible and also taught them how to pray.

Many Cherokees ended up accepting Christianity with a select few not willing, but that was no different than how many white settlers were. Due to the "civilization program" many Cherokees became extremely wealthy and even ended up purchasing slaves to do field work. These Cherokee men became key political leaders for the Cherokee nation. They would end up writing and applying their very own "Constitution of the Cherokee Nation" which was made very similar to our very own constitution. The main concern for most of the Cherokee was land and due to that it was the first thing to be outlined in the Cherokee Constitution.

In Article 1-Section 1 it states the boundaries they now possess because of the treaties made with the U. S. and also states that those boundaries shall forever be their land. Cherokees made another important law about the selling of land as well in order to keep their borders, "The Cherokee Nation Council advised the United States that it would refuse future cession requests and enacted a law prohibiting the sale of national land upon penalty of death." Even with these laws in place a small group of Cherokee set out against the rest of the Nation.

Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot, signed a removal treaty at the Cherokee capital of New Echota without the authority of Principal Chief John Ross or the Cherokee government. The Treaty of New Echota required the Cherokee Nation to exchange its national lands for a parcel in the "Indian Territory" set aside by Congress, in what is now Oklahoma, in 1834 and to <https://assignbuster.com/cherokee-removal/>

relocate there within two years. The federal government promised to remit \$5 million to the Cherokee Nation, compensate individuals for their buildings and fixtures, and pay for the costs of relocation and acclimation.

The United States also promised to honor the title of the Cherokee Nation's new land, respect its political autonomy, and protect its tribe from future trespasses. Even though it was completed without the sanction of the Cherokee national government, the U. S. Senate ratified the treaty by a margin of one vote. Presidential Chief John Ross tried to prove that it was done without majority consent by getting 16, 000 Cherokees to sign a document against the treaty. Ross tried to fight against the treaty till 1838, when the U. S. army was sent into the Cherokee Nation.

In October, the Cherokees were herded into wooden stockades with no food, water, blankets, or sanitation. Most of them were barefoot and had no coats or blankets, yet they were forced to cross rivers in sub-zero weather. There was about 22, 000 Cherokees that were forced out of their homes on the Trail of Tears and a total of about 5, 500 died along the way of exposure, starvation, and disease. A guard wrote, " I fought through the War (Civil War), and I saw men shot to pieces and slaughtered by the thousands, but the Cherokee Removal was the cruelest work I ever knew. "

Despite everything the Cherokees did...changing all of their traditions, trying to negotiate, and finally trying to protect themselves with laws...it did not matter. All the settlers wanted from the beginning was to manipulate and take every bit of land they could from the Cherokee. The Cherokee followed the " civilization program" and settlers only thought that, no matter what; an

Indian could never be “ civilized. ” As the historian Richard White put at the beginning, “ And in the end, being Indian is what killed them. ”