

Cherokee Indian Removal Timeline

- 1785** First treaty between Cherokee and United States, established peaceful relations.
- 1796** George Washington initiated “civilization” program among Cherokees.
- 1802** Georgia ceded some of its western land to the United States; the U.S. government, in exchange, promised to purchase for Georgia all of the Indian lands remaining within the state. However, the Federal Government could only buy land through treaty.
- 1808-1810** First major Cherokee migration to land west of the Mississippi.
- 1820s** Cherokees became the most “civilized” of the five “Civilized Tribes” (Creeks, Chickasaw, Seminole, Choctaw and Cherokee).
- The Cherokee had a newspaper and many had converted to Christianity; they adopted a Constitution; they had farms and owned slaves.
- 1828** Andrew Jackson elected President and declares his support for removal.
- 1828** Georgia extended its state power over Cherokee Nation and nullified (makes illegal) Cherokee law.
- 1832** Cherokee won their case in *Worcester v. Georgia*. U.S. Supreme Court upheld Cherokee sovereignty in Georgia.
- Andrew Jackson ignored the ruling.
- 1836** Treaty of New Echota signed; provided for removal of Cherokees to land west of the Mississippi.
- Chief John Ross led 15,000 in protesting the treaty.
- Only 2,000 Cherokee agreed to migrate voluntarily.
- 1838** U.S. government sent in 7,000 troops, who forced the Cherokees out at bayonet point. 4,000 Cherokee people died of cold, hunger, and disease on their way to the western lands.
- 1839** Execution of Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot for their role in the Treaty of New Echota.

Document A: Andrew Jackson (Modified)

It gives me great pleasure to announce to Congress that the Government's benevolent policy of Indian removal has almost been achieved.

We have wept over the fate of the natives of this country, as one by one many tribes have disappeared from the earth. However, we must accept this the way we accept when an older generation dies and makes room for the younger.

We would not want to see this continent restored to the condition in which our forefathers found it. What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and occupied by a few thousand savages to our great Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, decorated with art and industry, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?

The United States will pay to send the natives to a land where they may live longer and possibly survive as a people.

Can it be cruel when this Government offers to purchase the Indian's land, give him new and extensive territory, pay the expense of his removal, and support him for the first year in his new home? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of moving West under such conditions!

The policy of the Government towards the red man is generous. The Indian is unwilling to follow the laws of the States and mingle with the population. To save him from utter annihilation, the Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.

Vocabulary

Benevolent—kind

Annihilation—destruction

Source: Andrew Jackson, State of the Union speech. December 30, 1830.

Document B: Letter by Elias Boudinot (Modified)

Look at our people! They are wretched! Look, my dear sir, around you, and see the progress that vice and immorality have already made! See the misery!

If the darker picture which I have described here is a true one, can we see a brighter possibility ahead? In another country, and under other circumstances, there is a *better prospect*. Removal, then, is the only remedy, the only *practical* remedy. Our people may finally rise from their very ashes, to become prosperous and happy, and a credit to our race. I would say to my countrymen, fly from your life here that is destroying our nation.

What is *your* (John Ross) plan of relief? It is dark and gloomy beyond description. You want the Cherokee to live according the laws of Georgia, no matter how unfair they are? Instead of fix the evil, you would tie our people down in the chains of slavery. The final destiny of our race, under such circumstances is too revolting to think of. Take my word, it is the sure end of our race if you succeed in preventing the removal of your people. There will come a time when there will be few of us left as reminders of this brave and noble race. May God protect us from such a destiny.

Vocabulary

wretched—miserable

vice—sin

prospect—possibility

Source: The letter above was written in 1837 by Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee who supported Indian Removal (and who signed the Treaty of New Echota that gave away Cherokee land). The letter is to Chief John Ross, leader of the Cherokees who opposed Indian Removal.