

What is the Trail of Tears?

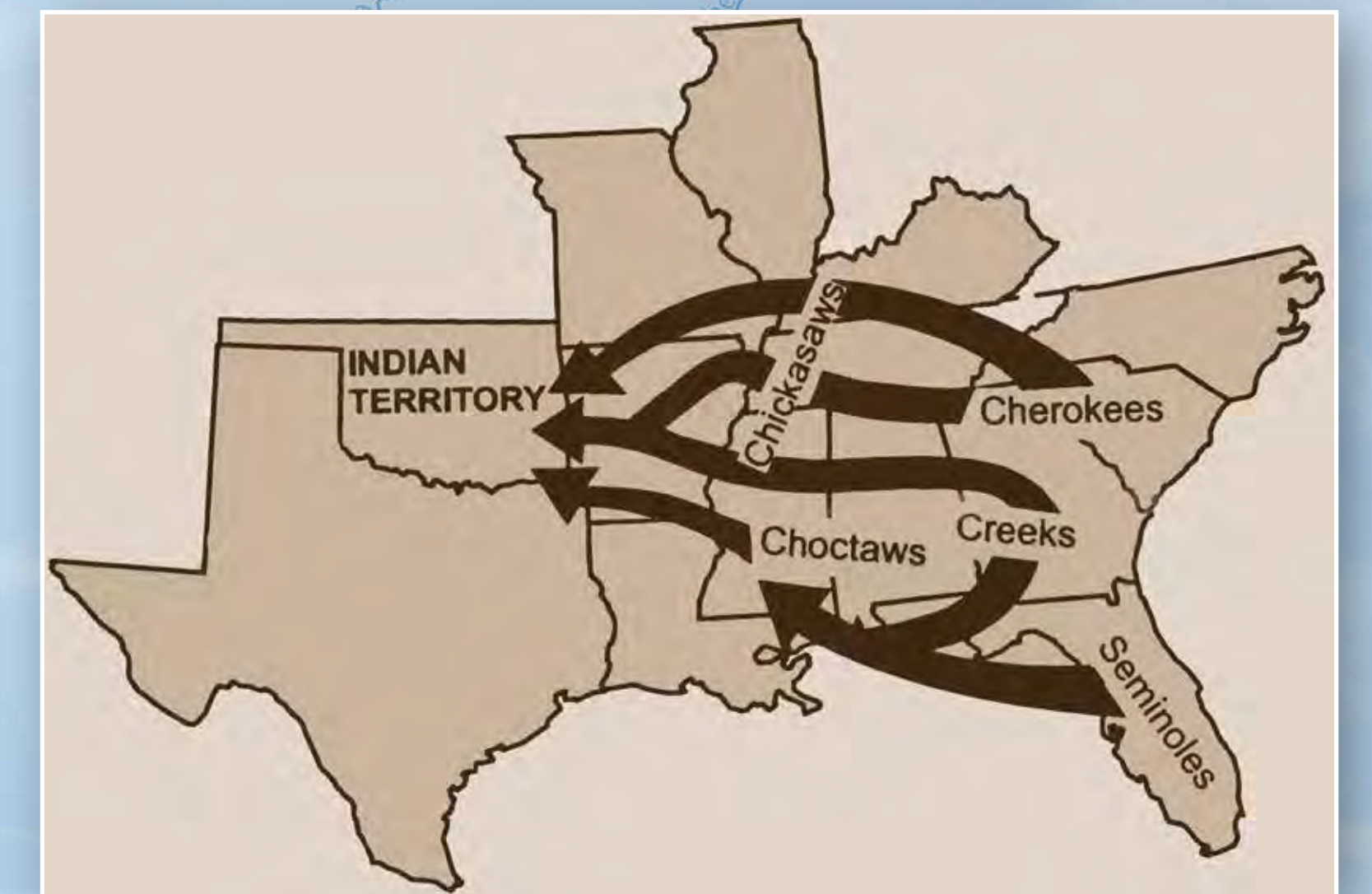
From 1837 to 1839, thousands of Cherokee traveled along local roads and through what is now Laughlin Park on their way to Indian Territory in the West. Some groups encamped here on their journey.

The Cherokee, or the “Principal People” or *Ani’-Yun’ wiya*, did not willingly leave their homeland in the southern Appalachian Mountains. The 1830 Indian Removal Act required that they surrender their land. In the decade that followed, the federal government forcibly removed Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole from their homes in the Southeast and relocated them to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

This tragic journey is called the Trail of Tears.



Waynesville and Roubidoux Creek lie along the northern route of the Trail of Tears. The northern route was used by 11 of the 17 Cherokee detachments. Other Indian nations followed different routes along their forced migration.

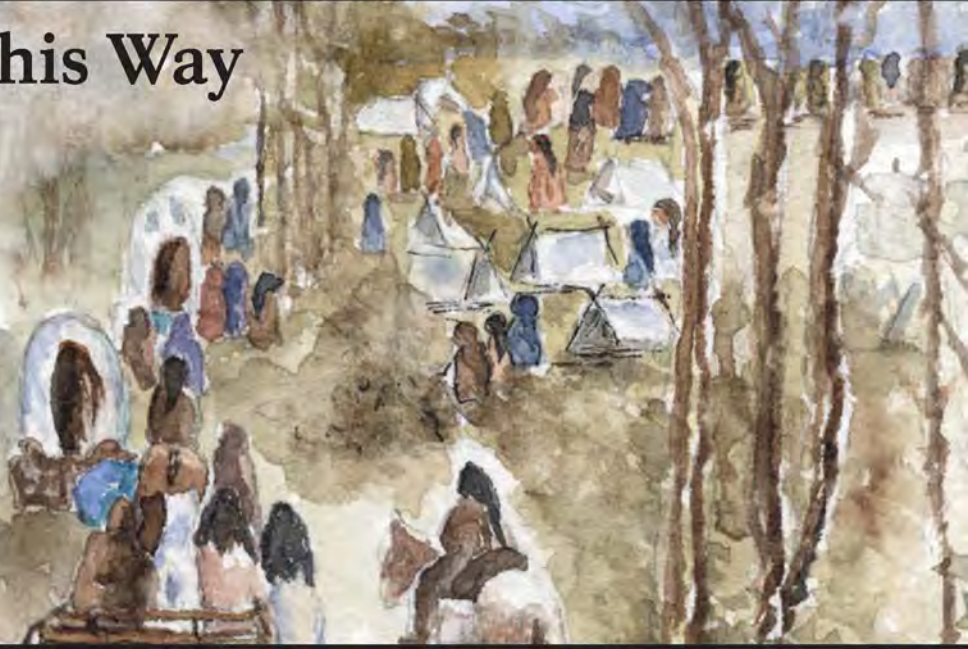


In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee; 21,000 Muscogee (Creek); 9,000 Choctaw; 6,000 Chickasaw; and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States.

They Passed This Way

*...we have Suffered a great deal...
The roads are in very bad Order as
the ground was frozen very deep...
We have been lying by about two
weeks...The [river] has been full
of large quantities of floating Ice...
we must calculate on suffering a
good deal from hardships &
exposure before we yet reach our
homes in the far West.*

Recollection of a survivor of the Trail of Tears

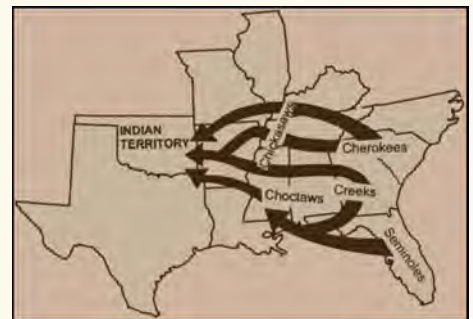


Federal Indian Removal Policy

After passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the United States government forced thousands of American Indians to leave their ancestral lands in the southeast for new homes in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). They traveled by existing roads and by rivers. Many groups left in the fall, hoping to avoid the disease and heat of summer travel, and instead faced treacherous winter weather. Hundreds died during the ordeal—remembered today as the Trail of Tears.

Despite the hardships of the journey, the people of the five tribes of the Southeast established new lives in the West. They stand now as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it would have for the Indian peoples. One thing was certain; removal freed millions of acres of desired Indian lands for use by white settlers.



In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 12,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States.

The Cherokee story of perseverance and survival is told along the original route and hiking trails at Mantle Rock Preserve. Join us in remembering those who traveled on the Trail of Tears.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

The National Park Service works with partners to administer the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told.

You can visit sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte



Imagine the Scene

Over 1,400 Cherokee men, women, and children from Peter Hildebrand's detachment spent two bitterly cold weeks camped in this area during the harsh winter of 1838-1839.

The detachments ahead of them had successfully crossed the icy Ohio River, but were trapped between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Waiting for the Mississippi River to thaw, all Cherokee detachments in the area were at a standstill and at the mercy of the weather. Hildebrand's detachment camped for miles here along the road until they could continue traveling west to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.



Retrace the trail. Original Route signs indicate that you are driving the historic route. At Mantle Rock Preserve, you can walk in the footsteps of the Cherokee along a hiking trail.

The Trail Where They Cried

The Cherokee Nation once spread across Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. It was home to thousands of men, women, and children. The 1830 Indian Removal Act required that the Cherokee surrender their land and move west. Many actively opposed the act and refused to move.

In the spring of 1838, soldiers established forts and camps across the Cherokee homeland and swiftly rounded up every Cherokee they could find. The Cherokee knew this was coming, and chose to resist removal by waiting in their homes to be forcefully evicted by militias. In the camps, they suffered from exposure, disease epidemics, inadequate sanitation, and heartbreak, remaining prisoners in the camps until their final deportation to the West.

“The soldiers came and took us from home. They first surrounded our house and they took the mare while we were at work in the fields and they drove us out of doors and did not permit us to take anything with us, not even a second change of clothes. . . They marched us to Ross’ Landing, and still on foot, even our little children, and they sent us off.”

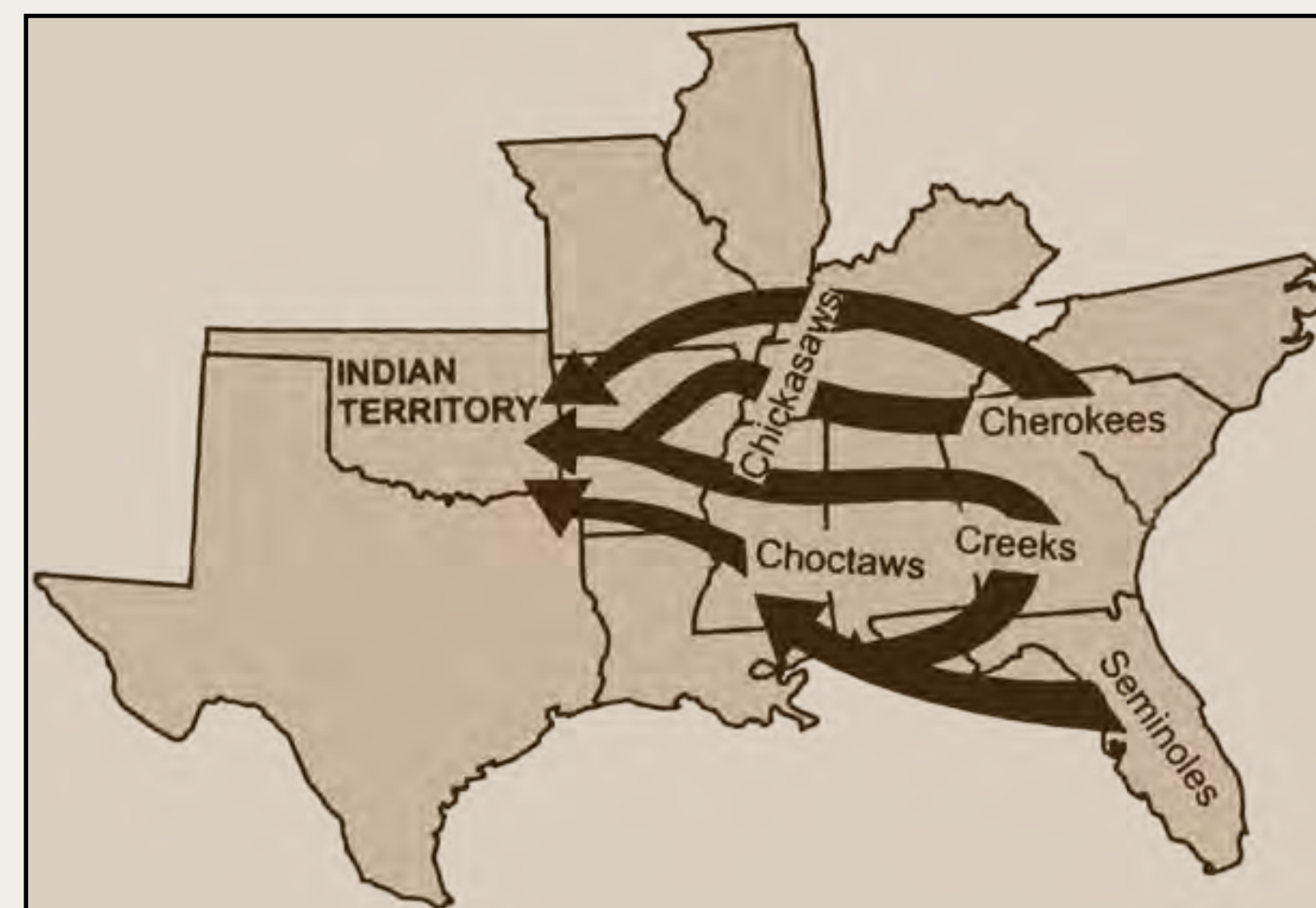
Oo-loo-cha, widow of Sweet Water, 1842



Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it had for the Indian peoples. One thing was certain; removal freed millions of acres of desired Indian lands for use by white settlers.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the removal of thousands of American Indians from their ancestral lands for new homes in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). They traveled by existing roads and rivers. Many groups, hoping to avoid the disease and heat of summer travel, left in the fall and instead faced treacherous winter weather. Many died during the ordeal of the Trail of Tears.



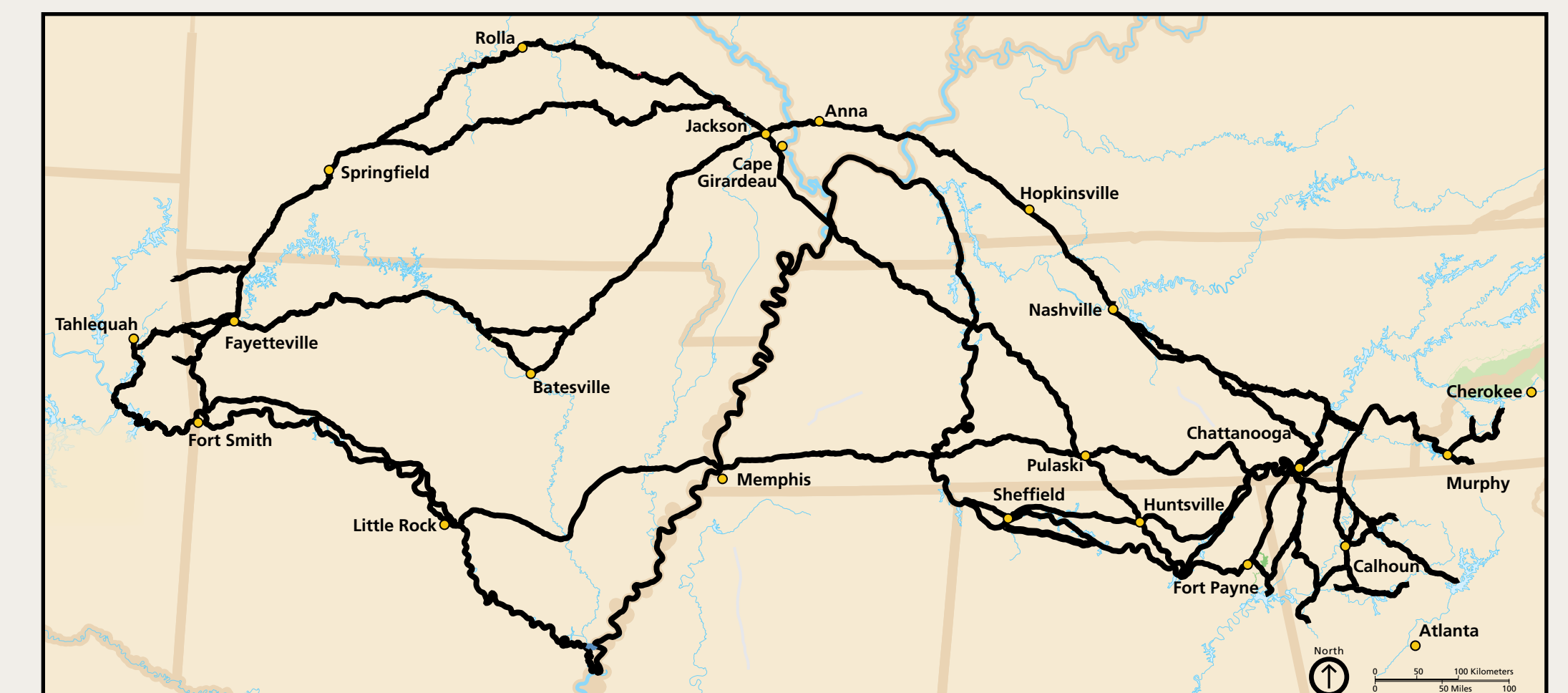
In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee; 21,000 Muscogee (Creek); 9,000 Choctaw; 6,000 Chickasaw; and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and due to a special exemption formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

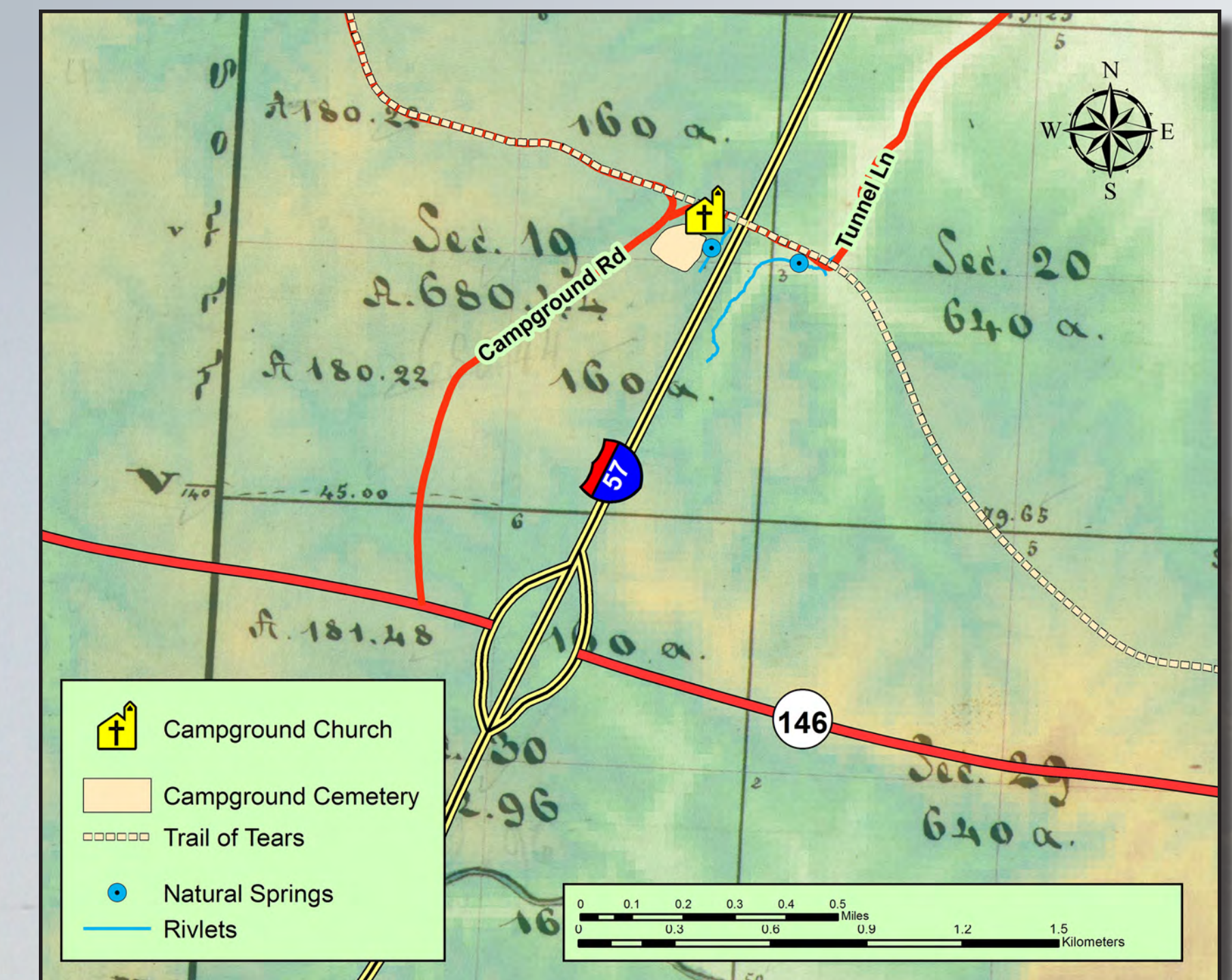
Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte

“This is My Home” by Dorothy Sullivan

A Place to Rest

In the early 1800s, this area was wooded and known as a camp ground by settlers and travelers, who took advantage of the five springs nearby. Camp Ground Cemetery began as the family cemetery of George Hileman. In 1834, Hileman took a land patent on the acreage that now includes the church and cemetery. When two of his children died in 1838, they were buried in “the field out from the house.”

In the winter of 1838-1839, the Cherokee were making their forced trek west and traveled along the main road - today’s Tunnel Lane. Several detachments, as many as 10,000 people, camped on Hileman’s land and the neighboring property on their way west. It is unknown how many Cherokee died while camping here, but family history relates that those who died were buried in the field next to Hileman’s children.



Abundant woods and rivlets formed by natural thermal springs made this area an ideal place to stop and camp. Cherokee camped here on their way to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma).



The Hileman brothers were buried here, the seventh and eighth markers from the left in the row.



Family oral history and modern technology came together to tell the story of the Hileman property and the Cherokee cemetery. Data support historical accounts that speak of the cemetery site as a camp ground for travelers as well as the Cherokee who traveled along the Trail of Tears in the winter of 1838-1839. Ground penetrating radar studies (equipment above) have been useful for detecting unmarked burials that may date to the removal era.

Probable Cherokee burial area – burials date to the removal era.

Water Route to Indian Territory

This was a remote stretch of the Mississippi River when steamboats of Cherokee passed by on their way west to Indian Territory on the water route of the Trail of Tears. River traffic in 1838 was limited to the daylight hours because of snags and shifts in the river. It is probable that one or more of the steamboats stopped at New Madrid because there were not many places to acquire supplies, including food for the travelers as well as wood and water for the steam engines.

Local pilots were often hired to take boats through nearby stretches of the river. Physicians who lived here may have tended to Cherokee sick from exhaustion and the close quarters onboard ship. At the time, the town of New Madrid had only 317 residents, 159 of whom were enslaved.

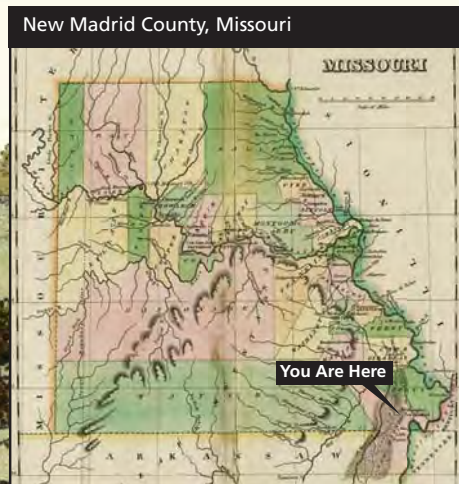


The steamer Warren brought news...of the loss of the steam-boat Monmouth, and the death of at least onehalf of her infamously crowded passengers. This fatal, and most appalling, accident arose from a collision between these two boats; but from the best intelligence we can procure, the blame rests upon the Monmouth. ...Six hundred [Creek] were jammed into this boat... and three hundred have perished."

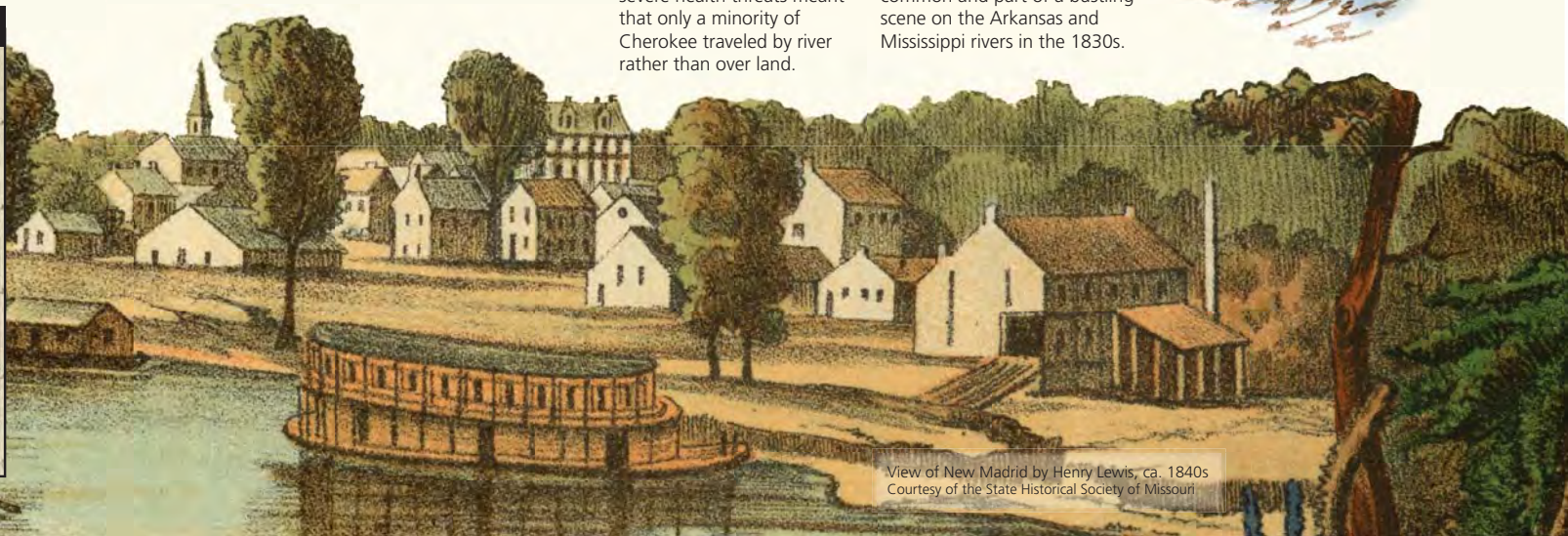
Arkansas Gazette, November 28, 1837

The unreliability of navigable rivers, safety concerns, and severe health threats meant that only a minority of Cherokee traveled by river rather than over land.

Steamboats pulling long flatboats and keelboats were common and part of a bustling scene on the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers in the 1830s.



Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri



View of New Madrid by Henry Lewis, ca. 1840s
Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Missouri

The End of the Journey

Between June 1838 and March 1839, more than 15,000 Cherokee trekked west from their traditional eastern homeland to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) over the “Trail of Tears.” More than 1,000 died during the journey westward, and there may have been as many as 4,000 that died as a direct result of their forced migration. Once they arrived in their new homeland, Cherokee detachments disbanded at one of seven disbandment depots, the most popular being sites near present-day Spavinaw, Westville, and Stilwell.

In accordance with the Treaty of New Echota, the new arrivals were promised one year of subsistence provisions, to be distributed at one of five depots in the Cherokee Nation. That year proved exceedingly trying, however. The delivery of provisions proved halting, and most Cherokee spent the year 1839 living in tents and other temporary quarters while awaiting their first year’s harvest.

The number was found to be 489 ... I have issued a sufficient quantity of cotton domestic to the Indians for Tents to protect them from the weather ... as they were for the most part separated from their homes in Georgia, without having the means or time to prepare ...

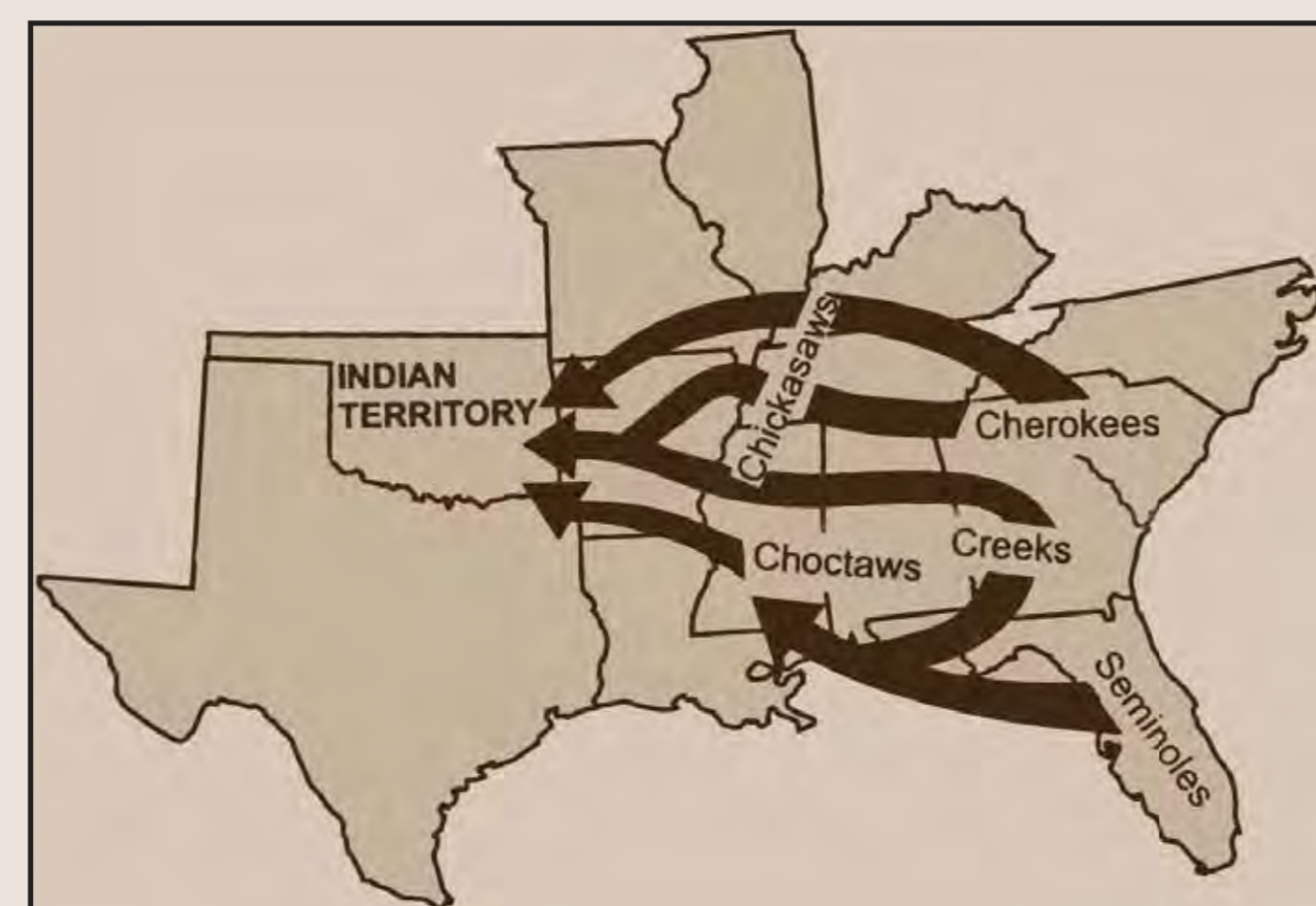
Lt. Edward Deas, June 1838



Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it would have for Indian peoples. One thing was certain; millions of acres of Indian lands were given to American settlers.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte.



After passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the United States government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and, due to a special exemption, formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.



You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments, and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

Home in the West

Upon arrival, families waited in long lines for supplies. Camps surrounded the dispersal site as Cherokee went out and located a home site, built a home, and started a new life.



Between September 1838 and March 1839, over 3,500 people arrived here at a dispersal depot known as “Mrs. Webber’s Plantation.” The property was a registration and supplies distribution point for arriving Cherokee as

they began new lives in the West. It was a time of transition for those who survived the trials of the journey and the process of settling in Indian Territory. The depot on Akie Webber’s land closed in 1841.

Nearby are graves of a number of Cherokee leaders, many of whom braved the Trail of Tears. They passed through Mrs. Webber’s depot and settled in the local area.