

Indian Removal Act, Trail of Tears, Donner Party, and California Gold Rush

INDIAN REMOVAL ACT

Primary Source: A

Indian Removal Act
(May 10, 1838)

From the Cherokee Agency, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott delivered an ultimatum to the Cherokees remaining in northern Georgia they had to go west, and they had to go now:

"Cherokees! The President of the United States has sent me with a powerful army, to cause you, in obedience to the treaty of 1835 [the Treaty of New Echota], to join that part of your people who have already established in prosperity on the other side of the Mississippi. Unhappily, the two years which were allowed for the purpose, you have suffered to pass away without following, and without making any preparation to follow; and now, or by the time that this solemn address shall reach your distant settlements, the emigration must be commenced in haste, but I hope without disorder. I have no power, by granting a farther delay, to correct the error that you have committed. The full moon of May is already on the wane; and before another shall have passed away, every Cherokee man, woman and child in those states must be in motion to join their brethren in the far West.

My friends! This is no sudden determination on the part of the President, whom you and I must now obey. By the treaty, the emigration was to have been completed on or before the 23rd of this month; and the President has constantly kept you warned, during the two years allowed, through all his officers and agents in this country, that the treaty would be enforced.

I am come to carry out that determination. My troops already occupy many positions in the country that you are to abandon, and thousands and thousands are approaching from every quarter, to render resistance and escape alike hopeless. All those troops, regular and militia, are your friends. Receive them and confide in them as such. Obey them when they tell you that your can remain no longer in this country. Soldiers are as kind-hearted as brave, and the desire of every one of us is to execute our painful duty in mercy. We are commanded by the President to act towards you in that spirit, and much is also the wish of the whole people of America.

Chiefs, head-men and warriors! Will you then, by resistance, compel us to resort to arms? God forbid! Or will you, by flight, seek to hid yourselves in mountains and forests, and thus oblige us to hunt you down? Remember that, in pursuit, it may be impossible to avoid conflicts. The blood of the white man or the blood of the red man may be spilt, and, if spilt, however accidentally, it may be impossible for the discreet and humane among you, or among us, to prevent a general war and carnage. Think of this, my Cherokee brethren! I am an old warrior, and have been present at many a scene of slaughter, but spare me, I beseech you, the horror of witnessing the destruction of the Cherokees.

Do not, I invite you, even wait for the close approach of the troops; but make such preparations for emigration as you can and hasten to this place, to Ross's Landing or to Gunter's Landing, where you all will be received in kindness by officers selected for the purpose. You will find food for all and clothing for the destitute at either of those places, and thence at your ease and in comfort be transported to your new homes, according to the terms of the treaty.

This is the address of a warrior to warriors. May his entreaties by kindly received and may the God of both prosper the Americans and Cherokees and preserve them long in peace and friendship with each other!"

Source: Edward J. Cashin (ed.), *A Wilderness Still The Cradle of Nature: Frontier Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1994), pp. 137-38.

Primary Source: B

"You have taken me prisoner with all my warriors - I fought hard. But your guns were well-aimed. The bullets flew like birds in the air, and whizzed by our ears like the wind through the trees in the winter. My warriors fell around me, it began to look dismal. I saw my evil day at hand."

- Chief Black Hawk (surrender speech)

"One of the greatest evils to which they (indians) are subject is that incessant (constant) pressure of our population..."

- John C. Calhoun

Secondary Source: 1

The Indian Removal Act was signed into law by Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830, authorizing the president to grant unsettled lands west of the Mississippi in exchange for Indian lands within existing state borders. A few tribes went peacefully, but many resisted the relocation policy. During the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839, the Cherokees were forcibly moved west by the United States government. Approximately 4,000 Cherokees died on this forced march, which became known as the "Trail of Tears."

Library of Congress

TRAIL OF TEARS

Secondary Source: 2

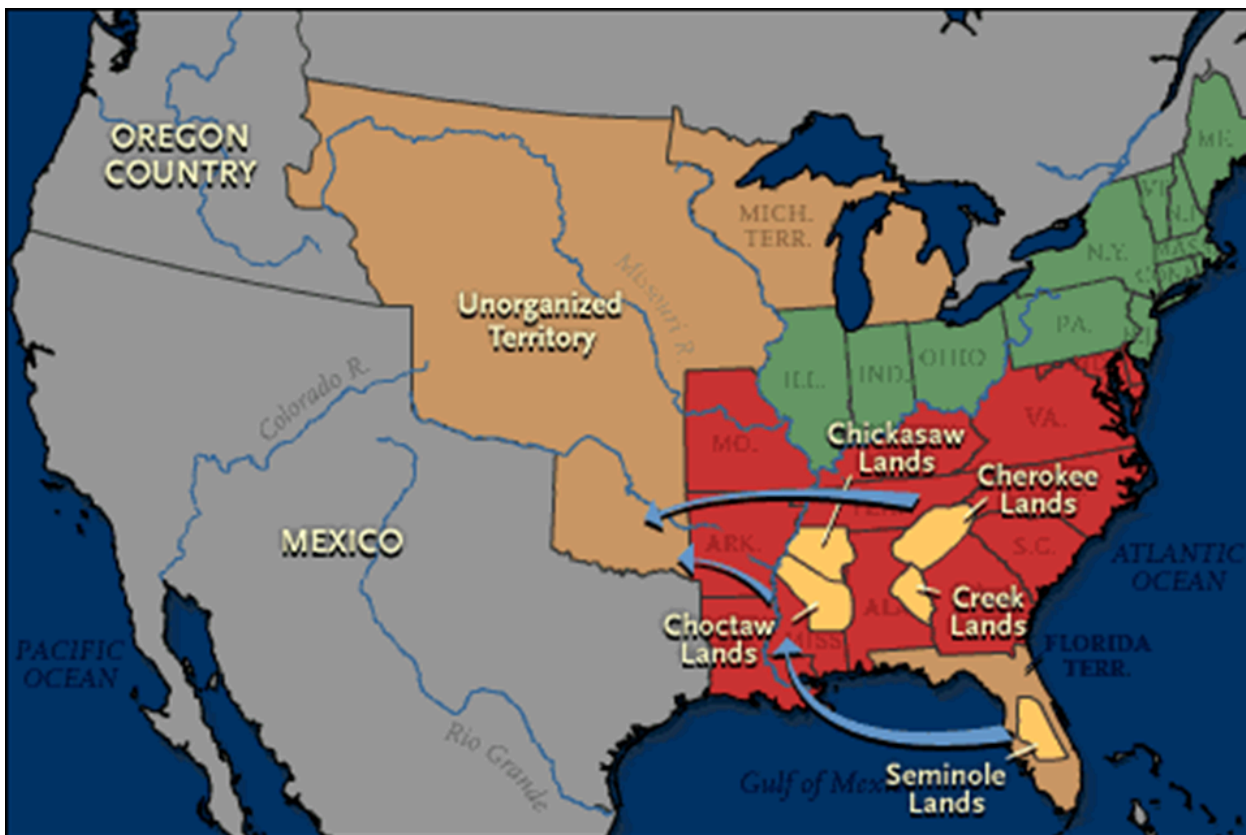


Secondary Source: 3

At the beginning of the 1830s, nearly 125,000 Native Americans lived on millions of acres of land in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida--land their ancestors had occupied and cultivated for generations. By the end of the decade, very few natives remained anywhere in the southeastern United States. Working on behalf of white settlers who wanted to grow cotton on the Indians' land, the federal government forced them to leave their homelands and walk thousands of miles to a specially designated "Indian territory" across the Mississippi River. This difficult and sometimes deadly journey is known as the Trail of Tears.

Histroy.com

Secondary Source: 4



Secondary Source: 5

Facts:

1. militia brutally rounds up 17,000 Native Americans
2. 800 miles – 6 months: boat, RR, foot
3. ¼ Cherokee die along the way

DONNER PARTY

Primary Source: C

"My father, with tears in his eyes, tried to smile as one friend after another grasped his hand in a last farewell. Mama was overcome with grief. At last we were all in the wagons. The drivers cracked their whips. The oxen moved slowly forward and the long journey had begun."

- Virginia Reed, daughter of James Reed

"We pray the God of mercy to deliver us from our present calamity."

- Patrick Breen

Primary Source: D

W! HO! FOR OREGON AND CALIFORNIA.

The company which left here last week for California, embraced 15 men, 8 women and 16 children. They had nine waggons. They were in good spirits, and we trust will safely reach their anticipated home.

A company have left Putnam county, consisting of 16 males and 7 females, for Oregon. John Robinson, one of the first settlers of Madison County, was one of their number.

A Chicago paper states that some forty persons will leave Rockford this spring for the same destination.

Notice of the Donner Party's departure, published in the April 23, 1846, Sangamo Journal

Primary Source: E

Secondary Source: 6



James F. Reed and his wife, Margaret W. Keyes Reed, seen in this photo taken in the 1850s, were survivors of the tragic Donner Party.

Secondary Source: 7

The Donner Party was a group of American pioneers organized by brothers George and Jacob Donner who set out for California in a wagon train from Springfield, Illinois. Delayed by a series of mishaps, they spent the winter of 1846–47 snowbound in the Sierra Nevada. Some of the emigrants resorted to cannibalism to survive, eating those who had succumbed to starvation and sickness. The journey west usually took between four and six months, but the Donner Party was slowed by following a new route called the Hastings Cutoff, which crossed Utah's Wasatch Mountains and Great Salt Lake Desert. The rugged terrain and difficulties later encountered while traveling along the Humboldt River, in present-day Nevada, resulted in the loss of many cattle and wagons and contributed to divisions within the group. By the beginning of November 1846 the group had reached the Sierra Nevada where they became trapped by an early, heavy snowfall near Truckee (now Donner) Lake, high in the mountains. Their food supplies ran low and in mid-December some of the group set out on foot to obtain help. Rescuers from Sacramento, California, attempted to reach the emigrants, but the first relief party did not arrive until the middle of February 1847, almost four months after the wagon train became trapped. Forty-eight of the 87 members of the party survived to reach Sacramento.

CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

Secondary Source: 8

The **California Gold Rush** (1848–1855) began on January 24, 1848, when [gold](#) was found by [James W. Marshall](#) at [Sutter's Mill](#) in [Coloma, California](#).^[1] The first to hear confirmed information of the Gold Rush were the people in [Oregon](#), the [Sandwich Islands](#) ([Hawaii](#)), and [Latin America](#), who were the first to start flocking to the state in late 1848. All told, the news of gold brought some 300,000 people to [California](#) from the rest of the [United States](#) and abroad.^[2] Of the 300,000, approximately half arrived by sea and half came from the east overland on the [California Trail](#) and the [Gila River](#) trail.

The gold-seekers, called "forty-niners" (as a reference to 1849), often faced substantial hardships on the trip. While most of the newly arrived were Americans, the [Gold Rush](#) attracted tens of thousands from [Latin America](#), [Europe](#), [Australia](#), and [Asia](#). At first, the gold nuggets could be picked up off the ground. Later, gold was recovered from streams and riverbeds using simple techniques, such as [panning](#). More sophisticated methods were developed and later adopted elsewhere. At its peak, technological advances reached a point where significant financing was required, increasing the proportion of gold companies to individual miners. Gold worth tens of billions of today's [dollars](#) was recovered, which led to great wealth for a few. However, many returned home with little more than what they had started with.

The effects of the Gold Rush were substantial. [San Francisco](#) grew from a small settlement of about 200 residents in 1846 to a [boomtown](#) of about 36,000 by 1852. Roads, churches, schools and other towns were built throughout California. In 1849 a state constitution was written, a governor and legislature chosen and California became a [state](#) in 1850 as part of the [Compromise of 1850](#).

New methods of transportation developed as [steamships](#) came into regular service. By 1869 [railroads](#) were built across the country from California to the eastern United States. Agriculture and ranching expanded throughout the state to meet

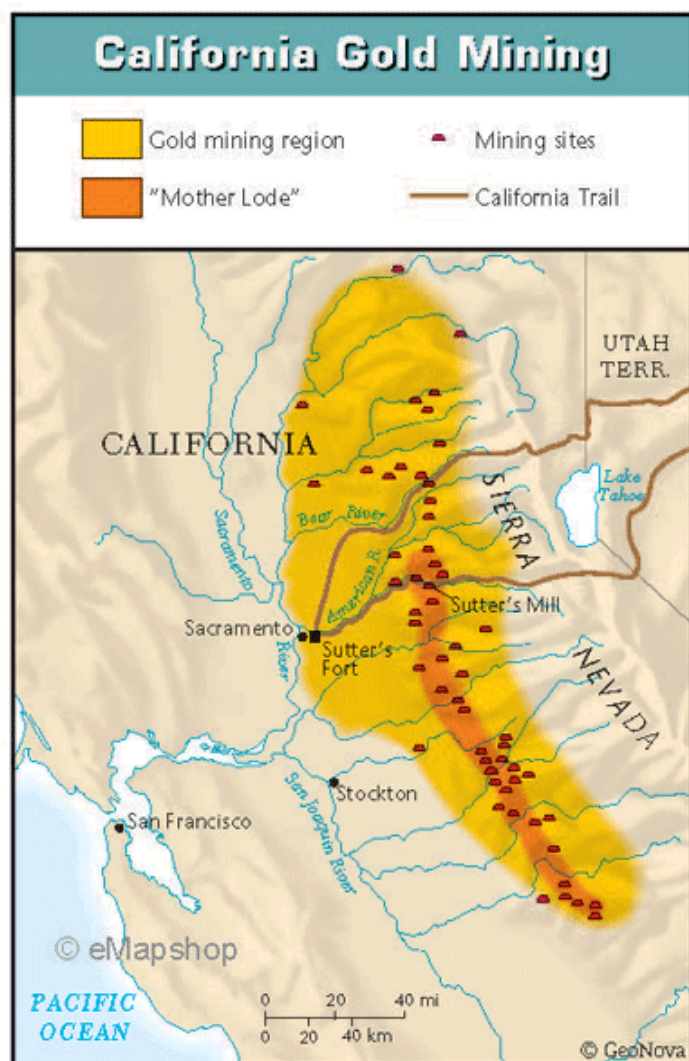
the needs of the settlers. At the beginning of the Gold Rush, there was no law regarding property rights in the goldfields and a system of "staking claims" was developed. The Gold Rush also resulted in attacks on [Native Americans](#), who were forcibly removed from their lands. An estimated 100,000 California Indians died between 1848 and 1868, and some 4,500 of them were murdered.^[3] Gold mining also caused environmental harm to rivers and lakes.

- Wikipedia

Primary Source: F



Secondary Source: 9



Secondary Source: 10

Statistics of the California Gold Rush:

Non-Indian population of California in 1846: less than 8,000

Non-Indian population of California in 1850: 92,597

Non-Indian population of California in 1860: 379,994

Chinese population of California in 1848: 7

Chinese population of California in 1852: 11,794

1848 average daily earnings for California placer miners: \$20

Percentage of California's population that was male in 1850: 92

[illegible]

Primary Source: H

“Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River!”

- Samuel Brannan, running through the streets of San Francisco waving a bottle of gold dust in the air, 1848

“California presented to the people a new model for the American dream - one where the emphasis was on the ability to take risks, the willingness to gamble on the future.”

-Historian: H.W. Brand