

Trail of Tears Personal Accounts/Indian Removal

[Vocabulary](#) [Video of Annotation](#)

During the Trail of Tears, thousands of Cherokee died from disease, starvation, and harsh weather. They were forced to walk hundreds of miles to their new land in the West. Other Native Americans were also moved, with similar results.

The Choctaw were the first Indians sent to Indian Territory. The Mississippi legislature abolished the Choctaw government and then forced the Choctaw leaders to sign the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. This treaty gave more than 7.5 million acres of their land to the state. The Choctaw moved to Indian Territory during a disastrous winter trip. Federal officials in charge of the move did not provide enough food or supplies to the Choctaw, most of whom were on foot. About one-fourth of the Choctaw died of cold, disease, or starvation.

News of the Choctaw's hardships caused other Indians to resist removal. When the Creek resisted in 1836, federal troops moved in and captured some 14,500 of them. They led the Creek, many in chains, to Indian Territory. One Creek woman remembered the trip being filled with "the awful silence that showed the heartaches and sorrow at being taken from the homes and even separation from loved ones." The Chickasaw, who lived in upper Mississippi, negotiated a treaty for better supplies on their trip to Indian Territory. Nevertheless, many Chickasaw lives were also lost during removal.

In the spring of 1838, U.S. troops began to remove all Cherokee to Indian Territory. A few were able to escape and hide in the mountains of North Carolina. After the Cherokee were removed, Georgia took their businesses, farms, and property.

The Cherokee's 800-mile forced march became known as the Trail of Tears. During the march, the Cherokee suffered from disease, hunger, and harsh weather. Almost one-fourth of the 18,000 Cherokee died on the march.

March 10, 1838

Beloved Martha, I have delayed writing to you so long.... If we Cherokees are to be driven to the west by the cruel hand of oppression to seek a new home in the west, it will be impossible.... It is thus all our rights are invaded."

Letter from Jenny, a Cherokee girl, just before her removal

*"Long time we travel on way to new land.
People feel bad when they leave Old Nation.
Women cry and make sad wails, Children cry and many men cry... but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on go towards West.
Many days pass and people die very much."*

—Recollections of a survivor of the Trail of Tears