

Section Preview

As you read, look for:

- Sequoyah and his syllabary,
- the relationship among the settlers, the Cherokee, and the Creek,
- the events leading up to the removal of the Cherokee and the Creek from Georgia, and
- **vocabulary terms:** syllabary, Oconee War, Treaty of New York, Red Sticks, White Sticks, Treaty of Indian Springs, litigation, emigrate, and Trail of Tears.

Below and opposite page above: The Chief Vann House, exterior and interior, with a typical 18th century Cherokee log house on left.

Native Americans in Georgia

Native Americans had hunted in Georgia's forests and fished its streams and rivers for ten thousand years. The fifty-five years from 1783 to 1838 were one of the darkest periods in the history of these Native Americans. During this period, they were forced out of their traditional lands and moved to unknown territories.

The Cherokee

In 1800, most Native Americans in Georgia still made their living in the traditional ways—by hunting or farming. Some, however, were quick to learn from white settlers. The Cherokee, in particular, were considered to be the most advanced of the tribes. A few Cherokee, like Chief James Vann, lived in large houses. Located on the outskirts of Chatsworth, Vann's classic two-story brick mansion has been called the "Showcase of the Cherokee Nation." In addition to the main house, the homestead contained forty-two cabins, six barns, five smokehouses, a gristmill, a blacksmith, a foundry, a trading post, and a still. Vann believed that Christianity meant progress for the



Cherokee, and he brought in Moravian missionaries to teach his children and his people.

Sequoyah's Syllabary

One of the most important contributions to the advancement of Cherokee culture was made by George Gist, who was born around 1760. Gist's father was a Virginia scout and soldier, and his mother was a Cherokee princess. Gist's Indian name was Sequoyah, which meant "lonely lame one." Sequoyah was crippled, from either a childhood illness or a hunting accident, so he could no longer hunt or farm. Instead, he learned to work with silver. He also became a blacksmith.

Sequoyah was very interested in the white man's "talking leaves," pieces of paper with marks on them. He noticed that the papers could be carried many miles, and the people who used them could understand the meaning of the various marks. In 1809, Sequoyah began to make a syllabary. Unlike an alphabet of letters, a **syllabary** is a group of symbols that stand for whole syllables.

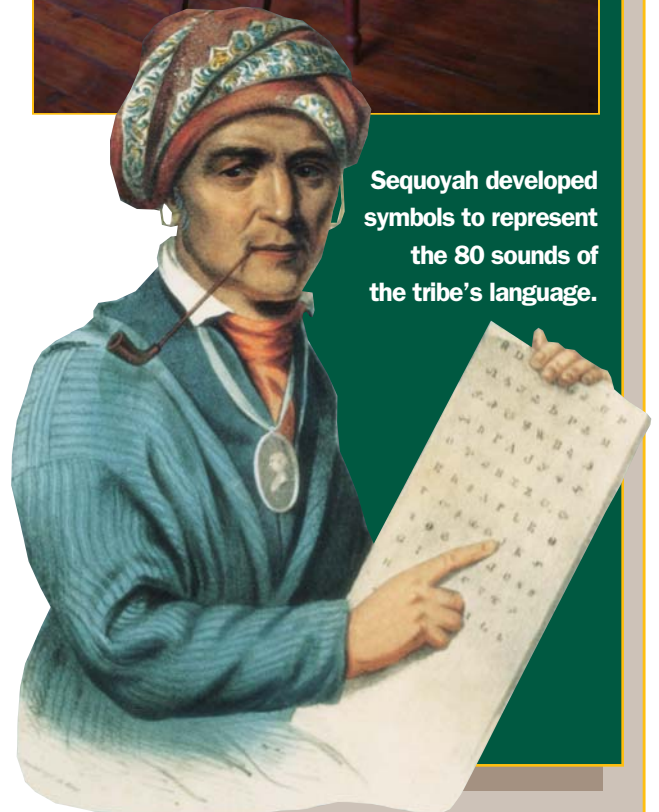
It took twelve years for Sequoyah to decide on the eighty-five symbols. According to legend, Sequoyah's wife, fearing that the white government would not like what he was doing, once burned all his work. Sequoyah spent more than a year reconstructing the syllabary, so dedicated was he to the task.

When he completed it, members of the tribal council at first made fun of the syllabary. However, after Sequoyah was able to teach his daughter and some young chiefs to write and understand the symbols within a few days, the council members changed their minds. They sent Sequoyah all over the territory to teach his method to other Cherokee. In about six months, most of the tribes could write and read the new symbols. As a result, the Cherokee were the first Indians to have their language in written form. Equally important, it demonstrated that Indians could communicate with each other without using the language of the white settlers.

People in the United States and Europe praised Sequoyah for his work. The Cherokee gave him a medal that he wore as long as he lived. The Cherokee Nation also rewarded him with a gift of about \$500 a year for life. This gift, by the way, is the first record of a literary prize in America.

The Cherokee Phoenix

By 1828, Elias Boudinot, another Indian leader, became the editor of the first Indian newspaper. The paper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, took its name from a legendary bird that burned itself and then rose from the ashes of the fire. The newspaper was printed in Cherokee and English. Perhaps its greatest



Sequoyah developed symbols to represent the 80 sounds of the tribe's language.



Top and above: This building is a reconstruction of the Cherokee Supreme Court house built in New Echota in 1829. The Cherokee Supreme Court heard 246 cases from 1823 to 1835.

achievement was that it was able to draw together the various tribes of the Cherokee Nation. The tribes were scattered in such far-flung places as Virginia, North Carolina, northeast Alabama, and Georgia. The newspaper made it possible to spread news among all of them.

Cherokee Capital Moves to New Echota

At one time, the capital of the Cherokee Nation was wherever the principal chief lived. In 1715, for example, it was in Stephens County, Georgia. At other times, the capital was in Tennessee or South Carolina. However, by 1825, the Cherokee had established a permanent capital at New Echota, near the present-day city of Calhoun.

New Echota was a thriving, bustling community. One of the twenty Cherokee government buildings in it was a print shop where the *Cherokee Phoenix* and textbooks for Indian schools were published and distributed. Other buildings included a Cherokee national library and a courthouse.

The Cherokee adopted a constitution similar to that of the United States. Their government also was organized along the lines of that of the United States and consisted of three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The principal chief and second chief were elected to their offices. Each October, Cherokee leaders, including those in the bicameral legislature and the superior court, met in New Echota to deal with tribal matters.

Did You Know?

By **1830**, over **90 percent** of the **Cherokee** could read and write.

The Creek

Tensions between the Creek and the settlers had grown during the late 1700s as pioneers kept pushing into Creek lands along the Oconee River. Tribes led by Chief Alexander McGillivray sent warriors against some of the pioneer settlements. The Indians burned houses, stole horses and cattle, and killed or captured over two hundred settlers. Georgia settlers got some men together and told them to kill on sight any Creek who were not members of friendly tribes. Although it was not quite a full-scale conflict, these skirmishes and attacks became known as the **Oconee War**.

Fighting between the settlers and the Creek went on for several years. In 1790, President Washington called Chief McGillivray to New York. The chief went, accompanied by twenty-three men of his tribe. President Washington and the chief talked and exchanged presents. McGillivray then signed the **Treaty of New York**, by which the Creek gave up all their land east of the Oconee River. They also promised to honor an earlier treaty in which they gave up lands through the Currahee Mountains to Tugaloo. In return, the United States government promised that no whites would go into land west of the boundary. The government also agreed to help the Creek start farms by giving them tools and farm animals.

When word of the treaty reached Georgians, they were very angry because it appeared to them that the federal government had taken the side of the Creek. Over the next few years, neither the Creek nor the Georgians paid any attention to the treaty. At one point, Governor Edward Telfair was ready to raise an army of 5,000 men to make war against the Creek, but President Washington talked him out of it. However, there were bad feelings between the tribes and the whites until both groups accepted other treaties. This “peace” lasted from 1797 until 1812.

It was during this time that the Yazoo land fraud took place. When the federal government stepped in and had Georgia give up all land west of the Chattahoochee River, it also promised to move the Native Americans out of the state. The federal government did little to carry out this promise. Then, in 1812, the United States was again at war.

The Creek War

Tecumseh, a Shawnee leader, tried to unite all Native Americans to fight for their land. The tribes in the Southeast split over this issue. Those who wanted war were called **Red Sticks**, and those who wanted peace were known as **White Sticks**.

During the War of 1812, many of the Red Stick Creek fought alongside the British. As you read earlier, the war ended with no real winner. However, something happened in 1813 that changed the future of the Creek Nation. On August 30, one thousand Red Sticks attacked Fort Mims in present-day



Top: In 1811, Tecumseh, a Shawnee, visited the Creek to recruit warriors and gain support for his plan. **Above:** Menawa was a leader of the Red Stick Creek. He led the party that killed Chief William McIntosh.



Above: Chief William McIntosh strongly believed that the Creek should sell their land to the government and take the money and land promised in the West. For that reason, he signed the Treaty of Indian Springs.

Alabama. About four hundred people, including women and children, died at the hands of the Red Sticks. Cries of “Remember Fort Mims” were heard all over the country.

Troops from Georgia, Tennessee, and the new Mississippi Territory began attacks in Creek territory. Many battles were fought during the next year, but the Creek were no match for the United States Army. The last battle of the Creek War began on March 27, 1814, at Horseshoe Bend, along the Tallapoosa River in Alabama. Over one thousand Red Sticks met two thousand troops led by General Andrew Jackson. With the help of White Stick Creek and Cherokee, Jackson defeated the Red Stick Creek.

In the following months, the Creek surrendered to Jackson and gave most of their lands to the United States government. Georgians were pleased with this outcome because it meant that the Creek owned no more land in southern Georgia.

Murder of Chief William McIntosh

As more and more of their land was ceded to the government, Creek tribes became separated from each other. There was little chance for them to talk together or to trade with each other. The strong Creek confederacy, which had united the tribes before the arrival of the settlers, was no

more. Groups of Creek sometimes signed treaties without asking the tribes to agree. This practice led to the death of one well-known Creek leader.

By February 12, 1825, Creek Chief William McIntosh and his first cousin, Georgia Governor George Troup, had worked out the terms of the **Treaty of Indian Springs** in Butts County, Georgia. The United States paid McIntosh and a large group of Lower Creek chiefs \$200,000 to cede (give up) the last Creek lands in Georgia to the federal government. The government, in turn, gave the use of that land to Georgia.

Groups of Creek who disagreed with the treaty met secretly to decide how to punish McIntosh. They agreed that, in accordance with Creek law, he should die. They sent a rival chief, Menawa, to execute him. According to reports, somewhere between 170 and 400 Creek marched single file to McIntosh’s home in Butts County. After two days, they were a mile from McIntosh’s house. Many reports say the Creek got close enough to hear

Did You Know?

Congress allocated \$500,000 to enforce the provisions of the Indian Removal Act.

McIntosh and his son-in-law, Samuel Hawkins, talking. McIntosh did not know they were there.

At daybreak, the Creek set fire to the McIntosh home. They allowed the women and children to leave before they exchanged gunfire with the chief they had come to kill. Smoke and his wounds stopped McIntosh from fighting. The Creek dragged him from the house and stabbed him in the chest. McIntosh's scalp was taken as a warning to others who might want to give Creek land to white men.

The Indian Removal

In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States. Jackson had been friendly to the Native Americans, especially the Cherokee, when he needed their help to fight the Red Sticks. However, he was wise enough politically to know that white voters wanted the Native Americans removed from the southern states.

In 1830, Congress passed a bill, the Indian Removal Act, that called for all Native Americans to be moved to the western territories. There were strong feelings on both sides, and the bill passed by only fourteen votes. After Jackson signed the bill into law, however, there was no question about what would happen to the Southeast tribes.

Removal of the Creek

The Choctaw, who lived in the newly created states of Alabama and Mississippi, were the first of the tribes to be moved. Hearing that hundreds of Choctaw died during the march to the west, the Creek refused to leave the lands of their fathers. When they did this, Alabama took away all their legal rights. The Creek could not defend themselves against whites who moved in and took their lands.

The Creek in Georgia, who no longer had hunting lands, were hungry. Some reports say they stood in the streets of Columbus and begged for food. To add to their hardships, smallpox broke out among the tribes in 1831, and many died. In 1832, the Creek signed the Treaty of Washington, by which they ceded to the federal government the 5 million acres of land they still owned. In return, the government agreed to set aside 2 million acres on which the Creek would live and farm. The government would protect Creek life and property from whites. Creek could own land, but only after living on it for five years. Then they could choose to sell the land and move west. The decision to stay on reserved land or to move to the western territory was up to each individual.



Above: The Indian Removal Act was passed during the presidency of Andrew Jackson. Jackson believed that the Native Americans were children in need of guidance. He believed their removal would be beneficial.

Below: The discovery of gold in Dahlonega ended any hope of the Cherokee keeping their lands. Once the news spread, thousands swarmed onto Cherokee lands to make their fortune.

Once signed, the treaty was broken almost at once. Creek homes were burned, items were stolen from their farms, and Indians were killed. By 1835, some Creek gave up and began the trip west. However, in 1836, bands of Lower Creek attacked whites between Tuskegee, Alabama, and Columbus, Georgia. Afraid of another Indian war, the U.S. Army captured over one thousand Creek and took them to the Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). During the next two years, a few Creek escaped and a few were made slaves, but the federal government forced thousands of them to move west.

Toward the end of the Creek removal in Georgia and Alabama, the United States became involved in another Indian war in Florida. They asked seven hundred Creek to help them fight the Seminole. After winning the war, the Creek returned to their families, who had been gathered in camps. Then the whole group, including those who had just fought with the army, was moved to the west.

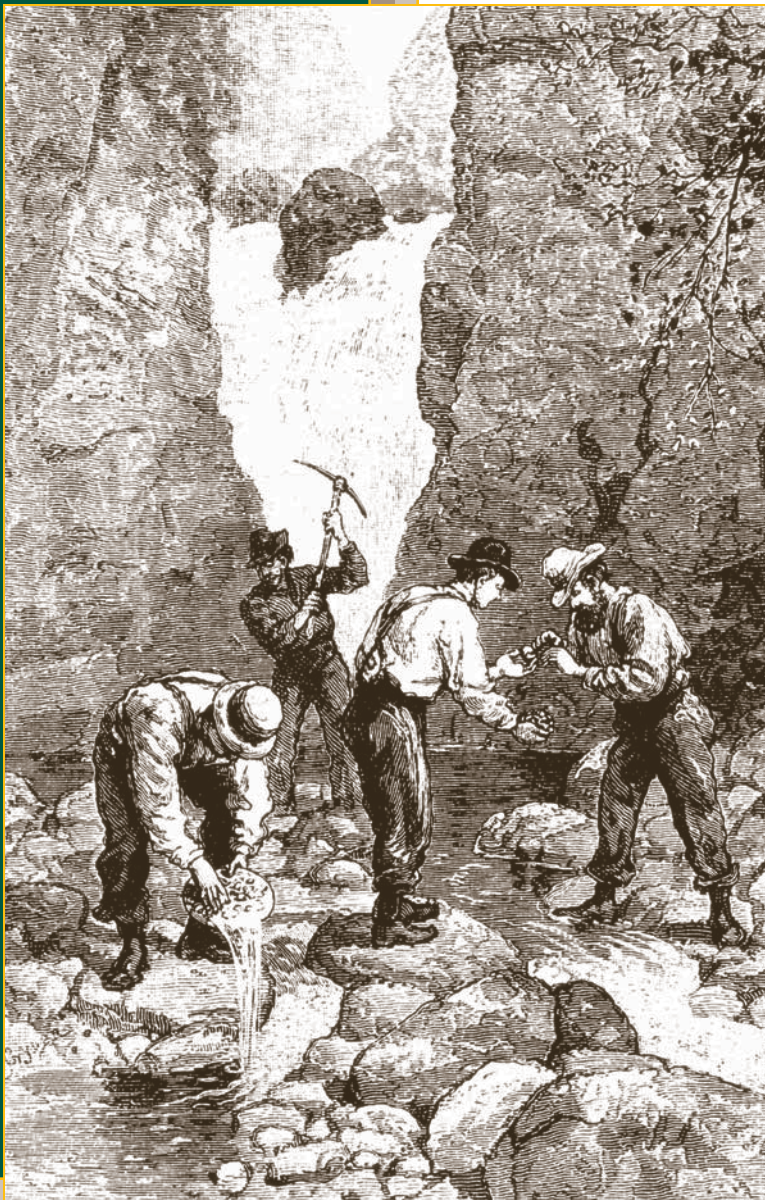
Removal of the Cherokee

At the same time that the Creek were being moved, Georgia was also making plans to get rid of the Cherokee. Georgians wanted to homestead Cherokee land and also to mine the gold that had been found on Cherokee land.

Gold in Dahlonega

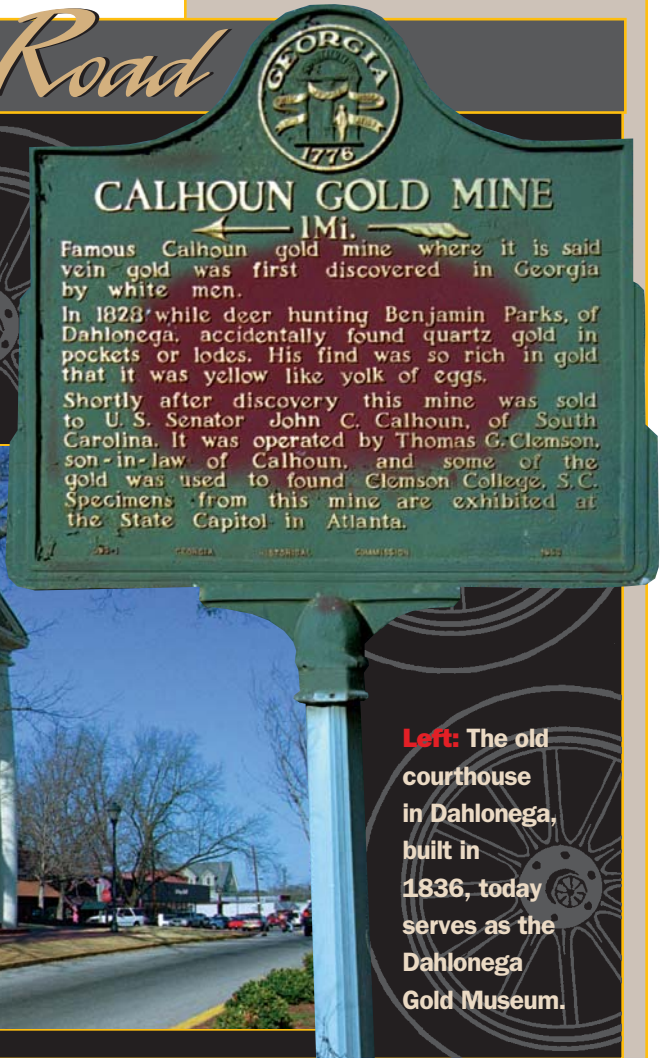
Gold was discovered in Dahlonega in the summer of 1829. In a matter of months, gold fever swept through the North Georgia mountain region. Although the Cherokee knew there was gold in the hills, the person given credit for the discovery was a farmer named Benjamin Parks. Parks found the valuable yellow metal while deer hunting in what was then Habersham (now White) County. Auraria, in nearby Lumpkin County, became the first gold mining center in the United States. Over ten thousand miners with gold pans, picks, and shovels moved onto Cherokee land.

The Georgia legislature passed a law that placed part of the Cherokee land under state control. It declared Cherokee laws null and void and would not let the Cherokee speak against white men in a court of law. This meant any white person could hurt or even kill a Cherokee without much fear of punishment. A second law, passed on December 19, 1829, refused the Cherokee any right to



By the Side of the Road

The discovery of gold in northern Georgia in what was then Cherokee territory led to the eventual exodus of the Cherokee and the settlement of the area by white settlers. Most of the original gold mines have long since disappeared, but the most famous mine was the Calhoun mine. You can visit the site of the Calhoun Gold Mine today on U.S. Route 19 and GA 60 just outside Dahlonega.

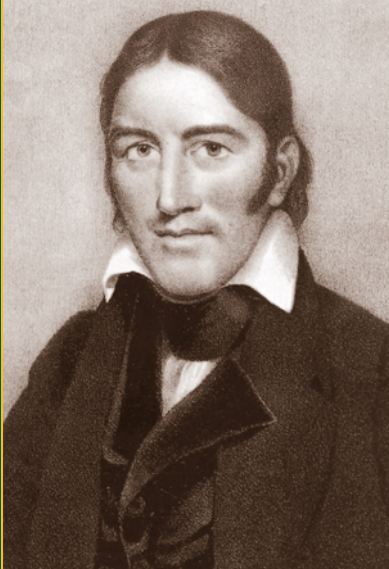


Left: The old courthouse in Dahlonega, built in 1836, today serves as the Dahlonega Gold Museum.

gold mined in the Dahlonega area. While the miners searched the mountains and streams for “a spot that showed good color,” the Cherokee were losing their homes, lands, and legal rights.

The Indians' Last Hope

Most Georgians did not care what happened to the Indians, but a group of white missionaries living in Cherokee territory did. To remove the missionaries, the Georgia legislature passed a law on December 22, 1830, which said a white person could not live on Cherokee land without taking an oath of allegiance to the governor. Eleven people, including the Reverend Samuel Worcester, postmaster at New Echota, refused to sign the oath and were jailed in March 1831. They were set free but arrested again in July. This time they were chained and made to walk from the North Georgia mountains to Lawrenceville. At their trial in September, the jury took only fifteen minutes to return a verdict of guilty. Gwinnett County Judge Augustin Clayton sentenced the group to four years at the state penitentiary in Milledgeville. Governor George Gilmer agreed to pardon anyone who would take an oath



Top: Cherokee Chief John Ross took a petition to Congress with 15,000 signatures, 90 percent of all Cherokee, to protest the Indian removal. **Above:** Davy Crockett lost his seat in Congress for opposing Jackson's views on the Indian removal.

of loyalty to the state, and all but two agreed. Missionaries Worchester and Elizur Butler took their cases to the U.S. Supreme Court. Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the decision of the Lawrenceville court could not stand because Cherokee territory was not subject to state law.

The Cherokee thought the ruling meant they could keep their land and government. Chief Justice Marshall ordered Butler and Worchester set free, but Judge Clayton refused. Georgia's newly elected governor, Wilson Lumpkin, would not take a stand against the judge. Even President Andrew Jackson refused to honor the Supreme Court order. Jackson thought that state governments should be in charge of Indian territories. He reportedly said, "John Marshall has rendered his 'decision'; now let him enforce it."

Cherokee lands were divided into lots of 40 and 160 acres. In 1832, the government held a state lottery to give the Cherokee lands to white men. Even then, the

Cherokee refused to leave their home.

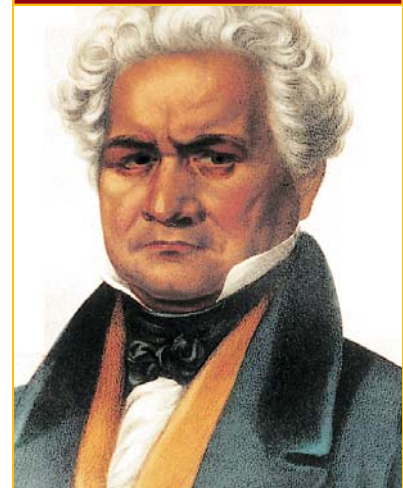
On January 9, 1833, Worchester and Butler gave up and told Governor Lumpkin that they would "abandon litigation." (**Litigation** is a legal court action.) The governor pardoned them and then said the two missionaries must leave the state and never return.

More and more, the Cherokee were run off their lands, whipped, and even killed. Chief John Ross made several trips to Washington to ask Congress for help. He wanted the Cherokee protected and the terms of past treaties honored. No help was given. Time was running out for the Cherokee Nation.

In December 1835, the Cherokee were told to come to their capital, New Echota. There they were to sign a treaty giving up all Cherokee land that remained in the Southeast. Any member of the tribe who did not come was considered to have agreed with the treaty. Three to five hundred Cherokee out of about seventeen thousand were at the meeting.

Did You Know?

Six months after their arrival in Indian Territory, **Major Ridge** (below), **John Ridge**, and **Elias Boudinot**, the editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, were **killed** for breaking a **tribal law** forbidding individual Cherokee from **signing away land rights** without the **permission of the entire tribe**.





Cherokee trader Major Ridge, his son John, and a small number of others agreed to sign the government's treaty. The treaty said the Cherokee would move west, and Georgia would give them a little money and food for the trip.

The Trail of Tears

After the treaty was signed, some national leaders like Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Davy Crockett tried to get the United States government to give the Cherokee the rights due them. No one listened. By May 1838, about two thousand Cherokee had gone. General Winfield Scott was ordered to remove the fifteen thousand or more Cherokee who refused to leave their home.

In May 1838, Scott and nearly seven thousand troops arrived in New Echota. The troops first built stockades to house the Cherokee. Then they went into homes and community buildings and forcibly moved the Cherokee to the stockades. Hundreds of men, women, and children died of cholera, dysentery, and fever while in the stockades. During the summer of 1838,



Map 29 The Trail of Tears

Map Skill: Through which states did the Cherokee have to travel to reach their new home?



Above: This mural in the Oklahoma State Museum of History shows the family and servants of Chief John Ross leaving on the Trail of Tears.

the army loaded several thousand Cherokee onto crowded boats and sent them on the Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas rivers to their new homes. The boats were dirty, and the food the government gave them was often not fit to eat. By the time these Indians arrived in Indian Territory, nearly one-third of the group had died.

A few Cherokee escaped and hid in the North Carolina mountains. The rest began a 700-800 mile walk to Indian Territory. It took some people six months to make the trip. Others were there in less time. However, winter winds, snow, and too little food led to the deaths of thousands of Cherokee. The exact number of how many were moved is not known, but about four thousand of this group died while they were in prison before they left or during the march west.

President Martin Van Buren, in his December 1838 address to Congress, said, “the measures of the Removal have had the happiest effect . . . the Cherokees have **emigrated** (moved out) without apparent reluctance.” Today, we can only imagine the fear, despair, and hurt felt by those who had to leave the land of the “principal people.” The Cherokee called the move to Indian Territory “ANuna-da-ut- sun’y,” which means “the trail where they cried.” To this day, the move is sadly remembered as the **Trail of Tears**.

It's Your Turn

1. What was Sequoyah's great contribution to the Cherokee?
2. Where was the Cherokee capital located in 1825?
3. Who were the Red Sticks?
4. What happened in Dahlonega in 1829?
5. Who was Samuel Worcester?

Between the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Trail of Tears, more than 100,000 Native Americans were displaced from 200 million acres of land that had been theirs for hundreds of years.

A Final Note

Before President John Adams fell asleep on his second night in the White House, he entered his thoughts into a journal. The November 2, 1800, entry reads, "I pray to Heaven to bestow the best Blessings on this House and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule beneath this roof." In your opinion, has Adams's hope been realized?

Chapter Summary

- In the period after the Revolutionary War, the U.S. Constitution was written, a new government established, and a Bill of Rights adopted. Georgia revised its state constitution.
- A fever for land gripped the people of Georgia and other parts of the country. Georgia ceded its western land to the federal government.
- The Louisiana Purchase doubled the land area of the new nation. Inventions such as the cotton gin and the mechanical reaper changed farming.
- At the end of the 1700s, life in Georgia was sharply different depending on whether one lived in the cities and towns or on the frontier.
- The United States fought Great Britain in the War of 1812.
- Although most Indians still followed traditional ways, some had made great advances. The Cherokee were especially quick to adopt the ways of the whites.
- Sequoyah invented a syllabary that enabled the Cherokee to communicate in writing.
- The Cherokee established a permanent capital at New Echota.
- The Treaty of New York ended the Oconee War and divided the Creek Nation.
- Greed for land and gold fever led to the Indian removal.
- U.S. treaties with the Indians were broken almost as soon as they were made.
- The Creek were forced west, and the Cherokee were gathered together and sent on their Trail of Tears to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma).



Above: The outdoor drama "Unto These Hills" tells the story of the estimated 1,100 Cherokee who managed to escape into the mountains of western North Carolina. The escapees and others known as the Qualla Indians formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee, which exists to this day.