



[Trail of Tears \[1942\]](#)

The Trail of Tears

The Investigative Question

How did the Trail of Tears impact those who participated in it?

Early Policies Towards American Indians



Unus Americanus ex Virginia. Aetat 23

- Before the Indian Removal Act, white settlers had been trying to deal with the Indian “problem” for a while.
- Many believed that American Indians could be “civilized.”
- If they became civilized, they could join with American society.
- Several tribes embraced this idea:
 - Cherokee
 - Creeks
 - Chickasaw

Adopting American Culture: The Cherokee

- The Cherokee are one of the more well known tribes that embraced Western culture.
- Cherokee adopted American architecture and clothing.
- Many converted to Christianity.



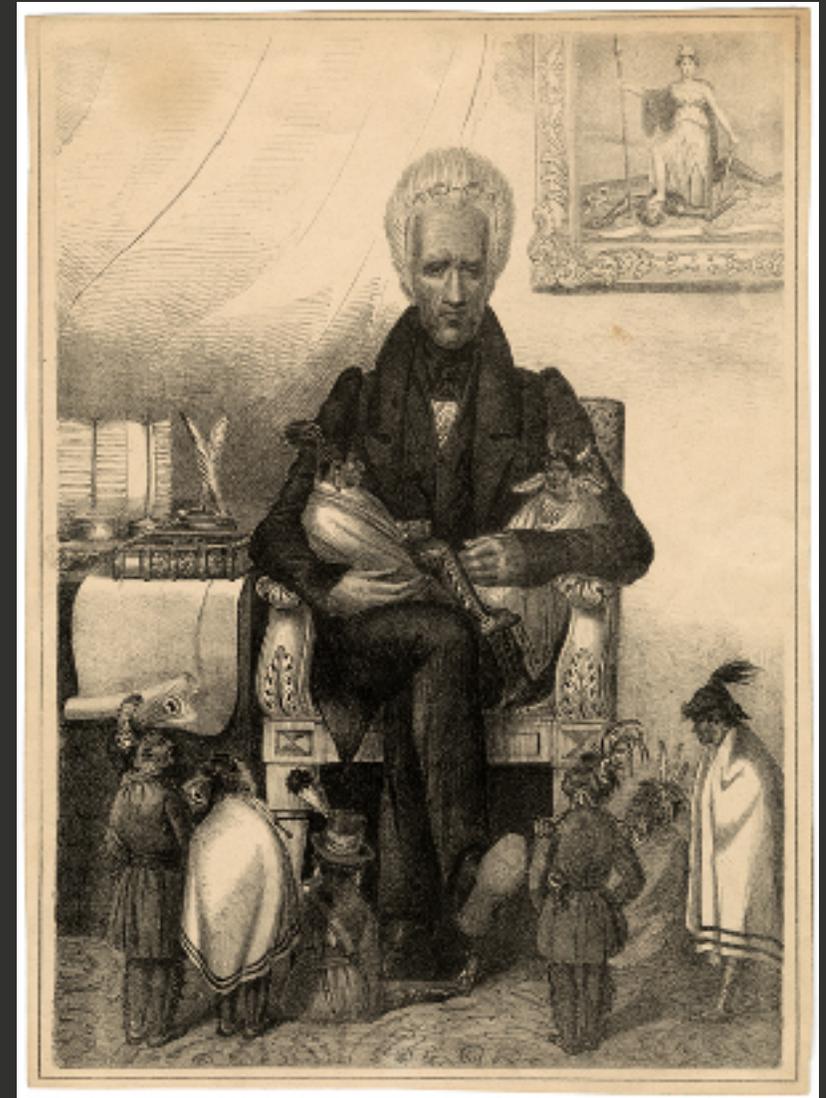
- They developed an alphabet so they could write in their own language.
- They even published their own newspaper, *Cherokee Phoenix*.
- The Cherokee hoped that by taking all these steps, they would be allowed to live in peace.

The Beginning

- **The origin of the Trail of Tears can be found when white settlers realized the value of the land the Cherokee were living on.**
- **Cherokee land possessed gold and prime spots to plant cotton.**
- **White settlers began stealing livestock, burning Cherokee houses, taking land by force--anything to drive the Cherokee away.**
- **The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that these actions were illegal.**
- **However, there was no one to enforce the Court's decision.**

Indian Removal Act

- Andrew Jackson favored Indian removal as an answer to the Indian “problem.”
- Jackson had partly made his name fighting the Creek Indians.
- The Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830.
- Passing this act allowed the U.S. government to exchange American Indian land in the East for land west of the Mississippi.
- Although the law could not force American Indians off their property, this frequently happened.



[Andrew Jackson as The Great Father \[ca. 1835\]](#)

Illegitimate Treaty

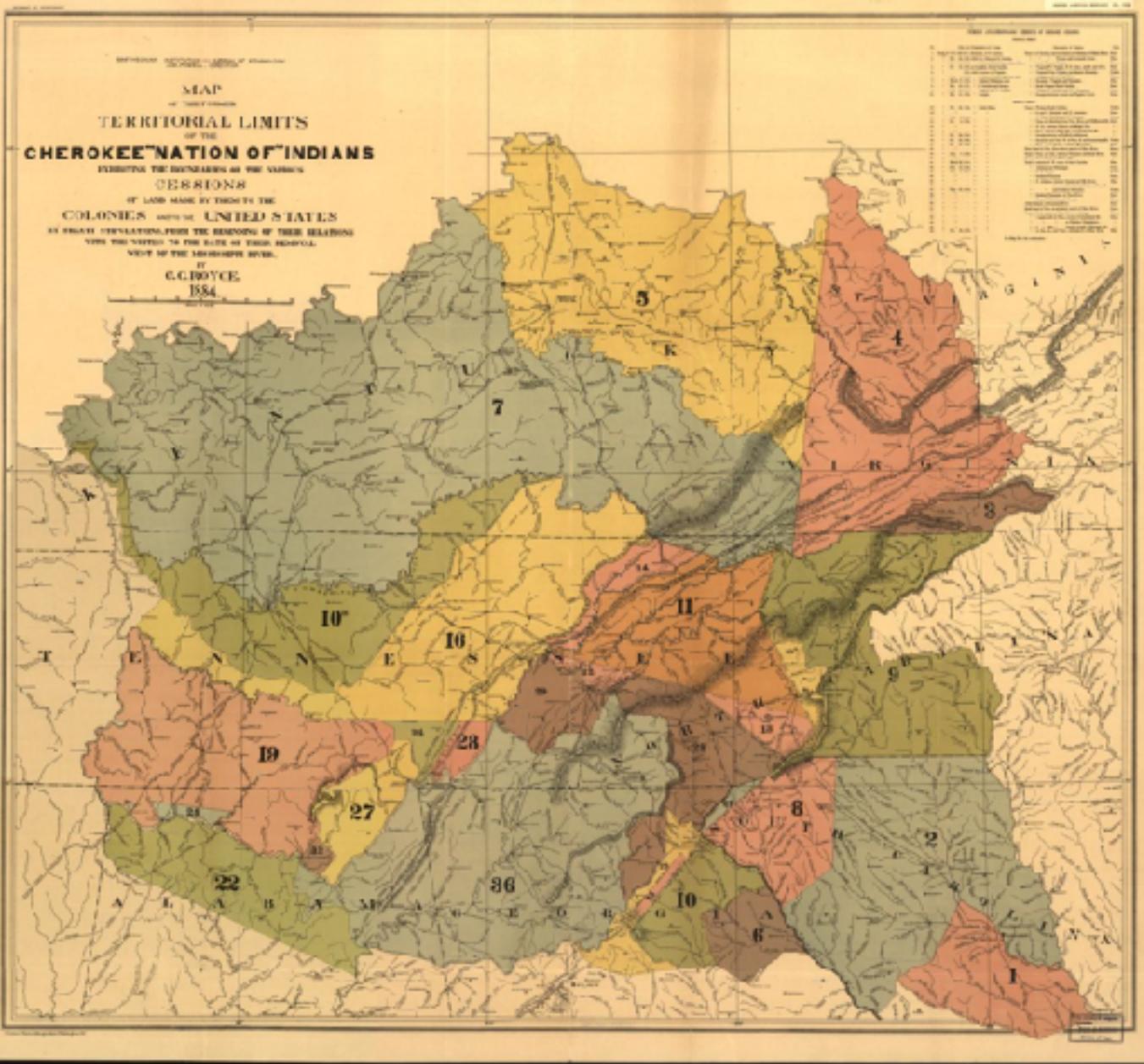
- In 1835, self-appointed representatives from the Cherokee nation signed the Treaty of New Echota.
- This treaty traded all Cherokee lands for \$5 million and land west of the Mississippi. The U.S. was required to help with relocation.
- The Cherokee people did not feel that this treaty represented their wishes.
- There was an anti-treaty petition submitted to Congress with 16,000 Cherokee names listed.
- This petition was ignored. Removal was a done deal.

The Trail of Tears

- **By 1838, only a few Cherokee had left their lands.**
- **President Martin van Buren sent soldiers to expedite the process.**
- **Cherokee were forced from their homes at bayonet point and some even in stockades.**
- **A forced march of over 1,200 miles began.**
- **An estimated 4,000 Cherokee died during this march as a result of exposure and disease.**

The Aftermath

- **The displaced American Indians would have to adapt to a new environment.**
- **There were already established tribes in the West and as a result, displaced American Indian settlements came under attack.**
- **The U.S. promised the American Indians that their new land would be safe from further encroachment.**
- **Despite this promise, by 1907, much of the land promised to the American Indians was back in government hands. The removal process was complete.**



Map of the former territorial limits of the Cherokee "Nation of" Indians ; Map showing the territory originally assigned Cherokee "Nation of" Indians.

