

# Cherokee Heritage

## Lesson 1: The Trail of Tears

In Georgia, resentment of the Cherokee people had been building for some time, and it reached a pinnacle following the discovery of gold in northern Georgia. Ultimately, the U.S. government decided it was time for the Cherokees to be removed, leaving behind their farms, their land and their homes.

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson authorized the Indian Removal Act. As president, his actions sanctioned an attitude that had persisted for many years among many white immigrants; however, Senators Daniel Webster and Henry Clay spoke out against removal. The Reverend Samuel Worcester, a missionary to the Cherokees, challenged Georgia's

attempt to extinguish Indian title to land in the state, actually winning his case before the Supreme Court.

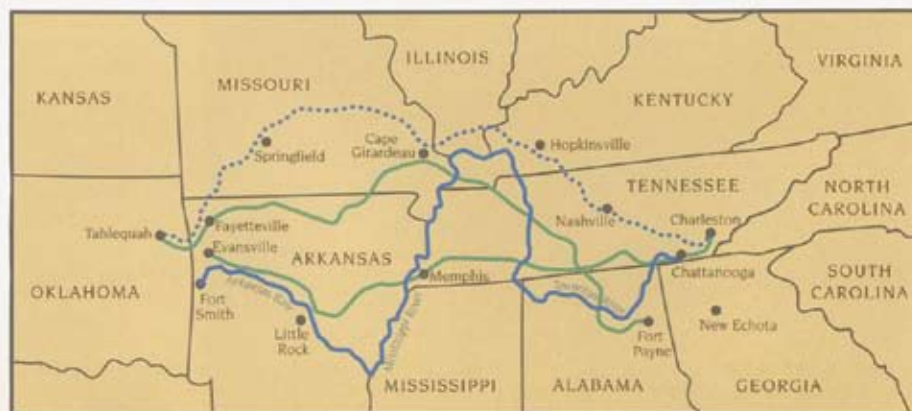
Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia, 1831 and Worcester vs. Georgia, 1832 are considered the two most influential legal decisions in Indian law. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled for Georgia in the 1831 case, but in Worcester vs. Georgia, 1832, the court affirmed Cherokee sovereignty. However, President Jackson arrogantly defied the decision of the court and ordered the removal, an act that established the U.S. government's precedent for the future removal of many Native Americans from their ancestral homelands.

The U.S. government also used the Treaty of New Echota

in 1835 as justification for removal. The treaty, signed by about 100 Cherokees known as the Treaty Party, relinquished all lands east of the Mississippi River in exchange for land in Indian Territory and the promise of money, livestock, various provisions, tools and other benefits.

Opposition to the removal was led by Chief John Ross. The Ross party and most Cherokees opposed the New Echota Treaty, but Georgia and the U.S. government prevailed and used it as justification to force almost 17,000 Cherokees from their southeastern homeland.

Under orders from President Jackson, the U.S. Army began enforcement of the Removal Act. Cherokees were rounded up in the summer of 1838 and loaded onto boats that traveled the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers into Indian Territory. Many were held in prison camps while awaiting their fate.



Trail of Tears National Historic Trail: .....Land Route — Water Route — Other Major Routes

An estimated 4,000 Cherokees died from hunger, exposure and disease. The journey became a cultural memory as the “trail where they cried” for the Cherokees and other removed tribes. Today, it is widely remembered by the general public as the “Trail of Tears.”

Source: National Park Service

Look for lesson 2 on Wednesday, November 30.