

America: Pathways to the Present (2009) [Excerpt]
Chapter 3: “An Emerging New Nation”

“Indian Relocation” [sub heading] (p. 124)

In the 1820s, wealthy plantation owners were buying up much of the best cotton-farming land in the South. Large and small planters alike wanted to expand westward into Native American lands. The Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole peoples lived on about 100 million acres of fertile land in western parts of the Carolinas and in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

In 1830, Jackson encouraged Congress’s passage of the Indian Removal Act, which authorized him to give Native Americans land in parts of the Louisiana Purchase in exchange for lands taken from them in the East.

Jackson forcibly relocated about 100,000 members of the Five Tribes. For their 100 million acres of largely cultivated land, the Native Americans received about 32 million acres of prairie land in what is now Oklahoma.

In 1832, the Cherokees brought their case to the Supreme Court through a missionary from Vermont, Samuel Austin Worcester. In *Worcester v. Georgia*, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Georgia had no authority over Cherokee territory. Georgia, however, simply ignored the ruling, and Jackson backed the state. “John Marshall has made his decision. Now let him enforce it!” Jackson is said to have declared. Of course, the Court had no power to enforce its decisions. Jackson claimed that his Indian removal policy would “place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters.”

The United States Army rounded up more than 15,000 Cherokees. In a nightmare journey that the Cherokees called *The Trail of Tears*, (begin p. 125) men, women, and children, most on foot, began a 116-day forced march westward. One out of every four Cherokees died of cold or disease on the journey.