

We Shall Remain: Trail of Tears

Video Notes

Day 1:

The way that Native Americans were treated by the United States could be considered *ethnic cleansing*.

Cherokee had always had a **constant threat from other tribes**; Americans started adding to their problems.

By 1805 Cherokee had **lost ½ their land to Americans**. (20,000 down to 10,000 acres)

American's **policy of "civilization"** was intended to teach Native Americans to be more Anglo-American. Examples: Growing cash crops, lifestyle (eat, dress, speak), daily schedule.

Thomas Jefferson told Native Americans that they would be equal once they were assimilated into American culture.

John Ross' father was Scottish and mother was from the Bird Clan of Cherokee.

All **Cherokee land was owned commonly** by the tribe but **individuals could work the land**.

Major Ridge believed that it was **important for the Cherokee to understand how the American system worked** and the need to get involved with the U.S. Federal Government.

John Ridge **experienced discrimination when he married his wife in an area that was thought to be an enlightened and progressive region of America**. He never truly trusted the white man after this experience.

John Ross had become a successful trader in Cherokee territory.

The **relations between Americans and Cherokees were fraying** because the United States was not making land payments and encroaching on land.

Cherokee Nation was becoming surrounded by the United States because of **other tribes making treaties/selling off land**.

Major Ridge took John Ross under his guidance because Ross was familiar with American culture.

Major Ridge was a powerful and successful plantation owner. (Owned slaves, cash crops)

Not all Cherokee people were finding financial success. A class distinction started for first time in their culture.

Sequoyah believed the ability for the Cherokee to read and write would help them establish themselves with the United States.

John Ross and John Ridge were gaining the trust of many Cherokee.

John Ross supported by the common people and John Ridge supported by Cherokee elite.

Cherokee Constitution: democracy, elected government, 3-branches, individual rights.

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Day 2:

Not all Cherokee people were finding financial success. A class distinction started for first time in their culture.

Sequoyah believed the **ability for the Cherokee to read and write would help them establish themselves** with the United States.

Ross' new **Constitution established borders & and the idea that Cherokee territory is sovereign.**

Georgia Legislature believes the new Constitution will make it **more difficult to get them off the land.**

Gold discovered in territory and now **even more white settlers encroach** on land.

In **Andrew Jackson's** first address to Congress in 1829 he **explains his idea to remove Indians** from land.

Shift in American's beliefs about Indians. (Discrimination, racism, Cherokee are inferior, can't be like white people)

Congressional debate – U.S. divided – **40 years of promises/treaties.** Cherokee start **looking for support in the Northeast.**

Congress passes Indian Removal Act. In the Senate, the New England Senators vote it down 11 to 1 but it still passes. House of Representatives barely pass it, 102-97. Removal Act is law.

Other **tribes start taking money, moving off their land, and relocating.**

State of **Georgia begins dividing up Cherokee land** and creates new laws overriding sovereignty. All Cherokee now under Georgia law.

Ross pleads for Jackson's help to stop Georgia. Jackson offered only **protection if they move.** He stated it was **state's rights issue.**

John Ross becomes Principal Chief at age 38. John Ridge is too young.

Ross re-instates Blood Law. Penalty of selling land illegally without tribal permission is death.

More than a dozen court cases filed. Some of the cases go to the Supreme Court. The premise is self determination / sovereignty. Major issue is State vs. Federal jurisdiction.

Cherokee see the court case **Worcester v. Georgia as huge win** for their cause. Samuel Worcester was arrested by the State of Georgia for not registering with the state.

Georgia refuses to recognize the court decision and Jackson agrees with Georgia. He is the **only President to openly reject a Supreme Court decision.** He tells Georgia, **"light a fire under them, they'll move."**

U.S. renewed offer. **Leave land and then get land, \$5,000,000 and money to build schools and churches.** The issue is to **preserve land or preserve sovereignty.**

John Ross stuck in the middle. As a chief, he can tell them to leave. He understands the need for one voice of tribe. Other tribes were divided and that helped the American cause to get them off land. He tells his people he is not willing to move. **Wait until Jackson Presidency is over than maybe next President will support Supreme Court decision.**

Ridge Party have powerful connections. He believes if they could talk to the people that might change their opinion. It doesn't work. (1834 Red Council Meeting) **They state that the Cherokee has too weak a government to take on the U.S.** The Cherokee people get upset because they feel the Ridge's are aligned with Americans. John Walker Jr. killed.

1835 Treaty of New Echota. Ridge Party knew it was illegal treaty. And they would be considered traitors which is **punishable by death.** However, they believed that they were doing the right thing. Major Ridge said he would give up his life if he knew it would save their land.

Senate ratifies the Treaty by one vote.

Only 2,000 of 18,000 leave.

Rest of Cherokee told that they **have 2 years to leave peacefully. Deadline: May 1838**

John Ross gets 15,665 signatures (a scroll 160 feet long) in an attempt to overturn Treaty.

It doesn't work.