

## FRIEND OF THE WHITE MAN? CHICKASAW NATION (1832 – 1838)

The Chickasaw Indians inhabited the northeastern corner of Mississippi. Distant relatives of the Choctaws, this tribe was targeted for removal by Andrew Jackson. In 1832, the Chickasaws signed the Treaty of Pontotoc. All lands in Mississippi and Alabama were given to the U.S. Money from the purchase of Chickasaw land would be put into a fund for the tribe.



**Chickasaw war chief, Tishomingo  
Chickasaw Council House Museum Col-  
lection. Courtesy of the Archives and  
Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma  
Historical Society.**

### CHICKASAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

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### Chickasaw Removal

After the Treaty of Pontotoc was signed in 1832, a delegation of Chickasaw leaders decided to travel to the Indian Territory to choose land on which they would reside “as long as the grass grew, or waters ran.” Rather than making it to the Indian Territory, Chickasaw leaders met with Choctaw representatives in Little Rock, Arkansas, and decided to live on Choctaw land until suitable land could be purchased for the Chickasaws. In addition, they were given citizenship in the Choctaw tribe.

Between 1833 and 1836, the Chickasaw homelands in Mississippi were overrun with white settlers. By 1836, no lands in the Indian Territory had been purchased for permanent Chickasaw settlement. However, since they were going to live on Choctaw lands, they agreed to be ready to leave their Mississippi home by May of 1836. Of the thousands expected to move westward, only a few hundred showed up and were sent ahead of the rest of the tribe.

The first Chickasaw removal party crossed into Arkansas via Memphis. Heavy rains prolonged their travel, as well as illness. The Chickasaws that were ill were placed upon steamboats on the St. Francis River, where they recovered after a few days rest. Traveling through east Arkansas, the Chickasaws encountered the swampy conditions that made travel difficult. They averaged about 15 miles per day and traveled at night in order to avoid the intense summer heat. They crossed the Grand Prairie, the White River and Clarendon before arriving at the north side of the Arkansas River across from Little Rock. Along the way, the Chickasaws picked up members of other tribes who were moving westward and allowed them to travel with their detachments.

Removal Route of the Chickasaw Nation, 1800 - 1840



An interesting dispute between a Chickasaw chief and a U.S. army conductor occurred in Little Rock over which route a detachment of Chickasaws under the leadership of J.M. Millard and Chief Sealy would take to Indian Territory. The Chickasaw detachment broke into two angry factions with conductor Millard noting that Sealy and his group “will have their own time and manner to get to their country [and seemed] to take great satisfaction in disregarding all directions and orders they received.”

Sealy’s Chickasaws hunted and loitered through south Arkansas. Over the slow, hot trek, Sealy lost horses and met with dishonest white settlers who took their money. Disheartened, Sealy’s group arrived at Fort Coffee in fall of 1836.

At the same time Sealy and Millard were leading groups of Chickasaws through Arkansas, many members of the tribe were preparing to leave their homes. News of prior disasters involving

steamboats had reached the Chickasaws in Memphis and a number of them refused to board the steamboats before being persuaded to ride them to Little Rock in 1837.

Those traveling by land in east Arkansas went through the Grand Prairie and the swamps of St. Francis County. In the swamps, the Chickasaw conductors noted that “not less than 70 or 80 ponies have been bogged down and left dead in the mud.” After enduring such rough conditions, many Chickasaws were tired and sick. They were enticed to board steamboats at Little Rock and travel by river to the Indian Territory.

Throughout 1838, smaller groups of Chickasaws traveled through Arkansas using the same overland and river routes as their predecessors. They landed at various places, like Helena, Fort Smith and Little Rock.

Approximately four thousand Chickasaws and over one thousand of their slaves were removed during the late 1830s. They were the last of the five southeastern tribes to be resettled and they chose to live within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation until 1855, when friction grew between the two groups. The Chickasaws established a separate government and drew boundary lines for their nation immediately west of the Choctaws in south-central Oklahoma.

Today, the Chickasaws have executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and have over 35 thousand tribal members.



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THE STORY.



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