

The End of the Journey

Between June 1838 and March 1839, more than 15,000 Cherokee trekked west from their traditional eastern homeland to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) over the “Trail of Tears.” More than 1,000 died during the journey westward, and there may have been as many as 4,000 that died as a direct result of their forced migration. Once they arrived in their new homeland, Cherokee detachments disbanded at one of seven disbandment depots, the most popular being sites near present-day Spavinaw, Westville, and Stilwell.

In accordance with the Treaty of New Echota, the new arrivals were promised one year of subsistence provisions, to be distributed at one of five depots in the Cherokee Nation. That year proved exceedingly trying, however. The delivery of provisions proved halting, and most Cherokee spent the year 1839 living in tents and other temporary quarters while awaiting their first year’s harvest.

The number was found to be 489 ... I have issued a sufficient quantity of cotton domestic to the Indians for Tents to protect them from the weather ... as they were for the most part separated from their homes in Georgia, without having the means or time to prepare ...

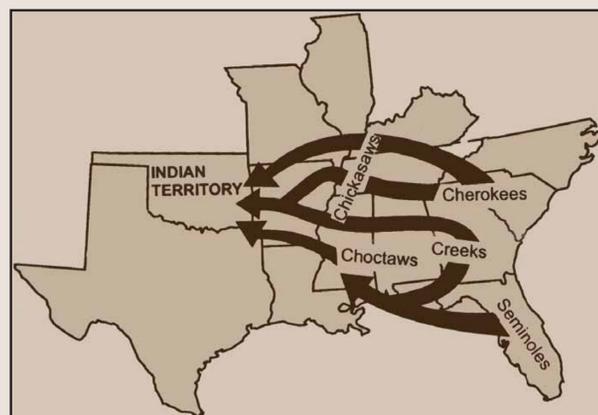
Lt. Edward Deas, June 1838



Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it would have for Indian peoples. One thing was certain; millions of acres of Indian lands were given to American settlers.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte.



After passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the United States government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and, due to a special exemption, formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.



You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments, and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

Home in the West

Upon arrival, families waited in long lines for supplies. Camps surrounded the dispersal site as Cherokee went out and located a home site, built a home, and started a new life.



Between September 1838 and March 1839, over 3,500 people arrived here at a dispersal depot known as “Mrs. Webber’s Plantation.” The property was a registration and supplies distribution point for arriving Cherokee as

they began new lives in the West. It was a time of transition for those who survived the trials of the journey and the process of settling in Indian Territory. The depot on Akie Webber’s land closed in 1841.

Nearby are graves of a number of Cherokee leaders, many of whom braved the Trail of Tears. They passed through Mrs. Webber’s depot and settled in the local area.

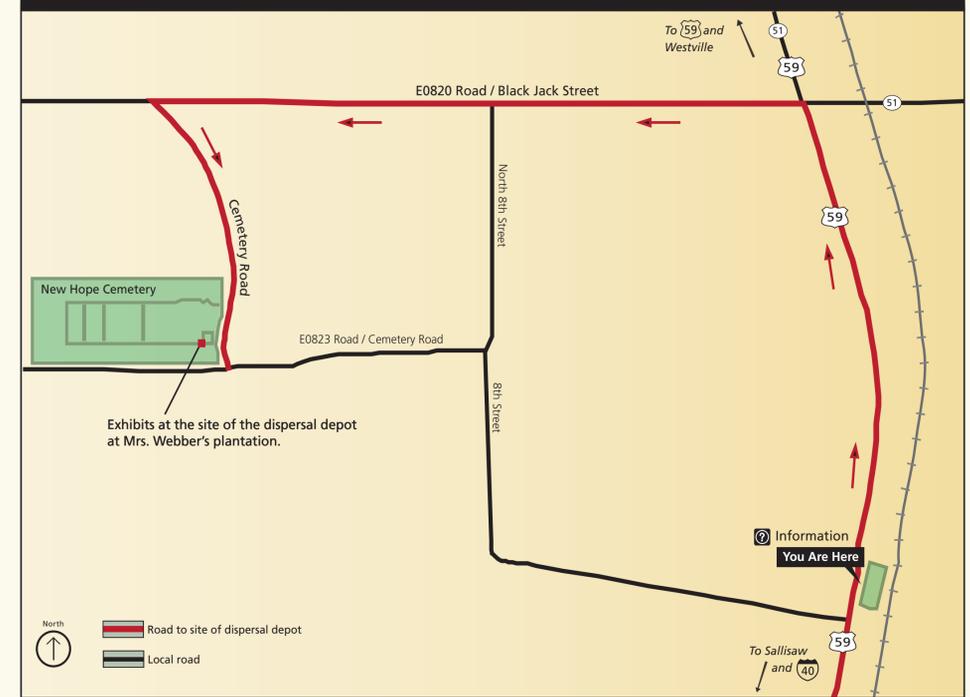
The End of the Journey

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Once they arrived in their new homeland, Cherokee detachments disbanded at one of five disbandment depots, the most popular being sites near present-day Spavinaw, Westville, and Stilwell. You can visit the site of the Stilwell depot—follow the directions provided on this exhibit.



Visit a Site on the Trail of Tears



You are invited to visit the place where the Cherokee disbanded here in present-day Stilwell. Turn right out of the parking lot and proceed north on Highway 59. Turn left at the intersection of Highway 59 and Black Jack Street. Turn left onto Cemetery Road. The exhibits are located in the cemetery on your right.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



The National Park Service administers the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, which was established by Congress in 1987. By working with partners, preservation of trail sites and awareness of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes are fostered. You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Learn more at: www.nps.gov/trte