



The Cherokee Removal (“Trail of Tears”), 1836–1839

According to the New Echota Treaty of May 1836, Cherokee Indians who refused to voluntarily leave their lands in Alabama and Georgia would be removed by force. In 1838 the War Department issued orders for Gen. Winfield Scott to remove the remaining 2,000 Cherokees to the Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) west of the Mississippi River, an event often referred to as the “Trail of Tears.” There is no comprehensive list of all Cherokees relocated to the Indian Territory; however, the following resources offer a good starting place to research the Cherokee disturbances and removal between 1836 and 1839.

Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (RG 75)

___T496, *Census Roll of Cherokee Indians East of the Mississippi and Index to the Roll, 1835*. 1 Roll. This publication contains the Henderson Roll (named inadvertently for Daniel Henderson, who conducted the Tennessee portion of the census that appears first in the Roll), an enumeration of all Cherokees residing with the original Cherokee homelands in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, who registered to participate in the removal to Indian Territory under the terms of the New Echota Treaty (although not all registrants actually went). Intended to determine the number of Indians and value of their property in preparing plans for the removal of the tribe, the Henderson Roll lists heads of households and gives information concerning each family and their personal effects.

___M1773, *Eastern Cherokee Census Rolls, 1835–1884*. 3 rolls. DP. This publication includes several census rolls of Eastern Cherokees compiled at different times for different administrative reasons and following a variety of formats. The earliest roll reproduced is a copy of the Henderson Roll, described in T496 above.

___M18, *Register of Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1880*. 126 Rolls. DP. These letters were registered in the alphabetical section, usually by the first letter of the writer’s surname, in chronological order of receipt. Letters from Indians usually were registered under the name of the tribe. The registers list all the letters received by the Office. The information given for each letter includes the writer’s name, the dates it was written and received, a summary of the contents, the jurisdiction or heading under which it was filed, and beginning in July 1836, the file number assigned to each letter upon its receipt.

___M234, *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1881*. 962 Rolls. DP. This series reproduces letters, reports, memoranda and other correspondence concerning the emigration of the Cherokee to the Indian Territory on **rolls 113–116**. The records are arranged chronologically and then according to an alphanumeric filing scheme. To obtain the file number, first search the registers (Microfilm Publication M18) described above.

___M640, *Records of the Southern Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1832–1870*. 22 Rolls. DP. This publication reproduces letters, reports, memoranda and other correspondence concerning Native Americans. **Rolls 1–7** pertain to the Western Superintendency, the predecessor of the Southern

Superintendency that was responsible for administering the Cherokees' affairs at the time of the removal.

___ M574, *Special Files of the Office of Indian Affairs, 1807–1904*. 85 Rolls. DP. The Special Files consist of correspondence, reports, accounts, affidavits, and other records that relate principally to claims and investigations but cover other subjects such as the Cherokee Removal. See the descriptive pamphlet for a breakdown of specific files and roll numbers.

Records of Fort Gibson

Fort Gibson, located in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma), served as the primary military staging area in the West during the Cherokee emigration. The forces in this post helped shield the Cherokees from the hostile Osage during their trek to the Indian Territory, administered supplies, and dealt with rivalries among the Cherokees.

Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821–1920 (RG 393)

___ M1466, *Headquarters Records, Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, 1830–1857*. 6 Rolls. DP. See **roll 2** for letters received at Fort Gibson during the years of the removal, including correspondence pertaining to the June 1839 Cherokee council to unite the Cherokee who had recently immigrated from the east with those Cherokee already living in the Indian Territory. The records are arranged chronologically.

Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's–1917 (RG 94)

___ M617, *Returns From U.S. Military Posts, 1800–1916*. 1,550 Rolls. DP. Post returns usually show the units stationed at the post and their strength, as well as a record of events. The records are arranged alphabetically by post and thereunder chronologically. For returns from Ft. Gibson during the period covering the Cherokee Removal, see **roll 404**.

Additional Military Records (RG 393)

___ M1475, *Correspondence of the Eastern Division Pertaining to Cherokee Removal, April–December, 1838*. DP. 2 Rolls. Records sent and received by Bvt. Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott as commander of the Eastern Division and his immediate staff. Correspondence includes the collection, concentration, health, and treatment of the Cherokees to be removed; transportation of the Cherokee west; and the conditions of the march to the Indian Territory.

For more information, see the following reference report: *Military Service during the Cherokee Disturbances, 1836–1839*.

Rev. September 2011