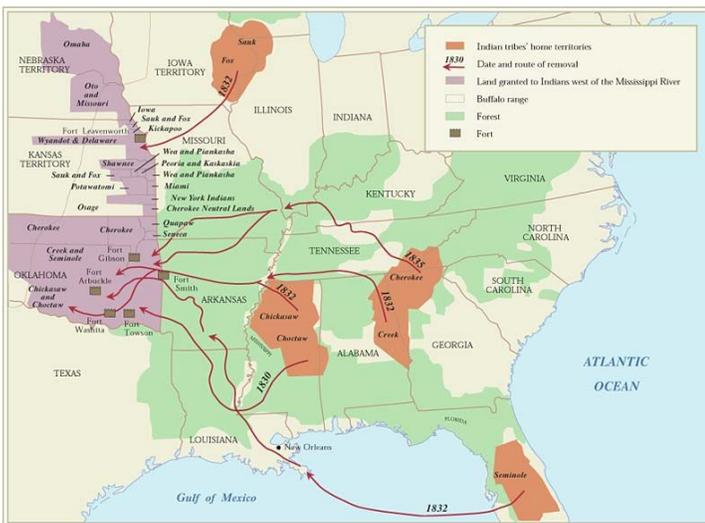


White settlers had come into conflict with Native Americans ever since colonial days. After independence, the new national government tried to settle these conflicts through treaties. **Typically, the treaties drew boundaries between areas claimed for settlers and areas that the government promised to let the Native Americans have forever.** In exchange for giving up their old lands, Indians were promised food, supplies, and money.

Despite the treaties, Native Americans continued to be pushed off their land. By the time Jackson became president, only 125,000 Indians still lived east of the Mississippi River. Warfare and disease had greatly reduced the number of Indians in the East. Others had sold their lands for pennies an acre and moved across the Mississippi. Jackson was determined to remove the remaining Indians to a new Indian Territory in the West.

Most of the eastern Indians lived in the South. They belonged to five groups, which Americans called tribes: the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole. Hoping to remain in their homelands, these Indians had adopted many white ways. Most had given up hunting to become farmers. Many had learned to read and write. The Cherokee even had their own written language, a newspaper, and a constitution modeled on the U.S. Constitution. Whites called these Native Americans the "Five Civilized Tribes".

While the Five Civilized Tribes may have hoped to live in peace with their neighbors, whites did not share this goal. As the cotton industry spread westward, wealthy planters and poor settlers alike looked greedily at Indian homelands. They wanted this land for themselves, and so they decided the Indians had to go.



The Indian Removal Act: In 1830, urged on by President Jackson, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. This law allowed the president to make treaties in which Native Americans in the East traded their lands for new territory on the Great Plains. **The law did not say that the Indians should be removed by force, and in 1831 the Supreme Court ruled that Indians had a right to their lands. An angry Jackson disagreed.** Groups that refused to move west voluntarily were met with military force, usually with tragic results.

The Trail of Tears: Many white northerners were ashamed. Washington D.C. was flooded with protests

over the treatment of Indians, but the work of removal continued. In 1836, thousands of Creeks who refused to leave Alabama were rounded up and marched west in handcuffs. Two years later, under President Martin Van Buren, more than 17,000 Cherokee were dragged from their homes in Georgia and herded west by federal troops. 4,000 died during their long walk to Indian Territory. Those who survived remembered that terrible journey as their "Trail of Tears." **A soldier who took part in the Cherokee removal called it "the cruellest work I ever knew."**



Led by a young chief named Osceola, the Seminoles of Florida resisted removal for ten years. Their long struggle was the most costly Indian war ever fought in the United States. A number of Seminoles were finally sent to Indian Territory. But others found refuge (safety) in the Florida swamps. Their descendants still live in the state today.