

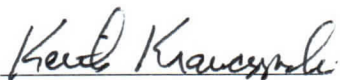
WOMEN'S ATTITUDES REGARDING INDIAN REMOVAL

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University at Montgomery
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Arts
Montgomery, Alabama

December 12, 2013

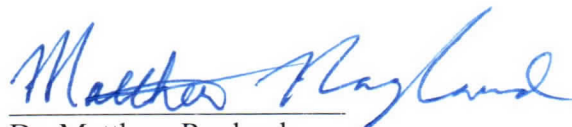
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Keith Krawczynski and Dr. Eric Sterling for advising and motivating me to complete my thesis. They have both been extremely helpful throughout my graduate career at AUM. I would also like to thank Dr. Krawczynski and Dr. Benjamin Severance for agreeing to be on my thesis committee and providing me with countless and much appreciated suggestions and revisions. A special thanks as well to my husband, Steven Trupp, who has been a true help-mate during this long process.

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis will focus on the motives and reasoning of women, both white and Indian, regarding their attitudes, and in particular their opposition, to removal. I will discuss the leaders of this movement and their organizations, both secular and religious, as well as research and analyze their petitions, letters, and campaigns. Specifically, I will address the question of why both white and Indian women were so adamant in their opposition to Indian removal when they normally stayed out of politics, traditionally a male domain. This thesis will contribute to our understanding of Indian removal by focusing on women's opposition to it, a subject that scholars have generally ignored.

The first chapter will provide background information to Indian removal. This will include the historiography of women's opposition, the historical background of removal, early opposition to removal, the reasoning for this opposition, support of removal, and the reasoning for support. In examining the historical background of removal, we can learn some of the reasoning behind it. Although scholars have provided several reasons to explain why white people believed Indian removal was necessary, the main cause was white encroachment onto Indian lands. Because whites and Indians viewed land ownership differently and because the whites considered Indians to be uncivilized savages, land-hungry white people saw a forced removal as the only way to obtain the Indian lands. When the Indians revolted against this encroachment onto their

lands by attacking white settlers, the United States government implemented the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that forced tens of thousands of Native American people to migrate to new lands reserved for them west of the Mississippi River. Tragically, many Indians died during this forced migration. Given the emotional and physical hardship of removal, one can appreciate the reasoning for women's opposition to it. In fact, both white and Indian women strongly opposed the inhumane policy, although some women supported removal. In the end, white male leaders ignored the concerns of these women and eagerly implemented their forced removal policy.

The second chapter will examine the history of removal in Alabama by focusing on the Creek-white settler wars. In the decades leading up to the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the Creek Indians and white settlers fought each other in numerous battles: the Creek Wars (1813 and 1814), the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek (July 1813), the Fort Mims Massacre (August 1813), the Battle of Holy Ground (December 1813), and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (March 1814). This chapter will detail each of these battles, especially the increasing bloody nature of them. Because of the enormous bloodshed involved in these battles, many whites concluded that the Indians must be removed from the area.

However, a number of people, both whites and Indians, were opposed to this removal plan. One such person was Te-lah-nay, a young Indian girl from north Alabama. The second chapter will also discuss the life of Te-lah-nay, who was forced to remove to Oklahoma and later secretly travelled back to Alabama where she lived the rest of her life. This woman's story, which she documented in her private journal and in letters she wrote to family members, provides an important glimpse into the life of an Indian woman who opposed the removal. In this chapter I will also describe in some detail the physical

and emotional hardship of the Indian removal on the Indian people. This is important as it emphasizes what the women were trying to actually avoid by opposing removal.

The third chapter will address the motives and methods of white women and Indian women in opposing Indian removal. White women opposed removal because of the notion of “republican motherhood,” which required “an obligation to act as moral guardians of the nation’s virtue.”¹ This included helping those less fortunate than themselves – even Native Americans. They also compared themselves to strong women of the Bible and believed this helped to justify their stance against removal.² These white women felt that since they could not actively participate in politics, they would organize petitions to send to Congress and write letters to religious newspapers. Indeed, many religious newspapers reserved a portion of the paper for women contributors and strongly supported their efforts in petitioning against removal.

Similarly, Indian women also wrote petitions stating their opposition to Indian removal and sent them to their tribal government. The Cherokee’s opposition to Indian removal is the most documented of the Indian tribes. Prior to the eighteenth century, Cherokee women possessed some amount of political, cultural, and social influence within the Cherokee Nation. However, the Cherokee’s trade with white settlers and their move to embrace white people’s ways and customs reduced this influence by the nineteenth century. Still, Cherokee women felt strongly about the subject of removal from their homeland to unknown lands in the West, and they spoke out against it in the strongest terms. These women sent two petitions to the all-male Cherokee National Council in 1817 and 1818 voicing their opposition to removal. In analyzing the language

¹ Mary Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s,” *Journal of American History*, Vol 86, No 1 (June 1999), 18.

² Angelina Grimke, “Letter to Catherine E. Beecher, 28 August 1837,” *The Liberator*, September 29, 1837.

used in the petitions, one finds that these women placed themselves in the role of mother/parent and referred to the Cherokee men as children.³ They stated that it was their “duty as mothers” to bring their feelings to the attention of the National Council and that these men should listen to them because they are their descendants.⁴

Male and female Christian missionaries also played a large part in the events before and during removal. These Protestant missionaries, largely from New England, helped to establish schools throughout the Cherokee Nation. They also converted many Cherokee to Christianity. Because the missionaries lived among the Cherokee people, they were better able to report to the white public the truth about removal and its injustices. By doing so, they convinced many whites to oppose Indian removal.

Finally, chapter four will discuss white and Indian men’s reactions to women’s opposition to removal. Admittedly, there is not much documentation concerning how men felt about women’s opposition to removal. When women left the domestic sphere to speak out on this issue however, many men strongly objected. They believed that women were intellectually inferior and therefore should stay at home taking care of the home and children. Nonetheless, some men were convinced by and agreed with these women’s arguments against removal and joined the cause. A number of Protestant Christian ministers and missionaries, such as Jeremiah Evarts, as well as some politicians like Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen, were vehemently opposed to removal and did their best to prevent it. Many of them saw removal for what it was: a land grab by greedy white men. Some men, on the other hand, believed removal was a good idea and strongly

³ “Petitions of the (Cherokee) Women’s Council, May 2, 1817, and June 30, 1818.” Presidential Papers Microfilm: Andrew Jackson. Washington, D.C., 1961, series 1, reel 22; *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, ed. (New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 124-126.

⁴ Ibid.

supported it. Some of these men knew removal to be a land-grabbing scheme, but their voracious appetites for more land compelled them to cooperate with the unscrupulous efforts against the Indians. Others argued that removal was a benevolent policy and would benefit the Indians. In what is viewed today as a rather convoluted way, they believed that providing land for the Indians far away from whites would save them from further white encroachment and possible extermination.

In short, my thesis will discuss white and Indian women's attitudes regarding Indian Removal, their methods of opposition, the role of Christian missionaries and newspapers in opposing removal, and finally, the reaction of white and Indian men to female participation in the debate. Since historians have generally neglected this subject, my thesis will significantly add to our understanding of one of the darkest episodes in our nation's history.

CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF NATIVE AMERICAN REMOVAL

For many years, scholars have been writing about the Native American Removal of the 1820s and 1830s in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the historiography of the removal, particularly examining how historians have studied the motives of whites in the removal and the role of women concerning the removal policy. The historical literature demonstrates several schools of interpretation, from those who excuse Andrew Jackson in removing the Indians from their homeland to those who sympathize with the Indians. Early histories about Indians failed to mention the removal, or say very little about it. Just as there were not many historical works on women's involvement in Indian removal until recently, earlier scholars avoided the subject of removal altogether. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Perhaps it was a reflection of their time, a time when feelings toward and about Indians remained prejudiced. Perhaps historians thought it was a subject best left alone because of the bitterness and national debate that surrounded removal. Perhaps Native Americans rarely impinged on the consciousness of early writers, who did not see Indians, once they were removed, as part of the American experience. It may never be known why early scholars

wrote so little about removal, but for academics as well as the common reader, we are fortunate that feelings and attitudes have changed.

In her foreword of Grant Foreman's book, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (1932), Angie Debo comments about the lack of early historical works concerning Indians and their removal. Foreman's book was written at a time when the federal government of the 1920s and 1930s began changing policies towards Indians and viewing them in a more favorable light. Those changes likely influenced Foreman's views. His own life and work with the 1887 Dawes Commission and as an attorney in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma also likely influenced his writing and views.⁵ Of his book, Foreman writes in the foreword to his second edition in 1953, "It has been a pleasure to the writer to note the ever increasing interest in the history of our Oklahoma Indians, not only among the natives but also among white people who now occupy much of the land formerly owned by these red men. The knowledge thus gained by the whites has made for a more sympathetic understanding of the Indian question."⁶

Foreman's book provides a candid account of the removal by following the actual events, although he provides no interpretation of the events or for the motives and actions of whites at that time. Foreman does, however, place the blame for removal not only with southern whites but with white people across the country, because although there were more Indians in the southern United States, Indian tribes were spread through the northern states as well, and all were treated poorly by white settlers. Foreman also places

⁵ The Dawes Severalty Act (the Dawes Commission, or Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes) was established by the United States government in 1887 to negotiate land allotment agreements with the Five Civilized Tribes. It was named for United States Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, who headed the commission.

⁶ Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932; reprint, 1953), 5.

much of the blame on the federal government for “inadequate preparation” and “the appointment of a horde of political incompetents to posts of authority,” resulting in “woeful mismanagement and cruel and unnecessary suffering by the emigrants.”⁷

Foreman also believes that the removal is best understood by recognizing the fact that Southeastern Indians had “fixed habits and tastes” regarding their land.⁸ “More than white people,” Foreman explains, “they cherished a passionate attachment for the earth that held the bones of their ancestors and relatives. Few white people either understood or respected this sentiment.”⁹ For them, “simple possessions filled their lives; their loss was cataclysmic. It is doubtful if white people with their readier adaptability can understand the sense of grief and desolation that overwhelmed the Indians when they were compelled to leave these behind forever and begin the long sad journey toward the setting sun which they called the Trail of Tears.”¹⁰ The vividly descriptive language Foreman uses throughout his book lends sympathy to the subject of removal, although he does state that the purpose of the book is not to gain sympathy for the Indians.

Because the book was first published in 1932, well before the modern women’s rights movement and other social, cultural, and political movements added a new interpretation of our nation’s history and events, Foreman does not mention women in his book. Even the 1953 reprint of the book came too early to address how removal affected women. Nonetheless, as Foreman’s first substantial work on removal and the one considered his best work by many historians, *Indian Removal* provides a thorough and factual account of the removal and the Five Civilized Tribes.

⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 15.

¹⁰ Ibid.

With the various civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s came renewed interest in our past social, cultural, and political history. This interest can be seen in the increasing number of publications on Indian removal, and with more of them written by female scholars. Two such books published during this time are Dale Van Every's *Disinherited: The Lost Birthright of the American Indian* (1966) and Gloria Jahoda's *The Trail of Tears* (1975). Although Every provides a detailed discussion of the Cherokee removal, he provides a much more limited but factual account of the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole Indians and their mistreatment by whites and by the United States government. Nonetheless, much like the previous historians, Van Every does not discuss women in removal or women's opposition to removal.

Van Every does, however, make an interesting argument about Andrew Jackson's motives for Indian removal and how his actions affected the country. Van Every notes that President Jackson's support of states' rights over a ruling by the United States Supreme Court in the 1831 case *the Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia* might have turned into a bigger, national crisis. However, Jackson's northern critics found it difficult to do so when in other instances, the Southern president upheld federal authority, such as in his hesitation to make Texas a state since such a large pro-slave territory would upset the balance of slave and free states in the nation. According to Van Every, this incongruity led Indians and whites who opposed removal to an even bigger cause for concern – that Jackson believed in defending the rights and upholding the freedom of white men only.¹¹ Despite the fact that the American public felt a sense of shame and guilt due to the government's actions against the Indians, Jackson was reelected as

¹¹ Dale Van Every, *Disinherited: The Lost Birthright of the Americans Indian*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1966), 150-156.

president in 1832, which was a huge blow to the Indians. In light of his reelection, the state of Georgia continued with their forceful and cruel displacement of Indians from their homelands. Van Every concluded that these factors led to the inevitable sectional confrontation between the north and south, calling to the fore the states' rights issue which ultimately culminated in the Civil War.¹² While other historians have also noted that Jackson had a prejudice and intolerant attitude toward Indians, which was the root of his removal policy, Van Every's opinion that this attitude and the factors involved in Indian removal laid the groundwork for the Civil War is an interesting one that should be further examined.

In her book *The Trail of Tears* (1975), Gloria Jahoda offers a much more thorough account of the Indian removal. She not only portrays the suffering of the Five Civilized Tribes during this time but also that of several other tribes affected by the removal, including those in the North, Midwest, and West. She also discusses several of the major male players, both white and Indian men, involved in removal. But while Jahoda does not discuss women as a group in her book, she does discuss various white and Indian women and their relationships to those men involved in Indian removal. One of these was Eliza Allen, who in 1829 married Sam Houston, then governor of Tennessee and an opponent of Indian removal. The marriage was short-lived, however, and Jahoda goes on to mention Houston's involvement with other women, Tiana Rogers, and the woman he later married in Texas, Margaret Lea.¹³ Jahoda also tells the story of Creek woman Polly Copinger, who was the mixed-blood mother of Seminole chief Osceola and aunt of Peter McQueen, the chief of Tallassee who had led the Creeks in the attack at

¹² Ibid, 262-265.

¹³ Gloria Jahoda, *The Trail of Tears* (New York: Wing Books, 1975), 50-52, 211.

Burnt Corn Creek in 1813. After the battle of Horseshoe Bend, Polly and Peter McQueen took a young Osceola south to Florida, where he eventually became head chief of the Seminoles.¹⁴ Jahoda also makes a passing mention of Sarah Northup, the white wife of Cherokee John Ridge, and Harriet Gold, the white wife of Elias Boudinot, editor of the Cherokee Phoenix. The Indians accused them of miscegenation, although both men had been educated by Protestant missionaries and were raised with white values and traditions. The accusations were so harsh that in the case of Harriet Gold, an effigy of her was hanged and burned in her hometown in Connecticut.¹⁵ Jahoda mentions several other women in her book in addition to these few; however, none had any direct involvement in women's opposition to Indian removal, a subject oddly lacking in a book written by a female historian during the height of the modern women's rights movement.

Whereas the previous authors mentioned here focus mainly on the Five Civilized Tribes collectively, Michael D. Green's book, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (1982), focuses on the Creek Confederacy in Georgia. Green states that the War of 1812 represented a kind of crossroads in United States history and thus produced a strong nationalistic spirit with the defeat of the British. One of the effects of this war, in which General Andrew Jackson played a crucial role in defeating both British and Creek forces, was the federal Indian removal policy. This policy stemmed in part from the vast migration of whites to the West and South following the defeat of the Indians and their British allies. At first, the federal government encouraged the southeastern Indians to go west on a voluntary basis. Persuasive measures failed, prompting President Andrew Jackson to use more forceful

¹⁴ Ibid, 258-259.

¹⁵ Ibid, 216.

means by redefining the legal rights and status of the Indian Nations that denied their sovereignty, terminated the treaty system, imposed full congressional control over them, and placed their lands under federal control using the concept of eminent domain. Green explains that in removing the Indians, the federal government's actions reflected the will of land-hungry settlers and speculators.¹⁶

Green adds that Jackson was also concerned with the military security of lands in the southeast and that the removal of the Indians from that region would provide its protection by a "permanent population, able to defend it."¹⁷ However, when met by Indian resistance, Green writes that the government realized its voluntary policy was unrealistic and unenforceable. In response, Jackson, as treaty commissioner, called for a reworking of the Indian policy. The resulting proposal had what Green refers to as a "circumstances-have-entirely-changed theme," meaning that the fact that the United States was growing in power meant that it no longer had to consider Indian tribes as independent, sovereign nations. Thus, in 1818 General Jackson pushed his "treaties-are-absurd notion" on Congress, stating that treating Indian tribes as sovereign nations no longer made sense and that the federal government was now strong enough to complete the proposed federal policy of Indian removal. Some politicians agreed with Jackson, but the majority of Congress disagreed and tribal sovereignty and the treaty system remained in place.¹⁸

Although he does state that Jackson and his administration were concerned with national security and protection from Indians, pecuniary interests played a large role in

¹⁶ Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 48.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 49.

removing the Indians as exemplified by the federal Indian agents, government volunteers, and civilians involved in the act of removal, all of whom Green describes as money- and land-hungry crooks. This is illustrated in the Treaty of Indian Springs of 1825, in which William McIntosh, a prominent Creek and member of the Creek National Council, signed away approximately one-third of the Creek lands and authorized the removal of the Creeks in Georgia. The Creek people saw McIntosh's act as a betrayal to the Creek people, especially since he did not have the authority to give away Upper Creek lands and his absolute authority over Lower Creek lands was "categorically and repeatedly denied" by the Creek National Council and other Creek leaders. Therefore, Green concludes that the Treaty of Indian Springs was "an iniquitous document grounded in fraud and chicanery and acted out in treason." The National Council declared McIntosh and the other Creeks involved in the deception as traitors and executed them shortly thereafter.¹⁹

Like many male historians writing about the Indian removal, Green gives no mention to Indian women and removal. Green does, however, provide a lengthy treatment of the actual removal of the Creek Indians in Alabama by citing specific examples. One such example involved the town of Irwinton in present day Eufaula. Green explains that the removal in Alabama was hastened by the unwillingness of white settlers to stay off Indian land as was promised in the Treaty of 1832. Article 5 of this treaty states:

All intruders upon the country hereby ceded shall be removed therefrom [sic] in the same manners as intruders may be removed by law from the public land until the country is surveyed, and the selections made; excepting however from this provision those white persons who have made their own improvements, and not expelled the Creeks from theirs. Such persons may remain 'till [sic] their crops are gathered.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid, 88.

²⁰ Ibid, 174.

These “intruders” were basically squatters and were warned by United States Marshal Robert S. Crawford to pack up and move or they would face eviction by federal military forces. The Creeks were skeptical of any assistance being provided by the federal government to protect their lands, especially when some government officials tried to convince them that the best way to avoid conflict was to sell their lands and move west. Even when federal marshals drove white settlers from the Creek town of Irwinton, local county officials issued writs of trespass against Creek Indians who returned to the Indian village to reclaim their homes and possessions.²¹ Although some historians, especially those in favor of Jackson’s removal policy, rarely mention the cruel mistreatment of Indians, Green provides a detailed discussion of their abuse and mistreatment at the hands of whites, as is evidenced in his account of the events in Irwinton in 1832.

Anthony C. Wallace, in his book *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (1993), portrays Jackson in an unfavorable light. He argues that even early in his career, Jackson worked against the best interests of the Indians. As a treaty commissioner dealing with the southeastern Indians for the federal government from 1815 to 1820, Jackson “persuaded the tribes, by fair means or foul,” to sell land to the United States.²² Wallace also provides evidence that Jackson, as an aggressive land speculator, had a financial interest in the acquisition and selling of these lands. However, Wallace notes that regarding Native American lands, “Jackson himself does not stand out as the greediest of speculators. He took care of himself, to be sure, and he was always ready to reward family, friends, and political constituents, but he was also concerned to develop

²¹ Ibid, 176.

²² Anthony C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 4.

the country by expanding its agriculture and commerce.”²³ Thus, according to Wallace, the primary reason Jackson and others whites wanted Indians removed from the South was so that they could acquire the Indian lands for the economic development of the nation. In other words, according to Jackson, Indian removal was an act of American patriotism. Wallace maintains that this need for land in the South was heightened by industrial development in the North and in Great Britain. Southerners were eager to join in this economic expansion and the easiest way to do this, Wallace states, was by producing cotton for the growing textile industry. In order to meet the growing demand for cotton, southern whites needed more land.²⁴

In addition to whites wanting “unused land” for cotton production, Wallace adds that many Indians followed the example set by whites by establishing cotton plantations of their own.²⁵ Cherokee Chief John Ross, Wallace claims, was “the mirror image of Andrew Jackson, a gentleman of the Old South, stamped on the Indian side of the American coin. And what white Georgia feared most was the rise of men like John Ross. It was not the ‘savagery’ of the Indians that land-hungry whites dreaded; it was their ‘civilization’.”²⁶ In this statement Wallace’s explanation of the true purpose of whites’ need to rid themselves of Indians is easily seen.

Like Angie Debo in her foreword to Foreman’s book, Wallace expresses surprise about the fact that few historians have written about the removal. “It is remarkable how little attention has been paid to the removal of the 1830s,” Wallace writes, “and the

²³ Ibid, 6.

²⁴ Ibid, 6-8.

²⁵ Ibid, 9.

²⁶ Ibid, 10-11.

events consequent upon it, by general historians of the United States.”²⁷ He writes that historians have largely ignored this period, leaving it to specialists in Indian studies to write books on the subject. Instead, Wallace adds, historians have “lavished” attention on such areas as Jacksonian democracy and the political and economic restructuring of the United States at the time. Wallace gives examples of what he calls “the tendency to trivialize” Native Americans, the removal, and its consequences, as in Frederick Jackson Turner’s *The Frontier in American History* (1920) and Arthur Schlesinger’s *The Age of Jackson* (1945), in which Wallace writes Schlesinger “barely notices” Indians and completely ignores the removal.²⁸ Additionally, Wallace mentions that Allan Nevins and Henry Steel Commanger, in their popular textbook *A Short History of the United States* (1966) refer to Native Americans as “too backward.”²⁹ Despite the fact that many historians have paid little attention to Native Americans, Wallace notes that this is not true of the history profession as a whole. However, more contributions to the history of the removal are needed, particularly the role of women.

Wallace’s portrayal of Andrew Jackson and his relationship with the Indians is a stark contrast to that of Robert V. Remini in his book *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (2001). Whereas Wallace has a critical view of Jackson, Remini provides a much more flattering account in addressing Jackson’s role in the removal. Indeed, Remini seems to almost excuse Jackson for his role in the removal by putting his actions in the context of the strong anti-Indian feelings among whites during that time, which he likens to the prejudices of white Americans toward Japanese-Americans during World War II. Remini’s favorable interpretation is perhaps due to his own experiences, particularly his

²⁷ Ibid, 11.

²⁸ Ibid, 11-12.

²⁹ Ibid, 12.

military service during the Second World War when the federal government forced all Japanese Americans, totaling more than 112,000, into internment camps.

Remini explains that Jackson's eagerness to remove the Indians was out of sympathy for the race, because as he told his agents, "they must necessarily entail destruction upon their race if they refuse to go."³⁰ "Obviously Jackson's concern over the likely extinction of Native Americans," writes Remini, convinced him that the tribes must be removed if they wished to "perpetuate their race."³¹ Thus, national security was not Jackson's primary concern in removing the Indians, as Wallace argued. Jackson's removal policy mirrored the sentiment of white Americans, according to Remini, who believed that the best way to safeguard the Indians' culture and way of life was "by shunting them off to the wilderness where they would no longer threaten the safety of the United States or hinder its westward and southern expansion." By doing so, it solved the so-called "Indian problem" in a way that would not clash with their Christian principles of love and charity, and, according to Remini, make the American citizens as much to blame as Andrew Jackson for the removal.³² The last paragraph of Remini's book sums up his views on both Jackson and the policy he enacted:

To his dying day on June 8, 1845, Andrew Jackson genuinely believed that what he had accomplished rescued these people from inevitable annihilation. And although that statement sounds monstrous, and although no one in the modern world wishes to accept or believe it, that is exactly what he did. He saved the Five Civilized Nations from probable extinction.³³

For Remini, Andrew Jackson was a true friend to the Indian. He only wanted to help them by keeping them from harm and out of the greedy white man's way. To do

³⁰ Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Viking, 2001), 227.

³¹ *Ibid*, 228.

³² *Ibid*, 279.

³³ *Ibid*, 281.

this, the only solution was their removal west of the Mississippi River. Much like other male historians, Remini does not say anything about Indian women and their removal nor does he discuss women's opposition to removal. In fact, in his book Remini hardly mentions women at all, except in passing. He briefly describes Andrew Jackson's courtship and marriage to Rachel and later tells of various aspects of her life as Jackson's wife.³⁴ Remini also goes into some detail discussing Jackson's mother, Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson, and her hatred of Indians.³⁵ Like Jahoda, Remini fleetingly mentions a couple of white women who were involved in Indian and white settler conflicts, such as Martha Crawley, who was captured and two of her children murdered by Creek Indians who raided their settlement near Duck River, near present-day Cullman, on May 12, 1812 and held at Tuckabatchee and Polly Sims, who, along with her children, was rescued by Jackson after having been kidnapped during the Fort Mims Massacre.³⁶

Though Remini places equal blame on the American people for the removal, Alisse Portnoy's book, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (2005), contradicts this notion. The context of Portnoy's work is recognized in the larger women's studies and feminist movement from the 1970s to the present that reflected the women's rights struggle of the time. In her book, Portnoy introduces the role of white women, who petitioned against removal at a time when women were not allowed a voice in political matters. Illustrative is Catharine Beecher's "Circular Addressed to the Benevolent Ladies of the U. States," written in 1829. In it, Beecher legitimized women's role regarding the removal legislation by placing it within the woman's domain of domestic and religious spheres. Beecher's circular not only

³⁴ Ibid, 26, 64, 78-80, 86, 92-93, 95, 100-101, 141, 208, 210, 214, 216, 217, 225.

³⁵ Ibid, 9, 12-14, 18-19.

³⁶ Ibid, 55, 83.

demonstrates women's resistance to removal, it also shows their determination to publically voice their opinions on political issues. "Benevolent Ladies" across the nation responded to Beecher's call to action by sending nearly 15,000 petitions to the federal government protesting the removal. By doing so, these women were advocating two causes: Native Americans' right to remain on their native lands and women's "right to speak on the subject."³⁷ "Because the petitions effectively combined essentializing [sic] ideologies about womanhood with strategically selected topics of debate," explains Portnoy, "the political intrusion of female anti-removal petitioners appeared to be a natural extension of women's roles and responsibilities."³⁸ Through their petitions, women were able to voice their opinions in a time when men expected the "weaker sex" to remain outside of the political sphere.

Though only a small sampling has been discussed in this chapter, many other books can also be referenced on the historiography of Indian removal. Although scholars have provided differing explanations for the Indian removal, their differences are the product of the prevailing prejudices and attitudes of the time they were written. Several of these writers discuss Andrew Jackson's involvement in and motives for the Indian removal, while other scholars take a broader approach to the subject. For example, Portnoy begins by focusing on three arguments concerning removal put forth by President Andrew Jackson, Jeremiah Evarts, a minister and legislative lobbyist for Native Americans, and Catharine Beecher, an abolitionist and women's rights activist who ordinarily rejected political power for women but believed that the issue of removal was a rare circumstance in which women should voice their opinions. Portnoy goes on to

³⁷ Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women's Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

explain how Jackson, Evarts, and Beecher all came to different conclusions regarding removal. Some writers, like Anthony C. Wallace, disapprove of Andrew Jackson and his actions regarding Indian removal, while others, such as Robert Remini, defend Jackson and lauded his Indian removal policy. Historians such as Michael D. Green focus on a smaller segment of the Indian removal but also disagree with Jackson's handling of the Indian removal. Still others simply state facts and offer no interpretation for the motives and reasoning behind removal, such as in Grant Foreman's book. However, all agree that the Native American removal of the 1820s and 1830s was a dramatic and tragic event in American history.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NATIVE AMERICAN REMOVAL

The Indian Removal Act was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830.¹ This law gave the president of the United States the power to negotiate removal treaties with Indian tribes living east of the Mississippi River. Under these treaties, the Indians were to give up their lands east of the Mississippi in exchange for new and unsettled lands in the west. Native Americans who wished to remain in their eastern homeland would become citizens of that state. On the surface, it seemed like an ideal solution. Upon closer examination, however, this was not always the case, especially in states like Georgia where Native Americans were denied citizenship.² The removal was meant to be voluntary and peaceful, and it was for those tribes that agreed to the conditions of the treaties. Many southeastern tribes, however, often resisted, compelling Jackson to remove them by force.

President Andrew Jackson outlined his Indian removal policy in his Second Annual Message to Congress on December 6, 1830. In it, he states:

It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements, is approaching to a

¹ Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 206.

² Joyce Bear, tribal elder in the Muscogee Creek Nation, conversation with author, April 2005.

happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress; and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes, also, to seek the same obvious advantages.³

Jackson justified the removal policy by explaining the benefits it will have on the Indians and the United States. He calls the Native Americans “savages” and says that removing them to distant, unknown lands will “perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government, and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits, and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.”⁴ Later in his speech, Jackson made an attempt to further justify removal:

The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change, by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the eastern States were annihilated, or have melted away, to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward; and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the south and west by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to a land where their existence may be prolonged, and perhaps made perpetual. Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did, or than our children are now doing?....And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home, than the settled civilized Christian?....To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.⁵

Jackson’s address to Congress shows that he believed that his policy of removal was a humane act for the Indians. However, it is also clear that his beliefs and attitude are based on prejudice and racist thinking. In fact, the very first federal appointments Jackson made as president suggested that Indian removal was his priority. He appointed zealous

³ U.S. House Journal. 1830. 21st Cong., 2nd sess., 6 December, 1830, 25. Accessed from “A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: United States Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875” on 20 July, 2011.

⁴ U.S. House Journal, 25.

⁵ Ibid, 26-27.

proponents of removal to crucial positions in government, such as John Eaton to Secretary of War and John M. Berrien from Georgia as United States Attorney General.⁶

Towards the end of his address to Congress, Jackson explains that Indian removal is the United States government's duty to white civilization:

It is, therefore, a duty which this Government owes to the new States, to extinguish, as soon as possible, the Indian title to all lands which Congress themselves have included within their limits. When this is done, the duties of the General Government in relation to the States and the Indians within their limits are at an end. The Indians may leave the State or not, as they choose. The purchase of their lands does not alter, in the least, their personal relations with the State Government. No act of the General Government has ever been deemed necessary to give the States jurisdiction over the persons of the Indians. That they possess, by virtue of their sovereign power within their own limits, in as full a manner before as after the purchase of Indian lands; nor can this Government add to or diminish it. May we not hope, therefore, that all good citizens, and none more zealously than those who think the Indians oppressed by subjection to the laws of the States, will unite in attempting to open the eyes of those children of the forest to their true condition, and, by a speedy removal, to relieve them from all the evils, real or imaginary, present or prospective, with which they may be supposed to be threatened.⁷

It is evident from his address to Congress that Jackson held a paternalistic and patronizing attitude toward the Native Americans. He described Indians as being like children in need of guidance and he truly believed that he was helping them by forcing removal. At this time, most Americans did not believe that the young nation would expand further west than the Mississippi River. Thus, by removing Indians to that area, he believed he was saving them from devastation and destruction that whites might and did inflict upon them. Nonetheless, Jackson's thinking reflected that of many other white people of the time who believed that the removal of Native Americans to reserved lands in the West made perfect sense and was clearly justified.

⁶ Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle Against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *The Journal of American History*, Vol 86, No 1 (June 1999), 16.

⁷ *Ibid*, 27-28.

Although Jackson claimed that concern for the welfare of Native Americans guided his removal policy, the real underlying reason was greed, although perhaps even this term is an oversimplification and “self-interest” is more apt. To white Americans at the time, political liberty was a function of economic independence, which usually meant owning property, such as land. In the early nineteenth century, the growing white population of the United States found that they needed more land on which to live and cultivate their crops. Geographically, it made the most sense to expand into the lower South. This proved problematic as several tribes of Native Americans already populated the area. These included the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole Tribes, which later came to be known as the Five Civilized Tribes. From the viewpoint of the whites, these “uncivilized savages,” as they referred to Native Americans, were blocking the way for progress and expansion of the United States and its superior culture and institutions. Eager for land on which to raise cash crops, white settlers pressured the federal government to acquire the Indian Territory. Further motivating many Americans to displace the Indians was the ideology of Manifest Destiny, a belief that God had destined the United States and its citizens to occupy all of North America. Still, there was considerable opposition to removal, by both men and women, especially outside the South. Some opponents saw removal as cruel and inhumane. Christian missionaries like Jeremiah Evarts, and liberal reformers such as Catharine Beecher, were highly vocal in their opposition to Indian removal. Several congressmen also opposed the policy. Even future president Abraham Lincoln voiced strong disapproval to Indian removal. However, such opponents were in the minority over the issue and the act was passed after harsh debate in 1830.⁸

⁸ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Has God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford

The passage of the Indian Removal Act was the culmination of Jackson's longstanding efforts to displace the Native Americans from their native lands. These efforts began as early as 1814 when, as commander of federal troops, he defeated a division of the Creek Nation. The defeated Creeks were forced to cede to the United States 22 million acres of their land in southern Alabama and Georgia. Four years later, General Jackson gained for the United States even more land by invading Spanish Florida and defeating the Seminole Indians. Jackson was instrumental in negotiating nine of the eleven treaties with Native Americans between 1814 and 1824, all of which stripped the tribes from their homelands in the southeast in exchange for land in the west. Through these treaties, the United States gained control of over three-quarters of present-day Alabama and Florida, as well as large parts of Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky, and North Carolina. The migration of Indians from these lands was voluntary, however, and only a small number of them actually moved to the new land.

The unwillingness of the Indians to leave their lands upset many land-hungry whites, who increasingly believed that more forceful measures were necessary to fulfill the nation's providential destiny. To that end, the Supreme Court, in the 1823 landmark case *Johnson v. McIntosh*, decided that Indians could occupy lands within the United States but they could not hold legal title to those lands.⁹ In essence, the Court claimed that their "right of occupancy" was subordinate to the United States' "right of discovery." In response, the Creeks, Cherokee, and Chickasaw established policies of restricting land sales to the United States government in an attempt to protect their remaining lands. In

University Press, 2009), 348-352.

⁹ *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823) was the first case in the Marshall Trilogy of the United States Supreme Court. *The Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. the State of Georgia* (1832) were the other two cases in this trilogy in which Chief Justice John Marshall used the "Discovery Doctrine" to decide ownership of new lands under colonial power.

hopes of further protecting their property, Native Americans began living as the whites by engaging in large scale agriculture, adopting American-style education, and in some cases converting to Christianity. However, this attempt to coexist peacefully with the settlers backfired because it only made whites jealous and resentful.¹⁰ Because the Indians refused to sell their lands, Forced removal of the Native Americans therefore became increasingly appealing to Southern whites.

The Indian Removal Act required forced emigration of tens of thousands of Native Americans from their homelands in the East to reserved lands in the West. On September 27, 1830, the first removal treaty signed after the Removal Act was the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, in which Choctaws in Mississippi ceded their lands east of the river in exchange for money and western land.¹¹ Shortly thereafter began the migration route that would come to be known as the Trail of Tears. The first known use of this phrase was in a quote in the Arkansas Gazette by a Choctaw chief who called the 1831 Choctaw migration a “trail of tears and death.”¹² Although not deadly, circumstances for those Choctaw who chose to stay on their native lands were certainly tearful as white settlers squatted on their land, cheated them in land holdings, and generally harassed them. The War Department made only a half-hearted attempt to protect them, compelling many of the remaining Choctaws to sell their land and migrate west.

Some Indians simply refused to leave their land; some even waged war against white settlers and the federal government. Illustrative are the proud Seminoles, who fought several wars with white settlers and federal troops. The First Seminole War (1817-

¹⁰ Anthony C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 10-11.

¹¹ Howe, *What Has God Wrought*, 348-352.

¹² Len Green, "Trail of Tears from Mississippi Walked by Our Choctaw Ancestors," *Bishinik*, March 1995, 4-5.

1818) was first sparked by American squatters and outlaws who raided the Seminoles, killing villagers and stealing their cattle. The Seminoles responded by stealing back their cattle, killing several squatters, and attacking a United States military supply boat. Fugitive slaves, who had found protection among the Seminoles, aided the Indians in their attacks. The presence of these runaway slaves further enraged white settlers, who demanded that the federal government displace the Seminoles. General Andrew Jackson responded by leading 2,800 white troops and 1,400 Creek warriors against Seminole villagers in Florida. In the treaty of Moultrie Creek, the defeated Seminoles agreed to cede most of their land in exchange for a four million square acre reservation in central Florida. Following the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the Seminoles were forced to sign the Payne's Landing Treaty (1833) that required their removal to the West. The refusal of some Seminoles to leave their lands sparked the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). Again, fugitive slaves fought with the Seminoles. Thousands died in the war, which cost the United States government approximately \$50 million, which was ten times the amount apportioned for the entire Indian removal. As a result of the war, many Seminoles reluctantly moved to the new territory in the west. Those who stayed fought another war, the Third Seminole War (1855-1858), which forced most of the remaining Seminoles to relocate to reservations in the West.

The Creeks also refused to migrate to the West. A treaty between the Creeks and the United States government was signed in March 1832, opening up large portions of Creek lands in Alabama to white settlers. The federal government guaranteed to protect the Creek's remaining lands, which was divided among the leading families. However, the government did not protect them from speculators, who cheated them out of their

land. By 1835, many Creeks were impoverished to the point that they were stealing livestock and crops from white settlers. Some even committed arson and murder in protest of their mistreatment. In 1836, the Secretary of War Lewis Cass declared their removal a military necessity. Even though the Creeks never signed a removal treaty, by 1837 approximately 15,000 Creeks had been forced to migrate west.¹³

The Cherokee used yet another method to retain control of their native lands. In 1791, a treaty between the United States government and the Cherokee Nation granted land in the state of Georgia to the Cherokee. They lived there peaceably until 1828, when white settlers began encroaching on the land after gold was found on Cherokee territory. They sought to use legal means in order to safeguard their rights and to protect their land and property from land-hungry white settlers who continually harassed them by stealing their livestock, burning their towns, and squatting on their land. To that end, the Cherokee, in 1827, adopted a written constitution declaring themselves to be a sovereign nation, and therefore, legally capable of ceding their lands. However, the state of Georgia sought to reclaim Cherokee land in 1830 by refusing to recognize their sovereign status and declaring them to be tenants living on state land. The Cherokee Nation took their case to the United States Supreme Court. In the 1831 landmark case, *the Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia*, the Supreme Court ruled that the Cherokee Nation was not a foreign nation but rather a “dependent domestic nation,” and therefore the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction. The result was that the Cherokee Nation's land cessions would remain, but they were denied the right to sue in federal court to prevent their removal

¹³ Ibid.

from tribal lands.¹⁴ Undeterred, the Cherokee went again to the Supreme Court in the case 1832 *Worcester v. the State of Georgia*.¹⁵ This time, their appeal was based on the 1830 Georgia law which prohibited whites from living on Indian Territory without a state license after March 31, 1831. The state legislature had passed this law to justify removing white missionaries who were helping the Indians resist removal. This time the Supreme Court ruled in their favor by declaring that the Cherokee had the right to self-government, and that Georgia's extension of state law over them to be unconstitutional. However, this legal victory did not count for much as the state of Georgia refused to abide by the Court's decision and President Jackson refused to enforce the ruling. As is evidenced in the power struggle here as well as in others throughout the removal process, the issue of states' rights is brought to the forefront. Because states' rights are about inhibiting federal interaction in state affairs, such as what to do with the Indians, states such as Georgia and Alabama believed that their rights superseded any rulings made by a federal court.

Instead, the President and Congress forced the Cherokee Nation to surrender their land under the Treaty of New Echota of 1835. However, the majority of Cherokee people, nearly 15,000, opposed the treaty, leading Chief John Ross and several other tribal leaders to write a letter of protest in 1836 to Congress stating their case. In their letter, the tribal leaders claimed that the delegation of Cherokee who signed the Treaty of New Echota was not acting in the tribe's best interest:

A spurious Delegation, in violation of a special injunction of the general council of the nation, proceeded to Washington City with this pretended treaty, and by false and fraudulent representations supplanted in the favor of the Government the legal and accredited Delegation of the Cherokee

¹⁴ "Cherokee Nation Denied Foreign Nation Status (Reason): American Treasures at the Library of Congress," <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr050.html>, (accessed July 20, 2011).

¹⁵ Final case in the Marshall Trilogy of the United State Supreme Court in which Chief Justice John Marshall used the "Discovery Doctrine," which ignored aboriginal land possession.

people, and obtained for this instrument, after making important alternations in its provisions, the recognition of the United States Government...By the stipulation of this instrument, we are despoiled of our private possessions, the indefeasible property of individuals. We are stripped of every attribute of freedom and eligibility for legal self-defense. Our property may be plundered before our eyes; violence may be committed on our persons; even our lives may be taken away, and there is none to regard our complaints. We are denationalized; we are disenfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family! We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own. And this is effected [sic] by the provisions of a compact which assumes the venerated, the sacred appellation of treaty.¹⁶

The letter goes on to explain how their human rights had been violated in their mistreatment and harassment by white settlers and the federal government. However, the plea of Chief Ross and the other Cherokee leaders fell on deaf ears. In the winter of 1838 and 1839, federal troops were ordered to “escort” approximately 15,000 Cherokee to the new territory in the West.¹⁷ Nearly 4,000 Cherokee died en route. The Cherokee aptly referred to this migration as “The Trail Where They Cried,” which is now commonly known as the Trail of Tears.¹⁸

In contrast, the Chickasaw did not protest removal because they considered it inevitable. In 1832, the Chickasaw signed a removal treaty with the United States government, which stated that the federal government would provide them with reserved land in the west and protect them from whites while they were still in the southeast. However, as with the Choctaws and the Creeks, the magnitude of harassment by white settlers went beyond what the War Department was willing to handle, causing the

¹⁶ John Ross, “Letter from John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation of Indians, in Answer to Inquires from a Friend Regarding the Cherokee Affairs with the United States” (Washington, D.C., 1836), 22–24.

¹⁷ Cherokee Removal Orders, No. 25, U.S. Army Head Quarters, Eastern Division., Cherokee Agency, TN, May 17, 1838, *Indian Land Cessions in the American Southeast*, 1838.

¹⁸ Angela Darrenkamp, “The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears: Cause, Effect, and Justification.” *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/7402>, (accessed July 15, 2011).

government to renege on its promise. Thus, the Chickasaw were forced to pay rent to the Choctaws for land on which they lived in the west. The Chickasaw, like the other nations, migrated to the west in the winter of 1837 and 1838.¹⁹

The historical background of Native American Removal is varied and somewhat complicated. There were many events over many years that finally culminated in the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This policy allowed for removal treaties to be negotiated between the United States and tribal governments. These treaties resulted in the forced migration and relocation of tens of thousands of Indians from their native lands in the Southeast to unsettled lands in the West. The tribes agreed to the treaties for strategic reasons; they wanted to appease the United States government, hoping to retain some of their land, and they wanted to protect themselves from further white harassment. One of the biggest proponents of Indian removal was Andrew Jackson. Historians disagree on the motives of Andrew Jackson in implementing his removal policy, but they all agree that he was the driving force behind Native American Removal.²⁰ By 1837, Andrew Jackson and his administration had removed approximately 46,000-60,000 Native Americans and had obtained treaties to remove even more.²¹ In doing so, the federal government opened roughly 25 million acres of land to white settlement. The motives of white settlers, the United States government, and President Andrew Jackson in particular, are still debated by historians; however, many agree that greed and self-interest played a large role. While it is understood that the attitudes and prejudices of the time must be considered in respect to Indian removal, it is still regarded as an extremely tragic and

¹⁹ Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 239.

²⁰ Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail*, 4.

²¹ Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932, reprint 1972), 7.

CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF REMOVAL IN ALABAMA

American expansionism is an important part of the early history of the United States; however, it had dire consequences on the Native Americans who already occupied the land. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson deemed it an “indispensable necessity” that the federal government build a road from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans. Creek Indians held a vast amount of land in the proposed route and they generously agreed to the United States government using their land for the construction of the Federal Road. However, by 1810 the road, little more than a horse path, was widened, allowing for the migration of thousands of white settlers into land previously occupied by Indians.¹ Many of the tribes native to Alabama resisted this intrusion and fought back. Although the state of Georgia was much more involved than Alabama in the removal of Native Americans to reserved lands west of the Mississippi River, some of the major battles between whites and Indians took place in Alabama.² The major reasons for this conflict include the invasion of whites onto Creek lands, a struggling Creek economy and made even more calamitous by the loss of skills among its members, and a new religious movement within the Creek Nation. Finally, while there is not much documentation regarding the opposition of women to Indian removal in

¹ Atkins, Leah, William Warren Rogers, Robert David Ward, and Wayne Flynt. *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 44.

² See Location Map of Battles in Appendix.

Alabama, there is the illuminating story of a Creek woman who was forced to travel to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears, but later returned to Alabama.

When William Bartram, the noted traveler and botanist, travelled through the Southeast in the late eighteenth century, he noted that the Creeks were “a proud, haughty, and arrogant race of men; they are brave and valiant in war, ambitious of conquests, restless and perpetually exercising their arms, yet magnanimous and merciful to a vanquished enemy when he submits and seeks their friendship and protection.”³ Hence, as white settlers began flooding into the area and with the English and Spanish trying to turn the Indians against the Americans, the Creeks were thrown into turmoil. Several factors contributed to the war between white settlers in Alabama and the pugnacious Red Stick faction of Creeks, so-called because they carried red-painted war clubs.⁴ One of the main factors was the Red Sticks’ opposition to the Creek National Council, the primary governing body of the Creek Nation. The National Council, with the help of federal Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins, was able to expand their power over both the Upper and Lower Creeks. However, the Red Sticks were opposed to this new power, which dictated that instead of allowing individual tribes to govern themselves, the Council would preside over the whole Creek Nation. The Creeks were also undergoing drastic changes in their way of life as well as in their economy. Many Native Americans began to abandon their traditional way of life in favor of a more Americanized style of life, which was accomplished by adopting Anglo-American agricultural practices, American education and Christianity, and owning slaves. This caused a generational divide as the younger

³ Albert Burton Moore. *History of Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University Supply Store, 1934), 20.

⁴ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, “Creek War of 1813-1814,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama* (accessed November 30, 2011), 3.

generations favored these new ways, while the older generation wanted to retain Creek traditions. Perhaps worse, Indians increasingly traded for their goods, rather than crafting them, and they no longer farmed as they had in the past. Thus, they lost their skills, making them totally dependent on American trade goods for their survival.⁵ This rift led to the Creeks breaking into two factions: Creeks who wanted to become more Americanized and the Red Sticks who favored the more traditional Creek ways. Indeed, a major cause of the war involved a spiritual movement that swept through many Native American tribes. This religious movement called for a return to the old traditions and way of life. Many Red Sticks had converted to this new religion that opposed white interference in their traditional ways. They believed that they should continue to follow the ways of their ancestors. The main leader of this religion in Alabama was Josiah Francis, who the Red Stick people called Hillis Hadjo, or the Alabama Prophet. To separate themselves from the other Creeks, Francis created a new settlement for his religious followers called Econochaca (Holy Ground), near present day White Hall in Lowndes County.⁶ A final reason for the native-settler conflict involved whites encroaching into Indian land. Adding fuel to the fire were Shawnee tribes of the Ohio River Valley calling for all Indians to unite with them in their opposition to white expansion. In his 1811 visit to Alabama, the famous Shawnee chief Tecumseh failed to gain the cooperation of the Choctaw and Cherokee Nations, but he was heartily welcomed by the Red Stick Creeks, who also opposed assimilation and removal.⁷ These factors helped set the stage for the bloodshed that followed.

⁵ Krawczynski, Class Notes, 2011.

⁶ Gregory A. Waselkov, "Return to Holy Ground: The Legendary Battle Site Discovered," *Alabama Heritage*, No 101, Summer 2011, 30.

⁷ Atkins et al, *Alabama*, 46.

The Creek Wars of 1813-1814 began as a civil war between the Upper and Lower Creeks. Many Red Sticks belonged to the Upper Creek Nation, while those Creeks who were more willing to adapt themselves and their way of life to the white man's style of living belonged to the Lower Creek Nation. Both Upper and Lower Creeks were governed by the Creek National Council. The Red Stick Creeks' opposition to the Creek National Council caused much conflict between the two factions. Not all Upper Creeks supported the Red Sticks' cause, however, nor did all of the Lower Creeks agree with the National Council. Although Tecumseh tried in vain to persuade all Indians tribes to unite against the United States government, helping to expand this internal civil war into a larger conflagration was the rumor among white settlers, later proved false, that upon Tecumseh's departure from Alabama he left a bunch of red-painted sticks that were to be displayed in Creeks towns to symbolize warfare.⁸ Many white settlers in the area, however, believed the story, which increased tensions between Indians and whites. Reports of Indian attacks against settlers only intensified this tension. President Jackson skillfully exploited tribal animosities. Pushing many whites over the edge was the looming war with Britain (War of 1812), whose agents were supplying the Creeks with guns and ammunition and goading them to attack settlers. To protect themselves, the Americans waged war on the Creeks. Many members of the Choctaw and Cherokee Nations, in an effort to appease the whites, joined the Americans in their fight against the Creeks. Therefore, what started as a civil war among the Creeks quickly evolved into a war between several different Indian nations and white people.

The first battle of the Creek war took place in the summer of 1813, when Creek prophets Peter McQueen, chief of the Upper Creek town of Talisi (Tallassee), Josiah

⁸ Atkins, et al, *Alabama*, 47.

Francis, and another prophet called High-Head Jim led a large party of several hundred Red Sticks to Pensacola, Florida to buy guns and ammunition from the Spanish government for an attack on Tuckabatchee, a traditional seat of power for the Creeks and a town loyal to the National Council. American soldiers at Fort Mims heard of the endeavor and planned to intercept them. On July 27, 1813, the American party, under the command of Colonel James Caller and Captain Dixon Bailey, overtook the Red Sticks on their return trip at the banks of Burnt Corn Creek near present-day Brewton in Escambia County.⁹ Initially the Americans overwhelmed the Red Sticks, sending them into the swamps. However, the Creek warriors quickly regrouped and counterattacked the soldiers, causing them to retreat. Their victory over the Americans raised the morale of the Creeks and caused the prophets to call for the death of all whites.¹⁰ The Red Sticks retaliated by plotting to attack Fort Mims, a military stronghold and garrison for white settlers located in northern Baldwin County, Alabama.

When the Americans received word of an intended attack, Brigadier General Ferdinand L. Claiborne warned the commander of the fort, Major Daniel Beasley, that he was “exceedingly exposed” and ordered him to “enroll every citizen that is willing to perform duty.”¹¹ Beasley, who was an attorney appointed to the army through his political connections, had no military experience and little common sense; he discounted both the warnings and instructions. Hundreds of white settlers fled to Fort Mims for safety. In all, over 500 settlers and armed militia took cover in the fort. Although there were repeated reports of a planned attack against the fort, Beasley disregarded them. On the very morning of the attack, August 30, 1813, Beasley wrote to Claiborne that the

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 48.

¹¹ Ibid, 48-49.

alleged attack was a “false alarm” and blamed it on two slave boys who claimed they saw “a great number of Indians Painted, running and halloing.” Even though other blacks also reported having seen the Indians, Beasley continued to deny the claims, and even went so far as to punish them for making the claims and scaring the inhabitants of Fort Mims. Thus, not believing the threats, Beasley was careless in securing the fort against attack. Evidence of this can be seen in an eye-witness account from one of the settlers taking cover at Fort Mims:

Just before the attack on Fort Mims, James Cornells rode up and shouted a warning through the open front gate, an alarm William Weatherford, who was hiding in the swamp with his warriors, heard clearly. Beasley ordered Cornells arrested, but he turned his horse and rode away. At noon on August 30, when lunch was being served, the Indians rushed the fort. Beasley had been so negligent that he could not close the stockade doors because sand had drifted against them.¹²

Varying accounts report that between 700 and 1000 Red Sticks attacked, under the command of William Weatherford, a prominent Creek leader, and Peter McQueen. Hundreds of American soldiers and settlers were killed, women and children included, and several of those remaining were taken as captives.¹³ The Fort Mims Massacre, as it has come to be called, marked the transition of a civil war among the Creek Nation to a war between Red Stick Creeks and the Americans.

In retaliation to the massacre, the United States government sought to crush the Creek Indians and force them into submission by attacking and destroying the Red Stick strongholds of Holy Ground, located in the rural Tombigbee and Tensaw districts north of Mobile, Autosee, near present-day Shorter in Macon County, and Tohopeka, or “Horseshoe Bend,” in the Tallapoosa River. The towns were established as regional

¹² Ibid, 49.

¹³ Ibid.

points of assembly as well as for their defensible locations in case of attack. These fortifications became the primary targets of whites. In retaliation of the Fort Mims Massacre and an attempt to crush the Red Sticks, Jackson met with two others military leaders to organize an attack on another of these fortifications, Tallushatchee, near present day Anniston in Calhoun County. Jackson ordered General John Coffee to attack the stronghold on November 3, 1813. In a letter published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* on November 29, 1813, Jackson stated, "Sir, – We have retaliated for the destruction of Ft. Mims. On the 2nd [of November 1813], I detached Gen. Coffee with a portion of this brigade of cavalry and mounted rifleman, to destroy Tallushatchee where a considerable force of hostile Creeks were concentrated."¹⁴ Coffee won the battle easily and was praised by Jackson, although in his report to Jackson, he commented on the courage and bravery of the Red Sticks. He wrote, "The enemy fought with savage fury and met with death in all its horrors, without shrinking or complaining, not one asked to be spared, but fought as long as they could sit or stand."¹⁵ This is a revealing statement, proving the will of the Indians and their determination to fight for their lands, homes, and way of life.

In spite of this victory and because of the widespread fear and panic caused by the Fort Mims Massacre, several groups of armed American military forces combined for the attack on Holy Ground. General Claiborne, who had a particularly strong animosity against the Red Sticks since it was his men who were bested at Fort Mims, led the attack on December 23, 1813. Joining him in the attack was a group of Choctaw warriors led by Pushmataha and armies from Georgia and Tennessee. Defending Holy Ground were over two hundred Red Stick and Alabama Creeks who were not terribly worried about an

¹⁴ Joseph W. Pearson, "Fall 1813: General Jackson Moves South," *Alabama Heritage*, No 110, Fall 2013, 44.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 45.

American assault, as they believed that the prophets would ensure their safety and their victory. George Stiggins, a Creek who fought with the Americans, described Holy Ground as “a spot made sacred by the great spirit, and consecrated only for the Indians.”¹⁶ The Red Sticks therefore believed the fortification was impregnable because of the wall of stakes and fallen logs surrounding it, as well as the spiritual barrier surrounding the town that would cause harm or death to white people. Believing the invisible barrier would protect them, the Red Sticks delayed removing women and children to safety and securing the town. However, upon learning that Claiborne and his men were nearby, Weatherford quickly evacuated all women and children from the village. On December 23, 1813, American forces attacked the town in phases and from all sides. A group of territorial volunteers from Mississippi struck first in a skirmish near a swamp before flooding into the town. As white troops crossed the spiritual barrier around the town, a dismayed Josiah Francis and his followers fled the town. Even with the spiritual barrier broken, Weatherford and his group of Alabamas remained to hold off the American forces until the center and left columns of the American army overwhelmed them south of Holy Ground. With the last of the Red Stick contingent retreating into the swamps, Weatherford and his men made their escape. Although the American forces failed to completely surround the village, allowing many Indians to escape, some twenty or thirty Indians were killed in the skirmish and a large quantity of their supplies and food stolen before the village was burned by the Americans. In

¹⁶ Atkins, et al. *Alabama*, 31.

comparison, only one American life was lost with several others wounded. Despite their defeat, the Creeks rebounded and vowed revenge on the American army.¹⁷

The decisive battle between the Indians and white people, however, was the Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814. General Andrew Jackson planned to attack the roughly one thousand Red Stick warriors who had taken refuge at Tohopeka, and, with his men and a group of friendly Creeks led by William McIntosh, began marching south. When they reached Tohopeka, General Jackson and his army surrounded the fort. The friendly Creeks, along with a group of Cherokee, stationed themselves on the banks opposite the fort and guarded the rear of the fort in case the Red Sticks tried to escape. Unbeknownst to General Jackson, a group of Creeks and Cherokee abruptly crossed the river and set fire to buildings near the river before attacking the rear of the fort. General Jackson took advantage of the confusion and attacked from the front. The fighting was fierce and intense. An account of the battle states: "Arrows, and spears, and balls were flying; swords and tomahawks were gleaming in the sun and the whole Peninsula rang with the yell of the savages, and the groans of the dying."¹⁸ One of General Jackson's men, Alexander McCullough, later noted that the Tallapoosa "might truly be called the River of blood for the water was so stained that at 10 O'clock [sic] at night it was very perceptibly bloody so much so that it could not be used."¹⁹ Even after the battle, American soldiers chased the retreating Red Sticks through the swamps and killed them. In letters written to family and friends, General Jackson almost bragged about this

¹⁷ Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Battle of Holy Ground". *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. <http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1811> (accessed August 30, 2013).

¹⁸ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars*, 77.

¹⁹ Alexander McCullough, "To Frances F. McCullough, April 1, 1814," Thomas W. Cutrer, "The Tallapoosa Might Truly Be Called the River of Blood: Major Alexander McCullough and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, March 27, 1814." *Alabama Review* 43 (January 1990), 38.

massacre by remarking that “the firing and the slaughter continued until it was suspended by the darkness of the night. It was dark before we finished killing them.”²⁰ Following his victory, General Jackson and his troops proceeded to the site of the earlier French Fort Toulouse, near present-day Wetumpka, where he built a fortification and designated it Fort Jackson.

These vicious battles convinced the Creek Indians to sign a peace treaty with the United States government. On August 14, 1814, General Jackson called a meeting at Fort Jackson to present a treaty to the Creek leaders. Essentially, the treaty called for a large cession of land as payment for the cost of the war. Only one Red Stick leader signed the treaty, but the Creek National Council signed the treaty on behalf of all Creeks in Alabama. Tragically, even these Creeks who had aided the American forces against the Red Sticks were coerced to give up a majority of their lands, despite promises from the whites that they could keep their land. The confiscated land covered over 20 million acres west of the Coosa River, as well as an area south of the Tallapoosa River and north of the border with Florida that reached from the Tombigbee River to the St. Marys River. Soon afterward, white settlers began rushing into Alabama to claim the Creek land.²¹

In order to ease Indian-settler hostilities, the United States government proposed a policy to remove the Indians and provide for them an area reserved solely for their occupation in the west. The main objective of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was to gain ownership of Indian lands. The policy of using treaties to advance American imperialism was not new. Treaties coercing the Indians to cede their lands began as early

²⁰ Andrew Jackson to William Blount, March 31, Andrew Jackson to Rachel Jackson, April 1, 1814, in Jackson, *Correspondence*, I, 491-493, in Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966), 230.

²¹ Atkins, et al, *Alabama*, 53.

as the late eighteenth century. Constant migration of white settlers into western lands, coupled with the election of the wealthy land speculator and notorious Indian hater Andrew Jackson to the presidency expedited the plan. In fact, President Jackson was one of the leading proponents of Indian removal and led a full-scale campaign to implement the plan. He had been one of the military commanders involved in the Battle of Holy Ground, and later he led the American forces at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. In order to execute this plan as peaceably as possible, the American government compiled various treaties between 1828 and 1835, in which the Indians ceded much of their land to the United States government in exchange for new land in the West. On June 13, 1837, United States Secretary of War Joel Poinsett wrote to Governor Clement Clay of Alabama to inform him of the government's decision to remove the Indians from Alabama and of the protection that will be provided to them by the army:

The Department concurs in your views as to the importance of removing, at the earliest practical period, the Indians to which you allude, and will leave no necessary means untried, to effect so important an object and until their removal shall be accomplished, it is fully sensible of the important duty, resting upon the Government of affording protection to the inhabitants of that section of the country where the Indians remain.²²

These treaties provided land in the Oklahoma Territory and small money compensations for their former lands. The government agreed to pay for the cost of removal and support them for a year following their removal. The federal government also promised titles to the new land in the West for "as long as the grass grows or water runs," with the added stipulation that neither states nor territories could take the land. Although the few Indians who chose to remain were promised the chance to become citizens and each family

²² Joel Poinsett to Clement Clay, June 13, 1837, Alabama Department of Archives and History, <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/3692> (accessed October 31, 2011).

would be given 640 acres of land, white people found loopholes to deny them these concessions.²³

Though the years between the Creek Wars and Indian removal were relatively quiet, some Red Stick Creeks refused to surrender and continued to pillage and harass white settlers throughout the state. In response, Governor John Gayle instructed the Indian agents to visit with Creek Indians and

impress upon them that the authorities of Alabama desire to protect them in all their right, to relieve their wants, as much as possible and redress their grievances. At the same time they should be made to comprehend fully their relations in their present situation with the white people & our laws. They cannot live among us without rendering obedience to the laws, and they must not indulge the expectation that they can commit offenses of any deception, with impunity.²⁴

In the same letter, Gayle explains why he believes the Creeks must be removed:

A state of society exists in the Country ceded by the Creek Indians, that has no paralel [sic] in our history, and unless they can be induced to emigrate, (will) be attended with inconvenienies [sic] that will counterbalance the advantages to be derived from the acquisition of their (laws).

In their present ignorance & with their savage habits, they cannot be brought to submit to the restraints of civilization, not [sic] are they fitted to participate its benefits. The impositions to which, they are liable, and which will be constantly practiced upon them, in their intercourse with the whites, will keep them perpetually excited and dissatisfied, and looking as they do to no consequences beyond the destruction of those upon whom they seek revenge themselves, they have at all times the power which they will frequently exert, suddenly rising upon and destroying whole neighborhoods. This will in turn provoke the vengence [sic] of the whites, which could be appeased by nothing short of the extermination of the savages.²⁵

²³ Moore, *History of Alabama*, 31.

²⁴ John Gayle to Indian Agents, June 16, 1834, Alabama Department of Archives and History, <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/2181> (accessed November 12, 2011).

²⁵ Gayle to Indian Agents, June 16, 1834.

Since the United States government could not provide full protection or guarantee the Indians' safety, many believed the best solution was to get rid of them. Governor Gayle sums up this feeling in one sentence, which resembles a thinly veiled threat. "It is therefore of the utmost importance that you persuade them to go to the Country which has been provided for them west of the Mississippi, before they experience the disasters which await them in their present situation."²⁶ This quote makes it clear that Governor Gayle fully supported removal and wanted to drive Indians from Alabama by any means necessary.

With their defeat at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814, many Red Sticks surrendered, preferring to throw themselves at the mercy of whites or face certain death by their own people, who blamed the Red Sticks for the Creek downfall. Some, however, escaped removal by refusing to surrender and continuing to attack white settlers, while others simply went into hiding. Evidence of this can be found as late as 1837 in a letter from Secretary of War Joel Poinsett to Governor Clement Clay:

Of those [Indians] who were encamped, and taken to Montgomery, preparatory to their removal West of the Mississippi, some escaped and returned to the Swamps of the Creek territory, where they united with others who had perhaps never made professions of friendship, or a willingness to emigrate. It is...impossible to ascertain satisfactorily how many of these deluded Savages, are still lurking within our limits, -- but I am conclusively satisfied...that there are yet several hundreds [sic] dispersed into small parties, and infesting almost the whole Country.²⁷

The Creeks who chose to stay pledged their loyalty to the United States and agreed to assimilate. The 1832 Treaty of Cusseta between the United States government and the Creeks allowed for those who remained protection from white settlers. The treaty also stipulated that no whites were allowed on Indian land until they had harvested their crops

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Poinsett to Clay, June 13, 1837.

and the government had surveyed the land, and the displaced Creeks had selected their land out west. However, neither the Alabama state legislature nor the settlers abided by these federal guidelines. The state legislature immediately began dividing the land into counties and claimed jurisdiction over it. Meanwhile, white settlers rushed in to claim the land. Angry Creek Indians protested this illegal behavior, at times with violence. Animosity and violence between Indians and settlers escalated to the point where even federal troops were unable to end the fighting.²⁸

Many Indians protested their forced removal to lands west of the Mississippi River. One such person was Te-lah-nay, or Woman with the Dancing Eyes, a member of the Yuchi tribe of Creek Indians who lived in the Tennessee River Valley region. This remarkable woman chronicled her experiences during the removal period in a diary. In explaining why she kept journals documenting her journey, Te-lah-nay says, “I must not let the long walk fade from my memory. I must tell my children of the people and places.”²⁹ Important to the Yuchi people is the Tennessee River, which they called the “Singing River.” The Yuchi tribe believed that a young woman lived in the Tennessee River who sang glorious songs. Te-lah-nay claimed that when she reached her new home in present-day Oklahoma she could no longer hear the songs of the rivers and streams and frequently dreamed that her grandmother gestured to her to come to where she sat on a hill near the river. She explains, “I see a stream, but there’s no sound. Every time we’ve stopped to water the horses or to make camp at a stream, I hear no sound. The streams here are silent. They do not talk to me.”³⁰ For this reason, Te-lah-nay feared death and decided to return to her homeland in north Alabama. It took her two years to complete the

²⁸ Atkins, et al., *Alabama*, 90-91.

²⁹ Tom Hendrix. *If the Legends Fade*. (Tom Hendrix: 2000), 167.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 60.

difficult and dangerous 700 mile journey. Nonetheless, she did, and went on to live a full and productive life.³¹

In addition to demonstrating her opposition to removal, Te-lah-nay's account also offers a glimpse into how the Indians were treated on the journey. In one incident, one of the Americans officers leading the group gives them instructions. He tells them, "Each of you will be given a numbered tag. You are to wear it at all times. Children will also wear small bells."³² Such treatment implies that whites viewed the Native Americans as something akin to convicts and animals. She also includes an account of the Indian agents' "inventory" of Indians travelling in this group: "20 Chickasaws: 7 women, 9 children, and 4 men. 12 Creeks: 5 women, 5 children, and 2 men. 11 Choctaws: 8 women, 3 children. 30 Cherokees: 11 women, 12 children, and 5 men."³³ The agent reported that they Indians were generally in good health. When they reached Fort Smith, Arkansas, officers divided the natives into smaller groups by tribes. A government agent explains to them, "Those Indians that's wearing white folks' clothes and armbands are interpreters. Over there in the Territory, they got sections and the government wants all the Indians of a tribe located together. Seems they think they'll be easier to handle that way."³⁴ Although Te-lah-nay recounts one rape attempt, the soldiers were generally indifferent to the natives.

Te-lah-nay's story also provides an example of a black woman's opposition to Indian removal. When Te-lah-nay and her sister, Whana-le, are captured after an attempt to return to Alabama, they are turned over to a local constable and locked in a jail cell.

³¹ Ibid, xi-xiii.

³² Ibid, 25.

³³ Ibid, 26.

³⁴ Ibid, 54.

The constable charges a black woman named Lottie to look after them until a government agent arrives to take them to meet a group of Indians and American soldiers who are travelling to Oklahoma. Lottie takes pity on the sisters and even provides them each with a bundle of food for the trip. During their time together Lottie expresses her thoughts on removal, “I wonder what that government man gonna do with the likes of you. Shore don’t understand why the government wants to git rid of you, you ain’t no threat to no one. They should get after them no goods that hangs around town drunk, instead, and them painted women.”³⁵ Upon Te-lah-nay’s return to Alabama, she finds Lottie, who by that time works for Mary Lou Ferguson, a widow who runs a boarding house and inn. When Lottie tells Ferguson about Te-lah-nay’s story, she replies, “Good heavens, Lottie. If she has done that [walked here from the Indian Territory in Oklahoma], I think we must try and help her. Goodness knows she deserves it.”³⁶ A strong bond develops between the women, and Ferguson unofficially adopts Te-lah-nay, who is listed as a member of Ferguson’s household on the 1840 United States census.³⁷ As these statements and actions indicate, white and black women also disagreed with the policies of the United States government toward Native Americans. Similarly, Te-lah-nay recounts her grandmother’s opinion of white people and her view of the future:

I see a time of change. The whites are all among us. They look upon things differently than we do. Maybe they are pale colored because when the earth was born, they were hiding on the other side of the moon. Their ways seem strange to us, but maybe our ways are strange to them. The way they tear at the earth, I don’t believe they think of it as their Mother.³⁸

Her statement tells a great deal about how Indians viewed white people.

³⁵ Ibid, 18.

³⁶ Ibid, 177.

³⁷ Ibid, 202.

³⁸ Ibid, 165-166.

Te-lay-nah's grandmother plays an important role in her decision to return home.

Of her grandmother, Te-lah-nay says:

I miss her every day. Someday I want to go up to the river, past the shoulderbone, and build a rock wall for my people. The Sun will warm the stones and it will be a good place. It will honor them...My grandmother told us that it used to be a custom for our people to build stone walls. She said it was an honor those who traveled a path long ago.³⁹

Te-lah-nay was unable to build this stone wall, but her great-grandson Tom Hendrix fulfilled Te-lah-nay's dream by building this wall in her honor. It took him thirty years to complete the sacred stone wall. Each stone symbolizes a step in her journey. The wall varies in size, height, and width to represent the obstacles she encountered. "Tom's Wall" is recognized as the largest un-mortared stone wall in the United States as well as the largest memorial to a Native American woman.⁴⁰ Te-lah-nay's amazing story and the sacred stone wall graphically illustrates the strong opposition that some Indian women felt regarding their forced removal.

Most Americans today have at least some idea of how truly horrific the conditions and the physical and emotional hardships encountered in the actual Indian removal and their forced trip west were on the Indian people. Understanding this is important as it emphasizes what women were trying to actually avoid by opposing removal. Approximately 10,000 Native American Indians, with estimates ranging from 5,000 to as many as 25,000, died both during the journey and upon reaching Oklahoma due to the inability to adapt quickly to the land and living conditions.⁴¹ Their travels were marked with hardships, tragedy, and disease, such as outbreaks of cholera, insufficient supplies,

³⁹ Ibid, 209.

⁴⁰ Early Southern Culture, "Tom's Wall: Memorial to his Great Grandmother," www.visitflorenceal.com/attractions/6-early-southern-culture (accessed December 2, 2011).

⁴¹ National Park Service, "Stories of the Trail of Tears," Fort Smith, Arkansas, <http://www.nps.gov/fosm/historyculture/storiestrailoftears.htm> (accessed September 8, 2013).

bitterly cold weather, and death from starvation and exhaustion. It is little wonder that the Cherokee people came to refer to this forced migration as the “Trail of Tears,” or “The Place Where They Cried.” Other tribes called it the “Trail of Courage,” or even the “Trail of Death.”⁴² After the Indians arrived in their new lands, they found adaptation to the strange climate difficult and challenging. For many of them, many of their old traditions were lost; at the same time, new traditions began in the decades that followed the removal. For example, their knowledge and use of medicinal herbs remained with them, while the American ideas of an economic system in which land, crops, and livestock were commodities with monetary values and natural resources could be exploited for economic development. Nonetheless, their religious traditions remained intact and many of their oral traditions were recorded and preserved for generations to come. The story of removal is one that has been passed down from generation to generation among all the tribes, as it is part of their identity and is an essential part of their ability to adapt and change with their environment.

⁴² Donald Fixico, “American Indians,” Oklahoma Historical Society’s Encyclopedia of Oklahoma Culture and History, 2007, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/a/am010.html> (accessed December 2, 2011).

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN AND REMOVAL

Both white women and Indian women opposed the Indian Removal of the 1830s. This may seem somewhat puzzling, as the removal policy was a primarily political one, and therefore within the man's sphere; however, these women appreciated and feared the social impact of Indian removal. Native American men, particularly among the Creek and Muskogee, deemed women as incapable of rational thought. They therefore did not allow women to participate in political affairs.¹ In contrast, Cherokee women had a great deal more freedom and authority in political, economic, and religious affairs, a circumstance created by the egalitarian nature of Cherokee society.² This power was traditionally derived from their role as mothers ("bearers of life") and cultivators of the earth ("sustainers of life"). They used their power and authority as mothers to protest removal.³ In her book *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907*, Carolyn Ross Johnston provides an account of a Cherokee woman who appeals to the Cherokee respect for women as mothers by delivering a 1787 speech in which she

¹ Richard A. Sattler, "Women's Status among the Muskogee and Cherokee," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 220.

² *Ibid.*, 222.

³ Carolyn Ross Johnston, *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907* (University of Alabama Press, 2003), 56.

states, “I am in hopes that if you Rightly consider that woman is the mother of All—and the Woman does not pull Children out of Trees or Stumps nor out of old Logs, but out of their Bodies, so that they ought to mind what a woman says.”⁴

However, as the Cherokee began to adopt Anglo-American ways, particularly the practice of patriarchy, Indian women were pushed further from politics. Wilma Mankiller, a former Cherokee chief, explains this process: “Our tribe and others which are matriarchal have become assimilated and have adopted the cultural value of a larger society, and in so doing, we’ve adopted sexism. We’re going forward and backward at the same time. As we see a dilution of the original values, we see more sexism....The thinking that people come to in a patriarchal society is crazy.”⁵ Nonetheless, when floods of white settlers began moving into Indian-held lands and the federal government began to force their removal in 1817, Cherokee women spoke up on multiple occasions. In 1817 Cherokee women, led by Beloved Woman Nancy Ward, presented a petition to the all-male Cherokee National Council voicing their opposition to removal:

The Cherokee ladys [sic] now being present at the meeting of the chiefs and warriors in council have though it their duty as mothers to address their beloved chiefs and warriors now assembled.

Our beloved children and head men of the Cherokee Nation, we address you warriors in council. We have raised all of you on the land which we now have, which God gave us to inhabit and raise provisions. We know that our country has once been extensive, but by repeated sales has become circumscribed to a small track, and [we] never have thought it our duty to interfere in the disposition of it till now. If a father or mother was to sell all their lands which they had to depend on, which their children had to raise their living on, which would be indeed bad & to be removed to another country. We do not wish to go to an unknown country [to] which we have understood some of our children wish to go over the

⁴ Ibid, 58.

⁵ Devon Abbott Mihesuah. *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 42.

Mississippi, but this act of our children would be like destroying your mothers.

Your mothers, your sisters ask and beg of you not to part with any more of our land. We say ours. You are our descendents; take pity on our request. But keep it for our growing children, for it was the good will of our creator to place us here, and you know our father, the great president [James Monroe], will not allow his white children to take our country away. Only keep your hands off of paper talks for its our own country. For [if] it was not, they would not ask you to put your hands to paper, for it would be impossible to remove us all. For as soon as one child is raised, we have others in our arms, for such is our situation & will consider our circumstance.

Therefore, children, don't part with any more of our lands but continue on it & enlarge your farms. Cultivate and raise corn & cotton and your mothers and sisters will make clothing for you which our father the president has recommended to us all. We don't charge any body [sic] for selling any lands, but we have heard such intentions of our children. But your talks become true at last; it was our desire to forwarn [sic] you all not to part with our lands.

Nancy Ward to her children: Warriors to take pity and listen to the talks of your sisters. Although I am very old yet cannot but pity the situation in which you will here [sic] of their minds. I have great many grand children which [I] wish them to do well on our land.⁶

In analyzing the wording used in this petition, the reader can see that these women viewed the land, "our land," as belonging to the whole tribe and therefore not available for the male tribal members to cede. In using words such as "mother" and "children," they also emphasize a maternal aspect in their ownership. The wording is also a reminder and an appeal that any decisions made by the men will affect future generations of Cherokee. These women appeal to their God; they state that the men are opposing their God by ceding their land. In the fourth paragraph, the women advise that the tribe should continue the "Americanization" process by cultivating and raising crops. In doing so,

⁶ "Cherokee Women Resist Removal," Petitions of the Women's Councils, 1817, 1818. Petition, May 2, 1817. Presidential Papers Microfilm: Andrew Jackson. Washington, D.C., 1961, series 1, reel 22, in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, ed., *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, (New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2005), 124-125.

they perhaps believe that this will discourage the removal process. By “for[e]warning” them, these women are advising the men against agreeing to cession of their lands. These women wished for their children and grandchildren to be raised on the land and in their native traditions. They therefore warned their leaders to be very careful in their decision as it will affect future generations. It is clear in the wording of this petition how these women felt about removal and giving up their lands. The language used seems placating toward the men, as if the women are playing upon the position and power of the chiefs and warriors on the council. While it is not known exactly how much leaders heeded their concerns of the female petitioners, it is known that after the Cherokee ceded land in 1817 and 1819, they did not again cede any land until 1835.⁷

In the fall of 1831, the Cherokee women penned their third and last petition protesting their removal. In it, they explain their motives:

We the females, residing in Salequoree and Pine Log, believing that the present difficulties and embarrassments under which this nation is placed demands a full expression of the mind of every individual, on the subject of emigrating to Arkansas, would take upon ourselves to address you. Although it is not common for our sex to take part in public sentiments on any subject where our interest is as much at stake as any other part of the community.

We believe the present plan of the General Government to effect [sic] our removal West of the Mississippi, and thus obtain our lands for the use of the State of Georgia, to be highly oppressive, cruel and unjust. And we sincerely hope there is no consideration which can induce our citizens to forsake the land of our fathers of which they have been in possession from time immemorial, and thus compel us, against our will, to undergo the toils and difficulties of removing with our helpless families hundreds of miles to unhealthy and unproductive country. We hope therefore the Committee and Council will take into deep consideration our deplorable situation, and do everything in their power to avert such a state of things. And we trust by a prudent course their transactions with the General

⁷ Ibid, 124.

Government will enlist in our behalf the sympathies of the good people of the United States.⁸

This last petition by Cherokee women reads much more forcefully and demanding, and is almost desperate in its tone. By using words such as “highly oppressive, cruel and unjust,” “against our will,” and “our deplorable situation,” the reader can almost feel the desperation and powerful feelings of these women. The overall impression of this petition is that these women are getting more comfortable in expressing their opinions before a political body and demanding to be heard – at the same time white women began to play a larger role outside the domestic sphere. The last line seems to appeal to those whites who oppose removal. As in the earlier petition, the language and wording used here makes perfectly clear the wishes and feelings of the Cherokee women. They even state that women do not normally speak out on public issues but they feel so strongly against removal and the effects it will have on the tribe and its people, that in this instance they must publicly express their sentiments.

Both white and Indian women were outspoken in their opposition to removal. There are a number of reasons why women of both races felt compelled to involve themselves in opposing Indian removal. Many women saw the forced removal of Native Americans as an immoral and illegal land-grabbing scheme. Many white women saw it as their moral obligation to safeguard and protect the nation’s virtue, which, they believed, would be destroyed by the federal policy of Indian removal. This moral obligation allowed them a public presence.⁹ Many whites also believed that since the Indians were first inhabitants of the land that they should be left alone. Additionally, many whites saw

⁸ “Cherokee Women Resist Removal.” Petitions of the Women’s Councils, 1817, 1818. Petition, October 17, 1831. *Cherokee Phoenix*, November 12, 1831, Perdue and Green, ed., *The Cherokee Removal*, 126.

⁹ Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women,” 18.

the actions of the United States government as morally wrong and inhumane. They believed that forcing them off their land was a violation of the Indians' human rights. Another reason that white women opposed removal was that they believed that if implemented, the removal policy would destroy the Indians and therefore would bring dishonor to the United States.

Some of the white women who opposed Indian removal were abolitionists like Catharine Beecher, Angelina Grimke, and Lydia Sigourney.¹⁰ The missionary and activist Jeremiah Evarts of the American Board of Missions asked Catharine Beecher, a teacher at Hartford Female Seminary, a public girls' school in Hartford, Connecticut, to campaign on behalf of the Cherokee people. Evarts believed the issue was a moral one, which allowed women to become involved publically and voice their opposition. The landmark sources demonstrating white women's opposition to Indian removal are from Catharine Beecher and other women of the Hartford Female Seminary, who initiated a white women's petition campaign against Indian removal. These women wrote pamphlets, newspaper editorials, and held mass meetings to convey their message to white people and to gain more support. This campaign against Indian removal, according to historian Alisse Portnoy, was "the first national women's petition campaign in United States history."¹¹ In their petitions, these white women declared their right to speak on moral and ethical issues, an argument that appealed to many men and community leaders. Because many of these women activists also later opposed slavery, at least one researcher has argued that their decision to protest was likely based not only on their understanding of Indian removal and slavery, but also on what they saw as the nation's failed race

¹⁰ Juan González and Joseph Torres. "News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media," *Verso*, 2011. Chapter 7.

¹¹ Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak*, 1.

relations.¹² Because so many whites believed in Manifest Destiny, a policy of imperialist expansion that held that whites were destined to spread out across the continent regardless of other peoples' prior claim to the land, whites often felt justified in their cruel and inhuman actions against blacks and Indians.

One of the earliest petitions was organized by Catharine Beecher and the women of the Hartford Female Seminary shortly after Beecher heard Jeremiah Evarts speak about Indian removal. Perhaps because women were not actively involved in politics or issues of this nature at that time, Beecher chose to not reveal the author of the petition even after its popularity and support became well known. The petition came to be known as "the Ladies' Circular" and was addressed to the "benevolent ladies of the United States."¹³ It used biblical references, such as the story of Esther, who plead to the king for her people, and urged women to join in the political fight against removal by pointing out that women had the same Christian obligation to help Indians as they did in helping the needy in their own communities. The circular argued that women:

are protected from the blinding influence of party spirit, and the asperities of political violence. They have nothing to do with any struggle for power, nor any right to dictate the decisions of those that rule over them. But they may feel for the distressed; they may stretch out the supplicating hand for them, and by their prayers strive to avert the calamities that are impending over them. It may be, that female petitioners can lawfully be heard, even by the highest rulers of our land....It may be this will be forbidden; yet we still remember the Jewish princess who, being sent to supplicate for a nation's life, was thus reproved for hesitating even when death stared her in the way: "If thou altogether hold they peace at this time, then shall deliverance rise from another place; but thou and they father's house shall be destroyed. And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"¹⁴

¹² Cassandra Jackson, *Barriers Between Us: Interracial Sex in Nineteenth Century Literature* (Indiana University Press, 2004), 14.

¹³ "Circular Addressed to the Benevolent Ladies of the United States," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, (December 25, 1829), 65-66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The circular made it clear that in this instance women should speak out because Indian removal was a moral crisis. It also urged haste, and again emphasized its female authorship, pleading with women to act.

Another petition was organized by a group of white women in Steubenville, Ohio. The petition, signed by sixty-two women, was read during a session of the United States House of Representatives on February 15, 1830. The petition is addressed “to the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:”

That your memorialists are deeply impressed with the belief, that the present crisis in the affairs of the Indian nations, calls loudly on all who can feel for the woes of humanity, to solicit, with earnestness, your honorable body to bestow on this subject, involving, as it does, the prosperity and happiness of more than fifty thousand of our fellow Christians, the immediate consideration demanded by its interesting nature and pressing importance.

It is readily acknowledged, that the wise and venerated founders of our country's free institutions have committed the powers of Government to those whom nature and reason declare the best fitted to exercise them; and your memorialists would sincerely deprecate any presumptuous interference on the part of their own sex with the ordinary political affairs of the country, as wholly unbecoming the character of the American females. Even in private life, we may not presume to direct the general conduct, or control the acts of those who stand in the near and guardian relations of husbands and brothers; yet all admit that there are times when duty and affection call on us to advise and persuade, as well as to cheer or console. And if we approach the public Representatives of our husbands and brothers, only in the humble character of suppliants in the cause of mercy and humanity, may we not hope that even the small voice of female sympathy will be heard?

Compared with the estimate placed on woman, and the attention paid to her on other nations, the generous and defined deference shown by all ranks and classes of men, in this country, to our sex, forms a striking contrast; and as an honorable and distinguishing trait in the American Character, has often excited the admiration of intelligent foreigners. Nor is this general kindness lightly regarded or coldly appreciated; but, with warm feelings of affection and pride, and hearts swelling with gratitude, the mothers and daughters of America bear testimony to the generous nature of their countrymen.

When, therefore, injury and oppression threaten to crush a hapless people within our borders, we, the feeblest of the feeble, appeal with confidence to those who should be representatives of national virtues as they are the depositaries of national powers, and implore them to succor the weak and unfortunate. In despite of the undoubted national right which the Indians have to the land of their forefathers, and in the face of solemn treaties, pledging the faith of the nation for their secure possession of those lands, it is intended, we are told, to force them from their native soil, to compel them to seek new homes in a distant and dreary wilderness. To you, then, as the constitutional protectors of the Indians within our territory, and as the peculiar guardians of our national character, and our counter's welfare, we solemnly and honestly appeal, to save this remnant of a much injured people from annihilation, to shield our country from the curses denounced on the cruel and ungrateful, and to shelter the American character from lasting dishonor.¹

Much like the petitions used by the Cherokee women, these white women also call upon their roles as mothers, sisters, and daughters. Although there are no biblical references and the language is not quite as flowery as in the Ladies' Circular, the women of the Steubenville petition purposely try to ingratiate themselves to these men by calling upon their patriotism and referring to themselves as "the feeblest of the feeble" who normally support the men in their political and moral lives but sometimes, as in the case of Indian removal, disagree and feel the need to speak out and let their opinions be heard.

A second wave of petitions written by women was circulated in 1838, protesting the Cherokee removal, but these did not receive as much attention nor did they have the same effect as the earlier petitions in 1830. This second wave of petitions was enacted due to President Martin Van Buren's proposed enforcement of the Treaty of New Echota in 1836, which forced all Cherokee to remove. An example of this second wave of

¹ "Memorial of the Ladies of Steubenville, Ohio, Against the Forcible Removal of the Indians Without the Limits of the United States," Government Document: 21st Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 209, House of Representatives, February 15, 1830, American Antiquarian Society Government Documents, <http://www.teachushistory.org/indian-removal/resources/petition-ladies-steubenville-oh-against-indian-removal-0> (accessed November 4, 2013).

petitions protesting the Treaty of New Echota came from Concord, Massachusetts, in 1838. The petition was signed by 206 white and free black women, many of whom were members of the newly formed Concord Female Antislavery Society.² The husbands, brothers, and fathers of these women also organized a petition that was sent to Washington, D.C. in 1838 protesting the Treaty of New Echota.

Similarly, Indian women also spoke out against Indian removal. Two of the most prominent Indian females opposing removal were Nancy Ward and Catharine Brown. Nancy Ward was referred to as a War Woman, meaning a Cherokee woman who has distinguished herself by accompanying war parties to perform the traditional women's role of cooking food, carrying water, and performing other mundane but necessary tasks. When Ward's husband died in battle in 1755, she rallied the warriors to continue fighting. She also rallied for the patriots during the American Revolution and addressed the Hopewell Treaty conference in 1785.³ By this time she had become a Beloved Woman of the Cherokee, which allowed her to sit in councils and to make decisions, along with chiefs and other Beloved Women.⁴ By the early 1800s Ward and other Beloved Women directed their attention to land cession and removal. Although none of Ward's writings still exist, except the speeches and petitions she presented that were translated into English, Ward was well-known for her strong oration and leadership skills and Cherokee men generally heeded her advice.⁵ For example, a treaty conference between the United States and the Cherokee was held in 1781 on the Long Island of the Holston in

² "A Most Sacred Duty": Women in the Antiremoval Movement, 1929-1838, Natalie Joy, CSW Update Newsletter, UCLA Center for the Study of Women, UCLA, March 1, 2008, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/76f601jz> (accessed November 4, 2013).

³ Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 122.

⁴ Carolyn Niethammer. *Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and Legends of American Indian Women* (New York: Collier Books, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1977), 172.

⁵ Karen L. Kilcup, ed., *Native American Women's Writing, c. 1800-1924: An Anthology*, (UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 26-30.

Tennessee. The federal government was hoping to coerce land cessions from the Indians due to some of them siding with the British during the American Revolution. Nancy Ward spoke at this conference and reminded them that not all Cherokee had aided the British, asking instead for peace, “You know that women are always looked upon as nothing; but we are your mothers; you are our sons. Our cry is all for peace; let it continue. This peace must last forever. Let your women’s sons be ours; our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words.”⁶ Her words were heeded and no land was ceded at that time. Sadly when she spoke on the same theme at the treaty conference at Hopewell in 1785, her message was disregarded and the Cherokee lost a large portion of their lands.

Cherokee woman Catharine Brown was also outspoken on the subject of Indian removal. Born into the Cherokee Nation in 1800 and educated by missionaries, she later converted to Christianity. Catharine Brown was a willing and eager student at the Brainerd missionary school. Although she had no prior knowledge of God or Christianity, she soon devoted herself to learning and faith. According to her memoir, Catharine was only at the school for a short time when “divine truth began to exert an influence upon her mind. This was manifested by a tenderness of spirit, and an increased desire to become more acquainted with the Christian religion.” She also showed “desires for the salvation of her people, [which were] now strong and ardent.”⁷ On December 12, 1817, Brown wrote of her own Christian faith and her fear of leaving her homeland for the west:

⁶ Theda Perdue, “Nancy Ward,” in *Portraits of American Women: From Settlement to the Present*, G.J. Barker-Benfield and Catherine Clinton, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1998), 94.

⁷ Rufus Anderson. *Memoir of Catharine Brown a Christian Indian of the Cherokee Nation 1825*. (Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 21-22.

I am here amongst a wicked set of people, and never hear prayers, nor any godly conversation. O my dear friends, pray for me: I hope you do. There is not a day that passes but I think of you and the kindness I received during the time I staid [sic] with you. It is not my wish to go to the Arkansas; but God only knows what is best for me. I shall not attempt to tell you what I have felt since I left you, and the tears I have shed when I called to mind the happy moments we passed in singing the praises of God. However, I bear it as well as I possibly can, trusting in our dear Saviour, who will never leave nor forsake them that put their trust in him.

It is possible that I may see you once more; it would be a great happiness to me if I don't go to the Arkansas; perhaps I may; but if I should go, it is not likely we shall meet in this world again:- but you will excuse me, for my heart feels what I cannot express with my pen. When I see the poor thoughtless Cherokees going on in sin, I cannot help blessing God, that he has led me in the right path to serve him.⁸

The language and words Brown uses suggests that she felt the plight of the Indians would be easier on them if they believed in God. This is a common belief among Christian Indian women. Like many Native American women, Catharine Brown valued the community over the individual. She led a pious life in service to others, as was taught to her by Christian missionaries.⁹ Many American Christian missionaries felt that assimilation and conversion to Christianity would allow the Indians to stay on their homelands and avoid removal and worked very hard to bring this about.

Religious newspapers and Christian missionaries also played a large role in opposing Indian removal. Denomination-based newspapers and periodicals became popular and widespread through the 1820s and 1830s. Newspapers and periodicals of this sort were more widely circulated than any other publications during this time and had a wider and more diverse audience. This, in a large part, stemmed from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who believed in upholding Indian sovereignty. Established in 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign

⁸ Ibid, 38-39.

⁹ Theda Perdue, ed., *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 6.

Missions (ABCFM) was the first American Christian missionary organization. The editors of these periodicals opposed Indian removal not only because it violated Indian treaties but also because they had willingly adopted American practices of agriculture and trade, as they had been advised to do in order to stay on their land.

The United States government at first promised to send teachers, missionaries, and blacksmiths in order to teach Indians white ways of life in an effort to assimilate them. Many missionary societies sent missionaries to Indian villages as they agreed that assimilation was in the best interest of the Indians. However, while many Indians welcomed the help Christian missionaries could give them, the Indians were unwilling to change their lifestyle or traditions. Although some did show polite interest in learning about white customs, some of the missionaries, as well as the government and white settlers, tried to hurry their efforts by using forceful methods of assimilation rather than being patient and accepting that true change would take time. One ABCFM missionary summed up his thoughts on rushing Indians to change their ways when he wrote in 1837:

"There are so many difficulties and hinderances [sic] at present, among [the] Indians, the prospect of introducing Christianity among them at present is rather discouraging ... it is a mystaken [sic] idea that many Christians have at the present time, thinking that nations of Indians are to be born to God in a day ... I believe that many years will pass first."¹⁰

Nonetheless, these missionaries remained in place and continued to help the Indians as best they could, leading many newspapers and their editors to print articles and stories about removal and their opposition to it.

¹⁰ Samuel Allis, "The Missionary Spirit: The Conversion Struggle," in *Fur Traders and Missionaries* from NebraskaStudies.org, 1800-1849, http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0400/frameset_reset.html?http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0400/stories/0401_0129.html, (accessed October 23, 2013).

Some white newspapers, especially northern ones, reprinted articles from other newspapers that opposed removal and sympathized with the Indian's plight. In September 1829, the editor of the *Syracuse Advertiser* (New York) reflected on the changing attitudes of northern white people toward Indians:

Indians and the Outrages. We have some reason or other heretofore been a little prejudiced against the aborigines; but since becoming acquainted with some facts, and witnessing repeated invasions of their rights, and a manifestation on the part of the whites of an entire disregard of their claims, our feelings have in a measure been enlisted in their behalf.¹¹

The editor goes on to state that the problems with the Indians were caused by the "merciless and cruel" white settlers rather than by the Indians themselves:

Whatever their conduct was during the war, and whatever may be the prevailing opinion through the country relative to them, we cannot consider them otherwise at present than being very quiet and peaceable when left unmolested. That the character and disposition of this defenseless race of beings has been very much misrepresented will appear apparent by referring back to past difficulties and their causes. It is not the Indians that are so savage, quarrelsome and such lovers of blood. It is the whites who reside near them that are merciless and cruel. It is their meanness of spirit which causes in most instances what is termed the "Indian Outrages"--their skill in getting from the red man all he has that is valuable for a mere song.¹²

In contrast, editors of southern newspapers, namely those in Georgia, wrote editorials in support of removal. Elias Boudinot, editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the newspaper of the Cherokee Nation, wrote an editorial in July 1829 addressing the lies and propaganda being spread by a Georgia newspaper:

The eagerness which is manifested in Georgia to obtain the lands of the Cherokees has frequently led the journals of that state to deceive the people, by stating, that we are "making extensive preparations to remove to the west." So desirable it is to get rid of these troublesome Cherokees,

¹¹ *The Cherokee Phoenix*, September 23, 1829, in Jim Hobgood, "Georgia Newspaper Coverage Discovering Conventional Practices of the 'Cherokee Question': Prelude to the Removal, 1828-1832" (Master's thesis, Georgia State University, 2008), 44.

¹² *Ibid.*

that every flying report is grasped at as an undoubted fact, and spread abroad to the rejoicing of thousands. The late statement of the Georgia Journal, to which we have already referred, is a very good example.¹³

Boudinot was an early supporter of removal but later changed his views. Other men, including Board secretary Jeremiah Evarts and United States Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, were highly opposed to Indian removal and remained so until their deaths. However, because of the important role women played within Christian missions as teachers and students, the missionaries' opposition to removal filtered down to women, as is evidenced in the petitions of both white and Indian women.¹⁴

The second petition by the Cherokee women, dated June 30, 1818, was enclosed in a letter from the ABCFM and mailed to their headquarters in Boston. This petition addressed the issue of land allotments, which involved dividing land into allotments and assigning it to individuals, a policy that went against traditional Cherokee practice of holding land in common. The United States federal government used the allotment of land in petitions with all of the Five Civilized Tribes as a means to bypass tribal government and allow itself or its citizens to purchase land from individual owners. The petition reads as follow:

Beloved Children,

We have called a meeting among ourselves to consult on the different points now before the council, relating to our national affairs. We have heard with painful feelings that the bounds of the land we now possess are to be drawn into very narrow limits. The land was given to us by the Great Spirit above as our common right, to raise our children upon, & to make support for our rising generations. We therefore humbly petition our beloved children, the head men & warriors, to hold out to the last in support of our common rights, as the Cherokee nation have been the first settlers of this land; we therefore claim the right of the soil.

¹³ Ibid, 63.

¹⁴ Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), 260.

We well remember that our country was formerly very extensive, but by repeated sales it has become circumscribed to the very narrow limits we have at present. Our Father the President advised us to become farmers, to manufacture our own clothes, & to have our children instructed. To this advice we have attended in every thing [sic] as far as we were able. Now the thought of being compelled to remove the other side of the Mississippi is dreadful to us, because it appears to us that we have, by this endeavor of our Father the President, become too much enlightened to throw aside the privileges of a civilized life.

We therefore unanimously join in our meeting to hold our country in common as hitherto.

Some of our children have become Christians. We have missionary schools among us. We have hard [sic] the gospel in our nation. We have become civilized & enlightened, & are in hopes that in a few years our nation will be prepared for instruction in other branches of sciences & arts, which are both useful & necessary in civilized society.

There are some white men among us who have been raised in this country from their youth, are connected with us by marriage, & have considerable families, who are very active in encouraging the emigration of our nation. These ought to be our truest friends but prove our worst enemies. They seem to be only concerned how to increase their riches, but do not care what becomes of our nation, nor even of their own wives and children.¹⁵

In this petition, the writers are pleading to Christian missionaries to help them in their opposition to removal. They mention that some of them have converted to Christianity and have assimilated into the American way of life, in hopes that this would show their willingness to become civilized, and therefore American, without the necessity of a forced removal. They also state that by selling their land, they would be committing blasphemy because “the land was given to us by the Great Spirit above as our common right.”¹⁶ These women also point out that they followed the advice given to them by the federal government and adapted many white practices and customs, but still it is not

¹⁵ “Cherokee Women Resist Removal,” Petitions of the Women’s Councils, 1817, 1818. Petition, June 30, 1818. American Board missionaries, “To Boston Headquarters,” American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard University, in Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 125-126.

¹⁶ Ibid.

enough to prevent white people from taking their land. The last sentence of the petition is very revealing in that it makes clear that these Indian women realize why the whites want them off the land they have lived on for generations – greed and self-interest of whites. Perhaps if these Christian missionaries had been more vocal in publicly declaring that whites were motivated by the deadly sin of greed and were behaving in an un-Christian manner, they would have had more support from American citizens for their cause.

Recognizing that religious missionaries opposed Indian removal, state officials in Georgia, who aggressively pushed for the removal act, passed a law that required all white people, including missionaries, to get a permit from the government allowing them to enter Cherokee land. Georgia officials aggressively enforced this law, in large part to subdue any opposition to Indian removal. In March 1831, the Georgia militia arrested Isaac Proctor, the Reverend Samuel A. Worcester, and the Reverend John Thompson, teachers and missionaries at the Cherokee towns of Carmel, New Echota, and Hightower, for violating state law and refusing to leave the Cherokee territory. Convicted of trespassing, these missionaries appealed their case all the way to the United States Supreme Court in the landmark case *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832). Even though the Court argued that the state had acted unconstitutionally and violated the rights of the petitioners, Georgia officials still refused to release one of the missionaries for several months. This gave cause for concern for other missionaries like Catherine Fuller, who wrote to her superiors asking guidance:

Since Mr. Thompson is a prisoner, I suppose I may stay here without molestation as heretofore. Do you think, Sir, that it is improper for me to stay as I do? I know that in common cases it would not be proper, but I trust that in the present instance it is right. I am desirous to stay, for I think that as soon as it is known that the people have left the house, some base intruder, if not the Georgia guard, will take possession of it. As yet I have

no fears which would prevent my staying, though thus unprotected. My heavenly Protector is ever near for my defence [sic]. I trust that whatever may come, I may not be greatly moved.¹⁷

That these missionaries were willing to stand up against the state governments by either remaining in Indian territories or by travelling with the natives to their new homes in the West in order to protect and convert them shows their dedication, perseverance, and belief in God and His protection.

Some Indians, however, chose to stay behind and live in Christian missions rather than migrate to the new lands reserved for them in the West. Catharine Brown wrote a letter to her former instructors at Brainerd, a Christian missionary school for Indians near Chattanooga,¹⁸ in which she explains her decision to stay behind:

...When I remember the kind instruction I received from you, before you left this place, my heart swells with gratitude. I feel much indebted to you, but more particularly to that God, who sent you here to instruct the poor ignorant Indians in the way that leads to everlasting life...

When I wrote to you before I expected to go to the Arkansas, and never to see this place again. But the Lord in his mercy has ordered it otherwise. He has permitted me to live with the other missionaries here again, though my parents could not bear to think of leaving me behind. My mother said, if I remained here, she did not expect to see me again in this world. Indeed, she wished she had never sent me to this school, and that I had never received religious instruction. I told her, if she was a Christian she would not feel so. She would be willing to give me, and all she had, up to Christ. I told her I did not wish to stay on account of my own pleasure; but that I wished to get more instruction, so that it might be for her good, as well as mine.

I felt very sorry for my parents. I thought it was my duty to go in obedience with their commands, and commit myself to the will of God. I knew the lord could change the hearts of my parents.

¹⁷ John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Doubleday: 1988), 247.

¹⁸ The Brainerd School was originally called the Chickamaugah Mission to the Cherokees. It was opened in 1817 and named for the area in Tennessee where it is located. It was renamed in 1818 after the missionary, David Brainerd. A number of other mission school existed in the southeast, such as the Moravian Mission at Spring Place, Georgia, which opened in 1802, and one established by the Reverend Gideon Blackburn that closed in 1810, among others. Vicki Rozema, *Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2002), 115.

They are now perfectly willing, that I should stay here two years longer. I left them in March. They expected to set out that month for the Arkansas. They had already prepared for the journey. But the Lord has so ordered, that they concluded not to go until next fall. I hope you will pray for them, and also for me, that I may be useful to my dear people. My heart bleeds for their immortal souls. O that I might be made the means of turning many souls from darkness unto marvellous [sic] light.¹⁹

Although the language of this letter is somewhat flowery, one can see that Catharine Brown deeply believes in the Christian ideology and hopes to convert many of her fellow Cherokee, including her own parents. Clearly, Christian missionaries and mission schools had a huge influence on the Indians during the removal. In another letter, Nancy Reese, a Cherokee student at Brainerd, writes to the Reverend Fayette Shepherd on December 25, 1828, about the school and the curriculum and how happy everyone is in the school. However, she adds that:

I do not think that all people are friends to the Cherokees. Miss. Ames has been reading a part of the Presid. [sic] message. Perhaps he does not like the laws of the Indian tribes for he says 'This state of things requires that a remedy should be provided.' Miss. Ames has been talking to the scholars and she felt bad and told them that they must get a good education soon as they can, so they can teach if they should be removed where they could not attend school and says that we must try to get religion for all the instructors ought to be Christians [sic]. It seems that it will be a trying season to us and the missionaries if we should be separated from them, but she says if God suffers it to be, we ought not to complain, for it will be for the best. I have been talking to the children about it and one says 'if the white people want more land let them go back to the country they came from,' another says 'they have got more land than they use, what do they want to get ours for?'²⁰

The questions of these children show that they perceive the true purpose of the white man's plan and what is at the heart of Indian removal – greed and self-interest of whites.

¹⁹ William L. Anderson, ed., *Cherokee Removal: Before and After* (University of Georgia Press, 1991), 55-57.

²⁰ Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 48.

Although in the end their anti-removal campaign was not successful, one of the lasting effects of women's opposition to Indian removal was that they now had a united front regarding national moral issues in the political sphere. Interestingly, white women had previously been denied a voice in political matters, which had been primarily in the male sphere of influence, they obtained it through their opposition to removal; however, Indian women, and especially Cherokee women, were traditionally allowed an opinion in political issues until Indians began assimilating and learning white ways of life, which caused a notable reversal of roles. Both white and Indian women organized petitions and campaigns protesting removal that were sent to their governments. These women also established secular and religious organizations intent on broadening their reach and gaining more supports in their fight against removal. Religious newspapers and periodicals helped to give them a voice on these matters, as well as support from male religious leaders and politicians. Through these newspapers, as well as the spreading of their petitions throughout the nation, more and more of the white population became aware of their stance. The anti-removal campaign also gave them the experience they needed to succeed in a future endeavors – the women's rights movement and the abolition of slaves.

CHAPTER V

MEN'S REACTIONS TO INDIAN REMOVAL AND WOMEN'S OPPOSITION

Although not much documentation exists regarding white and Indian men's reactions to women's opposition of removal, those reactions were as equally divided as those of women. Politicians, religious leaders and ministers, tribal leaders, social and civic leaders, and other men all voiced their opinions for or against removal in writings, speeches, and lectures. Men such as President Andrew Jackson, the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, and Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee and editor of the Cherokee Phoenix newspaper, strongly favored removal and just as strongly opposed women's efforts to thwart the policy. These men not only thought removal was a solution to the Indian problem, they also felt women should not involve themselves in what they considered political matters. However, more liberal-minded men like Christian missionary Jeremiah Evarts, New Jersey Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen, Davy Crockett of frontier fame and later a United States representative from Tennessee, and John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, among others, were vehemently opposed to removal and welcomed the support of women. The difference in the two groups of men is that those who approved of removal did so from a political and economic standpoint. Those who were opposed to

removal viewed it as a moral issue, which corresponded with the opinions of women on the issue of removal.

One of the biggest proponents of Indian removal was Andrew Jackson. Historians have provided a variety of motives for Jackson's policies and actions against the Indians. One of the kinder explanations is that Jackson believed it was a matter of national security. He believed that the more land occupied by white settlers would make the United States more defensible against attacks by Indians and other nations such as Spain, England, and France.¹ This argument holds some truth, especially in the Southeast where Spain had only recently ceded land in the Mississippi Territory (1798) and West Florida (1812) to the United States.² Jackson did not feel the Indians were entitled to own their lands, as their idea of legal ownership was different from that of whites, and so he felt no compunction at taking it from them. Nor did he believe in the idea that Indian nations were sovereign nations and therefore not under the rule of the United States. Instead, he felt they should be subject to United States laws and adopt white society and practices. Because the majority of Indians resented the government's assimilation policy, Jackson felt the best policy for the Indians was removal. He believed this would save them and their society, culture, and civilization from certain death and destruction at the hand of the white man. In short, Jackson believed that removal would rescue them from the evils of white civilization, and then they would "share in the blessings of civilization and be saved from that degradation and destruction to which they were rapidly hastening while they remained in the States..."³ Unfortunately, rather than save them, the removal policy

¹ Ian Barnes, *The Historical Atlas of Native Americans* (New York: Chartwell Books, Inc, 2010), 250.

² *Ibid*, 250.

³ *Ibid*, 253.

caused the Indians more humiliation and devastation than they might have faced if left to themselves, as many opponents of the policy argued.

Surprisingly, some ministers and clergymen also supported the removal policy. The Reverend Jedidiah Morse was a noted geographer, historian, scholar, and clergyman. Beginning in 1820, Morse traveled around to various Native American tribes in the northwestern United States preaching to them and writing about them. As a long-time member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Morse believed the Indian problem was both religious and political. Unlike some of the other religious leaders of the time, however, Morse believed that the best course of action for both the Indians and for white people was for government agents to move the Indians to special reserved areas in the West. These areas would offer “a secure, federally supervised environment” where they would be ‘taught all branches of knowledge pertaining to civilized man’ and be “thoroughly Christianized, and then allow their society to develop without further white interference.”⁴ His plan was to move the Indians to areas still under state control but considered to be frontier, like the Green bay area of Wisconsin, thus leaving the state governments to handle problems between settlers, traders, and Indians.⁵ Morse fully expected Indians and whites to live peacefully among each other and to even eventually intermarry.

Upon returning to Washington, D.C. in 1822, where the atmosphere and the debate over Indian removal was getting tense, Morse set up the American Society for Promoting the Civilization and General Improvement of the Indian Tribes of the United

⁴ Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 176; and Reverend Jedidiah Morse, “Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs,” (New Haven, CT: S. Converse, 1822), in Jahoda, *The Trail of Tears*, 66.

⁵ Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States*, 176.

States, a private organization meant to advance the Indian removal policy. The organization, however, collapsed after only one meeting. Both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson declined Morse's offer to be on the society's board of directors, stating that the problem was too big to be treated as a private matter. Many felt it was a federal problem and should be settled by the government. Later under the Jackson administration, many such men were willing to let states at the forefront of the Indian debate, like Georgia and Alabama, take over Indian policy in their territories, setting the stage for a national Indian policy. However, Morse died in 1826, before the matter was resolved and without seeing his plan of a benevolent removal carried out on a massive scale.⁶

Many Indians simply gave up the fight to retain their territory and started their own negotiations with the federal government. They did not want to leave their homelands but they came to realize that they would have to surrender to the will of the white man in order to survive. An example of this is the treaty party created by Major Ridge, a Cherokee planter and soldier, along with his son, John Ridge, and his nephew, Elias Boudinot. Ridge and his treaty party of approximately 400 Cherokee, none of whom were elected representatives of the Cherokee Nation, went against the wishes of the majority of Cherokee by negotiating with the United States for removal in December 1835. Most Cherokees, including Principal Chief John Ross, protested and tried to prevent these negotiations. A few years earlier, the United States passed the Indian Removal Act (1830), prompting Chief John Ross to hire former attorney general William Wirt to defend the tribe in a series of court cases against the Indian Removal Act and against the state of Georgia for their eradication of Cherokee laws. In the first court case, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), the United States Supreme Court recognized the

⁶ Ibid, 177.

sovereignty of the Cherokee tribe. Chief Justice John Marshall decided that the state of Georgia could not force its laws on the Indians. Nonetheless, the court rulings could not stop the forced removal, and Georgia and the Jackson administration ignored the rulings and refused to recognize Cherokee sovereignty.

In bolstering support for his actions, Major Ridge stated, “The Georgians have shown a grasping spirit lately;...They are strong and we are weak. We are few, they are many. We cannot remain here in safety, one road to future existence as a nation. That path is open before you. Make a treaty of cession. Give up these lands, and go over beyond the great father of waters.”⁷ President Jackson welcomed the efforts of Major Ridge and the Cherokee minority and together they signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835. In the treaty, Ridge ceded all Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi River in return for territory in present northeastern Oklahoma, five million dollars, transportation to their new land in the west, and one year of subsistence.⁸ Although some Cherokees made the journey, many stayed behind, hoping the court rulings would be upheld and that the illegalities of the treaty would be acknowledged, but some 7,000 armed U.S. soldiers arrived in 1838 to enforce the law, marking the beginning of their migration of the Trail of Tears.

Major Ridge’s nephew, Elias Boudinot, also known as Buck Watie, also believed removal was inevitable and joined his uncle in bringing about the 1835 Treaty of New Echota. Boudinot became the editor of the first Native American newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, in 1828. The newspaper was printed in both Cherokee and English to showcase their achievements and to show the white people that they were a civilized

⁷ Barnes, *The Historical Atlas of Native Americans*, 248.

⁸ Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 267.

people and had laws and culture.⁹ Originally Boudinot used this platform to argue against removal.¹⁰ In fact, in 1826 Boudinot delivered a speech entitled “An Address to the Whites,” in which he described the similarities between white people and Cherokee people and stated that Indians were adapting to the whites’ way of life through assimilation.¹¹ Eventually, however, he began advocating for treaties between his people and the United States government to try to protect as best they could their way of life and their lands, a view that was not shared by all. Because of the part he played in implementing the Treaty of New Echota, he was forbidden from continuing to use his newspaper as a platform for his pro-removal views, causing him to resign in protest in 1832.¹²

The principal players in executing the Treaty of New Echota, Major Ridge, his son John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and Boudinot’s brother Stand Watie, were eventually punished for their role in the Cherokee Nation ceding their lands and being forced onto the Trail of Tears. A group of Chief Ross’s supporters decided to enact their revenge for what they saw as a capital offense against the tribe. Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Boudinot were all assassinated on June 22, 1839, by unknown assailants. An attempt to assassinate Stand Watie was also made but he survived the attack.¹³

However, several white men and Indian leaders were opposed to removal. Jeremiah Evarts was one of the biggest opponents of removal. Evarts was a Christian

⁹ Ann Lackey Landini. “The Cherokee Phoenix: The Voice of the Cherokee Nation, 1828-1834” (PhD. dissertation. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1990).

¹⁰ Theda Perdue, ed. “Selections from the Cherokee Phoenix – The Cherokee Editor,” in *The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 87-153.

¹¹ Elias Boudinot, “An Address to the Whites,” delivered in the First Presbyterian Church on May 26, 1826, Philadelphia, (William F. Geddes, 1826), <http://neptune3.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/tei-natamer-idx.pl?sessionid=7f000001&type=doc&tei2id=bdt001> (accessed June 11, 2013).

¹² Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy*, 235-237, 242-244.

¹³ Bernd C. Peyer, “Elias Boudinot and the Cherokee Betrayal,” in *The Tutor’s Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 212-213.

missionary who spent his life working as a reformer and activist for Native American rights. Evarts published numerous letters, pamphlets, and articles that were distributed to the public and to the United States government in an attempt to bolster public opinion against removal. One of the most famous of his writings is the William Penn essays.¹⁴ Under this pseudonym, Evarts wrote a series of essays on the crisis of the Indians in regard to removal. The essays gave detailed information about the treaties signed between the United States government and the Indian tribes, and argued that removal would entail a breach of these treaties.¹⁵ Much like women who opposed removal, Evarts believed the American people had a moral obligation to the Indian peoples, whose land they had taken. While serving on the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Evarts organized a group of missionaries sent to Indian lands in Georgia, teaching and preaching to the Indians there, in an attempt to avoid removal by encouraging assimilation. However, the state of Georgia passed a law in 1830 forbidding missionaries from living on Indians lands without a permit. The law, which took effect March 31, 1831, was intended to end the work the missionaries were doing to help the Indians. Because of the passage of this law and the Indian Removal Act, Evarts encouraged the Cherokee Nation to take their case to the United States Supreme Court.¹⁶ The ultimately unsuccessful series of court cases that took place are described above. Unfortunately for the anti-removal cause, Evarts died of tuberculosis on May 10, 1831. At least one historian wrote that “the Christian crusade against the removal of Indians

¹⁴ Jeremiah Evarts, “A Brief View of the Present Relations between the Government and the People of the United States and the Indians within Our National Limits,” in Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 96-105.

¹⁵ Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition,” 23.

¹⁶ John A. Andrew, III, *From Revival to Removal: Jeremiah Evarts, the Cherokee Nation, and the Search for the Soul of America*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 20.

died with Evarts.”¹⁷ Nonetheless, Evarts did leave a legacy in that the approach and methods he used in the fight against Indian removal were a precursor to those used in the later abolitionist movement.

Much like Evarts, U.S. Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen was also a strong opponent of Indian Removal and led the fight against the Indian Removal Act in the Senate, delivering a six-hour speech on April 9, 1830, advising against the policy.¹⁸ Frelinghuysen also influenced other politicians to oppose removal. In a letter written in 1862, Edward Everett, a former member of the House of Representatives and a former Senator from Massachusetts, stated,

Mr. Frelinghuysen took an active part in opposition to that stupendous iniquity, the expulsion of the Indians from Georgia, and the division of their lands by lottery among the people of the state, in violation alike of the dictates of justice and humanity, and of the faith of seventeen treaties negotiated with them as an independent race. Having myself, to the best of my ability, opposed this scandalous measure in the other house of Congress, I took the greater interest in Mr. Frelinghuysen’s efforts in the same cause.¹⁹

Frelinghuysen was well-known for mixing religion and politics and was regarded as the “Christian Statesman” by contemporaries.²⁰ He was also involved with the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, serving as president of the organization from 1841 to 1857, as well as being involved in various other religious organizations.²¹ Like Evarts and many female opponents, Frelinghuysen also saw the removal issue as a moral and religious one. Evidence of earlier validation of Indian tribes

¹⁷ Prucha, *The Great Father*, 207.

¹⁸ Francis P. Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 49-52.

¹⁹ Talbot W. Chambers, *Memoir of the Life and Character of the Late Hon. Theo. Frelinghuysen* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1863), 83.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 70.

²¹ *Ibid*, 214-215.

as sovereign and independent nations can be found in the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812 with Great Britain:

. . . . the Indians residing within the United States are so far independent, that they live under their own customs and not under the laws of the United States; that their rights upon the lands where they inhabit or hunt, are secured to them by boundaries defined in amicable treaties between the United States and themselves; and that whenever those boundaries are varied, it is also by amicable and voluntary treaties, by which they receive from the United States ample compensation for every right they have to the land ceded by them That relation is neither asserted now for the first time, nor did it originate with the [1795] treaty of Greenville. These principles have been uniformly recognized by the Indians themselves, not only by that treaty, but in all the other previous as well as the subsequent treaties between them and the United States.²²

Thus, in Frelinghuysen's view, the Jackson administration was violating the Constitution in implementing the removal policy, due to the fact that treaties between Indians and the United States had occurred since very early in the nation's history and the federal government had a duty to protect Indians and their lands from white settlers.²³ He argued that Native American tribes had already sold over 214 million acres, which remained largely vacant, whereas only one million acres of public land had been sold, bolstering his contention that eventually the Indians would sell their remaining lands without unnecessary force or coercion.²⁴

Several other politicians were also against the Indian Removal bill when it went before Congress in 1830. Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and Secretary of State Henry Clay, among others, were opposed to Indian removal because they believed the Indian's cause was just. However, its most outspoken opponent in the House of Representatives was David (Davy) Crockett from Tennessee. When Crockett served

²² "Henry Clay on Native Americans," *Andrew Jackson: Good, Evil, and the Presidency*, PBS, <http://www-tc.pbs.org/kcet/andrewjackson/edu/clayonnativeamericans.pdf> (accessed November 13, 2013).

²³ Talbot, *Memoir*, 66-70.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

under Jackson in the army, he was a Jacksonian Democrat but they later parted ways over Jackson's treatment of the Indians. Crockett continued his fight against removal until 1832, when he was defeated by another candidate as a representative for Tennessee, causing him to leave national politics and move to Texas, where he died while fighting at the Alamo.²⁵ Like Frelinghuysen, Crockett believed the United States had a duty to the Indian people to protect them, which is explained in a detailed report of the speech Crockett gave on the House floor. According to this report, Crockett:

did not know whether a man (that is, a member of Congress) within 500 miles of his residence would give a similar vote; but he knew, at the same time, that he should give that vote with a clear conscience. He had his constituents to settle with, he was aware; and should like to please them as well as other gentlemen; but he had also a settlement to make at the bar of his God; and what his conscience dictated to be just and right he would do, be the consequences what they might. He believed that the people who had been kind enough to give him their suffrages, supposed him to be an honest man, or they would not have chosen him. If so, they could not but expect that he should act in the way he thought honest and right. He had always viewed the native Indian tribes of this country as a sovereign people. He believed they had been recognised [sic] as such from the very foundation of this government, and the United States were bound by treaty to protect them; it was their duty to do so. And as to giving to giving the money of the American people for the purpose of removing them in the manner proposed, he would not do it. He would do that only for which he could answer to his God. Whether he could answer it before the people was comparatively nothing, though it was a great satisfaction to him to have the approbation of his constituents.²⁶

Much like others who opposed Indian removal, Crockett also saw it as a moral issue and openly and stridently voiced his opinion in Congress.

²⁵ AP Study Notes, 2008, <http://www.apstudynotes.org/us-history/topics/indian-removal/> (accessed October 24, 2012).

²⁶ "A Sketch of the Remarks of the Hon. David Crockett, Representative from Tennessee, on the Bill for the Removal of the Indians, made in the House of Representatives, Wednesday, May 19, 2830," *Speeches on the Passage of the Bill for the Removal of the Indians, Delivered in the Congress of the United States, April and May 1830*, (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1830), 252-253.

One of the most well-known and out-spoken Indian opponents of the removal policy was John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. Ross started early in his life as a politician within the Cherokee Nation, rising through the ranks to eventually become Chief Principal in 1828. He was the longest serving principal chief in Cherokee history. Although he did try to negotiate alternatives to removal with the United States government, Ross was opposed to that faction of Cherokee, led by Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot, who proposed and signed the Treaty of New Echota with the United States in 1835 without Ross's consent. Unfortunately there was nothing Ross could do to repair the damage that had been done.

The actions of these men led to a long-standing feud between Ross and the Ridge family. Upon Ross's return from Washington to his home in Georgia, he was met by a man who informed him he now possessed Ross's home and had the papers to prove it. Ross soon learned that Indian agents for Georgia had given his home away and that his family had been turned out and was staying with other family members. Now destitute and homeless and with the forced removal imminent, Ross and his family migrated to Oklahoma. The United States military officer in charge, General Winfield Scott, did allow Ross to supervise the removal process. Sadly, Ross's wife, Quatie, died on the journey, near Little Rock, Arkansas.²⁷

Although there is a considerable amount of evidence that women opposed removal and little indication of their support for it, many men spoke out both in opposition or in support of Indian removal, as is evidenced here. Both white and Indian men were very outspoken in regards to their beliefs about removal. However, few of these men did so because of women or while acting on the behalf of women. The few

²⁷ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 252.

men who did join forces with women in opposing Indian removal acted out of moral obligation and Christian duty. They believed it went against their principles to enact such a cruel and unethical policy, just as the women who opposed removal did. Nevertheless, the law was passed and thousands of Indians were forcibly removed, regardless of the well-founded and well-intended arguments of these men and women.

CONCLUSION

Today the Indian Removal of the 1830s is seen as a truly horrific event in our nation's history and is regarded by some as on par with other such tragic events as the Holocaust of Nazi Germany. In understanding why and how such an event took place, one must examine and understand the prevailing public opinion of the time. Upon examining the beliefs and attitudes of the early nineteenth century, however, it is easy to find groups of people who did not agree with the United States government and the white citizens who forced the Indians from their native lands. One such group was white and Indian women. These women fought hard against removal and made their voices heard in the home and in Washington, D.C.

A deeper and much more involved study stressing the subordinate status of women during this time and how these daring women were perhaps "rebels" by stepping out of their domestic sphere would perhaps prove to be a fascinating research project. In viewing the present topic from a broader perspective, an argument could be made that these women's participation in opposing Indian removal in the 1830s helped to lay the foundations for the women's rights' movement of the 1840s and 1850s. Their opposition to Indian removal certainly had the larger implication of women being involved in the later abolition movement of the 1850s and 1860s. Each of these three major movements

in our nation's history was in a large part led and organized by women, and the same women often were involved in various aspects of these movements.

Another interesting topic of further study would be in finding a more direct connection between men's reactions to women's opposition to Indian removal and their actual actions in opposing removal. It is known that both men and women who opposed Indian removal did so because of their Christian faith and what they saw as their moral responsibility to those less fortunate than themselves and in need of their help. However, what is not well known is how closely men and women worked together in their efforts to fight removal, how men felt about women being involved in this effort, or if men understood the reason why women became involved in and were so adamant and outspoken in their opposition to removal. It might also prove interesting to compare and contrast white and Indian women's views and actions and how they differed and at times were similar to that of the men involved in opposition to removal. All of these questions need to be answered in order to fully understand men's reactions to women's opposition to Indian removal.

Perhaps an additional area for further study would be the views held by modern women on Indian removal. Many modern Indian women and female historians have a negative view of the Indian removal of the 1830s. Indeed, many historians and Americans today believe that Indian removal was a manipulative scheme concocted by whites for purely selfish reasons. Some have expressed shame concerning the treatment the Indians received, calling it a blight on United States history. The late female Cherokee chief Wilma Mankiller referred to the removal as a "deadly...holocaust,"

which caused “the continued loss of tribal knowledge and traditions.”²⁸ However, Mankiller also saw the removal as a source of strength and hope for herself and her people. She believed that understanding the history and culture of the Cherokee people allowed them to live alongside white people in the modern world. Mankiller and other women today believe that nineteenth century women should be lauded for their actions in opposing Indian removal. Further research into this topic would prove interesting as well as enlightening.

Yet another area of further study might be whether or not there was an ulterior motive involving self-interest behind missionary organizations opposing removal. A self-serving motive would make their efforts to convert the Indians already living on reservations in the West very difficult. Many Christian missionaries worked to help the Indians, whether in the attempt to educate, convert, and assimilate them in order to avoid removal or in the removal process itself. However, the motives of the individual missionaries and those of the missionary organizations may not have been the same, and if such was the case, the reasons for this may provide for an interesting research topic.

Despite the unsuccessful attempt by these women and men to avoid Indian removal, one wonders if there was an alternative to Indian removal. One possible alternative, which was discussed during the debates about removal, was complete extermination of the Indians. While extreme, many whites at the time, especially in the Southeast, saw this as the best solution. Conversely, the United States government could have allowed the Indians to retain their homelands and continue to live there, but with clear cut policies or treaties in place to allow Indians and whites to live in relative peace and harmony. However, in states such as Georgia and Alabama that believed states’

²⁸ Wilma Mankiller, “Reflections on Removal” in Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 184-186.

rights surpassed federal policies when it suited their needs, white paramilitary groups would likely have slaughtered the Indians if they had refused to go or tried to fight back. Sadly, for this reason, the Indians had no choice but to remove.

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Locations are Approximate

Produced by the Dept. of Geography
College of Arts and Sciences
The University of Alabama