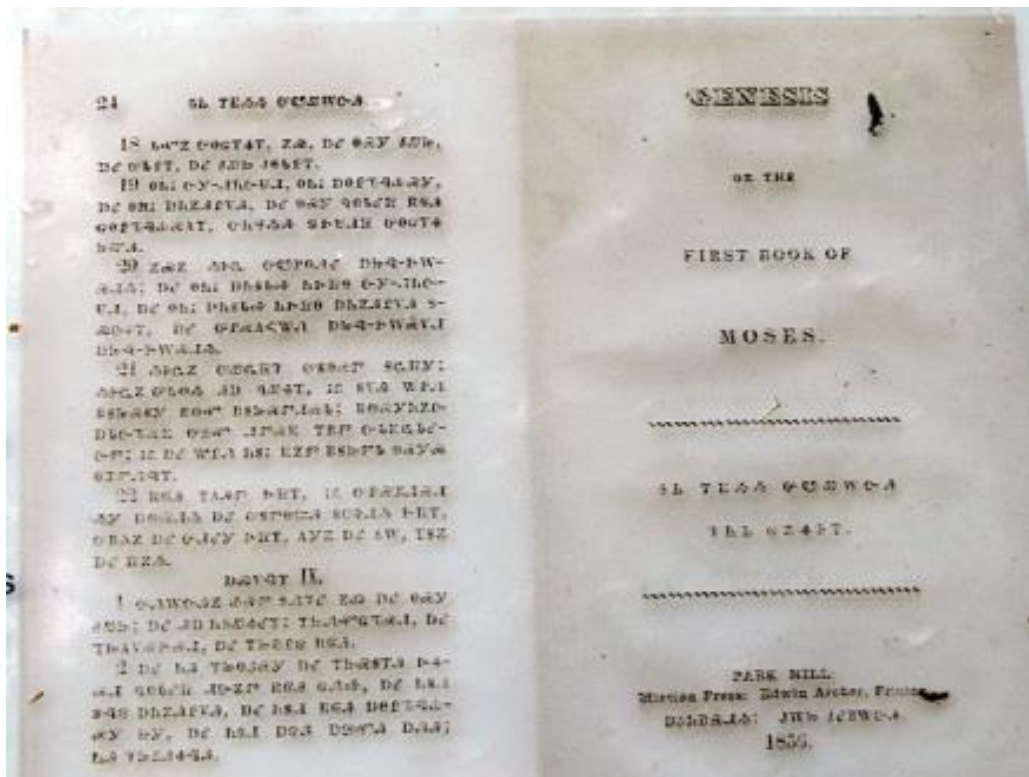


## HTY/SSC 110HM Module 4 Lecture Notes Southeastern Tribes and Indian Removal

In what is now the southeastern United States, the leaders of several tribes responded to the encroachment of Americans by attempting to **assimilate** to American society. These tribes, referred to by white Americans as the **five civilized tribes**, were the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. It is important to remember that the term “civilized” was used because white Americans believed that these tribes were superior because they sought to be like the Americans. Certain members of these tribes believed that if they began to live like Americans they would not be pushed off their land. The leaders of these tribes began to raise **cash crops**, raise livestock, learn to read and write in English, and opened schools for children. They also began to sell their crop surpluses to whites and build American-style towns with public roads and inns for travelers. Some even converted to Christianity and sent their brightest students to northern universities to study to become educated professionals.

**Cherokee Assimilation:** The Cherokee even created a written form of their language and began a newspaper. As shown in the nineteenth-century image below, the Cherokee demonstrated the level of their educational and religious assimilation by printing a bible in the Cherokee language. The Cherokee exhibited the five signs of civilization and more. Their towns were permanent, well-known, and thriving economically, but would this be enough to protect their lands from being taken by the Americans?

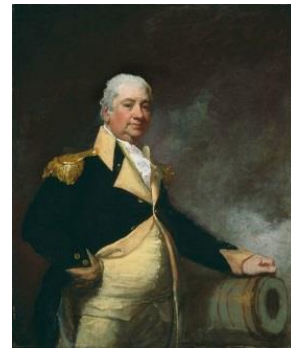


Sauber, Wolfgang. *Adams Corner - Kirche* 7. 2008. *Wikimedia Commons*. Web. 15 May 2013.

**Henry Knox and the Intercourse Acts:** After the Revolutionary War, the new American government was in great debt and it owed large sums of money to the veterans who had fought in this war. The government decided to give Native lands to these veterans in lieu of pay and sell Native lands to land speculators to make money for the new nation. According to **Conquest Theory**, since the Americans had defeated the British, the American government believed it had authority over all territory formerly belonging to the British. This included Native lands.

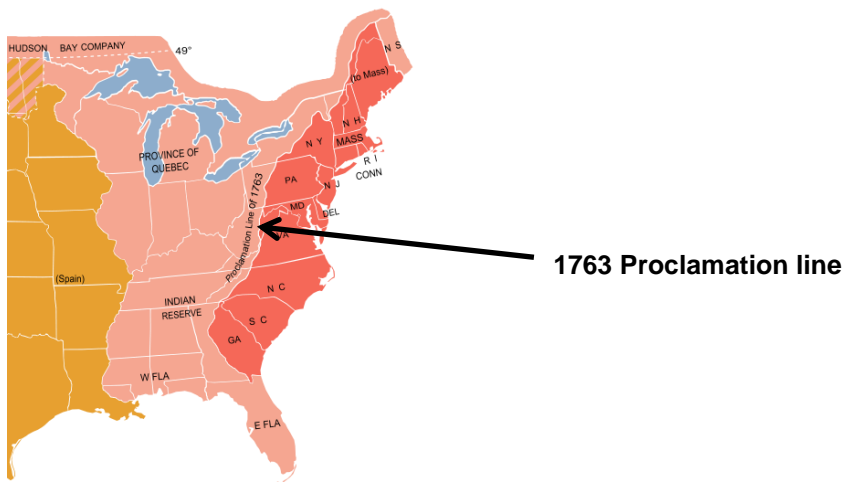
However, **Henry Knox**, the Secretary of War, thought differently. He believed Native Americans should be paid for their land. He also said that each Native group should be dealt with as a foreign nation so that only the federal government should be able to buy land from them. He believed this would protect them from unfair dealings with dishonest land speculators.

Knox's ideas became law in the form of the **Intercourse Acts**. These Acts were intended to provide federal protection for Natives against private land speculators and imposed punishments for Americans who settled on Native lands without federal permission. But the Acts did not protect the Native Americans from the greed of the federal government itself.



Henry Knox by Gilbert Stuart 1806. The Athenaeum. Wikimedia Commons. Web. 15 May 2013.

**American West:** At this time the “American West” was Ohio and Kentucky. As you can see on the image below, everything west of the 1763 Proclamation Line was designated as “Indian Reserve” land. But despite federal law, Americans moved west into these areas seeking cheap or free land. They settled on protected Native lands and the Native Americans tried to push them out, and, when settlers fought back, a series of battles erupted along America’s **western frontier**. The settlers who moved to these frontier lands were rough and unsophisticated poor Americans who had little influence on the federal government until the election of a new kind of President.



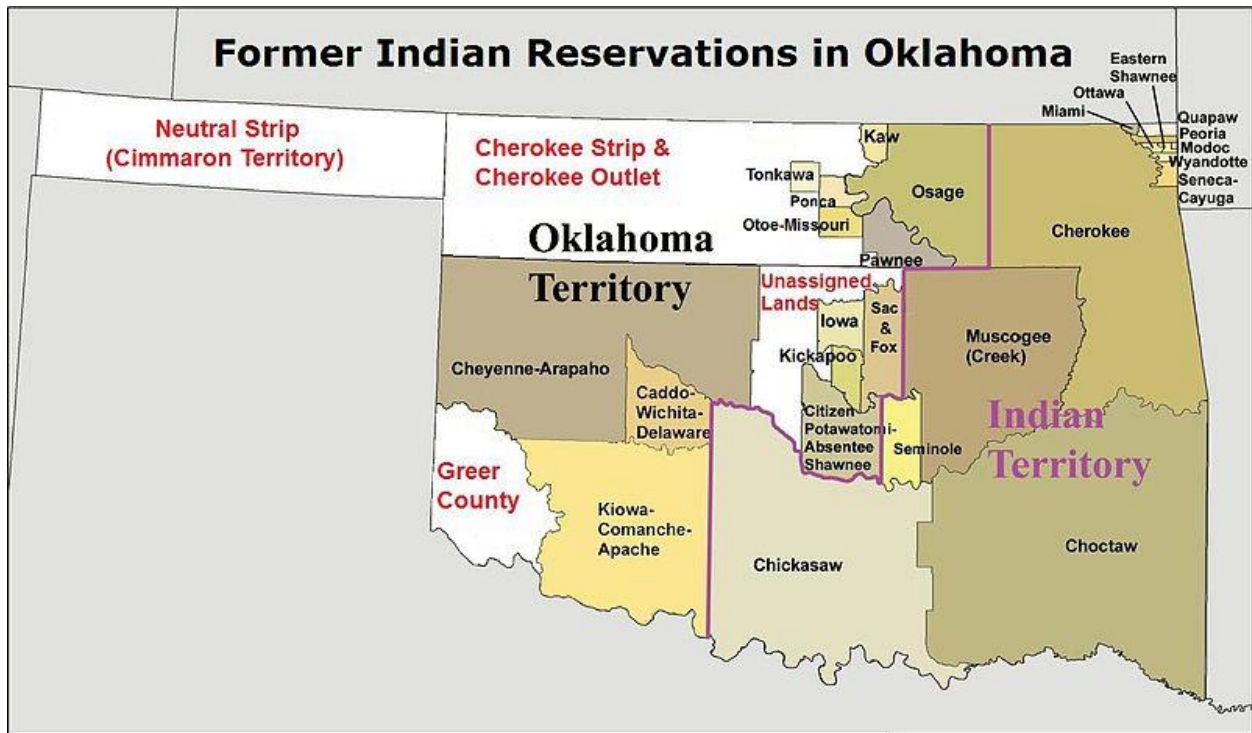
Boundary between Mississippi River and 49th parallel uncertain due to misconception that source of Mississippi River lay further north

1775

Map of territorial growth 1775. 2009. Wikimedia Commons. Web. 15 May 2013.

**Indian Removal:** Although Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe had all proposed what was called “Indian Removal,” Andrew Jackson of the frontier region of Tennessee was the first President who could relate to the settlers on the frontier. Prior to becoming President in 1828, this rugged frontiersman had led troops against the Native Americans in several Indian wars including the Battle of Horseshoe Bend against the Creeks. He later served as “Commissioner at Indian Treaties” and had secured for the Americans 50 million acres of Native land for settlement including much of Georgia and most of Alabama, western Tennessee, and southern Mississippi. As President, he remained committed to removing Indians west of the Mississippi River by working to pass the **Indian Removal Act** of 1830.

**The Indian Removal Act:** The Indian Removal Act dictated that Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River would be moved west of the river onto designated Indian reservations in Indian Territory, encompassing what is now the entire state of Oklahoma and more lands to the north. As you can see on map below, Native American groups were to move to the areas designated for their particular group. If Native American groups did not move willingly to the West, they would be forcibly removed.

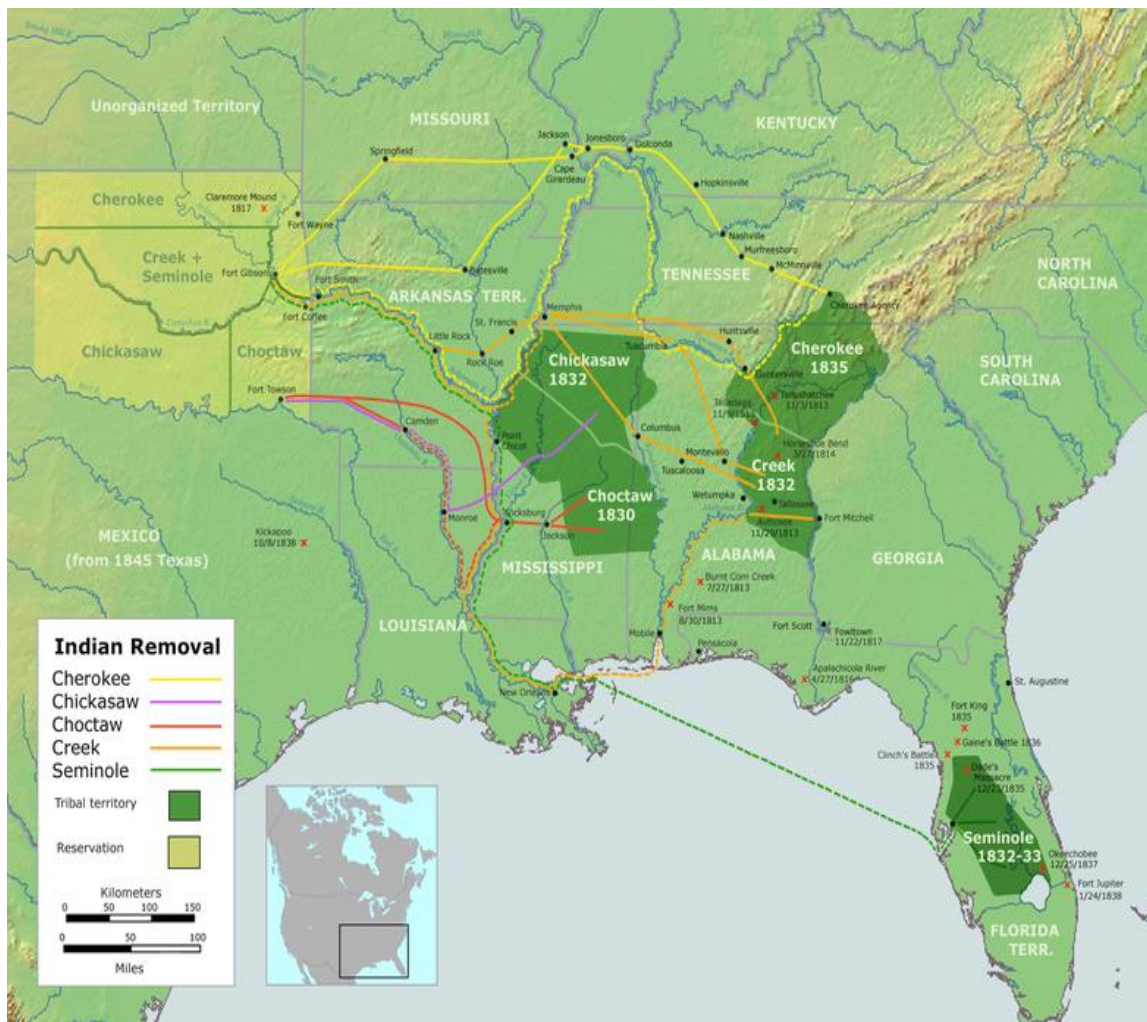


Former Indian Reservations in Oklahoma. 2013. Wikimedia Commons. Web. 15 May 2013.

For the Cherokee and the other so called “civilized tribes” of the Southeast, the passing of the Indian Removal Act was particularly devastating since they had built prosperous communities and farms and would lose everything by leaving. There were, however, factions within the Cherokee. One group, comprised of the Cherokee elite, refused to leave. This group was led by the sophisticated and highly educated Cherokee Chief, **John Ross**. The other group, comprised

of poorer, uneducated Cherokee, had little to lose by moving to the Indian Territory in the West and supported the move. Those Cherokee who refused to leave remained in the Southeast until federal troops arrived in 1838 to escort them to the West by force. This forced journey was called the **Trail of Tears**.

The Trail of Tears was a journey endured by all of the tribes whose journeys are shown on the map below. What the map does not show is that the misery and death that came with this journey began long before the actual march began. Native Americans were held in camps during preparation for the move. In these camps, they suffered starvation, illness, and death. Once the march to Oklahoma began, even more of them died. The tribes who endured the Trail of Tears lost thousands of people; it was a tragic end to their long-fought battle to remain in their ancestral homes.



*Trails of Tears*. 1988. *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 4. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. Wikimedia Commons. Web. 16 May 2013.

**Seminole:** Although some Seminole did travel west to the Indian Territories, their story unfolded quite differently from the rest. The Seminole were unique for two important reasons. First, their lives were intertwined with escaped African slaves and their descendants. And second, their Florida location made it difficult for military forces to defeat and capture them. Together with the **Black Seminoles**, their African tribal members, they fought against the Americans in an effort to remain in the Southeast.

When slaves in Georgia and Alabama escaped from plantations, they sometimes went south and sought protection from the Seminole in Florida. Many were taken in by the Seminole and their descendants became members of the tribe called Black Seminoles. The Seminole and the Black Seminoles enjoyed a symbiotic relationship in which the Seminole offered a refuge from slavery and the Africans shared their knowledge of agriculture and English. The Africans also augmented the Seminole numbers and served as spies and leaders of raiding parties in fights against the Americans during the **First Seminole War** and the **Second Seminole War**.



Negro Abraham,

Orr, N. *Abraham-black-sem.* 1848. *Wikimedia Commons.* Web. 16 May 2013.