

Georgia Natives



Modern scientists tell us that the Native Americans migrated by way of Beringia. This land bridge connected the two continents of Asia and North America across what became known as the Bering Strait. By contradiction, oral traditions said that the indigenous people originated in the Americas and did not migrate from somewhere else.

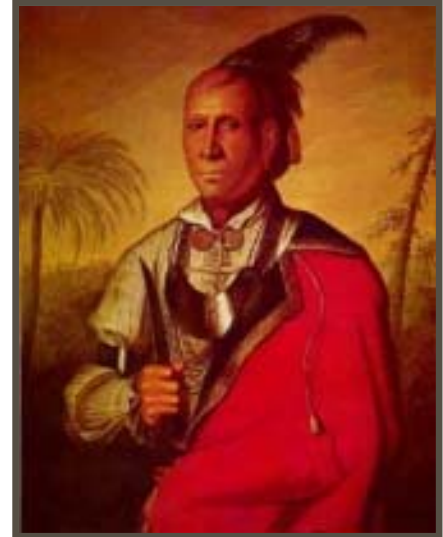
During the Paleolithic Period, highly mobile hunters used stone to make crude tools and weapons. Later, in the 13,000 BC to 8,000 BC, some tribes began gathering their food. In the Archaic Period (8,000 BC to 1,000 BC), the tribes started to sustain themselves through agriculture. From 2,000 BC to 1,000 AD, there was the rise of the Woodland Indian Tribes that could be found along the eastern border of North America. It was around this time (2,500 BC to 1,560 AD) that the Mound Builder's Cultures developed. This unique cultural development arose in northeast Louisiana during the late Archaic era, spreading inland along the Mississippi-Missouri-Ohio River areas.



According to oral tradition, the mighty Creek Nations migrated from the west of the Mississippi to present-day Alabama and Georgia. The Creeks, as named by the early Europeans explorers and settlers, were thought to have descended from the Mississippian Mound Builders. Their common culture and language were similar to the Seminole. The Creek Confederacy consisted of about 12 independent tribes in Georgia. The largest tribe in the Creek world was the Muskogee (Muscogee).

For about 400 years, the Cherokee ruled not only present-day North Georgia but significant areas of North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. They also possessed hunting grounds in Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and parts of Virginia. By oral tradition, the Cherokee, Tsalagi or Aniyvwiyai, migrated from the north and were thought to be a southern branch of the Iroquois. Due to conflict with the Iroquois, the migration of the white settlers, and cessions of their land, the Cherokee was pushed farther south and eventually into Georgia.

A conflict arose between the Creeks and the Cherokee. In 1755, Taliwa could be found Long-Swamp Creek and the Etowah River. Here, a great Cherokee War Chief by the name of Oconostota led 500 of his warriors to victory over a larger band of Creeks. So complete was the defeat that the Creeks retreated south of the Chattahoochee River, leaving to their opponents the region later to become the heart of the ill-fated Cherokee Nation. (028-1 GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION 1953)



Through the land cessions to the white man, the Creeks and Cherokee piece by piece lost their homelands. In 1733, the First Creek Cession was to James Oglethorpe which led to the establishment of the city of Savannah. The 1763 Treaty of Augusta further defined lines between the Creeks and the Georgia Colony. In 1773, the Creek and Cherokee ceded land to pay traders for debts owed. The land to the south and west of Tugaloo and Savannah Rivers was relinquished by the Creeks and Cherokee in 1782-83. The 1790 Treaty of New York gave up the Upper Creek land from the Altamaha to Oconee Rivers. In 1802, Georgia gave up its western land claims to the Mississippi River to the United States. In turn, the federal government promised to remove the remaining Indian Tribes from Georgia.



In 1825, William McIntosh, the leader of the Creek Nation, signed the Treaty of Indian Springs. This Treaty led to the removal of the Creek Tribes by 1827. An estimated 3,500 Creeks died in Alabama and on their way westward to Indian Territory. Some of those who remained took refuge in the Cherokee Nation. Others in effort not to starve ate death animals or boiled tree bark just to survive.

In 1830, the Federal Indian Removal Policy was endorsed by Congress. This act led to the forced removal of those remaining tribes to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi. In the Cherokee Nation, there was a conflict between those who wanted to remove to Indian Territory and those who wanted to stay east of the Mississippi River. The Cherokee successfully challenged the state of

Georgia in the U.S. Supreme Court. (Worcester v. Georgia, 1832) However, President Andrew Jackson, when hearing of the Court's decision, reportedly said, "[Chief Justice] John Marshall has made his decision; let him enforce it now if he can."

In December of 1835, the United States sought out a small group of Cherokee. These men become the signers of the New Echota Treaty. Only 300 to 600 Cherokee were at New Echota at the time and none of them were elected officials of the Cherokee Nation. Twenty signed the treaty, ceding all of the Cherokee



land east of the Mississippi to the federal government in exchange for \$5 million and new homelands in Indian Territory. Chief John Ross fought for the Cherokee to remain in their lands. However, in the Spring of 1838, the Cherokee were rounded up and marched to prepared stockades. As many as 4,000 Cherokees may have died while in the stockades and on the 800 mile journey west. Their ordeal has become known as the "Trail of Tears."

Sources:

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