

The Chickasaws

Although the Chickasaw Indians were the smallest of the Five Civilized Tribes, they were the last to sign a removal agreement and accept a home in the West (Clark 1976; Jahoda 1975; Savage 1976). The Chickasaws' final relinquishment of their lands was due to the relentless oppression by white settlers: the destruction of their land base and beloved soils; the depletion of game, which forced the Chickasaws to adopt the agricultural ways of the whites; and Mississippi's extension of its laws over the Chickasaws (Clark 1976; Foreman 1934).

A Chickasaw exploration party accompanied by United States Army officers left their homelands in the fall of 1830 to inspect the relocation grounds in Indian Territory. They passed through Little Rock in November of 1830 (Paige et al. 2003). The Chickasaws rejected the proposed territory, which nullified their current treaty and postponed removal (Agnew 1980).

The Treaty of Pontotoc Creek was signed on October 20, 1832 on the council grounds at Pontotoc Creek, Mississippi. This treaty ceded to the United States all the Chickasaw lands east of the Mississippi River and provided for government-assisted removal to Indian Territory. It also provided for another exploration party to visit the new country (Foreman 1932, 1934; Gibson 1976; Savage 1976). This second exploration party returned, again unsatisfied with the land (Foreman 1942).

Two more exploration parties departed in November 1835 and November 1836, respectively (Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, State Review Board Meeting [AHPP, SRBM] 2003a; Paige et al. 2003). The 1836 party met Choctaws at Doaksville near Fort Towson in Indian Territory. Here on January 17, 1837 the Chickasaws agreed to pay \$530,000 to the Choctaws for the central and western portion of the Choctaws' region in southern Indian Territory (Foreman 1942; Savage 1976). The United States government sought to unite the Chickasaws and Choctaws under one tribal government. The Chickasaws were not pleased with this plan; thus, though their formal removal took only a year, it did not begin until 1837 (Foreman 1934).

1833

The exploration party allowed by the Treaty of Pontotoc Creek consisted of 21 Chickasaw chiefs and a leader named Reynolds (Foreman 1832). They departed Tuscombua on October 16, 1833 (Foreman 1832; AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003b).

- Cross the Mississippi River at Memphis (a) (b) (d) October 21, 1832 (d).
- Travel the Memphis-Little Rock military road (a) (b).
- Pass through Little Rock (a) (b) (d); cross the Arkansas River using Rorer's Ferry (h).
- Arrive at Fort Towson (a) (d) December 4, 1833 (d).

1837

A party of 450–500 Chickasaws removed to Indian Territory during the summer of 1837. They were conducted by A. M. M. Upshaw, who had just been appointed superintendent of Chickasaw removal (AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Foreman 1832; Gibson 1976; Paige et al. 2003; United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service [USDI, NPS 1986]).

The Chickasaws left their homes traveling overland and passed through Memphis on July 4, 1837 (AHPP, SRBM 2003b; AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Foreman 1832). Here the party's conductorship was taken over by John M. Millard, who was assisted by W. R. Guy, Joe A. Phillips, and Dr. C. G. Keenan (AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003b; AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Foreman 1932).

- Cross the Mississippi River at Memphis (a) (b) (c) (d) (f) (h) July 4, 1837 (b) (c) (d) (h).
- Depart traveling overland (d) (f) (h); travel west on the Memphis-Little Rock military road (a) (b) (c).
- Arrive at Black Fish Lake (a) (d); continue another 5 miles (d) July 8, 1837 (d).

- Travel through swamplands; arrive at the termination of the newly constructed road (d).
- Cross Black Fish Lake (a) (b) (d); spend the night at “Camp Guy” (d) July 9, 1837 (a) (b) (d).
- Travel 8 miles over boggy roads July 10, 1837 (d).
- They are now through the Great Mississippi Swamp (d); camp for 2 days at “Camp Marietta,” 3 miles west of St. Francis and Strong’s (a) (b) (d); by now they have traversed the section of road that runs through Crowley’s Ridge (a) (b) July 11, 1837 (b) (d).
- Arrive at the Languille River and camp for one night, July 13, 1837 (a) (b).
- Travel the still-surviving Henard Cemetery Road Section of the Memphis-Little Rock military road (a); travel 11.5 miles today, July 14, 1837 (a).
- Arrive at the White River at the mouth of Cache Creek; cross the White River and proceed four miles southward to Rock Roe bridge (a) (d). Arrive at the site of present-day Clarendon (b) July 17, 1837 (d).
- Arrive and camp at Rock Roe bridge July 19, 1837 (b).
- Depart Rock Roe in the evening July 20, 1837 (b) (d).
- Travel 4 miles through the White River bottoms and reach the prairie (d); travel 25 miles through the “great Prairie” (b).
- Arrive at Mrs. Black’s (a) (b) (d) (h) July 20, 1837 (h); July 21, 1837 (a) (b) (d); July 22, 1837 (d).
- Travel 9 miles July 22, 1837 (b) (d).
- Travel the still-surviving Brownsville Segment of the Memphis-Little Rock road July 22–23, 1837 (b).
- Reach the Arkansas River opposite Little Rock (b) (c) (d) (f) (h); here the group splits three ways (a) (b) (c) (d), July 24, 1837 (a) (b) (d), July 25, 1837 (c) (h).

Overland Faction:

- 30 Chickasaws and 100 horses with W. R. Guy in charge continue overland (a) (b) (c) (h) (i) via the military road for Fort Coffee, which takes them along the still-surviving Cadron Segment (c) (h).
- Arrive at Fort Coffee (a) (b) (c).

Water Faction:

- 150–170 Chickasaws board the steamer *Indian* and leave for Fort Coffee (a) (b) (c) (d) (g) (h); Millard, Morris, and Keenan are in charge (a) (b) (c) (g) (h).
- Arrive at Fort Coffee (a) (b) (c) (d) (f) August 2, 1837 (a) (c) (d), August 1, 1837 (f).

A third Chickasaw party, which included Chief Sealy (AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003b; Paige et al. 2003), detached itself from Millard’s group at Little Rock, determined to travel West on their own terms. They planned to go southwest through the Red River country to Indian Territory (AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003b; AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003). Chief Sealy’s party had traveled about 35 miles beyond Little Rock before they were forced to stop due to most of them being ill. Millard returned from Fort Coffee with Lieutenant Governor Morris and the Choctaw interpreter Daniel McCurtain and found the stranded Chickasaws. Millard escorted them the rest of the way to Indian Territory following the Road to Fort Towson (AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003b; AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Clark 1976; Foreman 1932; Gibson 1971; Paige et al. 2003).

- Cross the Arkansas River at Little Rock (a) (b) (d) (h) using Rorer’s Ferry (h) July 25, 1837 (d).
- Travel overland going southwestwardly (a) (b) (d).
- Depart Little Rock; travel 10 miles overland and camp (d) August 10, 1837 (d).
- Travel 6 miles August 11, 1837 (d).
- A group is sent back to Little Rock for supplies August 12, 1837 (d).
- Arrive at Benton and camp an extra day August 13–14, 1837 (d).
- Travel 2.5 miles; horses are stolen in the night August 15, 1837 (d).
- Travel 3 miles; arrive at Hot Springs August 16, 1837 (d).
- Travel 12 miles; arrive at the Ouachita River and camp on the right bank (d) August 17–20, 1837 (d).
- Travel 5 miles, passing through Prairie Bayou August 21, 1837 (d).
- Arrive at the Caddo Crossing on the Caddo River August 22, 1837 (d).
- Arrive at the Antione Bridge August 25, 1837 (d).
- Travel 11 miles; arrive at Little Missouri River August 27, 1837 (d).
- Travel to Murphreesborough (d).
- Arrive at Brier Creek; travel 11 miles August 28–31, 1837 (d).
- Arrive at Rock Creek and Ultima Thule September 3, 1837 (d).
- Arrive at Rolling Fork September 4, 1837 (d).

- Arrive at Fort Coffee (a) (b) (f); arrive at David Folsom's, 22 miles west of the line (d) September 5, 1837 (f); September 10, 1837 (a) (b).

By November 9, 1837 about 4000 Chickasaws had assembled at Memphis after traveling overland from their homes. Most of the group traveled to Indian Territory by steamer under charge of Captain Simeon Buckner (AHPP, SRBM 2003a; AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Foreman 1932; Savage 1976). The steamers reached Fort Coffee in eight to ten days (Foreman 1932).

Water faction:

- Descend the Mississippi River starting from Memphis (d) (h) aboard the steamers *Fox*, *DeKalb*, *Kentuckian*, and *Cavalier* (h) November 25, 1837 (d) (h).
- Ascend the Arkansas River (d) (e).
- Pass Little Rock (d) (e) December 22–29, 1837 (d).
- Arrive at Fort Coffee (d) (e) December 2–4, 1837 (d).

The rest of the group traveled by land and was divided into three parties led by Langtree, Welbourne, and Millard respectively (Foreman 1932). The Chickasaws brought their horses, oxen, and wagons (Paige et al. 2003).

Land faction:

- Cross the Mississippi River at Memphis December 2–3, 1837 (b) (c) (d).
- Travel on the Little Rock-Memphis road (a) (b) (c) (d).
- Arrive at the St. Francis River; camp at Strong's (b) (d); remain here several days to await those struggling through the swamps (b) (d) December 10–11, 1837 (a) (b) (d).
- Cross the White River at the mouth of the Cache River December 7, 1837 (d).
- Continue down the Little Rock-Memphis road (b).
- Arrive at the Arkansas River opposite Little Rock (a) (b) (c) (d) December 13, 1837 (d).
- Millard and Welbourne and some Chickasaws board the steamer *Cavalier* at Little Rock and travel the rest of the way to Indian Territory by water (a) (b) (d) December 17, 1837 (d).
- Those who do not board the *Cavalier* travel overland (a) (b) (d) on the Little Rock-Fort Gibson road (c) (d) under charge of Captain Phillips (d).

Several other government-sponsored Chickasaw parties moved to Indian Territory during 1837. Around the first of December, Upshaw departed Memphis with 227 Chickasaws aboard the steamer *Fox*; they arrived in Little Rock on December 7 and reached Fort Coffee on December 12 (Foreman 1932). In mid to late December, 1837, 1938 Chickasaws, 4098 horses and oxen, and 61 wagons ferried across Cadron Creek and Palarm Bayou on the north side of the Arkansas River. Another Millard party consisting of 1220 Chickasaws, 902 ponies, 246 oxen, and 39 wagons crossed the White River on December 24 and arrived opposite Little Rock in early January, 1838 (Paige et al. 2003). The Bear Creek Chickasaws left Memphis for Fort Coffee on December 28, 1837 under charge of Captain J. A. Phillips (Foreman 1932). Also in 1837, the steamer *Itaska* arrived at the end of year in Fort Gibson under charge of R. B. Crockett (Foreman 1932).

Followers of Kin-hi-cha, or the "Cleanhouse Indians" traveled overland from their homes with 206 horses and oxen. They arrived at Memphis on January 18, 1838. The Chickasaws boarded the steamer *Itaska*, and the animals were loaded onto flatboats that were towed behind. The party was forced to travel by water because the Mississippi swamps were impassable (Foreman 1932).

- Descend the Mississippi River on the *Itaska* (d).
- Disembark at Arkansas Post (d).
- Travel overland to Little Rock (d).
- The party divides at Little Rock:
 - Conductor Vanderslice departs by steamer, taking the women and children; they arrive at Fort Coffee in February 1838 (d).
 - Captain Phillips departs overland, taking Chief Kin-hi-cha and the remaining Chickasaws and the animals; they arrive at Fort Coffee on March 16, 1838 (d).

On June 9, 1838, Chief Ishtehopa left Pontotoc Creek with 130 followers (Foreman 1932; Gibson 1971; Savage 1976). Upshaw was their conductor. They arrived in Memphis on June 24 and departed Memphis July 2 (Foreman 1932). This party probably traveled overland, since they used the ferry to cross the river.

- Depart Memphis July 2, 1838 (d).
- Arrive at Little Rock June 15, 1832 (d); cross the Arkansas River using Rorer's Ferry (h).
- Depart overland from Little Rock going southwestwardly (d).
- On the way, the group is turned over to Millard (d).
- Arrive at Fort Towson (d) June, 1838 (f); August, 1838 (d).

Several more Chickasaw parties traveled to Indian Territory in 1838, although the routes they traveled are recorded in less detail. Captain Phillips led a group of 979 emigrants from Memphis on January 6, 1838; this party was supposed to leave December 2, 1837 but was delayed. They crossed the White River and traveled to Little Rock with 888 ponies, 63 oxen, and 8 wagons. A party of about 799 under charge of R. B. Crocket departed the Chickasaw Nation on January 15, 1838; they arrived opposite Little Rock in early February 1838 (Paige et al. 2003).

In March, 1838 Colonel Upshaw left Fort Coffee to return to Memphis. At Helena, he found a commutation party of 450 Chickasaws who were emigrating themselves and refused any help. They told Upshaw that they planned to go to Arkansas Post and cross the river and then go on to Fort Towson, taking their time. Upshaw left them at Helena (Foreman 1932).

A Chickasaw party of 200 arrived opposite Little Rock in mid-May, 1838. John Millard arrived in Little Rock at the same time and convinced half of the group to accompany him along the Little Rock-Fort Gibson road; Chief Ishtehotopa was among those who went with Millard. Others had already crossed the Arkansas River; these Millard left to go southwest at their own expense (AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Paige et al. 2003). Millard's party departed Little Rock and started up the military road on May 30, 1838 (Paige et al. 2003).

Another overland party arrived opposite Little Rock on July 16, 1838 with Upshaw as their conductor. The group numbered 300 and had with them their cattle, horses, and wagons. They crossed the Arkansas River using the ferry and continued southwest to the Red River country (Paige et al. 2003).

1839-1850

Following the government-sponsored removals, several more parties of self-emigrating Chickasaws moved to the West. In 1839, 300 Chickasaws arrived in Indian Territory. In 1841, 145 Chickasaws emigrated (Gibson 1971; Savage 1976); 198 emigrated in 1842, and 62 emigrated in 1843 (Gibson 1971). In 1844, 138 Chickasaws and 56 slaves moved west. During 1850, only a few trickled in, sometimes just one family at a time (Gibson 1971; Savage 1976).

Chickasaw: Keyed Sources

(AHPP = Arkansas Historic Preservation Program)

(a) AHPP, State Review Board Meeting

2003 Memphis to Little Rock Road Segment – Henard Cemetery Road. 2 April:95.

(b) AHPP, State Review Board Meeting

2003 Memphis to Little Rock Road – Brownsville Segment. 6 August:15.

(c) AHPP, State Review Board Meeting

2003 Military Road – Cadron Segment. 3 December:145.

(d) Foreman, Grant

1932 *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*. University of Oklahoma

Press, Norman.

(e) Foreman, Grant

1942 *A History of Oklahoma*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

(f) Gibson, Arrell Morgan

1971 *The Chickasaws*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

(g) Little, Carolyn Yancey

1984 Samson Gray and the Bayou Meto Settlement, 1820–1836. *Pulaski County Historical Review* 32:2–16.

(h) Paige, Amanda L., Fuller L. Bumpers, and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.

2003 North Little Rock Site on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail: Historical Contexts Report. American Native Press Archives. University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

(i) Savage, William W., Jr.

1976 Creek Colonization in Oklahoma. In *America's Exiles: Indian Colonization in Oklahoma*, edited by Arrell Morgan Gibson, pp. 34–43. Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.