

Excerpt from Trail of Tears Diary

By Jobe Alexander & Mary Hill 1938

The Trail of Tears is the name given to the forced relocation of Native American nations following the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The removal included many members of tribes who did not wish to assimilate. Many Native Americans suffered from disease and exposure, and somewhere between 2,000-6,000 Cherokee died on the trail. The Trail of Tears Diary includes interviews that reveal the extraordinary resilience of the Native American nations during the trail. *As you read, take notes on how the perspectives of the two Native American interviewees differ.*

Interview with Mary Hill, Age 47

April 19, 1937

The Migration to the West of the Muskogee¹

Many years ago, my grandmother, Sallie Farney, who was among those that made the trip to the West from Alabama, often told of the trip as follows:

In every way we were abundantly blessed in our every day life in the old country. We had our hunting grounds and all the things that are dear to the heart or interest of an Indian.

A council meeting was mostly composed of men, but there were times when every member of a town (tulwa) was requested to attend the meetings.

Many of the leaders, when unrest was felt in the homes, visited the different homes and gave encouragement to believe that Alabama was to be the permanent home of the Muskogee tribe.

But many different rumors of a removal to the far west were often heard.

The command for a removal came unexpectedly upon most of us. There was the time that we noticed that several overloaded wagons were passing our home, yet we did not grasp the meaning. However, it was not long until we found out the reason. Wagons stopped at our home and the men in charge commanded us to gather what few belongings could be crowded into the wagons. We were to be taken away and leave our homes never to return. This was just the beginning of much weeping and heartaches.

We were taken to a crudely built stockade² and joined others of our tribe. We were kept penned up until everything was ready before we started on the march. Even here, there was the awful silence that showed the heartaches and sorrow at being taken from the homes and even separation from loved ones.

Most of us had not foreseen such a move in this fashion or at this time. We were not prepared, but times became more horrible after the real journey began.

Many fell by the wayside, too faint with hunger or too weak to keep up with the rest. The aged, feeble, and sick were left to perish³ by the wayside. A crude bed was quickly prepared for these sick and weary⁴ people. Only a bowl of water was left within reach, thus they were left to suffer and die alone.

The little children piteously⁵ cried day after day from weariness, hunger, and illness. Many of the men, women, and even the children were forced to walk. They were once happy children; left without mother and father, crying could not bring consolation⁶ to those children.

The sick and the births required attention, yet there was no time or no one was prepared. Death stalked at all hours, but there was no time for proper burying or ceremonies. My grandfather died on this trip. A hastily⁷ cut piece of cottonwood contained his body. The open ends were closed up and this was placed along a creek. This was not the only time this manner of burying was held nor the only way. Some of the dead were placed between two logs and quickly covered with shrubs, some were shoved under the thickets, and some were not even buried but left by the wayside.

There were several men carrying reeds with eagle feathers attached to the end. These men continually circled around the wagon trains or during the night around the camps. These men said the reeds with feathers had been treated by the medicine men. Their purpose was to encourage the Indians not to be heavy hearted nor to think of the homes that had been left.

Some of the older women sang songs that meant, "We are going to our homes and land; there is One who is above and ever watches over us; He will care for us." This song was to encourage the ever downhearted Muskogees.

Many a family was forced to abandon their few possessions and necessities when their horses died or were too weary to pull the heavy wagons any further.

Interview with Jobe Alexander May 3, 1938

I am a full blood Cherokee Indian born in Going-Lake District, Indian Territory, Cherokee Nation, March 10, 1854, and raised there. My father, Dun-Ev-Nall Alexander was born in Georgia and was driven West during the immigration. All the Indians were gathered up or rounded up by Federal¹⁸ soldiers and put in pens and guarded until ready for the move; they were gathered up by the "Clans" and left their gardens and crops, and some of the old homes of the Cherokee are still standing in Georgia.

The last group that was rounded up revolted;⁹ the leader gave the signal to revolt and all turned on the guards and took their guns away and murdered the guards and they made for hide aways in the mountains. That is why the Indians are back in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. They never were found or hunted much.

1. a Native American nation originally in Georgia and eastern Alabama, now located primarily in Oklahoma
2. a barrier formed from upright wooden posts or stakes
3. **Perish** (*verb*) : to die in a violent or sudden way
4. **Weary** (*adjective*) : feeling or showing tiredness
5. **Piteous** (*adjective*) : arousing or deserving pity
6. **Consolation** (*noun*) : comfort given to someone who is experiencing loss or disappointment
7. **Hasty** (*adjective*) : quick or hurried
8. belonging to the national government of an entire country (as opposed to a local government)
9. **Revolt** (*verb*) : to break away from or rise up against authority

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1) **PART A:** In Paragraph 7, what does the word "foreseen" mean?

- A. Implemented; put in motion
- B. Predetermined; previously agreed upon
- C. Predicted; to have been aware of
- D. Have seen or experienced previously

2) **PART B:** Which clue from the text best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "...rumors of a removal to the far west were often heard." (Paragraph 4)
- B. "...we noticed that several overloaded wagons were passing our home..." (Paragraph 5)
- C. "...until everything was ready before we started on the march." (Paragraph 6)
- D. "We were not prepared..." (Paragraph 7)

3) Which TWO statements best express the central idea of the text?

- A. In the mid-1800s, thousands of Native Americans were forced to leave their family land behind and travel west.
- B. On the Trail of Tears, new traditions and customs arose that have since become part of Native American culture.

- C. After the Indian Removal Act of 1830, many Native American tribes revolted, and were allowed to keep their homelands.
- D. When the Native Americans were forced to leave their homelands, they had to leave their sick and dying behind as well.
- E. The Trail of Tears was a brutal event in Native American history, on which many individuals were exposed to disease and exhaustion.
- F. In the mid-1800s, thousands of Native Americans chose to move west, in the hopes of finding more fertile farming and hunting land.

4) Which statement best describes the relationship between Mary Hill and Jobe Alexander?

- A. Both individuals are Native Americans who endured hardships on the Trail of Tears.
- B. Both individuals are the descendants of Native Americans who endured hardships on the Trail of Tears.
- C. Both individuals were officers who forced Native Americans into relocation on the Trail of tears.
- D. Both individuals have different opinions on the same historic event: the forced relocation of Native Americans on the Trail of Tears.

5) How would you describe the transition of the Muskogee tribe to the west?

- a) It was peaceful, as the tribe had been warned in advance.
- b) It was unexpected and people didn't have time to prepare for the journey.
- c) It was violent, as many Native Americans resisted.
- d) It was expected, as the Muskogee tribe had seen other tribes moving west.

6) How was the Muskogee tribe treated during their journey West?

- a) Only women and children were cared for during the journey.
- b) They were provided with the necessities to live.
- c) They were able to live comfortably during their journey.
- d) Many died from starvation and exhaustion during the journey.

7) How did some Native Americans resist being forced West?

- a) They reasoned with the soldiers.
- b) They broke out of the pens they were kept in.
- c) They overpowered the guards.
- d) They bribed the soldiers.

8) "A **council** meeting was mostly composed of men, but there were times when every member of a town (tulwa) was requested to attend the meetings." What is the meaning of council as used in this sentence?

- a) An assembly or meeting for consultation, advice, or discussion
- b) A policy or plan of action or behavior
- c) A lawyer engaged in the trial of a case in court
- d) Advice given especially as a result of consultation

9) Part A: How would you describe the attention given to the sick and dying?

- a) The sick were taken care of and the dead were buried with proper ceremonies.
- b) The sick were sent to a hospital and the dead were given a proper burial.
- c) The sick were left behind and the dead were not given a proper burial.
- d) Only the sickest were given care and no one died on the trail.

10) Part B: Which TWO clues from the text best support the answer to Part A?

- a) "This was just the beginning of much weeping and heartaches." (Paragraph 6)
- b) "The last group that was rounded up revolted...." (Paragraph 16)
- c) "Some of the older women sang songs..." (Paragraph 13)
- d) "The aged, feeble, and sick were left to perish by the wayside..." (Paragraph 9)
- e) "Many of the men, women, and even children were forced to walk." (Paragraph 10)
- f) "Death stalked at all hours, but there was no time for proper burying or ceremonies." (Paragraph 11)