

Source #3: Cherokee Leaders

Congressman Wilson Lumkin had been a United States Commissioner, a special representative of the government to an Indian tribe. He had lived and worked with the Cherokees as an adult from 1818 to 1821. Mr. Lumkin believed that the Cherokees should be moved out of Georgia because “it is a measure of great importance to the interest, peace and harmony of many of the states; and to the poor afflicted and perishing Indians, it is a measure of salvation.”

The following excerpt is from a special statement written by the Cherokee leaders on July 17, 1830 in response to Mr. Lumkin’s speech:

Part A: Why do the Cherokees want to remain on their land?

We wish to remain on the land of our fathers. We have a perfect and original right to remain without interruption...If we are compelled to leave our country, we see nothing but ruin before us. The country west of the Arkansas territory is unknown to us.

Part B: Why do the Cherokees not want to move out west?

From what we can learn...the inviting parts of it...are preoccupied by various Indian nations, to which it has been assigned. They would regard us as intruders, and look upon us with an evil eye (with anger and hatred). The far greater part of that region is, beyond all controversy, badly supplied with wood and water; and no Indian tribe can live as agriculturists without these articles.

Part C: How do the Cherokees view the other Native Americans in the west?

All our neighbors, in case of our removal, though crowded into our near vicinity, would speak a language totally different from ours, and practice different customs. The original possessors of that region are now wandering savages lurking for prey in the neighborhood. They have always been at war, and would be easily tempted to turn their arms against peaceful emigrants.

Part D: Why do the Cherokees want to remain on their land?

Were the country to which we are urged much better than it is represented to be, and were it free from the objections we have made to it, still it is not the land of our birth, nor of our affections. It contains neither the scenes of our childhood, nor the graves our fathers.

...taken from the Niles Weekly Register, August 21, 1830, XXXVIII, 454-7

Resource: Selected Case Studies in American History, Vol. 1, by Gardner-Beery-Olson