

## NATIVE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 sought to facilitate this migration by offering land west of the Mississippi to Native Americans living east of the river.
- President Andrew Jackson invoked this act, initiating the Trail of Tears that forced the migration of tens of thousands of Native Americans west of the Mississippi.
- Some of the Choctaw, the first to be removed, remained in the State of Mississippi and became American citizens.
- The Cherokees who were forced off their lands took 2000 black slaves which they owned with them to their new homes in the Indian Territory.
- Abraham Lincoln participated in the Black Hawk War of 1832 which forcibly removed what remained of Native Americans in Illinois.
- Lincoln appointed William P. Dole of his home state Commissioner of Indian Affairs, a bureau that proved to be corrupt.
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs accepted claims against Native Americans made by whites, but the Native Americans had no legal mechanism for making their own claims against whites.
- In 1862, Lincoln signed the Homestead Bill, opening the entire West to white settlers who demanded whatever fertile soil they found, including that located on Indian reservations.
- In 1863, Lincoln invited several major tribal leaders to the White House. Lincoln suggested to the Native Americans assembled that their people should adopt agriculture. He further declared that European Americans were less violent than Native Americans (despite the Civil War then going on).
- When white settlers attempted to remove the Nez Perce from their reservation in Oregon, Senator William Pitt Fessenden of Maine, pointed out the inconsistencies in the treatment by whites of Native Americans, shocking the Senate.
- During the Civil War, some Native Americans – including the Sioux in Minnesota – sought to take back their lands. In response, Union forces engaged Native Americans over eighty times in the West during the Civil War.
- On the other hand, Native Americans fought in their own cavalry units during the Civil War: the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, the Creek, the Osage, and the Seminoles.
  - Most Native Americans fought on the side of the Confederacy with which nation they had signed treaties as the outset of the war.
  - They came to regret their decision in light of their treatment in the Indiana Territory at the hands of Confederates.
  - They turned their loyalties to the Union in order to oust the Confederates from the Indiana Territory and thereby earned some measure of protection after the war.
- The Cherokee Battle flag resembled the first national Confederate flag, featuring the outer circle of eleven stars representing the Confederate States. An inner grouping of five red stars represented the Five Civilized Tribes.

- In the case of the Sioux, Lincoln ordered the commanding officer to suspend the executions and supply the President with the "full and complete record of each conviction." In the end he pardoned 265 of the 303 convicted Indians.
- During the Civil War about 3,600 Native Americans served in the Union Army, including Col. Ely Parker, Gen. Grant's aide at Appomattox Court House.
- Brigadier General Chief Stand Watie was a major figure on the Confederate side. Three of his grandparents were full-blooded Cherokees. Under his leadership, Cherokee troops earned respect for their cavalry maneuvers and guerilla tactics.



The Cherokee Braves Flag, as flown by Stand Watie. Wikipedia. 18 July 2008.  
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Bravesflag.png>>

For more information on the Native American Experience, check the following link:

<http://dig.lib.niu.edu/civilwar/nativeamericans.html>

### **Two Noteworthy Native American Authors**

- 1831 William Apess, a member of the Pequot tribe, penned the first published full-length autobiography by a Native American – *A Son of the Forest: The Experience of William Apes, A Native of the Forest*. (He added an additional s to his name in 1836). He used his status as the son of a Methodist preacher to champion his fellow Native Americans, offering an alternative to the history written by European Americans.
- 1833 Black Hawk, the eponymous Sauk chief associated with the only war in which Abraham Lincoln was an actual combatant, lost the war but gained fame and respect for his *Autobiography*.