

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

After Removal: The Choctaws in Mississippi. Edited by Samuel J. Wells and Roseanna Tubby.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5gk8850s>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 11(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Graves, William H.

Publication Date

1987

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

perhaps more importantly, as Americans. Our goal as historians is to discover what understandings were exchanged (or should have been exchanged) in the past. Peter Nabokov coins an apt metaphor, describing himself as a "mixed-blood . . . searching to reinhabit the land," reminiscent of Gerald Visenor's "mixed-blood earthdiver . . . seeking a few honest words upon which to build a new urban turtle island." (*Earthdivers*, 1981: 81). Reflecting on his attempt to merge past, present, and future in writing Indian history, Peter Iverson quotes a poem by an Navajo woman (pp. 142, 143):

i must be like a bridge
 for my people
 i may connect time; yesterday
 today and tomorrow—for my people
 who are in transition, also.

Irene Nakai

Tanis C. Thorne

University of California, Los Angeles

After Removal: The Choctaws in Mississippi. Edited by Samuel J. Wells and Roseanna Tubby. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press and Choctaw Heritage Press, 1986. 200 pp., photos, maps, drawings, charts, introduction, contributors, select bibliography. \$22.50 Cloth.

This collection of eight essays attempts to tell the story of the Choctaw Indians who remained in Mississippi after the removal era of the 1830's. This is a valuable topic and its story needs to be told. Unfortunately, this brief volume is not as complete as it wishes to be, and, as a result, leaves the reader with more questions than answers.

In a brief introduction, Samuel J. Wells gives the setting for the book and explains its purpose: to tell the story of several thousand Choctaws who remained in Mississippi after the larger part of the tribe was removed to "Indian Territory." The following essays are narrative and some demonstrate a major weakness of the study, that is it covers too broad a time frame, 1830-1986, in too few brief essays. In addition, there are no essays covering the

1918-1945 period which Wells claims is "more of a bonus than a problem." (p. vii). However, he offers no real explanation for this omission.

The body of this study is eight essays by scholars and lay persons presently working with the Mississippi Choctaw. As with any edited collection, the essays vary in quality. Perhaps the best essay in the book is a masterful one by the noted historian Ronald N. Satz which presents an overview of Choctaw history from the 1830 Removal Act to the reestablishment of federal relations with these people in the World War I era. Solidly researched and clearly presented, it is a must for any student of the Choctaw.

Two other scholars present exceptionally well done essays. Clara Sue Kidwell examines the struggle of the Indians to preserve their land base and cultural identity, and Charles Roberts details the second removal of some 1,462 Choctaws to Oklahoma on 1903. Both are well researched and written. R. Haliburton, Jr.'s vignette of the prominent Choctaw mix-blood, Greenwood Leflore, is short but enlightening.

Sister John Christopher Langford has written a nice essay on the close relation between the Mississippi Choctaw and the Catholic Church, and Jesse O. McKee and Steve Murray's article on Choctaw economic progress since 1945 is valuable. Well's essay on Choctaw mixed-bloods is very interesting but is written in a graduate school style in which the repeated use of "we" and "I" detracts from the text. His attack on scholars for writing in the stereotyped style of Thomas P. Abernethy is correct, but out of date. The weakest study in the book is Rufus Ward's archaeological survey of three traditional Choctaw farmsteads dating from the 1830's. His repeated use of the term "surface collections" leads one to question whether the surveys were scholarly and scientific, or amateurish and therefore questionable. A good editor at the Press should have cleaned up many of the above criticisms.

In sum, this is a valuable study and does fill a historical gap, but scholars must wait for a more complete study to understand this crucial but largely overlooked aspect of American Indian history.

William H. Graves
Prestonsburg (KY) Community College