



Trail Sisters: Freedwomen in Indian Territory, 1850-1890 (Plains Histories)

Linda W. Reese

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Linda W. Reese

African American women enslaved by the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Creek Nations led lives ranging from utter subjection to recognized kinship. Regardless of status, during Removal, they followed the Trail of Tears in the footsteps of their slaveholders, suffering the same life-threatening hardships and poverty.

As if Removal to Indian Territory weren't cataclysmic enough, the Civil War shattered the worlds of these slave women even more, scattering families, destroying property, and disrupting social and family relationships. Suddenly they were freed, but had nowhere to turn. Freedwomen found themselves negotiating new lives within a labyrinth of federal and tribal oversight, Indian resentment, and intruding entrepreneurs and settlers.

Remarkably, they reconstructed their families and marshaled the skills to fashion livelihoods in a burgeoning capitalist environment. They sought education and forged new relationships with immigrant black women and men, managing to establish a foundation for survival.

Linda Williams Reese is the first to trace the harsh and often bitter journey of these women from arrival in Indian Territory to free-citizen status in 1890. In doing so, she establishes them as no lesser pioneers of the American West than their Indian or other Plains sisters.

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Trail Sisters: Freedwomen in Indian Territory, 1850-1890 (Plains Histories) Linda W. Reese Bibliography

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