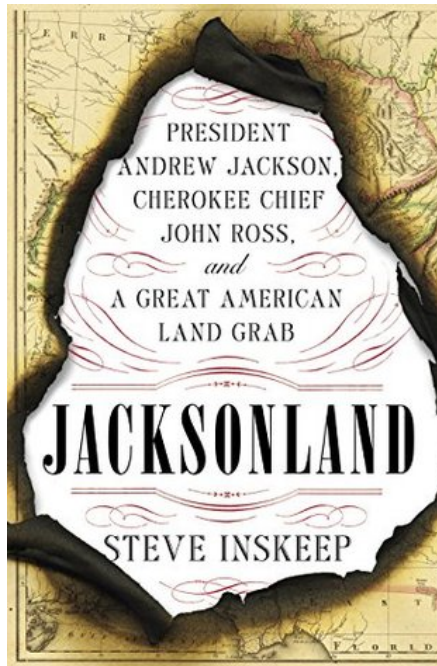




Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross, and a Great American Land Grab

Steve Inskeep

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Jacksonland is the thrilling narrative history of two men—President Andrew Jackson and Cherokee chief John Ross—who led their respective nations at a crossroads of American history. Five decades after the Revolutionary War, the United States approached a constitutional crisis. At its center stood two former military comrades locked in a struggle that tested the boundaries of our fledgling democracy. *Jacksonland* is their story.

One man we recognize: Andrew Jackson—war hero, populist, and exemplar of the expanding South—whose first major initiative as president instigated the massive expulsion of Native Americans known as the Trail of Tears. The other is a half-forgotten figure: John Ross—a mixed-race Cherokee politician and diplomat—who used the United States’ own legal system and democratic ideals to oppose Jackson. Representing one of the Five Civilized Tribes who had adopted the ways of white settlers—cultivating farms, publishing a newspaper in their own language, and sending children to school—Ross championed the tribes’ cause all the way to the Supreme Court. He gained allies like Senator Henry Clay, Chief Justice John Marshall, and even Davy Crockett. In a fight that seems at once distant and familiar, Ross and his allies made their case in the media, committed civil disobedience, and benefited from the first mass political action by American women. Their struggle contained ominous overtures of later events like the Civil War and set the pattern for modern-day politics.

At stake in this struggle was the *land* of the Five Civilized Tribes. In shocking detail, *Jacksonland* reveals how Jackson, as a general, extracted immense wealth from his own armies’ conquest of native lands. Later, as president, Jackson set in motion the seizure of tens of millions of acres—“Jacksonland”—in today’s Deep South.

Jacksonland is the work of renowned journalist Steve Inskeep, cohost of NPR’s *Morning Edition*, who offers here a heart-stopping narrative masterpiece, a tragedy of American history that feels ripped from the headlines in its immediacy, drama, and relevance to our lives.

Harrowing, inspiring, and deeply moving, Inskeep’s *Jacksonland* is the story of America at a moment of transition, when the fate of states and nations was decided by the actions of two heroic yet tragically opposed men.

CANDICE MILLARD, author of *Destiny of the Republic* and *The River of Doubt*

“Inskeep tells this, one of the most tragic and transformative stories in American history, in swift, confident, colorful strokes. So well, and so intimately, does he know his subject that the reader comes away feeling as if Jackson and Ross’s epic struggle for the future of their nations took place yesterday rather than nearly two hundred years ago.”

From the Hardcover edition.

Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross, and a Great American Land Grab Details

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From Reader Review Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross, and a Great American Land Grab for online ebook

marcus miller says

As I read this I wish I could have sat and listened to Inskeep talk with Brett Riggs, Tom Belt, and Andrew Denson, men who gave input at an NEH seminar on the Cherokee I was able to attend last year. Inskeep examines the events leading to the removal of the Cherokee by exploring the two key personalities involved, Andrew Jackson and John Ross. The two shared similarities, Scotch-Irish backgrounds, views of progress and democracy, yet there were also differences, chief among them, Ross's Cherokee ancestry. Inskeep describes the many complexities of the two men's personalities and politics. For example, the blending of political decisions which may help one's financial situation.

Inskeep shares how the Cherokee chose a path of "civil obedience" calling the U.S government to live up to its founding documents, laws, and treaties as the Cherokee worked for the right to stay in their ancestral homes. The efforts of Ross and others in support of the Cherokee influence both the anti-slavery movement and the women's movement. Strategies employed by the Cherokee were later used in the Civil Rights movement and other minority groups in the U.S.

Those wanting to remove Jackson's image from the twenty dollar bill will find more evidence of why that should happen. Demanding, stubborn, Jackson comes across as a bully willing to do anything to rid the southeastern U.S. of Indians,

I appreciated Inskeep's occasional comments relating events surrounding the Cherokee, Creek, and Seminoles with more current events. For example the tendency of government officials to underestimate the support a man like Ross had among average Cherokees to the assumption that few Iraqis supported Saddam Hussein, or that the Seminole war lasted longer than the Vietnam War and in modern terms was just as costly.

This is a readable and thought-provoking book about a tragic chapter in American history.

Jay says

Although I enjoy listening to this book's author, Steve Inskeep, on NPR, I worried that the book would lean more towards an examination of white guilt than towards actual history.

I'm glad to report I was wrong. I found this book engaging, engrossing, and educating without being overbearing, heavy-handed, or even overtly moralistic.

Inskeep shows not just Jackson and Ross but also all the other minor players in the drama as people of their time to be understood in the circumstances of the day. He avoids the all-too-common sermonizing of modern, moralistic presentism.

Well done, indeed.

Sarah Holz says

For a relatively compact nonfiction work, I found a distracting lack of focus at times. Inskeep set out for himself an ambitious but laudable goal of essentially writing a joint biography of Andrew Jackson and John Ross, though I didn't feel I left the narrative knowing a great deal more about either men. For Ross that might be a dearth of source material, but even Jackson didn't feel particularly fleshed out.

Part of this is due to digressions to follow the paths of other people involved in the events. I can give a pass to short stops with people directly connected (John Marshall, Catharine Beecher, etc), but far too much time is devoted to the reunion tour of Lafayette, which was a huge digression. And I am saying that as a person who loves Lafayette. I understand Inskeep was using the Revolutionary general as a conduit to talk about the state of the US at the time, but it took too long and had little to do with the story at hand. It was jarring enough that when I later came to a section entitled 'Democracy in America,' I actually said aloud, "Oh no! Now we're going to have to follow Tocqueville around!" And that is coming from someone who gave Democracy in America five stars on Goodreads and begs other people to read it (Oh my gosh, you have to read it). We did have to follow Tocqueville around, though for less time than Lafayette. All of the digressions take up so much time and space I felt like the actual result of Ross and Jackson's sparring, the horrific Trail of Tears, was tacked on as an afterthought in part of the last thirty pages.

This is not a bad book and those who are unfamiliar with the history will still learn something, though I think the book would benefit from being either 1) longer (then I would have loved all of the esoteric digressions), or 2) much more focused.

Wayland Smith says

This post might get a bit political. It also deals with a few issues many Americans prefer not to think about too much. If either of those bother you, you may wish to skip this.

The history of the American government dealing with Indians (yeah, I don't use Native American, sue me) is a long ugly tale of lies, betrayal, and unfair practices at best. One of the worst examples of this was Andrew Jackson, a President who many compare with Donald Trump. That's troubling on many levels.

Jackson was a war hero, serving in the war of 1812. His biggest victory was the Battle of New Orleans, interesting for many reasons, including the fact that it was fought after the war was technically over (word hadn't reached either side that far south). Jackson served in many interior campaigns within the US, and many of his early battles were fought with the Cherokee by his side.

Once he got into office, Jackson turned on his former allies, displaying attitudes that, at best, were racial and prejudiced. He became the only sitting American President to defy the Supreme Court when they ruled against him on the matter of forcibly removing the Cherokee from their home territory. He also, purely by coincidence I'm sure, managed to keep positioning himself to profit from the land he was instrumental in taking from the various tribes. He built a personal fortune by turning on his former allies, and interpreting laws and legal decisions in the way that was most profitable and/or convenient to him and his friends.

If you have any sense of justice, reading the actual history of these events should make you mad. The Federal government had a duty to protect the Cherokee and other tribes, or at the very least to honor the treaties they signed. They did neither. It's a disgraceful era of American history that still has echoes in the modern day. Jackson's general attitude seems very similar to Trump's on many levels.

If nothing else, knowing Jackson's history makes it even more of an insult that Trump, when honoring World War II Codetalkers, did so from under a portrait of the man that arguably most responsible for the greatest

loss of Indian lands.

Recommended to students of American History, those with an interest in Indians, and people willing to take a hard look at history, not the rosy, cheery version often taught in public schools.

Mary says

Jacksonland is well written and supported by excellent research. History unfolds in this work to document Andrew Jackson's desire to remove the Indians (Cherokee, Creek, and Seminoles) from their traditional homelands and moved farther west. He did this, in part, for personal gain. I was surprised by the fact of his personal enrichment. And not only for himself but for his friends as well.

Jackson bullied, lied, deceived, and used force to accomplish his goal. He ignored the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling with regard to the Cherokees. Bravo Justice Marshall for fairness and apt application of the law.

Inskeep's even handed reporting doesn't just paint Jackson as a villain but shows him as a President that held the union together during a difficult time.

John Ross was someone that I had never heard of before reading this book. His leadership as principal chief of the Cherokees during this crucial time is remarkable. His political acumen and continuing search for justice for his people shows him to be a self-sacrificing and honorable individual.

History lovers will certainly enjoy this book as well as non-history buffs.

Lane Willson says

As a kid, seeing my hometown, Athens, Tennessee, in print via anything larger in scope than The Daily Post-Athenian, was always exciting. However, the three mentions of Athens in Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross, and a Great American Land Grab by Steve Inskeep was quite sad. Calhoun, a neighboring McMinn County community to Athens, was an embarkation point for Cherokees moved in the late 1830's, and apparently Athens offered the nearest printing press.

There was little in the book that was not sad or disappointing. I've long known of the horrific treatment of the Cherokees, no Indian tribe escaped human plow of manifest destiny, but somehow I thought that Jackson's actions were at least for what he believed was a higher purpose. His motivation was little more than profit from land deals.

Jill says

It is ironic that Andrew Jackson, a murderer, kidnapper, slave owner, slave trader, land speculator acting on inside information, and last but not least, the cruel architect of Indian genocide, should hold such a revered place in the pantheon of American presidents - so much so, that when the question arose of who's image to replace on money, it was the image of Hamilton that garnered the most attention. [Ironic as well, since it was Jackson who was obsessively opposed to a federal bank, vetoing a bill to recharter the Bank of the United States, which led to an economic depression, and Hamilton, a fiscal genius, who championed the idea.] As

much as Americans have been shocked or disappointed over the behavior of some of our recent presidents, their actions are minor peccadillos compared to the abhorrent and morally horrific activities of Andrew Jackson.

Steve Inskeep, a cohost of NPR's Morning Edition, and someone who has received multiple awards for investigative journalism, tells Jackson's story, juxtaposing it to the story of the leader of the Cherokee people, John Ross. It is not hard for Ross to come off looking better.

It was truly difficult to listen to all the outrages committed by Jackson, and against the Native American people, and yet it is essential to understand this part of American history.

Evaluation: If you only read one nonfiction book this year, I hope you will make it this one. It is critically important that Americans understand what kind of man Andrew Jackson really was, and what was done to the Native Americans who occupied the land he coveted. It is an outstanding book, and a pleasure to experience via audio.

A Few Notes on the Audio Production:

It's almost unfair to compare other narrators to the cohost of one of the most widely heard radio news programs in the United States. Inskeep knows how to "read for the ear" and his impassioned narration hits all the right notes.

Clif Hostetler says

This is non-fiction history about the decades-long saga of politics, legal maneuvering, and greed that concluded in the grand tragedy of the expulsion of the Cherokee Nation from Georgia in 1838, commonly remembered today as the "Trail of Tears." This book describes this era of history largely through the stories of two of the most able leaders on both sides—Andrew Jackson, the seventh president; and John Ross, the "principal chief" of the Cherokee.

One of the lessons I learned from this presentation of history is that there were many years of political maneuvering before the advent of the Cherokee move to Oklahoma. One reality was that there were many voices of opposition to the expulsion and some close votes in congress where things could have gone a different direction. For example, the only reason the Indian Removal Act passed in 1830 was because the winning margin of votes were traded in the belief that Jackson would sign an interstate road construction bill. When Jackson vetoed the road bill many Senators wanted to take back their vote or have a re-vote before the Indian Removal Act was signed. But it was all too late. Jackson had quickly signed the Indian Removal Act making it impossible to undo.

The tribes being removed included the five so-called "civilized tribes." These Indians dressed like Europeans, lived settled lives, had centralized governments, were literate, many were Christians, and many spoke English. Some were even wealthy plantation owners and owned slaves. The census performed in 1830 listed many professions and trades among the Cherokees such as farmer, miller, shop keeper and carpenter; but none were listed as hunter, gather or wanderer. In spite of indications of their willingness to be considered as citizens, the Georgia State government passed a law that explicitly stated that the Cherokees were not citizens, had no civil rights, and their testimony was not allowed in legal proceedings.

In *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Georgia could not impose laws in

Cherokee territory, since only the national government — not state governments — had authority in Indian affairs. One would think that with such a Supreme Court ruling that the rights of the Cherokee would be protected. But President Jackson agreed with the pending expulsion of the Indians and did not act to extend the power of the Federal Government to protect the Cherokees.

A significant part of the story is the effort of John Ross to prevent the removal, and when that was no longer possible he bargained for the best possible deal. John Ross was only 1/4 Cherokee by blood, but his family had lived among the Cherokees for two generations, and he thoroughly identified with their cause. He was fluent in English, well educated, and very skilled in his writing and bargaining skills. In the end the move of the tribe was carried out as a negotiated voluntary operation carried out under Cherokee leaders with expenses paid by the Federal Government. The fact that the move was carried out as peacefully as it was is due to the leadership skills of John Ross.

I can't help but note that there are many parallels between the politics during the Jackson era and American politics of today. Jackson was the first president of the United States who could properly be labeled a populist. He was elected largely with the support of the western and southern parts of the country against the wishes of the eastern political powers. Jackson and his supporters were not concerned with the civil rights of those they considered to not be citizens (i.e. Indians and slaves). They were willing to ignore court rulings and the law when necessary to get what they wanted. I'll let you identify the parallels with current day politics for yourself.

The first story at the following link describes some interesting parallels between Andrew Jackson's first year in office with that of DJT.

<https://historyispower.blog/blogs/hip...>

Paul Womack says

The best review of this marvelous book is the author's last paragraph: "This book has been a joy to write, even though it tells a difficult story. It is about my country, which makes it a love story. Of the many ways to show one's love, one of the best is to tell the truth." The book was hard to read, because it is a difficult story, but I so appreciate the truth in the telling.

Scott says

Andrew Jackson may be getting a bit of a revival thanks to President Trump's hamfisted attempts to draw parallels between himself and Old Hickory. Before making this effort, President Trump would have been well-advised to have read Steve Inskeep's "Jacksonland," Inskeep's fascinating review of President Jackson's fight to clear millions of acres of land in the American south for safe American settlement.

That anodyne statement glosses over the fact that, in order to make the land safe for settlement, Jackson had to sweep aside native tribes who had lives on the land for centuries. And Jackson did so by hook, by crook, and other means covering a dizzying range of tools at his disposal.

All in all, President Jackson may be on the Mt. Rushmore of 'Complicated' Presidents. While Inskeep's book does not explore all the nuances of Jackson's presidency, Jackson's role in the "Great American Land Grab" was pivotal and, depending on your perspective, either a nightmare or a triumph. Jackson's defenders will

observe that by clearing the South for American settlement, Jackson secured a vital region of our country that would have otherwise ended up in British or Spanish hands. Jackson's critics correctly observe that, regardless of the motive, Jackson's treatment of the local tribes was inhumane, deceitful, and a stain on American honor.

It is this complexity that has caused most modern Presidents to look elsewhere for their inspiration even though Jackson's many achievements exceed many of the other members of the presidential fraternity. Perhaps if Trump and his acolytes understood this better, they might have thought more carefully before hanging Jackson's portrait in the Oval Office.

Thanks to Inskeep's wonderful book - written with great humor and reflecting extensive research - anyone who wishes to can get an entertaining and informative understanding of our flawed but noteworthy Old Hickory. This book makes a great companion piece to Jon Meacham's "American Lion," which offers a more comprehensive look at the President.

Wesley Roth says

I originally heard about the book after seeing the author Steve Inskeep promoting his book on Twitter and then read some early reviews, in which they praised the book. I saw it at Booksamillion the day it came out, but passed, then went ahead and bought it a few days later at Mitzi's Books. I am so glad I did!

Inskeep does a masterful job of bringing the reader into the story, establishing both Andrew Jackson and John Ross as giants in their own time, in their own way. It was fascinating to learn that our government recognized two different maps of our country--"The White Man's Map" and the "Indian Map" (which comprised the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole and of course, Cherokee nations). Reading through this history book, it was enraging and sad to the extent that Native American land was eventually taken--through treaty, squatting, purchase or eventually force with President Jackson signing the Indian Removal Act in 1830 leading to the Trail of Tears.

Each chapter was a goldmine of masterful storytelling that made this part of our country's history come alive. I also liked how he weaved in key events, building up and foreshadowing the Civil War. Inskeep also did a great job bringing other important "players" within Cherokee Nation to the forefront, such as Elias Boudinot, Jeremiah Evarts and Major Ridge, which deserve further study. My opinion of Jackson definitely changed after reading "Jacksonland" and we should consider removing him (or adding John Ross?) to the \$20 dollar bill. Well-research and even better written, this is in my "Top 5" of best U.S. History books I've ever read. 5 stars!

Angie says

I got a copy of this through First to Read.

At the beginning, this felt like a side-by-side summary of Ross' and Jackson's lives. Each had a perfunctory chapter towards the beginning to get at their background and what drove their characters. And there was a great deal of discussion of real estate that I didn't catch, not understanding the boundaries that were clearly described but not drawn out. But then after the first 100 pages, the book developed and blossomed into a true biography of an idea -- the baffling democratic (or not-so-democratic) process by which the Trail of Tears came about. It's a model of historical context. Instead of going out of his way to describe small details from

the ain player's lives, he describes the social and cultural situation at the time. He introduces us to the characters involved, including the minor ones. What role did the early women's movement play? How was this related to slavery and states' rights and the build up to the Civil War? So this isn't really the story of two men, although they form a nice scaffolding for the story. It's the story of a removal of a people from their homes, an event that was controversial even in its time, and one that split political parties and individuals' consciences. I didn't necessarily expect to learn much that was new to me, but I did pick up a greater understanding of the competing interests surrounding the issue at the time. And, as expected, it was very well written, so the story came through clearly.

Chris says

If you ever start to get that feeling that politics, corruption, and civil rights are reaching a new low then you need to go read some history books. This is one of those books. Steve Inskeep gives a damning account of how the US government (in particular, President Andrew Jackson) was complicit in the theft of Cherokee land by the state of Georgia. I checked out the audiobook and the e-book from the library and alternated between them. Steve Inskeep narrates the book and of course does a great job, but the e-book is quite helpful for keeping up with all the names and places. I recommend it for those interested in early American history.

Louise says

This is the early 19th century history of the Cherokee Nation, the original owners in residence of the land the author, Steve Inskeep, calls "Jacksonland".

While treaties confirmed by federal policy guaranteed the Cherokees rights and land, President Andrew Jackson found every excuse to procrastinate when it came to enforcement. Speaking of the "humanitarianism" and the "welfare" of the Indian people, President Jackson worked to free their lands for federal distribution.

Inskeep shows how prior to his presidency Jackson's self-dealing worked to pioneer federal land policy. As the leader of a Tennessee militia Jackson removed Indians from lands which he later arranged to purchase or otherwise acquire. Inskeep also shows how the Cherokee, who helped in the removal of the Creek and fought with the US against the British in the War of 1812, were forced into a position where they had to bargain to keep what little they had. Each bargaining session ended in further erosion of their position.

The portrait of John Ross, who, with 1/8 Cherokee blood, led his people legally and politically is outstanding. Other interesting people appear such as Catherine Beecher, sister to the more famous Harriet and Henry; the "Cherokee Phoenix" editor, Elias Boudinot; Jeremiah Evarts who for religious reasons supported rights for Indians; and Major Ridge and his son who like John Ross were Cherokee advocates, and depending on how you interpret events, profiteers.

You learn more of the rivalry between Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson and how John Quincy Adams, who while sympathetic to the Indians, whom he entertained in his home, did not help them, and John Marshall who stepped out of his role to advise. You glimpse Lafayette and deToqueville who tour the US at this time. There is something of Davy Crockett and Jackson's war on the US bank.

The end is not as good as the beginning. Only a few pages cover the aftermath. Inskeep goes from the flight of the Cherokee to the hyper-development (Disneyland being emblematic) of "Jacksonland", (the land

essentially created by Jackson's tactics and policies). He notes the multi-multiculturalism and the use of Indian terms (i.e. "Arrowhead Motel"). I would have liked more about contemporary life on the new Cherokee lands (particularly Oklahoma, not just that there is a casino).

The book raised my awareness on how these lands were taken from the Cherokee and Andrew Jackson's leadership role. I have never understood the laurels given this president (i.e. so many cities, counties and schools named for him and despite his distrust of currency, his picture on the \$20 bill). Now I understand it even less.

Regina says

It's a fascinating history. I still can't see Jackson as anything other than a complete ass.
