Corridors of Violence in the Wiregrass Region:

Accounts of Determination and Regional Identity Formation in the early to mid-1800s.[1]

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to the Graduate School
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[1] The Wiregrass Region encompasses the Coastal Plain, including Georgia's southern terrain. The area is characterized by pine trees, sandy soil, creeks, rivers, swamps, and wiregrass. Wiregrass is "a round-bladed perennial growing in outwardly bending clumps, wiregrass (Aristida Stricta) reaches a height of more than one foot and lends the region its name." Mark Wetherington. "Wiregrass Georgia." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Sep 28, 2020. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/geography-environment/wiregrass-georgia/ (accessed June 5, 2025).

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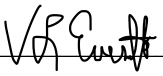
Signature 

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I started my graduate studies at Valdosta State University, I wanted to learn more about Georgia's history. Specifically, my question was, “What happened in this region of the state through the centuries, and how did Valdosta go from being one of the richest towns in the country to one of the poorest?” – “What happened?” This was new territory for me, and my instructors were patient, especially with my writing, which still struggles as I try to make sense of the large amount of literature and find my voice. During this journey, my professors have challenged me to analyze primary sources deeply, read critically, question interpretations, and form my own assessments.

When I first began, I recall Dr. Dixie Haggard explaining the program, which included the new field of Public History planned for the department. I was hooked, but I was also slightly intimidated. Historiography was my first foray, and this class set the foundation for approaching my readings. Dr. Tom Aiello was patient with my many questions and offered opportunities to navigate the complex materials without losing sight. Dr. Mary Block challenged my writing skills and compelled me to reach a new level of analysis. Dr. Magdalena Nowak inspired my thinking and writing to consider a world view of words and meanings outside of an American centric perspective. Dr. Sara FitzGerald opened the world of Public History and helped me develop the skills to apply what I had learned in academia to the possibilities outside the classroom. She also offered me my first job in a very long time. That was a huge boost in confidence. I am grateful to Dr. Dixie Haggard for introducing me to the vast Native American literature and the process of developing my Thesis. Dr. F. Evan Nooe’s research was timely and greatly assisted and validated my arguments; his questions continue to prompt me to consider the primary sources in a broader context. Dr. Hendry Miller, of the Georgia Archives, has offered great support with my multiple questions. Finally, I want to thank my gurus at the Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum, Donald Davis and Harry Evans. I am eternally grateful for their support and encouragement.

Thank you to everyone who has helped me along this journey.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Philip, and our son Thomas.
Thank you for your patience, encouragement, and unconditional love.

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes letters written by militia members and settlers in the Wiregrass Region to the governors in Milledgeville, Georgia, between 1825 and 1850, with most of the correspondence dated 1836 and 1838. The Wiregrass Region, acquired through the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson, spans the southern Coastal Plain in the Southeastern United States and is characterized by pine trees, sandy soil, and numerous waterways, including creeks, marshes, rivers, and swamps. The region gets its name from the native wiregrass that grows abundantly there. This thesis contends that settlers, many of whom were militia, used the environment of the transitional frontier - a dynamic, in-flux area - to influence their actions and organize against Native Americans. These settlers, who migrated to the region, received smaller land grants - 490 acres or less - compared to other parts of Georgia, significantly boosting the population of yeoman landowners in southern Georgia. This unique environment, along with settlement patterns, created fertile ground for the development of a distinct Anglo identity in the area. The Native Southerners referenced in these letters used waterways to reach safe locations during the height of the U.S. Indian Removal Policy. Their perseverance, from the Anglo perspective, shows how they leveraged the environment not only for survival but also to assert their agency. The unique terrain of the Wiregrass Region and the spatial settlement patterns from the 1820 Land Lottery directly influenced the shaping of Anglo regional identity and the behaviors of both settlers and Native peoples.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On July 19, 1836, Thomas E. Blackshear (1809-1867) reported in a letter to Georgia Governor William Schley (1786-1858) that Indian men, women, and children were making their way to Florida through swampy areas of southern Georgia.[2] He believed these people used the terrain to disguise their tracks as they journeyed through the region. Blackshear, who was from Thomas County, wrote that authorities in his district requested help from neighboring Lowndes County. He had recently led troops in a battle near Big Warrior Creek and the Little River, where twenty-two Indians and two Blacks died. The fighting encompassed approximately three miles of "cypress ponds, and bays, and a very thick hurricane" and lasted about two hours.[3] They took eighteen Indian women and children prisoner and transported them to a jail in Thomasville, awaiting removal to Alabama and then undoubtedly west to Indian Territory, Oklahoma today. Blackshear believed these Native Americans were traveling together as families and migrating south out of Georgia to possibly places of harbor in Florida.[4]

A letter by Blackshear, dated July 7 of the same month, described Native Americans moving from Baker County south into Thomas County. This was just four days after a battle in the Chickasawachee Swamp where three hundred Native Americans held a stronghold on an

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[2] Dates of birth and death are listed if known whenever the name is first mentioned.
[3] Thomas E. Blackshear, "Letter from Thomas E. Blackshear, July 19, 1836." File II, Reference Services. RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. A hurricane was reported in *The Evening Post*, New York, August 25, 1836, page 2 from New Brunswick, New York. An eye witnessed described the winds as being so intense that all crops were lost. Newspapers.com. "Terrifick Hurricane at Woodstock." Evening Post – New York August 25, 1836. https://www.newspapers.com/image/39642100/ (accessed May 2, 2025).
[4] Ibid.

island deep within the watery terrain. Blackshear reported that two companies from Jefferson County, Florida, had joined the Georgia militia to halt and expel all those moving south to Florida. Troops were stationed along the Flint River and surrounding areas. Additional letters written that same year by Blackshear reported settlers arming themselves against the Seminoles living along the Florida line and the Creeks who were joining them, calling the region a frontier and detailing a Native American exodus into Florida away from militia and settlers.[5]

Illustration 1: The 1831 map outlines Baker, Thomas, and Lowndes Counties, where Native Americans moved south as described in Blackshear's letters.[6]

Thomas Edward Blackshear, born in Georgia, moved with his family from Montgomery County to Thomas County in the 1820s during the early days of settlers

[5] Thomas E. Blackshear, "Letter from Thomas E. Blackshear, July 7, 1836," "Letter from Thomas E. Blackshear, August 6, 1836," "Letter from Thomas E. Blackshear, September 12, 1836," "Letter from Thomas E. Blackshear, September 14, 1836," "Letter from Thomas E. Blackshear, October 10, 1838." File II, Reference Services. RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. The term, Seminole, is a very broad terminology for Native people in the Southeastern United States, especially Georgia, who are a reorganization of people who sought refuge in Florida. Seminole is *simanóli,* or *cimarron*, from the Spanish slang for property "lost" in the Florida wilderness. The term describes Native Americans, including escaping enslaved people, acting as "renegades and vagabonds," refusing to submit to colonial authority, and reacting to settler expansion. Paul M. Pressly, *A Southern Underground Railroad: Black Georgians and the Promise of Spanish Florida and Indian Country* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2024), 156; Dixie Ray Haggard, "Black Indians: America's Forgotten People" in *Perspectives in American Social History* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 174; C.R. Elliott, "'Through Death's Wilderness': Malaria, Seminole Environment Knowledge, and the Florida Wars of Removal," *Ethnohistory,* 71, 1 (January 2024), 5.

[6] "Georgia," 1831 Map of Georgia. Historic Maps, Surveyor General, RG 3-8-65, Georgia Archives. (https://vault.georgiaarchives.org/digital/collection/hmf/id/24/rec/25).

encroaching on Native American land. Blackshear was a plantation owner, slaveholder, and elected official in the State House of Representatives and Senate. During the "Indian Wars," he joined the 69th Georgia Militia Regiment at the apex of Native American removal from the Southeastern region of the United States.[7] Blackshear's letters, along with numerous others written during this crucial period for Native Americans and settlers, reported continuous groups of Indigenous people maneuvering through the southern borders of Georgia. This settlement frontier, surrounded by the expanding state of Georgia, neighboring Alabama, and the newly acquired Florida, created a corridor for those escaping removal due to the sparsely populated environment and an abundance of waterways, many of which were swamplands. These Native people, who could be described as refugees fleeing insurmountable circumstances, skillfully negotiated the familiar terrain while attempting to avoid hostile encounters with settlers and militia who were opposed to their presence.

This thesis details correspondences written in the early to mid-1800s between militia assigned to the southern region of Georgia and residents of newly established towns with officials in the State Capitol in Milledgeville. This thesis argues that the letters illustrate how settlers utilized the environment of the transitional frontier to influence their behavior and organize themselves against Native Americans in the region.[8] These letters tell stories of murder and chaos, but also Native endurance. They offer a small look, a glimpse, into what occurred as the U.S. government opened the territory to Anglo-American settlements after a succession of

[7] Marie Giles, "Blackshear, Thomas Edward (1809-1867)." Texas State Historical Association. Tshaonline.org. Accessed July 10, 2024. William Warren Rogers. "From Planter to Farmer: A Georgia Man in Reconstruction Texas*." Southwestern Historical Quarterly,* 72, 4 (April 1969): 526.

[8] A frontier is defined by Bradley J. Parker as "fluid zones" where political and cultural entities often overlap. Bradley J. Parker, "Toward and Understanding of Borderland Processes." *American Antiquity,* 71, 1 (January 2006): 79-80. Transition is explained by a process of change. Transitional frontier is a physical space undergoing shifts in power legally, political, economically, and culturally.

treaties took more and more land from Native people in Georgia.[9] The changing economic, political, and military relationship between the United States and Native Americans in the region altered the power structure, placing Native people at a disadvantage on several fronts. The U.S. aggressively used a progression of treaties, beginning with the 1790 Treaty of New York, to slowly carve up Indian lands. However, the process was too slow for many politicians and settlers, and they were impatient. Increased pressure by large plantation owners and land speculators, combined with the War of 1812, eroded Native sovereignty as military roads dissected the Native South, clearing the path for squatters and other illegal groups seeking to benefit from unsanctioned Indian trade.[10] As difficulties intensified, disagreements mounted among the Muscogee people who failed to significantly unify politically against the United States, resulting in a Creek Civil War.

The Creek Civil War ended with the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, decimating any political consideration of Native autonomy as the aboriginal occupants and possessors of the Southeastern region. Negotiated by Andrew Jackson, the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson allowed the U.S. War Department to seize almost two-thirds of Muscogee territory after a series of vicious encounters, hundreds of murders, and the cartelization of the Indian trade. The 1825 Treaty of Indian Springs elevated Indian removal to another level, opening the floodgates of settlers and investors seeking economic opportunities, who all unofficially assisted the federal government with eliminating

[9] U.S. acquisition of Native lands began several decades earlier with the 1790 Treaty of New York and the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson of 1802, gaining significant territory in the middle of Georgia. By 1806, the U.S. controlled approximately 70 million acres of land previously held by Southeastern Native Americans. Historians Barnard and Schwartzman refer to the country's land acquisition policy as "bloodless negotiated treaties." Susan K. Barnard and Grace M. Schwartzman, "Tecumseh and the Creek Indian of 1813-1814 in North Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* 82, 3 (Fall 1998), 490 - 491.

[10] Duane Champagne, *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, and the Creek* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 125.

Native Southerners.[11] This research examines the interactions described in letters written by settlers and militia, all of which are Anglo-derived sources, rather than Indigenous. This absence is due to the fact that these are the only sources currently available to this researcher. Even so, the letters note evidence of settler regional and societal factions emerging as separate and uniquely nascent. The contents of these letters, albeit limited to the settlers' perspective, demonstrate how the Wiregrass regions, which is within the Coastal Plain, became a transitional frontier and corridor of violence as Anglo-Americans worked to establish themselves and form a distinct regional identity, and Native people were forced to contend with the crisis of continued violence while remaining resilient, both factions using the environment to shape behavior.

The settlers and local militia organized themselves in response to the Native presence on lands considered legally part of the United States and private property since the 1825 Treaty of Indian Springs. These settlers and militia continued to write letters and report to the Georgia governor's office during the first half of the 1800s that Indians occupied the southern portion of Georgia and their homesteads, and they wanted the intruders eliminated. In response, the U.S. Army of the South's Lieutenant Colonel Henry Stanton ordered Major Greenleaf Dearborn to South Georgia along with two infantry companies to assist the local militia.[12] Dearborn was already awaiting orders by June 1836 at Fort Mitchell in the neighboring state of Alabama.[13]

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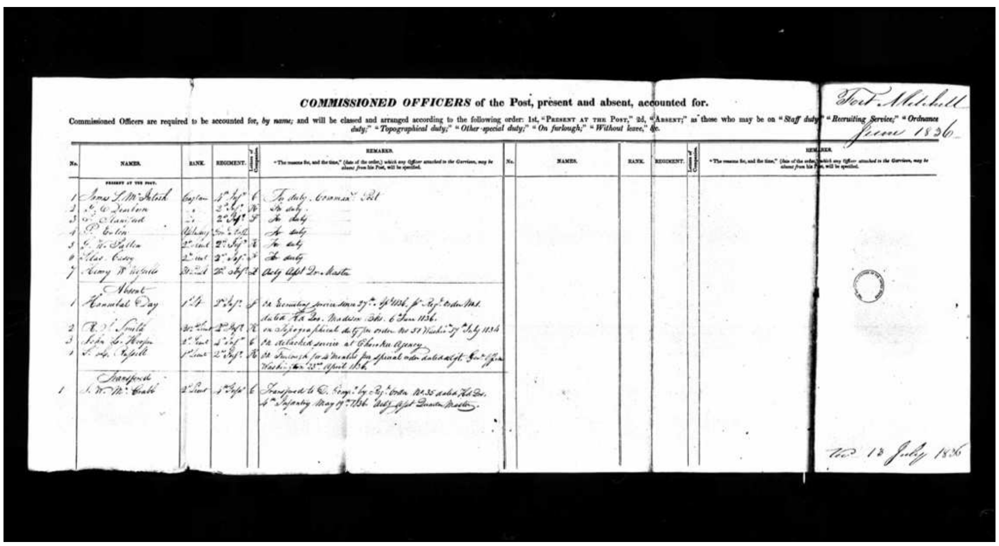
[11] John Thaddeus Ellisor, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier*. (Board of Regents: University of Nebraska, 2010), 12-13; Christopher D. Haveman, *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation, and Ethnic Cleansing in the American South*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 16; Robert J. Miller and Robbie Ethridge, *Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirl v. Oklahoma*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 57 & 59; F. Evan Nooe, *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South.* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2023) 81-82.

[12] Henry Stanton, "Letter from H. Stanton, September 20, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives and Ancestry.com. "U.S. Returns from Military Posts, 1806-1916." (accessed August 20, 2024).

[13] Ancestry.com, "Commissioned Officers of the Post, present and absent, accounted for." (accessed August 21, 2024). Greenleaf Dearborn served in the U.S. Army from 1833 until 1843 and was a Georgia state Senator from 1841 until 1844. Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and*

By November 12, 1836, Dearborn was in Lowndes County, Georgia. He wrote to Georgia Governor William Schley, reporting that local citizens saw Native people, with packs, traveling through the area while primarily staying hidden and not engaging with settlers. Dearborn stated that the Anglo-Americans followed the trails. Even so, this Army officer told the governor that he believed the Indians did not intend to attack "but to escape all observation, and elude pursuit, and perhaps secrete themselves in the Swamps."[14] In a March 10, 1837, letter, Dearborn described frustration with continuing to lose the Indian trails.[15] Another letter written by Dearborn described the environment as "being an extensive swamp, and marsh, and small ponds, and almost entirely unknown to any but the Indians."[16]


Fort Mitchell
June 1836

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS of the Post, present and absent, accounted for.

Commissioned Officers are required to be accounted for, *by name;* and will be classed and arranged according to the following order: 1st, "Present at the Post," 2d, "Absent;" as those who may be on "*Staff duty;*" "*Recruiting Service;*" "*Ordnance duty;*" "*Topographical duty;*" "*Other special duty;*" "*On furlough;*" "*Without leave,*" &c.

No.	NAMES.	RANK.	REGIMENT.	Letters of Companies.	REMARKS. "The reasons for, and the time," (date of the order,) which any Officer attached to the Garrison, may be absent from his Post, will be specified.	No.	NAMES.	RANK.	REGIMENT.	Letters of Companies.	REMARKS. "The reasons for, and the time," (date of the order,) which any Officer attached to the Garrison, may be absent from his Post, will be specified.

13 July 1836

Illustration 2: Pictured is the Fort Mitchell list of commissioned officers, including Major Greenleaf Dearborn. [17]

Field during the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838. Edited by James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017), 261.

[14] G. Dearborn, "Letter from G. Dearborn, November 12, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[15] G. Dearborn, "Letter from G. Dearborn, March 10, 1837." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[16] G. Dearborn, "Letter from G. Dearborn, September 13, 1838." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[17] Ibid.

The timeline of these letters written by Blackshear, Dearborn, and others during the early to mid-1800s coincides with tremendous upheaval and unremitting pressure on Native people to abandon their homeland. The events also reveal evidence of an emerging southern, white regional identity forged in violence and motivated by economic possibilities.[18] Settler society in the southern Coastal Plain, or Wiregrass Region, countered Native American opposition by converging and organizing a pecuniary, cultural, and political presence that sought to drive Natives out of the region. Natives obstinately resisted and survived by exhibiting resiliency and adaptability as settlers sought their eradication. Settlers migrating south were optimistic about forging a new life in lands they believed to be theirs by conquest and treaties, and they sought to take advantage of the seemingly unlimited prospects that the land promised. Native Americans, however, expressed defiance in the face of this expansionism while experiencing societal upheaval within a rapidly changing frontier. F. Evan Nooe explains that "…settler violence and Indigenous resistance generated reciprocating processes of coalescence, facilitating the unification of white southerners."[19] This interface between two societies, positioned to survive, facilitates the exploration of the origins of southeastern regional distinctiveness, which forms the foundation of this work.

Local stories, such as those of Blackshear and Dearborn, who offer firsthand accounts of the area, offer insight into the people who settled in the Wiregrass Region and how those narratives might fit into the larger context of national historiography. What did the landscape look like when the settlers first arrived? How did they respond to the Native Americans they viewed as different from themselves? What were their struggles, legal and social status, and

[18] F. Evan Nooe, *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2023).
[19] Ibid., 8.

economic probabilities? Does this early portrait correlate with the current economic stagnation of the area? To attempt to answer these questions, this thesis focuses on the earliest accounts available.

This thesis originates from records gathered by a regional historian who visited the Georgia Archives and hand-copied everything related to the state's Wiregrass region. That person was Folks Huxford (1893-1981).[20] Folks Huxford was from Clinch County, Georgia, and served as regional probate judge for decades, and later was elected to the Georgia General Assembly. The family claims that he never lost an election. Local folklore contends that while in Atlanta, Huxford would get so entrenched in whatever he was researching that he would stay late into the night and was known to sleep wherever he was, including the Georgia Archives.[21] The Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum had copies of letters Huxford discovered at the archives, and the director remembered that one document mentioned a Native American girl left in Lowndes County during the early to mid-1800s. Even so, concerns existed about the accuracy of these hand-copied letters.

The letters, through the decades, experienced several iterations. While Huxford hand-copied every letter he could find, he later transcribed them onto onion skin paper using a typewriter. To muddy the waters further, a museum volunteer retyped the transcriptions, creating a pamphlet of the works. This booklet was entitled *Indian Troubles in the Wiregrass Region*.[22] Almost every letter in its original form was in the Georgia Archives, File II, a collection

[20] Huxford edited the *History of Clinch County, Georgia: Revised to Date, Giving the Early History of the County Down to the Present Time (1916); Complete List of County Officers, Together with Minor Officers and Sketches of County Officers' Lives; and Chapters on the Histories of Old Families of Clinch County; Other Information as is Historical in its Nature*. (Macon, Georgia: J.W. Burke Company, 1916).
[21] The story of Folks Huxford sleeping on the bench at the Georgia Archives and other locations was recounted by his son and grandsons.
[22] This unpublished booklet is also called "Letters and Reports and Roster-Rolls Relating to the Indian Troubles in Wiregrass, Georgia Between 1826 and 1840," 2000.

assembled in the 1930s utilizing an archival system based solely on the work's author without cross-reference to location, subject, or addressee.[23] The only modification discovered was that the transcribers corrected spelling and grammar, but names, dates, and the integrity of the content were maintained.

Huxford and other keepers of local history maintain these stories that are dear to so many in the community. Still, these accounts of physical, cultural, and political interactions between different societies within a larger framework have implications for considering the regional development and identity formation. South Georgia's geographical location is also highlighted by its position at the fringes of multiple wars, a dramatically shifting federal Indian policy that affected the region's populace, and aggressive state leadership wanting acreage controlled by planters.[24] These often passionate encounters between Native Americans, settlers, and militia could be described as an elongated war punctuated by waves of extreme violence. These encounters could also be defined as a calculated genocide of a group no longer required or deemed a worthy opponent, as the U.S. sought complete domination over the territory. This viciousness culminated in new levels of hostility as state rights advocates dominated the federal government and its official policy in Washington during the mid-to-late 1830s. During this period, the Wiregrass Region became a complex crossroads of forces, with the expansion of the country, shifting economic priorities, and the struggle for Native American survival.

Historiography

[23] Hendry Miller, Georgia Archives, explained that "File II started as a topical reference collection and contains original records, unfortunately, removed from their original locations/context and reference correspondence/secondary sources." The 1930s categorization was common during that time but not utilized today due to the cumbersome and limited research means. Miller also noted that File II had not been digitized in its entirety as of February 2024. February 21, 2024, email.

[24] Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3-7, 122, 131-138.

Interpretations of U.S. and Native American histories began with Eurocentric narratives, including Southeastern studies. A Georgian historian, Alexander Hewat, published in 1779, framed Georgia's beginnings aligned to the country's early republic and emerging as the "tail to the South Carolina kite."[25] Hugh McCall published *The History of Georgia, containing brief sketches of the most remarkable events up to the present day* (1784).[26] Henry S. Halbert and Timothy H. Ball published several books, including *The Creek Nation War of 1813 and 1815*, in 1895, a detailed survey of the First Creek War, albeit with Georgia primarily absent. Even so, this tome was one of the most detailed descriptions of the Native American and Anglo interactions of its era, relying heavily upon primary sources from Alabama. Halbert and Ball note that the Georgian descriptions are lacking in the current scholarship.[27]

The state's geography was mainly understood from the northern, central, and coastal regions, with the southern frontier vaguely mapped. This 1804 map was published one year after the state's capital was moved to the newly established town of Milledgeville, which was more centrally located. A few trails are outlined in the southern regions, and the territory is labeled "Indians." The Okefenokee Swamp is listed but not detailed.

[25] E. Merton Coulter, "The Early Historians of "Georgia." *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* 31 (Fall 1947): 191.
[26] Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia, containing brief sketches of the most remarkable events up to the present day*, (1784) (Atlanta, Georgia: Reprinted by A.B. Caldwell, 1909), pdf (https.//www.loc.gov/item/11003994), Retrieved from the Library of Congress.
[27] Henry S. Halbert and Timothy H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1815* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1895): x. Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., a Georgia politician and attorney, published *Antiquities of the Southern Indians: Particularly of the Georgia Tribes.* (New York, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873). I would be remiss to omit William Bartram's *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida,* published in 1791. Most of the Georgia Archives were removed from Milledgeville before Sherman's army entered the city in November 1864. James C. Bonner. "Sherman at Milledgeville in 1864." *Journal of Southern History* 22, 3 (August 1956), 284.

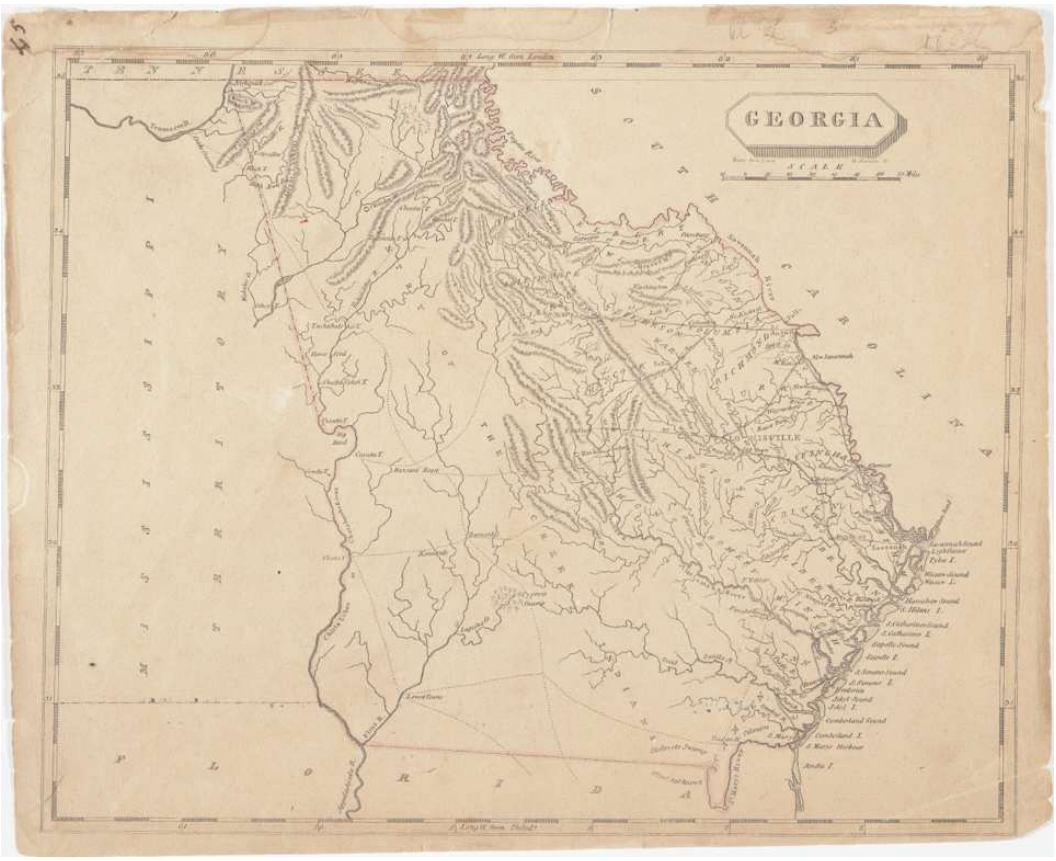


Illustration 3: 1804 Map of Georgia [28]

The 1823 Georgia map depicts the three counties created from the land obtained through the Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814): Early, Irwin, and Appling, established in 1818. Early County included twenty-six Districts and distributed 250 square acres per recipient, encompassing approximately 6,500 square miles. Irwin County had sixteen districts, distributing 490 square-acre lots, totaling 7,840 square acres. Appling County encompassed thirteen districts and distributed 490 square-acre lots, resulting in 6,370 square acres.[29] More rivers are listed, and the

[28] "1804 Map of Georgia," Map 4: Georgia, ca 1804. Victoria Pennington Rare Map Collection, MS-140. Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections.
[29] "1820 Land Lottery." https://www.georgiaarchives.org/research/1820_land_lottery (accessed April 24, 2025), Raymond Chambers. "Early County." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Jun 27, 2022. Information regarding Early County differed from the Georgia Archives regarding acreages in the New Georgia Encyclopedia. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/early-county/ (accessed April 23, 2025).

outline of the Okefenokee Swamp is drawn, including the areas of the swamp that extend into the recently acquired (1821) Florida. Paths to St. Augustine, Florida, and St. Marys, Georgia, are labeled. The boundary between Georgia and Florida originates with the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which established the nations' border at the thirty-first parallel.[30]

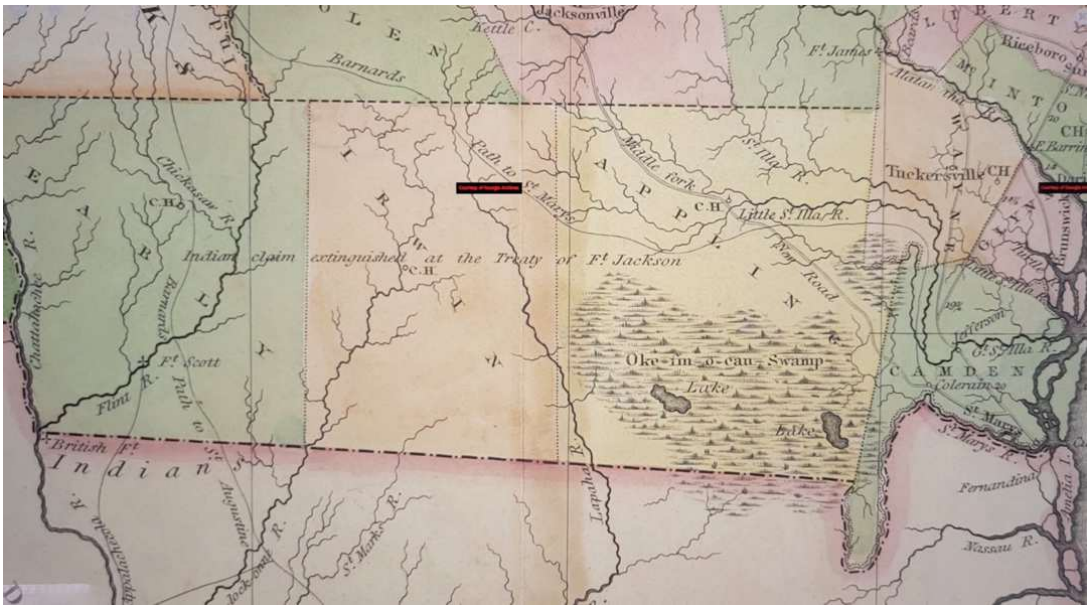


Illustration 4:1830 map of Georgia [31]

This 1830 Georgia map, drawn from surveys, includes counties carved from Early, Irwin, and Appling Counties, which were created in 1818. A large portion of Early County was divided, creating Baker (1825), Decatur (1823), and Thomas (1825) Counties. Irwin County was used to establish a portion of Thomas County (1925) and the entirety of Lowndes County (1825). Appling County was subdivided to make way for Telfair (1807), Ware (1824), and Wayne

[30] Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law*, (Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991): 210.

[31] Southern region shown on the 1823 Map of Georgia "Georgia and Alabama. Historic Maps, Surveyor General." RG 3-8-65, Georgia Archives (/digital//collection/hmf/search/searchterm/Historic Maps%2 Surveyor General%2C RG 3-8-65%2C Georgia Archives/field/source/mode/exact/conn/and). The Georgia Archives also has an 1822 Map of Georgia. However, the details of the Southern regions are no different from the 1823 map. "Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Map of Georgia. Historic Maps." Surveyor General, RG 3-8-65, Georgia Archives (/digital/collection/hmf/search/searchterm/Historic Maps%2C Surveyor General%2C RG 3-8-65%2C Georgia Archives/field/source/mode/exact/conn/and).

(1803) Counties.[32] More waterways are illustrated than on the 1823 map, and the Districts are numbered.

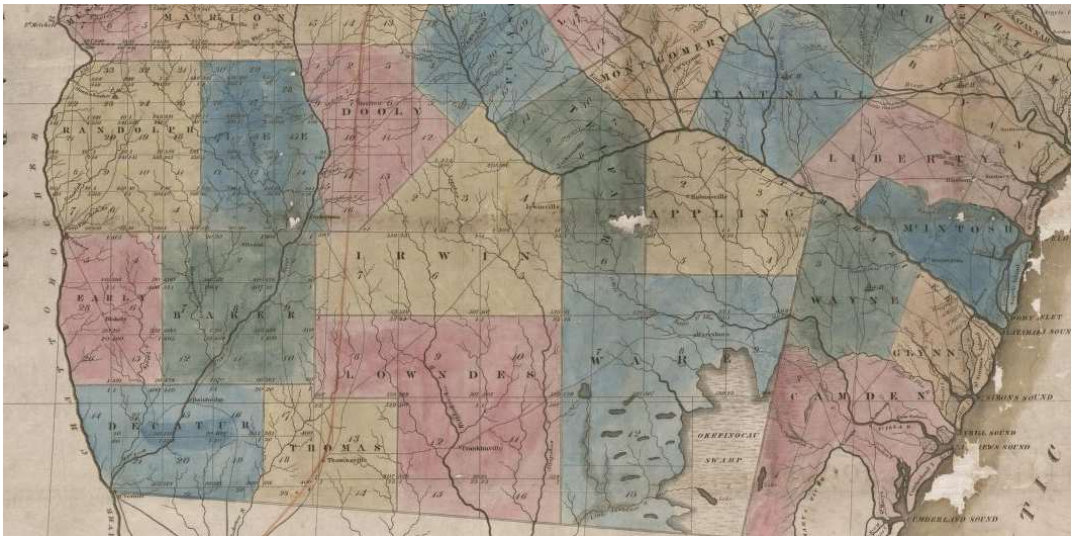


Illustration 5: 1823 map of Georgia [33]

By the early 1900s, Georgia historians began to differentiate between groups of Indigenous people, rather than categorizing all Native people into one homogeneous group. Still, many historians described the relationships as a balancing act between managing Native American affairs and the requirements of a newly formed United States.[34] Rather than focusing on state history, academia concentrated on federal policies and the emerging Georgia

[32] Carol Ebel. "Appling County." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Jun 7, 2022. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/appling-county/ (accessed April 23, 2025); Elizabeth Cooksey. "Irwin County." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Jul 11, 2022. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/irwin-county/ (accessed April 23, 2025); Raymond Chambers. "Early County." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Jun 27, 2022. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/early-county/ (accessed April 23, 2025).

[33] Wellborn, Carlton, Orange Green, and William Hoogland. *Map of the state of Georgia, drawn from actual surveys and the most authentic information*. [S.l.: s.n, 1830] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, (www.loc.gov/item/2011588001/).

[34] R.S. Cotterill, "Federal Indian Management in the South 1789-1825." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* 20 No. 3 (December 1933): 333-352; Verner W. Crane, "The Origin of the Name of the Creek Indians." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* 5 (1918): 339-342; Randolph C. Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1790-1795." *Journal of Southern History*, 8 (3) (August 1942): 350-373. Indian Management is defined as the U.S. Policies regarding Native Americans established by the 1824 U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

leadership's efforts to control and organize Native groups, land, and trade.[35] An anthropologist and linguist, John Reed Swanton, wrote *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors* in 1922.[36] Swanton's work focused more specifically on southeastern Native Americans, albeit identifying a pure and romantic society unaffected by other influences, negating the realities of interactions between settlers, militia, and different Native people.[37]

Attempts to understand the southeastern region geographically were made by William Edward Myer, an archaeologist, who mapped Native American trails in the Southeast with extensive detail in the Tennessee region.[38] Grant Foreman's *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians,* first published in 1932, updated in 1953, with the final edition issued in 1972. Foreman was an attorney hired by the Dawes Commission to mitigate land holdings in Oklahoma. After a few years, he moved to Oklahoma permanently and studied

[35] Verner W. Crane, "The Origin of the Name of the Creek Indians." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 5 (1918): 339-342; Randolph C. Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1790-1795." *Journal of Southern History*, 8, 3 (August 1942): 350-373; Lucian Lamar Knight, *Standard History of Georgia and Georgians, vol. 1 & 2* (New York, New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1917); Gaston Litton, "The Journal of a Party of Emigrating Creek Indians, 1835-1836," *Journal of Southern History,* 7, 2 (May 1941), 225-242. In the last piece, Litton described the Indian Removal Policy as unavoidable and a journey of a "home-loving, pastoral people" to the West where they could live in "comparative freedom." This romantic view was coupled with Litton describing the U.S. and its citizens as aggressive toward ending the Native American presence in the Southeast, 228 & 242.

[36] John Reed Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1922). A version of Swanton's book is also published in the *Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*, 73 (Washington D.C., 1922) and entitled "Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors." Theron A. Nunez, Jr., "Creek Nativism and the Creek War of 1813-1814." *Ethnohistory,* 5, 1 (1958), 1-47 references Swanton's work and attempts to analyze the division leading to the Creek War. David Usner references Swanton as the lead scholar of the southern Native Americans in *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower South before 1783* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 240. In Frank T. Schnell's "The Beginning of the Creeks: Where Did They First 'Sit Down'?" *Early Georgia,* 17 (1989), 25 & 29, wrote that Swanton's work has a Euro-perspective, and records from other sources, such as Spanish Florida, must be incorporated for a more complete history.

[37] Thomas J. Pluckhalm and Robbie Ethridge, eds., *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 5.

[38] John H. DeWitt, "William Edward Myer." *Tennessee Historical Magazine,* 8, 4 (January 1925): 225-230 and "Indian Trails of the Southeast." *Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of American Ethnology. Forty-second Annual Report, 1924-25*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1928, 727-857. Another archaeologist who examined pottery of Native Americans in the Southeast U.S. was William H. Sears' "Creek and Cherokee Culture in the 18th Century." *American Antiquity,* 21 (1955): 143-149.

the legal history of the Native Americans who had been displaced there.[39] Mary Rosemond Haas (1910-1996), a linguist, explored Muscogee inter-town relationships through ball games, utilizing the Muscogee language to describe the associations and interactions of townships working together.[40] Skills, which were translated in subsequent years, as many Native Americans strategized for survival.

Early scholarship focused on Western expansion from the European and American perspectives. These historiographies delved into the progressively changing federal policies and, finally, the involuntary removal of Native Americans, with modest attention given to the resistance and resiliency of Indigenous people. The environment of the South Georgia region, when considering U.S. expansion and the Native American response, has also received cursory attention. This east-to-west emphasis is due to historian Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, which focused on the vast western expanse dominating the U.S. development with little attention to Native American authority. Turner's influence as a historian significantly predisposed many who followed in his footsteps.[41] As an alternative to Turner, Herbert E. Bolton, in 1921 with *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*,

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[39] Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972).

[40] Mary Rosamond Haas, "Creek Inter-town Relations." *American Anthropologist*, 42 (1940): 479-489 and Muskogee (Seminole/Creek) Documentation Project. https://muskogee.pages.wm.edu/haas-hill-texts/ (accessed August 27, 2024).

[41] Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (New York, Collier Books, 1906, 1962 reprint). Turner presented his frontier thesis in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair) for the American Historical Association's annual meeting. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute note that Turner's work was successful in "shifting study away from Western Europe as the primary source of American institutions to the West as the formative zone of American society." The U.S. was establishing its history, albeit from an Anglo perspective. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) 2 and Andrew K. Frank and A. Glenn Crothers, eds., *Borderland Narratives: Negotiation and Accommodation in North America's Contested Spaces, 1500-1850*, Tallahassee, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017), 2. Turner is most noted for his frontier thesis, but he also wrote about geographic sectionalism within the United States. Frederick Jackson Turner, "Geographic Sectionalism in American History," Annals of the Association of American Geographic, 16 2 (June 1962), 85-92.

expanded the discussion with his borderland thesis, recognizing the Spanish influences on North America and challenging Turner's east-to-west thesis.[42] During the 1960s, David Corkran was the first historian to focus on Creek Indians during the colonial period from a purely historical perspective with his tome, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1793*.[43] Mary E. Young's 1961 *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-1860,* targeted the Jacksonian era negotiations and the implications for Native people in states adjacent to Georgia in the eighteenth century, when settlers and others flooded the region in an attempt to dominate the Indigenous people.[44]

In the 1970s, Charles Hudson focused on the Southeastern Indians with his classic work describing the region's Native Americans as a category separate from European colonists. His early writings marked a significant shift within the field, considering Native Americans to be distinct and center stage, in contrast to much of the previous work.[45] The writings of Kenneth Coleman, James M. Crawford, Michael D. Green, Steven C. Hahn, and Theda Perdue followed

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[42] Hebert Eugene Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1921.

[43] David Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1793* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

[44] Mary Elizabeth Young*, Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi, 1830-186*0. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). Young's article, "Indian Removal and Land Allotment: The Civilized Tribes and Jacksonian Justice," *American Historical Review,* 64, 1 (October 1958), 31-45, was an edition of a paper read at the Southern Historical Association and the American Historical Association in 1957. Young's book originated from her 1955 dissertation with the same title. Jack D. L. Holmes, "The Southern Boundary Commission, the Chattahoochee River, and the Florida Seminoles, 1799," Florida Historical Quarterly, 44, 4 (April 1966): 312-341, is another example of scholarship delving into primary sources attempting to define Native American agency.

[45] Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1976). Hudson's "The Genesis of Georgia's Indians" in Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia, edited by Harvey H. Jackson and Phinizy Spalding (Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1984). Other historians who followed Hudson's lead include Ross Hassig, "Internal Conflict in the Creek War of 1813-1814." *Ethnohistory,* 21 (Summer 1974; Michael Paul Rogin. *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian*. New York, New York: Knopf, 1875; Walter Williams, ed., *Southeastern Indians: Since the Removal Era*. Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1979; William T. Sturtevant, "Creek into Seminole." In *North American Indians in Cultural Perspective.* Edited by Eleanor B. Leacock and Nancy O. Lourie. New York, New York: Random House, 1971, 92-128; Michael D. Green, "Federal-State Conflict in the Administration of Indian Policy: Georgia, Alabama, and the Creeks, 1824-1834." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1973. Alfred W. Crosby's "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 33, 2 (April 1976), 289-299, must be noted as significant during this historiographic shift.

Hudson, emphasizing the European and colonists' perspectives.[46] Perdue, a Cherokee scholar, delved into Cherokee society and cultural adaptability through the interrelationship with European and American settlers. Perdue's work has significantly contributed to the direction of historiography within Southern Native American history and continues to do so. Perdue has stated that Southern history is directly correlated with and transformed by the Native American narrative.[47] Crawford, a linguist, analyzed the cultural and linguistic differences among Southeastern Native peoples. He also distinguishes between the terms Muskogee and Creek when referring to the tribes and calling the language Muskogean; however, Crawford is not consistent with this terminology. He states that the last of the Creeks moved to Indian Territory in 1840 and that the Creeks maintained their identity until 1907, but does not explain why this statement is made, except possibly to emphasize assimilation within the schools.[48] These works have limitations and do not thoroughly explain the Native persistent presence along the southeastern frontier.[49]

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[46] Coleman is a Georgia historian and edited *A History of Georgia* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1977) and James M. Crawford, a linguist, edited, *Studies in Southeastern Languages* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1875. Michael D. Green authored *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

[47] Theda Perdue*, Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knox, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), the chapter entitled "Southern Indians and the Cult of True Womanhood" in an edited tome by Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakely called *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, & Education* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 35-51, and her later work *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1998), including "The Legacy of Indian Removal." *Journal of Southern History*, 78 1 (February 2012), 3-36. In *The Native South: New Histories and Enduring Legacies*, edited by Tim Alan Garrison and Greg O'Brien, 24 -48. O'Brien interviews Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green about their experience studying Native American history as the field grudgingly transformed from an anthropological dominated arena to an ethnohistory permitting historians' interpretation of the archives emphasizing Native Americans at the center of their own story. Perdue also foresees the narrative of Southern history transforming by examining and including the impact Native American story.

[48] James M. Crawford, ed., *Studies in Southeastern Languages* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1875): 1, 37, 25-26.

[49] The absence of scholarship surrounding Southeast Native Americans and connections with enslaved and free African Americans is discussed in William G. McLoughlin, ""Red Indians, Black Slavery and White Racism: America's Slaveholding Indians," *American Quarterly,* 26 (1974), 367-385; Daniel Littlefield, Jr., *Africans and Creeks: From the Colonial Period to the Civil War* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979); Kenneth L. Valliere, "The Creek War of 1836: A Military History," *Chronicles of Oklahoma,* 57, Article 5 (Winter 1979-80), 463-85; Caleb Gayle, *We Refuse to Forget: A True Story of Black Creeks, American Identity, and Power* (New

Between the 1990s and 2000, there was a marked change in how Native American history was interpreted. Scholars centered Native Americans in their research and narratives rather than categorizing them as marginalized.[50] Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser, editors of *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704,* in 1994, marked the 1990s as the long-awaited shift when historians seriously considered Native American history a topic worthy of further exploration. "The Creeks formed one of the most populous and important aboriginal groups in the colonial history of the South. However, anyone who would speak of the 'the Creeks,' or especially of Creek origins, must choose his words with

York, New York: Riverhead Book, 2022. James H. Merrell stated in his 1980s writings that "Indians are still not considered important to this country's history." Native Americans appeared as problems post-American Revolution and separate from Eurocentric confines. "American Nations, Old and New: Reflections on Indians and the Early Republic." In *Native Americans and the Early Republic*, edited by Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert. University Press of Virginia, 1999, 333. Another example is Christopher S. Peeples's "Paradise Lost, Strayed, and Stolen: Prehistoric Social Devolution in the Southeast," *The Burden of Being Civilized: An Anthropological Perspective on the Discontent of Civilization*. Edited by Miles Richardson and Malcolm C. Webb. Southern Anthropological Society Proceedings no 18. Series editor, Mary W. Helms. (Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 24-40; Sturtevant, William C. ed., *A Creek Sourcebook* and *A Seminole Sourcebook*. (New York, New York: Garland Publishing, 1987). Even so, research tracing Native American and their forced removal through documents was evident in Dorothy Williams Potter, ed. *Passports of Southeastern Pioneers, 1770-1823* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, 1982) under the category "genealogy" rather than in academia. The 1990s also witnessed an explosion in Borderland scholarship. Examples include Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* ((New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1993), and David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009).

[50] Devon A. Mihesuah, "Introduction," In Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians, edited by Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 1-22; Ned Blackhawk, "Look How Far We've Come: How American Indian History Changed the Study of American History in the 1990s." *OAH Magazine of History*, 19, No. 6 (November 2005); 13-17 and *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1, 3-7, 301-302; Thomas H. Foster's *Archaeology of the Lower Muskogee Creek Indians, 1715-1836* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2007).; Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell, eds., *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850*, 2nd (New York, New York: Routledge, 2007). John H. Hann, formerly a historical sites specialist with the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research, Florida Department of State, addressed the absence of Spanish primary sources within Lower Creeks and Seminoles scholarship in "Late 17th – Century Forebears of the Lower Creeks and Seminoles" *Southeastern Archaeology,* 15 (1996): 66-80 and "St. Augustine's Fallout from the Yamasee War." *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 68, 2 (October 1989): 180-200. Joseph M. Hall, Jr., *Zamumo's Gifts: Indian-European Exchange in the Colonial Southeast.* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) is also representative of this period and a historian who utilized primary sources from other origins such as Spain, Great Britain, and France. According to Ellisor, John K. Mahon's *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1985), originally published in 1967, is the most comprehensive tome of the Second Seminole War.

care. The word can refer to a language, a people, a tribe, a nation, or a confederacy…a territorial assemblage of many small groups."[51] Even so, the letters written in the early to mid-1800s did not routinely distinguish between Native peoples. Kathryn E. Holland Braund expands upon this trend, but moves the scholarship in a new direction with her 1993 book *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815,* which details the eighteenth-century deerskin trade between the Creek Indians and British, explaining the transformative economic impact experienced by Native Americans.[52] In 1996, Donald L. Fixico, of Shawnee, Sac and Fox, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole ancestry and ethnohistorian, challenged academia to consider how Native American scholarship is primarily written from a non-Native perspective and how a more inclusive story can be inscribed into the dialogue.[53] This work derives from letters written from a non-Native position since those are the sources, at this time, available, and acknowledges the absence of the Native voice, but not their presence.

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[51] Charles Hudson and Carmen Chaves Tesser, eds., *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994): 1 & 373.

[52] Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

[53] Fixico described the non-Native's reliance on documents rather than a multi-academia approach as a hindrance to fully appreciating the American experience. He advocates that Native American history should not be a subfield but the "foundation of American history." Donald L. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," *American Indian Quarterly,* 20 (Winter 1996) and chapters written by Fixico "Introduction" in *Rethinking American Indian History* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 3-8 and "Methodologies in Reconstructing Native American History" in *Rethinking American Indian History* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 117-130. Other examples of a shift in historiography attempting to focus more heavily on the Native American as center-stage and reconsideration of sources are James Axtell's *The Indians' New South: Cultural Change in the Colonial Southeast* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 1997); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); William L. Ramsey, "'Something Cloudy in Their Looks': The Origins of the Yamasee War Reconsidered," *Journal of American History*, (June 2003); Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation: 1670-1763* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004); Denise I. Bossy, *The Yamasee Indians: From Florida to South Carolina* (Lincoln Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018). David Andrew Nichols' *Red Gentleman and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2008) is another work aimed at examining Native American and European interactions but remains in the gender neutral interpretation of societies.

More recent historiography has investigated the impact of Anglo and Native people intermingling. Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson published the edited piece *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, in 2002, setting the stage for early contact in the southeastern region of North America with a detailed explanation of coalescent societies. Braund's earlier work describing the transformative impact of outside influences was the precursor to the concept of coalescence groups, which Ethridge thoroughly developed. Ethridge, an anthropologist, along with Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, focused on a similar period as Braund in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South*, published in 2009, unfolding the destabilization and restructuring of cultures as Native Americans sought to make sense of their world. One essay in the volume is Matthew H. Jennings' description of violence during colonization and the adaptation and reaction to those violent encounters, which allowed for the creation of new cultural norms.[54] *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* reveals how coalescence societies evolved in response to world economies that exploited the European slave trade and its infiltration into Native society. The narratives described throughout the letters in this work

[54] Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson, eds., *The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2002) and Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, eds., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). Other works by Ethridge include *Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2010); *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2010). Additional scholarship published this decade include Dixie Ray Haggard's "Internalizing Native American History: Comprehending Cherokee and Muscogulge Identities," *Indigenous Nations Studies Journal,* 1, 2 (Fall 2000): 3-27; David S. Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60, 4 (October 2003): 703-742; Steven J. Oatis, *A Colonial Complex: South Carolina's Frontiers in the Era of the Yamasee War, 1680-1730* (Lincoln: Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 2004); April Lee Hatfield, "Southeastern Indian History," *Journal of Southern History*, 73, 3 (August 2007), 567-578; John T. Juricek *Colonial Georgia and the Creeks: Anglo-Indian Diplomacy on the Southern Frontier, 1733-1763* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2010); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010); John T. Juricek, *Endgame for Empire: British-Creek Relations in Georgia and Vicinity, 1763-1776* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2015. For a comprehensive review of Muscogee historiography, see Claudio Saunt's "The Native South: An Account of Recent Historiography," *Native South,* 1 (2008), 45-60.

demonstrate how settlers and Native people, separately and through interactions, transformed themselves as they worked to survive within the terrain.

Angela Pulley Hudson's 2010 work, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slave and the Making of the American South,* expands the discussion into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hudson incorporates the complexities of the southeastern Native groups with the history of the developing United States and settler migration. She integrates the multiple and complex societies into one history with many components, grounded primarily through avenues of mobility.[55] Hudson describes how the pathways that Native people created riddled the southeast and were used as environmental connections linking and strengthening towns. These same trails were expanded by settlers, including militia, to develop inroads into territory incorporated federally, destabilizing Indigenous inhabitants. Kevin Kokomoor's *Of One Mind and of One Government: The Rise and Fall of the Creek Nation in the Early Republic* describes the near decimation of the Muskogee and their ultimate movement toward organization and political unification. Kokomoor explains that the Muskogee successfully formed a national identity and structure in response to U.S. intrusions into the Native South. While the Creek National Council was eventually overwhelmed regionally, the Muskogee recast themselves, demonstrating resiliency and adaptability.[56] John Thaddeus Ellisor, an ethnohistorian, contributes to the historiography with his 2010 *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier.* Ellisor describes that violence and war throughout the southeast continued into the Second Creek War, past a premature declaration of victory by the United

[55] Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths, and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slave and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
[56] Kevin Kokomoor, *Of One Mind and of One Government: The Rise and Fall of the Creek Nation in the Early Republic* (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 2009). A recent work dissecting the subregional political structure of Muscogee is Steven Peach's *Rivers of Power: Creek Political Culture in the Native South, 1750-1815* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2024).

States. These escalations of violent expulsions of Native people were propelled by the economic prospects of cotton in the 1830s. This hefty tome delves into the complexities of social status, race, and the interrelationship of those involved in the Old Southwest.[57]

While these contributions from Hudson, Ethridge, and others have significantly transformed Southeastern Studies, Christopher D. Haveman, a student of Braund, wrote the most complete social history of Muscogee Removal from the Southeastern region to date.[58] Haveman's *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation,* and *Ethnic Cleansing in the American South* and *Bending Their Way Onward: Creek Indian Removal in Documents*, published in 2016 and 2018, respectively, provide comprehensive descriptions of Muscogee and settler violent conflicts from 1825 until 1838. Haveman begins with the experience in Alabama, the migration to Indian Territory, and finally, the settlement in the west in Oklahoma.[59] These works serve as primers for the Southeastern Native removal study.[60]

The next decade witnessed a new level of scrutiny with Claudio Saunt's 2020 *Unworthy Republic*: *The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* and F. Evan Nooe's 2023 *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South*. Saunt's examination dissected Removal by explaining that the 1830s, specifically 1836, was the long-awaited turning point in U.S. policy towards Native

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[57] John T. Ellisor. *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Board of Regents: University of Nebraska, 2010). An example of more recent scholarship on the Muscogee includes Brian Reidfleisch's *Brothers of Coweta: Kinship, Empire, and Revolution in the Eighteenth-Century Muscogee World* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2021).

[58] Christopher D. Haveman, "The Removal of the Creek Indians from the Southeast, 1825-1838." Ph.D. dissertation, Auburn University, 2009.

[59] Christopher D. Haveman, ed. *Bending Their Way Onward: Creek Indian Removal in Documents* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2018) and *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation, and Ethnic Cleansing in the American South* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2016).

[60] Colin G. Calloway's 2018 *The Indian World of Georgia Washington: The First President, the First Americans, and the Birth of the Nation*, 2006 *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America*, and 2016 *The World Turned Upside Down*, 2nd edition analyzes the diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Native Americans.

Americans. Historians commonly agree with this timeline. Saunt, however, goes further with his argument by describing that as the U.S. expanded and state advocates gained power nationally, the federal government led the expulsion and extermination of Native Americans for economic reasons that benefited the country in its entirety—this economic component of the U.S. Indian policy expedited interactions, especially violent encounters.

Saunt explores the political maneuvering of Governor Troup as he positioned Georgia separate from Federal Indian policy. The federal government's stance toward civilizing Native Americans and incorporating them into society was contrary to most Georgians who owned land and categorized Native people as "colored," devoid of rights.[61] Political leaders and their supporters wanted those groups expelled once the Treaty of Fort Jackson was signed. Troup criticized the federal government's delay in removing Native people from the territory gained through the treaty and decried hampered efforts to survey land still occupied by "unfriendly Creeks and Seminoles."[62] Georgians, particularly in the pre-Jacksonian Era, began to view themselves as separate from federal entities and others who did not support their settlement efforts. In addition, more recent historiography, such as Saunt and Nooe, dissects how the underpinnings of the large planter class and their desire for Native land are explained as the reasoning for the heightened campaign against Native Americans that categorized this population as the same as enslaved people. Branding the Muskogee as subhuman, similarly to enslaved persons, benefited the few who gained financially. Nooe stresses that this way of thinking about

[61] Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020) 40.
[62] Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 212.

others aids explanation and defines settler violence against Native Americans as enabling the foundation of the southern white identity formation and anti-other sentiment.[63]

Organization

The early to mid-1800s witnessed a period of defiance and upheaval as settler society and Native Americans converged within the transitional boundary of the southern Coastal Plain, also known as the Wiregrass Region.[64] This confluence aided in the formation of a southern white regional identity while organizing an economic, cultural, and political presence. Settlers sought to ensure the flight of "others" out of their region, while Natives obstinately resisted by exhibiting resilience during an intense crisis that sought their eradication. Within this ambiguous and transitional frontier, Native people adapted and responded to these violent encounters by taking advantage of the terrain, which was riddled with rivers, swamps, and multiple waterways. The Native people described in these correspondences used this environment as pathways and corridors towards places of refuge.

Georgia opened its southern territory to settlers through the 1820 Land Lotteries and ensured much smaller homesteads than those previously granted in other parts of the state. These smaller allowances along the border of Spanish Florida dramatically increased the number of white landowners who moved south into Native lands while concomitantly building the local Georgia militia sworn to defend the region. This defense was primarily aimed at keeping Native Americans out of the state. The farms and relatively smaller communities that emerged from the

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[63] F. Evan Nooe, *Aggressive and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2023). Nooe explores the clashing of Euro-American and Native societies and the responses to disruptions as colonial pressures increased, challenging conduct, punishment, and political authority from the 1700s until the 1813 Creek War in his "Common Justice: Vengeance and Retribution in Creek Country," *Ethnohistory,* 62, 2 (April 2015), 241-261.

[64] The term "settler" is most often used in this work but could be substituted with "Anglo," "Anglo-American," or "American." "Native American," "Creek," and "Indigenous People" are very broad terminologies, as is "Seminole" for Native people.

land lots were owned by those qualified for draws, or chances, to purchase land surveyed and divided into military districts. The land lot grant fee was $18.00, which in 2025 amounts to $492.00, a very inexpensive amount intended to encourage settlement by a large number of qualified recipients. Taxes were also not required when a recipient was granted land in the 1820 Land Lottery.[65] Once the 1820 Land Lottery was held and applicants gained legal parcel ownership, property owners were free to sell. This resulted in land lots being divided further, increasing the number of farms in some areas. In other districts, grants were purchased, consolidating acreages that were later transformed into plantations.

The result was the establishment of conditions that enabled the emergence of large cotton plantations in certain locations after the initial 1820 Land Lottery distributions, circumventing the state's restrictions. Later, timber-related industries emerged, replacing cotton in many places and becoming instrumental in the economy of the newly formed United States. This thesis explores how persistent and unrelenting federal and state policies strengthened removal while simultaneously encouraging the unscrupulous behaviors of settlers. Another area to explore is the reorganization and response of Native Americans resisting removal. Did towns, or newly formed towns, travel together? Sources may not currently be available to answer this question. Still, the organization of the Muskogee response to an attempted annihilation could extend Ethridge's Shatter Zone theory regarding Native resiliency and survival.

Chapter Two examines how the Wiregrass Region became a transitional frontier and passageway for Native Americans migrating away from forced removal. The political tenor was set with the Georgia Governors John Clark (1766-1832, elected in 1821) and George Michael

[65] Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991) , 314 and Silas Emmett Lucas, Jr., *1820 Land Lottery of Georgia* (Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1986). Georgia began collecting taxes on land granted through the lottery beginning in 1827.

Troup (1780-1856, elected in 1823), and Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), elected president in 1828 and a heavy hitter for states' rights. These elected officials increased pressures on several fronts for Native Americans to exit the territory, including surveying and distributing land to settlers as soon as they believed feasible. This distribution of territory changed the narrative from simply removal to annihilation of a people.[66] While these political powerhouses shared the common motivation of ridding the South of Native People to exploit the land for settlers and the planter economy, the seeds of mistrust by state entities of the federal government were in place as enacted policies and practices assumed authority, challenging and often usurping federal treaties.[67] These tensions fermented as settlers migrated into Georgia's southern regions, and citizens debated policy in local newspapers heatedly.[68]

Georgia state political leaders rejected Jackson's predecessor, President John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), and the Treaty of Washington and openly defied any policies granting rights or consideration to Native Americans.[69] The United States' Indian policies of negotiation, civilization, assimilation, and voluntary relocation severely shifted into statutory eviction as land speculators saw opportunities for economic profits. Native Americans, most likely Muskogee, in the region were no longer a part of the emerging southern economy and had not been for some time. The ownership of their territory by U.S. settlers was paramount to the new prospects within the state and cotton production. Any reason to exploit rebellion and resistance by Natives as

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[66] Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), 232.
[67] Ibid., 33-37.
[68] Ibid. 27 & 32-33, respectfully. "Socrates" wrote in the *Georgia Journal* advocating for the expulsion of the "barbarous and savage" Creek Indian, and Eugenius Aristides Nisbet, an elected official from North Georgia, submitted to the *Augusta Chronicle* that the policies of Georgia were driven by the wealthy landowners and contradicted the state's motto of "Justice, Wisdom, and Moderation."
[69] Duane Champagne argues that Adams did not move fast enough to satisfy southern states and that "Indians [were] in the way of economic progress" and "an obstacle to American economic integration, political expansion, and geo-political security" in his tome, *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, and the Creek* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 126.

justification for forced confinement and removal was at the forefront of settler comportment and government strategy.

South Georgia also served as an ambiguous borderland that, until recently, has been underrepresented in academia. The surrounding states, including the emerging Georgia community of Columbus, are thoroughly examined in current historiography, as well as the ordeals of the Cherokee, Upper and Lower Creeks of Georgia surrounding the Ocmulgee River and present-day Macon, and the Seminoles in Florida. Still, there is room for investigating Native American resistance, regional development, and anti-federal mindsets of settlers within the indistinctly defined and intensely contested Wiregrass Region.[70]

This frontier in the southeastern United States spanned several state lines, including North Florida.[71] This work focuses on a specific area of Georgia that operated as a passageway or corridor for Native Americans and a small number of enslaved people moving towards regions where they may have had more freedoms or at least fewer embattlements.[72] This area is known

[70] Recent historiographies include John Thaddeus Ellisor, Andrew Kevin Frank, John Hope Franklin, Christopher D. Haveman, Kevin Kokomoor, Megan Kate Nelson, F. Evan Nooe, Christine Rizzi, and Claudio Saunt, who explore regional defiance and identity formation but focus on areas surrounding the south-central region of Georgia.
[71] The frontier is defined as a "territory or zone of interpretation between two distinct societies." John Thaddeus Ellison, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 5. Frontier is also described as porous and contested. April Lee Hatfield, "Southeastern Indian History," *Journal of Southern History*, 73, 3 (August 2007), 576; Joshua Piker, "Colonists and Creeks: Thinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry," *Journal of Southern History*, 70, 3 (August 2024), 512. Patrick Wolfe defines frontier as the coming together of societies that had previously been mutually discrete." Patrick Wolfe, "Recuperating Binarism: A Heretical Introduction," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3, 257.
[72] In 2021, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation made a marketing (d/b/a) decision to omit the term "*Creek*" from its name. The legal and constitutional name remains the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Per an email with Tracie Revis, February 1, 2024. Revis served as Chief of Staff to the Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation and is currently the Director of Advocacy for the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative. William Bartram (1739-1823) uses the spelling *Muscogule* in Francis Harper, ed. *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist's Edition* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 134. Bartram also records the spellings, *Uches*, and *Siminoles*, when referring to the Native Americans in his writings. The spelling *Muskogee* is also found in the literature. Still, this work will adhere to the spelling preferred by the Muscogee Nation in reference to the modern political organization and *Muskogee* to refer to the people and their language. The traditional spellings in *Muskogee* include *Maskoko* and *Mvskoke,* according to Matthew Jennings and Gordon Johnston, *Ocmulgee National Monument: A Brief History with Field Notes* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2018), xv-xvi. J. Leitch Wright, Jr., in his work *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* uses the term "Muscogulge People" to reference the Muskogee and Seminole People.

as the Wiregrass Region. While this region encompasses Georgia's neighboring states, the research for this thesis focuses on the Wiregrass Region in Georgia, extending from the Chattahoochee River along western Georgia's perimeter to the Okefenokee Swamp in the east.

In their letters, the settlers and militia in this corridor recorded waves of people fleeing the Chattahoochee River region. The fleeing Natives were attempting to escape the Lower Creek reserves and intolerable conditions of starvation, alcohol abuse, and homelessness. Today, the actions are defined as genocide or ethnic cleansing of a specific group of people.[73] These corridors of violence through South Georgia offered a chance for Native people to leave the increasingly dire conditions of the Alabama and Georgia borders. More often, the sparsely populated landscape of South Georgia granted an opportunity to preserve survival and independence. These demonstrations of Indigenous people's endurance during intense crises, by those who sought eradication while striving to organize systems of economic and political presence, ensured perseverance.

Chapter Three argues that southern white identity and anti-federal sentiment emerged in the southeastern United States as the young country expanded and sought to establish its economic and diplomatic presence in the world. This southern distinctiveness developed as settlers responded to their environment, shaping behaviors as they violently confronted Native people. The economic potential of the land significantly fueled motivation. By 1814, Georgia ceded its vast western territories in exchange for federal assistance in evicting the remaining Native Americans. By 1823, Governor Troup led the charge, ensuring that the United States War

[73] Christopher D. Haveman, in *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation, & Ethnic Cleansing in the American South*, explains that once the Indian Removal Policy shifted from voluntary to forced migration out of the U.S. Southeast, interactions equated to "Ethnic Cleansing," a systematic eradication and purging of Native People. Haveman defines "Ethnic Cleansing" as "the purging of any culture, religion, government, or race from a territory in order to secure that land for another group" 3.

Department did not forget the promise of militia support and funding. Subsequent governors continued this support to some extent. Previously, non-Native and Native societies coexisted to some extent, with Natives utilizing the playoff system and intermarriage to maintain relatively peaceful relations.

Nevertheless, events changed when the United States and Georgia sought to expand. The federal and state governments, driven by large planter societies, pursued land. These groups viewed Native Americans as a problem to be addressed and a barrier to progress. Indians were becoming relics of the past that settlers preferred not to acknowledge as relevant to the young democracy and emerging populations. Many South Georgians, the new settlers, desired the banishment of the Native Americans. James H. Merrell, an ethnohistorian, argues that by the 1840s, "widespread face-to-face contacts between Natives and whites were a thing of the past; never again would Indians occupy so central a place in American life."[74] Even so, the southern Coastal Plain region of the country lingered, experiencing very recent memories of intimate contact.

The emergence of the Creek Confederacy developed in response to colonizers infiltrating the Native South and continued to solidify as the U.S. strengthened politically and militarily. The U.S., particularly Georgia, employed aggressive tactics to establish its presence, including smaller 1820 land grants within South Georgia. While the Muscogee Nation, which had coalesced from many other groups, comprised the heart of the Indigenous populace in this territory, the complexities of the Native South must be considered when exploring the Indian removal policies, migration, intermarriage, warfare, and the effects on these groups. Economic

[74] James H. Merrell, "American Nations, Old and New: Reflections on Indians and the Early Republic." In *Native Americans and the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 338.

and social degradation, internal and external influences, and legal mandates set the foundation and help delve into the resiliency and resistance of the themes involved.

Chapter Four examines the settlers' and militia's interpretation of the persistent adaptability and defiance of Native American societies as they utilized swamps and other watery pathways to reach safe havens while contending with crises and ongoing brutality. Robbie Ethridge's *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone* has applications relevant to the Muscogee people's response and their active rejection of the forced removal policies imposed on Native Southerners. While Ethridge focuses on the colonial era of contact between Europeans and Native peoples beginning in the mid-1500s, the reorganization and transformation of groups destabilized by violence during the Federal Removal policies reveal significant similarities. While eluding complete annihilation, settlers and militia witnessed Native peoples in the Wiregrass Region adapt and skillfully avoid capture by taking advantage of the environment. They fought, when necessary, especially after settlers and militias became aware of their presence.

To maintain sovereignty, Native groups maneuvered through the southern regions of Georgia and northern Florida, often avoiding confrontations and taking advantage of the environment, including rivers, ponds, densely vegetated woods, and particularly the Okefenokee Swamp.[75] In *A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma*, Robbie Ethridge discussed how "Many Creeks sought refuge with the Seminoles and Cherokees or

[75] Megan Kate Nelson, *Trembling Earth: A Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 41. Authors note that Library of Congress maps offer a chronology of the names of the Okefenokee Swamp. Examples include Ekanfinaka (1790), Akenfonoga (1796), Eckenfinooka (1810), Oquafanaoka (1818), Oke-fin-a-cau (1818), Ikefinoka (1813), E-fi-no-cau (1854). Ecunnau means earth and finocan means quivering, thus quivering earth. A.S. McQueen and Hamp Mizell, *History of Okefenokee Swamp* (Folkston, Georgia: Charlton County Historical Society, 1926).

disappeared into the woods."[76] Megan Kate Nelson focused on the Okefenokee borderlands as a place of refuge in her 2002 Ph.D. dissertation and later in her 2005 book *Trembling Earth: A Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp*.[77] Even so, Native adaptivity or cultural adaptability within the Wiregrass Region has not been adequately addressed in the current literature. Ellisor, Kokomoor, Nooe, and Saunt all thoroughly discuss settler and Indigenous interactions; however, the identities that emerge in response to the unique environment of the Wiregrass Region have not been significantly explored. Finally, Chapter Five concludes this research.

[76] Robert J. Miller and Robbie Ethridge, *A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 67.
[77] Megan Kate Nelson, "Peculiar Ecology: Swamps and Culture in the Southeastern Borderlands, 1732-1940." Ph.D. dissertation (University of Iowa, 2002) and *Trembling Earth: A Cultural History of the Okefenokee Swamp* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

Chapter 2

"History is all explained by geography." Robert Penn Warren[78]

Transitional Frontier:

Contested Territory, Violent Encounters, and Possibilities of Intention

On November 17, 1825, Thomas County coroner Christopher Edwards reported to the Georgia Governor Troup that Native Americans belonging to the Seminole Tribe in Florida murdered two men, Philip and Nathan Paris, and injured another, John Chastoon, after Philip Paris' house was robbed.[79] The altercation began when the men encountered a nearby "Indian camp" where the stolen goods, estimated at forty-five or fifty dollars, were found.[80] Two men in the camp agreed to assist with returning the items when, about four miles on the return trip, they shot the two Paris men. Chastoon told the coroner that seven of the eighteen to twenty people in the camp were "fellows" and were well known to the neighbors in the area. On this trip, the people in the camps related that they were traveling to the interior of Florida, planning to reach Tampa Bay.[81]

The subjects of the coroner's letter were early settlers to South Georgia. Thomas County and neighboring Lowndes County were established in 1825. These two districts were carved out of Irwin County.[82] Irwin County was surveyed and divided into sixteen land districts in 1818,

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[78] Kenneth K. Krakow, *Georgia Place-Names: Their History and Origins* (Macon, Georgia: Winship Press, 1975).
[79] John Castoon is possibly John Chastain, according to Thomas County residents listed in the 1820 U.S. Census. Ancestry.com. "1820 U.S. Federal Census." (accessed February 11, 2025).
[80] The amount would be approximately $1500 in 2025.
[81] Christopher Edwards, "Letter from John Christopher Edwards, November 17, 1825," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[82] Irwin County was named for Jared Irwin, who was born in North Carolina and came to Georgia with his family at the age of seven. Irwin was a Senator from Washington County and Governor of Georgia from 1806 until 1809. J.B. Clements, *History of Irwin County* (Salem, Massachusetts: Higginson Book Company, LLC, 1932), 30-31.

and organized in 1820. Land Lottery drawings were held between September 1st and December 2nd of 1820. While this portion of the state was legally U.S. territory, settlers were not officially permitted to homestead until the land was distributed, according to U.S. authorities. Even so, Americans were already in the region. J.B. Clements wrote that the southern region of Georgia had settlers from North and South Carolina, Virginia, and the established areas of Georgia before the county's creation.[83]

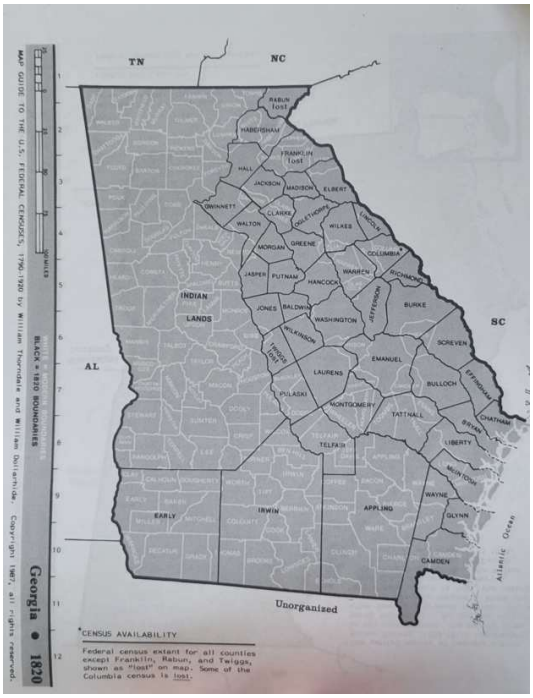

Illustration 6: Georgia counties as they were outlined in 1820. [84]

The 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson, orchestrated by General Andrew Jackson, and the Treaty of Creek Agency on the Flint River on January 22, 1818, extended the state of Georgia's jurisdiction to Spanish Florida and opened the floodgates for yeoman farmers wanting new

[83] Ibid., 31.
[84] William Thorndale and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920* (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 1987), 82.

opportunities and seeking cheap land south of the Ocmulgee River.[85] The treaties' wording placed all blame for the hostilities in the territory on the Creek Nation, and Jackson compounded the indictment by adding that the Creeks acted inhumanely toward the United States with continued attacks on citizens regardless of previous agreements, treaties, and assurances of peace.[86] After tremendous upheaval and attacks on Native people, Jackson took advantage via a succession of military campaigns.[87] Jackson continued securing land for the young country by fighting along the southern borders and into Spanish Florida. Eventually, the result was the Onís-Adams Treaty of 1819, with Spain relinquishing territory utilized by Native Americans and escaping enslaved people.

Diminishing the Native American presence in the territory shifted from a haphazard approach of coexistence and assimilation to an expulsion policy created by General Andrew Jackson and his proponents with the 1814 treaty. The Creek Nation was severely diminished. This action by the federal government, supported by Georgia state officials, produced the coordinated and organized settlement method of Native lands, ensuring the official eviction of Muskogee and other Native people from the region. Squatters, unscrupulous land speculators, and traders had already infiltrated the area, some working as agents of the affluent to secure the

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[85] Lewis N. Wynne and Guy Porcher Harrison, "'Plain Folk' Coping in the Confederacy: The Garrett-Asbell Letter" *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* 72, 1 (Spring 1988): 103 and J.B. Clements, *History of Irwin County* (Salem, Massachusetts, 1932), 18. After the two treaties mentioned above, Georgia established three counties on January 22, 1818: Early, Irwin, and Apple, west to east, respectively. The act was signed on December 15, 1818, by Benjamin Williams, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Mathew Tolbot, President of the Senate.

[86] Charles J. Kappler, LL. M., compiled and edited. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II. (Treaties),* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904.
Smithsonian, National Museum of the American Indian, "Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indians." https://americanindian.si.edu/nationtonation/treaty-fort-jackson.html (accessed September 4, 2024).

[87] A challenge regarding the present literature on this topic is that military campaigns and scholarship are divided along country and state borders. A regional history incorporating the ramifications of Native American reaction and resiliency takes a sideline to political borderlands and perceived ethnic boundaries. One exception found is James L. Hill., *Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022).

most desirable lots, while others were supported by politicians who sought to dismantle the Creek Nation.[88] Historian Claudio Saunt further compares federal and state actions to "state-sponsored expulsion," ethnic cleansing, and even genocide.[89] This chapter examines an area of the country that experienced extreme turmoil but has received modest consideration within borderland research. Nevertheless, the southeastern region of Georgia, including the Okefenokee Swamp, and north Florida continued to be a transitional frontier, experiencing sporadic fighting for several decades, extending until the mid-1800s, allowing for an elongated war and uncensored violence between the United States and Native Americans.

Margaret Ervin Austill traveled through the region known as Creek Country as a young child from 1811 until 1814 with her family. She recorded hostile encounters with Native Americans as settlers claimed territory that was not theirs legally, even though the migration was encouraged as the United States expanded.[90] Another narrative describes the horrific death of a murder victim attacked by Native Americans in southeastern Georgia, Camden County, in 1818, which occurred during this period when control of the territory west and south was disputed. This account, which was published and widely distributed in pamphlet form, was used to support the pro-Jacksonian faction at odds with Native Americans in the region and was most certainly a fabrication where stories of Natives as violent savages were propagated. Today, this publication could be described as propaganda.[91] These firsthand experiences of unrest that Austill described,

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[88] Robert J. Miller and Robbie Ethridge, *A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 57 and Christopher D. Haveman, *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation, and Ethnic Cleansing in the American South* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 4.

[89] Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), xiii & xvii

[90] Margaret Ervin Austill, "Memories of Journeying through Creek Country and Childhood in Clarke County, 1811-1814," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, 6, 1 (1944), 92.

[91] Eunice Barber, *Narrative of the Tragical Death of Mr. Darius, and His Seven Children, Who Were Inhumanely Butchered by the Indians, in Camden County, Georgia, January 26, 1818* (Boston: David Hazen, 1818). Barber's account is written describing horrific events and supporting General Jackson's campaign to expel Native people

and the promoted accounts of Indian savagery, resulted in drastically increased opposition and expectations from settlers. Native people, in turn, reacted to the increased migration of settlers and soldiers on established trails and old pathways.[92]

The Treaty of Colerain in 1796 permitted the establishment of U.S. military posts along the Oconee River and in areas near established trails that Muskogee routinely transversed.[93] On the eve of the War of 1812, federal officials wanted more access to these routes and advocated for federal roads constructed for wagon trains instead of merely horse trails. These roads dissected Creek territory, exacerbating the destabilization of Native authority.[94] Gaining access to these pathways for Americans was "not only central for securing their nation but also for expansion. U.S. officials ultimately deemed roads across Indian land essential and began a protracted series of negotiations to secure the right to traverse Creek land."[95] Article 4 of the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson mandated that the U.S. had "the right to establish military posts and trading houses, to open roads within the territory guaranteed to the Creek Nation...and a right to free navigation of all its waters." These passageways weakened the already beleaguered Creek country.

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from the region. This publication could be described as fabulated information devised for accelerating and escalating the removal of Native Southerners. Daniel E. Williams, editor. *Liberty's Captives: Narratives of Confinement in the Print Culture of the Early Republic* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

[92] Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1.

[93] Detailed descriptions of the Upper and Lower Creek trading paths are found in John H. Goff, "The Path to Oakfuskee: Upper Trading Route in Alabama to the Creek Indians," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 39, 2 (June 1955), 152-171; "The Path to Oakfuskee Upper Trading Route in Georgia to the Creek Indians," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 39, 1 (March 1955), 1-36; Annette McDonald Suarez, "The War Path Across Georgia Made by Tennessee Troops in the First Seminole War," *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* 38, 1 (March 1954), 29-42.

[94] In 1813, Georgia militia General Blackshear was tasked with surveying a route between the Ocmulgee River and the St. Mary's River, land that did not legally belong to the U.S. Hugh. M. Thomason, "Governor Peter Early and The Creek Indian Frontier, 1813-1815," *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* 45, 3 (September 1961), 223-237 and Kevin Kokomoor, *Of One Mind and of One Government: The Rise and Fall of the Creek Nation in the Early Republic* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 306.

[95] Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 39.

Austill and others who wrote about their experiences creating homes within the new territory differed significantly from the writings of William Bartram, who explored the country from 1773 to 1777, and the fur traders and British government officials who passed through or became part of Native families.[96] The Southeastern region of the United States during the eighteenth century was a diverse amalgamation of people and cultures. French, English, and Spanish traders, along with runaway slaves.[97] While avoiding the illusion of describing an idealistic state, the mingling of cultures who were somewhat equal secured, for a time, limited coercion by any one identity.[98] However, a young country's economic motivations and probabilities, aided by corruption, disease, warfare, and internal divisions, were accentuated by Georgia's role shifting from a "charity colony" to a land grab. Large plantation owners and

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[96] Much is written on William Bartram (1739-1823), albeit most of the scholarship is dated with a few exceptions. Francis Harper, ed., *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist's Edition* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Thomas Blake Earle and D. Andrew Johnson, eds. *Atlantic Environments and the American South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia, 2020); Matthew Jennings, ed., *The Flower Hunter and the People: William Bartram's Writings on the Native American Southeast* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2014). William Bartram's writings offer insights into the Southeastern region before the official Indian removal policies and the geographical relationship between the Lower Creeks and the Okefenokee Swamp in his work *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Jones and Johnson, 1791). Merritt B. Ramsey, "Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 13, 4 (December 1929), 392-409; Judson C Ward, Jr., *Benjamin Hawkins – Indian Agent* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1951); Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins-Indian Agent* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1951); Thomas H. Foster II, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2007) illustrate the life of an official, Benjamin Hawkins (1754-1816), who integrated into the local culture by speaking the Muskogean language, marrying a Native American wife, and having children. Theda Perdue, "Race and Culture: Writing the Ethnohistory of the Early South," *Ethnohistory*, 51, 4 (Fall 2004), 701-723 discusses the cultural complexities of intermarriage. Indian Countrymen were European American men who married Native American women, fathered children, and integrated into their matrilineal culture during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Bicultural on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 2-8. In this work, Frank thoroughly explores the "cultural overlapping" or "racial and cultural hybridity" of Anglo-men and their offspring into Native society while continuing extensive ties to their origins and furthers the scholarship by examining the significance of the children as "cultural brokers" within the developing region and the United States. Franks states that he has found no word for children of Native American women and Anglo-men in the Muskogee language.

[97] David Williams, *The Old South: A Brief History with Documents* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2014), 19-21, Joshua Piker, "Colonists and Creeks: Rethinking the Pre-Revolutionary Southern Backcountry," *Journal of Southern History*, 70, 3 (August 2004), 501-540.

[98] An example is in a letter written by James Seagrove, U.S. agent to the Creek Native Americans, to the Creek Nation on February 25, 1792, on behalf of the U.S. President, offering protection against any disturbance of their peace. D.C. Corbitt, "Papers Relating to the Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1784-1800," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 22, 3 (September 1938), 287. Gregory Waselkov, Peter Wood, and M. Thomas Hatley, eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, revised (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 505.

investors helped propel the region's dynamics into a detrimental spiral for regional Native people.[99] Once forced Indian removal became the official U.S. federal policy and the 1820 Georgia Land Lottery began, south Georgia and north Florida experienced violence as the borderland between old and emerging societies collided.[100]

These violent interactions that occurred in the region of the American Southeast have received modest consideration within borderland research. If the area was mentioned, the events were described as a footnote.[101] Nevertheless, this study of the southeastern sector of Georgia demonstrates that it remained a frontier in flux, or transition, for settlers and Native people as the contested 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson opened twenty-three million acres of land to the U.S., and the federal and state governments vied for control over land and Indigenous people. Regardless of the initial attempts made after the American Revolution, the federal Civilization Plan, which aimed to assimilate Native people, was engineered by President George Washington's Secretary

[99] In 1743, the Georgia Trustees allowed William Stephens to offer large land grants to wealthy plantation owners and investors. This policy was a significant shift from Oglethorpe's "charity colony," which banned slavery, fee-simple land ownership, and large tracts of land parcels held by an individual and was founded as an idealistic new start for the English working class. Enormous pressure from South Carolina plantation owners and Stephens' support forced small yeoman farmers to the margins, including offering refuge for religious migrants. In 1750, slavery was legally permitted, and in 1752, the "charity colony" became a royal colony. Georgia's working class found themselves unable to compete with the new economic reality of enslavement. Ibid.; Paul Bolster, *Saving the Georgia Coast: A Political History of the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2020), 13; Oscar H. Joiner ed., *A History of Public Education in Georgia, 1734-1976* (Columbia, South Carolina: R.L. Bryan Company, 1979); George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga:Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Christopher C. Meyers, ed. *The Empire State of the South: Georgia History in Documents and Essays* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2012). 8.

[100] Indian Removal is defined as the official U.S. federal policy after 1836 and the Second Creek War. Before 1836, migration west was voluntary, although that term is vague since not all Native Americans relocated freely before 1836.

[101] John Thaddeus Ellisor asserts that this period, particularly 1830 until 1836, is a neglected area of study in "The Second Creek War: The Unexplored Conflict." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1996 and *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Board of Regents: University of Nebraska, 2010). F. Evan Nooe's work currently addresses voids in the scholarship with *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2023) and "Result of this Great Conquest: How the Southern Indians made the Old South, 1811-1842," Ph.D. dissertation. University of Mississippi, 2012.

of War, Henry Knox (1750-1806), in 1789. However, Knox's plan ultimately failed.[102] These early efforts to avoid military action while ensuring U.S. expansion were futile compared to the lucrative visions that clouded justice.

Historians, including William S. Belko, John T. Ellisor, Andrew K. Frank, John Hope Franklin, F. Evan Nooe, and Claudio Saunt, contend that violent interactions were prevalent on the frontier during these years, unlike many other areas of the country that had already expunged Native Americans. Correspondence, newspapers, and personal experiences confirmed that antagonistic confrontations were consistently a part of daily life.[103] Examples include militia commanders who wrote to the Georgia governors about what they saw, battles fought, and the common struggles of food and sickness encountered. One military leader was Mark Willcox.

Mark Willcox (1799-1853) was born in North Carolina but later moved to Georgia with his family. He was a member of the 2nd Brigade, 6th Division of the Georgia Militia and was assigned to several locations during his ten-year career. By 1828, Willcox was at the military headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida. He later moved to Columbus, Hawkinsville, Thomasville, and other areas in Georgia, recruiting and coordinating with various volunteer militias in Georgia and Florida, as well as federal troops, gathering supplies, and leading volunteer militias in pursuit of the Indians. On July 5, 1829, Willcox was still in Jacksonville, Florida, where he reported that he was working with the volunteer Regiments of Appling and Ware Counties in Georgia.[104] During his tenure, Willcox kept the Georgia governors current on his location, campaigns, challenges, and even disagreements with other military commanders.

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[102] Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: United States Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1999), 61 and J. Leitch Wright, Jr., "Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and the Diplomacy of the Old Southwest," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 51, 4 (December 1967), 379.
[103] John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South: 1800-1861* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956).
[104] "Letter from Mark Willcox, July 5, 1829." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

In 1836 and again in 1838, Willcox wrote to the governor multiple times regarding the problem of maintaining a volunteer corps and the constant threat of attack. He stated that the troops find it "unpopular to go into Florida" to fight the "Seminoles of Creek Indians," especially now that the "sickly season" is approaching, and provisions are scarce.[105] Willcox described the region as riddled with trails leading to Florida from the western sections of Georgia. The areas described were thick with vegetation and almost "impenetrable due to thicket undergrowth," swampy waterways, and terrain dotted with hammocks.[106] Another letter written later that same summer reported locating a "considerable number of trails all leading in the direction of Florida" from the Suwannee River near Irwin, Lowndes, and Thomas Counties. Willcox reported that the Indians came into settled areas almost every night and plundered abandoned houses and farms "without disturbing the family who were at home." Willcox wrote that settlers and the militia were under the relentless terror of being attacked at any time by Creeks or Seminoles. Due to this predicament, he had requested help from Irwin, Telfair, and Appling Counties for additional volunteer militia and supplies. Willcox was also contending with a severe outbreak of measles among the troops.[107]

To appreciate the post-1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson environment, William S. Belko and James L. Hill outline the region's military campaign and the political and diplomatic responses

[105] Willcox wrote to John Forsyth (1780-1841) during his tenure from 1827 until 1829, George Rockingham Gilmer (1790-1859) during his two terms, 1829 until 1831 and 1837 until 1839, and to William Schley (1786-1858) during his time in office which was from 1835 and 1837. "Letter from Mark Willcox, June 12, 1836." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[106] A hammock is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a "densely wooded area of ground rising above a plain or swamp." *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Fifth Edition. Vol. 1 & 2, New York, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2002.

[107] Mark Willcox, "Letter from Mark Willcox, July 2, 1828," "Letter from Mark Willcox, June 3, 1829," "Letter from Mark Willcox, July 5, 1829," "Letter from Mark Willcox, June 11, 1836," "Letter from Mark Willcox, June 12, 1836," "Letter from Mark Willcox, July 10, 1836," "Letter from Mark Willcox, July 28, 1836," and "Letter from Marck Willcox, April 20, 1838." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

that led to the War of 1812 and the U.S. acquisition of Spanish Florida in 1821.[108] Spanish Florida, previously, had been a haven for enslaved African Americans attempting to find freedom, albeit limited equality. May 17, 1790, marked the official termination of the policy when the King of Spain issued a Royal decree in a letter widely distributed throughout Florida. On August 23, 1790, the new order was published in South Carolina and Georgia. President Thomas Jefferson expressed his gratitude to the Florida governor and appointed James Seagrove, the U.S. Collector of Customs, as liaison for the returned enslaved.[109]

The U.S. and Spain agreed on the policy but differed on how claims or reimbursements were established, capture and return costs, and "maintenance" expenditures.[110] That same year, the Spanish government began offering free land grants to anyone who wanted to homestead without the requirement of converting to Roman Catholicism, possibly enticing more migration into the territory.[111] Decades earlier, the southern territory of Georgia and northern Florida served as a geographical buffer zone for invested colonial interest, but transitioned into a more volatile space once the U.S. expanded and Georgia's population increased. For many years, the ambiguous border between the two countries was never fully defined or agreed upon and remained an area of dubious control. After Florida became a U.S. territory in 1821, disagreement between the two entities continued until December 1859.[112]

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[108] William S. Belko, ed. *American's Hundred Years' War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2011) and James L. Hill, *Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022).
[109] Jane Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687-1790," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 62, 3 (January 1984), 311.
[110] Richard K. Murdoch, "The Return of Runaway Slaves, 1790-1794," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 38, 2, (October 1959), 97.
[111] William S. Belko, ed. *American's Hundred Years' War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2011), 37.
[112] Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991) 220 and David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009) 205-206.

James Madison (1751-1836) served as president from 1809 until 1817 and was deeply concerned about Great Britain's influence and presence in Spanish Florida, as well as their relationship with the Native Americans. So much so that the U.S. Congress enacted the "No-Transfer Resolution" shortly after Madison addressed Congress in 1810. This declaration targeted Great Britain's presence at the U.S.'s southern borderland.[113] The U.S. viewed Spanish Florida, particularly Great Britain's influence within it, as a threat to national security. While Spain did not respond to the U.S.'s persistent overtures to purchase the southern peninsula, General Andrew Jackson led a force that infiltrated the borderlands in 1818. Jackson justified his campaigns as needed to eliminate violent Indian attacks and protect settlers. However, British infiltrators were also sought. The U.S. believed the British presence, or "John Bull," remained a problem for the young country's stability.[114]

With Spain's consent and its weakening position in North America, the British maintained a presence in Florida by continuing trade houses and supplying Native Americans with goods, guns, and ammunition. The U.S. believed that the British presence was more than a commercial endeavor; it was a pretext for aligning with rebellious Native Americans, even after the War of 1812. Georgia Governor David Brydie Mitchell (1766-1837) served two consecutive terms from 1809 to 1813 and won a third term in 1815. Mitchell, who was previously in the military, organized the state militia to protect what the settlers perceived as an inevitable attack on residents by Native Americans and formerly enslaved people, both supported by the British. The southern region of Georgia was legally designated as Native American land until 1814, yet the U.S. militia operated in the area to challenge all perceived, and often actual, encroachments

[113] William S. Belko, ed. *American's Hundred Years' War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2011), 57.
[114] "John Bull" equates to the U.S. Uncle Sam.

by Native people. These encounters persisted, with sporadic fighting continuing until at least 1839.[115]

Pressure on Native Americans in the southeast intensified as settler populations grew. By 1817, Governor Mitchell resigned from his elected position to be appointed Indian Agent to the Creek Indians, replacing the previous agent, Benjamin Hawkins (1754-1818). Mitchell sought to gain a negotiating advantage with the Muskogee and acquire additional land for the expanding state, enhancing economic possibilities and transportation initiatives, which had been priorities during his time as governor. Meanwhile, settlers from Georgia and the surrounding states pushed into the region as the Land Lottery of 1820 opened land for recipients and opportunities.[116]

In January 1825, while George Michael Troup was governor, the Indian Springs Treaty was signed. This treaty relinquished the remainder of Native lands to Georgia. Troup's first cousin, William McIntosh, was vital in negotiating the plan without the agreement of most of the Lower Creek town, or *talwa*, leaders.[117] McIntosh, a plantation and enslaver who previously

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[115] Carter, Clarence Edwin, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume 25, The Territory of Florida: 1834-1839*. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31210016047183&seq=298&view=2up&q1=Creeks (accessed August 28, 2024).

[116] Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991) 220 and David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009) 205-206.

[117] William McIntosh, Jr. was the son of William McIntosh. Catherine McIntosh, George Troup's mother, was William McIntosh, Jr.'s aunt. William McIntosh, Sr. and John McIntosh, Catherine McIntosh's father, were brothers. Walter W. Winn, *The Triumph of the Ecunnau-Nuxulgee: Land Speculators, George M. Troup, State Rights, and the Removal of the Creek Indians From Georgia and Alabama, 1825-38* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2015), 37. The political and social divisions of Native people can be divided by tribe, clan, or *talwas* and *talogas*, but indeed, were comprised of motley factions, including enslaved people fleeing bondage. Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "The Creek Indians, Blacks, and Slavery," *Journal of Southern History*, LVII, 4 (November 1991), 607, 617 & 633. A tribe is a group of people with a shared cultural ancestry. A clan or *em vliketv* is an anthropological expression used to describe "an extended unilineal kinship group, one that unites several extended king groups, lineages." Robbie Ethridge and Robert J. Miller, *A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 33 and James L. Hill, *Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 7. The talwas were a political and social unit, townships, capital town, or tribal town functioning independently. Matthew Jennings, ed., *The Flower Hunter and the People: William Bartram's Writings on the Native American Southeast* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2014), Note and Thomas J. Pluckhalm and Robbie Ethridge, ed., *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians* (Tuscaloosa,

fought alongside General Jackson against the Seminoles, received incentives that could be considered bribes. McIntosh was violently executed by the Creek National Council for his involvement.[118] Due to the adamant objections of the Creek National Council, President John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) amended the treaty in 1826 against the Georgia governor's vehement protests, ceding some land back to the Creek Nation along the western border with Alabama.[119] While the Native Americans in the region were forced to leave, the territory was not exempt from violent encounters between Native people and settlers.

Alabama: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 1. *Talogas* were smaller or daughter towns. Ibid., 32-33 and Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3. *Mēkko* is the chief or headman of a *talwas*. James L. Hill, *Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 1.

[118] William McIntosh was also known as Tustunnuggee Hutke or White Warrior. McIntosh's father was a Scottish fur trader, and his mother was of the Lower Creek's Wind Clan. For McIntosh's participation in the treaty, he was promised $40,000 and a leadership role once the Creek Nation moved west. James L. Hill, *Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763-1818* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 250. McIntosh met with the Americans in February 1825 at an Inn he owned in Georgia, where he received a significant bribe for his participation. McIntosh was accused of "embezzling national funds between 1819-1820" by the Creek National Council but refused to appear before the council to defend himself. He was convicted in absentia. His town, Coweta, was tasked with the execution. An estimated four hundred Muskogee surrounded his plantation house and an approximately fifty to one hundred bullets littered McIntosh's body once he exited his home, which was on fire. Duane Champagne, *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, and the Creek* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 165–168 and Andrew Kevin Frank, "'A Peculiar Breed of Whites': Race, Culture, and Identity in the Confederacy." Ph.D. dissertation (University of Florida, 1998), 221-222. Vivid details of William McIntosh's execution are given in William W. Winn's tome. *The Triumph of the Ecunnau-Nuxulgee: Land Speculators, George M. Troup, State Rights, and the Removal of the Creek Indians From Georgia and Alabama, 1825-38* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2015), 112-115. The Creek National Council was created as a political and governing organization representing *talwas*, or towns. This occurred in the 1790s when the colonizers increased the building of trade houses, trading negotiations and agreements were formalized, and Georgia became a colony. The Creek Nation came about as colonizing countries, France, Great Britain, and Spain, encroached upon Native lands. Trade negotiations included the 'playoff system," explained by Indigenous societies bargaining with European trade companies to ensure the best possible agreement. During the "playoff system" period, economic brokering favored Native groups. The Creek Nation attempted to set boundaries limiting outside aggression. These borders were in Georgia and Alabama. By the nineteenth century, the Creek Confederacy was formed as a political unit for the convenience of negotiations between Muscogee and the U.S. government and encompassed Upper and Lower Creeks from multiple towns and endeavored to respond to the U.S. assault. The reference to Upper and Lower Creeks refers to the geographical location of the Muskogee people Upper Creeks were principally in today's state of Alabama. Lower Creeks were mainly located in today's state of Georgia and had more interactions and integration with colonizer influences. Nevertheless, the terms eventually had applications to the political division that peaked as groups differed significantly with how to confront the concerted efforts by Americans and their government to undermine and eradicate Native sovereignty. Angela Pulley Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves and the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4.

[119] Kevin Kokomoor, *Of One Mind and of One Government: The Rise and Fall of the Creek Nation in the Early Republic* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 386.

This unrest was evident in the letters written to the governor by militia commanders as settlers who acquired homesteads through the 1820 Land Lottery populated the southern regions of Georgia. As the population grew, the initial three counties surveyed for the 1820 Land Lottery facilitated the establishment of additional counties. Thomas County was formed from Irwin and Decatur Counties in 1825 and named for Jett Thomas, who fought in the War of 1812. Lowndes County was established from seven Irwin County land districts and named for William Jones Lowndes, a South Carolina politician. Ware County was created in 1824 from a portion of Appling County and named for Nicholas Ware, a U.S. Senator from Augustus, Georgia.

The dramatic increase in the settler population and the political organization of counties had an adverse impact on Native populations. Because settlers did not want Native people on land that they believed was legally theirs, defensive efforts began. Lowndes County residents organized the "Committee of Safety for Lowndes County." The rosters were filled with local volunteer militia members equipped with guns and ammunition, hoping to be reimbursed by the state of Georgia while also relying on donations from residents gathered by the militia's appointed quartermaster. One townsman designated as commander was David Levi Jonathan Knight (1803-1870). Knight served in the 29th Georgia Infantry and corresponded regularly with the Georgia governors about his experiences until he issued his resignation on September 21, 1838.[120]

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[120] Levi J. Knight, "Letter from Levi J. Knight, June 15, 1838," "Letter from Levi J. Knight, September 22, 1838," Letter from Levi J. Knight, December 27, 1838," "Letter from Levi J. Knight, March 4, 1839," "Letter from Levi J. Knight, November 12, 1839," "Letter from Levi J. Knight, September 16, 1850," File II, Reference RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Governor George Rockingham Gilmer (1790-1859), during the governor's second tenure. Gilmer served two non-consecutive terms; the first was from November 4, 1829, to November 9, 1831, and the second lasted from November 8, 1837, until November 6, 1839. Before his political career, Gilmer was an officer with the 43rd U.S. Infantry who led troops against the Muscogee. Given the governor's experience, Gilmer would have been familiar with the Muskogee and the state's southern terrain, including challenges the militia may have encountered. Ancestry.com. "1830 U.S. Federal Census." (accessed February 11, 2025).

In a June 15, 1838, letter to Governor George Rockingham Gilmer (1790-1859) from Lowndes County, Knight remarked that there was ample evidence of Natives in the area, including about ten abandoned campsites. Knight recounted his time scouting in and around the Okefenokee Swamp in neighboring Ware County, where there were "considerable signs of Indians." Knights wrote that his scouting venture was after a recent battle in Florida involving another militia. There had also been a fight on the Suwanee River near the Georgia state line, where Native people were seen traveling east toward the Okefenokee Swamp. Knight led citizen volunteers from Lowndes and Ware Counties and coordinated with the Florida militia. He notes that about twenty miles south of the Florida line, about eighteen miles from Lowndes County, many Natives had assembled, possibly one hundred total. Knight ordered his men to withdraw due to being outnumbered. He reported that Native American families were in the retreating parties, moving away from them towards the Okefenokee Swamp. [121]

Knight also met with several volunteer militia groups in the Florida Territory during his excursions into the region. His problems included guiding his mounted riflemen and their horses through the thick, muddy, and rugged terrain; however, his most significant challenge was securing food for his troops. Knight wrote that the "greatest difficulty that stands in the way is the want of provision to support an army." The "great swamp which affords good water," but "St. Mary's is the nearest place where provisions can be got at this time, which is about 65 miles from the place I have mentioned (Okefenokee Swamp)." He stated, "No corn or bread stuff can be got in this country; the suffering Floridians have taken all that can be had."[122]

[121] Levi Jonathan Knight, "Letter from Levi J. Knight, June 15, 1838." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[122] Levi Jonathan Knight, "Letter from Levi J. Knight, June 15, 1838." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Georgia Governor George Rockingham Gilmer served from 1829 until 1831 and 1837 until 1839.

Knight requested that the Georgia governor provide additional companies that could be stationed along the perimeter of the Okefenokee Swamp to assist with patrols, as the terrain was not easy to traverse. “There is but two or three places as yet known to the white man as the landscape is too thick and muddy for the horses, and there are few areas that were deemed safe for retreat, if needed.” Knight explains that settler occupants of the Okefenokee Swamp and east Lowndes County were sparsely inhabited. “East of Lappaha (Alapaha) River in this county are now the frontier and in immediate danger.”[123]

A few months later, on September 22, 1838, Knight wrote that he had raised a company of sixty-eight volunteers who were mounted riflemen, including First Lieutenant Brazilla Staten (1791-1846) and Second Lieutenant George Roberts (1777-1854), to patrol the area. Knight stated that the group was “for some time past acting under the order of the Committee of Safety for Lowndes County” to provide security for the residents.[124] In doing so, he had recently returned from a ten-day trip to the eastern regions of the county, including the Okefenokee Swamp, but did not directly engage in fighting. Knight did, however, observe much evidence of their encampments. Knight and his men searched the terrain fifty miles west of the Okefenokee Swamp, “where they (Natives) have been in considerable force.” He believed the number of Native Americans was nearly five hundred warriors, and it was evident that the group was moving east with families, but Knight believed that the men would return. Camden County residents reported that the Natives were known to plunder houses looking for corn, but did not

[123] Levi Jonathan Knight, “Letter from Levi J. Knight, June 15, 1838.” File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[124] Levi Jonathan Knight,” Letter from Levi J. Knight, September 22, 1838,” File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

engage in violence unless confronted. Knight expressed gratitude to the governor by saying, "I am truly glad you are using efficient means to rid us of these troublesome neighbors."[125]

On December 27, 1838, Knight continued to report to the Georgia governor that Native Americans were moving through Lowndes County, evading the militia. Knight informed the governor that General John Floyd (1769-1839) "is operating in the Swamps," but "Indians are in small parties prowling through the surrounding country." Knight relayed from Floyd that their forces are too small to adequately deter the Native people from the region.[126] On November 18, 1839, Knight wrote that Indians were in Ware County, about ten miles from Lowndes County and twenty miles north of the Florida line. Knight and other residents unsuccessfully sought what they believed were about forty Native Americans who had abandoned their camps after killing cattle belonging to settlers residing along the east side of the Alapaha River in Lowndes County.[127]

Knight's letters demonstrate how the southern regions of Georgia experienced an elongated war, and violence between the settlers, militia, and Native Americans as political and military leaders recognized their advantage in securing a frontier that was shifting to one dominated by the U.S. Many historians identify military campaigns, such as the Creek Wars and the Seminole Wars, with distinct beginnings and conclusions. Belko argues, however, that the dates – 1763 until 1858 – denote a continued U.S. engagement with Indigenous cultures within the desired land.[128] "The expanding Americans and the retreating Florida Indians can only be described as one long unbroken struggle, commencing early in the eighteenth century, continuing

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Levi Jonathan Knight," Letter from Levi J. Knight, December 27, 1838," File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[127] Levi Jonathan Knight, "Letter from Levi J. Knight, November 12, 1839." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[128] William S. Belko, ed., *America's Hundred Years' War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2011), 6.

well into the nineteenth" – America's Hundred Years' War.[129] The correspondences between settlers in the region, militia, and government officials exemplify the continuing conflict.

In the 1830s, settlers in the southern region of Georgia were preparing to defend their homesteads against potential threats. Settlers readied themselves for war. The U.S. Congress established that all states must organize militias. These were all volunteer groups, and most settlers from South Georgia were part of these military units within their districts.[130] William Schley (1786-1858) served as governor from 1835 until 1837 and had previously served in the Georgia militia, 9th Regiment. He took an active interest in the military campaigns against the Indian revolts, as shown in many letters sent to his office. For example, Schley and Colonel Henry Blair of the Georgia militia, 81st Regiment, corresponded routinely.

On June 13, 1836, Blair wrote that he received intelligence that about two thousand Creeks from the Chattahoochee River region were making their way east toward Pindertown to join with the Florida Seminoles. Pindertown was in Worth County, Georgia, and north of where Blair was writing from – Sharpe's Store.[131] Blair reported that they require arms and additional

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[129] Ibid. Belko chose 1763 as the beginning of the war because Native American culture had transformed from an economy based on commercial hunting (deerskins) to a more traditional agricultural society independent of European and later American indebtedness. 1858 is selected as the end of the war due to the severe decrease of Native Americans in the Southeastern regions of the U.S.

[130] Hitz notes that technically speaking, today, every citizen between the ages of seventeen and forty-five of a state not in the military is a member of their state's militia. Initially, the age requirement was all males between sixteen and sixty. In 1778, the enlistment age was lowered to fifteen. The age was again modified in 1784 to sixteen to fifty, but the right to change was reserved if needed. All Militia Districts in Georgia were given a number. However, many are also known by a name. Company and Militia are interchangeable. Alex M Hitz, "Georgia Militia Districts," https://www.georgiaarchives.org/assets/documents/research/Georgia_Militia_Districts.pdf, (accessed October 28, 2024).

[131] Pindertown may have been located northeast of today's Albany, Georgia, near Highway 300, near the east side of the Flint River. Pindertown may have been built where previously Thronateeska, a Native American town, was located. Sharpe's Store was on a major road for the day, the Coffee Road. This road was built with enslaved labor. Sharpe's store may have been located at milepost 78, fifteen miles from Franklinville, and completed in 1823. The post office was eventually housed in this store. Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field during the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838*. Edited by James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017), 260. Both spellings, Pindertown and Pindartown, have been noted in the literature.

ammunition and are "very much exposed."[132] On August 4, 1836, from Lowndes County, Blair wrote again to the governor that small parties of Native Americans had been moving through the county the previous "six or eight weeks," and a larger party was anticipated. Blair does not state which direction the group was moving from, but proposed to station one hundred mounted men along the "northwestern frontier" of Lowndes County. Blair also requested that the militia be placed along the Florida line or the Suwanee River to defend against Seminole "from commiting [sic] depredations on our southerstern [sic] frontier as they occasionally threten [sic] us with outragious [sic] pleas." Blair appealed again for arms and ammunition, asking that the goods be delivered to Hall's Store in Lowndes County.[133]

Later that same month, on August 21, 1836, Blair reported that Native Americans were moving through Lowndes County daily in small parties, possibly families, en route to Florida. The "general opinion" among the settlers is that once the women and children were safely sheltered in the "large swamps" in Lowndes and Ware counties, the men would return to "lay wast [sic] this whole section of country." This letter from Blair was much more desperate and pleaded with the governor, whom Blair called his "Commander in Chief of the army of this State," to send five to six hundred army men to defend the territory. Blair stated that "the people is so excited and alarmed that they are prepairing [sic] to and are actually leaving their houses and property to the mercy of the savages, and unlefs [sic] you send us help soon any in the corse [sic] of fifteen or twenty days the enemy will have nothing to but come in and take peacible

[132] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment. Georgia Militia. "Letter from Henry Blair, June 13, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[133] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment. Georgia Militia. "Letter from Henry Blair, August 4, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Hall's store was located along the Coffee Road and was owned by Sion Hall (1784-1849). Hamilton W. Sharpe worked at Hall's store and eventually purchased the business, renaming the shop Sharpe's store.

pofsesion [sic].” Blair also appealed to the governor not to offer the command of any militia to Mark Willcox for the good of the county and country.[134]

Even so, Blair requested Willcox’s help a few days later. In a letter dated August 30, 1836, from Franklinville, Blair received word that Indians were observed in the northern areas of Lowndes County. He described how he and eighteen to twenty men trailed this small group for about three miles until they reached their encampment at the Lowndes and Ware County line along the side of Cow Creek, a large cypress swamp. Once they realized the group included about sixty-five to seventy men, Captain Willcox was dispatched to assist. Blair further described how they soon perceived the Indian party was much larger, with three to four hundred people, many of whom were running in and out of the swamp. The description is chaotic. Blair and Knight’s militia charged the Native Americans, killing two men and wounding a woman who died the next day from her wounds. Blair stated that five more were taken prisoner and sent to the Thomasville jail, where they gave testimony that the party included thirty-three men, thirty-five women, and several children. Several Indians were seen by the militia carrying their casualties into the swamp and were “supposed was [sic] killed.” One member of the militia and a horse also died.[135] From the portrayals in this letter, the encampment included families.

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[134] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment, Georgia Militia. “Letter from Henry Blair, August 21, 1836, File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[135] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment. Georgia Militia. “Letter from Henry Blair, August 30, 1836.” File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. The Georgia Historical Society maintains a historical marker, “Skirmish at Cow Creek.” The marker text is limited to “Near here, on August 27, 1836, Georgia Militia companies commanded by Col. Henry Blair, Captain Lindsay, and Capt. Levi J. Knight fought a skirmish with Creek Indians and routed them, killing two and taking several prisoners. During this summer, the Indians had committed many raids and massacres as they traversed the border counties on their way to Florida to join the Seminoles. Georgia troops had been following them for weeks and overtook this band in the cypress swamp on the edge of Cow Creek.” https://www.georgiahistory.com/ghmi_marker_updated/skirmish-at-cow-creek/. The application for this marker was made in 2000, however the original petition has not been located. (email with the Georgia Historical Society dated October 30, 2024). Beginning in 1998, the Georgia Historical Society assumed the program and maintenance of existing markers, and they do not have the original application. Hence, the research for this marker cannot be verified. The marker is in today’s Echols County, Georgia. Jesse Pleasant Prescott, Sr. recalled many years later in an article in the Valdosta Times, March 7, 1896, that William Peters and Barzilla Staten died in the fighting. However, a letter on August 15, 1838, stated that Barzilla Staten was on a newly formed Committee of Vigilance

Evidence of continued fighting and violence against family groups moving toward Florida from the west can be found in several of Colonel Blair's letters. On September 12, 1836, Blair reported that a small group of "hostile Creek Indians," including "three women and one girl of about ten or twelve years of age" were in Lowndes County and had been taken as prisoners by "the negroes belonging to Mrs. Rountree." The women, who reported that their warriors had died in battle, were making their way to Florida when they were taken in by the Roundtree family. Soon after, the Roundtree family reported the captives to the militia, who then transported the group to jail. Blair also noted that Mr. Williams of Lowndes County had a young Indian girl and refused to turn her over to the militia. It was unknown to whom the child belonged or what happened to her. Blair asked the governor for guidance in such instances.[136]

By October 12, 1836, Colonel Blair was experiencing considerable difficulty in gathering an adequate number of militia willing to patrol Lowndes County and the surrounding areas against intrusions. He reported that one company of federal troops had arrived in Lowndes County, with more anticipated, possibly numbering two hundred men.[137] A few days later, on October 22, 1836, Blair again expressed his frustration with recruitment but was assisted by Captain Levi J. Knight. Knight and his volunteers traversed the southeastern borders of Lowndes County, spoke with settlers, and found evidence of old Native American encampments in and around the Suwannee River (west) side of the Okefenokee Swamp, including "depredations" against residents. Knight believed that several hundred Indians were making their way to Florida to join the Seminoles, but he also wrote that he was sure many were deep in the swamp, eluding

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and Safety in Lowndes County. The Valdosta Times interview with Jesse Pleasant Prescott, Sr. was in 1896, when Prescott was between the ages of seventy-five and seventy-nine. Chances of two Barzilla Statens residing in Lowndes County in the 1830s are extremely low.

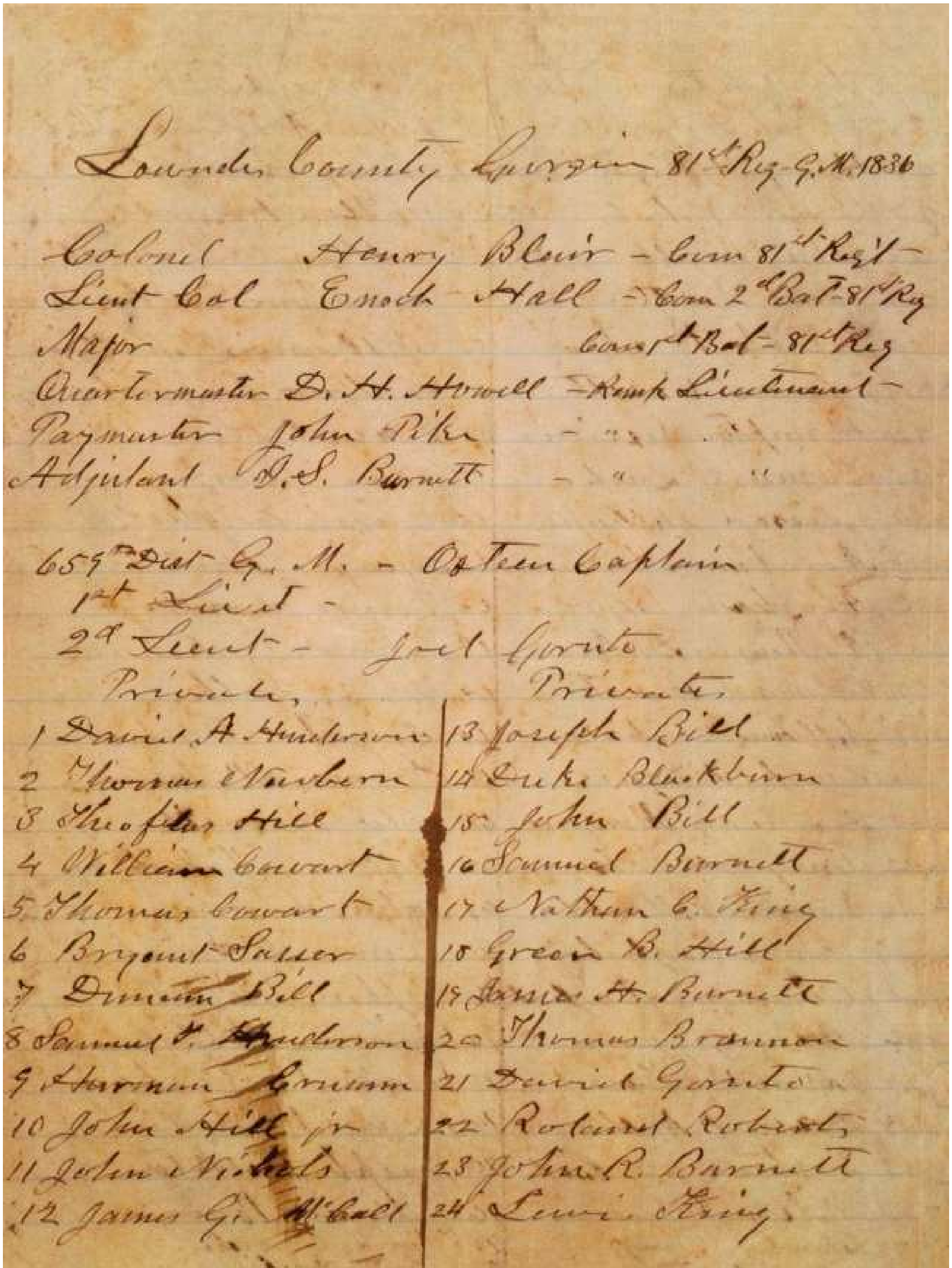
[136] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment. Georgia Militia. "Letter from Henry Blair, September 12, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[137] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment, Georgia Militia. "Letter from Henry Blair, October 12, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

detection. Some of his men did find traces of two or three wounded Native Americans who were headed south and camping near the Withlacoochee River, possibly having been injured during the Brushy Creek Battle and unable to travel. Blair also updated the governor on the status of the long-awaited federal troops. He reported that Major Dearborn only had fifty or sixty men to send. They agreed to postpone the deployment of federal troops to the southern region until the "Seminole Campaign" progressed. Blair believed that the volunteer militia would fulfill their obligations if the need became dire, and that U.S. troops would be on alert if the Indians returned from Florida or the refuge within the Okefenokee Swamp.[138]

The southern regions of Georgia remained a contested territory for decades following the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson and the forced expulsion of Native Americans from their lands, particularly after the federal and state governments enacted official U.S. Indian Removal Policies. The letters and experiences described in this chapter illustrate the extreme turmoil faced by Native American families, who were viewed as mere trespassers on land considered to be legally theirs and as violent interlopers in Georgia. These Native Americans moved away from the collection centers established for their forced migration to Indian Territory, now modern-day Oklahoma, by governments and settlers seeking to establish homesteads in places of refuge, thereby creating a gradually shifting frontier. This transitional frontier, or borderland, in the southeastern region of Georgia and northern Florida, continued to experience sporadic fighting for several decades, lasting until the 1850s and resulting in extended conflict and unchecked violence between the United States and Native Americans.

[138] Henry Blair, Colonel 81st Regiment, Georgia Militia. "Letter from Henry Blair, October 22, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Blair was also a prolific letter writer. Just six days later, Blair reported that he is still unable to raise the appropriate number of volunteer troops and Indians in the Okefenokee Swamp is a significant concern. "Letter from Henry Blair, October 28, 1836."



Lownds County Georgia 81st Reg G.M. 1836

Colonel Henry Blair - Com 81st Regt
Lieut Col Enoch Hall - Com 2d Bat 81st Reg
Major Com 1st Bat - 81st Reg
Quartermaster D. H. Howell - Rank Lieutenant
Paymaster John Pike - " "
Adjutant J. S. Burnett - " "

659th Dist G. M. - Ofteen Captain
1st Lieut -
2d Lieut - Joel Garrett.

Privates	Privates
1 David A. Henderson	13 Joseph Bell
2 Thomas Newbern	14 Duke Blackburn
3 Theofilus Hill	15 John Bell
4 William Cowart	16 Samuel Burnett
5 Thomas Cowart	17 Nathan C. King
6 Bryant Sasser	18 Green B. Hill
7 Duncan Bell	19 James H. Burnett
8 Samuel T. Henderson	20 Thomas Brannon
9 Harmon Crumm	21 David Garrett
10 John Hill jr	22 Roland Roberts
11 John Nichols	23 John R. Burnett
12 James G. McCall	24 Levi King.

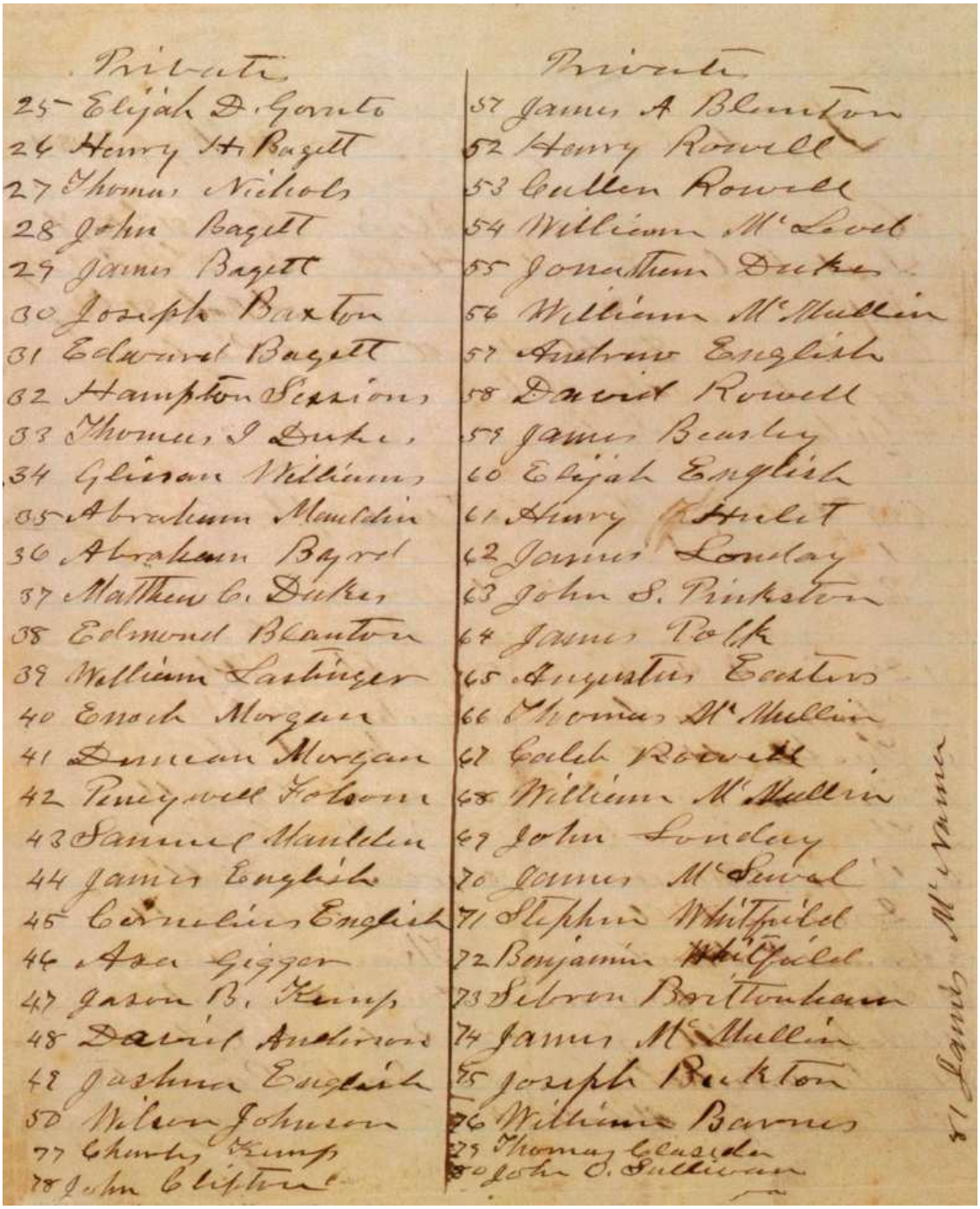


Illustration 7: 1836 Lowndes County, Georgia 81st Regiment, Georgia Militia, Districts 659 and 660.[139]

[139] Lowndes County, Georgia Militia, 81st Regiment, 1836 Roster, Valdosta State University, Archives and Special Collections, Wiregrass History, Historical Documents relating to Valdosta, Lowndes County, and South Georgia, https://vtext.valdosta.edu/xmlui/handle/10428/1219 (Accessed October 30, 2024).

Chapter 3

"As the settler takes over the territory, so does the territory take over the settler—hence the distinctive vascular condition of having the land run in one's blood. Land is settler colonialism's irreducible essence in ways that go well beyond real estate. Its seizure is not merely a change of ownership but a genesis, the onset of a whole new way of being—for both parties."[140]

- Patrick Wolfe

Southern Distinctiveness: Shared Dignity, Experiences, and Place

F. Evan Nooe, in *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* argues that settlers' aggressive and violent behaviors against Native societies who resisted led to the coalescence of Southern white identity and anti-federal sentiment in the Southeastern United States as the young country expanded and established itself within the world economically and diplomatically.[141] "Through personal experiences and community memories, settlers and their descendants looked to their aggression against and suffering at the hands of Native Americans as generating an exclusionary regional identity built

[140] Patrick Wolfe, "The Settler Complex: An Introduction." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal,* 37 (2) 2013, 1. "Settler Colonialism" is defined as the process when "non-Native settlers consumed land by dispossessing Indigenous peoples and then created historical narratives to justify and solidify their actions. While making such accounts, they also obscured Indigenous narratives and meanings of people and land." Farina King and Jacob F. Lee, "Indigenous Erasure and Selective Remembering in Kentucky and Arizona," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society,* 121, 4 (Autumn 2023), 302. "Colonial Entanglements" include the intricate dealings between Indigenous people and settlers. Ibid., 303. King is a historian and citizen of the Navajo Nation. Patrick Wolfe explained that "Settler Colonialism" is the methodical categorization and often calculated elimination of societies being colonized. The primary reason for elimination is access to land, which can lead to genocide, but not always. "Settler Colonialism destroys to replace," and Wolfe analyses the occurrence as the "logic of elimination." Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8, 4 December 2006.

[141] Identity is defined as the condition of being indistinguishable in every detail, absolute sameness, or a specified uniqueness. It is the state of community bound by "interpersonal relationships and associations, common experiences and feelings, and a shared past…it is the web of personal relationships that links disparate people together and gives meaning to their interactions. *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Fifth edition, Volume 1, A-M, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Steven E. Nash and Bruce E. Steward, eds., *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 2-3. Identity is explained by "being simultaneously both 'one's self or itself and not another." James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). A contrast must be noted.

upon the violent dispossession of the Native South."[142] Nooe argues that this analysis deviates from the traditional timing of when historians place the beginnings of white regional identity, which is within the Antebellum South, coupled with the justification and codification of slavery.[143] John Hope Franklin discusses settlers' violence against Native Americans as integral to southern white identity formation - "Shared honor."[144] Violence against others was deemed honorable; hence, Native Americans during the late 1700s until 1850 directly influenced the construction of the distinct White settler identity in the Southeast and expanded Georgia while shaping a shared community. Steven E. Nass and Bruce E. Stewart describe in *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South* how "conflict constituted a vital part of southern communal development."[145]

Identity is characterized by a collection of people who share similar values, beliefs, and experiences. Identity is also defined as being separate or different from others, or by who they are not.[146] Often, identity develops and evolves through shared experiences within a common geographic location. In a study of place identity formation in a copper mining town in Sonora, Mexico, John Harner argues that when a group of people shares commonly held certainties and

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[142] F. Evan Nooe, *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2023), 8. The Native South delineates land in modern-day Georgia to Alabama, where precolonial Indigenous people held sovereignty before another nation annexed their territory. Farina King and Jacob F. Lee reference the phrase "This is Native Land," which was prevalent in the 2020s during the "land back" movements. Farina King and Jacob F. Lee, "Indigenous Erasure and Selective Remembering in Kentucky and Arizona," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society,* 121, 4 (Autumn 2023), 302.
[143] James C. Cobb, in his 2005 tome *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity,* places the formation of Southern identity at the foot of the antebellum period. Another historian who does the same is Nunan V. Bartley in *The Creation of Modern Georgia* (Athens, Georgia: University of Press, 1983). Nooe, however, argues that the majority of modern historians neglect the significance of Native American's influence on regional development, particularly the formation of identity among white settlers within the Native South. F. Evan Nooe, "'Zealous in the Cause': Indian Violence, the Second Seminole War, and the Formation of a Southern Identity." *Native South,* 4 (2011), 57.
[144] John Hope Franklin*, The Militant South: 1800-1861* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956).
[145] Steven E. Nass and Bruce E. Nass, eds., *Southern Communities: Identity, Conflict, and Memory in the American South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 8.
[146] F. Evan Nooe, "'Zealous in the Cause': Indian Violence, the Second Seminole War, and the Formation of a Southern Identity." *Native South,* 4 (2011), 56.

beliefs and lives within a specific geography, a shared uniqueness begins to take shape. As this faction strengthens, a shared place identity reinforces the experience and justifies behaviors. Harner states that identity and place are intertwined; he refers to this relationship as sociospatial dialectic.[147] "Place is the location in which people struggle to achieve goals and understand their existence."[148] The uniqueness of an emerging community is influenced by what is occurring and the physical surroundings. The interplay of the expanding U.S. and the settlers' movement into Native lands led to the foundation of the distinct regional Southern and anti-federal identity that developed due to the ideal environmental conditions, the convergence of settlers and militia functioning against Native people, and the prospective lucrative economy assuring prosperity for those who controlled the land.

The expansion of the United States and the state of Georgia into the Old Southwest was directly correlated with Great Britain's Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. The Old Southwest encompassed the southeastern region of the United States, where Native American societies, including the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Muskogee, resided. These events in this region spurred rapid growth and created fertile ground for the shared distinctiveness required to meet the pecuniary demand. During this period, the Atlantic slave trade thrived, and long-staple cotton was supplied to textile mills. Ted Steinberg, in his 2002 environmental history *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*, describes how the location in Georgia and other states within the American South was ideal for growing another variety of a cash producing crop, short-staple cotton. The federal and state governments, along with the larger planter

[147] John Harner, "Place Identity and Copper Mining in Sonora, Mexico," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91, 4 (2001), 661.
[148] Ibid. Common places and experiences, particularly "martial distinctiveness" regionally is discussed in F. Evan Nooe's *Aggressive and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2023), 13.

societies, coveted the land in the Old Southwest occupied by Native Americans – land suitable for agricultural development and economic prosperity. Along the coastal regions, rice was a significant path to monetary wealth, and as the southern areas became available, cotton became paramount. The coveted environment of the Wiregrass Region, a territory previously dominated by Indigenous societies, was crucial to achieving this success and was a component of the settlers' identity formation in the Southeast, as it diverged from and was separate from the federal government's oversight.

Long-staple cotton brought fortunes along the eastern lowcountry seaside and the Atlantic islands to plantation owners. Due to the prolonged growing season in these areas, long-staple cotton, or sea island cotton, was ideally nurtured near the coastlines. Short-staple, however, could be grown in regions where warm weather and frost-free seasons persisted over a sustained period and adequate precipitation occurred. Eli Whitney's 1793 cotton gin, the efficient Mexican cotton seed variety, and well-organized production lines, coupled with the overproduction of the mono-agriculture in existing U.S. owned regions, resulted in exhausted soil and led Georgia and the neighboring slaveholding states to encourage the expedited federal Indian Removal policy in Georgia's southern region.[149]

The environment of the Old Southwest has a mild climate, a long growing season, and usually ample precipitation. The topography is known as the Coastal Plain due to its low-lying landscape that extends to the coast. This region of Georgia, geologically situated south of the Piedmont Plain, follows the Fall Line. The Fall Line runs at an angle approximately from the northeast to southwest of the state, dissecting the areas near today's Milledgeville, Macon, and

[149] Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 81-88 and Albert E. Cowdrey, *This Land, This South: An Environmental History* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 76.

Columbus cities. There is no visible change in the landscape when traveling from the Piedmont Plain into the Coastal Plain; however, if traveling via waterways, a series of rapids mark the variation in physiography.[150] The Coastal Plain is characterized by longleaf pine forests at higher elevations and densely vegetated swamps in lower areas.[151] This forest and savannah ecosystem was essential to the Indigenous Southerners who lived in the area and used the land as their hunting grounds.[152] The southern Coastal Plain is known as the Wiregrass Region, and extends from the Chattahoochee River to Savannah. The terrain includes pine forests, sandy soils, creeks, rivers, swamps, and wiregrass, with the western portions encompassing "sinkholes, caves, springs, and disappearing streams." The region is named after the wiregrass, which is "a round-bladed perennial growing in outwardly bending clumps" and grows to about a foot or more in height.[153]

Detailed topographical maps of the eastern Atlantic coastline, notably South Georgia, northern Florida, and the Okefenokee Swamp, pre-World War I, are limited.[154] Many of those

[150] The rock's composition accounts for the transitions from the Piedmont Plain to the Coastal Plain, creating the rapids. Otto Veatch and Lloyd William Stephenson, *Geology of the Coastal Plain of Georgia* (Atlanta, Georgia: Foote & Davies, Company, 1911), 27 and William Frazier, "Coastal Plain Province." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified December 10, 2024) https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/science-medicine/coastal-plain-geologic-province/ (accessed December 11, 2024).

[151] Harper records that by 1900, the pine forests of the Coastal Plain region of Georgia had decreased by thirteen percent and, in 1920, by thirty-two percent. The environment of Georgia's southern region was dramatically transformed within a few short years. Ibid., 456.

[152] C.S. Monaco, "Whose War Was It? African American Heritage Claims and the Second Seminole War," *American Indian Quarterly,* 41, 1 (Winter 2017), 35.

[153] Wetherington, Mark Wetherington, "Wiregrass Georgia." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Sep 28, 2020. https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/geography-environment/wiregrass-georgia/ (accessed June 10, 2025).

[154] William Gerhard De Brahm, a cartographer born in Koblenz in 1717 or 1718, Germany, and arrived in Georgia in 1751 with other emigrants from Germany, worked as an engineer, surveyor, and cartographer. De Brahm created "A Map of South Carolina and a Part of Georgia," an interesting note is that the map was used in a 1990 case regarding the lower Savannah River and the boundary lines of South Carolina and Georgia. De Vorsey, Louis. "De Brahm, William Gerard." *South Carolina Encyclopedia*. (https://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/de-brahm-william-gerard/) (accessed November 6, 2024) De Vorsey, Louis. "Indian Trails." *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/indian-trails/) (accessed November 6, 2024), and Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 39.

maps that do exist from that era, outlining the geological description of the Wiregrass Region, contain inaccuracies and incomplete information. Imprecise railroad locations and erroneous representations of resources are common with these maps.[155] The First World War compelled the War Department and the United States Geological Survey to fund mapping of the region, including the densely vegetated areas not easily accessible.[156] One problematic location is the Okefenokee Swamp. The Okefenokee Swamp encompasses about 800 square miles and extends into Florida.[157] The swampy terrain remained elusive for many decades, even after Georgia's southern border was expanded.

Nevertheless, the southern regions of Georgia were recognized as favorable for short-staple cotton and other crops, such as tobacco, indigo, rice, and wheat, which were ideal for European markets. Due to the lucrative possibilities, planter elites in Georgia and neighboring states, primarily South Carolina, personally funded or conducted the surveys themselves of land belonging to Native Americans in anticipation of acquiring land grants. The potential profits excited the neighboring landowners, who began aggressively pursuing the area politically. For instance, in 1796, cotton generated a 37.5 percent profit margin, and in 1810 - a 12.5 percent

[155] Ocean Pond, located in Lowndes County, was identified on one map as being the largest pond in the State of Georgia and placed in an erroneous location. Roland M. Harper, "Georgia Coastal Plain Geology and Physiography." *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, 46, 12 (1914), 921-922. The Assistant State Geologists of Georgia listed the incorrect information. Ocean Pond is listed as encompassing approximately six square miles, while the correct size is nearer to 1.375 square miles. Otto Veatch and Lloyd William Stephenson, *Geology of the Coastal Plain of Georgia* (Atlanta, Georgia: Foote & Davies, Company, 1911), 34-5.
[156] Roland M. Harper, "Some Recent Topographic Maps of the Coastal Plain of Georgia and Florida." *Geographical Review*, 13, 3 (July 1923), 454.
[157] The Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was nominated on December 20, 2024, to become the newest location in the United States as a UNESCO Heritage Site. https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/okefenokee-national-wildlife-refuge-be-nominated-join-unesco-world-heritage-list (accessed May 22, 2025).

margin.[158] Land further south was needed if profits were to improve. The political elites in Georgia and surrounding states sought the "geography of opportunity."[159]

One planter who sought opportunity in Georgia was Jonathan Bryan (1708-1788) of South Carolina, who moved permanently to the state in 1752, just one year after slavery was permitted. Jonathan Bryan had moved freely throughout colonial Georgia, assisting James Oglethorpe with establishing the settlement, building roads, and engaging in trade.[160] Even so, during Georgia's Trustee period, South Carolinian planters could not relocate into the territory legally due to restraints of limited land ownership and the prohibition of slavery. Nevertheless, Bryan, who worked surveying Indian territory, benefited from trading with the Georgians and learning which lands were best suited for developing into farmland. He knew how to optimize plantation production by using his enslaved workers to cultivate crops on the South Carolina border. They were ready to expand into new territories once conditions allowed.[161] One historian called Georgia the "land of opportunity for Carolinians."[162]

When South Carolina's economy experienced a downturn in 1740, pressure on the Georgia Trustees increased dramatically. South Carolinians needed more agricultural prospects. In 1751, slavery was legalized in Georgia, and in June of 1752, the Trustees returned the oversight of Georgia to Great Britain. The British Board of Trade and Plantations governed land

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[158] David Andrew Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85, 2 (Summer 2001), 205.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Harvey H. Jackson, "The Carolina Connection: Jonathan Bryan, His Brothers, and the Founding of Georgia, 1733-1752," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 68, 2 (Summer 1984), 157.
[161] Alan Gallay, "Jonathan Bryan's Plantation Empire: Land, Politics, and the Formation of a Ruling Class in Colonial Georgia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 45, 2 (April 1988), 18-23. Even though slavery was not legal in Georgia until January 1, 1751, enslaved Africans were sold at the Savannah port as early as 1748. Michael L. Thurmond, *James Oglethorpe, Father of Georgia: A Founder's Journey from Slave Trader to Abolitionist*. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2024), 82.
[162] Harvey H. Jackson, "The Carolina Connection: Jonathan Bryan, His Brothers, and the Founding of Georgia, 1733-1752," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 68, 2 (Summer 1984), 172.

distribution until a civil government was established in 1754. However, this new government devised a land allocation system called the Headright System, allowing for much larger land plots than the Trustees had previously permitted. The Headright System favored wealthy slaveholders who moved into the region and land speculators who recognized an opportunity.[163]

By 1765, Jonathan Bryan owned about 250 enslaved people and over 32,000 acres of land in Georgia and South Carolina combined. He also moved his attention to northeastern Florida. In 1774, Bryan had leased over four million acres for ninety-nine years from the Muscogee, who had moved into northern Florida – without the consent of Great Britain. Bryan wisely leased the land rather than purchase the acres, which would have violated the Proclamation Act of 1763.[164]

Jonathan Bryan was in Thomas and Lowndes Counties by the 1830s and served in the Georgia militia. His story provides a typical example of how Georgia's elite society was formed, emerging from the planters and political influences who seized opportunities that were entirely contrary to Oglethorpe's utopia. Bryan and other plantation owners simultaneously engaged in various occupations, including farming, militia service, and political endeavors such as elected or appointed leadership positions.[165] Bryan and his family, including his brother Hugh, began accumulating wealth by working as surveyors. The two brothers surveyed the South Carolina regions and started purchasing land and slaves to cultivate rice, a highly profitable crop. Bryan

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[163] Christoper C. Meyer and David Williams, *Georgia: A Brief History* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2012) 55.
[164] John Bryan received a land grant in the Florida Territory after leasing. John Bryan. "Land Grant in the Territory of Florida [Signed by John Quincy Adams.]." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[165] Alan Gallay, "Jonathan Bryan's Plantation Empire: Land, Politics, and the Formation of a Ruling Class in Colonial Georgia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 45, 2 (April 1988), 254. Gallay further expounds upon Bryan's success in his ability to adapt to new and changing environments and political circumstances and his willingness to engage in employment that is not typical of the social and planter elite. Gallay explains that the inability to adapt and participate in work is considered below social status, which occurred with some of Bryan's successors, causing failure to sustain the capital required to maintain circumstances.

became very familiar with the topography of Georgia, including the southern areas, as he traveled from South Carolina to Spanish Florida, exploring and learning about the landscape and possible agricultural opportunities.

Other members of the Bryan family moved into the southern regions of Georgia. David Bryan, Sr., drew a lot in Early County in the 1820 Land Lottery. In the same lottery, David Bryan acquired a lot in Appling County, and two men named John Bryan settled in Irwin and Early Counties, respectively.[166] At least two of the descendants, David and John Bryan, served in the volunteer militia in Lowndes County.[167] John Bryan was in Captains Blair and Godwin's Districts, while David R. Bryan was in Captain Johnson's District.

John Bryan's August 22, 1836, letter addressed to Governor Schley began with "Dear friend." While Bryan decried that Lowndes and Ware Counties are both very much exposed "at this time (to) the Creeke [sic] Indians" and stated that the Indians were gathering in the swamps in both counties. Bryan expressed fear that the U.S. might "give up this section of the state without your will." He claimed the land was healthy and as good as the Chattahoochee region.[168] Bryan also mentioned about fifteen hundred mounted riflemen stationed along the Florida line "in diffrenent [sic] places," all militia tasked with defending the land. Bryan and other settlers wanted land obtained through the 1820 Land Lottery for cash-producing crops, thus creating a

[166] Silas Emmett Lucas, Jr., *1820 Land Lottery of Georgia* (Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1986), 44.

[167] Ancestry.com. "Georgia, U.S., Property Tax Digests, 1793-1892 for David R. Bryan." (accessed November 11, 2024) and Ancestry.com. "Georgia, U.S., Property Tax Digests, 1793-1892 for John Bryan." (accessed November 11, 2024). David R. Bryan, "Letter from David R. Bryan, October 1, 1838," "John J. Bryan, "Letter from John Bryan, August 22, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives, and Ancestry.com. "1840 U.S. Federal U.S. Census." (accessed February 11, 2025).

[168] John Bryan, "Letter from John Bryan, August 22, 1836," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. According to Georgia Property Tax Digests, John Bryan resided in Lowndes County, Georgia, for at least two decades. Research is inconclusive as to whether these two John Bryans are the same person, but the evidence favors that they are the same. The Bryan family, however, included several members named John and Jonathan. Florida became a state in 1845.

collision of competing people with conflicting interests. Settlers wanting the land for farming worked together to remove Native Americans from land traditionally belonging to them.

Previous to the 1820 Land Lottery system of land distribution, Headright counties were all counties east of the Oconee River in Georgia. This land was intended for U.S. citizens who wanted to move to the state, establish residency, and improve the parcels according to European standards. Initially, these lots were limited to not more than one thousand "rich and healthy" acres for each application – or individual who had not supported Great Britain during the fight for independence.[169] Even so, Governors Walton (1749-1804), Telfair (1754-1807), Mathews (1739-1812), and Irwin (1750-1818) allowed for expanses of land containing over one hundred thousand acres to be awarded to individuals. After tens of thousands of acres of land were given to wealthy entrepreneurs and land speculators, the state revamped its guidelines for distributing its newly acquired public lands to offer a more equitable dissemination. This new arrangement was called the Land Lottery system. The Land Lottery system required surveying and organizing all land into land districts before distribution. Georgia citizens, soldiers who had served in the Indian Wars, American Revolution, or the War of 1812, widows who resided in Georgia or whose husband had served in the before mentioned war, family of minor orphans who had lived in the state and were children of a father who had died in a before mentioned war, applied and paid a modest grant fee. Depending on their military status and dependents, applicants received "draws" or increased chances in the lottery.[170]

[169] David A. Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Society,* 85 (2) (Summer 2001), 206.
[170] Farris W. Cadel, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 60-120, J.B. Clements, *History of Irwin County* (Salam, Massachusetts: Higginson Book Company, LLC., 1932), 28-29; Silas Emmett Lucas, Jr., 1820 Land Lottery of Georgia (Greenville, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1986).

Nevertheless, before the Land Lottery system, the Headright System enticed a few privileged groups into the state, and they benefited financially. As planter elites moved into Georgia, a rush ensued to acquire as much land as possible, which was particularly advantageous for more prominent and well-established landowners. The Headright Land Grants system favored those with larger estates and planters who owned numerous slaves, allowing them to work extensive acreages. The more slaves a planter owned, the more land he was allowed to purchase.[171] By 1760, approximately five percent of Georgians owned one enslaved person; fewer Georgians could afford to own more than one enslaved person.[172] If the planter held the minimum acreage, he could hold political office and be included in the legislative process, possibly yielding favorable power.[173]

These shared experiences and ethos within a mutual geographical region of southern Georgia fostered fertile conditions for the formation of a collective identity. The Wiregrass Region, particularly the vast opportunities presented by the newly acquired southern territory, provided ideal ground for settlers to establish homesteads beginning in the 1820s. The remaking of the land distribution system from the Headright System, which favored more prominent landowners, to smaller distributions of acreage in the 1820 Land Lottery allowed for a larger number of settlers along the southern borderlands. Regional identities took shape as ownership of an ideal landscape became a reality for settlers. While the mild climate suited rice production along the Georgia islands and coastal regions, the settlements within the inland regions of the

[171] Farris W. Cadle, *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law.* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 28-31.
[172] Alan Gallay, *The Formation of the Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 97.
[173] Ibid., 72.

Wiregrass Region, and prospects for short-staple cotton created optimal conditions for landowners to coordinate and work together to expel Native Americans.

The U.S. and its states required settlers to defend their homesteads and join their states' voluntary militia. Because of this arrangement, settlers, who were often militia members, found themselves in a powerful and opposing situation with Native Americans. Hence, the convergence of settlers and militias functioning against Native people helped solidify the distinct Southern identity. The anti-federal inclinations began to manifest and bitterly fester as those in Georgia became impatient with the slow and often silent responses to the Indian removal policy from Washington. Governor Troup, in 1824, expressed his annoyance with the U.S. War Department in a letter to James Barbour. Troup continued to vehemently oppose what he believed was leniency by President John Quincy Adams and his administration during the years 1825 to 1829 toward Native people. Governors Georgia Gilmer and Wilson Lumpkin even worked contrary to the U.S. Supreme Court's stance on land cessions.[174] This carbuncle matured as the federal government was reluctant and made little progress securing the southern regions. Decades earlier, even after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, President Washington was reluctant to aggressively push Native people out of the U.S. and acknowledged that if the federal and state leaders could not successfully collaborate to secure Native lands, Europeans would not recognize the United States' place in the world.[175]

The Federalists' approach to Indian diplomacy initially, according to Kevin Kokomoor, was coexistence, not expansion.[176] The U.S. would not move past the Oconee River in Georgia,

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[174] David Andrew Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85, 2 (Summer 2001), 199-200.
[175] Jeffrey Washburn, "'The Fate of the Southern States': The Creation of the First Federal Indian Policy and Its Impact on the Southeast," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, CVII, 4 2023, 355.
[176] The Federal political party dominated U.S. policy until the 1800 election when Republican Thomas Jefferson was elected. Kevin Kokomoor, "Creek, Federalists, and the Idea of Coexistence in the Early Republic," *Journal of Southern History*, 81, 4 (November 2015), 805-806 & 842.

and the federal government would regulate all interactions between settlers and Native Americans. Federalists, he argues, wanted to govern affairs with Native groups and the southern states, notably Georgia, should relinquish their authority. Georgia's renegade actions, according to the Federalists, jeopardized national authority and diminished the U.S. credibility among European elites.[177] The United States "needed most was stability, not expansion."[178] Even so, this was not the reality on the ground in south Georgia.

While the official interaction with Native people was federally regulated, the State of Georgia and the federal government continued to be at odds over which group should negotiate with the Native Americans on Georgia soil – this began as early as 1789 when parties met on the Oconee River at Rock Landing.[179] The Treaty of New York, signed in 1790, further inflamed Georgians, who did not want Native Americans within the territory. In 1802, Georgia agreed to cede its western boundaries to make way for the states of Alabama and Mississippi. Georgia, as payment, received several million dollars and the promise that the Native Americans would be removed, and that the southern portion of the state would be theirs, allowing settlers to populate the frontier region in 1820. By the time Governor Troup took office in 1823, the federal government had failed to fulfill the agreement, and the settlers had not forgotten. Troup and others were vocal with their discontent, and Troup accused the administration of "barring white Georgians from the rich lands which were their birthright."[180] Troup's stance was wildly popular.

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[177] Jeffrey Washburn, "'The Fate of the Southern States': The Creation of the First Federal Indian Policy and Its Impact on the Southeast," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, CVII, 4 2023, 364. The U.S. Congress passed several acts, 1790, 1793, and 1796, to oversee trade between settlers and Native groups. Kokomoor argues that the laws attempted to protect Native groups from settlers' aggression. Kevin Kokomoor, "Creek, Federalists, and the Idea of Coexistence in the Early Republic," *Journal of Southern History*, 81, 4 (November 2015), 813 & 818.
[178] Kevin Kokomoor, "Creek, Federalists, and the Idea of Coexistence in the Early Republic," *Journal of Southern History*, 81, 4 (November 2015), 811.
[179] J. Leitch Wright, Jr., "Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and the Diplomacy of the Old Southwest," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 51, 4 (December 1967), 384.
[180] David Andrew Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85, 2 (Summer 2001), 199-200.

Three years before Troup's tenure, the federal civilization plan transitioned to removal shortly after Spanish Florida was ceded to the United States in 1820.[181]

Governor Troup gained prestige among the settlers and militia by fighting the federal government until the country voted a Southerner and state rights proponent to the highest office.[182] Just a few years before Andrew Jackson was elected president, Lowndes County was carved out of Irwin County, and the Treaty of Indian Springs was signed, both in 1825. In

[181] Civilization and assimilation were the official U.S. federal policy under President George Washington in the 1790s, with the mission to transform Native culture to align with European farming practices and private property ownership. The idyllic motivation was to offer Indigenous groups the tools to integrate with Anglo society and similarly support themselves, providing a peaceful coexistence far removed from the belief that Indians were primitive. Still, this policy was also rooted in the reality that the young country was not prepared to challenge Indigenous societies directly, which were much stronger militarily and diplomatically well connected with Great Britain, France, and Spain. Colin G. Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington: The First President, the First Americans, and the Birth of a Nation* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3. This policy may have even been inspired by the Scottish Enlightenment values and Quaker ideas; however, the underpinning scheme was to limit the acreage required by Native people. During the lifetime of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other U.S. and European elites, the common enlightenment belief held that people evolved through "stages of society." Europeans were at the highest level of evolution, with Africans at the lowest. Native Americans were commonly believed by this group as being somewhere in the middle and needed the authority of the U.S. leaders for their well-being. These political and intellectual elites believed that if the U.S. could civilize Indigenous societies in the Old Southwest, they would be on par with other prosperous countries. Jeffrey Washburn, "'The Fate of the Southern States': The Creation of the First Federal Indian Policy and Its Impact on the Southeast," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, CVII, 4 (2023), 358. Washburn examines correspondences between U.S. and European elites in this article. Details of letters between President Jefferson and Henry Dearborn, Jefferson's Secretary of War, explaining "absorption of Indians within a 'higher' culture" is in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: United States Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1999), 49. Given individual land ownership and substantially smaller plots, parcels could be sold without clan consent. Initially, this arrangement seemed ideal after the Southeastern Native society's economic structure altered post-American Revolution but instead established inroads to destabilization for Natives and financial opportunities for settlers. Ethridge notes that after U.S. independence, the institution now known as John Forbes & Company was the only remaining trading house in the region once European interests were forced to exit. Robert J. Miller and Robbie Ethridge, *A Promise Kept: The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and McGirt v. Oklahoma* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 46-47. Ethridge explains that post-American Revolution, the U.S. Congress regulated trade with Native Americans per the Articles of confederation and the U.S. constitution. Soon after, the War Department administered trade relations with Native Americans, and in 1806, the Office of the Superintendent of Indian Trade was established. In 1823, the Bureau of Indian Affairs regulated duties within the War Department. In 1849, the Bureau of Indian Affairs moved administratively to the Department of the Interior. Ray H. Mattison also discusses the U.S. factory trading system, and the methods used to control Native populations in "The Creek Trading House – From Colerain to Fort Hawkins." *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 30, 3 (September 1946). Civilization and assimilation benefited trading institutions, at least for a time. "Extractive colonies" involved exploiting colonies for the benefit of obtaining precious resources.

[182] The Jacksonian Era is defined by the years Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) was president (1829-1837) and led the transformation of the United States from a bourgeoning republic contenting with Native Nations to a participant within European markets. During the Jacksonian Era, the country solidified its economic, political, and social stance. Christina Synder, *Great Crossings: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Age of Jackson* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16-17.

preparation for the 1820 Land Lottery, surveys began in the territory ceded in 1814, which had already been divided into districts, in June 1819. The surveyors worked for approximately one year under the tenures of Governor William Rabun, who died while in office later that year before completion, and Governors Matthew Talbot and John Clark.[183] The surveyors encountered extreme heat, an environment permeated with swamps, isolated from settler communities and replacement supplies, and Native people who displaced survey markers, frustrating settler progress.[184]

Troup's "resistance campaign" ordered the militia into Native lands to prepare for the territory of settler expansion and the homesteads granted with the 1820 Land Lottery.[185] In the 1820s and 1830s, aggression among the settlers continued to grow as they believed Native Americans were helping the enslaved escape and join their encampments.[186] Settlers were flooding the southern regions, many from North and South Carolina, Virginia, and the established areas of Georgia, even before the creation of Lowndes County. These families and militia became physical buffers, pushing Native Americans out but also creating security concerns for all states that allowed slavery.

Escaping slaves fleeing south had begun decades earlier. By 1780, the expanses of Florida, beyond the Spanish controlled Pensacola and St. Augustine, and extending to the St. Johns River, served as havens for maroon communities and welcoming oases for runaway

[183] Governor William Rabun (1771-1819) served from March 4, 1817, until October 24, 1819. Governor Matthew Talbot ((1767-1827) served from October 24, 1819, until November 5, 1819, after Rabun died in office, leaving the governorship to the President of the Georgia Senate. Governor John Clark (1766-1832) served from November 5, 1819, until November 7, 1823, and lost to George Troup in 1825.
[184] Farris W. Cadle, Georgia Land Surveying History and Law, (Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991): 223.
[185] David Andrew Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85, 2 (Summer 2001), 225.
[186] Brian R. Rucker, "West Florida's Creek Indian Crisis of 1837," *Florida Historical Quarterly,* 69, 3 (July 1991) 316.

enslaved people seeking freedom. Maroon, or marronage, is a Spanish term referring to enslaved persons who were self-emancipated and secreted themselves in less populated regions. Many maroon people created independent communities, sometimes near plantations where kinships and supplies were available.[187] These communities could be found from the American plantation to South America. Some maroons were small, others encompassed thousands of well-established populations, and some maroons operated as intermediaries amid settler society and Indigenous people.[188] The Spanish may have tolerated these sanctuaries, but they most likely could not prevent their existence. The British, however, may have supplied the maroons with arms and supplies to antagonize the rebelling Americans. During the War of 1812, the British made promises of freedom and land if slaves escaped into Florida.[189] One well supplied fortification set along the Apalachicola River, referred to as the Negro Fort, was the most prominent maroon settlement and possibly the best organized and protected. This well-armed fort included families of a few hundred, operating independently until it was violently destroyed by the Americans in 1816.[190]

[187] Paul M. Pressly, *A Southern Underground Railroad: Black Georgians and the Promise of Spanish Florida and Indian Country* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2024), 97; C.R. Elliott, "'Through Death's Wilderness': Malaria, Seminole Environmental Knowledge, and the Florida Wars of Removal," *Ethnohistory,* 71, 1 (January 2024), 5; Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Caahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University, 2003), 7.
[188] Kevin Kokomoor, *Of One Mind and of One Government: The Rise and Fall of the Creek Nation in the Early Republic* (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 2009).
[189] Riordan, Patrick. "Finding Freedom in Florida Native Peoples, African Americans, and Colonists, 1670-1816." *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 75, 1 (Summer 1996): 24-43.
[190] C.S. Monaco. *Second Seminole War and the Limits of American Aggression*. (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2018), 30; Paul M. Pressly, *A Southern Underground Railroad: Black Georgians and the Promise of Spanish Florida and Indian Country* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2024), 234N19; Larry Eugene Rivers. *Rebels and Runaways: Slave Resistance in Nineteenth Century Florida.* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 74.

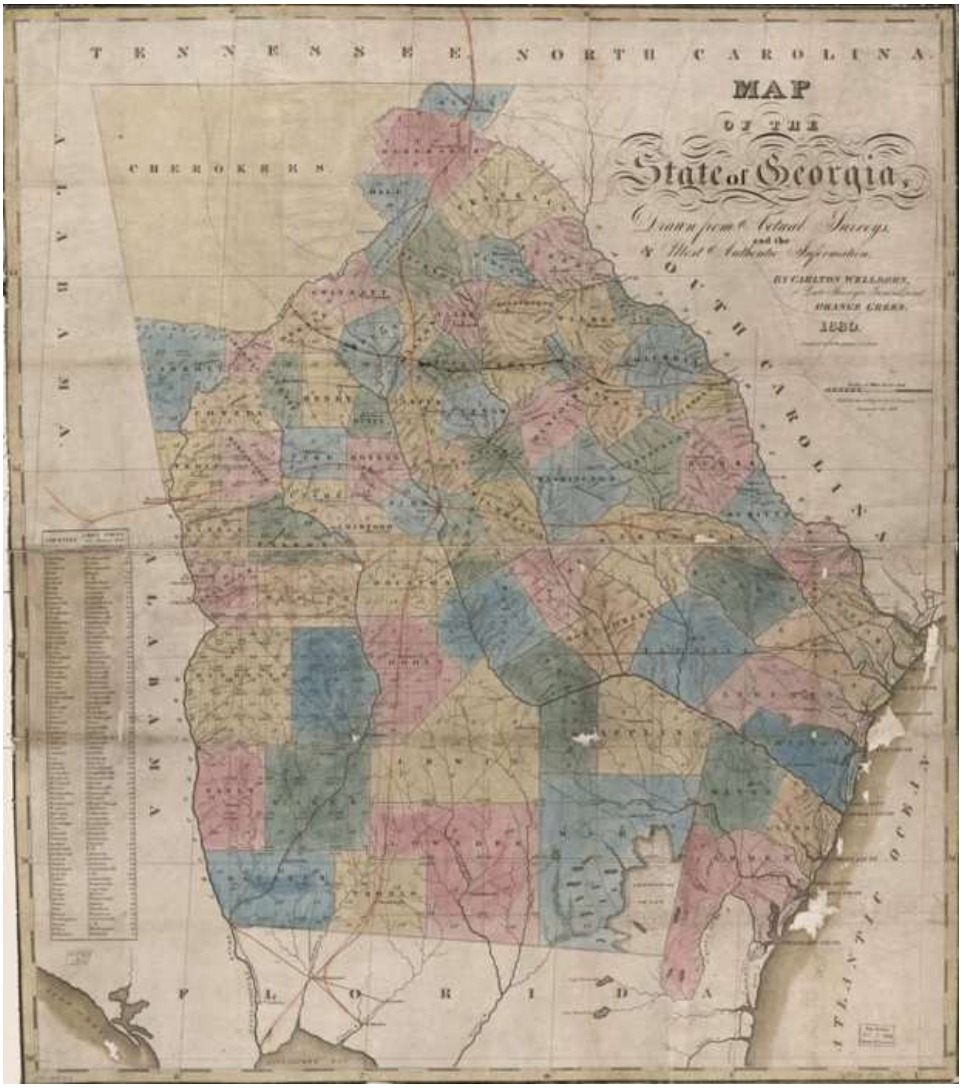

Illustration 8: 1830 Map of the State of Georgia.[191]

[191] Wellborn, Carlton, Orange Green, and William Hoogland. *Map of the state of Georgia, drawn from actual surveys and the most authentic information*. [S.l.: s.n, 1830] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, (www.loc.gov/item/2011588001/).

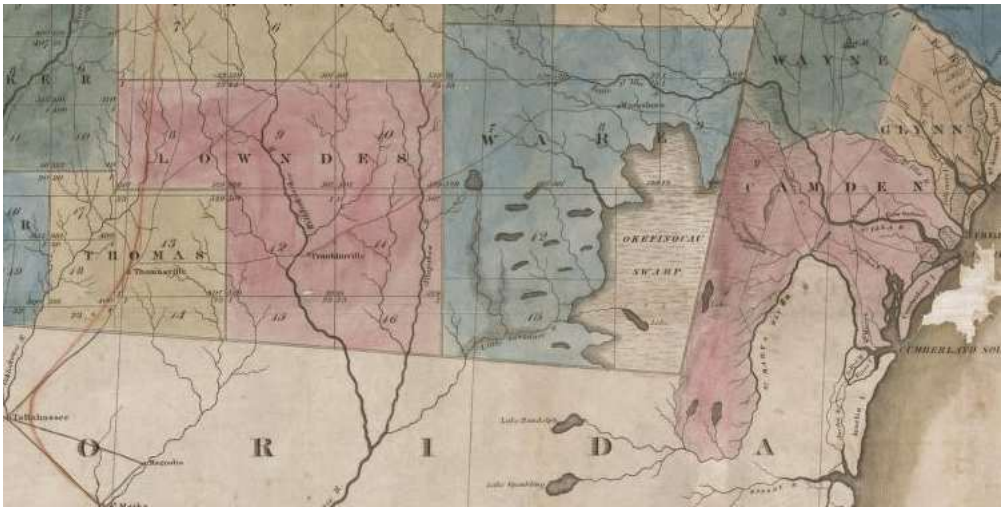

Illustration 9: 1830 map highlighting Thomas, Lowndes, and Ware Counties. [192]

George M. Troup took office in 1823, just two years before Thomas and Lowndes Counties were created.[193] After the Land Lottery in 1820, the newcomers filtered into the region and encountered Native Americans in the territory. These settlers began to organize in reaction to their presence. On August 5, 1836, approximately one hundred homesteaders in Lowndes County met and sent a petition to Governor William Schley, stating that Indians were passing through daily and pillaging homes, a practice that had been ongoing for the past month. The writer states that the Indians moved into the area from the Eighth District of Thomas County and traveled east through the Ninth and Tenth Districts of Lowndes County. The Indians are observed moving in the direction of the Okefenokee Swamp. Seventy Native people were reported killed or captured, including "one negro." Three hundred Native Americans, divided into small parties, were observed, and a larger group is anticipated. The writer is adamant that the group is not joining the Seminoles in Florida but continuing to stay in the southern region.[194]

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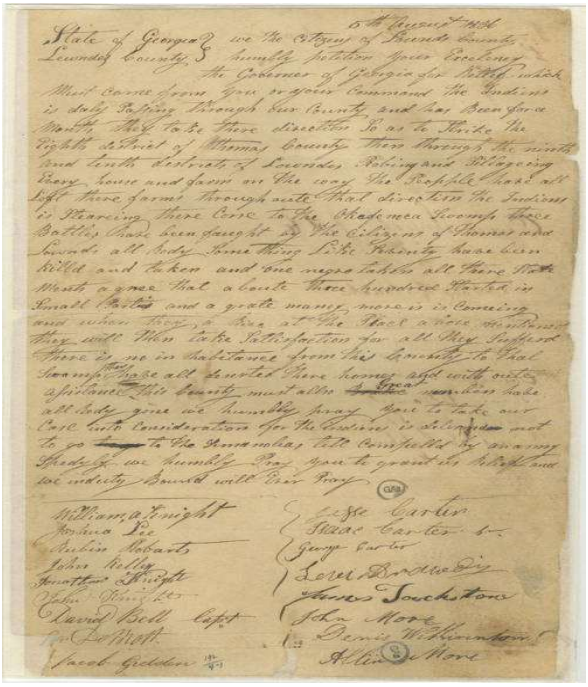
[192] Ibid.

[193] The county seat of Lowndes County was Troupville from 1837 until 1860, named after Governor George Michael Troup.

[194] Lowndes County Petition. "Petition from the residents of Lowndes County, August 5, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. The August 5, 1836, petition is mentioned in the D.A.R., General James Jackson Chapter, *History of Lowndes County, Georgia: 1825-1941* (Valdosta, Georgia: General James Jackson

Less than two years later, Stephen S. Whitfield and James A. Boyett wrote the governor on behalf of the residents of Lowndes County on April 9, 1838. They wanted to form a Company of Volunteers to patrol the frontier along the Georgia border and keep the enemy away. The settlers requested that the governor support their endeavors. The two stated that the Indians were "doing mischief evry [sic] ten or fifteen days on our neighering fronteers [sic]." A family is reported to have been murdered, and the Indians were constantly observed along the borders. Whitfield and Boyett do not specify which border, but the southern frontier along Florida is a reasonable assumption.[195]



Chapter NSDAR, 1995) along with a brief history beginning in 1821 when four settlers moved into the region that became Lowndes County. Five letters are also referred to (p. 8-14), with three being the same as referenced for this paper. The location of the letters is not given. The original publication of this book was in 1942. Two histories of Lowndes County, Georgia, have been written, not to mention a pictorial history by Louis Schmier. Jane Twitty Shelton wrote *Pines and Pioneers: A History of Lowndes County, Georgia, 1825-1900*, published in 2007, with all proceeds benefitting the Lowndes County Historical Society.

[195] Lowndes County. "Letter from the residents of Lowndes County, April 9, 1838." Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

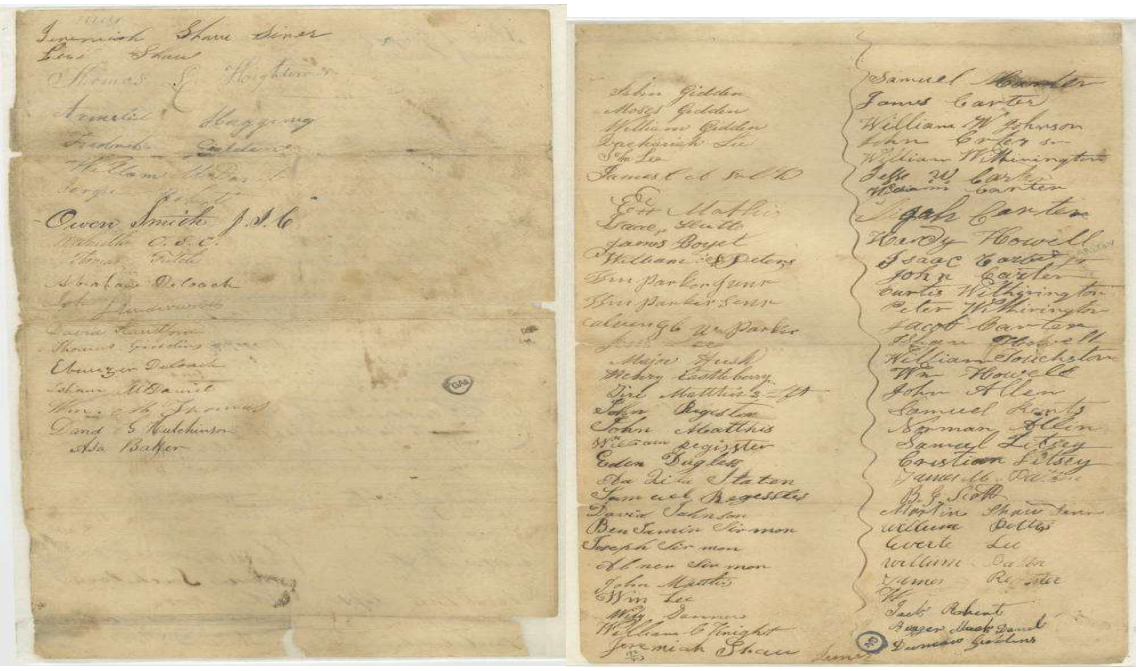


Illustration 10: Petition from the residents of Lowndes County signed on August 5, 1836. [196]

The Committee of Vigilance and Safety in Lowndes County was formed to oversee the Volunteer Militia on August 15, 1838.[197] Founding members listed in the letter include William Tomlinson, John Roberts, Sr., Benjamin Sirman, Barzilla Staten, and Ethelred D. Newbern. The purpose was to protect the citizens against the intrusion of Native Americans residing approximately twenty miles from their homesteads in and around the Okefenokee Swamp and from the threat of the Seminoles in Florida. Their paramount responsibilities included recruiting volunteers for the districts and overseeing the strategic alignment of troops along riverways and homesteads, as well as conducting regular inspections. The Committee also assumed the task of supplying the militia with necessary supplies, provisions, and other resources, drawing on contributions from residents while securing financial support and reimbursements from the

[196] Lowndes County Petition. "Petition from the residents of Lowndes County, August 5, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[197] The organization's title may have originated from the 1775 Council of Safety formed by Georgia's Provincial Congress. Alan Gallay, *The Formation of the Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Formation* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 153.

state.[198] Roberts and Staten were appointed as the point of contact for cashier services, and Sirman agreed to act as quartermaster, purchasing goods and handling distribution. The chairman, Tomlinson, would update the governor on all activities.[199]

Settlers in South Georgia wanted the Native Americans removed from their land. They distinguished themselves as separate and different from the Indigenous people, whom they viewed as interlopers and aggressively planned to discourage any presence on land known to belong to the state of Georgia. About a month later, on September 22, 1838, Tomlinson again wrote to the governor, stating he was willing to forego his position on the Committee of Vigilance and Safety for Lowndes County and join his Company in the militia to protect the county against the five hundred Indian warriors residing in the Okefenokee Swamp.[200] Tomlinson and other settlers were coming together as a community for a collective purpose. Later that year, on October 15, 1838, Tomlinson updated the governor on the news that Companies were going to the Okefenokee Swamp every fifteen days to stay for eight days, patrolling the area for Indians. Tomlinson reported that the Indians had moved out of the west side of the Okefenokee Swamp and relocated to the east side. He stated that the local militia may no longer be required for their protection, as General Floyd's regiment will soon be organized in the area.[201]

Jesse Pleasant Prescott, Sr., was an early settler in the region before the fighting between the early homesteaders and Native Americans intensified. Prescott moved to Lowndes County in

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[198] William Tomlinson, Harris Tomlinson, and Robert T. Roberts. "Letter from William Tomlinson, Harris Tomlinson, and John T. Roberts, April 17, 1839," File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. $3336.72 was received from the State of Georgia to pay for Georgia Militia expenses.
[199] William Tomlinson, "Letter from William Tomlinson, August 15, 1838." *Letters and Reports and Roster-Rolls Relating to the Indian Troubles in Wiregrass Georgia Between 1826-1840,* 2000.
[200] William Tomlinson, "Letter from William Tomlinson, September 22, 1838." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[201] William Tomlinson, "Letter from William Tomlinson, October 15, 1838." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

1825 as a young boy. In an interview recorded much later in his life, Prescott recalled that his family lived near the Alapahoochee River, a tributary of the Alapaha River, about five miles east of Lake Park, Georgia. He remembered that his family moved to the area before any schools or churches were built. He also recalled the sounds of wolves, bears, and panthers. Prescott said that a town called Old Mico Ferry in Hamilton County, Florida, was twelve miles from his home. Approximately three hundred and twenty-five Indians, family groups, resided there. He remembered parties of about seven to ten men hunting for venison, turkey, duck, and wild honey and cleaning the game near his family's homestead. Prescott visited Old Mico Ferry and remembered the homes, ponies, and farmland where potatoes, Indian corn, and goobers were grown.[202]

Prescott stated that in the early days, there was no violence, but that changed in 1835. He remembered Native Americans entering George Overstreet's home while Overstreet was away and murdering several people. The house was also plundered. Prescott reported that after that incident, panic ensued. People began to organize, and by 1836, several militia companies were formed from Irwin, Lowndes, and Thomas counties. He recalled that three battles occurred between the militia and Native Americans. The first was the Battle of Brushy Creek. Prescott said the battle did not result in many deaths on either side. Approximately 350 Native Americans and 300 militia members were involved in the struggle. The next battle occurred at Cow Creek in

[202] Goobers are most likely peanuts. Newspapers.com. "Old Indian War: Some Early History About the Red Skins." *Valdosta Times* March 7, 1896. https://www.newspapers.com/image/889835512/ (accessed December 3, 2024). The town, Micco, is believed to have been located "in the forks of the Alapaha River." Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field during the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838*. Edited by James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017), 263. The town Prescott mentions may have been Miccosukee on Lake Miccosukee, located south of the Georgia border. Deborah A. Rosen, *Border Law: The First Seminole War and American Nationhood* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015): 103.

what was then Ware County. This encounter is the same one mentioned in the letter from Colonel Henry Blair of the 81st Regiment, Georgia Militia, on August 30, 1836.[203]

Captain Levi J. Knight commanded the company with William Peters and Barzilla Staten. Peters and Staten died from injuries sustained during the fighting. Prescott did not know how many Indians died. The third battle was about one mile south of Statenville and was led by Captain S.E. Swilley. Indians had taken two horses from Jessie Carter, and the confrontation took place on the west side of the Alapaha River. Ten Indians were killed, and seven women and children were taken prisoner. At least one Indian and two African Americans fled to the south and east toward the Okefenokee Swamp.[204]

In *Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South,* environmental historian Jack Temple Kirby notes that Georgians were the most aggressive of Anglo Southerners as they acquired and settled land and worked to eliminate Native Americans. Kirby states that "by the time President Andrew Jackson and his successor effectively engineered this final solution, yeoman democracy was lost, and Georgia's vast lower piedmont was transformed into an empire of cotton dominated by planters, many of whom commanded scores, sometimes hundreds, of slaves, who toiled on estates of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of acres."[205] Kirby's statement can also be applied to the Wiregrass Region. White Southerners identified with one another and

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[203] Henry Blair. "Letter from Henry Blair, August 30, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[204] Newspapers.com. "Old Indian War: Some Early History About the Red Skins." *Valdosta Times* March 7, 1896. https://www.newspapers.com/image/889835512/ (accessed December 3, 2024). According to John R. Swanton, the word "Alapaha" comes with the Timucua language. *Ala*, or originating *ara*, means bear. *Paha* translates to house. Alapaha could imply a river or town, or both. When A.B. Shehee surveyed District 16 in November of 1819, from what was previously Irwin County, he noted a Native American village, or talwa, referred to as Alapahaw. Shehee wrote that several Indian trails existed in the district and, after following one trail, located a Native American community of seventy to eighty homes along the west side of the Alapaha River. Francis Lee Utley and Marion R. Hemperley, ed., *Placenames of Georgia: Essays of John H. Goff* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 240.

[205] Jack Temple Kirby, *Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 75-76.

supported each other and their efforts to conquer the Native South. Kirby describes how the region developed a warrior or martial ethos, and the coalescence and solidification of the regional white identity supported those values.[206]

The presence of Native Americans moving through and camping near the southern counties of Georgia served as a motivator for organizing and patrolling the militia that defended their land. The Native people traversing the counties were believed to be Creek, while those living near and south of the Georgia and Florida border were considered Seminole. By the late seventeenth century, the Seminole people had formed as a separate group as the Indian removal policy and settler expansion pressured Native societies to exit. Nooe and others write that the Seminole people originated from the Muskogee and other Indian cultures in Georgia and neighboring states, who did not want to be forced into Indian Territory. These defiant and resilient people eventually reorganized in Florida. Like southern Georgia, Florida was sparsely populated. Before the 1821 annexation of Spanish Florida, St. Augustine and its surrounding area extending to the St. John's River, and Pensacola to the west were the only secured territories. Florida was Seminole Territory and a place for freedom seekers, including enslaved people.[207]

The land was wild and unsettled, perfect for those who did not want to bend to the Georgia settlers or the U.S. presence and authority. This fact made the southern boundary and the area along and within the Okefenokee Swamp a feared environment that settlers and their militia worked to overtake and control. Nooe states, "The coalescence of Indigenous peoples in the American South elicited reciprocal responses among white southerners from disparate ethnic backgrounds, classes, colonies, and later, states. While the white South never culminated in a

[206] Ibid., 13.
[207] F. Evan Nooe, "'Zealous in the Cause': Indian Violence, the Second Seminole War, and the Formation of a Southern Identity." *Native South,* 4 (2011), 60.

coalescent society as a single integrated polity, the processes of Indigenous coalescence forged and sustained bonds between white settlers and their descendants in the U.S. South" and "gave rise to a self-conscious place-based and racially restrictive identity for the region's white inhabitants."[208] These disparate societies found commonalities with one another and aligned themselves against Native Americans, deemed "other," hostile, savage, and an enemy of the state.

American domination of the environment was paramount, and the land in the Southern regions of Georgia offered lucrative economic investment opportunities for those who controlled it. These profitable prospects and wealth were the final and possibly one of the most crucial elements in forming a regional white identity within this Southeast region. Robbie Ethridge writes that European traders introduced capitalism to the Old Southwest in the seventeenth century during the Atlantic slave trade.[209] While this paradigm existed for several decades, the post-American Revolution era ushered in a new level of capitalism, excluding Native people. This shift from Native South power and a form of coexistence slid into a progressive dismantling of societal and political structures, creating a channel for U.S. domination of the environment and witnessing a new entrepreneurial prospect for settlers, both wealthy and yeoman farmers.

One influential crop that settlers worked to ensure their economic success was rice. The cultivation of rice dominated the Carolina Lowcountry, and with enslaved laborers knowledgeable of the practice, it drew enormous returns for the planter elites. Profits for growing rice dramatically increased for South Carolinians in 1731 when Great Britain changed their transportation laws, eliminating additional port requirements and permitting the colony to sell

[208] Ibid., 10.
[209] Thomas J. Pluckhalm and Robbie Ethridge, eds., *Light on the Path: The Anthropology and History of the Southeastern Indians* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 216.

directly to other countries. The result was an increase in land used for rice farming.[210] Carolinians took full advantage of the fertile land available for settlers after the removal of the Yamasees.

The expansion into new coastal regions for rice, most notably Georgia, was an extension of the United States and capitalism. The planter elites moved into Native lands, seeking fresh chances for wealth. However, the southern Coastal Plain, specifically the Wiregrass Region, offered a canvas for new possibilities. In his article "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," David Andrew Nichols describes the 1820s through the early to mid-1830s as a period of economic prosperity, driven by favorable cotton prices. Nichols explains that the increased wealth enjoyed by a few, including their attachment to partisan politics supporting state leadership and justified entitlements, helped embolden a "romantic" notion of states' rights.[211] The resource-rich southeast motivated the region's incorporation into a new plane of a capitalist society. Georgia's elite decried federal intervention as anti-republicanism. Nichols defines republicanism as the "fear of concentrated political, social, and economic power."[212] This crusade also coincided with the climax of the Indian removal policies.

By 1812, cotton was the largest U.S. export.[213] As land became available, production increased, and by 1820, cotton prices dramatically improved, leading to an influx of settlers into the southern regions of the Native South. Accompanying these increased numbers, plantation owners brought in approximately 65,000 enslaved Africans and African Americans to work the

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[210] Alan Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athen, Georgia: University of Georgia, 2007), 16.
[211] David Andrew Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85, 2 (Summer 2001), 202.
[212] Ibid.
[213] John Thaddeus Ellisor, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2010), 12.

fields and maximize profits.[214] Joshua D. Rothman, in *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson,* states that by 1831, the U.S. produced almost half of the world's cotton supply. Much of the U.S. grown cotton was shipped to markets overseas, accounting for nearly $25 million for the planter elite and over half of U.S. exports. The Great Experiment had become necessary, even essential, to the Old World of Europe. Georgia, along with Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, enjoyed fortune, albeit at the sacrifice of thousands of humans kept in bondage.[215]

In "Does Region Matter in Environmental History? A Conversation between Environmental Historians of the South and the West," Caroline Peyton lists cotton as fundamental to the South's environmental past. The combination of fertile soil, an ideal climate, and enslaved labor made the region a crucial component of the national market and a significant player in the international market, competing with European textile mills. Peyton adds that "regions are not isolated entities" but a part of a larger economy.[216] These massive environmental conditions and motivators enabled settlers to meld and find commonality. Once settlers could cooperate for a common cause, the avenues for means and stability were more easily set.

The Panic of 1837, however, was a significant event in the economy experienced by most of the country. The more extensive land and cotton economy in the United States suffered a drastic financial downturn. This sweeping fiscal slump was felt in major cities in the young U.S., particularly New Orleans, and across the Atlantic in Great Britain. Jessica M. Lepler states that

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[214] David Andrew Nichols, "Land, Republicanism, and Indians: Power and Policy in Early National Georgia, 1780-1825," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 85, 2 (Summer 2001), 202.
[215] Joshua D. Rothman*, Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 3-4.
[216] Amahia Mallea, et al. "Does Region Matter in Environmental History? A Conversation between Environmental Historians of the South and the West." *Journal of Arizona History*, 64, 3 (Autumn 2023), 411 & 380.

the U.S. was a "nation of farmers" in the early decades, while Europeans held the monetary clout bankrolling these endeavors. When cotton prices plummeted dramatically in 1836 and 1837, lending institutions reverberated with shock. President Jackson's decentralization of U.S. banks, which favored direct distribution to state "pet" banks, contributed to the destabilization of regulation and the uneasiness of lenders. Even so, Georgia's southern regions were on the periphery of the U.S. economy.[217]

The experiences of settlers, such as Jonathan Bryan and the Committee of Vigilance and Safety in Lowndes County, in coordinating their efforts to expel Native Americans from the southern environs of Georgia helped solidify a distinct, regional white identity. These efforts also spurred the foundations of fierce independence from federal intervention and animosity toward those considered outsiders or interlopers. While the land parcels allocated in these regions were smaller and targeted for yeoman homesteads, rather than the larger parcels in the state's middle and northern territories, an effort considered more equitable by state leaders, the results revealed a significantly higher number of settlers present, which achieved the desired outcome of Native American eradication. The motivations of the pristine environment and fertile farmland encouraged action by the settlers, which proved unstoppable. To secure the homesteads, settlers, often militia members, performed in unison. The final carrot was the unofficial contract of prosperity and a secure financial endeavor, contingent upon the successful elimination of anyone considered foreign from the Wiregrass Region.

[217] Jessica M. Lepler. *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 9 & 14-16.

Chapter 4

"Swamps are places on the margins – as much, they are places of transition, opportunity, and challenge."[218]

Native Self-Determination and Assertion of Autonomy: Reimagined Pathways

Jonathan Smith (1793-1861), on December 26, 1835, wrote to Governor Schley from Irwin County. Smith stated that the residents were experiencing "more Indian cruelty" and "Humanity now call [sic] for protection." He reported that Indians burned Recey Muselwhite's house. Thomas Muselwhite, who lived nearby, was shot with "three balls into him and (Indians) cut his throat." Smith and other volunteer militia attempted to follow the offending group but soon lost the trail due to rain. This occurred in Dooley County, north of Irwin County. Smith also reported that a large party of Indians was living in Houston County, also north of Irwin County. Smith and others discovered their location, but as they tried to approach the encampment, the Native Americans "cursed us in plain English and swore they would kill us." Smith noted that, given they were severely outnumbered, they wisely decided to retreat until reinforcements could be gathered. Smith appealed to Schley for help and described the governor as their "guardian and friend of the community and will expect you to do something very soon."[219]

[218] Megan Kate Nelson, "The Landscape of Disease: Swamps and Medical Discourse in the American Southeast, 1800-1880." Mississippi Quarterly 55, 1 (Fall 2002): 567.
[219] Jonathan Smith, "Letter from Jonathan Smith, December 26, 1835." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

A few months later, on May 27, 1836, Captain Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn (1791-1848) wrote Schley from the Tired Creek Post Office in Thomas County.[220] He reported that adequate numbers of volunteers had been recruited in response to the "Law authorizing the Creation of the Guards." The "Fifty Efective [sic] Men" were ready to defend their county in the case of any hostilities, which were occurring "above and below our county." They were awaiting supplies, specifically arms, from the governor.[221] Hawthorn, born in North Carolina and settling in Bainbridge in Decatur County, west of Thomas County, was elected to lead the volunteer militia. Accounts of Indians traveling through the adjacent counties caused Hawthorn to decide to concentrate his forces in Bainbridge. In an August 22, 1836, letter, he described sending a small company scouting north along the Flint River's eastern side to ten miles north of the town of Newton, in Baker County. The group did not encounter Native people, but shortly after returning to Decatur County, officials in Baker County reported murders. As soon as the news was received, Hawthorn dispatched militia back to the area and met with Colonel Thomas Beall, also of the Georgia militia.[222]

[220] Tired Creek Post Office in Thomas County opened on July 19, 1833, and closed 1837. The post office was located along Tired Creek west of Thomasville, and the site is now in Grady County. Grady County was created in 1906 from portions of Decatur and Thomas Counties. William Warren Rogers, *Ante-Bellum Thomas County 1825-1861* (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, 1963), 46.
[221] Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, "Letter from Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, May 27, 1836." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[222] Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, "Letter from Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, August 22, 1836." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

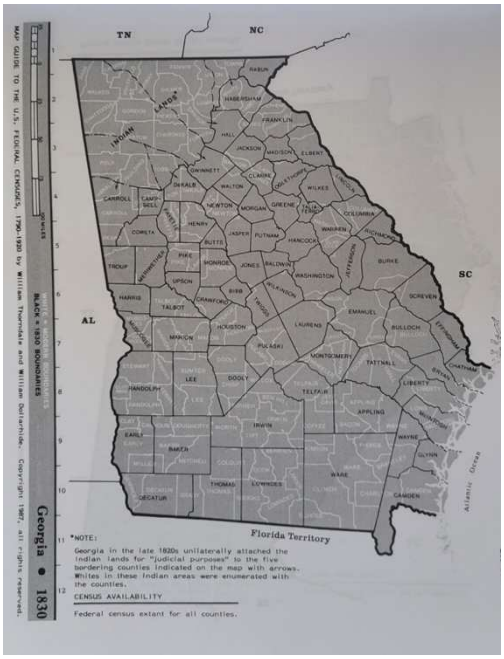

Illustration 11: 1830 Georgia map outlining counties, including Decatur, Baker, Thomas, Lowndes, and Ware Counties. [223]

The murders occurred in Baker County, in the area known as the Chickasawachee Swamp, the second largest wetland in Georgia. The 335-square-mile swamp, located in the Flint River watershed in South Georgia's Wiregrass Region, was the site of a significant battle between Native Americans and Georgia militia. Over three hundred Native Americans used the boggy and heavily vegetated terrain as a defensive stronghold during a July 3, 1836, battle. An unknown number of Natives died, and one Georgia militiaman was mortally wounded. Militiamen from several counties were involved in the fighting.[224]

[223] William Thorndale and William Dollarhide, *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920*. (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 1987) 83.
[224] Ibid.; Georgia Historical Society. https://www.georgiahistory.com/ghmi_marker_updated/battle-of-chickasawachee-swamp/ (Accessed May 13, 2025). The Chickasawachee Swamp is also known as the Swamp of Toa. The application for this marker was made before 1958, when the state of Georgia administered the historical marker program. Beginning in 1998, the Georgia Historical Society assumed the program and maintenance of existing markers, and they do not have the original application. Hence, the research for this marker cannot be verified.

The environment of the southern region of Georgia that Hawthorn and others encountered encompassed pine woods, swamps, heavily vegetated wetlands, hammocks, and numerous waterways. The militia and Native people each responded to these environments while opposing one another. Settlers and militia worked together, using the terrain to flush the enemy out of hiding. Native Americans responded by utilizing the complex environment for protection and survival.

The habitation and movement of Native peoples across this environment – the Wiregrass Region - could be portrayed as refugees fleeing insurmountable circumstances. They could also be described as individuals skillfully navigating the land while trying to avoid hostile encounters with settlers and militias who opposed their presence. These Native Americans demonstrated resilience and defiance, ensuring survival in the southeastern regions of Georgia during the early 1800s by expertly utilizing the diverse waterways and familiar landscapes, including an understanding of the places they traversed, the names of those places, and the language used to describe areas. The Native Southerners applied cultural adaptability and leveraged their environmental knowledge to their advantage. Because of their use of the terrain, settlers reacted by aligning their efforts to counter their presence. This chapter details how settlers and militias interpreted Native American migration through the Wiregrass Region, describing how the landscape was used for survival, established pathways for self-determination, and created corridors for freedom and safe havens during the peak of the U.S. federal Indian Removal Policy of the 1830s, which coincided with the expansion of Georgia and the United States. In contrast, the militia and settlers united their efforts to expel them.

After the Treaty of Fort Jackson was signed on August 9, 1814, Georgia's landscape south of the Oconee River underwent a significant transformation as settlers and planter elites

from the state's northern regions and neighboring states began to recognize the economic potential of the Wiregrass Region. While the state's land distribution methods were significantly modified to allow for a more equitable allocation of smaller homesteads, the result sanctioned larger numbers of settlers who worked together to oust Indigenous groups from their Native lands. These factions moved aggressively into the area, organizing volunteer militias to eliminate all Native American presence. Men, women, and children - families, most likely Muskogee but probably not exclusively - reacted with determination by utilizing these varied waterways to their advantage, thereby ensuring their survival.

Settlers and militia documented Native Americans traversing the southern region of Georgia, skillfully utilizing the landscape to evade attacks while traveling to safer areas, such as the Okefenokee Swamp and Florida. Although the letters detailed in this research cover the years 1825 to 1850, most describe the movement of Native people within the Wiregrass Region from 1836 to the end of 1838. Native people, often referred to as Creek, were observed moving from the west and northwest to the east and southeast across Georgia, particularly in Thomas and Lowndes counties. When a destination was mentioned in the letters written by the militia, Florida and the Okefenokee Swamp were the most common. The Seminole people were frequently reported to position themselves along the Georgia-Florida border, both to the west of and within the Okefenokee Swamp.

Table 1: Origin of Letter[225]

	1825	1828	1829	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839	1850
Camp Boyle at Warner's Ferry (Irwin County)						1			
Camp Wildes near Kettle Creek							2		
Decatur County						1	1		
Duncanville (Thomas County)					2				
Fort Mitchell, Alabama					1				
Hawkinsville					2				
Irwin County				1					

[225] All locations are in Georgia unless otherwise noted.

Jacksonville, Florida		1		2						
Lowndes County					7		6		3	
Milledgeville									1	
Okefenokee Swamp District							1		1	
Pindertown					1					
Randall's Plantation (Wacissa, Florida)							1			
Sharpes' Store (Lowndes County)					1					
Telfair County					2		1			
Thomas County	1									
Thomasville					6		1			
Tired Creek Post Office (Thomas County)					3					
Trader's Hill (Fort Alert/Charlton County)[226]					4		1			
Troupville							1			1
Waresboro					3		3			

Table 2: Direction of Native American Migratory Path

	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839
West to East		15	3		
Northwest to Southeast		1	1	1	
Northwest to East		1			
North to South		1		2	
South to North		1			
Reported in the Okefenokee Swamp, Only				5	
Only states "Passing Through"		2			

Note: Sixty-three correspondences were examined. Some letters did not offer directions or destinations but gave other information to the Georgia governors.

Table 3: Destination, if noted in the Letter

	1835	1838
Florida	10	2
Okefenokee Swamp	5	6

Note: Sixty-three correspondences were examined. Some letters did not offer directions or destinations but gave other information to the Georgia governors.

By 1838, the Okefenokee Swamp had become the primary destination for many Native Americans traveling from the west and northwest, rather than fleeing to Florida. This may have been due to the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) in Florida. Two letters explained that Native people were migrating north from Florida in 1838, including one from Thomas Hilliard (1805-

[226] Traders Hill was established as a settler community in 1811 in what is today, Charlton County. In 1811, the area was renamed Fort Alert and in 1838, Fort Henderson. Traders Hill is the most common usage.

1866), a member of the 2nd Brigade, 6th Division of the Georgia Militia. Hilliard was well acquainted with Waresboro and the surrounding terrain in Ware County. Most militia accounts noted that Native people stayed within the perimeters of the Okefenokee Swamp. This situation may have been influenced by the Second Seminole War or the increased military presence around the wetlands. The terrain helped to disguise trails and tracks, heavy vegetation camouflaged camps, and the landscape provided food for those eluding the militia.

One example was a letter written during the summer of 1836. On July 28, 1836, Hilliard reported that several groups of Creeks within this county (Ware County) were making their way to the Okefenokee Swamp. He observed "strolling parties of the Creek tribe of Indians..." Hilliard requested that his men join forces with the Appling County militia to aid in repelling the Natives.[227] Hilliard was born in Georgia and, by the mid-1830s, was residing in Ware County.[228] On that same day, Mark Willcox wrote to the governor from Telfair County that he was ten or twelve days "at the headwaters of the Suwannee near the liens [sic] of the counties of Irwin, Lowndes, and Thomas." Willcox stated he saw large numbers of trails, all leading to Florida near the Suwannoochee.[229]

On August 19, 1836, James Gay wrote Governor Schley from Pindertown that a camp of Indians was discovered by "Messrs. P.R. Oliver and John Gay" on a Wednesday evening near the Flint River, not far from John Gay's plantation.[230] The following day, neighbors were

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[227] Thomas Hilliard, "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, July 28, 1836," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[228] Ancestry.com "1850 U.S. Federal Census." (accessed February 11, 1025) and https://okefenokeeheritagecenter.org/hilliard-house/ (accessed February 11, 2025). Thomas Hilliard's plantation plain style house was built in Waresboro, Georgia, in the mid-1830s and later moved to the Okefenokee Heritage Center.
[229] Mark Willcox, "Letter from Mark Willcox, July 28, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[230] Pindertown was located near the Flint River within the modern Worth County, Georgia. Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field during the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838*. Edited by James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017) 33.

notified, and thirty men assembled. James Gay and Spencer Riley organized two detachments and led the group to the encampment, where the settlers began surrounding the site. The Indians soon discovered the impinging men, and the gathering fled south toward the direction of Florida. Gay and the men attempted to track the group, but he later wrote that "the trails were very dim, and artfully scattered for the purpose of deceiving their pursuers…"[231] After about twelve miles of the militia riding through the Wiregrass Region on their horses, they spotted the fleeing Indians in Irwin County in a "pine woods country" surrounded by ponds. The two commanders ordered their men to charge, and a gun battle ensued. After about twenty minutes, the shooting ended, and the men discovered eleven men and seven women dead. Gay noted that "the women so resembled the men in their dress that we could not discriminate between them in the engagement." The women may have been fighting alongside the men against the settlers. The detachment took five prisoners: three women and two children. Gay reported that many of the women were severely injured during the fighting and had very little with them except guns and ammunition.[232] Gay stated they were "at a loss to know what to do with them. We wish your excellency would inform us what disposition to make of them. Respectfully, your obedient servants."[233]

On August 26, 1836, Thomas Hilliard wrote the governor from Waresboro, a community northwest of the Okefenokee Swamp. Hilliard reported parties of Indians within Ware County, with more moving into the region. A group was observed moving down the Satilla River in the direction of the Okefenokee Swamp (west to east).[234] Hilliard described the Natives crossing the

[231] James Gay, "Letter from James Gay, August 19, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[232] Alejandra Dubcovsky discusses the cultural roles and centrality of Native women to their communities in *Talking Back: Native Women and the Making of the Early South* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2023).
[233] James Gay, "Letter from James Gay, August 19, 1836." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[234] Ware County was created in 1824.

river (location unspecified), so it is assumed that the group was traveling on foot rather than by boat. Women and children were reportedly part of the traveling parties. Hilliard noted that the trails discovered by local militia and settlers all led in the direction of the swamp, not toward Florida. Hilliard expressed concern that the groups may be "taking up residence here…The nature of the country is such around the swamp that should they stop there, it (would) be troublesome to remove them should they be let gather there."[235]

On October 5, 1836, Hilliard reported the murder of Thomas Fullwood (1793-1836) by a party of Indians the previous month in Ware County. The incident occurred on the Suwannee River near the mouth of the Suwannoochee, which was approximately sixty miles from Waresboro.[236] Hilliard met with militias from Appling and Wayne Counties at the site along the river where the murder happened to find "considerable Indians signs." Even so, they were unable to find traces of any trails. While camping that night, Hilliard received word from a Ware County company and Florida militia that fighting between their men and Natives occurred a few days previous, resulting in "fifteen or twenty Indians killed, and a number wounded." Captain North informed Hilliard that after these "engagements," the group was trailed along the south side of the Suwannee River toward the Okefenokee Swamp. North "believed that the Indians had gone into some of the islands and encamped." Several companies found the terrain impassable on horseback. The group dismounted and trudged "through the dismal and almost impassable [sic] bogs of the Okefenokee for about four miles." They encountered a "very large encampment situated on a large island, which had been abandoned only a few days (before)."[237]

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[235] Thomas Hilliard, "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, August 26, 1836," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[236] The Suwannoochee Creek, a tributary of the Suwannee River, is located west of the Okefenokee Swamp and north of the Georgia-Florida border.
[237] Thomas Hilliard, "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, October 5, 1836," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Another letter by

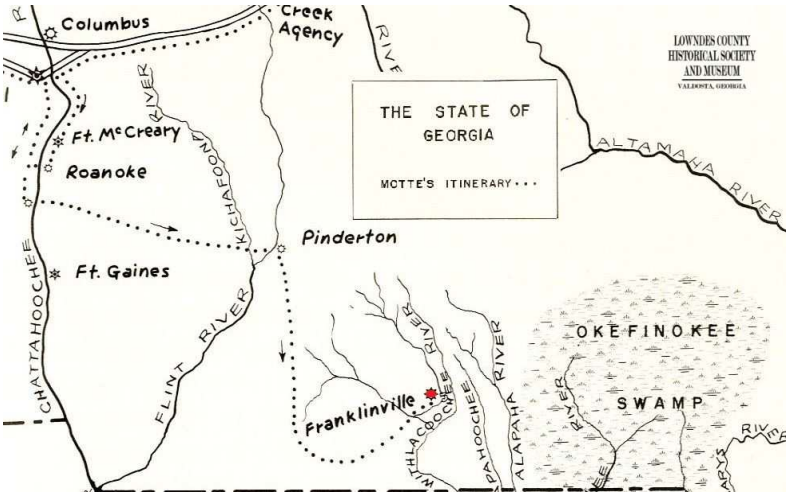

Illustration 12: This map features Pinderton (also known as Pindertown) and the nearby Flint River. [238]

West of Hilliard's encounters in Ware County, Hawthorn remained in Thomas County. On September 15, 1836, Hawthorn again posted a letter to Governor Schley from the Tired Creek Post Office. He requested supplies to address the ongoing threat in the area and acknowledged that aid in the form of guns and swords had yet to be received from the state, even after continued requests. Hawthorn does not report Indians in his county, Decatur, but emphasized that he continues to receive reports that Thomas and Lowndes Counties "are still in a state of alarm" and have Indians passing through continually on well established paths. Hawthorn reported that while the county is densely populated, the west and east sides of the Flint River are "poor pine woods" and the south and southeast portions of Decatur County are "adjoining the pine wood of Thomas County 2 1/2 miles of this post office," near his home. Hawthorn wrote that the residents are so distressed by the proximity of the Natives that they are constructing a fort six miles west of the Tired Creek Post Office for their protection.[239]

[238] James F. Sunderman, ed., *Jacob Rhett Motte's Journey into the Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field During the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2017). Photo from Lowndes County Historical Society.
[239] Tired Creek Post Office is approximately midway between Bainbridge and Thomasville. Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, "Letter from Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, September 15, 1836." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Another letter written by Hawthorn detailed an inventory and militia expenses submitted to Governor Schley.

The 1830s were a volatile time for the Coastal Plain region, but the summer and autumn of 1838 were an exceptionally turbulent period for homesteaders and Native Americans on the southern frontier, particularly in the areas surrounding the Okefenokee Swamp. Many of the Native people may have been fleeing the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), but most letters detailed in this study to the Georgia governors reported Indians traveling from west to east, with the Okefenokee Swamp often being their destination. The Okefenokee Swamp was a place of safety. Native Americans skillfully sought refuge in this dense, swampy terrain and supplemented their supplies by taking goods from farmhouses. These sanctuaries were largely unoccupied by settlers and were primarily unregulated territory.

Swamps are defined as "a tract of low-lying ground in which water collects; a piece of waterlogged ground; a marsh, a bog, a tract of rich soil with a growth of vegetation but too moist for cultivation" – a sponge.[240] In the early 1800s, swamps were not seen as desirable for homesteaders. In 1805, the Okefenokee Swamp was surveyed using the same protocol as other districts, and lots were put up for sale in the Land Lottery. Sales were unsuccessful since the land was deemed worthless. This vast expanse was largely ignored by settlers. Those wanting to evade discovery could find refuge within the elusive environs.

Nevertheless, violent encounters happened when the two groups crossed paths in these unoccupied lands. On June 4, 1838, Thomas Hilliard wrote the governor from Ware County that a "considerable number of Indians have left Florida" and are in Ware County. He said that they have taken up "residence in the Okefenokee Swamp. These groups may have been moving away

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Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, "Letter from Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, January 3, 1837." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. The final record noted is Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, "Letter from Jonathan Cleburn Hawthorn, October 10, 1838." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

[240] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Fifth edition, Volume 2, N-Z, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

from the fighting in Florida and looking for terrain suitable for hiding. Even so, the increased militia in the southern regions of Georgia allowed for more violence. Hilliard reported that two battles had ensued; two whites died of their wounds, and he did not know if any Natives had died. Hilliard believed that the Indians had "reached those deep and dense Swamps…and from my knowledge of those Swamps it will be almost impossible for them to be removed." He is coordinating with the militia in Lowndes County to recruit more men to help guard the southern regions of Ware County. [241] Hilliard sounded more desperate the next month when he wrote the governor on July 3, 1838, from Waresboro. He explained that the Natives remained in Ware County. He is unable to obtain supplies but hopes Governor Gilmer has sent needed items to Camp Pinkney along the St. Mary's River. He wrote that the Indians burnt one house and a farm, killing a stock.[242]

The fighting continued, and on July 25, 1838, Hilliard reported that a large group of Native people murdered a settler family. Maxey Niles and his family resided seven miles from Waresboro. Maxey, his wife, and six of their children, along with a neighbor child, died when approximately fifty Indians attacked. Four children escaped to report "the sad news." Captain Dade, of the U.S. Dragoons, and about forty men were about three miles away. They trailed the Indians to the Okefenokee Swamp but stopped before entering the dense terrain. Hilliard described the "situation of this county is truly distressing all the teretory [sic] south and southwest of Blackshear's road" as being overtaken by Natives. He stated that every section of Ware County that connects to the swamp is under attack and vulnerable. Hilliard pleaded again for supplies.[243]

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[241] Thomas Hilliard, "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, June 4, 1838." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[242] Thomas Hilliard, "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, July 3, 1838." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Camp Pinkney was about two miles from Folkston and served as a ferry crossing.
[243] Thomas Hilliard, "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, July 25, 1838." File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

Dearborn noted that Native Americans were concentrated during the late summer months of that year. On the same day Hilliard wrote to the governor, Dearborn was at Randall's Plantation in Wacissa, Florida, where he updated Governor Gilmer about the militia postings around the "Oke-fen-oke" and noted that he met with the commanding officer in Florida, Brigadier General Taylor. The men discussed stationing posts around the perimeter of the Okefenokee Swamp and conducting ongoing patrols around the swamp, which reassured residents of the militia's intentions to maintain security. Dearborn mentioned that settler families were beginning to return to their homesteads since the men were in the region.[244]

In several letters written in August 1838 from Trader's Hill, Dearborn described sporadic fighting between the militia and Native Americans. Dearborn wrote two letters on August 16, 1838. In the first, Dearborn reported Indians in the Okefenokee Swamp and settlers fleeing from their homes. In the second letter, Dearborn explained that Mr. Wilds and his family were murdered, and families who live near the Okefenokee Swamp have fled the area. Dearborn begged for additional troops to defend "this section of Country." On August 25, 1838, Dearborn wrote that a wagon train about twenty-six miles from Trader's Hill was attacked, as well as problems with the Natives bombarding trains. Trader's Hill, established as Fort Alert, was situated east of the Okefenokee Swamp, near today's Folkston, Georgia.[245] Another letter from

[244] G. Dearborn, "Letter from G. Dearborn, July 25, 1838," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. The Randall family moved to Jefferson County, Florida in 1827 when the county was formed. That area of Florida was known as "middle Florida." Larry River, "Dignity and Importance:" Slavery in Jefferson County, Florida – 1827-1860." *Florida Historical Society*, 61, 4 (April 1983), 404.

[245] G. Dearborn, "Letter from G. Dearborn, August 16, 1838," "Letter from G. Dearborn, August 16, 1838," (This second letter was written the same day as the previously noted.), "Letter from G. Dearborn, August 25, 1838," and "Letter from G. Dearborn, August 27, 1838," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Trader's Hill, or Fort Alert, was near the St. Mary's River not far from today's Folkston, Georgia.

Dearborn depicted the area as "an extensive swamp, marsh, and small ponds, almost entirely unknown to anyone except the Indians."[246]

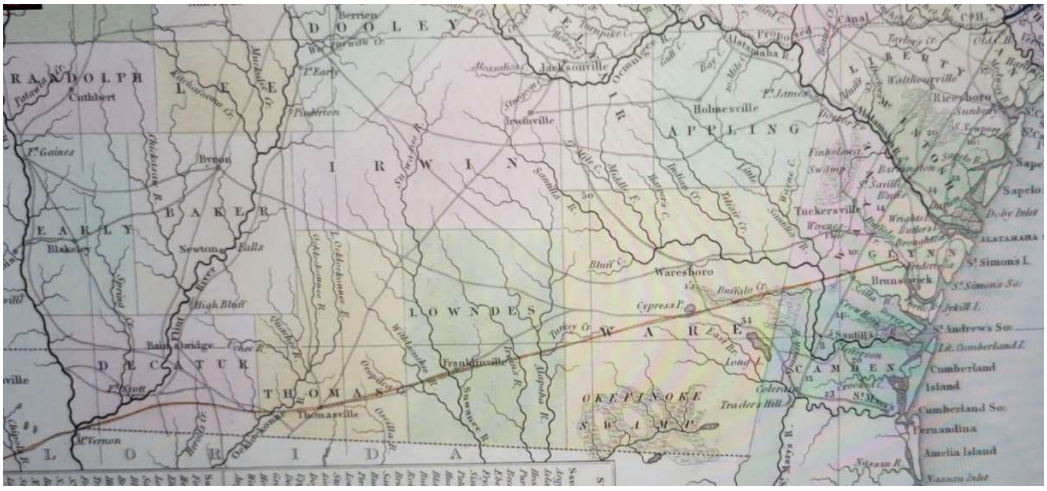

Illustration 13: 1830 Map of south Georgia [247]

This 1839 map of south Georgia shows the location of the Okefenokee Swamp in Ware County along the Florida border, east of Lowndes County. The swampy terrain remained elusive for many decades, even after Georgia's southern border was expanded. This vast area provided refuge for those fleeing colonizers, as its geography was largely uncharted. Adding to the intrigue, many believed these swamps and lowlands harbored disease. The nonhuman inhabitants of the swampy waterways also sparked fear, causing many to hesitate.[248] Native Americans capitalized on this perceived fear to resist colonization, and the militia documented Indigenous groups traversing these waterways and utilizing the terrain to their advantage, establishing pathways for self-determination.[249]

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[246] G. Dearborn, "Letter from G. Dearborn, September 13, 1838." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[247] "A New Map of Georgia with its Roads & Distances, 1839." Historic Maps, Surveyor General, RG 3-8-65, Georgia Archives (/digital/collection/hmf/search/searchterm/Historic Maps%2C Surveyor General%2C RG 3-8-65%2C Georgia Archives/field/source/mode/exact/conn/and).
[248] Megan Kate Nelson, "The Landscape of Disease: Swamps and Medical Discourse in the American Southeast, 1800-1880," *Mississippi Quarterly,* 55, 1 (Fall 2002), 536.
[249] C. R. Elliott, "'Through Death's Wilderness': Malaria, Seminole Environmental Knowledge, and the Florida Wars of Removal," *Ethnohistory,* 71, 1 (January 2024), 9. In this piece, Elliott explores his theory of Native

Native Americans exploited the southern and southeastern environments of Georgia and Northern Florida as pathways for self-determination and corridors to freedom. On September 21, 1838, Major George Loomis, 2nd Infantry, Okefenokee District, wrote to Governor Gilmer. He reported that Major Dearborn and two hundred and thirty men were in the Okefenokee Swamp. The group included regular Infantrymen, Dragoons, and Georgia militia. The troops had "penetrated the swamp from the north entrance to the 'Cow House,' as far as was practical, but could not discover any Indians but found few Indian signs and very few fresh ones." He explained that "there is a post establishment at, or near, the entrance to the 'Cow House' garrisoned by Regulars and ten militia from Major Hilliard's command. This party gives confidence and security to the inhabitants of the large settlement north and east of – (undecipherable) few miles distant." Loomis reported that some settlers are beginning to return to their homes. He did report that Mr. Albritton's farm "was plundered of some corn and potatoes and sugar" and supplies. Loomis wrote that a camp of Indians had been discovered. "Major Hilliard has been encamped near Fort Mudge." This is the new post at the entrance to the "Cow House." Loomis reported that scouting in all directions from the "Cow House" has been completed, and no fresh signs have been found, except for the one. They believe the Natives have left, but they do not know where they have gone.

Captain Morris reported from Fort Moniac that no fresh signs near Hog Pen Branch were found. South and west, near the river (presumably the Suwannee River, although this is not specified), was scouted, as well as the Griffith settlement. Loomis reported that Major Dearborn

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Americans consciously and actively utilizing the environment to their strategic advantage. Deborah McGregor refers to this as "Traditional Ecological Knowledge" in her article, "Coming Full Circle: Indigenous Knowledge, Environmental, and our Future," *American Indian Quarterly* 2004, 28, 3/4: 385-410. Greg O'Brien describes the interactions between Native Americans and Europeans as learned tactics, or strategic and evolved behaviors, rather than middle ground with his discussion of Choctaws negotiating the Hopewell Treat (1785, South Carolina) with Britain in "The Conqueror Meets the Unconquered: Negotiating Cultural Boundaries on the Post-Revolutionary Southern Frontier," *Journal of Southern History,* 67, 1 (February 2001), 39-72.

and those under his command have given "perfect security to the inhabitants of this frontier around the Okefenokee Swamp." Loomis and the militia have found no fresh signs of Natives in the swamp, and he believes that "they left this part of the country, if not this swamp all together." Loomis goes on to say that they have sufficient service of the government to drive them (Indians) from the country" if needed, "as the climate will permit operating in and around the swamps." [250]

Both G. Loomis and Levi J. Knight were in the Lowndes and Ware Counties adjacent to the Okefenokee Swamp in the Fall of 1838 as they continued to report to the governor's office in Milledgeville. Knight, however, added that "small parties prowling" were observed, and hostilities continued between the Lowndes County residents and Indians in a December 27, 1838, letter.[251] Loomis wrote General Taylor just a few days before, on December 20, 1838, from Trader's Hill, or Fort Henderson, as the location was known by that time. Loomis reported that trials of a group of about forty-two to fifty Indians were noted. He wrote that only thirty were believed to be warriors, with the lot to be "great and small," families. He does not explain but believes the party to be Yuchee Creek, who have "run away." Loomis reported that, besides this grouping, he believes all the Native Americans have left the Okefenokee Swamp and "traversed in various directions," but most notably from the northwest to the southeast within the swamp.[252]

G. Loomis wrote Governor Gilmer on March 5, 1839, from Traders Hill, discussing who would take command of the forces after his tenure. Loomis appeals to the governor to place the command of the Georgia Militia under General Floyd, and the Army of the South, rather than

[250] G. Loomis, "Letter from G. Loomis, September 21, 1838," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[251] Levi J. Knight, "Letter from Levi J. Knight, December 27, 1838," File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[252] G. Loomis. "Letter from G. Loomis, December 20, 1838." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

under the Georgia militia.[253] Thomas Hilliard, who is now a Brigadier General in the Georgia Militia, reported from Milledgeville on November 13, 1839, in a letter to Charles J. McDonald that he has organized six companies of mounted volunteers from Lowndes County to protect the Okefenokee Swamp, when needed.[254]

The correspondences written by the militia noted that Native Americans used the region's landscape to survive. In response, settlers and militia mainly worked in unison, but through a terrain that presented significant challenges. The densely vegetated woods, wetlands, and challenging climate fostered a feared environment along the southern frontier and throughout the many waterways of the Wiregrass Region, especially the Okefenokee Swamp. This area—the Wiregrass Region—saw Native Americans, including family groups, utilizing the forests and landscapes to their advantage, moving south and southeast into the swamplands and often to Florida, thereby ensuring their survival, self-determination, and defiance against colonization. While all the correspondences mentioned were written by non-Native Southerners and overlooked the Native voice and perspective, the presence of resilient Native Americans is evident in the descriptions written by the militia, showcasing a people who are well-organized and strategically complex.

[253] G. Loomis. "Letter from G. Loomis, March 5, 1839." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[254] Thomas Hilliard. "Letter from Thomas Hilliard, November 13, 1839." File II, Reference Services, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.

Chapter 5

"Troublesome Neighbors" along Georgia's Southern Frontier[255]

Conclusion

The southern regions of Georgia endured a long history of violent confrontations between settlers, militia, and Native Americans during the U.S. expansion and the forced removal of Native Americans from their traditional hunting grounds. Kevin Kokomoor refers to this contested and transitional territory as the "Creek-Georgian Frontier."[256] C.S. Monaco describes the area as "backwoods" known to few.[257] Georgia was initially a buffer strategically used by colonizers to counter competing Europeans. The territory was also Oglethorpe's and the Trustees' idealistic charity colony, founded for those seeking a new start apart from European restraints. Coinciding with these realities, Georgia did not follow the same trajectory as other colonial states. The territory outside of South Carolina's borders and the Georgia coastline was sparsely inhabited and regarded as a backcountry for yeoman farmers when the remainder of the newly acquired state was surveyed and distributed. The southern Coastal Plain, also known as the Wiregrass Region, lagged behind other southern states, particularly the districts along the southern borderland. Paul M. Pressly*, On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World,* also notes that "Georgia was considerably less integrated into the North

[255] Levi J. Knight, "Letters from Levi J. Knight, September 22, 1838." File II, Reference Services RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives.
[256] Kevin Kokomoor, "'Let Us Try to Make Each Other Happy and Not Wretched': The Creek-Georgian Frontier, 1776-1796," Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 2013, 246.
[257] C.S. Monaco, "'Whose War Was It?': African American Heritage Claims and the Second Seminole War." *American Indian Quarterly*, 41, 1 (2017), 32.

American mainland" than other regions of the United States.[258] South Georgia was even less integrated due to its delayed organization by American settlers in the 1820s and remoteness.

During the American Revolution, the Muskogee and Seminoles fought fiercely against the colonists, defending their land and sovereignty, which included established trade relationships, possibly aware of the dire consequences that would follow if their resistance was not strong and successful. Between 1760 and 1790, the population in the Old Southwest increased threefold, rising from 614,000 to 1,686,000.[259] The vastly larger influx and presence of settlers tipped the power scales against Native people, leading to an unrelenting infiltration of Native lands and violent encounters. Confrontations increased and intensified as settlers unified and the state of Georgia expanded.

These long and often vicious conflicts, concentrating in the mid-to-late 1700s, also affected yeoman farmers and settlers who acquired land through the state's land lottery system, migrating to the southern frontier from neighboring regions and other states. These settlers frequently instigated violence against Native Americans while also being victims of the sometimes horrific raids by the Indigenous inhabitants. Kokomoor explains that the settlers recalled the brutality of murdered women and children and, because of those experiences, "carried those scars with them well into the post-Revolutionary period," creating a clash of two cultures.[260] After multiple conflicts and battles, federal, state, and Native resistance intensified as each side sought to assert authority and maintain self-determination.

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[258] Paul M. Pressly, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 7.
[259] Steven Peach, *Rivers of Power: Creek Political Culture in the Native South, 1750-1815* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2024), 85.
[260] Kevin Kokomoor, "'Burning & Destroying All Before Them': Creek and Seminoles on Georgia's Revolutionary Frontier." *Georgia Historical Quarterly,* 98, 4 (December 2014), 303 & 340.

Steven Peach, in *Rivers of Power: Creek Political Culture in the Native South, 1750-1815*, writes that by 1815, Native Southerners were in a "refugee crisis."[261] This crisis is evident in the number of Native families moving west to east into places of safety, especially from 1836 to 1838, when militia and settlers noted their presence within their counties in south Georgia, predominantly from Decatur, Thomas, Lowndes, and Ware Counties. The convergence of settler society and Native Americans in the Wiregrass Region during this time created a period marked by defiance, upheaval, and a transitional boundary or borderland. The letters written to officials in the state's capital, Milledgeville, demonstrate this strained relationship.

Competing societies, Native Americans and settlers, collided physically, culturally, and socially. This state was complicated by the Muscogee experiencing a significant crisis, marked by an irreparable split, as evident during the Creek Wars. The outcome marked "long-running deep fault lines in Creek society, and the simple division between backward-looking nativists and forward-looking accommodationists obscures as much as it clarifies these fractions."[262] Even though the Native southerners experienced a near cultural decimation, the result, as evidenced in the letters written by settlers and militia, was the emergence of an adaptable and determined culture that used the environment to seek survival.

The Creek Civil Wars took place near the Chattahoochee River in northern Georgia and modern Alabama, with groups fleeing to the remote regions of Georgia, particularly the swampy areas, and Florida, where they integrated into new societies. Ellisor argues that Native societies demonstrated yet again continued adaptation, ensuring survival.[263] During this time of Indian

[261] Steven Peach, *Rivers of Power: Creek Political Culture in the Native South, 1750-1815* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2024), 18.
[262] Andrew R.L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontier from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 151.
[263] John Thaddeus Ellison, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 3.

Removal and settler expansion, the United States' federal and state governments never eliminated Native American presence in the Southeastern region. The remoteness of the southeastern areas of Georgia and the uniqueness of the waterways, especially the swampy terrain, created safe harbors, with Florida serving as "the nucleus of nativism in the Southeast" and the Okefenokee Swamp offered a respite.[264]

During the early to mid-1800s, the Wiregrass Region served as a transitional frontier - a corridor of violence and a pathway to freedom, and a demonstration of determination for those fleeing removal. At the same time, another culture vigorously sought to establish itself. This led to the development of a southern white regional identity, alongside the organization of an economic, cultural, and political presence. This cohesion began to manifest while driving away another nation that stubbornly resisted, showing resilience and ensuring survival during a severe crisis aimed at eradication.

The influence of the Carolina plantation elite and planter society, along with their connections to the Caribbean world and Atlantic markets, promised enormous "growth in consumption" for Georgians who hoped the region would bring financial prosperity.[265] However, the U.S. federal Indian policy of the pre-1830s was not in step with Georgia's plans to settle the state, given its guidelines, nor its timeline. The planters and political elites wanted the environs of Georgia's fertile landscape, and the selective memory of settlers decidedly placed themselves as the innocent victims of Indian aggression and violence. While Native Americans expertly exploited the terrain to survive, the environment of the transitional frontier fostered a sense of commonality and the emergence of a shared identity within the settler population.

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[264] Cameron B. Strang, "Violence, Ethnicity, and Human Remains during the Seminole War," *Journal of American History*, 100, 4 (March 2014), 976.
[265] Paul M. Pressly, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 3.

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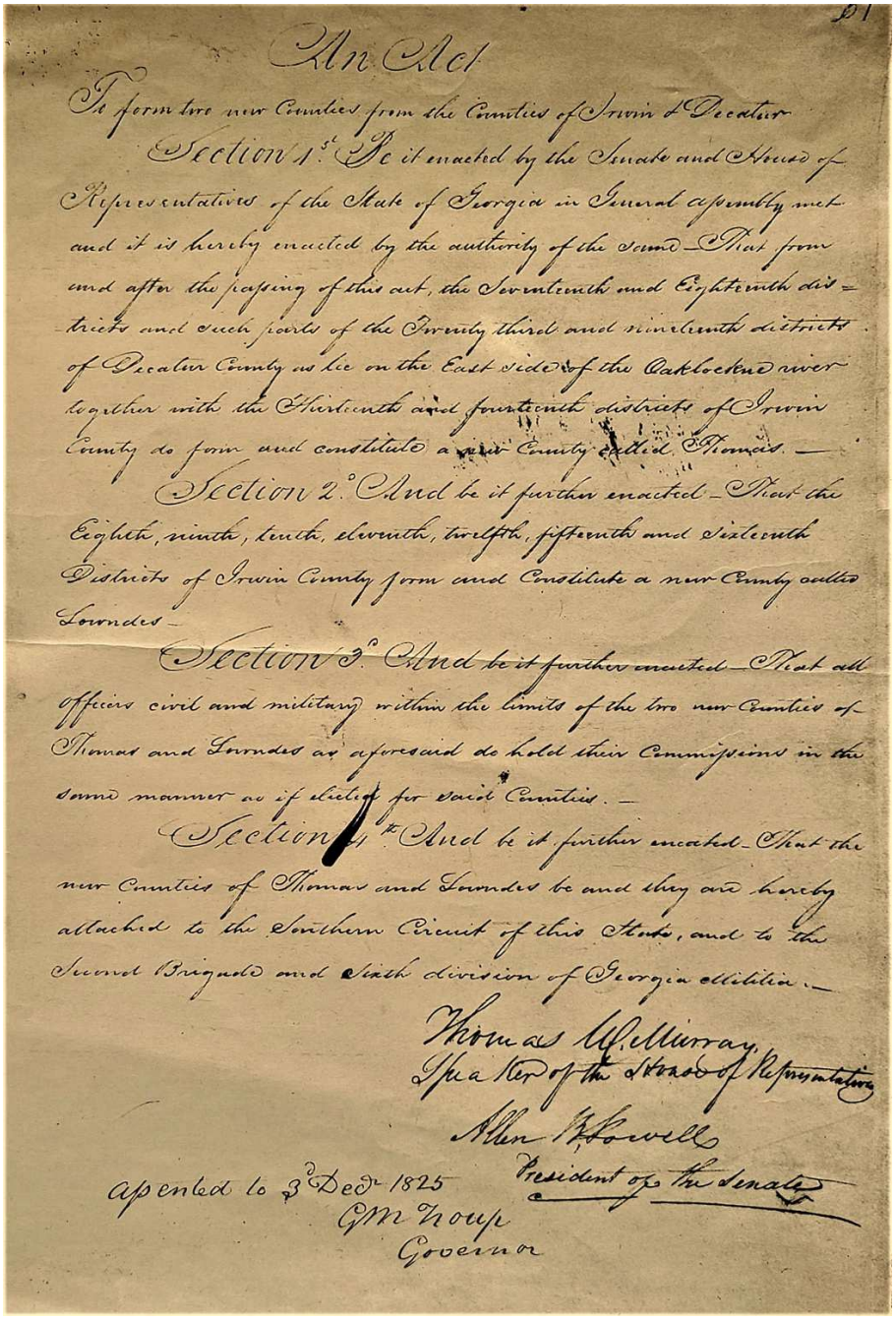
APPENDIX A:

1825 Act to Form Lowndes and Thomas Counties



An Act

To form two new Counties from the Counties of Irwin & Decatur

Section 1st Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Georgia in General assembly met and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same — That from and after the passing of this act, the Seventeenth and Eighteenth districts and such parts of the Twenty third and nineteenth districts of Decatur County as lie on the East side of the Oakclockne river together with the Thirteenth and fourteenth districts of Irwin County do form and constitute a new County called Thomas. —

Section 2d And be it further enacted — That the Eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, fifteenth and sixteenth Districts of Irwin County form and Constitute a new County called Lowndes —

Section 3d And be it further enacted — That all Officers civil and military within the limits of the two new Counties of Thomas and Lowndes as aforesaid do hold their Commissions in the same manner as if elected for said Counties. —

Section 4th And be it further enacted — That the new Counties of Thomas and Lowndes be and they are hereby attached to the Southern Circuit of this State, and to the Second Brigade and Sixth division of Georgia Militia. —

Thomas M. Murray
Speaker of the House of Representatives

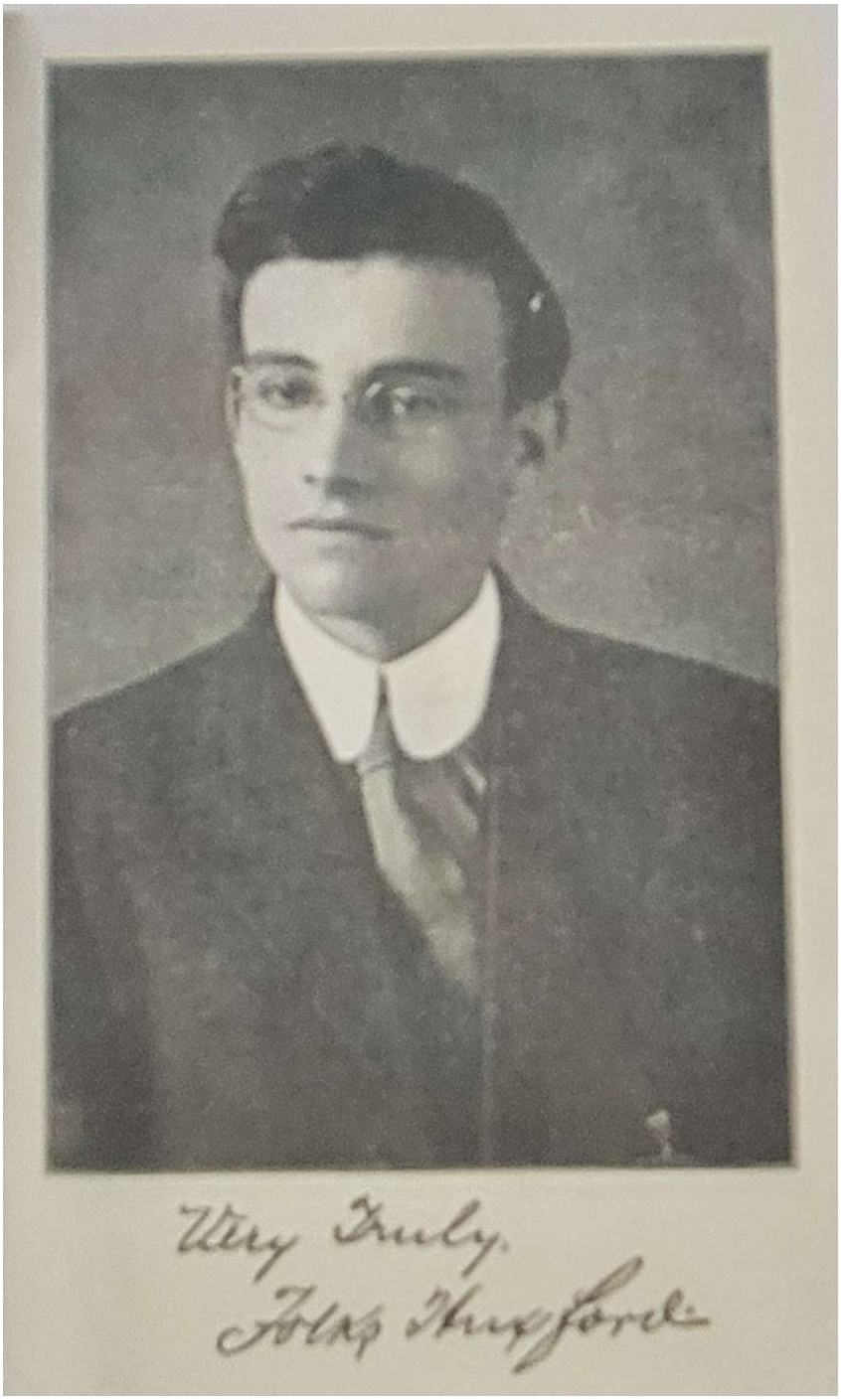
Allen Howell
President of the Senate

Approved 3d Dec 1825
G M Troup
Governor

(Source: Thomasville History Center)

APPENDIX B:

Folk Huxford



(Source: Huxford Family Collection)