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Fowltown and the First Seminole War: "Civilization," Centralization, and Politics in the Early American Republic

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FOWL TOWN AND THE FIRST SEMINOLE WAR: “CIVILIZATION,” CENTRALIZATION,
AND POLITICS IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates changes in Creek and Seminole society wrought about by centuries of European contact, participation—or lack thereof—in the Euro-American marketplace by Creek Indians, and the attempts of the United States government to deal with and control the Creeks. The destruction of Fowltown in 1817 provides a perspective into the struggles occurring inside and outside of Muskogee culture. The contest for autonomy remained at the center of the conflict for Fowltown and other villages. The nascent centralized Creek government and the American federal government attempted to assert control over individual villages, which previously acted as autonomous entities and only in confederation with other Creeks. In the turmoil of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, villages reacted to these attacks against their autonomy in different ways. Fowltown’s course of action favored maintaining village control of local affairs. Outside pressures forced Fowltown to resort to violence in order to protect its sovereignty.

After Fowltown’s destruction and the skirmishes and limited action of the First Seminole War, American officials, politicians, and military officers waged their own political battles over the war and the place of Native Americans in antebellum America. These debates were part of ongoing discussions about the federal policy of civilizing the Indians in order to bring them into the fold of white-American life. The two American officials closest to Fowltown’s destruction, General Edmund P. Gaines and Creek Indian Agent David B. Mitchell, played prominent roles in the debates. Their occupations and politics pitted them against one another and their words showed the differing opinions on Fowltown’s meaning between American officials and between whites and Native Americans.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On July 5, 1836, about 1,500 Creek Indians began their removal from their southeastern homelands at Fort Mitchell in eastern Alabama. Among them, Neamathla, an elderly leader, marched manacled and silent. The headman and his fellow Creek Indians were part of the first phase of the 1836 forced removal from Alabama to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Neamathla’s presence in this first group came as a product of his role as a leader in the Creek War of 1836. Hardly a war, it lasted only a few months and resulted in a few destroyed farmsteads in west Georgia and east Alabama. A force of nearly 13,000 white militiamen and American-allied Creeks quickly quelled the conflict, captured Neamathla in late June, and imprisoned him in Fort Mitchell.\(^1\) Reportedly eighty-four years old, Neamathla sparked the interest and imagination of numerous newspaper writers and was, in their eyes, a “noble [\,] fine looking fellow,” “an extraordinary man,” and a “heroic old man, more bowed in years but still unsubdued [sic] in spirit.” To those distant from the skirmishes in the Creek War of 1836, Neamathla fought heroically, albeit vainly, to protect his homeland.\(^2\)

However, this was not the first time Neamathla defended his territory from encroaching whites. Nearly two decades before, his village of Fowltown in southwestern Georgia was pulled into a complex web of contentions that pitted Creeks against other Creeks, white Americans against other whites, and Euroamericans against Natives over Indians’ place in United States society. In 1817, Neamathla advised the United States Army that his village of Fowltown was autonomous, an assertion that defied the newly formed Creek central government, but peaceful as per the United States’ civilization policy toward Indians. Neamathla warned that the military had no reason to call on or visit the village. Despite this, American soldiers, representing citizens, politicians, and military officials who believed that the civilization plan was outdated and ineffective, marched against Fowltown on multiple occasions with the intention of arresting


\(^2\) (Washington) *Army and Navy Chronicle*, July 28, 1836; *New York Spectator*, July 21, 1836; and (Keene) *New Hampshire Sentinel*, August 11, 1836 respectively.
Neamathla and subduing his people. The outcome of these attacks on Fowltown was the First Seminole War. Neamathla’s removal forcibly brought an end to a long career of resisting outside attempts to assert control over his village, a career that began in the 1810s.

* * *

This thesis investigates changes in Creek and Seminole society wrought about by centuries of European contact, participation—or lack thereof—in the Euro-American marketplace by Creek Indians, and the attempts of the United States government to deal with and control the Creeks. The destruction of Fowltown provides a perspective into the struggles occurring inside and outside of Muskogee culture. The contest for autonomy remained at the center of the conflict for Fowltown and other villages. The nascent centralized Creek government and the American federal government attempted to assert control over individual villages, which previously acted as autonomous entities and only in confederation with other Creeks. In the turmoil of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, villages reacted to these attacks against their autonomy in different ways. Neamathla and Fowltown’s course of action favored maintaining village control of local affairs. Outside pressures forced Fowltown to resort to violence in order to protect its sovereignty.

After Fowltown’s destruction and the skirmishes and limited action of the First Seminole War, American officials, politicians, and military officers waged their own political battles over the war and the place of Native Americans in antebellum America. These debates were part of ongoing discussions about the federal policy of civilizing the Indians in order to bring them into the fold of white-American life. The two American officials closest to Fowltown’s destruction, General Edmund P. Gaines and Creek Indian Agent David B. Mitchell, played prominent roles in the debates. Their occupations and politics pitted them against one another and their words showed the differing opinions on Fowltown’s meaning between American officials and between whites and Native Americans.

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Recent historiography points to the changing nature of Creek society in the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries. Contact with Europeans and the introduction of Old World diseases caused populations to decline and chiefdoms to collapse throughout the native South.

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<sup>3</sup> Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 1, uses the term “Muscogulge” as an “imprecise but all-encompassing,” term for the diverse Creek and Seminole Indians. However, the
Hierarchical societies reeled from the widespread loss of life from disease. The European call for enslaved labor compounded difficulties. While slavery was not unknown to Native Americans, the European version of it was on a much larger scale and resulted in more population declines. Some native groups received firearms from colonists, creating a military advantage over non-armed groups. The armed groups paid for their weapons and trade goods with captured Indians who were primarily sold to the West Indies, but also to emerging plantations centers on the Atlantic coast. By the early eighteenth century the rise of the African slave trade and the 1715 Yamassee War, in which armed Indians rebelled against English slavers, shifted European interests away from Native slaves. Deerskins, already a commodity in their own right, became southeastern Indians’ primary trade good.⁴

The Creeks came together from various groups with similar traits following the aftershocks of chiefdom collapses in the southeast as means mutual alliance and protection. Slowly, a confederacy formed in the Deep South along various river systems in present day Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Ethnically Muskogee Indians dominated the confederacy, but other groups, many of whom spoke a Muskhogean dialect or the Muskogee language itself, were encouraged to join to strengthen and expand the group. These new groups were usually the remnants of collapsed pre-contact chiefdoms and entered the Creek Confederacy as new towns. The growing confederacy desired various cultures to join but for them to retain ethnic and cultural identities.⁵

The Creek Confederacy was flexible and inclusive. It deeply respected the autonomy of the individual towns. Historians have long stressed the importance of Muskogee towns in

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political organization of the confederacy, but more recent works place heightened significance on towns. While noting, for example, the key roles of other institutions, such as clans, Joshua Piker posits that town identity was paramount to Creek life. Clan ties called on clan members for various things but “town-based networks, events, and rituals called on townspeople to transcend—although not forsake—personal and familial agendas and loyalties.” Towns, thus, were the foundation of the Creek confederacy, and without them, Piker argues, “Creek society would not have existed.”

When towns did come together to address common needs, councils recognized individual town autonomy. No group or leader held coercive power. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the confederacy’s diplomatic strategy featured aloofness and intrigue, playing European colonizers off one another in order to protect land claims. This strategy also gave Creeks a considerable amount of power in the interior South. As French and Spanish influence faded from the Southeast and only the English remained, the Creeks were forced to define themselves more as a geopolitical nation to defend territorial rights. Yet, individual town autonomy remained the ideal. As Steven Hahn contends, the Creek Nation was an entity that existed primarily when Creeks discussed land-based disputes with the British, “yet disappeared, phantom-like, when those talks ended.”

After the Revolutionary War, the United States sought peace from the Creeks, but more importantly they wanted land. The Creek Confederacy presented too formidable a foe for the young Untied States to conquer militarily and the agreed-upon course of action became the federal civilization plan. With this policy, government officials hoped to transform Native Americans from hunters into Euro-American style yeoman farmers through trade and providing agricultural tools to Indians. By converting to a strictly agrarian life, Indians’ land needs would be reduced and selling their excess land to the United States would make the most logical sense.

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6 Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 24-25. On Creek town autonomy see, for example, Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 4; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 30-31; and Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 15.


8 Again, many historians have pointed this out. See Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 12; Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*, 22; and Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 23, for a few examples.

9 Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); quote from 270.
However, despite the civilization plan’s seemingly philanthropic aims, the policy was an attack on native culture that, if successful, would strip Indians of their identities. ¹⁰

Despite the civilization plan’s apparent attack on their culture, many Creeks accepted and advocated acculturation of Euro-American lifestyles. Claudio Saunt argues in *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* that the majority of these were of mixed European and native parentage and forsook Creek culture in favor of sprawling plantations. Scots-Creek men such as Alexander McGillivray and others like him tried to establish themselves as outright leaders of the confederacy. They sought to enforce laws, control property, and undermine town autonomy—to create a ‘new order’—to line their pockets at the expense of other Creeks. These changes, brought about by McGillivray’s influence, Saunt argues, led the Creeks into a bloody civil war. ¹¹ While the struggle for autonomy played a role in Creeks and Seminoles taking up arms to protect their towns—Fowltown in 1817 is an example—other factors than the market economy influenced the Creek Civil War of 1813-14. ¹²

Andrew Frank further challenges some of Saunt’s assumptions. He points out that parentage did not dictate behavior. Certain lifestyle choices, such as operating a plantation for example, did not exclude a person from being a Creek. Men like McGillivray could and did live in both the Creek and Euro-American world. Robbie Ethridge argues that little evidence exists to suggest that simply living in individual plantations or farmsteads undermined cultural traits such as matrilineal kinship groups. Overall, Etheridge holds that the majority of attempted reforms made by the civilization plan and wealthy Creeks failed. Finally, James Taylor Carson shows that southeastern Indians often adapted aspects of the civilization plan and Saunt’s new

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order into their own lifestyles with new cultural meanings. The Choctaws, a group neighboring the Creeks, incorporated cattle, seen as an affront to native society by Saunt, into their society. Choctaw women and men both integrated herding and tending cattle into established gender roles.\(^{13}\)

What emerges is an adaptable society, but one that valued the independent and autonomous nature of its component towns. When a slow and uneven trend toward centralization occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some Creeks favored it as a means to protect territory against the expanding United States. Others fought to retain their autonomy. One way that this was completed was through what Steven Hahn terms “Seminolization,” a slow out-migration of Creeks who wanted little to do with the confederacy. These groups established villages away from the heart of Creek country. Early migrations paved the way for more permanent settlements, particularly in Florida’s Alachua and Apalachicola regions in the mid 1700s. Over time, connections to the Creek Confederacy faded—though they were recognized and remembered—and the Creeks and Seminoles in Florida continued to act as autonomous towns. Outsiders called them Seminoles, but town more than likely determined an individual’s identity.\(^{14}\)

As previously mentioned, the Creeks fought a disastrous civil war. The United States entered the war after nativist Creeks attacked white settlers, militiamen, and pro-civilization Creeks at Fort Mims, Alabama in August 1813. American participation in the Creek Civil War ended in March 1814 with a significant American and pro-civilization Creek victory at Horseshoe Bend in Alabama. However, for Creeks and Seminoles, the fighting continued long after 1814. Many on the losing end fled to Florida over the next few years but victorious American-allied Creeks sought to punish and bring back into the fold those that did not respect

\(^{13}\) Frank, Creeks and Southerners; Ethridge, Creek Country, (on matriline specific: 173 and 303-304 n.116 and n. 117); and James Taylor Carson, “Native Americans, the Market Revolution, and Culture Change: The Choctaw Cattle Economy, 1690-1830,” Agricultural History 71 (1997): 1-18. While Creeks frequently complained about cattle and other livestock to white officials, they too accepted cattle into their society, using it not to replace wild game, but to augment it. See Ethridge, Creek Country, 158-174.

the power of the strengthening Creek centralized government. This was the case in the First Seminole War of 1817-1818, in which United States soldiers and state militias invaded Spanish-held Florida. However, a large portion of the combatants against the Florida towns were American-allied Creeks.

The dating of the First Seminole War to 1817 is owed to the skirmishes at Fowltown, on the eastern side of the Flint River in southwest Georgia, and retaliatory attacks against an American supply vessel in the Apalachicola River in late November of that year. While the war itself is covered in many works, the particulars about Fowltown are frequently lost. Furthermore, few historians have delved into Fowltown and Neamathla’s motivations for their defiance of the American military. Thus, placing Fowltown within the context of the transforming Creek and Seminole society and white America’s aims for its Native population will lead to a more thorough understanding of the town’s position during a time of Muskogee upheaval.

* * *

Fowltown’s destruction held different meanings for the diverse groups connected to it. This thesis explores those meanings. It is divided into three chapters. The first provides detailed background on Creek society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It focuses on society, leadership, power, and diplomacy among the Creeks and how they dealt with assaults on their territory and culture. Chapter one also examines the United States’ approaches towards Native Americans in general and the Creeks specifically. This section addresses various attitudes held by white Americans about Indians’ place in society, such as civilization, conquest, or removal.

Chapter two endeavors to bring the events leading up to Fowltown’s destruction to the forefront and explore the town’s actions in reference to the changing Creek world. Neamathla

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15 Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 155-215, makes this point. The cause of the Creek Civil War and the increasingly central Creek government will receive more attention in Chapter 1.
and his followers accepted many of the changes brought about by the New Order and the civilization plan; however, Fowltown had no use for the governmental reforms espoused by them. Like other Creek towns, Fowltown prioritized village independence and autonomy. In the bloody years of the 1810s, they merely worked to defend autonomy.

Finally, the third chapter examines the ways that white Americans on either side of the civilization or removal debate used the events at Fowltown in the political fallout after the First Seminole War. These discussions reveal different and changing attitudes held by military and civilian leaders about Native Americans. In the end, the debates were less about the war or the treatment of Fowltown villagers than they were about gaining the upper hand in emerging rivalries.
CHAPTER TWO

MOVING AWAY FROM “A WORLD OF TOWNS:” CREEK CENTRALIZATION AND ‘CIVILIZATION’ IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, two American societies were facing conflicting yet connected dilemmas. The young United States sought to cheaply and peacefully acquire land from the indigenous peoples of North America. At the same time, Creek Indians and other Native American groups looked to find ways to protect both their lands and people. Debates about proper courses of action over these contradictory goals existed in both cultures.

To peacefully acquire territory, the United States adopted the civilization plan: a program intended to provide American Indians agricultural tools to reduce the amount of land needed and eventually integrate into Euro-American culture. Many early American politicians championed the civilization plan as economical and philanthropic while others despised this plan. Southern politicians and white settlers wanted immediate access to Native lands and felt it absurd to think that Indians would be able to assimilate into white American society. The civilization plan led to tensions within Native American society as well. Native leaders saw the civilization plan’s altering customary ways of life for sedentary farming for what it was: an affront to indigenous culture in order to acquire land. Even so, other Indians accepted the plan. Many incorporated both new and traditional lifestyles in order to preserve more important cultural traits. One of the methods adopted by the Creeks to deal with white Americans’ call for land and civilization was the continuation of the trend of Creek political centralization. However, neither the civilization plan nor centralization appealed to many Creek leaders.

The civilization plan was established, revised, and debated in the three decades leading up to the First Seminole War. Although it came under attack from various skeptics, new faces of the program plied its tenets among the Creeks. The doubters of the civilization plan voiced their opposition through words and actions and eventually advocated war and removal. Creeks endeavored to maintain cultural identity and territory amidst the Euro-American affront to their society.
The Creek Indians came together from the remains of collapsed chiefdoms beginning sometime in the early 1700s. The confederacy formed out of a need for mutual defense against other Native groups as well as Europeans. Remnant chiefdoms coalesced into a multi-ethnic heterogeneous group designed to incorporate newcomers. Many social institutions in the forming confederacy resembled those from the former hierarchal societies. Lower level social organization, such as matrilineality and reciprocity, was highly flexible in order to cope with the evolving world.¹

Geographically, the confederacy centered around two river systems. Towns clustered around the Coosa and Tallapoosa in Alabama and Georgia’s Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers. Although the two foci of Creek towns laid essentially on an east-west axis, English traders denoted the Coosa-Tallapoosa towns as Upper Creeks and the Chattahoochee towns Lower Creeks because the trading path split in middle Georgia. A trader took the upper road to get to the western towns and the lower path to trade with the Chattahoochee towns. The Upper and Lower Creeks’ geographical division created very important differing outlooks on the world based on their relative distance from outsiders.²

It should come as no surprise that waterways figured largely into Creek life. Their proximity to waterways provided them their English name. English traders from Charleston became familiar with Indians living on Ochese Creek, a tributary of the Ocmulgee River in present-day central Georgia, in the late 1600s. The traders referred these people alternatively as Ochese Creek Indians, Ochese, and eventually Creeks. After the 1715 Yamassee War, the Creeks living on or near the Ocmuglee migrated westward to the Chattahoochee. The name followed them, and was eventually applied to the other groups coalescing into the confederacy.³

Like their English designation, outsiders also foisted the name Muskogee on the Creeks. The name derives from the Algonkian word “muskeg,” which meant swampy or wet ground, prone to flooding.\textsuperscript{4}

Situated in these floodplains were Creek farms. Annual spring floods deposited nutrient-rich silt on the fields and forced the Creeks to build their homes and villages on terraces above the flood level. Traditional farming practices provide a glimpse into Creek gender norms. Women tended the fields in Creek culture. They maintained both the large agricultural fields as well as family garden plots near the village. Villages owned lands and assigned sections to their members according to matrilineal kinship groups. Creek mothers and their matrilineal clan relatives socialized children. Creek women taught younger female clan members farming and other feminine tasks such as household manufactures and making clothing. Instead of the biological father, maternal uncles taught their sisters’ sons the masculine traits of hunting, warfare, and diplomacy as well as other attributes of Creek manhood.\textsuperscript{5}

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Creek society underwent a slow and uneven process of centralization. Before this move to centralization, the Creeks existed as a loose confederacy of autonomous towns. These towns possessed a square ground, the place where governmental and ceremonial affairs took place, and were likely settled from the remnants of completely independent tribes reeling from the consequences of European contact. Towns also had satellite villages that did not possess square grounds and were attached to the town ceremonially and politically. The town, not the Creek nation or confederacy, determined identity in Creek society. As historian Joshua Piker put it, “[t]he Creek world was essentially a world of towns.”\textsuperscript{6}

Many Creek towns came together for military alliance, but the confederacy was not designed to have a central government. Town autonomy and independence remained imperative

\textsuperscript{5} Etheridge, \textit{Creek Country}, 55-57; Green, \textit{The Politics of Indian Removal}, 3; Braund, \textit{Deerskins and Duffels}, 14; and Andrew K. Frank, \textit{Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 61-76.
for the Creeks. Leaders did not hold coercive power; rather they led because they had the ability to persuade the group to consensus. Something of a National Council existed for a lengthy time, perhaps dating to the seventeenth century. The council’s meetings were often the result of crises, particularly those involving Euro-American calls for land cessions. During these emergencies, many leaders came together to form the Creek Nation to defend their territory. The ephemeral nation often dissolved at the conclusion of land-related dilemmas. Thus, the Creek National Council held infrequent, “crisis-oriented” meetings. It did not represent all towns; many of them, continuing the tradition of autonomy and independence, sent no delegates to council meetings. Essentially, the National Council was “a proper noun and little more.”

Despite the insistence of town autonomy, some leaders did attempt to centralize authority for various reasons. Alexander McGillivray, the son of a British trader and a Franco-Creek woman, was one of the most notable leaders that worked to centralize Creek politics in the late 1700s. McGillivray led a pro-British Creek faction during the American Revolution. After the war, he realized that the emerging United States threatened Creek lands. Throughout the 1780s, he intended to unify the Creeks under the National Council and combat fraudulent land cessions made by other Creeks to Georgia. McGillivray was moderately successful in this, as he negated previous treaties with Georgia by negotiating the 1790 Treaty of New York with the federal Government. However, McGillivray’s Creek opponents believed him a usurper attempting to consolidate power for his own personal gain, and the decentralized nature of Creek political organization obstructed McGillivray’s aims. Although McGillivray’s education, literacy, and political aims set him apart from most other Creeks, he respected and used Creek parameters of power and leadership to work toward centralization to protect Creek lands.

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7 Green, The Politics of Indian Removal, 12-14; Frank, Creeks and Southerners, 23; Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 22 and 171 (both quotations from 171); Ethridge, Creek Country, 18-19; and Steven C. Hahn, The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 269-270.

8 Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 168-176 and Green, The Politics of Indian Removal, 33-36. Some historians, Claudio Saunt, A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 67-89, for example, view McGillivray’s mixed parentage as evidence that he merely sought to profit from the Creeks and worked without the best interest of Creeks in mind. Others, such as Andrew Frank, Creeks and Southerners, 47-60, refute the idea that biology automatically separated whites and Indians and argues that many leaders like McGillivray were accepted in both Creek and American society. Kathryn E. H. Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 171, and Michael Green,
The Creek move towards centralization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries remained uneven and incomplete. Individual town autonomy made a unified government impossible. Complicating matters for the Creeks, and other Native American groups, was the increasing size, demand for land, and calls of cultural assimilation of the United States.

The main functions of America’s Indian policy until the 1830s were to protect Indians’ land from all but the federal government, regulate trade, limit the amount of alcohol going into native territory, end retaliatory violence between natives and white settlers, and finally, perhaps most important, attempt to civilize Native Americans so that they would assimilate into white-American society. These policies resulted from many things and provided for an “orderly advance of the frontier,” but an advance regardless. However, the civilization plan was effectively cultural genocide. If the policies worked for the American government, it would be at the cost of Native American groups’ entire way of life.  

The United States’ policies toward Native Americans in the early national period derived from the need for peace in the fledgling nation’s most remote territories. President George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox had two options to maintain peace. Ironically, the first was the idea that the United States should attempt to militarily subjugate Indians and neutralize them as a threat to the frontier. This idea was scrapped in favor of negotiating with and fostering amicable relations with America’s natives through the establishment of boundaries and encouragement of trade, which would provide Indians with the tools of civilization.  

The July 22, 1790 Congressional “Act to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes” established this strategy. This measure provided for the licensing of traders, who could lose their privilege to trade if they disobeyed regulations. The act also protected Native Americans’ lands by outlawing any territorial exchange that was not administered under a U.S.
treaty. Further, the act established the punishment of crimes committed by whites on Indian lands. This act represented an early incarnation of the civilization plan sponsored by government officials that typified the United States’ relations with Native Americans during the Early Republic. Statesmen wanted to alter the Indians’ ways of life from their native forms to those of yeoman farmers and herders. Indian women were to learn the tasks of spinning yarn and weaving cloth. If this plan succeeded, white Americans hoped that the difference between Indians and whites would significantly decrease and they would assimilate into white culture.\(^{11}\)

One of the first examples of the civilization plan being put into action was the 1790 Treaty of New York between the United States and the Creeks. Many of the provisions in the treaty were similar to the July 22 Trade and Intercourse Act. The treaty defined and protected Creek lands and established punishments for whites who violated its provisions. Most importantly, the Treaty of New York provided to the Creeks periodic gifts, such as agricultural tools or livestock, which would lead the Creeks “to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters.”\(^{12}\)

Many American leaders supported the civilization plan and sought to strengthen it. President Washington endorsed the civilization plan in an address to Congress. In 1791, he argued for the just treatments of Indian’s and their lands. He again stressed ideas of fair trade to bring to Native Americans “the blessings of civilization.”\(^{13}\) Two years later, Washington felt that after punishing “violators of peace, the establishment of commerce with the Indian nations in behalf of the United States” was of utmost importance in bringing Indians to civilization. Noting that individual traders sought only profits, the government would merely seek reimbursement for the numerous goods provided.\(^{14}\)

As fair and equal trade was essential to the civilization plan, in 1796 Congress passed an act that gave the president authority to set up trading posts with sanctioned agents on the


southern and western frontiers. The trading agents were not to be connected with any private trading interests and the act set forth punishments for abuses by the agents. The federal government set prices for the goods sold at the trading houses. Although the 1796 act expired after two years, the factory system, as the trading house organization became known, was renewed through periodical extensions until 1822.  

The first Trade and Intercourse acts that formed such vital components of the Civilization plan were short lived, and had to be extended. The 1790 and 1796 acts had two-year limits and the 1799 act, three years. The program was given permanency with the 1802 act, which had no time limit and lasted until the overhauling of the United States’ Indian policy in 1834. The act was essentially a re-statement of the previous acts. It established boundaries, provided for the prosecution of violators of Indians and their property, allowed that no lands exchange hands except through treaty, and encouraged Native Americans to live as farmers or herders by providing them gifts related to agriculture. The 1802 Trade and Intercourse act did add one new stipulation to the civilization plan, however, that prohibited the sale of alcohol to Native Americans. President Thomas Jefferson recommended this addition when he requested from Congress the renewal of the act.  

Jefferson, as president, continued the civilization plan with no intention to overhaul strategies established by Washington and Knox. The philanthropic plan for civilization of Indians represented, according to historian Bernard Sheehan, somewhat of a consensus among politicians during Jefferson’s presidency and was carried on by many others after his retirement. Jefferson’s policy also sought to limit Native American’s contacts with European trade and influence. He viewed the factory system as capable of both curbing foreign influence and bringing forth civilization. Jefferson argued that the continuation and expansion of the system would encourage sedentary, agricultural lifestyles, decrease Indians’ land needs, and increase “domestic comforts.” The factories had the ability to undercut the prices of competing illicit traders. Thereby, the country would dispose of “a description of men who are constantly

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endeavoring to excite in the Indian mind suspicions, fears, and irritations toward” the United States. 17

Jefferson believed that the peaceful approach provided by the Civilization plan was the best means of conduct with Native Americans. Preserving peace with and obtaining lands from Indians represented paramount goals in Jefferson’s mind. Jefferson believed it necessary to convince natives to accept agriculture. This, in turn, would prove to them that they had no need for vast stretches of forests and would willingly and eagerly sell land to the United States. Jefferson’s views are neatly summarized in a letter to Creek Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins:

The promotion of agriculture, therefore, and household manufacture, are essential in their preservation, and I am disposed to encourage it liberally. This will enable them to live on much smaller portions of land, and indeed, will render their vast forests useless but for the range of cattle; for which purpose, also as they become better farmers, they will be found useless, and even disadvantageous. While they are learning to do better on less land, our increasing numbers will be calling for more land, and thus a coincidence of interests will be produced between those who have lands to spare, and want necessaries, and those who have such necessaries to spare, and want lands.

The resulting exchanges, Jefferson felt, would benefit both sides. Eventually, Native and white Americans would become one. “Surely, it will be better for them to be identified with us, and preserved in the occupation of their lands,” he wrote, than live as separate peoples who risked disappearance. 18

For initially all Indians south of the Ohio River, but later just the Creeks, Benjamin Hawkins represented the civilization plan. Hawkins’ politics aligned with Jeffersonian ideals and it is no surprise that he was tabbed to administer the civilization plan in the South. His first excursion to deal with the Southern Indians was the 1785 Treaty of Hopewell, which protected

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18 Thomas Jefferson to General Andrew Jackson, February 16, 1803, in Albert Ellery Bergh ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 10 (Washington D.C: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907), 10: 357-360 and Jefferson to Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, February 18, 1803, in Bergh, ed., *Writings of Jefferson*, 10: 360-365 (quotations from 362 (block quotation) and 363 respectively). Jefferson further felt that if any tribe was imprudent enough to refuse acceptance of the civilization plan and “take up the hatchet” against the US, then driving them west of the Mississippi River was the only, albeit regrettable, solution. Jefferson to Governor William H. Harrison, February 27, 1803, in Bergh, ed., *Writings of Jefferson*, 10: 368-372 (quotation from 371).
Cherokee Lands. Hawkins was elected as one of North Carolina’s Senators in 1790 and six years later he negotiated the Treaty of Colerain with the Creeks in Georgia. The Colerain treaty, in accordance with civilization plan ideals, gave the president the ability to establish trading posts on Creek lands. It also provided for goods to be distributed among the Creeks as well as blacksmiths to civilize them. During negotiations, Hawkins had to defuse tensions between land-hungry Georgians and the Creeks. After returning from Colerain, President Washington recognized his efforts by appointing him as agent to the Southern Indians.19

Florette Henri described Hawkins as “both anesthetist and surgeon on the Indians.” He acted as the latter because his goal was to cut away land from Southern tribes for use of the United States. Through the civilization plan, however, he was to dull the pain by introducing to Indians the Euro-American ways of life. When natives adopted these, their quality of life would improve and their need for land would diminish.20

Hawkins began his job of introducing Euro-American agriculture optimistically and in earnest. Hawkins found encouragement in the enthusiasm of many Indians, particularly women. In 1797 a number of women vowed to “plant cotton and learn to spin it and weave it” in addition to growing excess corn and learning other Euro-American tasks. Optimistic about what seemed like genuine enthusiasm for the new system, early in the next year Hawkins boasted of his successes to the governor of Georgia, noting that he had established peace and trade, and introduced herding, cotton planting, spinning wheels, and looms.21

Hawkins bragged about his successes among the Creeks to President Jefferson as well. The agent explained that the Creeks favored livestock rearing aspects of the civilization plan and that many were actively obtaining cattle. Further, cotton thrived in the fertile fields of Creek country and women were quickly learning how to work the fiber. As a result of his perceived accomplishments in his duties of introducing the civilization plan to the Creeks, Hawkins felt, like Jefferson, that hunting was no longer capable of providing food and clothing for Creek families and “[s]tock raising, agriculture and household manufactures are essential to their

preservation and must be resorted to.” “Success,” Hawkins wrote, was “no longer doubtful,” and within ten to twenty years, the Civilization plan would be perfected.22

Hawkins also fulfilled his job in obtaining land from the Creeks. The 1802 Treaty of Fort Wilkinson secured two thin slivers of land for the United States, one on the west side of the Oconee River in central Georgia and the other south of the Altamaha River in the southeastern part of the state. Hawkins laid the groundwork for the 1805 Treaty of Washington. Georgia and the United States were determined to have the land between the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers. The federal government also desired a road to run through the Creek Nation, from the Ocmulgee to Mobile. Hawkins negotiated for this throughout 1804 but to no avail as the Creeks assented to the sale of land between the rivers but not the road. The following year, Hawkins traveled with six chiefs to Washington, where Secretary of War Henry Dearborn assumed negotiations and secured both of the government’s goals.23

While Hawkins considered himself successful, especially in his first few years as agent to the Creeks, he frequently found the implementation of his policies half-hearted or ignored. Hawkins endeavored to centralize the Creek government in order to control the Creeks and use the National Council to usher in cultural changes of the civilization plan. The agent took credit for inventing the National Council and insisted that the council meet annually. Hawkins held that the National Council possessed coercive power, able to enforce Euro-American style laws with a national police force, both of which Hawkins introduced. The laws and police force served the purpose of increasing the power of the central Creek government. In reality, the National Council existed in some form long before Hawkins presence in Creek Country. The police force rarely acted. When they did, they often operated within Creek conventions or were fearful of reprisal from the kin of the punished. While some leaders adhered to the National Council, its influence remained limited. Hawkins lived at the Creek Agency on the Flint River

23 ASPIA, 1: 669 (Treaty of Fort Wilkinson); ASPIA, 1: 691 (the abortive 1804 treaty); ASPIA, 1: 698-699 (Treaty of Washington); and Henri, *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins*, 245-251. See also Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal*, 44 for a map of land cessions.
until his death in 1816 and in his twenty years as agent to the Creeks, most of his attempted governmental reforms failed. 24

Hawkins’ death did not bring an end to the civilization plan. As Hawkins’ life drew to a close, Georgia senator William H. Crawford became a leading advocate for the program. He quickly rose to national prominence and President James Madison twice offered Crawford the Secretary of War position, first in late 1812. Crawford initially declined but accepted the second offer for the job in August 1815. Crawford held the post for a little more than a year, moving to the Treasury Department in October 1816, where he remained through the Monroe administration. United States’ Indian policy fell under the control of the War Department and as Secretary of War, Crawford’s policies towards Native Americans carried on the civilization plan. 25

Perhaps Crawford’s most notable continuation of the Civilization plan was his March 13, 1816 communication to the Senate pertaining to Indian Affairs. Crawford advocated more strenuous management of Indian trade, which would not only provide profits, but also give the government influence over the tribes “by administering to their wants, increasing their comforts, and promoting their happiness,” thus leading Native Americans to the Euro-American view of civilization. Crawford indeed believed that the government’s role towards Native Americans was one that encouraged civilization and discouraged war through trade. He made this abundantly clear by stating:

> it is the true policy and earnest desire of the Government to draw its savage neighbors within the pale of civilization. If I am mistaken in this point—if the primary object of the Government is to extinguish the Indian title, and settle their lands as rapidly as possible, then commerce with them ought to be entirely abandoned to individual enterprise, and without regulation. The result would be continual warfare, attended by the extermination or expulsion of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country to more distant and less hospitable regions. The Correctness of this policy cannot for a moment be admitted. The utter extinction of the Indian race must be abhorrent to the feelings of an enlightened and

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25 Crawford served as United States Minister to France from 1812-1815 and initially declined the war secretary offer citing inexperience. He was actually en route from France when he learned of his second appointment to the Secretary of War post through a newspaper article he received in England. Chase C. Mooney, William H. Crawford, 1772-1834 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 29, 48-51, 75-79, 91, and 83-84; Prucha, American Indian Policy, 51; and The (Washington) Daily National Intelligencer, March 4, 1815.
benevolent nation. If the system already devised has not produced all the effects which were expected from it, new experiments ought to be made. When every effort to introduce among them ideas of separate property, as well as in things real as personal, shall fail, let intermarriages between them and the whites be encouraged by the Government.

Crawford argued that these views and actions were the honorable route to take and during the remainder of his brief tenure in the War Department, attempted to reform Indian trade.26

Although he essentially posited no new policies to the civilization plan, Crawford became one of its most visible advocates. In one of his few other actions geared at the civilization plan, Crawford engineered the placing of former Georgia governor and close political ally David B. Mitchell as Creek Agent, the post left vacant by the death of Benjamin Hawkins in 1816. Crawford, a consummate politician with eyes cast at the presidency, placed Mitchell in this position so that, as Michael D. Green argues, “Crawford could take credit for whatever Georgia might gain at the Creeks’ expense.” Although Mitchell’s appointment was politically motivated and he abused his duties and powers as agent, Mitchell personified the civilization plan to the Creeks in the years surrounding the First Seminole War.27

While leaders like Washington, Jefferson, Hawkins, and Crawford held high hopes for the civilization plan, skeptics of the government’s policy were numerous and varied. These people sought financial and territorial gains from Native Americans. Their views were shaped by racial intolerance. Skeptics to the plan believed it doubtful that Indians would ever accept white ways of life and advocated conquest or removal.

Individual traders and private companies were one of the most obvious groups affected by the federal government’s Indian policy. The legislation and treaties of the civilization plan sought to limit the negative influence of unscrupulous trade by establishing licensed traders and government trading houses. However, illicit trade went essentially unchecked on Native American lands. Laws provided specifics for punishment of corrupt and unlicensed traders. These penalties included forfeiture of goods and fines. Unfortunately, the remoteness of these

26 *ASPIA*, 2: 26-28 (first quotation, 26; block quotation, 28) and William H. Crawford to Territorial Governors and Indian Agents, May 10, 1816 in Records of the Secretary of War, Letters Sent Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800-1824, National Archives and Records Services, Microcopy 15 (hereafter SWLSIA).

illegal traders, the time it took to impose sanctions, and difficulties in building a case against transgressors limited government officials’ effectiveness in curtailing unlawful trade. To make matters worse, courts often sided with traders or dismissed cases against them on technicalities. Benjamin Hawkins bemoaned that the presence of unsanctioned trade “deranged [the] plan of civilization.”

Through the continual presence of unsanctioned trade, Southeastern Indians accrued large sums of debt. The main creditor, Panton, Leslie, and Company, desired remuneration. The trading firm formulated a plan with the United States that any money owed to the Indians for land acquired through treaties would be applied to the debts. Via these means, unlicensed traders destabilized the civilization plan and succeeded in profiting at Indians’ expense and diminishing Native territory.

Another threat posed to the civilization plan came from land-hungry politicians and white settlers on the southern reaches of the United States. Zachariah Cox, a Georgia land speculator, despised the Trade and Intercourse acts, which provided the tenets of the civilization plan that protected Indian lands. The “Government will find it a better policy to people a country with their own citizens,” Cox wrote, “than to reserve it as an asylum for savages.” Tennessee Governor John Sevier also detested the acts, writing that he hoped “this infamous act will not be revived, it has given more umbrage to the people of this State than any act ever passed since the independency of America.” Sevier took note of the federal government’s inability to enforce the act as he witnessed numerous white hunters crossing onto Indian lands. Georgia land speculators and politicians often derailed and slowed treaty negations. Benjamin Hawkins, while negotiating the Treaty of Colerain, had to restrict Georgians from coming into contact with

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30 Zachariah Cox to Andrew Jackson, April 27, 1797, and John Sevier to Andrew Jackson, January 22, 1798, in Sam B. Smith, et al., ed., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, 7 vols. to date (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980-), 1: 131-132 and 1: 171-172; quotations from 131 and 172 respectively.
Creeks or attempting to trade arms or alcohol to bribe individual Indians for unlawful land cessions. Hawkins later had to remind the Georgia governor, ironically David B. Mitchell, who, as already noted, would succeed Hawkins as Creek agent, that he had “no partiality” to Georgia’s demands and reminded the governor that he was “specifically charged with the civilization of the Indians.”

White settlers also posed a serious threat to the civilization plan. Despite the various treaty articles designed to protect Creek lands from encroachment, whites flocked to these areas and established farms and homesteads. A reason for Creek cession of lands in the Treaties of Fort Wilkinson and Washington was the fact that white hunters, settlers, and their livestock routinely ignored previous boundaries. Creek leaders frequently complained about white settlers traveling and free-ranging their cattle unauthorized on their lands. Cattle competed for the same forage as black bears and white hunters used fire and rifles to take the game, exhausting Creek hunting grounds. Creek leaders also complained that white squatters built houses and cultivated fields illegally. Thus, land ceded in at Fort Wilkinson and Washington was already rendered useless to hunting and these treaties could not effectively stop a steady stream of settlers from squatting on Creek lands.

White settlers’ hostile attitudes towards the Creeks can be seen in the narrative of Eunice Barber. Barber lived with her family in Camden County, in the southeastern corner of Georgia. On January 26, 1818, Indians attacked Barber’s homestead and took her hostage. Throughout the account of her captivity, Barber negatively described all aspects of Creek life. The Indians themselves were “unfeeling wretches” or “monsters” who resided in “filthy wigwam[s] unfit for a shelter for dumb beasts.” She noted that the Indians “were almost constantly employed in expeditions against christian [sic] settlements,” neglecting the fact that the populations of these white settlements were likely unlawfully squatting on Creek lands. Barber’s narrative even points to the cause of these attacks, remarking that the Creeks “harboured [sic] great inveteracy against the American troops for depriving them of their lands.” After about five weeks among

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32 Hawkins’ Journal, January 24 and January 29, 1802, in Grant ed., *Writings of Hawkins*, 2: 406 and 2: 409; Efau Haujo’s talk, June 9, 1802, and Hopoi Micco’s talk, June 9, 1802, in “Journal of the Commissioners of the United States for holding conferences with the Indian Nations, south of the Ohio,” in *ASPIA*, 1: 674-675; and Green, *Politics of Indian Removal*, 38 and 43-44.
the Creeks, Barber made her escape when she was sent for water late one evening. She traveled through the wilderness for about a week until she came across a white man chopping wood, who took her back to a white settlement.33

To be sure, Eunice Barber’s experiences were traumatic. But the language used in this sensationalized account34 shows white settlers’ negative and unsympathetic views towards Native Americans. While some statesmen hoped that whites and Indians could coexist, most everyday whites only saw hostile savages.

Racial intolerance is also seen in the backlash against aspects of the civilization plan that advocated intermarriage between whites and Indians. Skeptics of the civilization plan took aim at William H. Crawford’s suggestion as Secretary of War that the government foster and encourage intermarriage. In a series of letters to President Madison shortly after Crawford’s endorsement of intermarriage, Judge Thomas Cooper, under the pseudonym “Americanus” ridiculed Crawford and lambasted his ideas. Strictures Addressed to James Madison, the pamphlet in which the letters were published, called the intermarriage plan “unprincipled and nefarious” and stated that the plan would “rouse feelings of indignation and abhorrence” among whites.35

Cooper sent his first letter to Madison about a month after Crawford’s communication to the Senate that suggested intermarriage. Cooper first contemplated if it was even appropriate to incorporate Indians into the United States. He considered it an insult that whites who had settled, most likely illegally, on frontiers should encouraged to marry Native Americans. Further, he wondered:

33 Eunice Barber, Narrative of the Tragical Death of Mr. Darius Barber, and his Seven Children, who were Inhumanly Butchered by the Indians, In Camden County, Georgia, January 26, 1818 (Boston: Printed for David Hazen, 1818), 6-24; quotations: “wretches,” 7; “monsters,” 15; “filthy wigwam,” 8; “expeditions against christian settlements,” 16; and “great inveteracy,” 18.
34 One would be hard pressed to find the “steep and ragged mountains,” mentioned in Barber, Narrative, 10, in southeastern Georgia’s costal plains.
whether the finest portion of the human race in form, figure and capacity—the young men and young women who border on the Indian frontiers in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia—blooming, healthy, hardy, active, and enterprising, shall or can be tempted by gouvermental [sic] allurements, to relinquish the society of each other, and prostitute their persons, to the dirty, draggle-tailed, blanketed [sic], half human squaws, or the filthy ferocious half naked savages, bedecked indeed, with pewter pendants in their ears, lips and noses, and so politely recommended also by Mr. Crawford to the fair daughters of America as beaus and husbands: all for the benevolent and patriotic purpose of propagating and extending civil liberty and social happiness.\textsuperscript{36}

In another letter, Cooper questioned how the government would encourage intermarriage. Cooper concluded that no matter what the remuneration for marrying an Indian, only “very lowest and most degraded” whites would accept. “For it is absolutely incredible that any such marriages will ever take place by choice,” he wrote. “The natural, the unsophisticated feelings of every young white man and woman would sicken and revolt at the idea of such a strange connexion [sic].”\textsuperscript{37}

These letters shed light on early nineteenth century Americans’ views on races as well as illustrating intolerance for the civilization plan. The idea of intermarriages revolted the minds of white settlers and politicians. Men like Cooper only saw “the absolute futility of any plan for civilizing these people,” and felt that one could “no more convert an Indian into a civilized man, than you can convert a negro into a white man. The animal configurations and propensities are different.”\textsuperscript{38}

The ever-present alternative to the civilization plan was military conquest and forceful removal. As so many whites saw Indians as inhuman, savage, and incapable of civilization, this unfortunate alterative emerged as the leading competitor against the government’s official policies. And critics of civilization often pointed out that native groups’ conditions deteriorated under the program. To be sure, this bit of rhetoric merely masked whites’ desire for Indian lands.\textsuperscript{39}

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\item \textsuperscript{36} Americanus to James Madison, April 10, 1816, in \textit{Strictures Addressed to James Madison}, 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Americanus to Madison, April 16, 1816, in \textit{Strictures Addressed to James Madison}, 10-13; quotation from 13.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Americanus to Madison, April 16, 1816, in \textit{Strictures Addressed to James Madison}, 11.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Prucha, \textit{American Indian Policy}, 224.
\end{itemize}
The person who emerged as the most visible force in conquest and removal was Andrew Jackson. Hailing from the Carolina backcountry and growing up during the American Revolution, Jackson became the hero of the civilization plan’s critics. In the 1790s, he worked as a lawyer, was a delegate in the Tennessee Constitutional Convention, and served as a senator for the newly formed state. He was eventually elected as major general of the Tennessee Militia and would serve in this position through the Creek War when he was commissioned as a general in the U.S. Army.\textsuperscript{40}

Jackson’s negative attitudes towards Native Americans emerged early on in his public life. He felt that holding treaties with Indians was pointless and did not believe Indians would live up to treaty terms. In 1793 he wondered to a colleague why “do we attem[pt] to Treat with [a Savage] Tribe?” The next year, Jackson argued that “Peace Talks are only Delusions; and in order to put us of[f] our Guard.” “Does not Experience teach us,” he continued, “that Treaties answer no other Purpose than opening an Easy door for the Indians to pass [through to] Butcher our Citizens.”\textsuperscript{41}

Jackson’s long held negative views about Native Americans and the civilization plan were laid out to newly inaugurated President James Monroe in March 1817. Jackson believed treaties with specific tribes were illogical. “The Indians are the subjects of the United States, inhabiting its territory and acknowledging its sovereignty,” he wrote, “then is it not absurd for the sovereign to negotiate by treaty with the subject[?]” Jackson argued that Congress had “full power, by law, to regulate all the concerns of the Indians.” The general continued by condemning the civilization plan, stating that it “grew out of the weakness of the arm of the Government.” Jackson advised the new president to change Indian policy, move away from the “farce” of treaties, and enforce boundaries on Native Americans to rid them of non-white customs.\textsuperscript{42}

A popular figure to contemporaries and a polarizing figure among historians, Jackson’s policies endeared him to white settlers on the frontier. Eunice Barber wrote of Jackson as the

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\textsuperscript{40} Robert V. Remini, \textit{Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821} (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1977).
\textsuperscript{41} Jackson to John McKee, January 30, 1793 and Jackson to John McKee, May 16, 1794, in \textit{Papers of Andrew Jackson}, 1: 40 and 1: 48-49 (quotations from 40 and 49). Brackets appear here as they do in the published \textit{Papers} and reflect deterioration in the original manuscript.
\textsuperscript{42} Jackson to Monroe, March 1817, in \textit{Papers of Andrew Jackson} 4:93-98 (quotations 94 [first] and 96 [remaining]).
\end{flushright}
“distinguished” and “much dreaded enemy” of the Creeks who “march[ed] fearlessly into the very heart of their village, lay their wigwams in ashes and compel[led] them to sue for peace.” Jackson became the military commander of the South after the War of 1812. In this position he was the most recognizable detractor of the Civilization plan.43

Jackson’s subordinate in the South and the man eventually responsible for the destruction of Fowltown was General Edmund Pendleton Gaines. Gaines, a career military man, shared his commanding officer’s views about the civilization plan. Gaines’ professed desire was to bring the “savage man to the walks of civil life.” Yet, he felt civilization would not come without force, as

[t]he savage must be taught and compelled to do that which is right, and to abstain from doing that which is wrong. The poisonous cup of barbarism cannot be taken from the lips of the savage by the mild voice of reason alone; the strong mandate of justice must be resorted to, and enforced.

Further, Gaines felt that the government’s “wisdom and philanthropy” had yet to effectively meet its goals of civilization.44

Skeptics of the civilization plan such as Gaines and Jackson received a boost in the lands gained as a result of the Creek War of 1813-14. The war began as an intra-tribal conflict with both internal and external causes. Nativism and pan-Indian movements happening concurrently with and partially inspired by those of Shawnee Indian prophet Tenskwatawa and his warrior brother Tecumseh helped fuel the fire of the Creek Civil War. The two Shawnees advocated abandonment of non-Native lifestyles as a way to halt the Euro-American advance, both geographical and cultural, on Native America. Many Creeks appreciated the idea of turning away from white lifestyles in order to protect land and lifestyles. The civilization plan represented an attack on Creek culture as men were to abandon hunting and move to the farmstead and Creek women were supposed to move from the field into the home. Benjamin

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Hawkins’ attempted reforms intended to replace matrilineal Creek society with patriarchal families and exchange deer hunting for cattle raising.45

Yet, while many Creeks wanted to use nativism to regain strength, many others easily abided cultural changes. For example, individual farms did not bring an end to matrilineality and many Creeks situated their homesteads near other members of their matriline. As J. Leitch Wright put it, “a Creek could ride his horse, hunt with a musket rather than a bow and arrow, and clothe himself in textiles from Lancashire, and at the same time continue his old ways.” For many, it was impossible to return to native ways. Creeks found it necessary to meld old and new.46

As the debates over nativism raged, autonomy emerged as another main point of contention in the Creek Civil War. The National Council’s increasing desire to dictate action and policy meant less and less acceptance for dissidents. Creeks who continued “to live under their own authority became renegades” from the Creek central government. When the council authorized the execution of Creek nativist Little Warrior in 1813, issues of autonomy merged with the pan-Indian movements and the Creek Civil War broke out. Creek nativists, called Redsticks due to the red clubs they carried, attacked physical symbols of the civilization plan and Creeks who espoused the plan and centralization. The conflict became the Creek War in August 1813 when Redstick Creeks destroyed Alabama’s Fort Mims. Although the majority of the settlers who perished in the fort were Creeks who had adopted the civilization plan, white Americans used the attack as an excuse to enter the war against nativists. Militia units from Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi Territory helped the pro-civilization plan Creeks subdue dissenters with the decisive victory belonging to Andrew Jackson, his militia, and Creek allies at Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River in March 1814 where nearly 800 Redsticks lost their lives.47

45 For further description of the Creek War see Green, Politics of Indian Removal, 40-43; Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 155-184; Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 186-188; and Saunt, A New Order of Things, 249-272. On nativism’s role in the war, see Joel W. Martin, Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993) and Gregory Evans Dowd, A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
46 Ethridge, Creek Country, 173-74 and Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 160.
47 Saunt, A New Order of Things, 249-271 (quotation from 251); Green, Politics of Indian Removal, 41-43; and Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 172-176. The name Redstick was “doubly
At the war’s conclusion, Jackson wrote that the “hostile Creeks have forfeited all right to the Territory we have conquered.” However, it was not the “hostile” chiefs that lost land. Jackson forced his Creek allies to sign the Treaty of Fort Jackson in August 1814, which ceded to the United States over twenty million acres in Georgia and Alabama. Small portions of the land that Jackson extracted from the Creeks belonged to Redsticks; the majority came from pro-civilization plan Creeks in southern Georgia and Alabama.48

Although the Treaty of Fort Jackson theoretically ended the Creek Civil War, real and ideological battles continued within Creek society and between the United States and the Creeks and Seminoles. Scores of the Redsticks relocated to Florida to live among their Seminole relatives. Further, even for pro-civilization Creeks, the strengthening National Council and the wearing away of town autonomy forced many to figuratively move away from the Creek central government. As will be seen in the next chapter, the maintenance of autonomy played key roles for numerous Creek and Seminole towns.

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48 Jackson to John Williams, May 18, 1814, in Papers of Andrew Jackson, 3: 73-75 (quotation from 74); Green, Politics of Indian Removal, 43; and Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 177.
CHAPTER THREE

“IN COMPLETE FIX FOR FIGHTING?:” FOWLTOWN’S AUTONOMY IGNORED AND THE BREAKDOWN OF PEACE

In his book *Facing East from Indian Country*, historian Daniel K. Richter described a visit to St. Louis, Missouri, during which he gazed through the city’s famous Gateway Arch from his nineteenth story hotel room. Instead of looking through the arch from the Illinois side of the Mississippi River, Richter viewed it from a western vantage point. Using this experience to coin the phrase that titled his book, he argued that the tired histories of early America that highlighted Euro-American conquest and westward expansion could be remedied by a “visual reorientation” that attempts to show early American history through the eyes of Native Americans.1 Although Fowltown ironically sat east of the American military forces that attacked it, ruining Richter’s idiom of facing east from Indian country, his notion of a visual reorientation of the events leading up to the First Seminole War provide a definitely needed native understanding of them.

For Creek and Seminole history, Fowltown occupied an important geopolitical location in southwest Georgia and in relation to its Native and Euroamerican neighbors. The village’s location on the east side of the Flint River and close to the Florida border put it on the fringes of the new political order created by the civilization plan and the uneven process of centralization in the previous decades. It was also part of the territory recently ceded by Creek leaders in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. Chief Neamathla rejected both the treaty and the Creek National Council making Fowltown part of the nascent, albeit nebulous, Seminole community. Seminoles did not exist as a tribe at this time. Rather, the represented various communities that had opted out of Creek national politics for a variety of reasons.2

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As Fowltown sat on Georgia soil, white American politicians, soldiers, and settlers would have viewed the Neamathla and his people as Creeks. Many of Fowltown’s people, as will be seen, effectively abstained from participation in the Creek Civil War, but the wrangling over power and autonomy between the central Creek government and towns continued to be an issue for Creek and Seminole peoples. Although Fowltown residents would have identified with their town, to white Americans they were Creeks. As such, Neamathla and Fowltown were supposed to submit to the authority of the National Council. When they refused and the American military pushed Fowltown to retaliate, in white American eyes, they transformed into Seminoles. Yet, amid the upheaval of the early nineteenth and changes wrought by contact and the civilization plan, local autonomy remained the main focus for Fowltown’s defiance and rejection of the National Council, illustrating that town self-governance remained preeminent in most Creek and Seminole eyes. Neamathla’s goal in the both before and after the First Seminole War was protecting Fowltown’s ability to exist autonomously.

Fowltown was on the southern and eastern reaches of the Creek confederacy. Benjamin Hawkins, in his 1798-99 trek through Creek villages, described Tuttallossee, or Fowl Town, as a tolofa, a satellite village to a larger town, associated with Hitchiti. Hitchiti was a talwa, which meant it was the main town of the township, and possessed a ceremonial square ground and public buildings for councils. Splinter groups settled tolofas like Fowltown but remained associated with the talwa as identity was based on town, not nation. In 1799, Fowltown sat on Tuttallosseehatche, known to this day as Fowltown Creek, a tributary of the Flint River and located some distance from Hitchiti. It was likely settled in the late eighteenth century when other splinter groups moved eastward from their talwas on the Chattahoochee River. Also in 1799, Fowltown established its own square ground. Robbie Ethridge posits that by creating their own square grounds, tolafas like Fowltown separated entirely from their talwas and became

3 J. Leitch Wright, Jr., Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulgle People (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 5, makes the point that whites viewed Creek and Seminole identities based on location: “Osceola was a Creek in Alabama and a Seminole in Florida. He did not change—he remained a Tallassee—but white perceptions of him did.”

4 Joshua Piker, Okfuskee: A Creek Indian Town in Colonial America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), places the town identity as perhaps the most important feature of Creek life.
townships in their own right. A variety of circumstances could have contributed to this change, including town size, individual concerns, or geographical, political, social, or economic distance from the talwa.\footnote{Benjamin Hawkins, “A sketch of the Creek Country in the years 1798 and 1799,” in C.L. Grant ed., Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins, 2 vols., (Savannah, GA: The Beehive Press, 1980), 1: 315; Mark F. Boyd, “The Seminole War: Its Background and Onset,” Florida Historical Quarterly 30 (1951): 15-16; and Robbie Ethridge, Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 29, 64-66, and 93-96.}

Situated between the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers in 1799, Fowltown was some distance from the location on the eastern side of the Flint where skirmishes opened the First Seminole War. However, Creek towns often relocated for many reasons. Exhausted fields, insufficient firewood, new agricultural practices, and livestock herding could all play a role in a Creek town’s relocation.\footnote{Ethridge, Creek Country, 96, 156, and 174.} It seems likely that Fowltown relocated south to the location east of Fort Scott for any number of reasons. Hawkins’ initial view of Fowltown was rather positive. He praised the quality of the soil, and also reported that the villagers built fences and held large livestock herds.\footnote{Hawkins, “Sketch of Creek Country,” in Grant ed., Writings of Hawkins, 1: 315.}

Like so many other Creeks and Seminoles, they accepted some aspects of the civilization plan but they refused to give up village autonomy.

Whether or not Fowltown was hostile, neutral, or friendly to the United States at the outbreak of the First Seminole War played a central role in the debates surrounding the war and its causes, both among contemporaries and modern historians. However, few have looked at the events from the village’s point of view. In the eyes of Fowltown residents, the town merely acted to retain their autonomy.

General Edmund P. Gaines, instigator of hostilities at Fowltown in 1817, argued that Fowltown was long antagonistic to Americans. At first glance, his views appear justified. In June 1814, after the Redstick defeat at Horseshoe Bend, a few warriors from Fowltown and other villages were reported to have fled with a Redstick leader to Pensacola to receive arms from the British. Yet, the Indians claimed that the supplies were not for war and that it was their intent to remain peaceful with the Americans. They realized their continued hostilities likely meant
further loss of land. But many Creek warriors, particularly young ones, including some from Fowltown, continued attacking whites and American allied Creeks. From the end of 1814 through May 1815, Fowltown warriors harassed roadways and cooperated with other warriors in East Florida. On May 12, 1815, a party of American-allied Creeks tracked down the Fowltown warriors and found them near St. Marks, Florida and executed the leader, Motmileche.

Fowltown and other Lower Creek villages were experiencing what Steven Hahn terms “Seminolization,” which he defines as “a gradual process of fission” among Creeks that could be likened to an out-migration of Creek communities working to remain autonomous. The 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson sped up this process for some of the Lower Creeks. Leaders of towns near the confluence of the Flint and Chattahoochee contested the amount of ceded land. American officials held that Creeks and Seminoles were one people and Seminoles were subject to the dictates of the Creek National Council. However, this was the American ideal, not the reality. Many Creeks ignored or abandoned the Americans and aligned themselves with the Seminoles already in Florida and their British and African-American allies. Although the Fort Jackson Treaty ended American participation in the Creek War, it continued for the Creeks. It appeared to American observers that the towns on the southern Chattahoochee and Flint were preparing for war in mid-1816, shortly before the destruction of the Negro Fort, a redoubt on the Apalachicola River in Florida inhabited by Native and African Americans who had been given supplies by the British.

The Negro Fort struck fear into the minds of white southerners. The thought of free and armed blacks allied with Native Americans and supported by the British situated on the borders of the slave south frightened southern sensibilities. The fort also served as an affront to the power of the Creek central government as former Redsticks and Seminoles settled around the

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8 “Report of Supplies to the Indians by the British and Spainards at Pensacola and Mouth of Chattahoochee,” June 14, 1814, enclosed in Hawkins to Peter Early, June 15, 1814, and Hawkins to John Armstrong, June 21, 1814, Grant ed., Writings of Hawkins, 2: 684 and 685.
9 Hawkins to John Houston McIntosh, November 26, 1814; to Peter Early, April 21, 1815; to Alexander J. Dallas, May 5, 1815; to Andrew Jackson, May 5, 1815; and to Thomas Pinckney, May 12, 1815, in Grant ed., Writings of Hawkins, 2:707 and 724-727.
area to distance themselves from the National Council. Therefore, in July 1816, a joint operation with American and pro-centralization Creek soldiers launched an attack on the fort, an action that is seen as a link between the Creek War and the First Seminole War. On July 27, a cannonball fired from an American ship ignited a powder magazine in the fort, causing a large explosion. Although many historians discount or ignore the role of Creek soldiers in the expedition, men under pro-centralization Creek chief William McIntosh were the first inside the fort after the explosion. While some estimates counted 300 deaths at the Negro Fort, Claudio Saunt argues that “probably no more than forty lost their lives” as most fled the fort before the engagement.  

It seems that Neamathla and the Fowltown villagers were on their way along with other outlying Creeks of rejecting the notions of centralized power in order to maintain their autonomy. Other events in the months surrounding the Negro Fort’s destruction also added in pushing Fowltown away. In May 1816, Benjamin Hawkins described Fowltown’s people “as remarkable for their rude, ungovernable conduct and must at some time, [sic] be compelled to respect the rights of their neighbours.” However, Hawkins pointed to a specific reason for Fowltown’s animosity toward Americans: Georgians harassed, injured, and rudely treated Neamathla and a party of his villagers. It seems that Fowltown’s “rude, ungovernable conduct” was a direct result of similar behavior by frontier Georgians, which did little to boost the village’s perceptions of Americans.  

American squatters gave the earlier 1816 impetus that helped drive Fowltown toward Indian allies in Florida. American soldiers soon provided another one. A leading Fowltown warrior reported that American forces, returning from their mission against the Negro Fort, attacked and killed a number of villagers. The assumed reasoning for this attack was that Fowltown did not join the Americans and allied Creeks on the offensive against the African-Americans on the Apalachicola River. Another headman allied with Fowltown suggested that

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12 Hawkins to James McDonald, in Grant ed., *Writings of Hawkins*, 2: 786-87 (quotations from 787).
William McIntosh was responsible for American conduct, using American forces to bring outlying towns back under the influence of Creek National Council.  

These specific actions—the harassment of Neamathla, the attack on the Negro Fort, and the murder of Fowltown villagers—directly pushed Fowltown away from the Creek National Council. This undoubtedly hastened Fowltown’s in-process turn to the Seminole community. The fate of the blacks at the Apalachicola River angered Fowltown and its allies. Warriors from Fowltown spoke “in the most contemptuous manner of the Americans.” Along with warriors from other towns, they desired to avenge the Negro Fort and were reportedly in a “fix for fighting,” particularly wishing to clash with McIntosh and his pro-centralization Creeks for their role in the attack.

In mid-1817, tensions seemed to have lessened somewhat when the Seminole community made British citizen and trader Alexander Arbuthnot their advisor. Arbuthnot worked to maintain peaceful relations between the Seminoles and Americans. He was no philanthropist as his main interest was trade, and he needed to keep the Americans out of Florida in order to secure business. In June, twelve chiefs, including Neamathla, gave power of attorney to Arbuthnot, and the trader encouraged the Seminoles’ desires to live outside the realm of American influence and in their own autonomous towns.

Shortly after giving power of attorney to Arbuthnot, the Seminoles contacted Tustunnuggee Thlcco, or Big Warrior, the speaker for the Upper Creeks in the Creek National Council. The Seminole leaders informed the Upper Creek chief that they wanted to silence “the mouths of bad men who are continually sending false and bad talks to us,” meaning the Americans and those pushing for centralization. The Seminoles argued that they respected white Americans and their property, but Americans intensified schisms between centralized and outlying Indians. The Seminoles solicited Tustunnuggee Thlcco to ignore or expel white men.

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14 George Perryman to Lieutenant Sands, February 24, 1817, in American State Papers, Military Affairs, 7 vols. (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-1861), 1: 681-82 (quotations from 682); hereafter cited as ASPMA.

15 Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 193 and “Power of attorney from the Indian chiefs to A. Arbuthnot, June 17, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 726-727.
who wished “ill-blood between brothers” so that they, and all Southeastern Indians, could live in peace.16

A few months before the skirmishes at Fowltown, the Seminole community, including Neamathla, would be content with being left alone. They hoped others would follow in their denunciation of centralization, but town residents mainly desired to live and act autonomously and peacefully. Nevertheless, leaders like Neamathla grew frustrated with the increasing encroachment of whites on their lands, which threatened their autonomy.

In the late summer of 1817, General Edmund Gaines called on King Hatchy, or Kinache, of Miccosukee to turn over murderers to the American authorities. The Seminole leader replied that he harbored no murderers. King Hatchy admitted that the Seminoles recently killed a white settler, but argued that instance was a just execution of a cattle thief. On the other hand, the military did nothing when white squatters murdered four Indians. King Hatchy defiantly stated that he would “use force to stop any armed Americans from passing my towns or my lands.”17

Gaines’ demand of King Hatchy to turn over warriors was also sent to other Indians east of the Flint River. It produced a response to similar to King Hatchy’s and reflected the opinion of ten Seminole towns. The leaders maintained that after the Redstick War, their people attempted to live peacefully on the eastern side of the Flint River, but suffered continual harassment from whites. Their demands for justice went unanswered by white officials and occasionally they chose to react with force. Livestock that Gaines accused the Seminoles of stealing was merely reclaimed from squatters who had stolen them from the Indians in the first place. Headmen bemoaned the fact that whenever a white man was killed, Americans called on the Indians to turn over murderers; when whites killed an Indian, however, officials did nothing. The Indian community in south Georgia and north Florida was frustrated and insisted that they stayed on their side of the Flint and did their best to “meddle with no person.” These leaders, like King Hatchy, wanted the Americans to respect their title to the land as they did not want to see their “country desolated by an army passing through it.”18

16 “To our good brother the Chief Tustonaky Thlucco, the Big Warrior,” June (?), 1817, in ASPFR 4: 606.
17 Edmund P. Gaines to the Seminole Chief, 1817??, in ASPMA 1: 723; King Hatchy to Gaines, 1817??, in ASPMA 1: 723 (quotation); and Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 203.
18 Major Twiggs to Gaines, September 17, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 684 and Ten Towns to the commanding officer at Fort Hawkins, September 11, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 685 (quotation).
The Seminole leaders’ desire to remain sovereign but peaceful became increasingly difficult. Gaines’ orders for King Hatchy to turn over murderers did not sit well with the warriors heard about them. The command particularly incensed younger warriors. The men present at the meeting were outraged, as they had never heard of turning their own people over to the Americans for justice. The warriors admitted they had heard of Creek men being executed by National Council, but thought giving a warrior up to the Americans “was out of the question,” and by doing so, insisted that only the community possessed the ability punish transgressors. Tensions grew between these Indians and those that wished to bring them back under American influence in late 1817.\(^19\)

Historian Jeanne T. Heidler suggests that Neamathla was the primary leader responsible for the ten towns’ reply to Gaines’ orders to turn over warriors.\(^20\) Whether or not the words were Neamathla’s, he undoubtedly agreed with them as they conveyed the message that his town would not submit to American authority. This did not sit well with Gaines, who thought it absurd that the ten towns requested justice for the lives of three Indians, as opposed to turning in warriors, and intended to remove Neamathla and Fowltown from their lands. Major David Twiggs, Fort Scott’s commander, delivered the message to the Indians on the east side of the Flint. Twiggs suggested that Neamathla’s defiance to outside governance and insistence on autonomy also dis pleased a number of Creek leaders. These leaders intended to flog Neamathla to show their intentions of remaining at peace with the Americans and also to bring him into accordance with Creek central government.\(^21\)

The continued incursions and demands by American officials led leaders like King Hatchy and Neamathla to place a higher value on sovereignty than on peace. By the end of September, Neamathla grew wearier with the constant barrage of American squatters on his land and the United States military’s calls for his compliance. It was also around September that Neamathla issued his fateful directive for Americans to respect his territory that eventually led to the First Seminole War.

\(^{19}\) Twiggs to Gaines, September 17, 1817, in *ASPMA* 1: 684-5; quote from 684.
\(^{21}\) Gaines to the Secretary of War, October 1, 1817, in *ASPMA* 1: 685; Secretary of War to Gaines, October 30, 1817, in *ASPMA* 1: 685-6; and Twiggs to Gaines, October 7, 1819, in *ASPMA* 2: 131.
By 1817, Fowltown had moved south and east of Tuttallosse’s 1799 location recorded by Hawkins. The town’s new location was on the east bank of the Flint River, about fifteen miles away from Fort Scott on the opposite side of the Flint. Unfortunately for the village, the 1814 Fort Jackson Treaty territorial cessions included this land. Americans viewed any Native Americans remaining on the land as violators of the treaty. Neamathla, like many other Creek leaders, disagreed vehemently. Although some young warriors from Fowltown participated with the Redsticks during the latter stages of the Creek Civil War, the village remained primarily neutral in that conflict. Hostilities that did occur seemed to come as reactions to white violence. Feeling that the conflict did little directly to do with him, Neamathla, building upon Creek a tradition that frustrated Euro-Americans since the eighteenth century, ignored the treaty that he did not sign. When told to leave the land, Neamathla had no difficulty in asserting “that he had nothing to do with giving the land away at Fort Jackson,” nor did he “consider that act as binding on him or his people, nor would they remove in consequence, unless compelled by force.” Neamathla believed the Creeks on the Chattahoochee “fooled away their land,” but the territory east of the Flint belonged to his people and they had no intention of vacating it.22

Nonetheless, with the Treaty of Fort Jackson, the United States possessed a document that gave them possession of the land and intended to remove any remaining Native Americans. Neamathla reached his breaking point. His arguments that Fowltown was autonomous but peaceful and that the land belonged to the village failed to sway the American army’s opinion. Neamathla decided to forego peace in favor of village sovereignty. He cautioned Fort Scott’s commander that the army was to remain on the west side of the Flint River. Americans, Neamathla instructed, were not to range livestock, procure timber, or cross the river for any reason. “[I]f ever a detachment of United States’ troops crossed the Flint river [sic],” Neamathla warned, “he would resist them by force” as “he was directed by the powers above to protect and

22 “Report of Supplies to the Indians by the British and Spainards at Pensacola and Mouth of Chattahoochee,” June 14, 1814, enclosed in Hawkins to Peter Early, June 15, 1814, in Grant ed., Writings of Hawkins, 2: 683-684; Twiggs to Gaines, October 7, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 131 (quotations); and Hahn, The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1-3.
defend” Fowltown’s lands. After issuing these warnings, Neamathla withdrew from contact with the military.23

Despite Neamathla’s warnings that Americans would be attacked if they trespassed on his territory and with a reportedly large number of warriors ready to carry out Neamathla’s ultimatum, Edmund Gaines dismissed them, stating that he did not trust Indian threats. Gaines arrived at Fort Scott on November 19, 1817. He sent an Indian messenger to Fowltown asking Neamathla to come to Fort Scott. Neamathla ignored the summons and sent word to Gaines “that he had already said to the commanding officer here [Twiggs at Fort Scott] all he had to say.” Neamathla’s refusal to see Gaines reasserted earlier warnings as well as his insistence on Fowltown’s sovereignty. This persistence led to open hostilities and the beginning of the First Seminole War.24

Within days of this exchange, Gaines launched two of the three United States excursions against Fowltown. Historians have typically viewed these attacks to be the beginning of the First Seminole War. Some argue that expansionist Americans found at Fowltown the opportunity to attack allies of Florida Indians while not actually crossing Florida territory. These expansionists, historians say, fully understood that when retaliation came, permission to attack Florida would be granted.25 Others have seen it as just punishment of hostile Indians who refused to leave previously ceded lands.26 The people of Fowltown saw it as an attack on their autonomy by trespassers and they reacted with force.

Theoretically, the first skirmish at Fowltown surprised the Americans. As Gaines did not place much faith in Indian promises, he likely believed Neamathla’s threat to be empty. He ordered Major Twiggs and 250 men to march through the night of November 20 the fifteen miles from Fort Scott to Fowltown and arrest Neamathla and his warriors. Neamathla proved Gaines’

23 Secretary of War to Gaines, October 17, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 685-686; Twiggs to Gaines, October 7, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 131 (first quotations); and Gaines to Secretary of War, October 1, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 685.

24 Gaines to the Secretary of War, November 9, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686; to Andrew Jackson, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686 (quotation); and David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, Old Hickory’s War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 104-105.


doubts about the nature of the threat not to cross the Flint wrong when Twiggs’ detachment attempted to encircle Fowltown early on the morning of November 21. Villagers quickly spotted the soldiers and carried out Neamathla’s threat by opening fire with a volley of shot at the trespassing Americans. The soldiers hastily returned fire and the Indians abandoned Fowltown for the safety of nearby swamps. Twiggs held that, although he occupied the town, the people had scattered and he had no opportunity to capture Neamathla or any other hostages. Twiggs then withdrew to Fort Scott. However, Indians told Alexander Arbuthnot that Fowltown’s villagers regrouped in the swamp and expelled the force from their town. Regardless, the end result was the same: American soldiers crossed the Flint River and Neamathla made good his ultimatum to defend Fowltown and its sovereignty. The Americans left the town still standing, but five Fowltown villagers, four men and one woman, lost their lives.\textsuperscript{27}

While briefly occupying Fowltown, Twiggs’ men found a British army uniform coat in Neamathla’s house with an attached note implying the headman’s affinity for the British. Some have viewed this as evidence of Fowltown’s aiding the British and the Redsticks during the Creek Civil War. However, possession of a British uniform did not necessarily mean Neamathla was a Redstick. A staple of Creek foreign relations for nearly 100 years was the ability to play one side off against the other. Possession of a British coat could have meant that Neamathla was simply trying to welcome a new ally. Whether Neamathla was a Redstick or just acting as a savvy diplomat, both views show his dedication to autonomy.\textsuperscript{28}

A few days after the first skirmish, Gaines dispatched a larger force of 300 men commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mathew Arbuckle to Fowltown. According to Gaines, this expedition’s goal was to scout out the size of Fowltown’s forces and to explore the surrounding landscape. However, providing provisions for a fort on the far reaches of the Southern frontier was no easy task. Fort Scott suffered from undersupply during the winter of 1817-1818. Procuring foodstuffs for the fort seemed to be a prime motivating factor for the expedition: a junior officer on the raid stated “[c]orn, cattle, and other provisions…was the object of this

\textsuperscript{27} Gaines to Twiggs, November 20, 1817, in ASPMA 2: 131; Twiggs to Gaines, November 21, 1817 in ASPMA 2: 131; Gaines to Jackson, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686; and Arbuthnot, “Note of Indian Talks,” in ASPMA 1: 724.

\textsuperscript{28} Gaines to Jackson, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686; Owsley and Smith, Filibusters and Expansionists, 150-151; and James W. Silver, Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Frontier General (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 71.
visit.” Neamathla had another reason in addition to sovereignty and autonomy to defend his village: protecting provisions.  

As Arbuckle’s force approached Fowltown, villagers spotted the Americans and again fled. Soldiers then began searching buildings for corn. When they started loading the contents of the corncribs on wagons to return to Fort Scott, men from Fowltown placed near the edge of the nearby wetlands opened fire on the soldiers, killing one. Another skirmish ensued, this time lasting about twenty minutes. The Indians withdrew into the swamp with an estimated six or eight fatalities. The Americans withdrew toward Fort Scott with what corn they had already loaded, approximately fifteen cattle, and some horses. About three miles away from Fowltown, the detachment constructed a small picket works and remained there for four or five days, perhaps waiting for reinforcements. In this time, the Americans exhausted the food supplies stolen from Fowltown and returned to Fort Scott, again failing to capture or remove Neamathla and the people of his village fighting to maintain their sovereignty.  

Within the space of a week, Fowltown had engaged and expelled two larger attacking forces. In their defense of the village, as many thirteen people lost their lives and residents saw their corn stolen and their cattle driven away. The village still stood but, without adequate provisions and the possibility for more American attacks, its inhabitants elected to leave.  

In retaliation to the attacks on Fowltown, Neamathla’s outlying Creek and Seminole allies exacted revenge on the Americans. Before the first skirmish at Fowltown, Gaines dispatched Lieutenant Richard W. Scott with forty soldiers down the Apalachicola River to assist Major Peter Muhlenberg’s boats bringing much needed supplies to Fort Scott. Instead of traversing the river with Scott’s party, Muhlenberg kept twenty of the Lieutenant’s men, replacing them with twenty of his own men, who were ill, along with seven soldiers’ wives. Muhlenberg then sent Scott back to the fort to get medical care for the sick. The boat nearly

29 Gaines to the Secretary of War, November 26, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686; Mathew Arbuckle to Jackson, January 12, 1818, in ASPMA 1: 695; Arbuckle to Gaines, January 13; 1818, in ASPMA 1: 695; John N. McIntosh to Abner Lacock, February 5, 1819, in ASPMA 1: 747 (quotation); Heidler and Hidler, 122 and 126; and John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, The Seminole Wars: America’s Longest Indian Conflict (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 37.  
30 McIntosh to Lacock, February 5, 1819, in ASPMA 1: 748 and Gaines to the Secretary of War, November 26, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686. Arbuthnot, “Note of Indian Talks,” in ASPMA 1: 724, suggests Fowltown Indians rallied and expelled the American detachment.  
31 Arbuckle to Jackson, January 12, 1818, in ASPMA 1: 695.
made it back to Fort Scott by November 30, but about a mile from the headwaters of the Apalachicola, which formed the United States-Florida boundary, swift currents compelled the boat to stay near the shore. A force of Indian men concealed in the underbrush at the river’s edge waited until the boat was very close to the bank and opened fire. The first volley killed Lieutenant Scott and most of the able bodied men. Of the forty men on board, only six escaped at the end of what became known as the Scott Massacre. All seven women on the boat were presumed killed, though one was later found alive.32

Numerous secondary sources report that during the Scott Massacre, Indian warriors snatched white children by the feet and swung their heads against the side of the boat, killing them. Some cited this as an example of the atrocious actions of the dreadful Seminole enemies.33 The problem with this statement is that in none of Gaines’ reports of the incident mentioned children being on the boat. Certainly, if these actions had taken place, Gaines, looking for any excuse to invade Florida, would have reported them to his superiors. Instead, he only reported the twenty able-bodied men, twenty sick men, and seven women on board.34 The fact remains, however, that even if children were killed in this engagement, it was not the goal of the Indians to dash out the brains of white children. Attacking Scott’s party was instead an attempt to make the American army respect native autonomy.

32 Gaines to the Secretary of War, December 2, 1817, in ASMPA 1:687; Gaines to Jackson, December 2, 1817, in Sam B. Smith, et al., ed., The Papers of Andrew Jackson, 7 vols. to date (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980-), 4: 153-154; and Jackson to John C. Calhoun, April 20, 1818, in Smith ed. Papers of Jackson, 4: 193.
33 Several works report this. See Silver, Edmund Pendleton Gaines, 72; Owsley and Smith, Filibusters and Expansionists, 151; John K. Mahon, “The First Seminole War, November 21, 1817-May 24, 1818,” Florida Historical Quarterly 77 (1998): 64. Even works highly critical of Gaines, Jackson, and the First Seminole War report this, for example, Heidler and Heidler, Old Hickory’s War, 107.
34 Gaines to the Secretary of War, December 2, 1817, in ASMPA 1:687; Gaines to Jackson, December 2, 1817, in Smith ed. Papers of Jackson, 4: 153-54. An employee of Arbuthnot, Peter B. Cook seems to be the first to mention children on Scott’s boat, Cook to Elizabeth A. Carney, January 19, 1818, in ASPFR 4: 605. Politicians seized on this evidence in the political debates following the First Seminole War; see for example R.M. Johnson, “Report of The Minority,” in ASPMA 1: 736. Surprisingly, popular historian Joe Knetsch’s Florida’s Seminole Wars, 1817-1858 (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2003) is one of the first works to point this out, although Knetsch finds it unfortunate that the accounts of children with the Scott party were not reported by Gaines or Jackson. Knetsch, Florida’s Seminole Wars, 26-27.
By January 1818, Fowltown was deserted. American soldiers had stolen their provisions and Neamathla and his people likely knew that another and perhaps larger expedition against the town would soon come. The third American operation against Fowltown came on January 4, 1818. Lieutenant Colonel Arbuckle also led this expedition, which crossed the Flint and marched the distance to the village. When the soldiers found it abandoned, they burned it to the ground. However, the people of Fowltown established a new town after they fled to their allies near Lake Miccosukee in north Florida.\(^{35}\)

The attack on the Scott party made war between the United States and Indians in Florida inevitable. Andrew Jackson assumed the duties of commanding officer, arriving at Fort Scott in March 1818. His forces, which included regular army, militias from various states, and allied Creek soldiers, descended the Apalachicola River and erected a fort on the ruins of the Negro Fort. From there, the army marched on the villages of Lake Miccosukee. Actually engaging Indians in Florida was a constant problem for United States forces during the First Seminole War because, as had been the case on the third expedition against Fowltown, Seminoles frequently abandoned villages by the time American troops entered them. This was also the case on the last day of March and first day of April when the army burned the abandoned villages of Tallahassee and King Hatchy’s town of Miccosukee. On April 2, Americans discovered the relocated Fowltown, again abandoned, and again American soldiers destroyed it. At this new location, American forces found uniforms from Scott’s boat in the village. The also found white scalps, apparently taken from the heads of members of the Scott party. Americans viewed this as evidence of the Indians’ hostility and savagery, but American actions had forced Neamathla and his allies to fight back.\(^{36}\)

In addition to participating in the fighting and joining other Seminoles in Florida, Fowltown people avenged their sovereignty in another way. Shortly after the Scott ambush, Fowltown warriors captured illicit traders William Hambly and Edmund Doyle on the Apalachicola River. These men furnished supplies to the American squatters that unlawfully

\(^{35}\) Arbuckle to Jackson, January 12, 1818, in ASPMA 1: 695 and Robert Butler to Daniel Parker, May 3, 1818, in ASPMA 1: 703-704.

\(^{36}\) Calhoun to Jackson, December 26, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 690; Butler to Parker, May 3, 1818, in ASPMA 1: 703-704; Jackson to Calhoun, April 8, 1818, in Smith ed. Papers of Jackson, 4: 189-190; Missal and Missal, The Seminole Wars, 38-43; Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 204-205; and Heidler and Heidler, Old Hickory’s War, 143.
inhabited Native land. Further, the Indians were well aware that Hambly helped guide the 1816 American expedition against their allies at the Negro Fort. Creek and Seminole Indians held them until Jackson’s army swept through north Florida in the spring of 1818.  

For a time, with the American army and its Creek allies serving as common foes, like-minded, independent, and geographically and ideologically outlying Creeks came together to defend sovereignty and territory. The Americans pursuing them called them Seminoles, which was the tendency of Euro-Americans to term Indians living in Florida. Seminoles did not yet exist as tribe; both Creeks and American leaders continually held that they were merely wayward Creeks who needed to be brought back under the control of the National Council. Yet, Neamathla and his allies wanted little to do with Creek central politics and maintained they possessed autonomy at the village level.

Although no treaty ended the war between American forces and the Florida Indians, Jackson left Florida in late May, effectively ending official fighting in Spanish territory. But the war continued for the many Indians who still refused to submit to Creek central government. Fowltown’s people continued to fight for their autonomy after Jackson’s army left the region. But for white Americans, the battles about the First Seminole War moved from the Creek and Seminole towns of south Georgia and north Florida to the field of politics, as will be shown in the next chapter.

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38 Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 104
39 Hawkins to David B. Mitchell, September 7, 1812, in Grant ed., Writings of Hawkins, 617. Creek headman William McIntosh worked to bring the Seminoles under the sway of the National Council. See Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 211.
40 Heidler and Heidler, Old Hickory’s War, 174; Wright, Creeks and Seminoles, 208; and The (Boston) New England Palladium and Commercial Advertiser, July 28, 1818.
CHAPTER FOUR

“TO PENETRATE AND COUNTERACT THE DESIGNS OF MY PERSONAL ENEMIES:” DAVID B. MITCHELL, EDMUND P. GAINES, AND PERSONAL AND POLITICAL RIVALRY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST SEMINOLE WAR

The United States’ attack on Fowltown ended quickly. After two short skirmishes, Neamathla and his people suffered a handful of casualties and lost some of their provisions before repelling the attacking soldiers. By the end of the third American excursion against the village, the Indians had deserted the village and all the buildings were destroyed. Neamathla had two potential sets of allies to turn to in this dire moment. The first group was the collection of fellow Creeks and Seminoles who did not adhere to the governance of the Creek National Council, but rather attempted to preserve village autonomy. The other possible allies were white proponents of the civilization plan, represented by Creek Indian agent David B. Mitchell. Given that this latter ally intended to force Neamathla to abandon his autonomy and submit to the Creek central government, he chose the former option and continued to fight for local self-rule in tandem with the Lower Creeks and Seminoles. Despite Mitchell’s objectionable ideas, he ironically proved to be an advocate for Neamathla’s cause. The former Georgia governor disavowed the United States Army’s actions and strongly protested against Fowltown’s destruction, although his critique of the plan came too late.

According to contemporaries and historians, General Edmund P. Gaines’ harassment of Fowltown began the First Seminole War. The war, despite its brief span of a few months, caused a national scandal that was the subject of congressional debate and investigation for more than a year after the skirmishes at Fowltown. Pennsylvania Senator Abner Lacock’s committee investigating the war agreed with the prevailing opinion that Gaines’ actions precipitated the wider conflict. The committee based this finding on the testimony of agent Mitchell, who argued that Gaines’ needless attacks against Fowltown started the war.1

The ensuing debates between Mitchell and Gaines about the First Seminole War reflect larger political tensions over United States Indian policy. Mitchell, a representative of the civilization plan, was tasked with peacefully ushering in change to Native American society through trade and gifts designed to teach Indians to adopt sedentary Euro-American farming lifestyles. Gaines, like his superior Andrew Jackson, found the civilization plan slow, outdated, and ineffective. The First Seminole War debates pitted Mitchell and Gaines against each other in a professional capacity, and their rivalry played out in their discourses against each other after the war as they acted as proxies in the political battles surrounding American Indian policy.

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The national political rivalry at work in this scandal pitted advocates of the federal government’s civilization plan against expansionists in the military. The civilization plan, established in the 1790s by George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox and expanded drastically by Thomas Jefferson, held that Indians could be incorporated into American society by learning the practices of white civilized life, particularly Euro-American agriculture. By adopting these methods, Indians’ need for territory would be greatly reduced and over time their lands would open for white settlement. This plan provided a peaceful approach to the so-called Indian problem, although it inherently threatened the vitality of Native American culture. The responsibility for carrying out the plan fell to the Secretary of War. Influential Georgia politician William H. Crawford held this position for a short but important fourteen-month term from August 1815 to October 1816. Crawford, amid much criticism from expansionists, staunchly promoted the Civilization plan and even advocated intermarriage between whites and Native Americans.²

Crawford’s support of the civilization plan put him at odds with General Andrew Jackson, who considered the plan outdated and declared it “absurd” for the United States to negotiate with Indian tribes. Jackson wanted Indian lands open to white settlement immediately and extracted twenty million acres from the Creeks at the Treaty of Fort Jackson at the end of the

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Creek War in 1814. Even though American-allied Creeks lost the majority of land, Jackson was pleased that the territory he acquired for the United States was some of the best in the Creek nation. However, as a result of Cherokee protests that some of their land was included in the ceded territory, Crawford ordered parts of the treaty renegotiated in 1816, despite Jackson’s objections.³

Although the precise beginning of Jackson and Crawford’s rivalry is unclear, both were popular and politically ambitious. Their differences were profound; they held differing attitudes toward Native Americans, and Jackson made clear he had little use for civilian supervision over the military just as Crawford had that supervision as his task. At one point, Jackson ordered his subordinates to disregard commands from Crawford and the War Department unless first authorized by the general. Needless to say, this widened the rift between Crawford and Jackson. Even though Crawford left the War Department to become Secretary of Treasury in 1816, the rivalry lasted throughout the next decade. During this time, each man worked to tarnish the other’s reputation and this long-standing grudge included attacking each other’s political allies.⁴

The rivalry between Crawford and Jackson over the merits of the civilization plan spread to include their subordinates. David Brydie Mitchell was one of Crawford’s biggest allies in Georgia politics. Hailing from Scotland and immigrating to Georgia in 1782 to inherit his maternal uncle David Brydie’s estate, Mitchell became a successful Savannah lawyer, politician, judge, and brigadier general in the Georgia Militia. In 1809, Mitchell became the last foreign-born governor of the state. He occupied this position for three terms, two consecutively from 1809-1813 and one final term from 1815-1817. Mitchell stepped down as governor in 1817 to accept the position of Creek agent.⁵

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One wonders why a career politician was assigned to the agency. Historian Michael D. Green has labeled the appointment “purely political,” a maneuver conceived by William Crawford specifically to enhance his own political agenda. Now in the Treasury Department and as politically ambitious as ever, Crawford saw the benefits of having a staunch ally as the Creek agent. With Mitchell in the Creek agency, Crawford could take credit for any land cessions obtained. Crawford further manipulated events by delaying Mitchell’s assumption of his duties until March 1817, which left him governor of Georgia until Crawfordite William Rabun would become president of the Georgia Senate, and thereby able to succeed Mitchell. In this way, Crawford was able to utilize Mitchell without potentially losing Georgia to unsympathetic leadership.  

Mitchell’s appointment was dubious. As Governor, he frequently called on his predecessor at the Creek agency, Benjamin Hawkins, for more and more land. This forced Hawkins to remind Mitchell that he had “no partiality” to Georgia’s demands and informed the Governor that he was “specifically charged with the civilization of the Indians.” Other contemporaries expressed astonishment at Mitchell’s appointment. William Baldwin, a Navy physician, naturalist, and Pennsylvania Quaker who relocated to Georgia in 1811, questioned Mitchell’s qualifications and doubted Mitchell’s intentions to treat the Creeks justly. “I know him well” Baldwin wrote, “and cannot entertain a doubt but that in all his decisions he will lean to the side of Georgia,—the State in which he is popular, and where the popular cry is—exterminate the savages.”

While Governor, Mitchell occasionally utilized the provisions of the civilization plan to protect Indian interest. In February 1817, shortly before moving to the Creek agency, Mitchell requested that the Army remove unlawful white settlers from Creek lands, as he “was unwilling

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6 Green, Politics of Indian Removal, 52-53 (quote from 53) and Heidler and Heidler, Old Hickory’s War, 79-80.
8 William Baldwin to William Darlington, April 19, 1817, in Reliquiae Baldwinianae: Selections from the Correspondence of the Late William Baldwin, M.D., Surgeon in the U.S. Navy, with Occasional Notes and a Short Biographical Memoir, edited by William Darlington (Philadelphia: Kimber and Sharpless, 1843), 213-218 (quotation from 216); emphasis in original.
to give the Indians any just cause of complaint against” the United States.\(^9\) Otherwise, however, Governor Mitchell was a land-hungry politician, with a shaky record toward Indian affairs.

Mitchell’s time at the Creek agency was rife with allegations of scandal and impropriety. He was an active land speculator in the Creek Nation and monopolized trade there. Mitchell undercut the U.S. trading house at Fort Hawkins by allowing traders to sell goods to the soldiers stationed at outposts throughout Creek territory as well as to the Indians themselves. These practices drew criticism from other government agents such as factor Daniel Hughes, who lamented that the mobile traders had the upper hand on providing merchandise, as factors could not leave their posts to engage in commerce. Mitchell informed the Hughes that he “would not or could not restrict the intercourse with the Indians if goods were offered upon better terms than I [Hughes] could sell.” Hughes later discovered that Mitchell himself, with the help of his sons, had established his own store for trading with the Creeks. Creek chief William McIntosh, a partner in the store, aided Mitchell in this enterprise. Instead of paying the Creek Nation’s annuity in cash, Mitchell, through McIntosh, provided headmen with overpriced merchandise from the store.\(^10\)

Undoubtedly, Mitchell used his position for personal gains. He abused the trade system that other government officials felt were so important to the civilization plan and became involved in matters that had little to do with the Creeks. However, his exploitation of trade did not necessarily detract from the success of the plan, as the tools of civilization still flowed into Creek country. Further, Mitchell, perhaps following the suggestions of William H. Crawford and others, became an in-law to William McIntosh when one of Mitchell’s sons married a daughter of McIntosh.\(^11\) Finally, despite his numerous unscrupulous dealings, Mitchell represented the civilization plan to the Creeks before, during, and after the First Seminole War.

Whereas Mitchell served William Crawford’s interests during this period, General Edmund Pendleton Gaines was Jackson’s ally in the Fowltown Affair. A North Carolinian by birth, Gaines was a career officer, having received a commission in the Army as a second

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\(^9\) Mitchell to Gaines, February 5, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 748.
\(^11\) Green, Politics of Indian Removal, 56.
lieutenant in 1799 at the age of twenty-two. He quickly rose through the ranks, distinguished himself during the War of 1812, and upon its conclusion was selected as one of the two brigadier generals to serve in the Southern military sector under Andrew Jackson.\footnote{James W. Silver, \textit{Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Frontier General} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 5-53 and John K. Mahon, \textit{The War of 1812} (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972), 277-280.}

It was in this position, as subordinate to Jackson in the South, that Gaines became the rival of Creek agent David B. Mitchell. Gaines, like Jackson, did not trust the Indians he encountered in the southern reaches of the United States. Gaines had misgivings about Native Americans, and candidly told Jackson and Secretary of War Crawford in similar letters that he placed “little faith” in Indian promises.\footnote{Edmund Pendleton Gaines to Andrew Jackson, May 14, 1816 in \textit{Papers of Andrew Jackson}, 4: 30-31 (quotation from 31) and Gaines to Crawford, April 30, 1816, in \textit{American State Papers, Foreign Relations}, 6 vols. (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1833-1859), 4: 557-558 (quote from 558; hereafter cited as \textit{ASPFR}).} Gaines doubted that the peaceful Civilization plan would work, and believed instead that military force would be necessary to reform Native ways of life.\footnote{Gaines to Jackson, October 1, 1817, in \textit{Papers of Andrew Jackson}, 4: 140-141 and Gaines to the Secretary of War, December 4, 1817, in \textit{ASPIA} 2: 161.}

The general’s antagonism toward the Indians pervaded his conduct through the end of the First Seminole War. In late summer or early fall of 1817 Gaines castigated King Hatchy, a Seminole leader, stating “[y]our Seminoles are very bad people.” Gaines referenced several offences against Americans committed by the Seminoles, especially the killing of white settlers. The general concluded his letter by demanding that the Seminoles submit to American authority. If the Seminoles refused, he warned, the United States possessed “good strong warriors, with scalping-knives and tomahawks,” which they would use to enforce it.\footnote{Gaines to the Seminole Chief, n.d., in \textit{ASPM A} 1: 723. King Hatchy received this letter in August 1817, according to Alexander Arbuthnot, who acted as advisor for the Indians. See Arbuthnot to Charles Bagot, n.d., in \textit{ASPM A} 1: 723.} King Hatchy replied that he had “cause to complain of the Americans.” He admitted that one white settler was killed, but only because he had been caught attempting to steal some of the Indians cattle. The Seminole leader further complained that unlawful settlers had murdered four Indians. King Hatchy threatened to “use force to stop any armed Americans from passing” his towns or land.\footnote{King Hatchy to Gaines, n.d., in \textit{ASPM A} 1: 723.}
Gaines bristled at this threat and reported to the Secretary of War that the Indians had refused to meet his demands to turn in warriors who had killed white settlers. The general also rejected King Hatchy’s explanation that the Seminoles only retaliated after whites killed some of their people, despite the fact that the Natives had professed the desire to be left alone. Given his attitudes toward the Natives, General Gaines especially objected to receiving orders from Neamathla that the United States was not to cross onto the east side of the Flint River.\(^{17}\)

At the end of October, Acting Secretary of War George Graham wrote to Gaines that the government approved of moving troops closer to the Seminoles. He authorized the general to remove any Indians still remaining on territory ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Fort Jackson and to hold a number of them hostage “until reparation may have been made for the depredations which have been committed.” However, the Graham expressly prohibited troops from crossing into Florida to pursue the Seminoles.\(^{18}\)

Gaines did not get this letter until early December, and in the meantime he continued building up his troops in anticipation of an attack. On November 9, he related to Graham that the Seminoles had no plans to turn any people over to the Americans. He also reported that “it appears they are determined to attack us as soon as we cross the Flint River; and that they have two thousand seven hundred warriors.” Gaines believed these numbers might be somewhat exaggerated, but nonetheless requested additional troops from the Georgia militia. Gaines justified his call for the militia by stating “in a war with savages, I think little should be hazarded; as every little advantage which we suffer them to acquire tends to add, in an extraordinary degree to their strength and confidence.”\(^{19}\)

Twelve days later, on November 21, Gaines sent word to Andrew Jackson describing Major David Twiggs attack on Fowltown. Gaines’ hubris and the little faith he put in Indian threats led to this skirmish. Further, Gaines, who previously and continually doubted the size of the Indians that he forced into hostility, now guessed the number of Seminoles and their allies to be more than two thousand.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{17}\) Gaines to Secretary of War, October 1, 1817 and Ten Towns to the Commanding Officer at Fort Hawkins, September 11, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 685.

\(^{18}\) Secretary of War to Gaines, October 30, 1817 in ASPMA 1: 685-686; quotation from 686.

\(^{19}\) Gaines to Secretary of War, November 9, 1817 and Gaines to Jackson, November 9, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686

\(^{20}\) Gaines to Jackson, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686.
On December 2, Gaines finally received the Graham’s October 30 authorization to remove the Indians in southern Georgia. Gaines seemed to think this course of action was ineffective. He replied to Graham:

I am now quite convinced that the hostility of these Indians is, and has long since been, of so deep a character, as to leave no ground to calculate upon tranquility, or the future security of our frontier settlements, until the towns south and east of this place shall receive a signal proof of our ability and willingness to retaliate for every outrage.

He then explained the circumstances of the Seminole retaliatory attack on the supply party commanded by Lieutenant R. W. Scott on the Apalachicola River below the Georgia line. Given the location of the attack, Gaines felt that limiting his engagement with the Indians to territory north of the Florida line had “reference only to the past, and not to the present or future outrages.” He hoped that the federal government would agree and allow him to attack Seminole towns south of the border.21

On December 15, Gaines learned that he was still prohibited from entering Florida to pursue his enemies. Although he wrote that, for his part, the order would be “scrupulously observed,” he suggested that the United States needed to establish dominance over the Seminoles with a show of force. The Seminoles, he explained, believed that American soldiers could not beat them. They were not aware of the power and resources of the United States. Gaines then related his disappointment that he was not able to retaliate after the loss of Lieutenant Scott’s party, which gave the “enemy a moment of triumph” and emboldened other Indians. Attacking the Seminoles, then, would teach them a lesson. Gaines desired to enter Florida to do this and added, perhaps to influence the Secretary of War or the president, “[t]here is little ground to apprehend that we shall find it necessary to follow the Indians far beyond the national boundary.”22

Gaines’ plea to enter Florida echoed the views of his superior officer. Andrew Jackson wrote during this period that the protection of the United States required “that the wolf be struck in his den.” If the Indians discovered that the American military could not pursue them into Florida, attacks on white settlers would increase. “The war hatchet having been raised,” Jackson concluded, “unless the Indians sue for peace, your frontier cannot be protected without entering

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21 Gaines to Secretary of War, December 2, 1817, ASPMA 1: 687.
22 Gaines to Secretary of War, December 15, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 689.
their country.”

The recently installed Secretary of War John C. Calhoun had not yet received Gaines and Jackson’s letters, but was already contemplating the possibility of an invasion of Florida. Consequently, on December 16, 1817 he authorized Gaines to consider himself “at liberty to march across the Florida line and attack [the Seminoles] within its limits.”

Although this authorization would not reach them for some time, Jackson and Gaines had permission to attack Seminoles wherever they were. British trader Alexander Arbuthnot wrote to the British minister in Washington that the two generals had long sought this authorization. Arbuthnot viewed Gaines’ August letter to King Hatchy as an attempt to gather intelligence and determine the size of the force needed to overrun the Seminoles. Since the time of the letter and before the attack on Fowltown, Gaines and Jackson, Arbuthnot wrote, “seem to have been collecting troops and settling in various quarters” to prepare for an attack.

It seems, therefore, that Edmund P. Gaines had little use for the civilization plan. Although he desired “bringing over savage man to the walks of civil life” peaceably, he held that it was not practicable. “The poisonous cup of barbarism,” he wrote, “cannot be taken from the lips of the savage by mild reason alone.” Despite the government’s money and philanthropy, he held that no tribe, with the exception of the Chickasaws, had remained peaceful for any lengthy span of time. The general also had little esteem for the Seminoles. Ironically, Gaines’ antagonistic actions toward the Seminoles reinforced his views. He continually distrusted Native Americans and looked for examples of hostile Indians. By treating them as such, as in the case of Fowltown, he forced them to become in his mind hostile, even though Neamathla was merely carrying out his promise to defend his territory.

The animosity that developed between Edmund Gaines and David Mitchell began shortly after the United States’ attacks on Fowltown. On December 2, Gaines described to Mitchell the Fowltown skirmishes and the Seminole retaliation on the Scott party. Gaines related that several of the American-allied Lower Creeks offered to help the army pursue the Indians residing within Spanish territory. Mitchell met with the allied Creeks, who expressed regret at the outbreak of

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23 Jackson to Secretary of War, December 16, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 688.
24 Secretary of War to Gaines, December 16, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 688.
26 Gaines to Secretary of War, December 4, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 688.
27 Gaines to Mitchell, December 2, 1817, Box 47, Folder 9, Telamon Cuyler Collection, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, GA.
fighting but also informed Mitchell that they would join Gaines against the Seminoles. Mitchell, however, honoring the order not to cross into Florida, informed the Creeks that the United States did not wish to attack the Seminoles. The agent added that the president “would not consent to their going against the Seminoles within the Spanish territory, under authority of the United States.” Mitchell implored the Creeks to wait until he gave them the order to muster and asked them to meet at the agency on January 11, 1818 for instructions.\footnote{Mitchell to Acting Secretary of War, December 14, 1817, in ASPMA 688-689 (quote from 688.)}

During this time, and before news of the Scott attack could reach Washington, Gaines was dispatched to Amelia Island in northeastern Florida to seize it and oust a group of smugglers that had taken up residence there. Gaines, not enthusiastic about being removed from the situation in southwest Georgia, wrote that he intended to take the island against little expected opposition, and return to Fort Scott posthaste. On December 26, Calhoun received word of the fighting near the Flint and Apalachicola Rivers and wrote to Gaines that the government had hoped the hostilities would end without an invasion of Florida. Given the new circumstances, Calhoun informed Gaines and Jackson that the latter was to assume command of forces against the Seminoles. Calhoun instructed Gaines to finish his task at Amelia Island and return to Fort Scott to await Jackson’s arrival. However, Calhoun also authorized Gaines to attack the Seminoles in Florida if he determined his force sufficient to do so.\footnote{Silver, Edmund Pendleton Gaines, 73-74; Heidler and Heidler, Old Hickory’s War, 103; Gaines to Graham, December 15, 1817, Calhoun to Gaines, December 26, 1817, and Calhoun to Jackson, December 26, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 689-690.}

Gaines and Jackson now possessed the ability to enter Florida, and they hoped to do so with as many regular army troops, volunteer militiamen, and allied Creeks as possible. They were displeased that Mitchell, still laboring under the impression that the boundary was not to be crossed, delayed the allied Creeks from mustering. For his part as a representative of the civilization plan, Mitchell felt that war could be avoided, and consequently he worked to prevent it. He sent an envoy to the Seminoles to determine if a peaceable solution could be found, as he did not believe invading Spanish territory would be necessary. However, after learning of the
order to pursue the Seminoles in Florida, Mitchell asked the allied Creeks to comply with the military and join Jackson and Gaines.  

This row over the use of Creek soldiers played a part in the debates surrounding the Fowltown Affair as it pitted Mitchell and the civilization plan against Gaines, Jackson, and the military. Adding to the tension between the two sides were accusations made by Gaines that Mitchell was illegally smuggling Africans into the Creek nation to be sold as slaves contrary to the 1807 non-importation law. Given Mitchell’s penchant for corruption, these charges were not outlandish.  

After the allegations, Mitchell was on the defensive. He explained to Calhoun that he did not know where Gaines was getting his information and that the slaves in question were brought into the country by “some respectable gentlemen” who were intending to settle in Alabama. Mitchell held that Gaines trumped up the slave smuggling charges against him because the general was displeased that Mitchell had delayed his plans to mobilize allied Creek troops. He wrote:

General Gaines by his own conduct has brought upon himself the embarrassment and difficulties he now experiences, and the loss he has sustained; and it is unjust that he should endeavour [sic] without the least shadow of propriety or evidence to support him, by insinuations and improper colorings to his official communication to divert the public attention from himself to others, and particularly to myself, with a view to my injury in the public opinion.

Mitchell firmly believed Gaines was responsible for instigating war with previously peaceful Indians and that the general was attempting to smear his reputation.  

The holdup of allied Creek troops and accusations of slave smuggling did little to stop the American invasion of Florida to attack the Seminoles. The forces under generals Jackson and

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32 Mitchell to Calhoun, February 3, 1818 in *Papers of Calhoun*, 2: 114-118; quotations from 117 and 118. See also Mitchell to Georgia Governor William Rabun, February 13, 1818 in *The Reflector* (Milledgeville, GA), February 24, 1818.
Gaines swiftly moved through northern Florida, destroying towns on Lake Miccosukee and the Suwannee River. Although official orders prohibited American forces from taking Spanish posts, Jackson believed he had tacit approval from President James Monroe to terminate Spain’s presence in Florida. Accordingly, he did not hesitate to take St. Marks and Pensacola, and he ordered Gaines to occupy St. Augustine. During the course of the war, the Americans captured and executed two British subjects, Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister, who were aiding the Seminoles. Unfortunately for expansionists Jackson and Gaines, the Monroe administration, fearing reprisal from Great Britain for the execution of Arbuthnot and Ambrister and from Spain for wresting control of their territory, relinquished territorial gains made in Florida.  

The First Seminole War led to lengthy debates and committee investigations in Congress. The rivalry between David B. Mitchell and General Edmund P. Gaines was fully revealed in the course of these investigations. Mitchell testified before the Senate about the origins of the Seminole War in February 1819. He described the Georgia frontier as a place where “a spirit of retaliation has mutually prevailed” between Indians and white settlers. Both groups took part, but tensions were exacerbated by “a set of lawless and abandoned characters, who had taken refuge on both sides of the St. Mary’s river, living principally by plunder.” These unlawful whites instigated hostilities in 1817 by attacking a group of Seminoles, who promptly retaliated by killing a Mrs. Garret.

Mitchell continued his testimony by describing his first meeting as Indian agent with the Creeks at Fort Hawkins. He stated that he impressed upon the Creeks the need to preserve peace and argued that the southernmost towns had not joined the anti-American faction in the Creek War. However, Redstick Creeks and the British exerted influenced upon some of them. This made a few of lower town Creeks “obnoxious to the friendly part of their own nation, and to the

34 Heidler and Heidler, Old Hickory’s War, 207.  
35 Testimony of David B. Mitchell, February 23, 1819, in ASPMA 1: 748-749; quotes from 748 and 749 respectively. Mitchell had previously reported the killing Mrs. Garret and her child as “retaliation for the killing of an Indian about three or four weeks previous, on the Florida side of the St. Mary’s River, by some worthless white men who reside on the frontiers of East Florida, and who live by plunder.” Mitchell to the Secretary of War, March 30, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 683. This retaliatory killing was admitted by some Indians who found in the Garret household a kettle belonging to the Indian who had been killed. Gaines to the Secretary of War, October 1, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 685.
United States.” Mitchell noted that he had worked to persuade the Creek chiefs to “restrain the restless sprits among them” to avoid war. Fowltown was one such town that had fallen under the influence of the British and the Redsticks. However, Mitchell asserted that shortly after his meeting with the Creeks at Fort Hawkins, he received word that Fowltown and two other villages near Fort Scott expressed the desire to become friendly to the United States. The Indian agent even presented the committee with a copy of the letter from the Fort Scott’s commander, Major David Twiggs, as evidence of Fowltown’s good intentions. Mitchell asserted that he was successful in restoring friendly relations among the Indians on the Georgia frontier.  

However, before Mitchell could send envoys to the three villages, General Gaines arrived at Fort Scott and sent for Neamathla. When the Fowltown leader did not immediately meet with the general, Gaines ordered Fowltown attacked and destroyed. Undoubtedly bearing in mind the slave smuggling charges made against him by Gaines, Mitchell testified that Gaines’ attack was unwarranted and it only fomented needless violence. It was, he said, “the immediate cause of the Seminole war.”

Mitchell also insinuated in his testimony that Gaines intended to pursue Indians in Florida and wanted to use allied Creeks to do so. Mitchell stated that he informed the Creeks to be prepared to muster but to wait for further orders as early as July 1817. In the meantime, Mitchell testified, Gaines tried to go around the Indian agent’s orders and contact Creek leader William McIntosh to secure the services of his warriors. Mitchell, as has been seen, delayed the marshalling of Creek forces because the government’s policy up to that time had precluded an invasion of Florida. Gaines, however, informed Mitchell “from the representations he [Gaines] had made” to the War Department, Gaines felt the restriction would be removed and desired immediate use of the Indian allies.

As a final parting shot at Gaines, Mitchell challenged the number of “hostile Seminole Indians” reported by the general. Gaines, after the attack on Fowltown, estimated the force of the Seminoles to exceed two thousand men, plus more than four hundred allied African Americans. Mitchell guessed the number to be about half that, with about seven hundred Indians and between two hundred and fifty to three hundred allied blacks. Mitchell added that the

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37 Testimony of Mitchell, February 23, 1819, in ASPMA 1: 749.
38 Testimony of Mitchell, February 23, 1819, in ASPMA 1: 749
majority of the Indians fled the approaching army long before the Americans actually engaged them in Florida.\footnote{Gaines to Jackson, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686 and Testimony of Mitchell, February 23, 1819, in ASPMA 1: 749}

Mitchell’s testimony squarely placed the blame for the First Seminole War on Edmund Gaines. In his testimony before Congress, Mitchell attempted to show that he had Indian relations under control on the Georgia frontier. He further implied that Gaines instigated hostilities and misrepresented the number of ‘hostile’ Indians in order to attack. In this sense, Mitchell was successful as the Lacock Committee sided with him and declared the Fowltown Affair to be the beginning of the war.\footnote{ASPMA 1: 739.}

Mitchell’s testimony heavily influenced the national media’s opinions of the Fowltown Affair. Writers used the Indian agent’s views to berate Gaines and the army for acting as the aggressor and starting the war. Before Mitchell’s testimony, the PhiladelphiaWeekly Aurora had lambasted the general, noting that the “imbecility of Gen. Gaines throughout the Seminole war has, perhaps no equal.” The beginning of the war, the Aurora wrote, “was entirely owing to the want of the mental resources in that general; and that every thing that was required to be done, could have been done, had he been adequate to the command entrusted him.”\footnote{“Seminola,” The Weekly Aurora (Philadelphia, PA), September 14, 1818.}

After the Lacock Committee report, the New York Daily Advertiser noted that the report must be read with interest by all “who take the least concern of public affairs of the country.” The newspaper quoted Mitchell’s testimony, described the events of Gaines’ ordered attack at Fowltown, and concluded “War, then, was begun on our part.” “It is to Gen. Gaine’s [sic] movement upon the Fowl Town,” the Daily Advertiser continued, “that Lt. Scott, and his unfortunate party are indebted for the loss of their lives.” The New York paper, like Mitchell, also took Gaines to task over the number of Seminoles involved in the conflict and lambasted both him and Jackson for the buildup of American and Creek forces used to invade Florida. Other newspapers followed suit in criticizing the military’s actions in the First Seminole War. For example, the Salem Gazette of Massachusetts also found Gaines responsible for the war and exclaimed, “Our White Savages committed the first aggressions.”\footnote{The New York Daily Advertiser, March 3, 1819 and “Seminole War,” The Salem (Massachusetts) Gazette, March 9, 1819; emphasis in originals.}
The reports and newspaper articles did not go unnoticed by Gaines, who was apprised of them by Jackson in April 1819. Jackson believed Mitchell’s testimony to be a scheme by William H. Crawford to attack the military by “endeavouring [sic] to throw the blame of the Seminole war on” Gaines and to also defame the subordinate general’s “military character [sic].” Gaines’ reply to the charges that he was responsible for the First Seminole War would not come until October 1819, but when they did they were exhaustive and pointed.

The general wrote Secretary of War Calhoun that he was “inexpressibly hurt and embarrassed” by the findings of the Lacock Committee. The committee’s verdict angered Gaines for a number of reasons, not least the structure of the investigation. He learned of the committee’s examination of the First Seminole War through newspaper publications, but since he was not called to Washington to attend the meetings, he assumed that his conduct would not be investigated. Thus, after seeing the committee’s report, he was outraged that his role in the war was determined solely by Mitchell’s testimony. The general had had no way to publicly reply to the accusations. As he was denied the chance to be heard, Gaines found the committee findings meaningless and unconstitutional.

Gaines was also incensed at Mitchell’s personal attacks on his honor and reputation, which he described as “a thousand times dearer to me than life.” The general felt it absurd that the committee, though not legally authorized to pass judgment, did so in a case that affected the reputation of a public official, specifically his. Gaines found the report to be the “incipient act of a special inquisition devoid of the power to pass sentence upon whoever they deem to be the offenders.”

Gaines determined that David Mitchell aided this “special inquisition” in attacking his character and reputation. He complained that the report’s most profound accusations were based on Mitchell’s testimony, the majority of which Gaines found to be false. Throughout the rest of the letter, Gaines worked “to penetrate and counteract the designs of my personal enemies” even though Mitchell’s statements, Gaines observed, “may have done me all the injury intended or expected.”

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43 Jackson to Gaines, April 24, 1819, in *Papers of Andrew Jackson* 4: 289-290; quotes from 289.
44 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in *ASPMA* 2: 125-130. Quotes from 125.
45 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in *ASPMA* 2: 126; emphasis in original.
46 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in *ASPMA* 2: 125-126; quotes from 125 and 126 respectively.
Gaines then deconstructed Mitchell’s testimony point by point, and engaged in some attacks of his own. Gaines first questioned why Mitchell was in Washington testifying and not at the Creek Agency, carrying out his duties for the government. The general then took Mitchell to task for his descriptions of reciprocal violence on the Georgia frontier. Mitchell had insinuated that the Garret killings opened the violence between whites and Indians before the First Seminole War, but Gaines argued that in this statement Mitchell revealed “his true character for deep calumny and misrepresentation.” Gaines maintained that Mitchell downplayed the continued bloodshed on the frontier prior to the Fowltown Affair even though Mitchell, first as governor and then as Indian agent, was certainly aware of its existence. Gaines also attacked Mitchell’s statement that the instigators of the violence were white “lawless and abandoned characters.” Gaines argued that it did not matter whether white victims were lawless or not; it was enough for him to know that white Americans, regardless of their location, were attacked. In making this statement, Gaines’ rejection of the civilization plan and its provisions designed to keep trespassers off Indian lands is particularly apparent.47

In addressing the Fowltown Affair specifically, Gaines contended that Mitchell’s testimony was “positively destitute of truth.” The general refuted Mitchell’s claim that a Fowltown headman met with Major David Twiggs at Fort Scott to profess friendliness. As the Indian agent attached a letter from Twiggs, so too did Gaines, only this letter held that Twiggs did not meet with anyone from Fowltown and that the Creeks he did meet with were not pleased with Neamathla’s actions. Gaines concluded that Mitchell simply fabricated portions of evidence to condemn the general.48

Next, Gaines defended his actions, labeling the people of Fowltown as, at the least, cattle and horse thieves. “Not a doubt remained in my mind,” he wrote, “of the guilt of the Fowltown chief and warriors,” and consequently he had felt justified in sending troops to the village. However, the general maintained that he did not order the attack on Fowltown, nor was there evidence of an actual attack. He argued that his intention had been for Major Twiggs to simply

47 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 126-127; quotes from 126. Gaines also referenced a letter from Mitchell in which the then governor informed Gaines of Indian-white violence. However, Mitchell also requested Gaines to use military authority to remove unlawful settlers, as he was “unwilling to give the Indians any just cause of complaint against us.” Mitchell to Gaines, February 5, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 748.

48 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 128 (quotation) and Twiggs to Gaines, October 7, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 131.
bring in Neamathla and the warriors, not to take or destroy Fowltown. Gaines even enclosed copies of his original orders to not treat Fowltown as hostile unless the Indians tried to escape, as well as Twiggs’ after-action report to the general, which held that his forces entered the town, the Indians fled with an indeterminable number of small losses, and the expedition returned to Fort Scott.49

Finally, Gaines addressed the charges that he was responsible for raising an army of Creeks in order to invade Florida. Gaines maintained that he simply requested the use of American-allied Creek warriors. In October 1817, Mitchell, in Gaines’ view, seemed willing to comply with this request and informed Gaines that he would speak with Creek leaders about the matter. However, before the Creeks mustered, Gaines argued, the prospect of smuggling African slaves through Creek territory arose. David Mitchell seized the opportunity and delayed the organization of the allied Creeks to create confusion, as “[a] half war half peace system evidently most desirable” to smugglers. Therefore, the general concluded, he did not raise the Creek forces, he only accepted their services, which “were prevented by the intrigues of a negro smuggling agent from joining” Gaines.50

Gaines made sure that he reminded Calhoun of the slave smuggling charges against Mitchell. The general found that since he had accused Mitchell, the Indian agent had “endeavored to injure me by a false and malicious attempt to prove me guilty of an act which he which he considers to have been the immediate cause of the Seminole war.”51 Gaines was not far off the mark.

However, each man in this debate had an axe to grind with the other, and in their lengthy discourses of vindication and attack, they both occasionally stretched the truth or omitted information. Mitchell described the retaliatory violence on the frontier in too small of a geographical and temporal box. Gaines, likewise, downplayed the skirmishes at Fowltown, only mentioning the first one and neglecting to report, as he had to Jackson immediately after the first skirmish, that four Fowltown men and one woman were killed in the brief encounter.52

49 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 128 (quotation) and Gaines to Twiggs, November 20, 1817 and Twiggs to Gaines, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 2: 131.
50 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 129-130 (quotations from 129 and 130 respectively) and Mitchell to Gaines, October 7, 1817, in ASPMA 2: 132.
51 Gaines to Calhoun, October 17, 1819, in ASPMA 2: 129.
52 Gaines to Jackson, November 21, 1817, in ASPMA 1: 686.
The personal rivalry between Gaines and Mitchell came to an end with the investigation of the slave smuggling charges. Andrew Jackson, angered that Mitchell had withheld allied Creeks troops and convinced that William H. Crawford orchestrated the congressional examination of the First Seminole War, aided his subordinate in attacking Mitchell. Jackson reached out to John Clark, Crawford and Mitchell’s leading adversary in Georgia politics, in order to solicit help in sullying Crawford’s character. Clark jumped at the opportunity, eventually publishing a pamphlet criticizing Crawford. It pleased Jackson to report in November 1819 that Mitchell was under investigation for smuggling Africans and Clark had won Georgia’s governorship, which precipitated a decline in Crawford’s influence over Georgia politics.\(^5^3\)

John Clark took the lead for Jackson and Gaines in building and prosecuting a case against Mitchell. The new governor publicly requested that citizens contribute any known facts of the case and quickly assembled a body of evidence. Mitchell was to be tried in Milledgeville’s United States Circuit Court in May of 1820. Unfortunately for the court, the two-year statute of limitations on the original non-importation law ran out, and no indictment was issued. However, the grand jury still felt the need to issue a statement that they were of the opinion that Mitchell’s actions were a “flagrant violation” of United States laws.\(^5^4\)

Unfortunately for Mitchell, President Monroe directed Attorney General William Wirt to reassess the case. The evidence against Mitchell compelled Wirt to make the “painful” conclusion that Mitchell was “guilty of having prostituted his power, as agent for Indian affairs at the Creek agency, to the purpose of aiding and assisting in a conscious breach of the act of Congress of 1807, in prohibition of the slave trade—and this from mercenary motives.” Monroe,


in turn, instructed Secretary of War Calhoun to release Mitchell from his duties as Indian agent in 1821.\footnote{William Wirt to President Monroe, January 21, 1821, in \textit{American State Papers, Miscellaneous}, 2 vols., (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-1861), 2: 957-975 (quotation from 975) and Calhoun to Mitchell, February 16, 1821, in “Negro Trading,” \textit{Niles Weekly Register}, April 21, 1821.}

When all the dust settled surrounding the animosity between Edmund Gaines and David Mitchell, nothing was done on behalf of the Creeks and Seminoles attacked by American forces. Mitchell was made Indian agent through the political machinations of William Crawford and discharged of his duties under a cloud of scandal. Gaines’ reputation was briefly tarnished, but his career was not affected in the long term as he remained in the Army until his death from cholera in 1849.\footnote{Green, \textit{Politics of Indian Removal}, 54 and Silver, \textit{Edmund Pendleton Gaines}, 270-271.} The two men’s occupations and higher-ranking allies pitted them against each other, but genuine enmity ensued. They used the fallout after the First Seminole War and debates about the Fowltown Affair for personal motives to sully one another’s reputation. All the while, people from Fowltown and many other Creeks and Seminoles driven from their homes by the war had no true advocates or means of recourse.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

Fowltown’s destruction and the First Seminole War provide an interesting and complex look into Native and American relations and policy in the early nineteenth century. The village and the events occurring in and around it in the late 1810s have geopolitical importance on multiple levels. First, Fowltown represents a contested area that illuminates the political struggles of the Creek Indians in the 1800s. Previously, villages prioritized local autonomy and made their own decisions without fear of reprisal from other members of the Creek Confederacy. However, with the rising influence of the Creek National Council and the intensification of the trend toward centralization, nonconformists became targets of the council as more centralized Creeks tried to assert their own authority. In the First Seminole War, as was the case in the Creek Civil War, dissenters from the National Council moved away from the Creeks both geographically and ideologically with many eventually making it to Florida and joining with their Seminole relatives. Thus, Fowltown was one location that the process of Seminolization took place.

The real and political battlefields at Fowltown also provide insight into opposing factions’ views about United States Indian policy. Proponents of the civilization plan, such as William Crawford and David B. Mitchell, felt that the government’s peaceful approach toward Native Americans was working effectively and that there was no need for the outbreak of war. On the other hand, politicians, settlers, and military officers, like Andrew Jackson and Edmund P. Gaines, found the civilization plan protracted and ineffective. They refused to believe that Native Americans could be incorporated into the fold of white society and deemed it necessary to forcefully subjugate Native populations. Out of these political positions, personal rivalries emerged leading to the debates about the outbreak of fighting at Fowltown between Mitchell and Gaines. As Gaines effectively won the personal battle over Mitchell, as the former Georgia governor lost his position as Creek agent, so too did advocates of military conquest of Native Americans win out over the civilization plan. Fowltown, along with the First Seminole War as a whole, represents a place in which the civilization plan lost out to the more powerful forces of the military, signifying a shift in American Indian policy that would eventually lead to removal.
Fowltown was a space where various intersecting contentions about Native American’s place in society played out, thus revealing uncertainty and disagreement among both groups—Creek and white—about the proper way to proceed. White Americans divided along lines concerning civilization and conquest. Creeks were forced to choose between acculturation and submission to both the National Council and the United States or to resist attacks on their autonomy and fight back. Neamathla and Fowltown chose the latter and joined up with likeminded Creeks and Seminoles in Florida.

Shortly after the First Seminole War, the United States took possession of Florida through the Adams-Onis Treaty. Native Americans in Florida, whether they had been in the new American territory since the 1700s or were recent emigrants from Alabama and Georgia, were forced to deal with the United States. America’s plan for Florida Indians involved removing them from fertile north Florida—either removing them to live among the Creeks or concentrating them elsewhere in Florida—and selling the land. Discussions between the United States and the Indians proved difficult in late 1822 as the Florida territorial government’s organization fell apart, leaving no one to negotiate on the United States’ behalf at the planned November 20 meeting at St. Marks. A handful of chiefs arrived, waited for three days, and returned to their towns annoyed that no American negotiators came. After the stillborn negotiation, Major Thomas Wright performed damage control for the United States. Wright assembled some of the nearby headmen to assure them that there was no intended slight on the part of the American government and implore the Florida Indians to remain peaceful.1

Among the leaders that met with Wright was Neamathla. In the years since the First Seminole War, he had built a good reputation with other Natives in Florida and American officials saw him as the main leader of the Florida Indians. Neamathla assured Wright that his people would remain peaceful until proper talks could be carried out. “What a change was here

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revealed in Neamathla!” exclaims John K. Mahon, comparing Neamathla’s amicable conduct in 1822 to his 1817 refusal to meet with Edmund Gaines at Fort Scott.²

Despite this apparent change, Neamathla continued to defend the territory and autonomy of his people while advocating selective acceptance of the civilization plan in the talks and treaty negotiations of the 1820s. In March 1823, while meeting with newly appointed Indian Agent Gad Humphreys, Neamathla accepted the fact that hunting deer and other game could not sustain his village. However, neither could a solely agrarian lifestyle. Also ever aware of the problems encroaching white settlers presented, Neamathla advised Humphreys of the following:

We must have lands to raise Corn and other things. Game is getting scarce, and we cannot find enough of it to live upon. Me must therefore have land to work, & should be glad of tools to work with. We cannot quit hunting altogether, but can both hunt & work... We wish that the white people be told not to come and crowd upon us. If they do, I am afraid my young people will grow foolish, and get into difficulty. We do not want them near our lands. The land we live on at Talahassee [sic], we consider ours.

Neamathla, thus, incorporated facets of the new order that benefitted his followers. Yet he still insisted on protecting claims to land and carrying on cultural aspects.³

Later, in September 1823, Neamathla acted as the main negotiator for the diverse Florida Indians at the Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Although the treaty had disastrous implications for Florida’s Native Americans—it terminated their claim to the majority of Florida land—Neamathla secured for his followers a reservation in North Florida near Tallahassee. The Moultrie Creek Treaty supplied Florida Indians with livestock and agricultural tools, as well as providing for the establishment of a school at the Florida agency. But the school was not established and confounded American officials wondered why the Indians possessed no desire to educate their children. Neamathla replied to Florida Territorial Governor William Duval:

It is very good to know all those things which the white people know, and it is right for them to teach them to their children. We also instruct ours in our own way: we teach them to procure food by hunting, and to kill their enemies. But we want no such schools, such as you offer us. We wish our children to remain as the Great Spirit made them, and as their fathers are, Indians.

³ Reply of Neamathla to talk, March 20, 1823, in Letters Received by the Office of the Secretary of War Relating to Indian Affairs, 1800-1823, National Archives and Records Services, Microcopy 271. Emphasis in original.
Here again, Neamathla showed his acceptance of aspects of the civilization plan (livestock) as well as his commitment to tradition. He feared that educating native children with white lessons would chip away at their Indian identity, concluding, “we desire no school, and none of the teachings of white people. The Master of Life knew what was best for his children. We are satisfied. Let us alone.”

American negotiators at Moultrie Creek hoped that the reservation granted to Neamathla and his followers would be small enough “as to force the occupants into civil pursuits.” But despite the Florida territorial government’s desires, Neamathla and his followers refused to conform to a sedentary agrarian lifestyle. They threatened white settlers and killed some livestock, raising the ire of Governor Duval who believed Neamathla to be “a man of uncommon capacity, bold, violent and restless.” The governor felt little trust could be placed in Neamathla. Less than a year after the treaty of Moultrie Creek, Duval grew weary of Neamathla’s defiant attitude and appointed John Hicks (or Tukose Emathla), a man who would follow Duval’s orders, as leader of the Florida Indians.

After this, Neamathla and his followers moved to Alabama, living again in the Creek Nation. His north Florida reservation required his presence to keep and the United States took possession of it when they realized Neamathla was in Alabama. He established a town at Hatchechubbee Creek, southwest of Columbus, Georgia. It was from this town that Neamathla, along with other Creek leaders, launched the Creek War of 1836, a reaction against calls from both Creeks and Americans for the removal to the trans-Mississippi west and the continued

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4 Thomas Lorraine McKenney, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America, With Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of the Principal Chiefs* (Philadelphia: D. Rice and Co.), 1: 82-84 (quotes from 82 and 84, respectively). Tukose Emathla, or John Hicks, delivered a similar message about schools in 1826; Neamathla was a member of the delegation that signed this talk. “Talk by the Delegation of the Florida Indians,” May 17, 1826 in Carter ed., *Territorial Papers* 23:548-551.


encroachment of white settlers. As mentioned at the introduction to this work, the war was short-lived. Neamathla was quickly captured and sent west.⁷

Neamathla had a long career of defying those that jeopardized his or his town’s autonomy. He was willing to accept facets of the civilization plan that benefited his village but refused to willingly yield to any assaults on his people’s sovereignty. His life spanned a troubled time for southeastern Indians that saw the balance of power shift significantly toward the United States. Even though Neamathla was captured and forcibly removed from the southeast, he caused a stir in western Creek territory when it was feared that, upon arrival, he would vie for control of the nation from Roly McIntosh, William McIntosh’s son, and start yet another war.⁸ Although he “peaceably submitted” to McIntosh, the fact that the aged Neamathla settled in a separate section of Creek territory likely helped to diminish tensions between the two leaders.⁹

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⁸ Army and Navy Chronicle, September 29, 1836.
⁹ Philadelphia National Enquirer, November 11, 1836.
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James Hendry Miller, Jr. was born in 1985 in County Line, Georgia. He earned an Associates Degree in History from Gainesville State College in Oakwood, Georgia, in 2005 and a Bachelors Degree in History from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, in 2007. He entered Florida State University’s history program in 2008. Miller has presented papers at the Florida Conference of Historians and the Florida Historical Society. He plans to continue in FSU’s history program.