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## “LIKE SO MANY WOLVES”: CREEK REMOVAL IN THE CHEROKEE COUNTRY, 1835-1838

John T. Ellisor\*

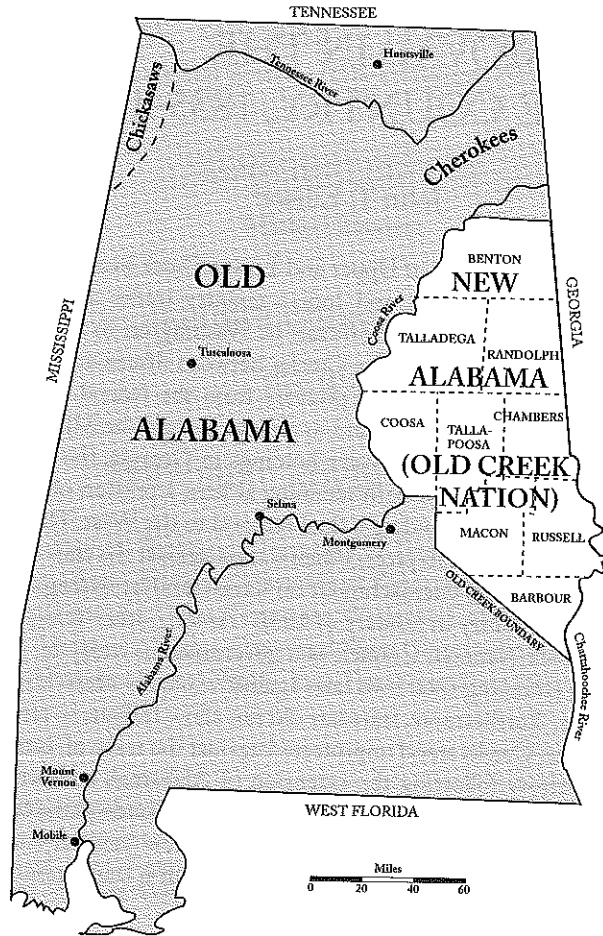
In March of 1832, a delegation of Upper and Lower Creek headmen, advised by the Creek agent, John Crowell, and Indian country trader and planter John Brodnax, met with War Department officials in Washington to negotiate a new treaty with the federal government. The Creeks, between fifteen and twenty thousand people, had been facing incessant pressure from the federal government to cede all their land to the United States and to remove beyond the Mississippi River. Having previously given up their extensive holdings in Georgia, the Creek leaders sought a new treaty as a means of both retaining at least a portion of their ancient homeland in Alabama and of avoiding a final removal to the West. The Creek delegation also wanted a new pact to protect their nation against the state of Alabama, which had encouraged white encroachment on Creek land by extending state law over the entire Creek country in January of 1832. Among other things, state law emasculated the Creek National Council as a governmental entity by prohibiting Creek leaders from enforcing their own laws against whites or obstructing the federal removal process. Furthermore, state law did not allow Indians to testify against whites in court. Thus Creeks stood unprotected against the wave of intruders who came into their territory following the extension of Alabama's authority, and the Creek delegates hoped to trade a portion of their Alabama lands to the federal government in return for a guarantee that President Andrew Jackson and the War Department would protect their remaining country from a state-sponsored invasion of outsiders.<sup>1</sup>

On March 24, 1832, Creek delegates put their marks and signatures to a document known as the Cusseta Treaty. Under the terms of the agreement, the Creeks ceded all 5,200,000 acres of their tribal lands in Alabama to the United States. The federal government then promised to survey the cession and allot approximately 2,187,000 acres of it to individual chiefs and heads of Creek households in severalty. The remaining acres of the Creek country would be open to white settlement. The treaty also gave the individual Creek landholders an option: they could sell

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\*The author holds the doctoral degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and currently resides in Greeneville.

<sup>1</sup>For a more complete explanation of the reasons behind the signing of the treaty see Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, 1982), 169-73, and Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, 1976), 107-11.



Old Creek Nation, 1832-1836. Courtesy of the author.

their allotments to whites and move west to land reserved for them in the Western Territory, or they could hold on to their property and remain in Alabama as independent freeholders and state citizens. Once the allotments were made, the Creeks had a five-year period to make their decisions. Finally, the federal government promised to protect the Indians' tribal domain from encroachment by settlers from the time of the cession to the end of the decision period.<sup>2</sup>

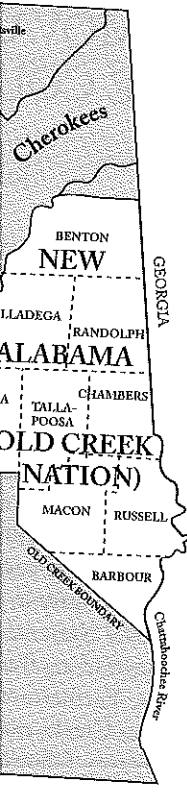
<sup>2</sup>Charles J. Kappler, ed. and comp., *Indian Treaties 1778-1883* (1904; reprint, New York, 1972), 341-43; U.S. Congress, *American State Papers, Military Affairs* (Washington, 1861), 6:575 (hereafter cited as *ASP: MA*); Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 111-12.

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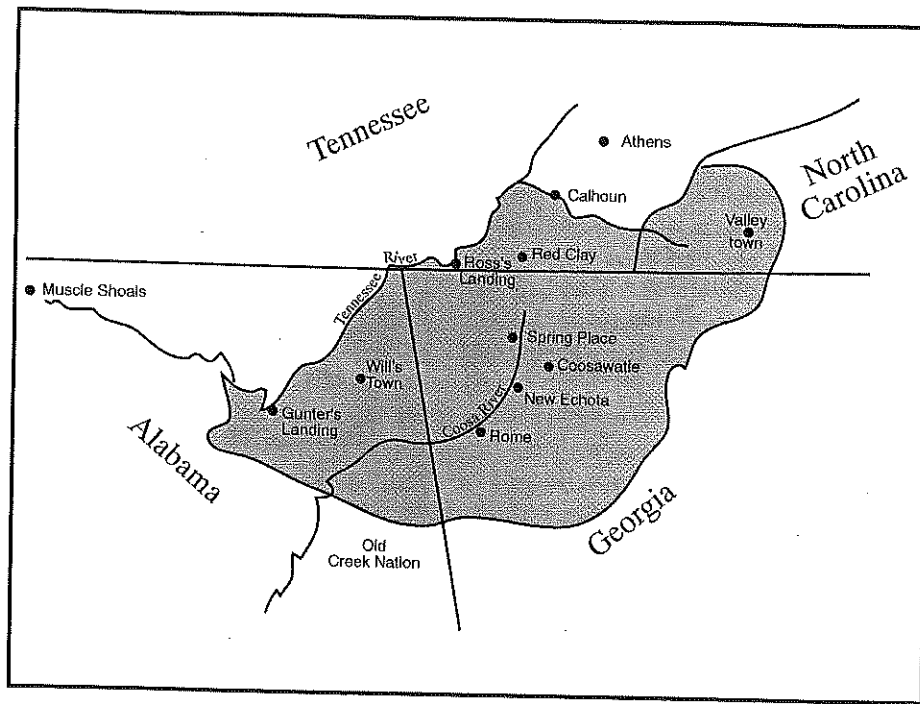
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On the face of it, the Cusseta Treaty seemed a clever bargain for the Creek delegates. They meant for their tribespeople to take their individual land allotments in blocks, clustered about their old town sites, and thus maintain some semblance of communal life and tribal integrity despite a much-reduced land base. Furthermore, the federal government would protect the allotments until the individual chiefs and heads of families gained deeds to their holdings. These Creek landowners could then use those deeds to guarantee their property rights under Alabama law and in the Alabama courts. In short, it appeared that the Creek delegates could use the Cusseta Treaty to manipulate federal power and state law to their own best advantage.<sup>3</sup> They had negotiated a successful alternative to removal.

In reality, the treaty marked the beginning of the end of the Creek Nation in the Old South. Rather than allowing the Creeks to avoid immigration to the West, the treaty led directly to that result in only four years. Ultimately, those Creeks who wished to escape removal in 1836 had to flee from federal and state troops and seek refuge among neighboring Indian nations. Some of these fugitives fled to the Chickasaws; others stole into the wilds of Florida to join the Seminoles; but the largest group, a few thousand individuals, moved to the mountains of the Cherokee country. The plight of these Cherokee-Creeks is one of many interesting but neglected stories of the Indian removal era. It is also a much more important story than previously realized, for the flight of Creeks into the Cherokee Nation made it much more difficult for the Cherokees to resist removal. In fact, the government's attempts to extricate Creeks from the southern highlands ultimately helped facilitate Cherokee removal.

The Creeks' problems stemmed from the fact that the whites interpreted the Cusseta Treaty in a much different way. During the 1830s, many citizens of the Southern states were hard at work shifting the center of cotton production from the Atlantic coast region into the Old Southwest. These people saw the Cusseta Treaty as a great boon, for it would open three million acres of new public land to white settlement and agricultural production. Moreover, the treaty would free the other two million acres of Creek allotment land from the control of a tribal government. This would enable aggressive settlers to purchase the finest lands in the Creek Nation directly from relatively unsophisticated native landholders. In fact, President Jackson counted on this result. He and his men in the War Department envisioned the Cusseta accord merely as a market-based removal treaty. They believed that once the government sold all the land surrounding the Creek allotments to settlers, Alabama's aggressive white population would press the natives to sell their landholdings. Then the Creeks would realize they lacked both the means and the desire to compete economically with their new neighbors. Consequently, the Indians would sell their allotments for substantial sums and use the money to finance new starts for themselves in the West. Thus Jackson hoped to bring the forces of the market place to bear on the Creeks and finally compel their emigra-

<sup>3</sup>Green, *Politics of Indian Removal*, 171-72.



Cherokee Nation, 1835-1838. Courtesy of the author.

tion, something government negotiators had been unable to do for years.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, both Jackson and the Creeks would be disappointed with the Cusseta Treaty. Turning the Creeks over to the tender mercies of the market place during the flush times of the 1830s cotton boom was a mistake. Rather than restricting white intrusion and protecting their land, the Creeks would see the Cusseta Treaty become a wedge for whites into the last stronghold of the Creek Nation. These intruders not only found ways to strip the Creeks of their land allotments but to dispossess them of all their money and disposable property as well. In fact, the new treaty left many natives homeless and starving, wandering about in dazed, sometimes drunken stupors, eating bark from trees. Some Creeks even found themselves forced to work on the new cotton plantations as virtual slaves. This was not what Jackson intended. While he meant to exert enough economic pressure to compel removal, he never sought to impoverish the Creeks.

<sup>4</sup>Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 111-12; Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York, 1975), 228.

Furthermore, Creek liquor dealers, and white planters Jackson sought Creeks removal rather than Creeks leave Alabama for income, and labor for agents so they could government contracts. possessed Indian property being further exploited Second Creek War.

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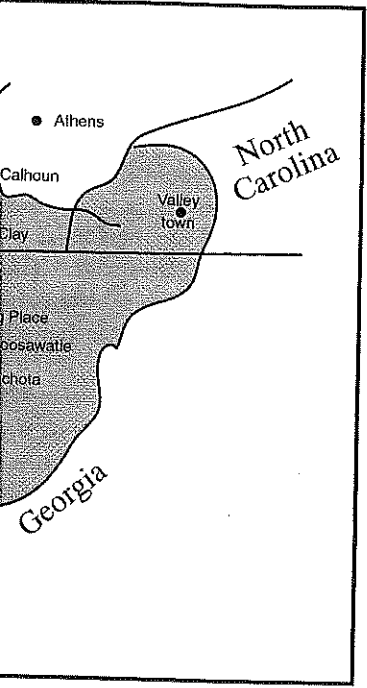
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<sup>5</sup>John Ellisor, "The University of Tennessee

<sup>6</sup>The weekly issues of running account of

<sup>7</sup>From the *Columbian*

<sup>8</sup>*ASP: MA*, 6:712.



Furthermore, Creek land and Creek possessions fell into the hands of speculators, liquor dealers, and wealthy planters, not the respectable yeoman farmers and small planters Jackson sought to serve. Worse still, the Cusseta Treaty actually retarded Creek removal rather than stimulating it. Avaricious whites would not let the Creeks leave Alabama until they extracted the last measure of land, disposable income, and labor from them. Furthermore, speculators stymied federal removal agents so they could take charge of the removal themselves and profit from government contracts. Thus the treaty failed on all accounts, and by creating a dispossessed Indian population that could neither stay in Alabama nor leave without being further exploited, the Cusseta accord became the immediate cause of the Second Creek War.<sup>5</sup>

The residents of the Lower Creek villages suffered most in all the turmoil, and in early May of 1836, 1,500 to 2,000 of their warriors staged an armed revolt against the oppression they faced. They attacked farms and plantations and cleared their territory of noxious settlers. Then they stockpiled pilfered goods, food, and arms in their strongholds, and closed off the Federal Road, the main thoroughfare through their land. Finally, they attempted to shut down steamboat traffic on the Chattahoochee River, the eastern border of their country.<sup>6</sup> That much done, the Lower Creek rebels began to cross the river to attack militia posts and plantations in southwestern Georgia, obviously trying to open a line of communications with the Seminole Indians, who had gone to war with the United States a few months earlier to avoid removal from Florida.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, rumors spread that the rebels had opened negotiations with the Upper Creeks and Cherokees, and the citizens of Georgia and Alabama believed that the military success of the Lower Creeks would surely draw these disaffected tribespeople into the fray against them. In fact, whites feared a huge Indian war that would engulf a good portion of the Old Southwest.<sup>8</sup>

The outbreak of the Second Creek War was a disaster for the Cherokees, because it sparked a migration of Upper Creeks into their territory in the four corners area of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. These migrants were not members of the Lower Creek war party, and they only fled to the Cherokee country to avoid bloodshed in their own nation. Once in the Cherokee highlands, they joined groups of other Creeks who had gone north even before the war to escape economic exploitation and famine. There was nothing sinister about these Creek refugees, but their presence in the Cherokee Nation scared local whites beyond belief. These frightened citizens became convinced that certain Cherokee

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<sup>5</sup>John Ellisor, "The Second Creek War: The Unexplored Conflict," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1996), 8-52.

<sup>6</sup>The weekly issues of the *Columbus Enquirer* during the month of May 1836, provide a running account of Creek attacks.

<sup>7</sup>"From the *Columbus Herald*," *Milledgeville Federal Union*, June 9, 1836.

<sup>8</sup>*ASP: MA*, 6:712.

, *Fathers and Children*: Andrew  
 (New York, 1975), 228.

leaders meant to unite with the newly arrived Creeks in a war against them should the United States Senate approve the New Echota Treaty. This agreement, signed by federal commissioners and a minority faction of Cherokee leaders, obligated all the Cherokees to immigrate to the West within two years of the treaty's ratification. Many whites in and around the Cherokee country cast covetous eyes on the tribespeople's lands and property, and they meant to see the Cherokees removed. Consequently, they bombarded Washington with letters of complaint about the Creeks. Benjamin F. Curry, the superintendent of Cherokee removal, warned of all the hostile Creeks "flocking into the Cherokee settlements of Georgia," and of "vindictive Cherokees" threatening to "avail themselves of all the physical force of the Creek Nation to resist the contemplated removal of the Cherokees" from their territory.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, a resident of Murray County, Georgia, spoke with alarm about all the Creeks arriving "daily" in the neighborhood of Coosawatie, an important Cherokee village, where the Creeks built "good cabins" in expectation of staying for a long time.<sup>10</sup> Then William Schley, Georgia's governor, chimed in with the news that his state was in "dire peril," virtually surrounded by dangerous Seminoles, Creeks, and Cherokees.<sup>11</sup> Alabamians issued the same types of statements; and on June 13, 1836, A. R. Turk of Calhoun, Tennessee, warned President Jackson that Creeks, well-armed and supplied with fine cattle, had taken up residence around the Cherokee council grounds at Red Clay, Tennessee. Turk claimed that these people only awaited word from John Ross, the Cherokees' principal chief, to take to the warpath.<sup>12</sup> Given this climate of fear, whites in the Cherokee country stopped selling arms and ammunition to Indians and called on the president to send troops to squash the Cherokee-Creek uprising.<sup>13</sup>

These settlers became even more insecure when word arrived that the Senate had finally ratified the New Echota Treaty, by only a couple of votes.<sup>14</sup> This ratification meant that the Cherokees had to depart for the West by May 23, 1838. According to John Ridge, a leader of the Cherokee treaty party and Ross's political enemy, this news convinced many whites that their Indian neighbors would surely rise up to slaughter them. As a consequence, the Georgians disarmed many Cherokee men and otherwise abused them. In fact, Ridge reported that "the lowest classes of the white people were flogging the Cherokees with cowhides, hickories, and clubs." He also said that "this barbarous treatment is not confined to men, but the women are stripped, also, and whipped without law or mercy." Then Ridge put in his own call for troops; but he wanted United States regulars to protect the

<sup>9</sup>United States Congress, *Senate Documents*, 25 Cong., 2 Sess., no. 120, "Cherokee treaty of 1835," 511, 524 (hereafter cited as *Senate Doc. 120*).

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 521-22.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 599-600.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 606-607; "The Cherokees," *Milledgeville Federal Union*, June 9, 1836.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Valentine Parker, *The Cherokee Indians* (New York, 1907), 37.

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<sup>15</sup>*Senate Doc. 120*.

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<sup>19</sup>*Senate Doc. 120*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-14.

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Cherokees from assaults so they could immigrate peacefully to the West.<sup>15</sup>  
 Lewis Cass, the secretary of war, responded to the pleas of the Southern citizens by issuing a call for 10,000 state troops to serve in the various theaters of real or imagined Indian conflict. He also dispatched two major generals and over a thousand federal troops to the scene of the Creek War.<sup>16</sup> Winfield Scott, the ranking general, took charge of half the federal force, as well as nearly 5,000 Georgia militiamen and volunteers and set up his headquarters at Columbus, Georgia, just to the east of the hostile Lower Creek towns. Thomas S. Jesup, commanding the Second Corps of the Army of the South, took up his post at Tuskegee, Alabama, just to the west of the Lower Creek insurgents. Jesup encamped with the other half of the federal troops and also took command of approximately 4,500 Alabama volunteers and militiamen.<sup>17</sup>

Secretary Cass required that the state of Tennessee furnish 2,500 of the total number of state troops in service, and Governor Newton Cannon issued a proclamation to this effect on June 6, 1836. The response of the Tennessee volunteers exceeded the call. Troops from the middle and western part of the state assembled at Fayetteville and formed a brigade of 1,550 men under General Robert Armstrong. This brigade then marched south to the scene of the Creek War, with some of these Tennesseans subsequently serving in the Seminole conflict in Florida. Troops from the eastern part of the state collected at Athens on July 7 for service in the Cherokee Nation. These volunteers, led by Brigadier General Richard G. Dunlap, joined a small contingent of federal troops under Brigadier General John E. Wool, who assumed command of all forces in the Cherokee country.<sup>18</sup> Secretary Cass instructed Wool to ascertain the designs of the Cherokees, put down any armed hostilities on their part, and issue rations to those in need so they would not feel compelled to take food from the whites by force. Cass also ordered Wool to make his presence and activities known to generals Jesup and Scott in the Creek country.<sup>19</sup> At that point, what had been fairly separate efforts by the government to pacify and remove the two Indian nations, Creeks and Cherokees, started to tie together, become intricately bound, one influencing the other.

Wool immediately went to work on his mission. He began by reducing his army of East Tennesseans to a workable size. Dunlap's brigade originally consisted of some 2,400 men organized in three regiments. Wool promptly sent one of these regiments home to await further orders.<sup>20</sup> Then the general sent his army into

<sup>15</sup>Senate Doc. 120:607-608.  
<sup>16</sup>ASP: MA, 6:622-23, 625-626, 629, 631, 434-35; "Lewis Cass to Dixon H. Lewis," War Department, May 17, 1836, reprinted in *Columbus Enquirer*, May 27, 1836; ASP: MA, 7:115, 354.  
<sup>17</sup>ASP: MA, 7:168, 170, 174, 354.  
<sup>18</sup>Robert H. White, Stephen V. Ash, Wayne C. Moore, eds., *Messages of the Governors of Tennessee, 1835-1845*, 11 vols. (Nashville, 1952-1998), 3:126-27.  
<sup>19</sup>Senate Doc. 120:141-43.  
<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 12-14.



the field. He dispatched his first regiment, under Captain Morrow, to the mouth of Valley River in Macon County, North Carolina. The second regiment, led by Colonel Joseph Byrd, he ordered to Ross's Landing on the Tennessee River. Wool believed that a large number of potentially hostile Cherokees lived near these locations and he wanted to establish a military presence there as soon as possible. He instructed the commanders of both regiments to establish ration depots for the Cherokees at both places and to visit as many of the Indians as possible spreading the message that any armed revolt against the New Echota Treaty would bring devastation to the Cherokee Nation. In particular, Wool told his officers to point to what was happening in the Creek Nation as an example of what the Cherokees should avoid.<sup>21</sup> And finally, the general instructed his officers to detain any Creeks they found who had escaped to the Cherokee country "to avoid punishment for their conduct in the recent hostilities" in the Creek Nation.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, troops went to work on the Creek insurgents in southern Alabama. The general plan of attack called for Jesup and Scott to move on the rebels simultaneously, catching them in a vice grip. But Scott experienced a delay in receiving arms and supplies for his Georgians. Consequently, Jesup, believing he had to stop further Indian depredations, and fearing that the insurgents would try to escape to Florida before Scott could stop them, marched against the Lower Creek strongholds in mid-June with his army alone. He led 1,500 Alabama troops and 1,500 Upper Creek warriors, and together they soon smashed the rebellion, or so Jesup thought. Actually some of the Lower Creeks did manage to join the Seminoles, and they would fight on for years to come.<sup>23</sup> But for the moment, Jesup's efforts pleased President Jackson and Secretary Cass. They also liked the fact that the Creek War gave them an excuse to break their treaty commitments and order the removal of all Creeks, hostile and friendly, from Alabama as a necessary national security measure. They then ordered Jesup to supervise this removal as a natural sequel to his victory in the rebellion.<sup>24</sup>

The general began the process by sending 2,498 of his prisoners of war to the West. The warriors in this group marched in chains.<sup>25</sup> Then, in mid-July of 1836,

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 15-19.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 637.

<sup>23</sup>"To the Public," Columbus, June 25, 1836, printed in *Columbus Enquirer*, June 30, 1836; Ellisor, "Second Creek War," 301-54.

<sup>24</sup>ASP: MA, 7:753; *ibid.*, 6:623, 631-32.

<sup>25</sup>General Jesup to Governor Clay, Camp Near Big Warrior's Stand, July 5, 1836, Governor Clay's Administrative Files—Creek War, Alabama Department of Archives and History [ADAH]; "From the *Columbus Sentinel*," June 24, 1836, reprinted in *Milledgeville Federal Union*, June 30, 1836; "Letter from Columbus," June 25, 1836, *ibid.*; "Creek War," *Columbus Herald*, June 28, 1836, *ibid.*, July 7, 1836; "Letter from Camp Gibson," *Columbus Republican Herald*, *ibid.*, July 12, 1836; Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey Into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field During the Creek and Seminole War, 1836-1838*, ed. James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, 1953), 20-21.

Jesup turned his attention to the Creek Nation and ordered all of the Creek towns to be evacuated. Ominously, he warned that the Creeks would consider themselves as having entered that the Creek Nation was the headman of the Upper Creek Nation, 2,700 of his townspeople were in the Cherokee country on August 6. And on the 10th of Wetumpka. But the Creeks, sheriffs, lawyers, cre... "Suits were multiplied... erty taken—themselves... rounded them." Even where one Jesse D... whites complained... Cherokee country... want and starvation... that he would not... ment as enrolling a... Jesup concluded, "I... Indians, & all the... men." Furthermore... suffering Upper C...

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Jesup turned his attention to the systematic removal of the mass of friendly Creeks and ordered all of them into removal camps north of the Federal Road. Ominously, he warned these Indians that if they ventured outside of the camps he would consider them hostile and treat them accordingly.<sup>26</sup> But Jesup soon discovered that the Creeks were not the major obstacles to his plans. Opothle Yoholo, headman of the Upper Creeks, tried to leave Alabama as early as August 1 with 2,700 of his townspeople. Another group of 1,170 Creeks, including 400 collected in the Cherokee country in Tennessee, attempted to leave Talladega, Alabama, on August 6. And on that same day, a third detachment of 3,022 Creeks marched out of Wetumpka. But these erstwhile emigrants found the westward path blocked by sheriffs, lawyers, creditors, and an assortment of greedy whites. According to Jesup, "Suits were multiplied against the Indians—their negroes, horses, and other property taken—theirselfs driven almost to desperation by the difficulties which surrounded them." Even more bad news came in from Cherokee County, Alabama, where one Jesse Duran stood in the way of removal. The county's respectable whites complained to Jesup that Duran had induced the Creeks to come into the Cherokee country in the first place, so that he might profit "by bringing them to want and starvation." He sold goods and liquor to the Indians and now proclaimed that he would not allow them to enroll for the removal unless he got the appointment as enrolling agent. Exasperated by the actions of Duran and others like him, Jesup concluded, "I find more difficulty than I apprehended in removing the Indians, & all the difficulties, or nearly all, arise from the interference of white men." Furthermore, the general believed that because of that opposition, the long suffering Upper Creeks, heretofore friendly, "may yet be persuaded to hostilities."<sup>27</sup>

Jesup persevered and the Creeks began the march to their new homes beyond the Mississippi. Opothle Yoholo and the people of Tuckabatchee town started on September 2, with the town priests marching a mile ahead of the main body, carrying the sacred medals which had been buried beneath the Tuckabatchee square grounds. The next day Chief William McGillivrey's detachment crossed the Coosa River and headed west just as a couple of thousand Lower Creeks from Coweta and Cusseta towns started their journey from Chambers County, Alabama. Over a hundred truculent rebel Creeks emerged from hiding and joined this last party along the way. Simultaneously, the large contingent of Indians from Talladega headed north to Gunter's Landing on the Tennessee River, where 2,000 Creeks

<sup>26</sup>From the *Columbus Sentinel*, July 29, 1836, reprinted in *Milledgeville Federal Union*, August 2, 1836; *ASP: MA*, 7:357, 951; General Jesup to Governor Clay, Tuskegee, July 18, 1836, Governor Clay's Administrative Files—Creek War, ADAH; General Jesup to Governor Clay, Tallassee, August 23, 1836, *ibid*.

<sup>27</sup>Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 160-63; John H. Garrett to Governor Clay, Childersville, June 27, 1836, Clay's Administrative Files—Creek War, ADAH; General Jesup to Governor Clay, Tuskegee, July 18, 1836, *ibid*.

who had been living near the Cherokees in DeKalb, Benton, and Cherokee counties joined with them in crossing the river and marching on to Memphis. Presumably, this host of Creek refugees from the Cherokee country also included some Creeks recently removed from among the Cherokees in North Georgia. A month after this grand procession of Creeks vacated their homeland, another removal party from Talladega, consisting of 2,320 individuals, followed along the same path to Gunter's Landing and on to the Mississippi. This was the last group of the 14,609 Creeks who left Alabama before the end of 1836. An army officer conducted each of the removal parties west, and the Alabama Emigrating Company supplied food, wagons, and when necessary, steamboat transportation for the Indian travelers. This company, owned and operated by some of the more infamous land speculators in the Creek Nation, charged the government \$28.50 for each Creek emigrant. Having taken the Indians' land, these men now profited by their expulsion from the South.<sup>28</sup>

The exodus from the lands of the old Creek Nation was a terrible experience for the Indians. The "squalid, forlorn and miserable" Tuckabatchees left their homes reluctantly "under the influence of deep melancholy and deep dejection." Another party of Indians so loved their country that on moving they "carried with them every article they could lay their hands on that they ever owned, whether of any value or not, as keepsakes, such as old irons, broken jugs, jars &c." Other Creeks tore down their cabins so the whites could not use them and cut down the fruit trees growing over the graves of their children so the whites could not enjoy the produce of their labors and their sorrows. A few Indians lingered behind the moving parties to meditate alone among the deserted towns, to touch the rocks and trees one last time, and to bid a final farewell to the fields and streams of Alabama. Some old people determined not to leave at all. They took up posts on the high hills and sat gazing out on their ancient homeland until they starved to death.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Angie Debo, *The Road to Disappearance* (Norman, 1941), 106; *ASP: MA*, 7:952; Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 161-163, 167; "Creeks in Cherokee," *Milledgeville Federal Union*, August 9, 1836; "On Sunday last," August 23, 1836, *ibid*; General Jesup to Secretary Harris, Tallassee, August 21, 1836, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, Creek Emigration 1826-1836 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M234, reel 237) [hereafter cited as OIA Letters (NAMP)]; "Removal of the Creeks," *Columbus Sentinel*, August 16, 1836, reprinted in *Milledgeville Federal Union*, August 23, 1836. The Creek removal camp in the Cherokee section of Alabama was situated on Town Creek in the vicinity of Gunter's Landing on the Tennessee River. General Andrew Moore to Governor Clay, Claysville, August 15, 1836, Governor Clay's Administrative Files-Creek War, ADAH; General Moore to Governor Clay, Camp Springs, August 22, 1836, *ibid*.

<sup>29</sup>Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 162; F. L. Cherry, "The History of Opelika and Her Tributary Territory," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1953): 406; Motte, *Journey*, 254.

Unfortunately, some of the removal parties were ordeals much worse for the Indians. One of the last grand opportunities for the Indians was the removal of the Sprague of the United States. The removal party was removing the Coweta and the Creek men were prowling about the removal camps and es and cattle and carrying off the removal party into intoxication." Another removal party was removing the Coosa River, and removal party shot the dogs of the removal party and "saw many an Indian s

However, other whites showed pity and compassion for the Indians. The whites held a dance for the Indians. A little farther north in the removal party, a man named Zen, married an Indian woman from her people. Other whites, on the other hand, some whites, like the removal party, shelter those Indians who were removed from their birth, live with the removal party. The removal party on his plantation would not send them away. Finally, the removal party up for removal, and the removal party the state law prohibited the removal party over the old Creek country and like the citizens of the removal party necessity which compelled the removal party of this sympathy for the removal party contact with whites for a removal party in many respects. Besides the removal party a correspondent for the removal party "all ages, sexes, and sizes" from the civilized and the poorest of the removal party and the poorest of the removal party description equally w

<sup>30</sup>Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 162; "The History of Opelika and Her Tributary Territory," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1953): 406; Motte, *Journey*, 254.

<sup>31</sup>Alexander Nunn, *Yamacraw* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1968), 96; Anthony Hart Orr, "A History of the Creek Nation," University, 1950), 16;

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Unfortunately, some whites, usually the rougher element of society, made the ordeal much worse for the Creeks; they saw the removal as a joyous spectacle and one last grand opportunity to torment and exploit the natives. Lieutenant J. T. Sprague of the United States Marines, the man Jesup charged with the task of removing the Coweta and Cusseta Creeks, reported that "a large number of white-men were prowling about" his emigrating party, robbing the natives of "their horses and cattle and carrying among them liquors which kept up an alarming rate of intoxication." Another observer watched a party of Creeks making their way over the Coosa River, and recounted that "some low-down white men stood on the bank and shot the dogs of the Indians as they were swimming across." This observer also "saw many an Indian shed tears as his dog was killed."<sup>30</sup>

However, other whites deplored the mistreatment of the Indians and showed pity and compassion for their red neighbors. In Macon County, Alabama, some whites held a dance for the Indians the day before they were to depart for the West. A little farther north in Talladega County, Melton Lewis, a prominent white citizen, married an Indian woman, packed up his possessions, and left Alabama with her people. Other white men with Creek wives followed his lead. On the other hand, some whites, like Wiley Williams of Marion County, Georgia, attempted to shelter those Indians who wished to sever their tribal ties, remain in the country of their birth, live with whites, and work for wages. Williams employed a number of Creeks on his plantation and resisted attempts by some of his white neighbors to send them away. Finally, Governor Schley ordered Williams to deliver his Indians up for removal, and the county authorities placed the planter on trial for violating the state law prohibiting Creek Indians from living in Georgia. Meanwhile, all over the old Creek country respectable whites watched sadly as the natives passed, and like the citizens of Tuscaloosa, "expressed many a heartfelt regret . . . at the necessity which compelled us to remove them to the far West." Undoubtedly, some of this sympathy for the Creeks stemmed from the fact that they had been in contact with whites for a long period of time and consequently resembled the whites in many respects. Besides the obvious light skin color of many emigrating Creeks, a correspondent for the *New York Observer* reported that the travelers consisted of "all ages, sexes, and sizes, and of all the varieties of human intellect and condition, from the civilized and tenderly nourished matron and misses, to the wild savage, and the poorest of the poor." Certainly Northerners would have applied this description equally well to all the Alabamians the Creeks left behind.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 167; J. D. Anthony, "Reminiscences of Cherokee County, 1835-1875," in W. Stanley Hoole and Addie S. Hoole, eds., *Early History of Northeast Alabama and Incidentally of Northwest Georgia* (University, AL, 1979), 42.

<sup>31</sup>Alexander Nunn, *Yesterdays in Loachapoka and Communities Nearby* (Alexander City, AL, 1968), 96; Anthony, "Cherokee County," 42; Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 162; Nell Hart Orr, "A History of Lafayette, Alabama 1833-1933," (Master's thesis, Auburn University, 1950), 16; "Wiley Williams to Editors," *Columbus Enquirer*, August 4, 1836;

Still, Jesup was not done. Even more Creeks had fled north since the close of the war to join the Cherokee Nation and thereby escape removal. Jesup meant to chase them down. He ordered General Andrew Moore of the Alabama Militia to stay in service in the vicinity of Gunter's Landing, one of the principal Tennessee River ports within the Cherokee lands of northern Alabama. Moore's troops were to keep peace in that neighborhood between the Indians and whites as well as collect refugee Creeks and confine them to a removal camp near the landing site.<sup>32</sup> Jesup also commissioned Major Charles H. Nelson and several companies of Georgia troops to scour the Cherokee settlements of Georgia and Alabama and drive any Creek refugees they found into Moore's camp on the Tennessee.<sup>33</sup> Then General Jesup made his exit from Alabama to take charge of the Seminole War in Florida, leaving General Wool in charge of these officers and their activities.<sup>34</sup> Again, the Creek and Cherokee removal projects moved closer together.

Wool could provide little immediate direction, however. Having learned that the Cherokees most resistant to the idea of emigration had withdrawn to the mountains of North Carolina, the general set out from his headquarters in Athens, Tennessee, with five companies of troops and arrived at the Cherokees' Valley Town on July 29.<sup>35</sup> Shortly thereafter, he held council with the local Indian leaders, intent on convincing them of the necessity of leaving their old homes. These leaders, however, refused to discuss such a possibility. Moreover, the poorer Cherokees along Valley River refused to take the government rations Wool brought them for fear of obligating themselves to obey the hated New Echota agreement. The general therefore decided to demonstrate his power. He took a number of the leaders hostages—including Roman Nose of Cheoree Town—and demanded that their followers deliver up their firearms in exchange for their headmen.<sup>36</sup> The Cherokee warriors did as they were told, although they remained determined in their opposition to the treaty and removal. But Wool, much to his chagrin, soon discovered that these stubborn warriors were not his greatest concern. He stated, in fact, that "the worst Indians, however, who I have to contend with, are the white inhabitants residing among them, who are opposed from interest to their removal."<sup>37</sup>

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"Letter to the Editors," *Hamburgh*, August 8, 1836, *ibid.*, August 11, 1836; "The Citizens of Marion County vs. Williams and his Uchee Indians," *Milledgeville Federal Union*, July 7, 1836; "Letter from Little Rock," December 25, 1836, printed in *New York Observer*, February 1, 1837.

<sup>32</sup>Lt. Edward Deas to C. A. Harris, Decatur, Alabama, May 19, 1837, OIA Letters, Creek Emigration 1837 (NAMP M234, reel 238).

<sup>33</sup>*Senate Doc.* 120:26.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 250, 636.

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 631, 64

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Like Jesup before him, Wool was finding out that Indian removal was a complex affair, and that while some whites wanted the South swept clean of all its native inhabitants, others wanted them to stay for a variety of economic reasons. This was certainly true in the Cherokee Nation. Besides the grog shop and grocery operators, who wanted to retain good Cherokee customers, many whites purposefully traded with the Indians and lent them money so they could run them into debt. These opportunistic creditors then presented their bills to the Cherokee agent for payment out of Cherokee annuity funds, or they simply hauled the indebted Indians into court and stripped them of everything they possessed, including their farms, houses, cattle herds, etc. In some cases, local sheriffs imprisoned Indian men until their frightened families agreed to vacate their homes and move away.<sup>38</sup> Seeing this, Wool concluded that the Cherokees were "the prey of the most profligate and the most vicious of the white men," and "the whole scene, since I have been in this country, has been nothing but a heart-rending one, and such a one as I would be glad to get rid of as soon as circumstances will permit." In truth, Wool's attitude changed after only a short time in the Cherokee Nation. He came to the Southern country to protect settlers from Indian hostilities, and to urge the Cherokees to uphold their treaty obligation to move west. After his trip to Valley River, however, he realized the treaty was a fraud and saw protecting Indians from whites as his major task. And though he continued to press removal on the Cherokees, he did so for a different reason. He now believed the Indians could only save themselves from utter ruin by disentangling themselves from their white neighbors and fleeing as quickly as possible to a safe haven beyond the Mississippi.<sup>39</sup>

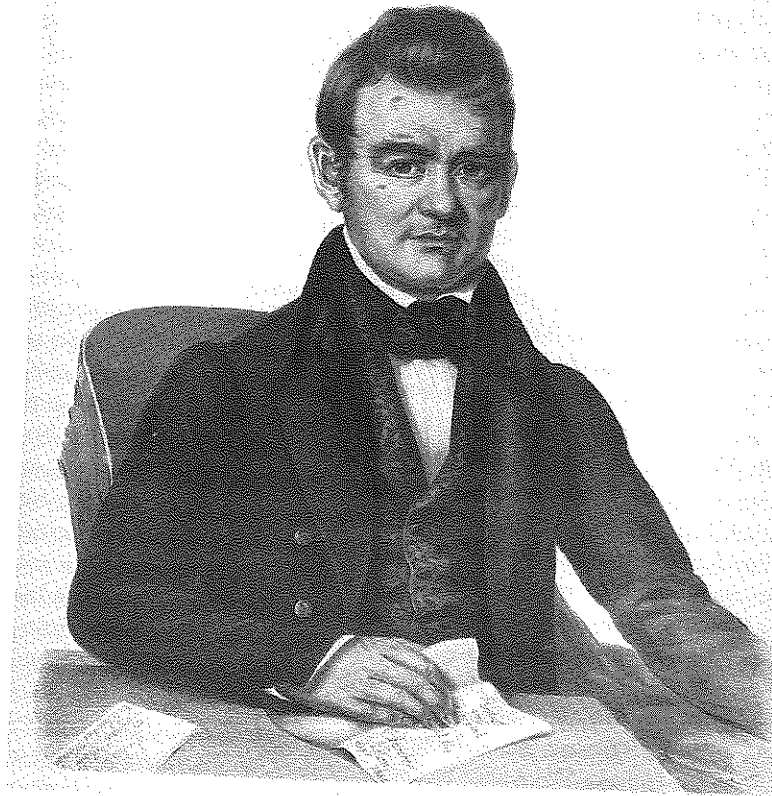
As a first step toward establishing his control over the Cherokee country and protecting the Indians, Wool tried to discipline the Georgia volunteers and militiamen operating in the Cherokee counties of their state. These troops, stationed at Rome, Canton, and Spring Place, had made themselves infamous for harassing Indians and trying to run them out of Georgia.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, Wool sent Brigadier General Dunlap and a body of his East Tennessee troops to New Echota, Georgia, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, with orders to prevent the Georgians and Indians from abusing one another. He also instructed Dunlap to disband any Georgia militia units that might be operating independently without authorization from state or federal authorities. Finally, he ordered the Georgia troops at New Echota to release some forty or fifty Cherokees and Creeks they had confined illegally, some in chains. Obviously, Wool feared that the Georgians' ill-treatment of the Indians would provoke a war, as had happened in the Creek Nation.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 646.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 631, 648.



John Ross, Principal Chief of the Cherokees, 1826-1866. Courtesy UTK Special Collections.

For much the same reason, Wool decided that removing Creeks from the Cherokee country could be a bad idea. The Georgians had been chasing Creeks all over the land for some time, and General Jesup raised the intensity level of their activities by notifying Major C. H. Nelson that all Creeks who had not reported to removal camps by August 20 would be declared hostile and dealt with accordingly. Certainly Wool knew this meant that the Georgians would be shooting some of the Creeks they tracked down. Furthermore, Major Nelson announced his intention to capture the Creeks around Coosawatie and threatened to arrest the Cherokees who sheltered them for treason against the United States.<sup>42</sup> This meant that Georgia might hang Cherokees at just the moment Wool was trying to keep the peace and win their approval for emigration. Thus the general cautioned

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 670.

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 671.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 673.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 668.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 669.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 187.



866. Courtesy UTK Special

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Nelson to proceed with care. He also ordered him not to place any Cherokees in removal camps or capture any Creeks related to, or adopted by, the Cherokees. Again, he feared that an overzealous insistence on total Creek removal would tear Cherokee-Creek families apart and provoke another Indian uprising.<sup>43</sup> Then Wool complained to the secretary of war that his command was "daily becoming more dangerous," because "the Georgians are impatient of restraint, and more difficult to manage."<sup>44</sup> In fact, Wool could not wait to dismiss Nelson and his 300 troops when their enlistments expired in early October.<sup>45</sup>

Wool also sought a revision of General Jesup's policy of removing all refugee Creeks from the Cherokee Nation. He protested this policy to the War Department, saying that "humanity revolts at the course pursued toward those Creeks who have not participated in the late hostilities, but have lived from one to twenty years in the Cherokee country, and connected by marriage and blood, with the Cherokee people. They ought not be hunted and dragged to the emigrating camp like so many wolves."<sup>46</sup> He also protested, as he had to Major Nelson, the fact that Cherokees, married to Creeks, were being hauled into General Moore's removal station at Gunter's Landing. Specifically, he cited the case of one Oke-wo-nat, the Cherokee widow of a Creek, who, along with a half-dozen children had been corralled for removal. According to the matrilineal kinship systems of both Creeks and Cherokees, this woman and all her offspring were seen as Cherokees, and entitled to remain in their homes. But white society was patrilineal in structure, and thus the troops who captured Oke-wo-nat believed her Creek husband was the head of her family and she and her children must be considered Creeks as a consequence.<sup>47</sup> This sort of cultural confusion, and the possibility of violent confrontations springing therefrom, troubled Wool.

Fortunately for the general, the president agreed, at least in part, with his assessment of the Creek situation. In early October of 1836, C. A. Harris, the acting secretary of war, notified him that all Creeks who entered the Cherokee Nation before the Creek treaty of 1832, could stay and emigrate with the Cherokees when the time came. However, those Creeks who came to the Cherokee country after the treaty should be separated from the Cherokees and sent west as soon as possible.<sup>48</sup>

Wool may have breathed a slight sigh of relief, for he needed to settle the turmoil between Georgians and Creeks so he could turn his full attention to overcoming the stout opposition of Chief John Ross and his powerful party of anti-removal Cherokee leaders. At a grand council of the Nation, held at Red Clay,

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 671.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 673.

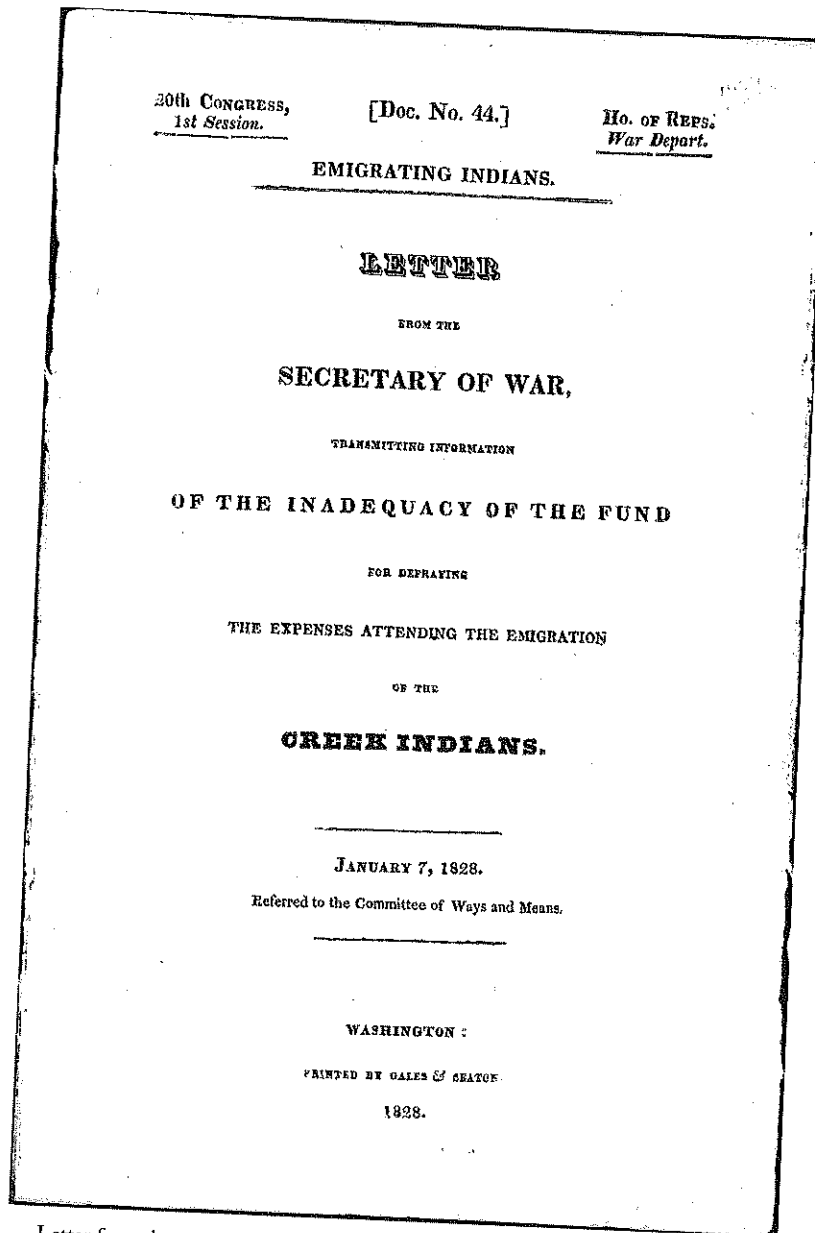
<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 668.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 187.





Letter from the secretary of war regarding the 1828 removal of the Creeks from their lands in Georgia. Courtesy of UTK Special Collections.

Tennessee, in mid-tribespeople attend would not receive council members a session of Congress the removal of all as a turning point He camped four miles from the council ground to watch the emigration. He cautioned Ross that the Creeks would not leave without saying that if the treaty, troops would be sent around them. A plan was made he did convince Washington that the war to resist emigration had won a victory with the possible exception of the made threats against them.

Yet the general believed the Department could not coerce the Creeks to leave. But at the same time he wanted the Creeks to hold their lands to seek a revision of the treaty. He confused the general by tying his hands. The superintendent of the Cherokee Nation, John Ross, believed that General Wool believed the long. Given these troops and the general recall from the Cherokee Nation.

General Dunlap believed the danger of replacing state volunteers and some of his friends on the occasion of his departure from the hand. Among other

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 30-35, 45.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 51, 53, 55.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 28.

Tennessee, in mid-September, this party, with the consent of several thousand tribespeople attending the meeting, issued a declaration that the Cherokees would not receive the New Echota Treaty as a valid act of the Nation. The council members also appointed a delegation to visit Washington at the next session of Congress in order to make a new treaty, one that did not mandate the removal of all Cherokees from the Southeast. Wool saw this maneuver as a turning point in the whole struggle over removal, and he meant to win. He camped four mounted companies of troops a quarter-mile from the council ground to watch the proceedings and to support the treaty party. He then cautioned Ross that his efforts at overturning the treaty were useless; the Cherokees would emigrate. And again, he pointed to the Creek example, saying that if the Cherokees did not go west in the time mandated by the treaty, troops would hunt them down as they were doing the poor refugees around them. A polite John Ross refused to alter his course, but apparently he did convince Wool that he and his followers had no intention of going to war to resist emigration. Thus Wool came away from the council feeling he had won a victory, and that the Cherokees would soon start to move west, with the possible exception of the conservative Valley River Indians who had made threats against the treaty party.<sup>49</sup>

Yet the general was not happy. He received letters from the War Department chiding him for taking hostages at Valley River, for trying to coerce the Cherokees into accepting removal long before they were due to leave. But at the same time, Secretary Harris scolded Wool for allowing the Cherokees to hold their most recent council, the sole purpose of which was to seek a revision of the New Echota Treaty. These contradictory statements confused the general and hurt his pride. He thought the administration was tying his hands. Furthermore, Wool had begun to despise C. H. Curry, the superintendent of Cherokee removal, whom the general blamed for antagonizing the Cherokees and making the army's task more difficult. In fact, Wool believed the Valley River Indians would assassinate Curry before too long. Given these circumstances, as well as all his troubles with the Georgia troops and the greedy whites living among the Cherokees, Wool requested recall from the Cherokee service.<sup>50</sup>

General Dunlap was even more angry and disappointed. Because Wool believed the danger of hostilities had lessened, and because he wanted to replace state volunteers with regular troops, the general dismissed Dunlap and some of his East Tennessee brigade in September.<sup>51</sup> Dunlap then used the occasion of his departure from the Cherokee service to condemn it out of hand. Among other duties, he and his troops had to build log pens for any

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 30-35, 45, 667-68.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 51, 53, 55, 58, 186, 642, 717, 721, 732.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 28.

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Cherokees "who might prove recalcitrant" when removal day finally arrived. Dissatisfied with this job from the start, the Tennesseans lost complete faith in their mission when they attended Cherokee parties at Ross's Landing and danced with "bright, pretty, well-educated Indian girls."<sup>52</sup> Now Dunlap proclaimed that he would never "dishonor Tennessee arms in a servile service by aiding to carry into execution, at the point of the bayonet, a treaty made by a lean minority against the will and authority of the Cherokee people."<sup>53</sup> He also accused interested whites of spreading war rumors so as to draw troops into the Cherokee country, and criticized the "cruelties and oppressions" of the Murray Guards of Georgia, who had imprisoned Creeks whose "ancestors had fought by the side of General Jackson at the battle of the Horseshoe" in 1814.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, many East Tennessee civilians shared Dunlap's view. The *Athens Observer* supported both Dunlap and Wool in their positions, and some of the local Whig politicians, men like David Crockett, voted against ratification of the New Echota pact and criticized the administration's handling of Cherokee affairs.<sup>55</sup> These men were not objective observers, however, for they regularly opposed Jackson's policies as a matter of party politics. They also failed to note what an abundance of War Department correspondence revealed: the flight of Creeks to the Cherokee country did engender such fear among the whites of Georgia and Alabama that the president, already embroiled in a war with Creeks and Seminoles farther south, had to respond in some fashion to prevent even the possibility of Cherokees entering the fray.

In time, even General Wool turned back to this view. By December of 1836, he realized that the Cherokees were not going to move of their own accord as he had predicted. He had always blamed the Ross party for Cherokee resistance to removal, but now he understood just how united the vast majority of Indians were against emigration. He saw that the Cherokees "preferred living upon the roots and sap of trees" rather than take treaty rations from the government. Moreover, he believed that a people "so unwilling to leave their native country require to be urged but one step further to raise the tomahawk and scalping knife," and "we shall have difficulty with them which may lead to the shedding of blood, I have little doubt." However, Wool contended that whites, by continuing to rob and plunder the Indians, would provoke the uprising.<sup>56</sup> Further, he thought that a clash between whites and the Creeks might be the flash point of the coming armed conflict. Consequently, the general now recommended the roundup and removal of Creeks, whereas before he had disdained such a task. Interestingly, he chose not to employ Tennesseans in chasing the Creeks in Georgia, probably owing to Dunlap's

<sup>52</sup>Robert M. Utley and Wilcomb E. Washburn, *Indian Wars* (New York, 1977), 140.

<sup>53</sup>*Senate Doc.* 120:40.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>55</sup>Parker, *The Cherokee Indians*, 45.

<sup>56</sup>*Senate Doc.* 120:68-69.

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<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 218, 739.

<sup>58</sup>Captain Page t Letters, Creek E Secretary Harris. 81.

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declaration and the fact that the Tennessee and Georgia troops had nearly come to blows over the handling of Indians in the past.<sup>57</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1837, hunting Creeks became the major activity of troops stationed in the Cherokee Nation. In early March, Captain John Page, the superintendent of Creek removal, sent Lieutenant Edward Deas to take charge of shipping Wool's Indian captives out of the country. Deas went first to Gunter's Landing and sent off some 1,500 Creeks who had been taken during the course of a year. Then he hired a number of assistant agents and Cherokee interpreters to help him with his project of removing the approximately 1,000 Creeks remaining in the Cherokee country. That much done, Deas traveled to New Echota to confer with Wool. Following their meeting, the general ordered Captain Derrick of the Georgia volunteers to assist Deas in collecting the Creeks around Coosawatie. Then he commanded Major John Delany to corral the Creeks in the neighborhood of Red Clay. Next he directed Captain Jacob Peak, heading the Tennessee volunteers at Calhoun, to go after the Creeks in the Tennessee and North Carolina mountains as he saw fit. And finally, Wool ordered Colonel Byrd at Valley Town to bring in any Creek refugees seeking shelter in that vicinity, and to confine any Cherokees who refused to assist him in the task. Deas wanted all the Indians captured by these units sent to Ross's Landing. From there he would transport them down river to Gunter's Landing, and turn them over to private contractors, the infamous Alabama Emigrating Company, for their final journey west.<sup>58</sup>

By May 10, Deas had assembled 545 new Creek captives near Gunter's Landing, and announced his plans to accompany them on their long trip. The party would proceed down the Tennessee on flatboats to Muscle Shoals. Below the shoals, steamboats would take the flats in tow and pull them to the mouth of the Arkansas River and up that stream to their final destination, Fort Gibson in the Indian Territory. Though Deas had not accumulated all the Creeks in the Cherokee country, he thought it best to remove all he could before mid-summer, when dropping water levels closed the Arkansas off to steamboat travel. Also, Deas believed that those Creeks left behind had scattered themselves about in small groups and integrated themselves into Cherokee society. Thus they were able to feed themselves and would not be stealing from the whites or otherwise conflicting with them.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 218, 739-40.

<sup>58</sup>Captain Page to Lieutenant Deas, Ft. Mitchell, Alabama, March 8, 1837, OIA Letters, Creek Emigration 1837 (NAMP M234, reel 238); Lieutenant Deas to Secretary Harris, New Echota, Georgia, March 30, 1837, *ibid.*; *Senate Doc.* 120:76-79, 81.

<sup>59</sup>Lieutenant Deas to Secretary Harris, New Echota, March 30, 1837, OIA Letters, Creek Emigration 1837 (NAMP M234, reel 238); Lieutenant Deas to Secretary Harris, Gunter's Landing, May 10, 1837, *ibid.*

Deas' journey went reasonably well, though 85 of his charges escaped along the way, and he arrived at Fort Gibson in early June. He then returned east to the Cherokee Nation to find that the secretary of war had relieved General Wool of command and ordered him to face a court of inquiry in Knoxville for the offense of illegally closing liquor shops catering to Indians in Alabama. Another regular army officer, Colonel William H. Lindsay, replaced Wool, and Deas called on him for assistance in removing the remaining Creeks from among the Cherokees. Most of these people lived in "the wild and mountainous track of country extending from near New Echota and Coosawatie to the neighborhood of the Valley Town in North Carolina." Therefore, Deas went to Coosawatie to talk to the Creeks there, only to find they had either fled at his approach or would not speak to him about emigration. Consequently, Deas rode on to the Cherokee Council meeting already in session at Red Clay. The lieutenant knew he would find the principal Creek leaders there and hoped to persuade them to surrender themselves for removal. At this point, both Deas and Lindsay knew they needed to be conciliatory, as it would be impossible for troops to find the Creeks in their mountain forests until well into the fall, when the leaves disappeared from the trees. Thus Deas spoke softly to the Creeks in council, while Lindsay met with John Ross and asked the chief to help him get the Creeks into camp. Ross, in turn, took the matter up with the Cherokee Council.<sup>60</sup>

But the Creek leaders also sought aid from John Ross and the Cherokee Council, saying:

We speak to you as the Chief of the Cherokee Nation. It has been the custom of our fathers and our forefathers to go freely into each others' country. With this knowledge we came in the Cherokee country. We came here to escape the evil of War. In time of trouble we came to the Cherokees as the home of a brother. When we came, we were treated kindly. Our red brethren made no objection. They did not tell us to leave the country. But we have been pursued by the White Men and treated harshly, without knowing that we were guilty of any crime. While living here we planted corn in the season but the white man destroyed it and took away our other property. In this bad treatment two of our men were killed, one man shot through the thigh and arm and three children lost in the flight of their mothers and have not been found. We do not want to be put in the hands of these Men. We ask the favor of you to permit us to reside with you. We ask your pity and protection. We put ourselves into your hands. We ask you to speak for us

<sup>60</sup>Lieutenant Deas to Secretary Harris, Cherokee Council Ground, Red Clay, Bradley County, Tennessee, August 2, 1837, *ibid.*

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Council Ground, Red Clay, Bradley



Wilson Lumpkin, former governor of Georgia and special commissioner for the federal government during the Cherokee removal. Courtesy of UTK Special Collections.

to the President, our father, that he may order his men not to  
 hunt us through the country. We hope you will pity us. We want  
 to live with you. We are willing to obey your laws.<sup>61</sup>

Then the Creek leaders went on to tell Ross that the son and brother of  
 Chinnabee, a famous friend and ally of Jackson in the First Creek War, were  
 among the refugees asking for aid, and the chief should inform the whites of this  
 fact.<sup>62</sup> Ross took the plea to heart. He informed Lindsay that he had advised the  
 Creeks to emigrate but he could not violate custom by giving them over to the  
 whites.<sup>63</sup> But neither Lindsay nor Deas pressed the issue, for they had come to  
 believe that the immediate removal of the remaining Creeks was unnecessary.  
 Realizing the rapid approach of the May 1838 deadline for Cherokee emigration,  
 they saw no harm in allowing the Creeks to stay in place and leave the country with

<sup>61</sup>Creeks to John Ross, Red Clay, August 14, 1837, *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>Colonel Lindsay to J. R. Poinsett, Secretary of War, Headquarters, Army of the  
 Cherokee Nation, Fort Cass, Tennessee, September 21, 1837, *ibid.*

their Cherokee friends. Consequently, Deas, Lindsay, and General Nathaniel Smith, the new superintendent of Cherokee removal, all asked the secretary of war to let the Creeks remain where they were until the Cherokees moved. Fortunately for the refugees, he granted the request.<sup>64</sup>

However, not all the government officials in the Cherokee country approved this lenient policy. Wilson Lumpkin, former governor and soon-to-be senator of the state of Georgia, was one of these. The New Echota Treaty obligated the government to pay the emigrating Indians for their improvements on the land, such as houses, ferries, mills, and bridges. Lumpkin served as a special commissioner to evaluate these improvements. He had succeeded in surveying the property of many of the wealthier Cherokees, but the mass of tribespeople had refused to cooperate with him. As the removal deadline neared, he grew more frustrated and blamed the military for not doing more to "prepare the minds" of the common Cherokees for emigration. He also believed that the troops had not done enough to get all the refugee Creeks out of the country, and this was a tragic mistake. In fact, he thought the Creeks had "a great influence in preventing the Cherokees from emigrating." Lumpkin also contended, quite erroneously, that many of the Creek refugees had been "among the first hostile party in Alabama."<sup>65</sup>

In reality, the Cherokees needed no outside influences to oppose removal. They felt spiritually bound to their native country, a land they shared in common. And many Cherokees feared that only misfortune awaited them in the West, a place they did not belong. Furthermore, they never intended to obey the fraudulent New Echota Treaty, nor did they ever doubt they could have that treaty set aside or, at least, corrected by the Congress. The same Cherokee Council that heard Colonel Lindsay's appeal for help with the Creeks also sent another delegation to Washington to propose that the Cherokees cede their lands in Georgia in return for permission to remain on a reduced portion of their country in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Alabama. When the new president, Martin Van Buren, denied their request, John Ross presented yet another petition against removal, this one reputedly signed by 15,665 tribespeople.<sup>66</sup>

The Cherokees gained support for their cause in the Northern states. Van Buren wanted to delay their removal for another two years, but the governors of Georgia and Alabama, as well as many of Van Buren's Southern constituents, were adamant that the Cherokees must go. Consequently, the president held to the emigration deadline, and sent General Winfield Scott to remove the entire Cherokee Nation, by force if necessary. Scott divided the Cherokee country into three mili-

<sup>64</sup>Lieutenant Deas to Secretary Harris, Coosawatie, September 9, 1837, *ibid.*;  
Lieutenant Deas to Secretary Harris, Coosawatie, September 23, 1837, *ibid.*; Colonel Lindsay to Lieutenant Deas, Cherokee Agency, September 20, 1837, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>*Senate Doc.* 120:991-94.

<sup>66</sup>Kenneth Penn Davis, "The Cherokee Removal, 1835-1838," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1973): 324-325.

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President Martin Van Buren. Courtesy of UTK Special Collections.

tary districts, placed an officer in charge of each, and sent troops to capture Indians and confine them in stockades for shipment out of the country. Thus began a period of great travail for the Cherokees. By early June of 1838, soldiers had gathered up 16,000 Indians, and Lieutenant Deas, who had become a Cherokee removal agent by virtue of his experience with the Creeks, sent approximately 3,000 of these people west by way of Gunter's Landing.<sup>67</sup> Now resigned to the fate of his people, John Ross attempted to make the emigration less painful by seeking Scott's permission for the remaining Cherokees to remove themselves in the coming fall. Scott agreed, and by the end of December virtually all of the Indians had set out on the now infamous "Trail of Tears."<sup>68</sup> Over 500 Creek refugees went with them and eventually formed their own settlement on the Illinois River in the Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Captain Page to Secretary Harris, Calhoun, Tennessee, June 22, 1838, OIA Letters, Cherokee Emigration (NAMP M234, reel 115, frames 2-5).

<sup>68</sup>Davis, "Cherokee Removal," 326-31.

<sup>69</sup>Debo, *Road to Disappearance*, 286.



Today we point to the Cherokee removal as one of the most tragic events in American history. We have not realized, however, how closely related that removal was to the forced emigration of the Creeks. In fact, the hunt for Creek fugitives paved the way for Cherokee removal. The flight of the Creeks to the mountains of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and northeastern Alabama caused the whites to fear a combined Creek-Cherokee uprising in that region, and troops descended on the Cherokee heartland. In truth, the Creeks gave the government an excuse to establish an intimidating military presence in the Cherokee Nation well before the Cherokees were scheduled to depart for the West. From that point on, federal efforts to remove refugee Creeks and Cherokees started to merge. Moreover, government troops actually laid the groundwork for Cherokee removal as they hunted the Creeks. They practiced techniques in tracking down and capturing Creeks that would later help them corral the Cherokees. The soldiers also built camps, stockades, supply posts, and roads which would allow them to move thousands of Cherokees across the mountains in a relatively short time. And finally, the government's removal agents learned that the fastest and best way to get the Creeks out of the country was to concentrate them at Tennessee River ports, most notably Ross's and Gunter's landings, for rapid water transport to the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers. These agents did the same with the Cherokees.

And yet the federal and state troops and other government operatives did not succeed in removing all the Cherokees. A scattering of these tribespeople remained in all the states of the old Cherokee domain. Today the descendants of those people proudly proclaim their Native American heritage. And perhaps some Creeks remained in the Cherokee country as well, even in East Tennessee. This is another interesting but unexplored question arising out of the complex story of Indian removal.

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On January 18, 1846, in one of the most dramatic episodes in American history, the staunch opposition to the Civil War) and the "Parson" Brown, the Union proponent, the least "rebels" and their families, who had mushroomed in the members. By the rounding of Brown's political

The Union's policy of the freedmen, protecting them from the Republicans' influence in the South, the Union's sponsorship of blacks to take the Republican side were created, and soon became their political

Tennessee's Union League as early as 1845 to follow. The

The author is from Knoxville.

<sup>1</sup> Minutes from the meeting of January and February 1845, in the Library, Knoxville, Tennessee County, Tennessee (revised 1988),