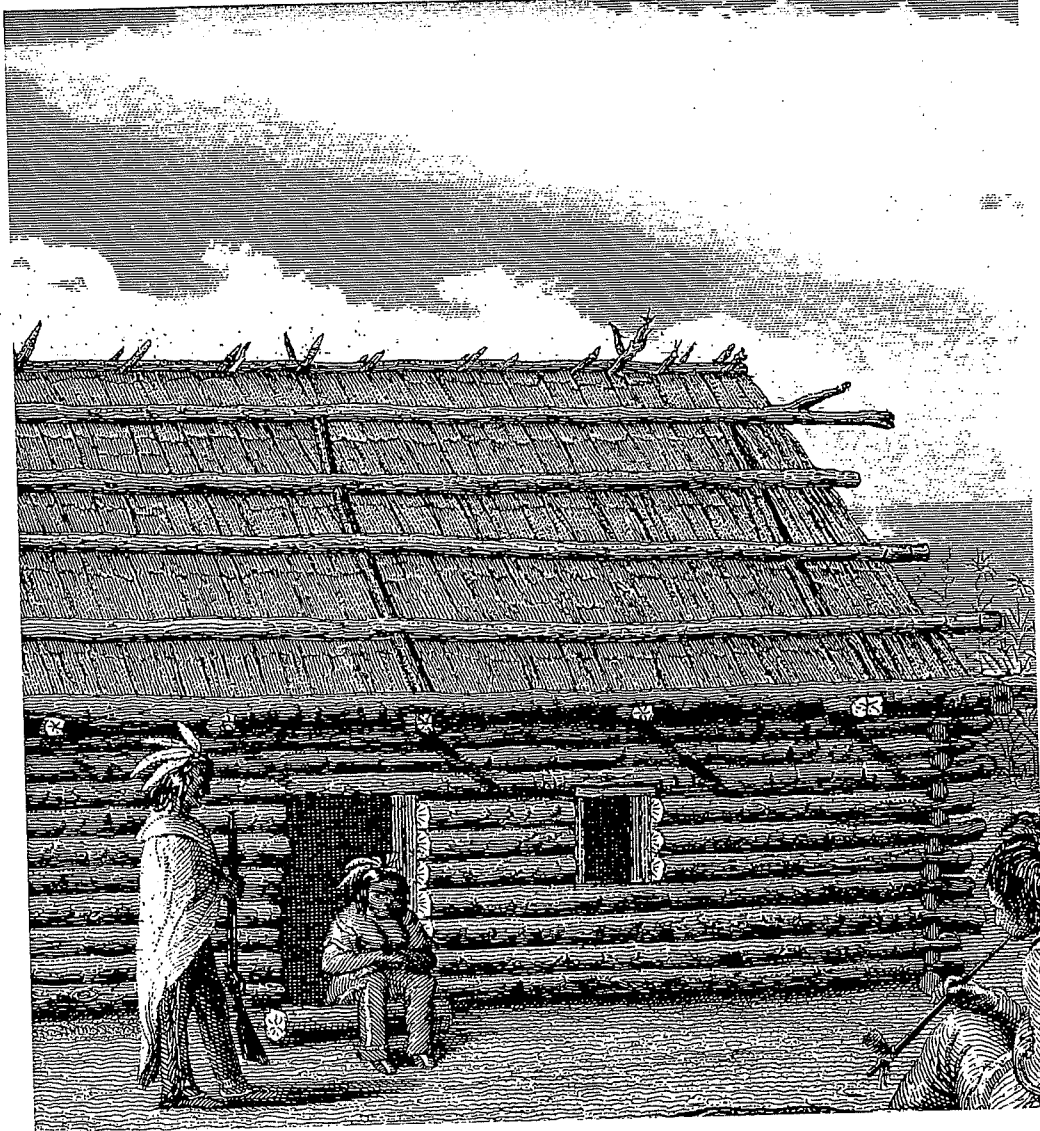


WE THE PEOPLE

The Creek

and Their History



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On the cover: A Creek cabin scene painted by 19th-century artist
and career military officer Seth Eastman

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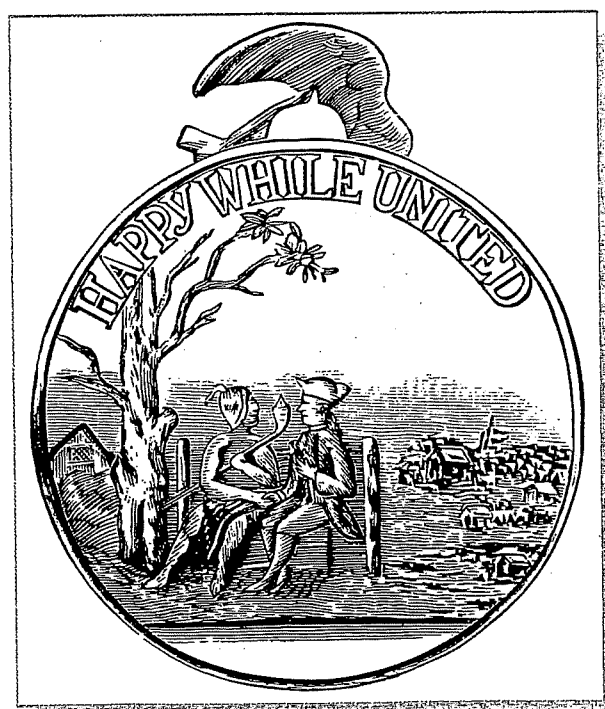
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At first, the Creek seemed to benefit from European interest in deerskin and furs. Creek leaders traded these for guns and tools. After a while, though, the Creek began to depend on these tools. They slaughtered so many deer for skins to trade that the animals became a scarce food source.

Then the Creek became involved in European wars on their land. The English and French fought the French and Indian War from 1754 to 1763. During this



war, the Creek sided with the English winners. The Creek lost lives but retained much of their land. They remained allies of the English. This alliance harmed the Creek after

The British gave this medal to Indians who supported them during the American Revolution.

Creek and Their History • The Creek and Their History

the English lost the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) with their American colonies. The new United States was now angry with the Creek.

Nonetheless, Creek leader Alexander McGillivray successfully bargained for some Creek rights in a treaty signed in 1790. The son of a Creek woman and a Scots trader and politician,

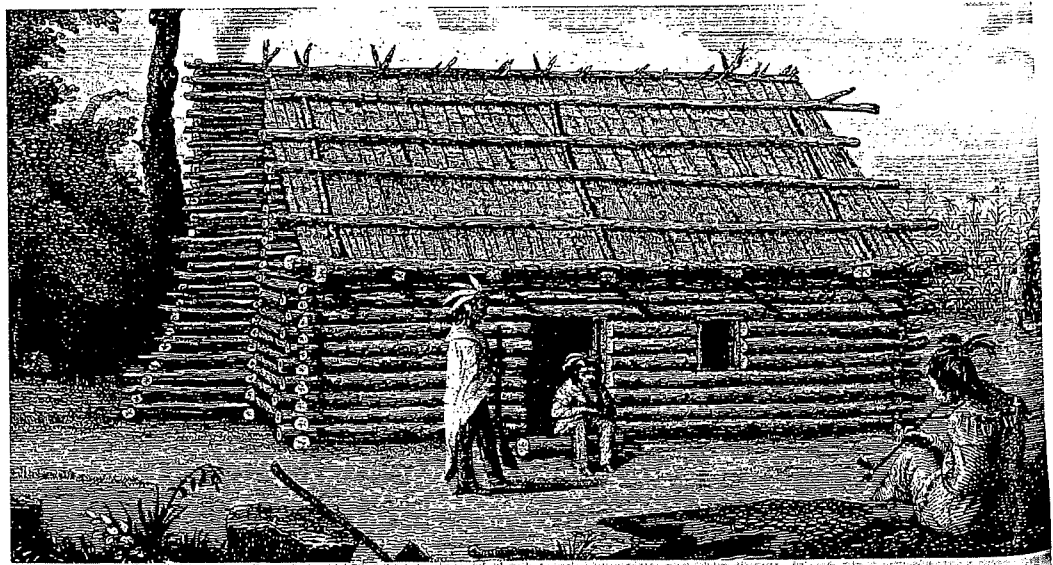
McGillivray was shrewd but honest. Some native leaders had taken bribes to sign away rights.

McGillivray declared that President George Washington himself could not bribe him “had he the 13 colonies in his belly” to offer.



Alexander McGillivray

At this time, money and European ways had become increasingly important to the Creek and their neighboring tribes, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Seminole, and Cherokee. By the early 1800s, these peoples had adopted so many European customs that settlers began calling them the Five Civilized Tribes. Even though many settlers approved of their civilized behavior, the United States did not treat the Creek well. The government broke many of the promises it had made in the 1790 treaty and later agreements.



The Creek lived in cabins like this one painted by 19th-century artist and career military officer Seth Eastman.

“LAND ... I AM NEVER TO LOOK UPON AGAIN”

Ignoring the treaty, U.S. settlers began taking Creek land by force. The government even built roads through Creek territory. Tribal leaders could not agree on what to do about this. Some believed war was the answer. Their views gained strength as a popular Shawnee leader, Chief Tecumseh, also urged native peoples to fight the government.

Between 1813 and 1814, a group known as the Red Stick Creek, led by Chief Menawa, fought a larger U.S. Army



Creek armed with hatchets, bows and arrows, and rifles rush to defend their village against American soldiers during the Creek War.

force led by General Andrew Jackson. In this Creek War, some Cherokee warriors and a group called the White Stick Creek helped Jackson. Chief William McIntosh was a Creek leader who helped Jackson. At the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in Alabama, Jackson and his allies defeated the Red Stick warriors. At least 800 of the 1,000 Red Stick warriors died in the battle. Jackson's forces, on the other hand, lost only about 200 of their 3,300 men.

This defeat forced some Red Stick Creek from their land. Some moved west, while others fled south to Florida. Wounded Chief Menawa voiced his people's sadness when he said, "Last night I saw the sun set for the last time, and its light shine upon the treetops and the land and the water that I am never to look upon again." Andrew Jackson, though, became famous for winning this war. This fame



Chief Menawa



Chief William McIntosh

helped him later become the seventh president of the United States.

In 1825, Chief William McIntosh signed a treaty giving away some Creek land in Georgia. Other Creek leaders disagreed with McIntosh and felt he had broken Creek laws. They suspected he might have taken a bribe. One chief named Opothleyaholo voiced the tribe's

anger when he said McIntosh had "a double snake tongue." These Creek leaders ordered McIntosh's death.

McIntosh's family later described how, in the early morning hours of April 30, 1825, more than 100 warriors surrounded the chief's house and killed him "by shooting more than 100 [bullets] into [him]." Nonetheless, the U.S. government held the Creek to the treaty McIntosh had signed. Some Creeks in Georgia had to move west.

In 1832, when Andrew Jackson was president, Creek leaders were pressured into signing more treaties. These exchanged most of their remaining traditional land for land in the western Indian Territory that later became Oklahoma. As a result, between 1836 and 1837, the U.S. Army removed between 15,000 and 20,000 Creek from their homes. It was while they were fighting against this removal that Chief Eneah Emathla and his followers were caught and taken to Montgomery.

In Indian Territory, the Creek uneasily joined their former neighbors, the Chickasaw and Choctaw peoples, who had already



President Andrew Jackson



The forced march of the Cherokee in 1838 is known as the Trail of Tears.

been forced to move there. In 1838, most of their Cherokee neighbors were also forced to relocate. The journey of the Cherokee was so bitter and painful that in their own language they called it the Trail of Tears.

In Oklahoma, the Creek continued to struggle. They faced disease, hunger created by the government's failures to deliver supplies, and sometimes unfriendly neighbors. During the American Civil War of 1861 to

1865, most Creek sided with the Southern Confederate states, which lost to the Northern Union forces. A Creek regiment of soldiers was one of the last in the Confederate Army to be defeated.

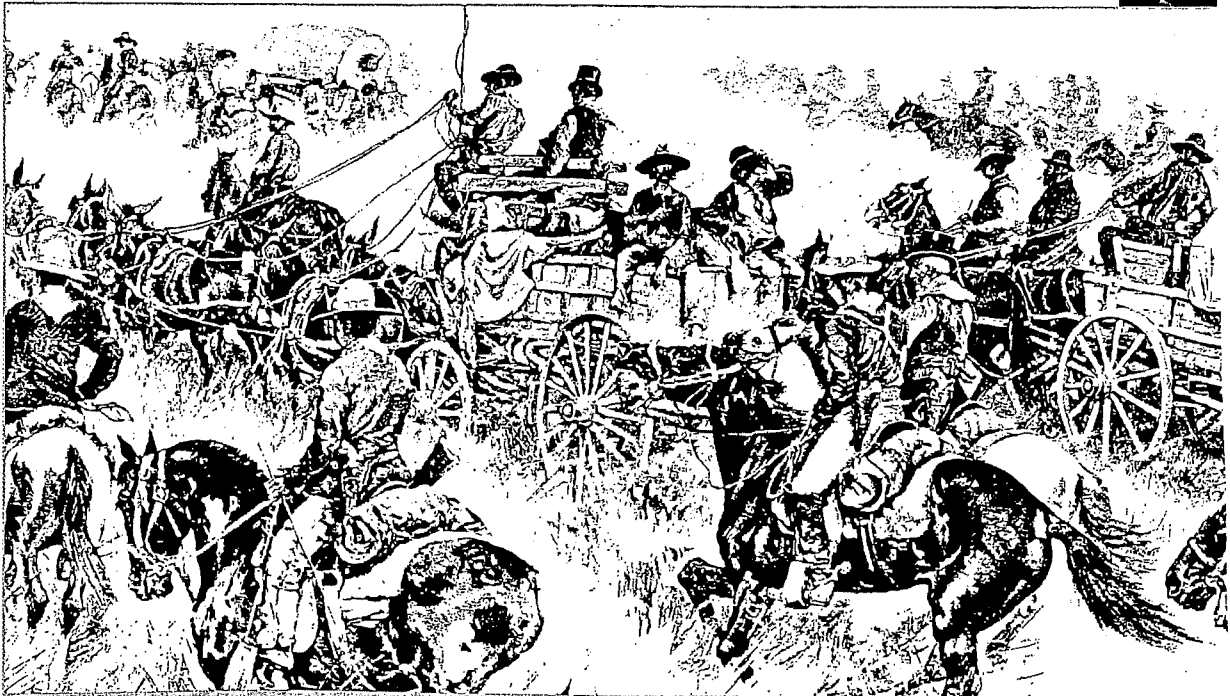
During the Civil War, the Creek leader Opothleyaholo led several thousand Creek who were loyal to the Union. Escaping from Confederate forces to Kansas, Opothleyaholo led his people on a second “trail of tears.” One winter, their bare feet left bloody footprints in the snow as they stumbled to keep ahead of their enemies. Yet their loyalty was not



Delegates from 34 tribes gathered at the Creek Council House in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) in 1880. The decade would bring them further loss of their land.

rewarded. In 1866, the United States punished all Creek people by taking away nearly half of their Oklahoma territory.

In 1887, the Dawes General Allotment Act further reduced the land set aside for such reservations. The Creek lost more territory in 1889, when the government opened Oklahoma to homesteaders. Traditions as well as land were lost at this time. Christian missionaries continued their efforts to convert Creek people and their neighbors.



Homesteaders raced to claim land in Oklahoma in 1889.