Indigenous Tuscaloosa

HY 439: Foundations in Public History
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Instructor: Dr. Julia Brock

Introduction

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The indigenous history of Tuscaloosa and the surrounding areas is foundational to the story of Alabama. The Muscogee Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Nations and their ancestors lived here for millenia, yet their stories are misconstrued or have been erased. In the fall of 2020, the HY 439: Foundations in Public History course conducted research on the Native past in order to inform efforts of the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History and Reconciliation Foundation, which is expanding its public history presence in the city. The following report is a snapshot of the history of indigenous presence in Alabama; at the end of our narrative we include a recommendation and selected bibliography for the TCRHRF to pursue additional research and guidance.

The class concluded that the history of tribal presence in Alabama as connected to Tuscaloosa is tied to the themes of **resistance**, **resilience**, and **recovery**. **Resistance**, a refusal to comply with state or federal policies or to adapt to the culture and lifeways imposed by Euro-Americans, was not just a phenomenon of the nineteenth century when Indian Nations resisted removal. The Battle of Mabila, in October of 1540, is the earliest documented case (via the writings of Europeans) of expanded and coordinated resistance to European exploration and colonization in what is now Alabama. The spirit of this original resistance was carried by Nations that fought against dispossession in the 1800s and by those people who remained in place. After the forced migration of most Native Americans from Alabama, notable individuals

such as Afro-Native engineer Horace King (Catawba) and groups of Muscogee Creeks found ways to survive in a society that denied the fundamental humanity of Native peoples.

Resilience conveys an attitude of survival and continuation in the face of difficulty. The Moundville and earlier precontact sites reveal that indigenous civilization has thrived in the South for centuries. After the late 1500s, the society surrounding Moundville dispersed, but the descendants of Mississppian peoples coalesced into new Nations by the eighteenth century. Furthermore, indigenous people survived in the face of state-sanctioned dispossession. Contrary to some public history representation in the South, indigenous peoples did not simply "disappear" during forced migration. The "Indian fires" did not ever truly die out; the ceremonial flames were carried as cultural icons along the Trail of Tears and reestablished in Oklahoma.

Recovery carries the weight of rebuilding a community after fragmentation and decimation along the Trail of Tears. The reestablishment of Native American Nations in what became Oklahoma has its own rich history. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians in South Alabama and the MOWA Choctaws (the Choctaw Indians in Mobile and Washington Counties, Alabama) continue Creek and Choctaw culture, traditions, and language, even as the modern Nations continue to fight for sovereignty. Recovery also reflects the work to uncover and center the histories of Tuscaloosa's indigenous past, an effort that, in the case of this report, was supported by the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, ethnohistorian Dr. Robbie Ethridge (University of Mississippi), and historian Dr. Heather Kopelson (University of Alabama).

Though the class prepared the report for the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights Foundation, we want to acknowledge that while the history of indigenous people in Tuscaloosa is pivotal to the story of the region, it is not reflected on campus at the University of Alabama. At present, there are roughly 200 Native American students, and there are no designated financial or cultural

resources for them sponsored by the university. There is no official acknowledgement by the university of the land's earliest inhabitants. As public historians, our work should go beyond centering these histories to bring about meaningful change. We are excited by the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights Foundation's inclusion of indigenous histories and we hope to see similar interest and action taken by the University of Alabama.

Moundville

Elliott Snow

Moundville, just 20 minutes south of Tuscaloosa, was a residential and then ceremonial center during the Mississippian era between the 11th and 15th centuries (1,000 A.D. – 1450 A.D), before and right up to European contact. The site was an important Mississippian complex, second in size only to Cahokia in Illinois. Modern indigenous Nations, including Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Muscogee (Creek) are cultural descendants from the Mississipian peoples and view Moundville as an important ancestral site.

More than 2,000 burials, 75 house remains, and thousands of artifacts have been discovered in the 500,000 square feet that were excavated (only 14 percent of the site). Archaeologists have determined that the society, at its height, was likely composed of three social categories: low-ranking workers and farmers, high-ranking elites, and a "small group of males who occupied the supreme ascribed political and ritual offices."[1] The site is now a protected National Historic Landmark, though it experienced looting in the 19th and 20th

[1] Lawrence S. Alexander with a contribution by Vernon J. Knight, "Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance of the Oliver Lock and Dam Project Area Tuscaloosa county, Alabama," Report of Investigations 33, Office of Archaeological Research, University of Alabama, September 16, 1982, p. 37, https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a135936.pdf.

centuries.[2] The most recent example of theft occurred in 1980 when students from the University of Michigan discovered boxes of antiquities at a university repository.[3] In the 1970s and 1980s, Native American activists across the country brought attention to the vast collection of human remains that had been looted or excavated and removed to anthropological museums, especially the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History. In response, Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (or NAGPRA) in 1990, which established procedures for indigenous nations to reclaim human remains and cultural and burial objects from federally funded museums and institutions like Moundville.[4]

Moundville was the center of a society that spread as far north as Tuscaloosa and as far south as Akron, Alabama.[5] Other, secondary centers and villages existed along the Black Warrior River. There is evidence of human occupation in the Oliver Lock and Dam archaeological study commissioned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the early 1980s. The report, which encompassed a total of 1,100 acres downstream from the Oliver Lock and Dam, showed that the artifacts included burial urns and other ceramics associated with this precontact period.

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[2] John H. Blitz, "Moundville Archaeological Park," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, February 26, 2007, encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1045.

[3] Donna Yates, "Moundville Archaeological Repository Theft," *Moundville Archaeological Repository Theft*," *Trafficking Culture*, Nov. 14, 2018, traffickingculture.org/encyclopedia/case-studies/moundville-archaeological-repository-theft/.

[4] For more on the activism that led to NAGPRA see Chip Colwell, *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[5] Alexander and Knight, 36-37.

Chief Tuscaloosa and the Battle of Mabila

Danielle Leonardi

The Black Warrior River and the city of Tuscaloosa received their names from early 18th century mislabeled maps by French cartographer Guillaume de Lisle that drew from the reports of Hernando de Soto's expedition in 1540.[6] As told by anthropologist Vernon J. Knight, maps by de Lisle "have the interesting feature of demonstrating the cartographer's ideas concerning the probable route of Soto in 1540. This results in a fairly confused map … [in which] De Lisle decided to place Soto's "Tascalousa" midway up the Black Warrior, and it is for that reason only that the Black Warrior River and city of Tuscaloosa bear their present names."[7] The "Tascalousa" of de Lisle's map refers to the historic Chief Tuscaloosa, who presented a formidable challenge to de Soto and his men in October 1540. His name, "Tuska lusa" is a Choctaw phrase for "Black Warrior."[8] The Alibamu and Choctaw people spoke a western Muscogee dialect and were from the region that became Alabama. However, the chiefdom of Tuskaluza disintegrated by at least 1575.

Chief Tuskalusa was the *mico*, or principle chief, of the province Tascalusa in 1540. According to ethnohistorian Robbie Ethridge, he lived in the town of Atahachi with his family and had deep communication networks with many other tribes. The men of Hernando de Soto's

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[6] For example, see his 1718 *Carte de la Louisiane* at "1718 de L'isle map," *Access Genealogy*, accessed December 6, 2020, https://accessgenealogy.com/america/1718-de-lisle-map.htm.

[7] Alexander and Knight, "Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance," p. 48-49. See also From G. Ward Hubbs, *Tuscaloosa: 200 Years in the Making* (Univ. of Alabama Press, 2019), p. 5.

[8] RaeLynn Butler, Lecture, November 4, 2020, HY 439: Introduction to Public History, University of Alabama.

voyage described Chief Tuskaluza as of "very good proportions, a very well built and noble man," that he "towered over all the others by more than a yard and appeared to be a giant, or was one," and that he "was a man, very tall of body, large limbed, lean, and well built." Hernadez de Biedma said the mico was "a giant." Tuskaluza was able to bring together a large army to fight the Spanish, which demonstrates his power and influence over other chiefdoms of the region.

Hernando de Soto wanted to meet Chief Tuskaluza while on his expedition through the Southeast in search of gold. Tuskalusa sent his nephew and other dignitaries to gather intelligence on the Spanish. His nephew delivered a message to de Soto stating the chief, "desired as he does life to see and serve your Lordship," and that the Spanish would be received in peace. In return, de Soto gave the dignitaries beads and cloth for the chief. Tuskalusa thought he was above de Soto, and showed this by forcing the Spanish to come to him. When Hernando de Soto reached the chief's village, he was received in peace. However, the chief was planning a surprise attack in another town, Mabila, with other chiefdoms. De Soto asked Tuskaluza for burden bearers' (women), but the chief refused, arguing that everyone served him and not de Soto. However, the chief agreed to give de Soto the things he wanted in Mabila.

Hernando de Soto felt uncomfortable and demanded that Chief Tuskalusa accompany him on the journey.[9] They traveled for three days to reach their destination.[10] Along the way they had to cross the Talisi town and the Spanish were attacked from a distance.[11] However, the Talisi people did not attack Tuskalusa's men because they feared the powerful chief. Finally, the party reached Mabila on October 18, 1540. De Soto entered the town with 15 horsemen and 30

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[9] Robbie Ethridge, "When Giants Walked the Earth: Chief Tascaluza, Hernando de Soto, and the Precolonial Mississippian Borderlands of the Sixteenth Century U.S. South," unpublished paper.

[10] Lawrence A. Clayton, et al, *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando De Soto to North America in 1539-1543* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

[11] Ethridge, "When Giants Walked the Earth."

footmen, while the rest of the Spanish army waited outside the walls. The Spanish suspected the Indians because they had many weapons, many people, and had fortified walls. Chief Tuskalusa invited de Soto to stay in the town; de Soto felt forced to stay.

The chief then retired to a hut and refused to come out, even though de Soto tried to make peace. While the Spanish waited outside, one of de Soto's men, Baltasar, took off his marten and startled warriors in the town. They began to fight and Baltasar wounded or killed them. The battle erupted. Tuskalusa's people told their chief to save himself and leave to save the tribe.[12] Some sources argue that his fate it is unknown,[13] others that Chief Tuskalusa did perish during the Battle of Mabila. Approximately 2,000-6,000 of Tuskalusa's warriors died during the battle. Twenty-two of Hernando de Soto's men were killed and almost all were wounded. Forty-five of their horses were killed and all the Spanish provisions and equipment were burned in fire.[14]

The story of Tuskaluza is known primarily through the accounts of Spanish travelers with de Soto, and it must be understood as a highly mediated account. Archaeologists have yet to determine the exact location, but more recently a team from the University of West Alabama (led by Dr. Ashley Dumas) have made promising leads in Alabama's Black Belt. What's clear is that Tuscaluza's is a story of resistance against the European explorers, the first recorded account of a coordinated indigenous attack of this scale on European travelers in what became Alabama.

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[12] Lawrence A. Clayton, et al, *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando De Soto to North America in 1539-1543* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

[13] Ethridge, "When Giants Walked the Earth."

[14] RaeLynn Butler, Lecture, November 4, 2020.

Borderlands: The 18th and early 19th Centuries

Shane Hekker

Interactions of Native peoples and American colonists by the 18th century show how differently both cultures viewed property as well as each other. By that time, the major tribes of what became Alabama were part of geopolitical struggles between Spain, France, and England and, later in the century, found themselves dealing with encroaching settlements from both Georgia and Tennessee. Unlike how many of the American sources portrayed it, the land of Tuscaloosa was not simply a "frontier" waiting to be divided up into individual landholdings but an integral part of the trade network and hunting grounds for indigenous peoples.

After the Battle of Mabila, little is known about the area in west-central Alabama--in fact, scholars have noted the 17th century was a "century of obscurity" for the region, as there is no written and little archaeological record extant.[15] Vernon J. Knight noted that by the 18th century the Black Warrior River served as a "vaguely defined political boundary between the Choctaws and Muscogees," a reference to the indigenous nations that coalesced during the late 16th and 17th centuries, a period that ethnohistorian Robbie Ethridge calls the "Missippian shatter zone." In Ethridge's words, the shatter zone

> was a large region of instability in eastern North America that existed from the late sixteenth century through the early eighteenth centuries and was created by the combined conditions of the structural instability of hte Mississippian world and the inability of Native polities to withstand the full force of colonialism; the introduction of Old World pathogens and the subsequent serial disease episodes and loss of life; the inauguration of a nascent capitalist economic system by Europeans through a commercial trade in animal skins and especially in Indian slaves, whom other Indians procured and sold to European buyers; and the intensification and spread of violence and warfare through the Indian

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[15] Alexander and Knight, "Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance," p. 47.

> slave trade and particularly through the emergence of militaristic Native slaving societies who held control of the European trade.[16]

The Nations that surrounded the area that became Tuscaloosa formed because of--and in spite of--shatter zone effects and were entangled in global geopolitics and commercial economies. To compress a complicated history, the Muscogee Creek confederacy allied with the English and the Choctaw allied with French (before 1763, when French were pushed out of the region after the Seven Years' War) in a colonial struggle to gain possession of land, resources, and Native allies in what is now Alabama and Mississippi. Colonial alliances and the Indian slave trade had devastating consequences for intertribal relations; the Creek and Choctaw, for example, battled each other in the mid-18th century. One of those battles, described by Gideon Lincecum, a white chronicler of Choctaw leader Pushmataha and a Tuscaloosa resident in the 1820s, may have taken place near Mill Creek in Northport.[17]

This region was a borderland between Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Muscogee Creek but there are recorded encampments, particularly by the end of the 18th century. By then, there was a Muscogee Creek village, known as the town at "the Falls" and sometimes misidentified in textual records as "Black Warrior Town" (Vernon J. Knight, looking closely at primary evidence, argued that Black Warrior Town was north of Tuscaloosa, closer to Florence). Such a location possibly allowed tribal leaders to trade at the Choctaw trading post or factory at St. Stephens or meet with other villages nearby. Indeed, George Gaines, who operated a Choctaw trading house

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[16] Robbie Ethridge, "Introduction," in *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 2.

[17] Gideon Lincecum, "Life of Apushimataha," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* vol. 9 (1906): 449-453, accessed December 5, 2020, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009793181. Lincecum wrote his account of Pushmataha as part of a larger autobiography in 1861. Vernon J. Knight notes that the description of the battle could plausibly be Mill Creek in Northport, particularly given that Lincecum would have known the area around Northport and Tuscaloosa, and from the location of the Muscogee Creek village of the Falls of the Black Warrior. See Alexander and Knight, "Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance," p. 53.

at St. Stephens, named the headman of the town at the falls as Oceochomotla, who often traded in St. Stephens. Gainees noted that Oceochemothla had aligned with the British in 1811 and wanted to join in war against the U.S.[18] The location of the Creek town at the Falls is unclear; Knight pointed to local historian Thomas P. Clinton, who identified the town (and a circular fort) as being near what is now the intersection of Sanders Ferry and Clinton Roads. Knight noted, however, that a neighborhood was built atop the site; the only object linking the site to the Creek town is a pottery sherd in the Ocmulgee Fields Plain type, which is associated with Creek creation.[19]

Continued encroachment by whites and Native American land cessions, often made under duress, heightened tensions in the early 19th century. External pressures and internal divisions in Muscogee Creek Nation, for example, exploded in the Creek War of 1813-1814. Ancillary to the war of 1812, the conflict pitted Creeks from Upper Towns, those towns on the Coosa and Tallapoosa River, against those from Lower Towns on the Chattahoochee River. Those from or who sided with the Upper Towns were called Red Sticks; those from the Lower Towns, White Sticks. Generally, Redsticks fought against white encroachment and rejected American customs and the U.S. government's attempts at assimilating the Creeks.[20] The Lower Towns sided with the U.S. Government, and were often, though not solely, Creeks of who had European ancestry. The attack on Ft. Mims by Red Stick Creeks and the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek sent the parties to war; tension was also heightened by the kidnapping of Martha Crawley, described below.

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[18] George Strother Gaines, *The Reminiscences of George Strother Gaines: Pioneer and Statesman of Early Alabama and Mississippi, 1805-1843*, ed. James P. Pate (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 51-52.

[19] Lawrence and Knight, "Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance," p. 74.

[20] For important context on the Creek War, see Gregory Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2009).

Ultimately, a combination of U.S., White Stick Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw forces, led by Andrew Jackson, defeated the Red Sticks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in Alabama.

The defeat of the Red Stick Creeks and the Treaty of Fort Jackson in 1814 led to the forcible cession of 22 million acres of the Creek Nation--including land just east of Tuscaloosa. This was the first of several large cessions forced upon the Creeks that dramatically reduced their landholdings. Opening the lands to white settlement created a rush of migrants from Tennessee and Georgia into what was then the Mississippi Territory, putting additional pressure on Creek towns and drastically reducing hunting grounds. In 1816, Alabama Territory was created after land cessions by the Choctaw. In 1819, Alabama became a state and in 1826, Tuscaloosa became its capital.

Early white settlers in Tuscaloosa were uneasy with Native Americans living among them or passing through what had been contested territory. Whites complained that Native Americans continued to travel through the area; one group of whites petitioned the territorial governor in 1818 after claims that "Hostile Indians" moving "Westward" had a violent encounter with white children and an enslaved woman. The group asked the governor to "send us such aid in men & as many arms as may be in your power --to prevent our families from a sacrifice to them & also take such measures as may prevent any more parties from again entering our Territory…"[21] The same year, Thomas Hunter in Tuscaloosa wrote to the governor to ascertain "if the regulation with the respect to Creek [emphasis original] Indians, whether friendly or hostile repairing to their own nation out to be strictly enforced." Hunter was concerned because of "white man named Smith" had married a Creek woman and was living in northern Tuscaloosa

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[21] Petition to Governor Bibb by Inhabitants of Tuscaloosa County, October 7, 1818, *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Vol. 18, The Territory of Alabama, 1817-1819*, comp. Clarence Edwin Carter (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1952), p. 430, 437, accessed November 15, 2020, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31210016047118.

County, where he had "in employ about 30 or 40 Indians for the purpose to hunting; those Indians have during the last war [the Creek War] been unfriendly to the United States, but now profess peace--however they are suspected generally of giving aid and assistance not only to hostile and bad Indians but to rascals of every description."[22] Whites wanted to bar Indian presence from the county and sought force to do so.

The government of Alabama was on the side of white Tuscaloosans. This sentiment is elaborated by the letters between Governor Israel Pickens of Alabama and Gov. John Clark of Georgia about the "Indian problem." In a letter from 1821, Pickens calls for aid from Georgia in "the extinguishment of the Indian title to the country."[23] This call for "extinguishment" of Native land would grow to a fever pitch in Alabama during the 1830s, which is covered in the section on forced migration.

The Martha Crawley Incident

R.J. Williams

The Creek town at the Falls was the backdrop to an event that added to increased tension before the outbreak of the Creek War--the captivity of Martha Crawley by Red Stick Creeks in 1812. Though accounts of the event are conflicting, it does seem that Crawley was reclaimed at the Falls town by a white trader from St. Stephens.

The narrative surrounding Martha Crawley's abduction was immediately seized by the media and war hawks of the time who hoped to see a military defeat of the Creeks. Crawley's

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[22] Thomas Hunter to Governor Bibb, Nov. 1, 1818, *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, *Vol. 18, The Territory of Alabama, 1817-1819*, comp. Clarence Edwin Carter (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1952), p. 452, accessed November 15, 2020, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31210016047118.
[23] Israel Pickens to John Clark, December 18, 1821, *Southeastern Native American Documents*, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries, presented in the Digital Library of Georgia, accessed December 16, 2020. https://dlg.usg.edu/record/dlg_zlna_tcc145#item.

account was exaggerated and used to reignite negative sentiment even months after her capture, and even after she had escaped. The Affidavit of Martha Crawley, when compared to the newspapers reporting the events of her kidnapping, reveals a less dramatic version of events.

In May of 1812 a small party of Creeks who had been traveling with the prophet Tecumseh attacked the Manley homestead in Tennessee. They killed seven individuals, including five children, and took Martha Crawley hostage. Several people survived the events, one of them being Crawley's own child, and the other being Mrs. Manley, who died four days following the attack from her wounds (Kanon 4). The media immediately capitalized on the attack to provoke public outcry against Creek violence; the *Tennessee Herald* proclaimed that Mrs. Manley's young child was scalped and thrown into the fireplace and that Mrs. Manley had been violated, scalped, shot, then left to bleed out.[24] Based on the accounts of Mr and Mrs. Manley, as well as that of Martha Crawley, the baby was not scalped, nor thrown into the fireplace, and Mrs. Manley was never violated. Although the term "yellow journalism" would not be used until the Spanish American War, sensationalism can be found in these newspapers that exaggerated the story to fit a narrative of war, one they, along with Andrew Jackson, pushed in their pursuit of the lands south and west of Tennessee.

Jackson was the major general of the Tennessee territorial militia at the time, and the attack on the Crawley and Manley families in Tennessee enraged him. He wrote to Governor William Blount that "*they* [Creeks] *must be punished*--and our frontier protected" and that Tennessee militiamen "burn for revenge." He hoped Blount could secure permission from the U.S. Secretary of War to raise troops; he promised to "lay their Towns in ashes" if the Creek

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[24] John Bennet, "Massacre at Duck Creek," *The Clarion*, May 19, 1812, p. 5. See also "Indian Murders," *Niles Weekly Register* (Baltimore, Maryland) II, no. 42, June 13, 1812, *Hathi Trust*, accessed December 4, 2020 https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101064076845?urlappend=%3Bseq=270

Nation did not turn over Crawley and her captors. Noting that the Creeks in question were aligned with the British and "making every preparation for war" he suggested that with the help of Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaws, a volunteer army could "quell the Creeks, and bring them to terms without presents or annuities."[25] The Secretary of War chose a diplomatic resolution, entrusting Creek agent Benjamin Hawkins to negotiate release of Crawley and the punishment of her captors, among them a man named Little Warrior. Crawley eventually escaped in July of 1812, and "friendly" Creeks (as characterized by American forces) put Little Warrior and another captor to death.[26]

The story's connection to Tuscaloosa is probable but not completely clear. After she was taken captive, Crawley claims that her captors first took her to Bear Creek, then to a town on "the Bigby," then to "a town on Black Warrior River," at which point she escaped. For three days she ran in a direction she thought might take her to the Tombigbee River again, but instead came upon another town on the Black Warrior. Here she was told by several Creek residents that a man spoke English in the town; they took her to "a house" with two Creek men, neither of which spoke English, according to Crawley. She then escaped again but was overtaken by two Creek men with guns who ordered her back toward the town; this time, Tandy Walker, a blacksmith from St. Stephens, was there to purchase her freedom (though she claimed she never saw money exchange hands).[27] George Gaines, the Choctaw factor at St. Stephens, remembered the incident in his *Reminiscences* and cited the rescue as taking place at the falls of the Black Warrior River.[28]

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[25] Andrew Jackson to Willie Blount, June 4, 1812, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson, Vol. II, 1804-1913*, eds. Harold D. Moser and Sharon McPherson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), p. 300-301, accessed November 11, 2020, https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_jackson/5/.

[26] Tom Kanon, "The Kidnapping of Martha Crawley and Settler-Indian Relations Prior to the War of 1812," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 19.

[27] Martha C. Crawley, "Affidavit of Martha Crawley," August 11, 1812, *Library of Congress*, accessed November 5, 2020, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/maj.01010_0030_0033.

[28] Gaines, *The Reminiscences of George Strother Gaines*, 53-54.

The most important information obtained from Crawley's affidavit is what goes unsaid. At no point in her recollection is she "severely whipped; exhibited naked in circles of warriors, who danced around her" at no point is she "burned" at the stake either, as the rumors claimed.[29]

The Crawley kidnapping was a narrative used to instigate whites against the Native Nations in Tennessee and elsewhere. This sentiment, only furthered by the onset of the War of 1812 and the Creek War, would turn settlers ever more violent towards Native people, and the Creeks in Alabama especially. They were seen as collaborators with the British and as depraved "savages" that would continue their depredations on the frontier unless they were forced to stop by a military force. The people of the United States were looking for a reason to continue westward, and they found that reason in the isolated incidents along the frontier of supposed Indian depredations. These "depredations" were sensationalized into tales of brutality meant to stir anger in the hearts of people, not considered as acts of resistance against violence enacted by whites themselves. The events that befell the Crawley family were tragic, but those who reported on it were much more interested in another story of Indian violence than they were on finding Martha Crawley. Some hoped to stir public resentment and push a land grab backed by a government forced to respond to the supposedly brutal end of one of her citizens. Andrew Jackson's eagerness to lead a force against the Muscogee Creek people is evidence enough of that; Jackson had been readying for a fight against the Creeks for years. In the Creek War, he got that fight and during 1813-1814, the U.S. military, with Choctaw support, burned Creek towns along the Black Warrior River, which were still purported to be Red Stick towns.[30] In a few short

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[29] Kanon, "The Kidnapping of Martha Crawley and Settler-Indian Relations Prior to the War of 1812," p. 7.
[30] For more detailed coverage of the burning of Creek towns along the Black Warrior River, including the town at the Falls, see Alexander and Knight, "Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance," pp. 60-72.

years, Jackson would also deal the final blow to southeastern Nations when he signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

Creek and Choctaw Removal in the 1830s

Kelsey Bridgeforth

J.W. Stephens, son of John and Theba Stephens, was born in 1859 in the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma. An Afro-Creek man, he and his mother were enslaved by a Creek family until the mid-1860s. In a 1938 interview with journalist L.W. Wilson, he told of his Creek grandparents' story, who came from Alabama during the Creek forced migration of the 1830s. Removal, he said, was "nothing more than greed and injustice on the part of the whites and suffering and hardship for the Creeks." Stephens' grandfather was "driven out like cattle" and told his grandson that "he made the trip barefoot and often left bloody footprints in the snow."[31]

Stephens' family history--dispossession, violence, and enslavement--tells a larger story of historical trauma. Removal, called ethnic cleansing by members of the Creek Nation and leading historians of the period, is a complicated narrative that cannot be encapsulated in these few pages.[32] We have included resources to help tell this story in the bibliography. Here we point to ways that forced migration, particularly of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, connects with the city and county of Tuscaloosa.

White Americans only controlled parts of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi by the 1830s. Much of the land still belonged to Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Nations.

[31] J.W. Stephens, interview by L.W. Wilson, March 22, 1938, Indian-Pioneer Oral History Project, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/cdm/ref/collection/indianpp/id/2466.

[32] "Ethnic cleansing," for example, is used by historian Christopher Haveman in *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation & Ethnic Cleansing in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

However, white settlers, with support from the federal and state government, continued to push Indian Nations westward. The Creeks had suffered from the 1825 Treaty of Indian Springs that erased their Georgia landholdings; Creek leader William McIntosh signed the treaty without Creek National Council support (other Creek men murdered McIntosh because of this act and that he allowed the Georgia governor to begin surveying Creek lands in western Georgia). Though the U.S. government deemed the treaty null, another was signed that essentially kept land cessions in place. Creeks from Lower Towns migrated into Alabama, where the Nation was suffering from white violence, poverty, and growing pressure from the Alabama government to emigrate to land in what was then called Indian Territory.

Historian Claudio Saunt has noted that, "With the exception of bayonets and rifles, the United States's most effective weapon in compelling people to move west was state law."[33] Tuscaloosa, Alabama's capital from 1826-1846, formed an important field of action in the dispossession of Muscogee Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw peoples in the 1830s. The Alabama state government in Tuscaloosa pushed to take control of indigenous lands--first by passing so-called extension laws in the late 1820s and early 1830s to claim sovereignty over Creek and Cherokee allotted lands and forbidding Creek hunting and fishing in the state. Then, the state punished resisters in the Creek War of 1836, the latter of whom Gov. C.C. Clay referred to as "deluded Savages" in correspondence with the U.S. Secretary of War.[34] For Clay and other Alabama whites, forced removal was "necessary to the permanent tranquility of the white

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[33] Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2020), p. 93.

[34] C.C. Clay to J.R. Poinsett, April 17, 1837, SG6241, folder 7, Governor C.C. Clay administrative records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, https://archives.alabama.gov/timeline/1800/cwar17.html. For more on the extension laws, see Christopher Haveman, *Rivers of Sand: Creek Indian Emigration, Relocation & Ethnic Cleansing in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), p. 85.

population"-- and for lands desired by white westward migrants who quickly established an agricultural cotton economy fueled by enslaved workers.[35] More study should be undertaken on Tuscaloosa's role as a center of Alabama's government during forced migration; governors' records at the Alabama Department of Archives and History would be a helpful starting place.

In the forced removal of the Creeks, the state of Alabama had the backing of the U.S. Government. On December 6, 1830, then President Andrew Jackson wrote to Congress about the progress of the Indian Removal. He announced that it gave him a pleasure to continue pursuing the removal of Indians and to create a happy environment for white settlers. Jackson proclaimed the removal would "incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontiers" as well as "enable those states to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power."[36] By then, some Creeks, such as those associated with the McIntosh faction, had emigrated to present-day Oklahoma. Some Choctaws had emigrated, as well, after signing the Treaty of Doak's Stand in 1820.[37] The Indian Removal Act of 1830 hastened forced removal west, though Nations employed violent and passive means of resistance--in the courts, in negotiations with U.S. officials, in their refusal to leave eastern homelands, in their continuation of traditions such as the Green Corn Ceremony, and in coordinated attacks on white encroachers, emigration agents, and predatory whites who loitered around the Nation selling whiskey and swindling Creeks out of land claims. The so-called Second Creek War in 1836-1837, in which resistant Creeks struck out violently against their oppressors, was the final excuse for Jackson and Alabama to

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[35] C.C. Clay to Thomas J. Jesup, March 30, 1837, SG6483, folder 8, Governor C.C. Clay administrative records, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, https://archives.alabama.gov/timeline/1800/cwar16.html.

[36] "Andrew Jackson's Speech to Congress on Indian Removal," December 6, 1830, *National Park Service*, accessed November 27, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/museum/tmc/MANZ/handouts/Andrew_Jackson_Annual_Message.pdf.

[37] Clara Sue Kidwell, "Choctaw," *Oklahoma Historical Society*, accessed December 7, 2020, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH047. For a book-length study of Choctaw Removal, see Arthur H. Derosier, *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

call upon military force to displace remaining Creek men, women, and children from the Muscogee Creek Nation in Alabama (some had agreed to move in 1834 and 1835, but we can't consider this an example of free choice).[38] Between the earlier McIntosh emigration in the late 1820s to the final Creek people displaced in 1837, the U.S. government and states of Georgia and Alabama forced 23,000 Creeks westward.[39]

The journey to western land included stories of Creeks treated brutally by whites along the way. Approximately 3,500 died during forced migration.[40] Lizzie Wynn described her Uncle Willie Benson telling the story of making it to Dustin, Oklahoma, from Alabama.

> When they started out they were afoot and were driven like cattle. At first they had something to eat but that gave out and they were starving. If they had had guns or string they could have gotten game or fish but were not allowed to have them. They came to a slippery elm tree and ate the bark of that until they could get something else. When they would give out they would camp for two or three days to rest up a very little bit, then come on again. Lots took sick and died, so there were not so many when they got here. Big boats were used to haul them across the streams and lakes. When they got to Arkansas they were unable to walk farther so wagons were provided for the rest of the trip. I don't know just where they located first but they were Muskogee Indians under Opuithli Yahola.[41]

Wynn's family likely migrated through Tuscaloosa with Opothle Yoholo's party.

In 1834 and 1836, thousands of Creek Indians passed through and camped near Tuscaloosa, some with enslaved African Americans. Opothle Yoholo and Eufaula Harjo came through the capital with large groups. The parties encountered indifferent and even hostile

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[38] Haveman, *Rivers of Sand*, 185.

[39] Christopher Haveman, "Creek Indian Removal," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, accessed December 5, 2020, http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2013.

[40] "What Happened on the Trail of Tears?" *National Park Service*, accessed November 17, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/trte/learn/historyculture/what-happened-on-the-trail-of-tears.htm#:~:text=Between%201830%20and%201850%2C%20about,and%20on%20their%20westward%20journey.

[41] Lizzie Wynn, "Family Stories from the Trail of Tears, ed. Lorrie Montiero, Sequoyah Research Center, Native American Press Archives, accessed November 15, 2020, https://ualrexhibits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html#Wynn.

whites as they passed through the city. On Christmas Day 1834, Sarah Gayle noted somewhat dismissively in her journal that, "A part of the Creek tribe of Indians is in Town, on its way to its new home" and that her husband bought a pony from them for their son, "unquestionably the ugliest I have ever beheld but, at the same time, the most docile and diminutive."[42] Eighty years later, local historian Thomas Clinton reprinted a reminiscence of Dr. Joshua Foster, a UA faculty member who was a boy in Tuscaloosa when Creek families were forcibly migrated through the city: "In their emigration westward some of them camped where the University Observatory now stands. With other boys I had visited their camp and bought from them a few trinkets."[43] He also visited another camp across the Black Warrior River in Northport, which Clinton cites as Hargrove Mill Creek, now simply Mill Creek that runs through the current Van de Graaff Arboretum to the Warrior River (at the time of Creek removal, the site may have already been Robert Jemison's property Cherokee Place, which he purchased in 1836). None of the recollections include enslaved people traveling with the Creeks, but historian Christopher Haveman notes that, based on U.S. Army muster rolls, the 1834 party included 630 Creek individuals and 115 enslaved workers.[44] Opothle Yaholo was also an enslaver.[45] We recommend additional research on the complicated history of Indian slaveholding and include in the bibliography useful sources to that end.

If some whites in Tuscaloosa met the Creek Indians with indifference or even curiosity, some were violent and acted with ruthless force against the travelers. The daughter-in-law of

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[42] Sarah Haynesworth Gayle journal, 1832-1835, Josiah and Amelia Gorgas Family Papers, University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections, accessed November 11, 2020, https://cdm17336.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17336coll43/id/304.

[43] Thomas Clinton, "The Visit of Opothelyoholo [*sic*], the Indian Chief to Tuscaloosa in 1836 and his Subsequent History," *Tuscaloosa News*, July 20, 1919.

[44] Haveman, *Rivers of Sand*, 122-123.

[45] Haveman, *Rivers of Sand*, 177.

Gov. Clay, Virginia Clay-Copon, grew up near Tuscaloosa and was present during the encampment of Creek families, which she recalled lasting "several weeks." In a memoir published in 1905, she recounted the brutal murder of a Creek man; we quote verbatim from her words here, which are offensive and depict brutal violence:

> During that encampment a redman was set upon by some quarrelsome rowdies, and in the altercation was killed. Fearing the vengeance of the allied tribes about them, the miscreants disembowelled [*sic*] their victim, and, filling the cavity with rocks, sank the body in the river. The Indians, missing their companion, and suspecting some evil had befallen him, appealed to Governor C. C. Clay, who immediately uttered a proclamation for the recovery of the body. In a few days the crime and its perpetrators were discovered, and justice was meted out to them. By this prompt act Governor Clay, to whose wisdom is accredited by historians the repression of the Indian troubles in Alabama in 1835-'37, won the goodwill of the savages, among whom was the great warrior, Apothleohola [Opothle Yaholo].[46]

Though she used the anecdote to cast her father-in-law as a dubious hero, the disturbing event as described by Clay-Copton highlights the dehumanization of Creeks by white settlers in Tuscaloosa.

Near the remains of Capitol Park today there is a historical marker titled, "The Indian Fires are Going Out," which recounts a speech that "Chief Eufaula" (likely Eufaula Harjo or Yaholo Micco, according to Haveman)[47] was said to have given at the state capitol building about leaving his land in east Alabama. A white man translated the speech from Muscogee and the *Niles Weekly Register* reprinted the speech. Interpretation of the speech's meaning is open, but it must be understood as a highly mediated oration, first translated by a white person and then reprinted from a witness' recollection. Other Creek leaders did not express the seeming resignation that is attributed to Chief Eufuala. Clinton, in his local history of the removal

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[46] Virginia Clay-Copton, *A Belle of the Fifties: Memoirs of Mrs. Clay of Alabama, Covering Social and Political Life in Washington and The South, 1853-66*, electronic edition, Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1998, https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/clay/clay.html.

[47] Haveman, *Rivers of Sand*, 122-123.

parties, reprinted a memory from Thomas Maxwell, Sr., of Tuscaloosa who had witnessed oration by Opothle Yaholo: "Opotheyaholo [*sic*] while here never pretended to be satisfied with the removal of his people, but admitted he moved only because of imperative necessity."[48] Historian Christopher Haveman confirms the continued resistance by Opothle Yaholo on the path to Indian Territory.[49] We believe that the marker, if appropriately contextualized, will allow for a modern audience to critically examine the historical process--from the origination of a primary source to its reframing for a contemporary audience in the 1830s and then again by the city of Tuscaloosa in 2002, when the marker was installed. It will be important to consult with descendant communities about the marker's interpretation; as RaeLynn Butler of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation reminded our class in November 2020, "The fires never went out."

The Life and Legacy of Horace King

Joshua McKinney

On May 28, 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, granting the president the power to seize indigenous lands in exchange for land west of the Mississippi River. As a result of this forced removal, Native American presence east of the Mississippi was greatly diminished. Those that did remain were often persecuted. Despite this ostracization, indigenous people still had a presence within the South, as seen through the noted engineer, architect, and bridge builder Horace King.

Horace King was born in the Chesterfield District of South Carolina as the son of an enslaved woman, which secured his unfree status. He was of Catawba, European, and African

[48] Clinton, *Tuscaloosa News*, July 20, 1919.

[49] See, for example, the list of demands made by Opothle Yaholo to the U.S. Army agents before and during forced migration. Haveman, *Rivers of Sand*, 206-206.

descent. His grandfather was a Catawba man who married an enslaved woman, giving birth to King's mother; because of this paternal line of descent, King likely did not have clan affiliation in the matrilineal Catawba Nation. Nevertheless, in recounting his biography to Reverend F.L. Cherry in the early 1880s, he claimed Catawba ancestry.[50]

King's enslaver died in 1830 and his estate was bought by contractor John Godwin.[51] Godwin was a bridge builder, and trained King in construction and engineering. Working under Godwin, King quickly learned how to mill lumber, construct bridges, and organize construction projects. As a testament to his skill and stature, King often acted as the superintendent on many of his projects under Godwin, including bridges that connected Columbus, Georgia, a boomtown founded in the wake of Creek forced migration, and Girard, Alabama (now Phenix City). Godwin trusted King's judgment and skills such that he allowed King to travel to any part of the state of Alabama with hands to make contracts for the building of bridges--the work of Godwin and King created the infrastructure for white migration to Alabama and Mississippi. King married a free Black woman and began a family in 1839, while he was still enslaved. His wife, Frances Gould Thomas, was also of multiracial descent--she from lines of Creek, African, and European ancestry.[52]

In the early 1840s, King began working with Robert Jemison Jr., a Tuscaloosa slaveholder, entrepreneur, and Alabama state legislator. Jemison had saw and grist mills in eastern Mississippi, and he employed King to build bridges over the Tombigbee and Luxapalila Rivers to serve his business interests. Through this cooperation, Jemison and King developed a

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[50] Frances L. Cherry, "History of Opelika: Chap. V," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1953): 193-197. King's biography was collected from King by Cherry in the early 1880s and originally printed in *The Opelika Times*, October 19, 1883.

[51] John S. Lupold and Thomas L. French, Jr., *Bridging Deep South Rivers: The Life and Legend of Horace King* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 14.

[52] Lupold and French, *Bridging Deep South Rivers*, 78.

friendship, according to King's biographers. Jemison certainly relied on King's professionalism and skill. When, in 1846, King brought his own freedom (according to his own testimony in an 1878 hearing about his wartime loyalty), Jemison worked to secure passage of a bill in the Alabama legislature that would allow King to continue to live and work in the state as a free man.[53] King could only legally stay within the state of Alabama for a year after manumission, as per state law. The act granted Horace King a semblance of freedom within the state of Alabama.

Letters between Jemison and King do illustrate a friendly relationship, though we might ask if the friendship could have been authentic with such a distorted power differential between the two men. King, for his part, seems to have treated Jemison as a kind of patron, using Jemison's influence to secure contracts and, in some cases, important information. During the Civil War, for example, King wrote to Jemison (who had been in Richmond, Virginia) to learn whether or not the Confederate government passed a law to conscript free Black men between the ages of 18 and 25 into the Confederate Army. "Did the bill pass?" King asked Jemison, knowing such a law would affect his sons.[54] King's relationship with Jemison continued after the Civil War. Jemison, for example, pushed for the city of Tuscaloosa to hire King to rebuild the bridge over the Black Warrior River, which they did in 1872 (the year after Jemison died).

Myths and inconsistencies abound about Horace King's life. His biographers argue that he became adopted by the post-Civil War Lost Cause narrative as a loyal enslaved man who, even after freedom, remained in the South and fought for the Confederacy (he didn't). A more recent example of historical inconsistencies can be found within the city of Tuscaloosa itself. A historical marker placed near the Hugh Thomas Bridge gives a short summary of King's life and

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[53] Lupold and French, *Bridging Deep South Rivers*, 125, 123.

[54] Horace King to Robert Jemison, March 23, 1864, Robert Jemison, Jr. Papers, University of Alabama Libraries Special Collections, accessed November 22, 2020, https://cdm17336.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/u0003_0000753/id/2874.

notable works, stating that King constructed the first bridge over the Black Warrior River in the early 1830s. However, Seth King actually constructed the bridge; King was a business partner of both John Godwin and Robert Jemison, and had no relation to Horace. As noted, Horace King, an Afro-Native man of Catawba descent, did reconstruct that same bridge in 1872 after it suffered destruction by Croxton's raiders during the Civil War.

Continued Fight for Sovereignty

Espen Oh

In this project, we wanted to make sure that modern indigenous Nations are represented in the story--especially to combat against the stereotype of the so-called "vanishing Indian."[55] The Muscogee (Creek) Nation is now the third largest Indian Nation in the country, and yet it still fights for its sovereignty. That truth is clear in recent cases heard by the Supreme Court between 2018 and 2020.

In the first case, *Sharp v. Murphy*, a Muscogee (Creek) man, Patrick Murphy, case of was convicted of murder by the state of Oklahoma in 2015. This crime took place within the boundaries of the Creek Nation by a member of the nation. The argument that was brought to the Supreme Court in 2018 was that the state of Oklahoma could not exercise its jurisdiction over the defendant because under the Indian Major Crimes Act: "Section 1153 of Title 18 grants jurisdiction to federal courts, exclusive of the states, over Indians who commit any of the listed offenses, regardless of whether the victim is an Indian or non- Indian."[56] To put it simply this

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[55] For more information on the "vanishing Indian" stereotype, see for example Raymond Orr, Katelyn Sharratt, and Muhammad Iqbal, "American Indian Erasure and the Logic of Elimination: an Experimental Study of Depiction and Support for Resources and Rights for Tribes," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 11: 2978-2900.

[56] See the United States Department of Justice Archives, *Criminal Resource Manual 601-699*, "679. The Major Crimes Act," https://www.justice.gov/archives/jm/criminal-resource-manual-679-major-crimes-act-18-usc-1153, accessed November 11, 2020.

means that any indigenous person who commits a crime or is the victim of one, within their own territory, would be dealt with by either their reservation's jurisdiction or by federal jurisdiction, but not by the state jurisdiction.

The State of Oklahoma argued that there was no reservation in place at the time of the committed crime and that they had the jurisdiction to convict Murphy rather than the federal government. Oklahoma's argument that Congress never established a reservation in the first place was rejected by the Court not in 2018 (when Justice Neil Gorsuch recused himself from hearing the case) but in 2020 in a *per curiam* decision after another case with similar legal question (*McGirt v. Oklahoma*) was also decided in favor of the Indian Nations. The Court recognized that although there was never direct language which determined the Creek lands as a reservation that "land reserved for the Creek Nation since the 19th century remains 'Indian country.'"[57]

This case is an example of the ongoing struggles of the indigenous people of America who consistently must fight for their right to sovereignty within the boundaries of the law. Though the Court decided in favor of Indian Nations in Oklahoma, much remains unsettled regarding tribal sovereignty's regulation and ownership of its own land. The state of Oklahoma and the oil industry, for example, are pushing back on the rulings in order to maintain control over natural resources in the state.[58]

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[57] *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, 591 U.S. ___ (2020).

[58] Alleen Brown, "Inside the Oil Industry's Fight to Roll Back Tribal Sovereignty After Supreme Court Decision," *The Intercept*, March 10, 2021, https://theintercept.com/2021/03/10/oklahoma-mcgirt-oil-industry-kevin-stitt/.

Native Presence in Alabama

Any interpretation of Alabama's indigenous past must make clear that the federal government and state of Alabama did not displace all Native Americans in the 1830s. In Alabama, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians has a unique and significant history. The Poarch Band began as a community of multi-ethnic Muscogee (Creek) families who, in the late 18th century, petitioned the Creek National Council to relocate from eastern Creek lands to present-day Escambia County.[59] Within this community of Creek families, some aligned with the U.S. government during the Creek War (with a few notable exceptions, such as William Weatherford). In the Treaty of Fort Jackson that ended the conflict, the federal government allotted 640 acres to Creek leader Lynn McGhee. Through struggle and resistance in the courts over the next century, and despite discrimination caused by Jim Crow laws and customs, the community of Creeks in South Alabama maintained its lands. After many years of hardships and struggling to hold place in south Alabama, the federal government officially recognized and acknowledged the Poarch Band of Creek Indians on August 11, 1984.

[59] Keith S. Hébert, "Poarch Band of Creek Indians," *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, January 18, 2017, http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3853.

The MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians is based in southwestern Alabama, not far from the Tensaw Delta where the Poarch Creek community began. The MOWA Choctaws' history can be traced to the nineteenth century, when groups of Choctaws escaped the encroachment of whites and federal and state dispossession of ancestral lands by building community in the outreaches of southern Alabama.[60] Like the Poarch Creek Brand, the MOWA Choctaw evaded removal efforts leading up to the Civil War. In the late nineteenth-century, these Choctaw were labeled "Cajuns" by local politicians in an attempt to delegitimize claims to indigeneity.[61] The Choctaws, like the Poarch Creeks, were a "third party in a binary system" of racial hierarchy, and suffered from the effects of Jim Crow.[62] The MOWA Choctaws have made multiple attempts to gain federal recognition of tribal status, but according to historian Jacqueline Anderson Matte, "The BIA's Bureau of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR) refuses to credit oral history and requires a comprehensive, documented historical account of tribal life, which distorts the history of petitioning groups, making a tribe unrecognizable to both its own members and to other Native Americans."[63] The MOWA Choctaws continue to seek federal recognition through U.S. Congressional action.

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[60] Jacqueline Anderson Matte, "MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians, *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, last updated April 1, 2021, http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1368.

[61] Matte, "MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians," *Encyclopedia of Alabama.*

[62] Angela Pulley Hudson, "Removals and Remainders: Apaches and Choctaws in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11, no. 1 (March, 2021): 87.

[63] Matte, "MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians," *Encyclopedia of Alabama.*

The "Forgotten History" of Native Americans at the University of Alabama

Allison Mansour

At the center of Tuscaloosa is the University of Alabama. The land we now occupy on campus has a very different story to tell from that of football and frat parties. It is important to remember that Tuscaloosa–and by extension the University–is built on land that was stewarded and claimed by First Nations.

In Alabama, the Indian Removal Act separated Muscogee Creek, Cherokee and Choctaw people from land legally "granted" to them in various treaties with the U.S government. It is reasonable to claim that the treaties ceding Southeastern lands were invalid due to the pressure placed on tribes by the US Government as well as fear of violence on behalf of white settlers. Combined with the early university's participation in slavery–a phenomenon that also affected indigenous people–as well as the lack of appreciation of the nature of the land the university sits upon, there is a moral obligation for us to acknowledge the repercussions of the actions of removal and racism related to the school. In 2004 the university formally acknowledged, apologized, and memorialized its participation in slavery.[64] Dr. Hilary Green and other UA scholars have spent untold hours researching and compiling the history of slaves who lived, worked, and died here on campus; Dr. Green has created, among other public-facing projects, a tour dedicated to revealing this forgotten history.[65]

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[64] See Max Clarke and Gary Alan Fine, " A' for Apology: Slavery and the Collegiate Discourses of Remembrance--the Cases of Brown University and the University of Alabama," *History and Memory* 22, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010: 81-112.

[65] Hilary Green, *The Hallowed Grounds Project*, accessed November 21, 2020, https://hgreen.people.ua.edu/hallowed-grounds-project.html.

To this day, however, no representative of the university administration has ever publicly and officially acknowledged the fact that we are on land taken by a plan of systemic erasure against indigenous people. While researching indigenous people and their relationship with the university, I learned that it is highly probable that part of the 1836 Creek removal party camped on what is today the area of Maxwell Hall. While we know for a fact that part of this group came through Tuscaloosa, Dr. Joshua Foster–a professor at the University of Alabama for over fifty years– claimed that while a student he and some friends went to the Creek encampment on what would become the observatory field and purchased trinkets from them.[66] If this is true, then the university needs to acknowledge that the land they own was used for the systematic removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands, something that would ultimately lead to severe negative impacts on indigenous communities that last to this day.

We do not know when the first Native students were admitted to UA due to sealed registration records. Faculty meeting notes from 1873 at the University of Alabama report that a Muscogee Creek man requested aid in order to pursue his education at UA; there is no mention of him or his petition in later meetings and it is unclear how his story ends.[67] In 2019, only 147 students – .4% of the entire student body – identified as Native American, a number that has remained relatively steady over the last ten years.[68] There are no indigenous student groups and official diversity outreach does not extend to Native students. Without their inclusion, the university is not as diverse as they hope to appear and actually presents a mentality that is

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[66] Clinton, *The Tuscaloosa News*, July 20, 1919.

[67] "Alabama. University. Faculty Minutes. V. 5 1871-1879," May 2, 1873, RG-154, University Faculty Records, Hoole Special Collections, University of Alabama.

[68] "Student Population Information," *Higher Education Act Required Information*, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, University of Alabama, accessed May 34, 2021, https://oira.ua.edu/HEA/report/Student_Population/#sasreport.

neglectful of Native American history, culture, and legacy; Native American academic courses are a great step towards educating on indigenous history, but what good are these classes if the university remains a non-Native space? Indeed, the lack of Native American representation by the university is reflective of the general laissez-faire attitude toward removal by non-indigenous people and lack of acknowledgment of the significance of Muscogee Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee tribes in the state of Alabama and the United States as a whole.

This absence is most poignantly represented by the fact that at the university there is almost no trace of indigenous communities outside of our textbooks. In order to truly begin to remedy this exclusion, the university also must acknowledge–as it did with enslaved African Americans–the harm it did to indigenous communities by the appropriation of lands and the financial benefits received by the university through the use of this land. This would allow the University of Alabama to make a step towards building relationships with indigenous people. Furthermore, as an institution of higher learning, the University of Alabama needs to be concerned with the fact that silence surrounding Native American issues and history allows for information to be circulated that minimizes removal and white settlement or simply avoids the narratives of indigenous people.

Recommendation

The most important recommendation we can make is that the Foundation, or an advisory group appointed to oversee interpretive content, consult with descendant groups, modern Nations, and experts on Native history (and, where possible, to offer compensation for consultation). The Tribal Historic Preservation Offices of the Muscogee Creek Nation, Poarch Creek Band, and Choctaw Nation, for example, should be included in any exhibit or interpretive

work that the Foundation may create. The University has several Native history experts on faculty--Dr. Heather Kopelson in History and Dr. Mairin Odle in American Studies--that will provide important historical context and help in interpretive framing. Dr. William Bomar, director of the UA Division of Museums, Dr. Alex Benitez, director of Moundville Archaeological Park, and Matthew Gage, director of the Office of Archaeological Research, all have extensive experience researching and interpreting Native history and consulting with tribal Nations. By creating an advisory committee of stakeholders to guide the creation of exhibitions, the Foundation can ensure that it moves forward with accurate and sensitive interpretation of Native history in Tuscaloosa.

Selected Bibliography

The following resource list includes works that were especially helpful to our research but is not an exhaustive representation of the research on Native history in Alabama .

Primary Sources

Alabama Department of Archives and History: https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/

Most helpful to the search might be the House and Senate legislative journals to document acts and resolutions related to Native Americans and African Americans. Also, Horace King served in the legislature during Reconstruction. ADAH also compiled a list of links to documents related to the Second Creek War (letters, for example, from Governor C.C. Clay, who was then based in Tuscaloosa): https://archives.alabama.gov/timeline/1800/creek.html

Alabama Maps, Univ. of Alabama Geography Department: http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/

The UA Geography Department has digitized a trove of valuable historical maps of what is now Alabama.

Andrew Jackson Papers, Library of Congress: https://www.loc.gov/collections/andrew-jackson-papers/?st=gallery

The papers of President Andrew Jackson have been digitized and are available via the Library of Congress. Of particular interest to use were letters surrounding the captivity and escape of Martha Crawley. Her affidavit that recounts her captivity can be found here: https://www.loc.gov/resource/maj.01010_0030_0033/?st=gallery

Hoole Special Collections, Univ. of Alabama: https://digitalcollections.libraries.ua.edu/digital/

Of particular use for our project were the Robert Jemison papers--Jemison befriended and corresponded with Horace King, and these letters are digitized. We also consulted records related to the history of the university, including faculty minutes (not digitized), yearbooks (digitized), and issues of the *Crimson White* (digitized).

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We used the newspapers.com database to access Tuscaloosa papers from the 1830s that cover Indian removal. We also found Thomas Clinton's reports on early Tuscaloosa history.

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