

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE LOWER MUSKOGEE CREEK TRIBE**

The United States guaranteed the Creek Nation a large territory covering most of Georgia and Alabama in the Treaty of New York in 1790. Many treaties would follow in the years to come. In the 1802 Compact, the State of Georgia sold all the Muskogee land to the United States, in which the State of Georgia was paid \$1,230,000. The United States Government promised to extinguish all of the Indians as soon as possible. The boundary line drawn by the Treaty of 1790 was changed twice before 1812. In the War of 1812, the Upper Creeks chose to side with the British, and the Lower (or Friendly) Creeks with the United States. This resulted in a Creek Civil War in 1813-14. This changed the outlook and power structure for the Creeks to this day. The Creek government of today is patterned after the tribal town government of the past. The Creeks who lived in South Georgia towns or communities lost their land after the Creek Civil War ended on March 27, 1814. They were given seven rifles and fourteen barrels of powder. The Muskogee Creeks in Georgia lost 7,085,000, Alabama lost 14,248,800, and Mississippi lost 400,000 acres of unconquered land.

However, many Lower or “Friendly” Creeks served with the United States Government during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, not to be confused with the Creek Civil War. Many were allowed to draw in the lottery of the so-called “conquered lands”. Some Muskogee people were given land for services to the United States Government. This was at a time when state laws had not been made to oppress the Friendly Georgia Muskogee people, and they were given the opportunity to “settle” the land newly acquired by the United States. After the War of 1812, many of the

Upper Creeks left Alabama and settled in South Georgia, while others went to the Seminole Nation.

The Indian Removal Bill of January 27, 1825 was passed and called for the removal of all Indian Tribes within the State of Georgia, in accordance with the Compact of 1802.

As a result of the law passed for the Department of War on February 3, 1826, for the preservation and civilization of Indians, South Georgia became a gathering place for the “Friendly Creeks” who would join the Christian Church and try to adapt to the way of life of the white settlers. However, this was short lived due to the laws passed by the State of Georgia.

The State laws which followed the Indian Removal Act of 1826 would greatly affect the Muskogee people for many generations. Muskogee people were not allowed to work or be hired by a white man; their hunting and fishing rights were taken away; their identity was taken away and their race was changed to “persons of color”; ceremonial rights of thanking God (Hesaketvmese) for the water, the fire and the corn were taken away.

These laws of The Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe are primarily made up of the Friendly Lower Creeks, who were allies to the United States during the War of 1812. Ninety people were granted the right to occupy individual reservations taken away from the Tribe by the State of Georgia. These Creeks lost their land because the laws of Georgia changed and the State of Georgia allotted their lots of land with no intervention from the Federal Government despite treaty stipulations to protect legitimate Indian title.

The Indian Springs Treaty of 1825 between the United States and the Creek Nation was voided by Congress after a threat of war by the hostile Upper Creeks. These hostile Upper Creeks had killed General William

McIntosh, Speaker of the House and the Chief of the Coweta along with several other Chiefs of the Creek Nation, including Principal Chief, Etommee Tustanuggee. The voiding of the treaty was not acceptable to Governor Troupe of Georgia. Governor Troupe proclaimed that it was the sovereign right of the State of Georgia to do so according to the 1802 Treaty between the State of Georgia and the United States Government. Governor Troupe threatened to secede from the Union if they interfered with his State of Georgia and the United States Government. Governor Troupe threatened to secede from the Union if they interfered with his sovereign right as a leader of the State of Georgia.

After the removal of 1832, Creeks remaining in South Georgia, Central Georgia, and Alabama met at the swamps of South Georgia where they maintained close family ties and relationships as well as an informal government. The focus of the Muskogee people in years to come would be religion. Church records show the names of many Indians who joined the Christian church. Thomas, Decatur, Early, and many other Georgia county courthouses hold records such as wills, marriage records, marks and brands, debts owed, and meetings of the Creek Indians.

The South Swamps of Attapulcus became the primary meeting place for the Creek Indians who had migrated from Central Georgia, Alabama, and North Florida. They also remained friendly during the War of 1836 and would aid the whites who had settled near them and take care of their stock while the whites themselves went into Fort Bainbridge.

Before and after the removal, there were Creeks known as border trotters, who would cross from Florida, Georgia, and Alabama to escape persecution of state laws.

Some of the leaders of the Muskogee people in Georgia were Sam Jones, William Williams, and William Brown, alias Efa Emathla. William Williams was a half-breed who was trained in an Indian Boarding School where he learned to read and write. This enabled him to use the system to the benefit of the Muskogee people. William Williams was instrumental in the Muskogee people remaining in the East by registering them as slaves and allowing them to work as sharecroppers on his property.

William Brown, alias Efa Emathla died and was buried in Washington, D. C. after a long struggle of working with Congress to amend the laws for the Friendly Creeks and rectify the taking of Muskogee land.

The Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe in Georgia maintained an economical dependence upon farming, sharecropping, fishing, and agricultural labor.

Many of the Lower Muskogee Creeks fought in the Civil War. Many Creeks fought in World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, and Desert Storm.

Leadership among the Creeks was from the “older heads” of each community represented. Government was carried on by each family and each clan had their form of government with a national meeting known as “Homecoming”. Each family served one another in a spirit of community whether it was looking after each other’s children, support during a death, tending the sick, or sending each other letters. Some of this is noted in the Decatur County Courthouse.

The Muskogee Creeks of Georgia joined Calvin McGee of the Poarch Band of Creeks in Atmore, Alabama in the 1940’s and enrolled with The Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe East of the Mississippi as a unified group or Nation of Muskogee people as they sued for land payment known as Docket

21. Other Dockets that followed were Docket 272 and 275. An Act of Congress was passed to set regulations to determine what documents were used in determining eligibility. The State of Georgia recognized hundreds of the descendants of Creeks being eligible for this docket in 1966. The last docket was in 1986. The Muskogee Creek Indians East of the Mississippi served as a formal organization representing the Muskogee Creek Nation for the purpose of the claim, and for the governing body of each community of Creeks.

When the Muskogee Creek Nation merged to a more formal government there were three chiefs, Neal McCormick (Georgia), Wesley Thombley (Florida), and Houston McGee (Alabama) who signed a pact of unity. This would give an opportunity for each state to work with the legislature to amend the laws of their state.

Today, The Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe has been recognized as a legal entity within the State of Georgia and is a state recognized group by the Georgia General Assembly. Creeks maintain their tribal government in the old Tribal Town of Tama. They work with state, county, and federal governments to improve the standard of living, education, and health of Muskogee people. In addition, they have worked for many years to obtain a housing program.

The Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe was awarded a federal grant through the Department of Education for an American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The mission of this program is to empower American Indians with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, inclusion, and integration into society.

The physical location for the office of The Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe is 107 Tall Pine Drive, Whigham, Georgia 39897, in the Tribal Administration Building at Tama Tribal Town.

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