

CHIEF JOHN BLOUNT - APALACHICOLA BAND OF CREEK INDIANS

VIVA Florida 500 Years of History Celebration

“walks softly in two worlds” (Eidse quote from Voices..)

The history and origin of the Apalachicola Band of Creek Indians is complicated and impossible to realistically condense into a few paragraphs. It is estimated that at the time of first European contact, more than 90 million Native Americans inhabited North and South America. Anthropologists have grouped these Native American Societies into several cultural areas. The Southeastern cultural area included the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Creek people. The Creek Indians lived in the valleys and river bottoms of the Flint and Chattahoochee rivers. The Creek people are believed to be the southeastern descendants of the Moundbuilders of the Mississippian Period. They spoke a family of related languages and called themselves the Muskogee Nation. Muskogee means land that is wet. Europeans called them Creeks because they lived and roamed the many rivers, creeks, and swamps that ran through parts of Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi. The Creek Nation included around 60 towns which the Europeans called the Upper Towns and Lower Towns. Forty Upper Towns were along the Tallapoosa-Coosa-Alabama River and 20 Lower Towns were scattered along the Ocmulgee, Flint, and Chattahoochee river system. These were geographic divisions as well as politically. The Creeks also divided their towns into Red Towns or War Towns and White Towns or Peace Towns.

Native Americans were faced with navigating among competing European imperial powers on the continent of North America. Britain, Spain, and France struggled for dominance. Sovereign Native American Nations had distinctive issues of their own as they tried to hold on to their sovereignty, homelands and maintain access to trade and supplies. The period prior to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War was fraught with consequence for the Creek Indians as they were forced to take sides. The Creeks understood that the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) was also a contest for the continent and for territory they rightfully considered their domain.

The Creeks of the Upper Towns and the Lower Town respected their kinship with each other but differed not only geographically but politically. The Creeks of the Upper Towns supported the British Loyalists. Some of the Creeks of the Lower Towns sided with the American Patriots. War engulfed their lands. It was into this unsettled period of our history that John William Blount was born in Tuckabatchee, Alabama in 1773. His Father was the United States Indian Agent, William Blount, of New Bern, North Carolina. His Mother was the half sister of Koasati Chief Red Shoes, Sehoy II. His Father's appointment as US Indian Agent and his Mother's lineage gave him a unique perspective while growing up in these turbulent times. Traditional Indian Culture tracks the child's lineage through the Mother's maternal family and European culture tracks through the Father's family line. It is against this historical background that John William Blount grew up.

The War of 1812 found the British and Red Sticks (Creeks of the Upper Towns) siding against the United States and the Spanish while the Creeks of the Lower Towns sided with the American Patriots. The Creek War or the Red Stick War (1813-1814) widened the split within the Creek Nation. On August 30, 1813, Red Eagle and Creek followers of Tecumseh descended upon Fort Mims killing about 500 men,

women and children. Chief John Blount served as a guide and fought alongside Andrew Jackson's troops with more than 1,000 Creek warriors in the decisive battle of the Red Stick War at Horseshoe Bend in March 1814. Chief Blount's wife and three of his children were killed. Many Creek tribesmen volunteered or were conscripted to serve in the United State Army during these perilous times. Chief Blount's military life was followed by service in the Creek War (1814-15) and the First Seminole War. Chief Blount achieved the rank of Colonel and was awarded a silver medal from President Andrew Jackson for his military services to Jackson during the First Seminole War.

During Jackson's 1818 campaign against the Seminoles of Florida the Indian Town of Miccosukee was destroyed and the people fled to the East, South and West. Increasing pressures to remove the Indians from North Florida by white settlers resulted in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, signed by Tuskie Haco and John Blount on September 18, 1823 removed them from the Seminole Nation; setting up a small reservation in present day Calhoun County for Chief Blount and Tuskie Haco. The reservation was set aside "commencing on the Apalachicola one mile below Tuskie Haco's improvement, running thence up said river four miles thence west, two miles, thence southerly, to a point two miles west of the beginning, thence east to the beginning point" (American State papers, Indian Papers, Vol. 2, pp 423-30).

There was increasing pressure from white settlers for removal of Indians from Florida. Chief Blount was the first Apalachicola Band Chief to agree to move West following the 1830 Indian Removal Act. Chief Cochrane, Blount's Brother-in-law died in 1832, and Blount appointed Cochrane's son, Davy Elliott (Osia Hajo) Chief of Spanewadka. Blount and Davy sold their section of the Apalachicola Reservation known as Blountstown and Spanewadka in the 1832 Treaty with the Apalachicola Band of Creek Indians. Blount and Davy were the only two Chiefs who were party to the negotiations held at Governor DuVal's home in Tallahassee.

When Sam Houston requested Chief Blount to immigrate to Texas to help protect Texas in the War with Mexico he was persuaded to relocate. President Jackson gave permission for the migration. However, Chief Blount refused to leave Florida until the Apalachicola boys that were taken to the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky in 1831 were returned home to emigrate with their families. He was told that his own son had died of Cholera. Blount's stubborn refusal to leave without the boys resulted in the withholding of money and supplies to feed his people. Finally the War Department released the boys and the departure began in mind March 1834.

New Orleans was the first stop as Blount and Davy were ordered to receive the bulk of their treaty money at the Bank of New Orleans. Outside the Bank the two were met by the High Sheriff and on spurious charges of absconding with stolen funds were placed in jail April 7, 1834. Blount paid a fine equal to all the money he had plus the value of two of his slaves. Without federal intervention or money, Blount and Davy gathered the remainder of their followers and walked through Louisiana and across the Red River into Texas. Blount managed to get the remaining forty or less of his people near his Uncle Red Shoes' Koasati Village near Trinity River. Chief Blount died shortly after arrival.

Sources: The narrative about *Chief John William Blount of the Apalachicola Band of Creek Indians* was extrapolated from a number of sources as well as oral histories. Of particular assistance were the current tribal Chief Mary Sixwomen Blount of the Apalachicola Band of Creek Indians (Texas Branch) and Ann McClellan, Chief of the Apalachicola Band of Creek Indians (Blountstown Branch). If you are interested in furthering your knowledge and understanding you will find these electronic and print resources helpful:

<http://www.calhounco.org/history-blountstown.cfm>

http://www.sherpaguides.com/georgia/flint_river/cultural_history/

<http://www.apalachicolabandofcreeks.com/>

<http://www.indians.org/articles/seminole-indians.html>

<http://www.flheritage.com/facts/history/seminole/wars.cfm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origins_of_the_War_of_1812 (note spaces are underlines)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creek_War

<http://genforum.genealogy.com/blount/messages/2025.html>

Dr. Andrew Boggs Ramsey "Tuski Mahaya Haco" extensive research volumes are located in the Blountstown Public Library in the genealogy room. Genealogists and historians travel to the library to learn from his extensive compilations. This narrative drew from Volume IV: Historical papers of the Harjo-Boggas-Parrot Clan of Creek Indians in Calhoun County as researched and compiled by Dr. Andrew B. Ramsey. A portrait of Dr. Ramsey and his son Boggs Ramsey hangs in the Blountstown Public Library.

The Ocheesee Chapter 2693 of the UDC provides free genealogy research assistance each Monday night 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Janice Moore and Barbara Hansford.