

Creeks, Federalists, and the Idea of Coexistence in the Early Republic

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IN 1796 AMERICAN AUTHORITIES INVITED CREEK HEADMEN TO A TREATY council at Coleraine, a federal post in southern Georgia. A great deal was riding on these negotiations to bring stability to the Southeast, where animosity between Creek communities and Georgia settlers had been festering for over a decade. The Creek delegation would be asked to endorse a compact that a handful of them had signed six years earlier, the Treaty of New York. Getting the old treaty legitimated, however, would be no easy task. Only a few Creek headmen had signed it, and when word spread of what they had done, the treaty deeply fractured Creek politics, spread instability through the region, and then went largely ignored.¹ Any effort to have a much larger Creek delegation validate the agreement, which had proved so contentious in the past, was sure to meet with renewed opposition. Further complicating the prospective conference was an antagonistic Georgia commission that was also en route. Georgia lawmakers argued that federal authorities had overstepped their bounds in New York, compromising with the Creek delegation in ways that were offensive to the state's interests. The George Washington administration had bargained for only a portion of the lands, for instance, that state commissioners had already claimed through their own previous negotiations. "[N]ineteen out of twenty" Georgians were pressing for those lands anxiously, Governor George Mathews complained to the U.S. secretary of war, and he pushed hard to see the state's claims honored at Coleraine.²

¹ For the 1790 treaty see David Andrew Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages: Indians, Federalists, and the Search for Order on the American Frontier* (Charlottesville, 2008), 118–24; J. Leitch Wright Jr., "Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and the Diplomacy of the Old Southwest," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 51 (December 1967), 379–400; Michael D. Green, "Alexander McGillivray," in R. David Edmunds, ed., *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity* (Lincoln, Neb., 1980), 41–63, esp. 55–56; and J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln, Neb., 1986), 139–40.

² George Mathews to Timothy Pickering, April 16, 1795, *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States. Class II: Indian Affairs* (2 vols.;

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Three commissioners from Georgia were on their way south to state their demands, mostly for land, while reluctant Creek headmen began their journey only after vowing they would not cede an inch of it. The situation was reminiscent of confrontations that had already generated years of sporadic violence along the frontier, and without considerable intervention the upcoming negotiations promised only more of the same. How Federalist authorities like President George Washington and Secretary of War Timothy Pickering approached Coleraine, however, differentiated this meeting from those previous attempts. They made arrangements for the conference, at Georgia's request, with explicit conditions, warning their state counterparts aggressively. "The Creeks have been, with difficulty, restrained from open war," Pickering made clear, and "any movement which may hazard that event, must be cautiously made." The United States was interested in stability, and not necessarily land, Pickering warned, and Georgia would not be permitted to drag the entire region into war.³

James Seagrove, who for years was the United States' temporary agent in the Southeast, shared that attitude. When asking Creek headmen to attend the meeting at Coleraine, he issued strong promises. "You have often met me on the frontiers of this country," he wrote, "and I have always sent you home safe and well pleased, and I can venture to assure you, it will be the same now."⁴ It was clear from whom Seagrove thought he would be keeping the Creek delegation safe—Georgians. His assurances, along with Pickering's warnings, constructed a conference where Creeks' needs were as important as, if not more important than, state ones. Undeterred, the state commissioners soon arrived at Coleraine. They wasted little time, generating days of tense interactions with the three federal commissioners appointed by Congress. The state

Washington, D.C., 1832, 1834), 1:561; hereinafter cited as *ASP: IA*. On the response of Georgians and Creeks to the Treaty of New York, see George R. Lamplugh, *Politics on the Periphery: Factions and Parties in Georgia, 1783–1806* (Newark, Del., 1986), 64–65; Watson W. Jennison, *Cultivating Race: The Expansion of Slavery in Georgia, 1750–1860* (Lexington, Ky., 2012), 99–101; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights: A Study of the Political History of Georgia from the Revolution to the Civil War, with Particular Regard to Federal Relations* (Washington, D.C., 1902), 42–44; E. Merton Coulter, *A Short History of Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 1933), 169–71; and Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent* (Athens, Ga., 1951), 81–87.

³ Timothy Pickering to George Mathews, March 20, 1795, *ASP: IA*, 1:561. For Georgia's request and the president's general ideas about agreeing to it, see James Gunn and Thomas P. Carnes to George Washington, n.d., and George Washington to the Senate, June 25, 1795, both *ASP: IA*, 1:560.

⁴ "A talk from James Seagrove . . ." n.d., in Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties, 1705–1839, in Four Parts," 2:474–76 (quotations on 474) (Georgia Archives, Morrow, Ga.).

commissioners' talks at the conference reflected on the righteousness of Georgia's past treaties while downplaying the Treaty of New York, and, not surprisingly, they made aggressive demands for land and remuneration for past Creek raids. When the Creek delegation began to worry aloud that the state of Georgia would intervene with force, which had most certainly happened in the past, federal commissioner Benjamin Hawkins interjected. "The people of Georgia cannot take your lands from you," he declared to the chiefs, in front of his state counterparts, because the lands "are guarantied to you by the treaty of New York." His interposition was not taken kindly by the Georgia commissioners, but Hawkins made clear in that and several other exchanges that the federal commissioners were in control of the conference and had no plans to entertain Georgia's demands. "There will always be a garrison of federal troops stationed" on the boundary, "to preserve order and good government," the U.S. commissioners promised the Creeks; "they will of course protect you, as you see they do here."⁵

Pickering, Seagrove, and Hawkins were all committed to the same vision of Creek-federal relations. Their approach was calculated not to coerce or to intimidate the Creek headmen but to ensure their security and stability, as Seagrove and Hawkins promised. And, as Pickering implied, their efforts were designed not to gain Creek lands but to lay the foundation for long-term coexistence. Indeed, the negotiations at Coleraine represented the peak of a decade-long dialogue between agents of the federal government and Creeks that focused on coexistence, not on the usurpation of Native Americans' rights. This Federalist approach reveals a relationship with natives that was more than an episode in the familiar narrative of dispossession, where national authorities functioned as the glove on the hand of state-level expansionists.⁶ Instead, the Federalist efforts provide an intriguing counternarrative that highlights the possibility of Native American and Euro-American coexistence. While violent reaction toward native peoples in the post-Revolutionary period has been well documented at the local and state levels, only much more recently have historians cast fresh eyes on the position of Federalist authorities in both the Washington and the John Adams administrations. Those studies vigorously suggest that Federalists did

⁵"Commissioners United States, by Mr. Hawkins," June 24, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:604-5 (first and second quotations on 604); U.S. commissioners, "Kings, Chiefs, and Warriors, of the whole Creek nation," June 23, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:601-2 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations on 601).

⁶The term *Federalist* as used here is synonymous with nationalist, meaning those who supported a strong central government and the federal constitution. For a similar interpretation, see Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*, 17.

not necessarily share in the expansionist sentiments of their state counterparts.⁷ Indeed, focusing on the Creek-Georgia frontier provides a striking counterpoint to the development of land-appropriating policies in the early-nineteenth-century Southeast by describing what was essentially the exact opposite only a decade earlier. National actors like George Washington and Timothy Pickering, along with local federal agents like Seagrove and Hawkins, all recognized the unfeasibility of armed conflict and moved from that point toward the peaceful, if not mutually exclusive, coexistence of two peoples. Their efforts generated an approach to Native Americans in the post-Revolutionary era that resembled much more the Proclamation of 1763 than the Civilization Fund Act of 1819 or the Removal Act of 1830.⁸ Creeks would live on Creek lands across a river from Georgians living in the United States, and only through federal intermediaries would the two ever interact.

The development of that policy did not reflect ideological assumptions about Native Americans as much as the real political problems that Federalist legislators struggled with at the time, which also removes early republican Indian diplomacy somewhat from more abstract notions of enlightenment or civilization and ideas of economic dependency. Security and stability were what American authorities grasped for, and to achieve those basic goals, agents of the United States went to great

⁷ Studies at the local level have borne out the growing animosity between settlers and natives in the Revolutionary period and the development of racial identities. See, for instance, Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008); Gregory T. Knouff, *The Soldier's Revolution: Pennsylvanians in Arms and the Forging of Early American Identity* (University Park, Pa., 2004); William A. Pencak and Daniel K. Richter, eds., *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania* (University Park, Pa., 2004); Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill, 2003); and Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673–1800* (New York, 1997). The development of a nationalist, or Federalist, Indian policy after the ratification of the Constitution has been most recently addressed particularly well in Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*; and Leonard J. Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations: Indians, Empires, and Diplomats in the Founding of America* (Charlottesville, 2009), chap. 5.

⁸ For an excellent examination into the policy of and violent reaction to the Proclamation of 1763 in the Ohio Valley region, see Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York, 2007), 19–94. For the British struggle to enforce the proclamation in the South, see Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 54–58; John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier: A Study of Indian Relations, War, Trade, and Land Problems in the Southern Wilderness, 1754–1775* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1944); and J. Russell Snapp, *John Stuart and the Struggle for Empire on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge, 1996). For studies of the American plan for civilizing southern native peoples and the transition to removal, see Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, 1973); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); and Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (2 vols.; Lincoln, Neb., 1984), 1:135–58, 183–242.

lengths to secure peaceful relations with Creeks while going to equally great lengths to control the actions of U.S. citizens. Most intriguing, it is clear from looking at the Creek-Georgia frontier that the concept could have worked. Federal authorities imposed a restrictive policy of coexistence on state officials in the Southeast, guaranteeing Creek lands and protecting them from settlers by force if necessary, and they succeeded.

The road to Coleraine was blazed more than a decade earlier, as the Georgia backcountry had suffered tremendously during the Revolutionary War as well as in the Confederation period. Most Creek communities eventually became British partisans by the end of the Revolution. Warriors frequented the Georgia backcountry, and their raids had a devastating impact on settlers, shaping in turn how state authorities responded to Creek communities.⁹ In the wake of the American victory, Georgia officials approached Creeks three times: at Augusta in 1783, at Galphinton in 1785, and at Shoulderbone in 1786. Each time they requested larger land cessions in an increasingly confrontational tone, and each time Creek communities, who by no means thought of themselves as conquered, responded just as belligerently. By the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, confrontation had escalated more than once into open warfare. Creek warriors again devastated the state, burning swaths of the backcountry, emptying the profitable rice plantations along the coast, and even threatening Savannah.¹⁰ Both Georgia

⁹ Studies that incorporate Creeks into the Revolutionary fighting include Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens, Ga., 1989); Martha Condray Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776-1778* (University, Ala., 1985); Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 2001); Jim Picuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia, S.C., 2008); David H. Corkran, *The Creek Frontier, 1540-1783* (Norman, Okla., 1967); James H. O'Donnell III, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville, 1973); and Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York, 1995).

¹⁰ This important era unfortunately has not received very much attention. A basic outline of the period can be found in Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens, Ga., 1958), 238-49, yet this work downplays the aggressiveness of the Georgians and tends to gloss over the violence that resulted. See also Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 34-37; and Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing, Mich., 1967), 1-41. Gregory Evans Dowd gives a much more critical interpretation of the treaties as a "bizarre pattern of American aggression" in *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, 1992), 96-99 (quotation on 96). So does Michael D. Green, who writes, "Three unauthorized and fraudulent treaties between the Tallasee King and the Fat King and Georgia in 1783, 1785, and 1786 gave that state the spurious claim to a large parcel of Creek hunting ground. Acting on this claim, Georgians in large numbers crossed the Ogeechee River and swarmed to the illegitimately established new boundary, the Oconee River." See Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln, Neb., 1982), 34-45 (quotation on 34). Another concise and critical recounting of these early treaties and their outcomes is

state legislators and convention delegates in Philadelphia eyed the Constitution as a means to make the violence stop, and indeed, Georgia was the fourth state to ratify the new frame of government, and the first in the South.¹¹

When American legislators made the first arrangements for peace, Georgians embraced the efforts.¹² Congress sent a set of commissioners to the Creek-Georgia frontier in the summer of 1788 and then appointed three more a year later to hold a treaty conference at the Rock Landing, on the eastern bank of the Oconee River, in an attempt to put a permanent end to the hostilities. Those early efforts accomplished little, however, because the commissioners were seemingly empowered only to endorse the earlier Georgia treaties and not to deliberate on something entirely new. In 1788 that approach just antagonized Alexander McGillivray and the other headmen who met with the commissioners, leading Governor George Walton to worry that “our prospects of peace

Randolph C. Downes, “Creek-American Relations, 1782–1790,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 21 (June 1937), 142–84. By 1786, Creeks began attacking Georgians on those lands and evicting illegal settlers by force, initiating the Oconee War. After several years of irregular warfare, there was little doubt that Georgians had suffered enormously. One casualty list outlines more than 100 whites killed or wounded and 100 slaves taken or killed, almost 100 houses burned, and almost 1,000 head of cattle destroyed or taken away. Two larger lists of properties destroyed, based on depredation claims and taking into consideration all raiding between the ending years of the Revolution and 1789, show approximately 100 slaves, 1,000 horses, and 2,700 cattle lost. Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., “Indian Depredations, 1787–1825: Original Claims in Department of Archives and History of Georgia,” vol. 1, part 2, pp. 407–55, 501–56 (Georgia Archives).

¹¹For commentary on Georgia’s support for the Constitution, out of its interest in keeping what was left of the backcountry from burning, see, for instance, John Jay to Thomas Jefferson, November 3, 1787, in Merrill Jensen, ed., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* (26 vols. to date; Madison, Wis., 1976–), 3:261, hereinafter cited as *DHRC*; Nicholas Gilman to John Sullivan, November 7, 1787, *DHRC*, 3:261–62; George Washington to Henry Knox, January 10, 1788, *DHRC*, 3:263; Washington to Samuel Powel, January 18, 1788, *DHRC*, 3:263; Gaspard Joseph Amand Ducher to Comte de la Luzerne, February 2, 1788, *DHRC*, 16:11; “A Columbian Patriot: Observations on the Constitution,” n.d., *DHRC*, 16:287; “Purported Letters from George Bryan to John Ralston,” March 7, 1788, *DHRC*, 16:488; and “The Landholder X, Connecticut Courant,” March 3, 1788, *DHRC*, 16:305. On ratification by the Georgia legislature, see Jürgen Heideking, *The Constitution Before the Judgment Seat: The Prehistory and Ratification of the American Constitution, 1787–1791*, edited by John P. Kaminski and Richard Leffler (Charlottesville, 2012), 288–89.

¹²Georgia governor George Handley pleaded for the support of the federal commissioners’ bid for peace to “prevent if possible the further effusion of blood & hostilities.” See George Handley to Governor of South Carolina, February 19, 1788 (quotation), in Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., “Force Transcripts, Georgia Records, Council Correspondence, 1782–1789,” pp. 136–37 (Georgia Archives), hereinafter cited as Force Transcripts; Handley to Abraham Baldwin, March 24, 1788, in Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., “Governor’s Letter Book, October 20, 1786–May 31, 1789,” pp. 151–53 (Georgia Archives). In March 1788 the sense of urgency, even desperation, was clear in Handley’s reports that between fifteen and twenty settlers had been killed in Washington County in one week alone. See Handley to Andrew Pickens, March 31, 1788, pp. 142–43; Handley to Richard Winn, March 31, 1788, pp. 143–44; and Handley to George Mathews, April 2, 1788, pp. 144–45, all in Force Transcripts.

have been obliged to yield to the impressions of war." Creeks had no interest in renegotiating terms for cessions that they considered fraudulent to begin with, and they were in too powerful a position to be coerced.¹³ The meeting a year later at the Rock Landing was even worse. For the second time the U.S. commissioners declared their authority was only to uphold the three past Georgia treaties and to negotiate a settlement from there, while the sizable Creek delegation was equally determined to have those terms invalidated. The deliberations quickly degenerated, and in the end the Creek delegation abruptly left without agreeing to anything.¹⁴ Irritated federal officials, led by Secretary of War Henry Knox, were soon pressuring a Creek delegation led by McGillivray to come to New York in 1790, warning that the government would support Georgia militarily if the Creeks did not make some sort of compromise. Soon McGillivray and a small delegation of Creek headmen made their way to New York.¹⁵

The Treaty of New York was the first made on behalf of the federal government and ratified by the Senate, marking a tremendous American constitutional achievement. Both Knox and Washington were clearly pleased with it. However, it had its share of shortcomings. Knox and Washington negotiated it with only a tiny delegation of headmen who in no way represented Creek country, for instance, and the finished

¹³ George Walton to Clarke, May 29, 1789, in Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., "Governor's Letter Book of George Walton, Governor, May 29, 1789–November 4, 1789," p. 1 (Georgia Archives). On the deliberations with the first set of commissioners, see Richard Winn, Andrew Pickens, and George Mathews to Alexander McGillivray and others, July 16, 1788, *ASP: IA*, 1:29; McGillivray to Winn, Pickens, and Mathews, August 12, 1788, *ASP: IA*, 1:29; McGillivray to Winn, Pickens, and Mathews, September 15, 1788, *ASP: IA*, 1:30; Winn, Pickens, and Mathews to McGillivray, November 28, 1788, *ASP: IA*, 1:30; McGillivray to George Galphin, May 18, 1789, *ASP: IA*, 1:35; and Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1782–1790," pp. 168–69.

¹⁴ For the deliberations at the Rock Landing, see Alexander McGillivray to Benjamin Lincoln, Cyrus Griffin, and David Humphreys, September 25, 1789, *ASP: IA*, 1:74; Humphreys to George Washington, September 26, 1789, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series* (18 vols. to date; Charlottesville, 1987–), 4:86–89; David B. Mattern, *Benjamin Lincoln and the American Revolution* (Columbia, S.C., 1995), 190–93; Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1782–1790," pp. 174–80; Lincoln, Griffin, and Humphreys to Henry Knox, September 28, 1789, and to Governor of Georgia, October 3, 1789, both *ASP: IA*, 1:76; McGillivray to William Pantton, October 8, 1789, in John Walton Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman, Okla., 1938), 251–54; and Wright, "Creek-American Treaty of 1790," p. 384.

¹⁵ "After the solemn offer of peace which has been made and refused," Henry Knox declared, "it is incumbent on the United States to be in a situation to punish all unprovoked aggressions." See Henry Knox to George Washington, January 4, 1790, *ASP: IA*, 1:59–61 (quotation in note on 59); Downes, "Creek-American Relations, 1782–1790," pp. 182–84; and Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 70–71. For the decision to go to New York, see Wright, "Creek-American Treaty of 1790," pp. 384–86; Alexander McGillivray to Don Carlos Howard, August 11, 1790, in Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks*, 273–76, esp. 273; and Thomas D. Watson, "Strivings for Sovereignty: Alexander McGillivray, Creek Warfare, and Diplomacy, 1783–1790," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 58 (April 1980), 400–414, esp. 410–11.

document contained several secret articles of a dubious nature. It also demonstrated how fundamentally different the Federalist approach to Indian diplomacy was from Georgia's, beginning the deliberate replacement of a state-led policy of land appropriation with a national one that stressed stability and the status quo. In Georgia, the treaty was met with an equal mix of shock and horror. Knox agreed with McGillivray that the Georgia treaties had been illegitimately made, and the compromise they inked did not secure nearly enough of the land or the remuneration that Georgians already claimed. The agreement essentially robbed state officials, as they saw it, of large swaths of land between the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers and south of the Altamaha River that Georgia already claimed title to and had in fact already begun settling. Worse yet, Knox guaranteed that no more land cessions would be asked of Creek communities. And not only did the treaty not secure punishment for Creek raids on Georgians, but also several articles insinuated that Creeks were to be protected from the state. The treaty directed federal troops to the border and hinted at the possibility of trade arrangements that would be overseen nationally, not locally. These stipulations, in short, undid much of what Georgia authorities had accomplished. The Treaty of New York clearly was not made for their benefit, and Georgians were furious.¹⁶

The political shift between the negotiations at the Rock Landing and in New York marked the emergence of a distinct Federalist Indian policy developed by the Washington administration at a time of tremendous vulnerability. While Henry Knox may have talked longingly about civilizing the Creeks and developing a factory system that would make them dependent on American goods, there were more immediate needs that guided his actions in New York and afterward. Americans faced threats along almost every inch of the country's borders, with Indian wars ranking at the top of the list. Indeed, while Knox had warned Alexander McGillivray after the Rock Landing meeting about the possibility of American military involvement, the U.S. government was in no position to make good on those threats. Federal attempts to enforce land cessions in the Northwest Territory were being thwarted by relatively small native groups, and American armies were being embarrassed. Those failures had Knox pondering—both before and after

¹⁶ Henry Knox to George Washington, August 7, 1790, in Abbot et al., eds., *Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, 6:206–12; George Washington to the Senate, August 7, 1790, *ASP: IA*, 1:81; Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 159; Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 66–73; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*, 118–24; Lamplugh, *Politics on the Periphery*, 64–65; Jennison, *Cultivating Race*, 96–101; Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 42–44; Coulter, *Short History of Georgia*, 169–71; Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent*, 81–98.

New York—the wisdom of attempting the same military approach in the South. That region's native groups, most notably the Creeks, were much, much larger. Overpowering them would be a long, bloody, costly, and probably impossible undertaking. Indeed, he informed Washington, “the critical situation of affairs between the State of Georgia and the Creek Nation require[s] a more particular consideration.”¹⁷

The negotiations in New York reveal a policy that pivoted on developing stable relationships with strong native peoples. However paternalistic his views were, Knox was convinced that Americans needed first to recognize natives' legitimate claims to their land—“the right of the soil of all lands within their limits,” as he explained to Washington—and then to convince native peoples that the American government did not exist solely to get those lands. “The great object,” he wrote elsewhere, was “to obtain their confidence,” which “cannot be done but by convincing them of an attention to their interests.” Along the frontier developing that trust revolved almost completely around land. “The Indians have constantly had their jealousies and hatred excited by” Americans' efforts to acquire those lands, Knox thought, which certainly was the case along the Creek-Georgia frontier. What Georgians stood to gain in land, compared with what all other Americans stood to lose in security, lives, and money, made an expansionist agenda imprudent and even reckless. “I hope in God that all such designs are suspended for a long period,” he wrote, and that Americans speak to natives “with the confidence of men conscious of the fairest motives towards their happiness and interest in all respects.” What Americans needed most was stability, not expansion.¹⁸ He reiterated this point to the agents he placed in the Southeast, like James Seagrove, whom he appointed temporary Creek agent in 1792. Knox made sure Seagrove clarified to any native representative he met “that we require none of their lands, nor of any other tribe's, but such lands as have been ceded by fair treaties.” The secretary of war was just as blunt to McGillivray. Americans “require no

¹⁷ Henry Knox to George Washington, July 7, 1789, *Microfilms of the Henry Knox Papers: Owned by the New England Historic Genealogical Society and Deposited in the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1910* (microfilm, 55 reels; Boston, 1960), reel 24; hereinafter cited as *Knox Papers Microfilm*, with reel number. See also Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 156–65; Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*, 98–159; John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607–1814* (New York, 2005), 184–86; Reginald Horsman, “Indian Policy of an ‘Empire for Liberty,’” in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, 1999), 37–61, esp. 40–44; and Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 133.

¹⁸ Henry Knox to George Washington, July 7, 1789, *Knox Papers Microfilm*, reel 24 (first quotation); Knox to Governor William Blount, April 22, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:252–53 (second through seventh quotations on 253).

lands from the Indians; they require nothing of them but what shall tend to their own happiness."¹⁹

Those hopes, however grounded they were in national interests of pressing importance, were lofty. The situation in the backcountry, and certainly along the Creek-Georgia frontier, was dreadful.²⁰ Creek headmen were deeply resentful of Georgians because of their abusive approach to treaty-making in the past, while the violence of Creek raids forged Georgia authorities into more or less inveterate Indian-haters. Federal officials expounding on the idea of coexistence were not going to find much local support on either side of the frontier. The Creeks were only defending their lands and their sovereignty, as they saw it.²¹ Georgians meanwhile were struggling to settle and defend those same lands, which, from their point of view, had been made legally theirs. It was the latter, the Georgia settlers, whom American officials would have to work harder to control; gaining Creek trust would come at the expense of Georgia's interests. Through national treaties and inter-course laws, and federal officials working locally, Federalists both in the national capital and along the Creek-Georgia frontier would promise Creeks coexistence and force it on Georgians. Only then, in Knox's words, "the indians would be convinced of the Justice and good intentions of the United States, and they would soon learn to venerate and obey that power from whom they derived security against the avarice and injustice of lawless frontier people."²²

The Treaty of New York provided the basis on which to develop that doctrine, through clearly and for the first time subordinating a state's

¹⁹ Henry Knox to James Seagrove, April 29, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:253-55 (first quotation on 253); Knox to Alexander McGillivray, April 29, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:255 (second quotation).

²⁰ Knox had long understood this situation, whether he looked to the Creek-Georgia frontier or elsewhere. "[D]eep rooted prejudices, and malignity of heart," he wrote, "reciprocally entertained and practised on all occasions by the Whites and Savages will ever prevent their being good neighbours." Instead, "The one side anxiously defend their lands which the other avariciously claim." Any offense "occasions death—revenge follows which knows no bounds." And "[t]he flames of a merciless war are thus lighted up which involve the innocent and helpless with the guilty." The answer was clear. Either one group had to leave, "or Government must keep them both in awe by a strong hand, and compel them to be moderate and just." See "Report of the Secretary at War to Congress," July 10, 1787, in Clarence Edwin Carter and John Porter Bloom, eds., *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (28 vols.; Washington, D.C., 1934-1975), 2:31-35 (quotations on 31).

²¹ McGillivray negotiated with federal commissioners aggressively in 1788, for instance, demanding that Americans honor old Creek-Georgia boundary lines that had existed before the Revolution. See note 13. Later McGillivray declared to one American trader that past Creek offensives "have been made with no other view than to warn the Georgians to desist from their injustice." Creeks would have no qualms about bringing the war farther into Georgia, and they had the means "equal to effect their destruction." See Alexander McGillivray to George Galphin, May 18, 1789, *ASP: IA*, 1:35.

²² Henry Knox to George Washington, July 7, 1789, *Knox Papers Microfilm*, reel 24.

right to negotiate with Indians to the general government's exclusive authority to make treaties with foreign powers.²³ Three intercourse acts, passed by Congress in 1790, 1793, and 1796, built on that foundation. These laws outlined ways "to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes," explicitly by keeping Indians and settlers from making contact with each other in the manner that had traditionally bred violence. The first law, while brief, severely restricted traders and declared that criminal acts by American citizens in Indian territory would be tried as if committed in their home state or district. Most important was the law's explicit language concerning land, which gave meaning to the boundary created by the Treaty of New York. The first intercourse act established a moratorium on citizens' buying Indian lands, surveying them, or even being found on them. Indian lands could only be ceded through "some public treaty, held under the authority of the United States," a provision that further invalidated the previous Georgia treaties.²⁴

The intercourse laws were to be enforced and the boundary lines maintained under the watchful eyes of military officers, making them an important component of the Federalist policy. If the central government's laws were to be respected, and if Knox's larger idea of gaining stability along the Creek-Georgia frontier through trust was to work, it would be through them. A strong commanding officer in the region was necessary not only to project the strength of the United States but also to enforce the government's new regulations and maintain peace along the boundary with a sovereign people. Every sign from the Creek-Georgia frontier had led the Washington administration to believe that a lot of soldiers would be needed to patrol that border. "The angry passions of the frontier Indians and whites," Knox informed the president, "are too easily inflamed by reciprocal injuries, and are too violent to be controlled by the feeble authority of the civil power." He concluded that "the sword of the Republic only, is adequate to guard a due administration of justice, and the preservation of the peace."²⁵ American forces had been largely absent during the Confederation period. Knox thus moved quickly in the spring of 1790, assigning three companies,

²³ Prucha, *Great Father*, 1:52–53; Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 41–49; Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 57; Horsman, "Indian Policy of an 'Empire for Liberty,'" 43.

²⁴ "An Act to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes," 1 Stat. 137 (July 22, 1790), at 138; "An Act to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes," 1 Stat. 329 (March 1, 1793); "An Act to regulate Trade and Intercourse with the Indian Tribes, and to preserve Peace on the Frontiers," 1 Stat. 469 (May 19, 1796). See also Prucha, *Great Father*, 1:89–90; Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 44–49; and Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 62–63.

²⁵ Henry Knox to George Washington, July 7, 1789, *Knox Papers Microfilm*, reel 24.

consisting of seventy men each, to three new stations on the St. Marys, Altamaha, and Oconee Rivers. These men, he assured General Anthony Wayne, were "all the troops which were within the power of the President." An officer established the post on the St. Marys River quickly enough to welcome the Creek headmen returning from the New York conference.²⁶ Soon some of those men were on their way to creating the second post, on the Oconee at the Rock Landing.²⁷

From these first postings, the number of troops spread through the region, slowly and inconsistently at times, but there was always a federal military presence at several places along the boundary. Henry Gaither commanded one of the first regiments of troops to exist in the service of the United States, and all of them were stationed in Georgia. Late in 1792, there were close to three hundred men under his command stretching across the frontier, making his command one of the largest to exist in any region not actually at war. Indeed, as the Federalist plan unfolded on the Creek-Georgia frontier, so did Gaither's men. While little is known about the exact positioning of those troops, it is clear that he established Fort Fidius across the Oconee from the Rock Landing early in 1793; by that time there were also troops under his command at several other small outposts, like Forts Mathews, Telfair, and St. Tammany.²⁸ Around the same time Knox commissioned Captain

²⁶ Henry Knox to Anthony Wayne, April 10, 1790, *Knox Papers Microfilm*, reel 26. See also "Minutes whereby to give information . . .," April 1, 1790, *ibid.*; Wayne to Knox, May 12, 1790, *ibid.*; and Knox to Henry Burbeck, August 16, 1790, and August 17, 1790, Henry Knox Papers, SPR716 (Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Ala.), hereinafter cited as Knox Papers (ADAH) and available online in the ADAH Digital Collections, <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/>.

²⁷ Henry Knox to Henry Burbeck, May 25, 1791, Box 1, Henry Burbeck Papers (Special Collections and Archives, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, N.Y.), and available online in the Papers of the War Department Project, 1784–1800, <http://wardepartmentpapers.org>; Henry Knox to John Heth, May 31, 1791, *ASP: IA*, 1:125–26; Knox to Richard Call, March 17, 1791, May 25, 1791, and July 13, 1791, Knox Papers (ADAH); Knox to Governor of Georgia, July 11, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:256.

²⁸ "Statement of the Troops in the Service of the United States," November 6, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:318; Victor Davidson, *History of Wilkinson County* (Macon, Ga., 1930), 90–91; John Stagg to Samuel Hodgdon, June 14, 1793, Papers of the War Department Project. Even with those garrisons, however, the frontier was thinly protected. In September 1792 James Seagrove complained of "the naked state of this frontier; not more than twenty soldiers, without an officer, compose our force" on the St. Marys River, where he made his headquarters. See Seagrove to Henry Knox, September 8, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:310–11 (quotation on 311). As of February 1794 the presence of the federal government on the frontier was weaker. There were only 132 troops spread among four posts, and Governor Mathews complained that "feeble indeed must the support be which they can afford." See Mathews to Habersham, February 17, 1794, in Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., "Governor's Letter Book, Governor George Mathews, November 18, 1793 to October 14, 1794," pp. 18–20 (Georgia Archives). In May, there were only sixty-nine men healthy and effective for duty at Fort Fidius. See Richard B. Roberts to Henry Knox, May 10, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:482.

Constant Freeman to act as agent of the federal government for the state of Georgia. That appointment was an important step in bridging the gap between local militias and the federal service. Freeman was a trusted Federalist ally and an acquaintance of Knox's who, while stationed in Georgia, could both coordinate with any state troops called into federal service and help Gaither keep a watchful eye on them.²⁹ Freeman, Gaither, and other officers in the region had clear directives from Knox and even President Washington to ensure stability, and their orders spelled out the important diplomatic function their positions served. Although federal troops were obviously stationed in the region to protect Americans, they were also ordered to keep lines of communication with chiefs open and entertain them when necessary and, finally, to restrain the actions of Georgia citizens. Knox made sure that the garrison commander at St. Marys knew that "[t]he interests of the United States and the Creeks henceforward are proposed to be the same." And when some of those troops were dispatched to the Rock Landing, it was "of great importance that the force of the United States in Georgia should be directed with the highest prudence and circumspection," and that the main object of their presence was "to preserve the peace by conciliating to each other the Creeks and frontier citizens of that State."³⁰

Although the military officers provided tremendous support, it fell ultimately on the government's Indian agents to oversee the building of friendly and stable relations with Creek headmen and to mediate differences with local Georgians. By "acting purely for the mutual interests of the United States and Indians," Knox hoped, the agents "would soon attain a respectable and pre-eminent influence." He thought he had that direct line to headmen in Alexander McGillivray, but in the early 1790s criticism of the young man, as well as the Treaty of New York, drew his leadership ability into question. Scores of Creek headmen did not agree with the treaty, and as they turned increasingly to Spanish governors and even to adventurer William Augustus Bowles for means to resist it, McGillivray's authority flagged. Soon, Knox was forced to look elsewhere. He turned increasingly to James Seagrove, whom he had recently appointed temporary agent in the Southeast, ordering him to work with McGillivray but also pushing him to develop his own connections.

²⁹ Constant Freeman to Henry Knox, May 16, 1790, *Knox Papers Microfilm*, reel 26; Knox to Henry Gaither, June 10, 1793, and July 17, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:367.

³⁰ Henry Knox to Henry Burbeck, August 16, 1790 (first quotation); Knox to Richard Call, July 13, 1791 (second and third quotations), both *Knox Papers (ADAH)*. Knox also explained to James Seagrove that forces were being moved to the Rock Landing "under the ideas of awing and repressing any turbulent spirits among the Indians who might be disposed for mischief." See Knox to Seagrove, February 20, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:249-50 (quotation in note on 250).

"[A]void every thing that is harsh and disagreeable to the Indians," Knox pressed, "whom you will conciliate by kindness and mildness, instead of terrors or threatenings." Were a respectable and competent agent, like Seagrove, available to the Creeks "at their general meetings, administering to their convenience on all occasions, by means of artificers, husbandmen, and physicians, and always evincing himself their impartial friend and protector, with adequate means to their end," it would do much more good "than all external applications, through bad interpreters and doubtful friends." Knox hoped Seagrove could develop those sorts of connections in Creek country and, by doing so, present to Creek headmen a fair and equitable face for the United States government.³¹

That was a tall order in a region torn by over a decade of violence, but Seagrove quickly went to work penning letters of introduction, and it did not take long for him to open dialogues with headmen across Creek country. At the Rock Landing, over the course of April and May 1792, he met with several dozen headmen from Upper Creek country and later with the White Bird-Tail King of Cusseta, in Lower Creek country.³² Seagrove made equally important efforts, he soon demonstrated, to soothe animosities as well as build trust within Creek country. When reports circulated that hunting parties were harassing Georgians, for instance, he traveled down the Oconee and Altamaha Rivers personally. Over ten days, "I fell in with several camps of hunting Indians, to all of whom I talked, and pointed out to them what I conceived right." He also made sure that when communities were in need, he was the first to assist them, letting them know his aid was on behalf of the United States. For example, in the fall of 1792, several communities around Cusseta suffered crop failures, and it was obvious they would have a tough time getting through the winter. Seagrove pressed Knox to purchase corn and clothing provisions and ship them south for Seagrove to distribute, which he did.³³

³¹ Henry Knox to James Seagrove, October 31, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:259–60 (first and second quotations); Knox to Alexander McGillivray, February 17, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:246–47; Knox to Seagrove, February 20, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:249–50 (third and fourth quotations on 250); Knox to Seagrove, April 29, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:253–54; Knox to Seagrove, August 11, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:257–58 (fifth and sixth quotations on 257).

³² James Seagrove to Alexander McGillivray, May 21, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:298–99; "A Talk Delivered by James Seagrove . . . to the kings, chiefs, head men, and warriors of the Creek nation, assembled at the Rock Landing . . .," May 18, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:299–301; Henry Knox to Seagrove, October 31, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:259–60. The spelling of Creek place-names in this article relies on Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill, 2003), esp. 29.

³³ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, June 14, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:301–2 (quotation on 301); Knox to Seagrove, October 31, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:259–60; Seagrove to "the Kings and Chiefs of the Cussetuhs and Cowetas," October 6, 179[2], *ASP: IA*, 1:313.

Those early efforts earned Seagrove an audience. Over two hundred headmen surprised him at the Rock Landing in the summer of 1792. Not only did they quickly exhaust his food and liquor provisions—they had none of his attempts to ration what remained. Yet, he confided to Knox, “What I have bestowed on those who have been with me, and the indulgent, kind treatment they have met with, is now working powerfully in our favor in the nation.” “Good treatment” was the only way to keep the Creeks friendly, and “let me assure you, there is no middle road with those people.” Seagrove understood that by entertaining the visitors, even if it was done expensively, he was building relationships in Creek country that would facilitate solving problems in the region when they occurred. Moreover, he argued, “I should think it advisable to keep those Southern nations in friendship, even at a considerable expense,” at least until the federal government had dealt “with those we are now at war with,” in the Northwest Territory.³⁴

Those relationships became more important late in 1792 as an increasing number of Creek communities rejected the treaty made at New York, which did, after all, cede significant tracts of Creek land to Georgia. Several Creek leaders reached out for the means to resist the drawing of the new boundary line, which they had not agreed to, and they did not fail to find support. When swirling talks from Spanish governors, from adventurer William Augustus Bowles, and from Shawnee outsiders drew Creek country closer to confrontation with Georgia, Seagrove did what he could to counter them.³⁵ Several conversations suggest that Seagrove was having some measure of success, even as stability in the region grew more dubious. White Lieutenant of Oakfuskee, a powerful leader in the Upper Creek country, was warming up to him quickly. The Cusseta King, the Cusseta Warrior King, and the Hallowing King of Coweta also delivered friendly talks, reporting after the sizable but impromptu meeting at the Rock Landing that they were pleased with it and looked forward to the next one. The headmen spread Seagrove’s talks through both the upper and the lower country, and the White Lieutenant of Oakfuskee assured Seagrove afterward, “The day is not far off that we shall take you by the hand, and be as friends and

³⁴ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, July 5, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:303–4; Seagrove to Knox, July 27, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:310 (quotations).

³⁵ For the arrival and influence of William Augustus Bowles, see J. Leitch Wright Jr., *William Augustus Bowles, Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens, Ga., 1967); and Gilbert C. Din, *War on the Gulf Coast: The Spanish Fight against William Augustus Bowles* (Gainesville, Fla., 2012); and for the Shawnees’ role in the greater region, see Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 99–115; and Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*, 151–59.

brothers."³⁶ In the Lower Creek country Seagrove was also developing an excellent working relationship with John Kinnard, who in turn was influential among the Creek neighborhoods there, like Hitchiti and Chehaw. By October, Seagrove reported "frequent communications from different parts of the nation, all of which seem favorable," and he had strong hopes that "a very favorable change hath taken place in the nation, in favor of the United States." After meeting with forty-five more headmen, from eighteen separate towns in Creek country, in November at his post at Coleraine, the positive outlook was the same. "[E]very thing hath gone favorable, beyond my most sanguine expectation," Seagrove reported to the secretary of war, and affairs were "in a most pleasing state between the Creeks and our country."³⁷

Seagrove was unrelentingly positive even to Georgia governor Edward Telfair, who was no friend of the Creeks, declaring in October 1792 that "the affairs of the United States with the Creek nation, at this time, appear more favorable than for years past" and that, in fact, "[e]very day furnishes me with fresh proofs of their ardent desire of living in peace and friendship with this country."³⁸ Seagrove's attempts to reassure local authorities like Telfair, however, hinted at another important conciliatory function that federal officers were forced to perform. If they were to succeed in stabilizing the frontier, they must confront and control increasingly unhappy settlers. As the Intercourse Act of 1790 already seemed to suggest, American legislators blamed a great deal of the region's instability on whites, not Indians. Knox certainly understood it that way. "It is to be deeply regretted," he penned Telfair, "that there are many whites on the frontiers, whose resentments are so keen against all persons bearing the name of Indians, that they have adopted an opinion that it is meritorious to kill them all on all occasions."³⁹

³⁶ White Lieutenant to James Seagrove, August 1, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:312 (quotation); Cussetah King, Cussetah Warrior's King, Opay Mico, and Hallowing King to Seagrove, August 23, 1792, *ibid.*; Seagrove to "the Kings and Chiefs of the Cussetuhs and Cowetas," October 6, 179[2], *ASP: IA*, 1:313.

³⁷ James Seagrove to John Kinnard, October 7, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:314; Seagrove to Henry Knox, October 17, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:311–12 (first and second quotations on 311); Seagrove to Knox, November 22, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:336 (third and fourth quotations).

³⁸ James Seagrove to Edward Telfair, October 5, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:315.

³⁹ Henry Knox to Edward Telfair, July 11, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:256. As Francis Paul Prucha has suggested, the Intercourse Acts dealt with "the crisis of the day on the frontier," which was the reality that American citizens did not respect Indian rights and probably routinely ignored the American treaties that were made to guarantee those rights. The intercourse laws, therefore, were pieces of legislation "directed against lawless whites." See Prucha, *Great Father*, 1:89–92 (quotations on 92); and Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, 48. As Reginald Horsman also explains, if the United States could peacefully buy Indian land, make boundaries,

Many Georgians, affected by both years of violence and an abiding envy of Creek lands, would sooner burn Creek communities than share a border with them. Seagrove, hovering between federal garrisons on state land, was in the best position to judge local sentiment toward Creeks, and what he saw was pretty clear. "The refractory conduct of the frontier inhabitants," he informed President Washington directly, "is so notorious, and so apparently determined to bring on a war with the Indians, that all endeavours to preserve peace seems [*sic*] in vain." As both Knox and Seagrove understood, the developing Federalist policy had to be superimposed over deep-seated resentments and enforced against unwilling local residents. They were "the worst class of people," Seagrove grumbled, and the backcountry was "where there is least energy to be expected in her civil government." Only with the liberal imposition of federal actors and federal troops would anything meaningful be accomplished there: "unless supported in the early stages of settlement by military force, civil authority becomes a nullity."⁴⁰

As the situation along the Creek-Georgia frontier continued to deteriorate in late 1792 and 1793, it placed Seagrove in a more difficult position vis-à-vis his counterparts in the region. While his relationship with several headmen continued to develop, others continued to reject the Treaty of New York. The growing Spanish presence was particularly worrisome; Seagrove complained that "Spanish agents in the Creek nation. . . , unquestionably, are using every means to induce the four Southern nations of Indians to take up the hatchet against the United States," and that "[e]very undue, unjust, and villainous means are using by them, to bring these unfortunate people to act to their diabolical purposes." Aggressive talks from Spanish governors in Florida pushed individual Creek communities to reject the Treaty of New York, creating partisan factions in the region and stressing Seagrove's relationships with the several headmen who remained American supporters.⁴¹ Hopes for stability in Creek country were nearly shattered early in 1793 when a small group of raiders from one or two of the most disaffected Creek

protect these lines from white encroachment, and punish unruly frontiersmen through the legal system, "then the United States could hope to establish an orderly frontier advance." Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 59–60.

⁴⁰ James Seagrove to George Washington, July 27, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:305–6 (first and second quotations on 305); Seagrove to Henry Knox, October 28, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:320–21 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations on 321).

⁴¹ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, September 8, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:310–11 (quotations on 310). For reports of the developing instability, see James Durouzeaux to Seagrove, May 28, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:302; Alexander McGillivray to Knox, May 18, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:315–16; Seagrove to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, governor of East Florida, June 13, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:303; and Knox to Edward Telfair, July 11, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:256.

towns killed a trader and sacked a store on the St. Marys River, at a place called Trader's Hill, in an unprovoked attack that shocked everyone in the region. Soon scattered reports of raiding along the St. Marys and Altamaha Rivers surfaced as well. Waves of panic swept across the Georgia frontier, and local authorities were convinced that the attacks were only the beginning of complete Indian war.⁴² Seagrove, in contrast, insisted that the majority of Creek communities were peaceful and that the attacks were not widespread, a position that sparked heated confrontations with his state counterparts.

Several Creek allies shared Seagrove's optimism, ushering in a period of intense and personal conversation that demonstrated Creeks and Federalists alike desired peace and stability. Headmen sent reassuring talks to Seagrove as soon as word spread of the attacks, and they urged him to give them time to sort things out and not to let the Georgians do anything too harsh in the meantime. Cusseta headmen were among the first to respond, sending Seagrove several traditional symbols of peace, including a white wing; the Cusseta King and White Bird-Tail King hoped that Seagrove would be convinced by those tokens and their talks that the Cussetas were most certainly his friends and were determined for peace. "I wish for a peace, and always did," the Cusseta King and White Bird-Tail King declared.⁴³ Soon talks from Alexander Cornells, Charles Weatherford, the Mad Dog of Tuckabatchee, and the White Lieutenant of Oakfuskee arrived as well. Together these talks demonstrated Creeks' solidarity in the upper country, which was encouraging news indeed. Not only was the raiding done by only a handful of renegade warriors to the south, but also the headmen were plainly doing everything they could to make things right. As Alexander Cornells pledged to Seagrove, "I have done all that lies in my power; it is

⁴² For reports of the killings at Trader's Hill, see Robert Brown, Affidavit, March 14, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:374; Ann Gray, Deposition, March 14, 1793, *ibid.*; and John Forrester to Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, March 13, 1793, Section 32, East Florida Papers (Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.; hereinafter cited as UF), microfilm, reel 47. For the raiding that followed, see James Jackson to Edward Telfair, March 16, 1793, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 1:271; J. Houstoun to the Governor of Georgia, March 18, 1793, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 1:275; William McIntosh to General [Lachlan] McIntosh, March 18, 1793, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 1:276; Deposition of Joseph T. Hardy, April 1, 1793, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 1:277; Timothy Barnard to Henry Gaither, April 8, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:419; Forrester to Quesada, March 19, 1793, and April 8, 1793, Section 32, East Florida Papers, reel 48; Telfair to Henry Knox, April 3, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1: 368; and "Extract of a letter to General Jackson," April 7, 1793, in Mrs. J. E. [Louise Frederick] Hays, comp., "Indian Letters, 1782-1839," p. 20 (Georgia Archives).
⁴³ "The Following talks received by James Seagrove," April 15, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:384 (quotation); James Seagrove to Henry Knox, April 30, 1793, *ibid.*; Bird King and Cussetah King to Henry Gaither, April 13, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:420.

impossible to do more than I have done." The Mad Dog admitted that "there are many bad talks in the nation," but he and his friends "are using every endeavor to make them better." And Charles Weatherford reportedly was "doing all he can for the good of the United States."⁴⁴

Seagrove reached out to his superiors, hoping to keep the attacks from sparking regional violence. It was obvious that the attacks were "not a business of the [Creek] Nation," he informed President Washington, but simply the actions of a few rogue warriors. Both Washington and Knox seemed to agree. Knox explained to Major Henry Gaither that the attacks were "rather the robbery of some marauders," while writing to Seagrove that "it would appear, at this distance, to have been the work of a predatory party, rather than any fixed plan of the nation."⁴⁵ Local and state officials, however, were of a completely different mind, and convincing them of Creek sincerity was all but impossible. Instead they lashed out at federal authorities, declaring that the blood of Georgia citizens was on the government's hands. "Make peace on any terms say they," one angry militiaman complained; "it is that disposition in our Northern brethren, which was so plainly discovered to the Indians when they were at New York, that has brought all the evils on this country which we have since experienced."⁴⁶

Georgia governor Edward Telfair emerged as the leading state-level advocate for violence. By the summer of 1793, he was absolutely sure of an impending war, and he began aggressively planning preemptive attacks into Creek country. "To destroy their towns and crops," he charged, "and possess ourselves of prisoners, will ensure peace on a solid basis; and no other principle can be of any duration." He also cut off all correspondence with Seagrove, apparently convinced that Seagrove

⁴⁴ Alexander Cornell to James Seagrove, April 15, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:384 (first quotation); "The Mad Dog of the Tuckaubatchees' Talk," March 22, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:383 (second and third quotations); Timothy Barnard to Seagrove, April 19, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:386–87 (fourth quotation on 387); Upper Creek headmen to Seagrove, April 8, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:384–85; Charles Weatherford to Seagrove, March 9, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:385–86. Alexander Cornells (Tuckabatchee headman Oche Haujo) is also spelled *Cornell* in the sources. See Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 79–80.

⁴⁵ James Seagrove to George Washington, March 17, 1793, in Abbot et al., eds., *Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, 12:335–38 (first quotation on 336); Henry Knox to Henry Gaither, April 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:367 (second quotation); Knox to Seagrove, April 30, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:366 (third quotation).

⁴⁶ Major Robert Flounoy to James Seagrove, October 5, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:416–17 (quotations on 417). Robert Anderson had similar words of discouragement. He advocated for offensive operations to the governor of South Carolina, complaining, "I am truly sorry that the citizens cannot be permitted to defend themselves in the best way, without the approbation of Government." Without action, "then we may as well dissolve the Union, as to pretend to hold together, because Georgia will be ruined, perhaps this State [South Carolina], and several others much injured." Robert Anderson to Governor of South Carolina, September 20, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:317–18 (first quotation in note on 317; second quotation in note on 318).

did not have Georgians' well-being in mind.⁴⁷ That approach generated more confrontations between agents committed to the Federalist position and Georgians who challenged it. At the Rock Landing, for instance, Major Gaither cast a suspicious eye on the governor, who kept insisting on ordering out the militia at the federal government's expense. Gaither reported that Telfair often spoke of "murders and depredations committed by the Indians, that I cannot hear from any other person" and that he seriously doubted.⁴⁸ Knox, having already accepted Seagrove's version of the attacks, quickly rejected the Georgia plan for invasion and prohibited any offensive action at all.⁴⁹ These decisions enraged the governor, of course, but there was little his state forces could do without federal assistance. By questioning and disallowing the state actions, federal authorities demonstrated their commitment to peace, not aggression, and alienated Georgia officials in the process.⁵⁰

At the same time he was throttling state plans for violence, Knox pressed Seagrove to resolve the Trader's Hill crisis. He hoped the agent would undertake what several Creek headmen had already been requesting—a comprehensive journey into Creek country to meet personally with the region's most influential men. As several of them had repeatedly assured Seagrove, that was the best way to lay the foundation for a long-term peace. "Their eager desire for your immediate arrival . . . will serve to convince you that they were fully satisfied of your good intentions towards them," trader and interpreter Timothy Barnard explained. A trip to a good-sized community, say Cusseta in Lower Creek country or Tuckabatchee or Oakfuskee in Upper Creek country, was almost universally seen as the means to make a lasting peace. After Trader's Hill, even the staunchest American partisan

⁴⁷ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, May 24, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:387–88; Edward Telfair to Knox, July 24, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:370 (quotations).

⁴⁸ Henry Gaither to Henry Knox, April 7, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:417. A separate federal agent, farther to the north, looked into similar accounts of Creek depredations outlined by General John Sevier in modern-day Tennessee and reported that by his accounts "the disposition of the Creek nation is very different from what" the general presented. See Tobias Lear to Henry Knox, November 25, 1792, in Carter and Bloom, eds., *Territorial Papers*, 4:220.

⁴⁹ Henry Knox to James Seagrove, April 30, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:366; Knox to Henry Gaither, April 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:367. See also Grenier, *First Way of War*, 186–91. Along the northern frontiers of Georgia, William Blount, the governor of the Southwest Territory, and John Sevier, a brigadier general of the territorial militia, were outspoken advocates throughout the 1790s of marching armies into Creek country. See William Blount and Andrew Pickens to Knox, August 1, 1793, in Carter and Bloom, eds., *Territorial Papers*, 4:291–93; Blount and Pickens to Knox, August 6, 1793, in Carter and Bloom, eds., *Territorial Papers*, 4:296; and Blount to Knox, November 10, 1794, in Carter and Bloom, eds., *Territorial Papers*, 4:364–70.

⁵⁰ Edward Telfair to Henry Knox, September 6, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:371.

headmen were admitting outwardly that nothing of importance could be done without such a show of trust and good faith.⁵¹ The White Lieutenant's request was particularly personal and revealing. "My unknown friend," he began, "I have very long had a particular desire to see you." He pleaded, "[C]ome forward, my friend, and don't be daunted; now is the time you can be of service to us, and your country as we are determined to take your talks, and stand by you to the last moment." What they were asking no American agent had yet attempted at such a pivotal moment. Yet the Trader's Hill crisis made such a journey all the more important.⁵²

Soon a separate murder along the border further necessitated Seagrove's journey. A Creek delegation met at Tuckabatchee in June 1793, reaffirming their commitment to do what they could internally to deal with the Trader's Hill killings while they awaited Seagrove's arrival. David Cornells, kin to Alexander Cornells and a powerful and well-liked young man in the region, was quickly dispatched to Coleraine to deliver the council proceedings to Seagrove.⁵³ He was waylaid by Georgia militiamen, shot from his horse, and executed within miles of the federal post. It was a deliberate and heinous attack that horrified federal authorities. Indeed, with David Cornells's murder, Barnard lamented, "I fear the prospect of a peace is at an end."⁵⁴ Seagrove immediately reached out to his friends in Creek country, yet this time he was urging them not to do anything harsh. "I have only to say, my friend," he told David's uncle Alexander Cornells, "for you and the other relations and friends of the deceased, that full satisfaction shall be made." Seagrove begged Cornells, "the Mad Dog, White Lieutenant, your uncle Joseph Cornell, and all others concerned, not to alter their good opinion of us, on account of this accident, or to

⁵¹ Timothy Barnard to James Seagrove, April 9, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:390–91 (quotation on 390); Henry Knox to Seagrove, October 27, 1792, *ASP: IA*, 1:262–63; Barnard to Seagrove, March 26, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:381–82; Barnard to Henry Gaither, June 21, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:422–23; "The Mad Dog of the Tuckaubatchees' Talk," March 22, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:383. On Barnard, see Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln, Neb., 2005), 185; and Ethridge, *Creek Country*, 77–78.

⁵² White Lieutenant to James Seagrove, June 23, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:401. Cusseta headmen assured Seagrove that his arrival "might settle matters" even among the most belligerent towns, while the White Lieutenant openly declared that, if Seagrove came, "matters could be soon righted." Timothy Barnard to Seagrove, June 20, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:394–95 (first quotation in note on 394); Barnard to Seagrove, July 2, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:400–401 (second quotation in note on 400).

⁵³ Mad Dog, White Lieutenant, Alexander Cornell, and Charles Weatherford to James Seagrove, June 14, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:396; Timothy Barnard to Seagrove, June 20, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:394–95; Barnard to Seagrove, June 20, 1793, in Louise Frederick Hays, comp., "Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard, 1784–1820," p. 182 (Georgia Archives).

⁵⁴ Letter of July 21, 1793, in Hays, comp., "Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard," 205.

take any hasty measures in consequence, as it is my determination to satisfy you fully on this business."⁵⁵

David Cornells's death, while tragic, presented a unique opportunity for Seagrove to construct a grand bargain of sorts, and it galvanized his plans to enter Creek country. Before the killing, he had largely been dictating the terms of peace to Creek headmen. They owed him debts in blood and money for Trader's Hill, and he was pressing hard to get satisfaction for Americans. After Cornells's death, however, Creeks were on a much fairer footing. They would certainly demand satisfaction for the blatant murder of the well-connected Cornells, not to mention the young boy who was killed with him, which provided Seagrove with the opportunity, essentially, to trade lives. "The plan I have all along proposed, since this affair took place," he later explained to Knox, "was by way of a discount." Captain John Fleming, one of those killed at Trader's Hill, "was a valuable man," valuable enough for Seagrove to propose trading his life for Cornells's. The other man killed at the store, a Mr. Daniel Moffitt, would have his life traded for the boy's. Seagrove knew that the headmen would demand lives, and he was also certain that Georgians, who were not at all remorseful for the killings, would systematically reject those demands.⁵⁶ Seagrove's plan, although pragmatic, was an astonishing demonstration of the lengths Federalist authorities were willing to go to ensure stability. Trading lives certainly was not part of American legal precedent. Seagrove was framing a compromise that tangled Euro-American conceptualizations of guilt and wrongdoing, in an effort to find the quickest way back to peace.

Although the trade was a long shot in Creek country and completely unjustifiable from an American legal perspective, there was a chance it would help smooth over regional tensions, and so Seagrove committed to it. Soon he asked friends in Creek country, including Alexander Cornells, the Mad Dog, and Charles Weatherford, to make preparations for his arrival.⁵⁷ Once he received Washington's approval, Seagrove

⁵⁵ James Seagrove to Alexander Cornell, July 5, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:398 (quotations); Seagrove to White Lieutenant, July 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:402-3.

⁵⁶ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, August 13, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:406. With a young man as important as David Cornells dead, it was unclear whether such a trade was even possible from the Creeks' point of view. His uncle Alexander was pushing for swift justice, declaring, "without some example . . . made of those who had a hand in the death of David, it will be impossible for peace to last long." Alexander Cornell to Seagrove, n.d., *ASP: IA*, 1:407.

⁵⁷ He was particularly candid with Cornells, confiding that if the headman could help Seagrove get safely to Tuckabatchee, or another town of similar importance, "I doubt not, we can settle all affairs on a firm footing." James Seagrove to Alexander Cornell, July 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:403 (quotation); Seagrove to Mad Dog, July 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:403-4; Seagrove to "the Kings and Chiefs of the Cussetahs, and all other friends to the United States in the Lower Creek towns," July 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:404; Seagrove to Charles Weatherford, July 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:404-5.

alerted Timothy Barnard that “nothing remains but that you and I strain every nerve to carry so desirable a business into effect.” Whether Creeks would take the steps necessary to ensure peace he was unsure, but he would know soon enough, “as I have determined to give them an opportunity.”⁵⁸ Barnard, who was already in Creek country, soon sent encouraging news. Writing from the Flint River area among the Lower Creeks, he reported that the local communities “seem at present more inclinable for peace than they have been this summer past,” which was excellent news indeed. He also traveled through Cusseta and spoke with the Warrior King, who was “very attentive in striving to reconcile matters.” After Barnard sent him north to the White Lieutenant to help prepare for Seagrove’s arrival, the Warrior King also gave a favorable outlook for Upper Creek country. There was “a greater prospect” of peace “than there has been for some time past.” By the time Seagrove set off, in fact, the Warrior King, the White Lieutenant, “several more of the heads” of Creek country, and more than one hundred Creeks were reportedly already waiting for him on the Ocmulgee River. “[T]he whole of the Creek Nation is desirous of peace with the United States,” Seagrove declared to Knox, “and would conclude it with me, could I be amongst them, uninterrupted [*sic*] by the Georgians.”⁵⁹

Both Knox and Washington were similarly optimistic. It was “with entire truth,” Knox confided to Seagrove, that if he managed to get into Creek country “and bring it to a just sense of the friendship and kindness of the United States, you will do an essential service to your country.” At the same time, federal officials stepped up the pressure on Georgia authorities. When word spread that Governor Telfair was convening a new war council, Knox quashed it, ordering Telfair to desist in no uncertain terms. The United States, Knox declared, absolutely would not start a war with a Creek people who were overwhelmingly friendly. President Washington “utterly disapproves the measure at this time.” The expedition was “unauthorized by law, as contrary to the present state of affairs, and as contrary to the instructions heretofore given.”⁶⁰ That message, which Constant Freeman took

⁵⁸ James Seagrove to Timothy Barnard, July 29, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:405. See also Seagrove to Henry Knox, July 31, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:399–400.

⁵⁹ Timothy Barnard to James Seagrove, October 17, 1793 (first letter), *ASP: IA*, 1:415 (first quotation); Barnard to Seagrove, October 17, 1793 (second letter), *ASP: IA*, 1:415–16 (second, third, and fourth quotations on 415); Barnard to Seagrove, October 18, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:416 (fifth quotation); Seagrove to Henry Knox, October 31, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:468–69 (sixth and seventh quotations on 469).

⁶⁰ Henry Knox to James Seagrove, September 16, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:366–67 (first and second quotations on 366); Henry Knox to Edward Telfair, September 5, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:365 (third and fourth quotations). Knox warned Governor William Moultrie of South Carolina not to get involved either. Knox to Moultrie, September 5, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:366.

to Telfair directly, hit its mark. It "put a stop to any further preparations for this expedition."⁶¹

Even with this foundation of support from federal officials at the highest level, Seagrove faced incredible local obstacles. Knox's plan disregarded the state's demands for aggressive action, and as it turned out, Seagrove's peace initiative was one affront too many. Even Telfair declared to Seagrove, in the presence of Constant Freeman, that the proposed journey into Creek country was "altogether useless; that a war must be had, and the Indians chastised before peace could be solid or agreeable."⁶² Whether or not it was Telfair who leaked plans of Seagrove's journey, soon there were posses of militiamen patrolling the border, proclaiming that Seagrove would get into Creek country only over their dead bodies. "To speak of peace with the Creeks" in Georgia was "a crime not to be forgiven," a worried Seagrove told Knox. To Freeman, Seagrove complained that "it was determined I should not reach this place [Fort Fidius] alive; that I was a most dangerous man; that I was taking measures to keep this country in peace. This may be considered by some, a crime of the deapest [*sic*] dye." A Captain Williamson, with upward of sixty mounted militia, was reported to be lying in wait at the Ocmulgee River to waylay Seagrove, while a "Mr. Adams . . . expressed a great wish that Major Seagrove and his deputy, Mr. Barnard, should be both sacrificed."⁶³

In the fall of 1793 Seagrove finally set out. Twenty federal troops from Fort Fidius met him on the road from Augusta, their commander having received alarming "information that parties of villains were out on the roads determined to destroy" both Seagrove and Gaither, who were traveling together. "[T]he country," Seagrove lamented, was "in a most determined state of opposition to Federal measures," and there

⁶¹ Constant Freeman to Henry Knox, September 11, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:426 (quotation); Freeman to Knox, September 25, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:426–27.

⁶² James Seagrove to Henry Knox, September 5, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:408–9 (quotation on 408). See also Constant Freeman to Knox, September 11, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:426. For the general atmosphere in Georgia, including support for an invasion and anger at federal officials, see Seagrove to Edward Telfair, August 3, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:406; Seagrove to Knox, September 3, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:408; and Seagrove to Knox, September 17, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:409–10.

⁶³ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, September 3, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:408 (first and second quotations); Seagrove to Constant Freeman, September 11, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:426 (third quotation); Frederick Dalcho, Deposition, September 25, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:413–14 (fourth quotation on 414); "Extract of a letter from Lieutenant Sedgwick," September 16, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:411. Adams's complaints in particular were telling. Agents of the general government were "only encouraging and paying" Creeks "to destroy our frontier inhabitants," and "he was confident, the Executive officers of the Federal Government wished that the Indians might destroy the whole State of Georgia." Congress was "a set of rascals," the secretary of war was "an enemy to his country," and the U.S. troops under Henry Gaither were "of no service in protecting the frontier." See Frederick Dalcho, Deposition, September 25, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:414.

were several gangs of state militia out who "publicly declare, they will oppose every attempt that can be made to peace." Later, when he sent scouts ahead, they barely escaped with their lives. Even Constant Freeman, who in the past had been hesitant to believe the settlers would be so violent, admitted that things really were that bad.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, in November Seagrove continued west into Creek country, accompanied by Gaither and an armed militia escort, arriving at the eastern bank of the Ocmulgee River. On the other side were "one hundred and thirty chiefs and warriors," who greeted him enthusiastically. Trading the federal escort for a Creek one, Seagrove continued southwest, reaching Cusseta a week later, where he "took quarters in a house set apart for me by the king of the town." In the morning he was led to the center of Cusseta to the sound of salutes and drums: "I was received in great form by all the chiefs and people of the town, in the public square, as the agent of the United States." Runners fanned out through the Lower Creek country to publicize his arrival and to announce plans for a general conference in Tuckabatchee. After a short stay, he and an entourage of Cusseta chiefs began moving in that direction, "that being the place fixed on to settle the business of the nation." In another week they arrived.⁶⁵

Once at Tuckabatchee, Seagrove "proceeded to business." Sitting at the head of one of the largest councils ever assembled, he gave a strong oration to scores of chiefs and warriors. Although "standing on dangerous ground, and surrounded by numerous enemies, both white and red," Seagrove later declared proudly that he did his duty. "[S]peaking in plain and decided terms," he laid out past transgressions, demanded justice for the injuries done, and spoke hopefully for the future. For two days the council deliberated, and "it was unanimously determined on, that all acts of hostilities or depredations should, from that moment, cease between the United States and the Creek nations." The chiefs agreed, this time in Seagrove's presence, to return any "white prisoners," along with any slaves, cattle, and other properties that had been taken in past raids. Moreover, it seems like Seagrove's life-for-life trade went over well. The headmen agreed to execute "two or more of the principals"

⁶⁴ James Seagrove to Constant Freeman, September 11, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:426 (quotations); "James Aiken's Declaration," August 31, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:410-11; Constant Freeman to Henry Knox, September 25, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:426-27.

⁶⁵ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, November 30, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:471-72 (quotations on 471). Seagrove's reception at Tuckabatchee was not nearly as impressive as at Cusseta. "I could plainly discover a sullen countenance on many of the principal people, especially those belonging to the clan of the unfortunate young warrior, David Cornell, who fell at St. Mary's." *Ibid.*, 1:471.

in the Trader's Hill killings and associated raids. And for his part, Seagrove solemnly promised to do everything in his power "to bring to punishment the murderer or murderers" of David Cornells.⁶⁶

Seagrove stayed behind after the conclusion of the council to work on the various agreements' details and to continue developing relationships. Three chiefs, the White Lieutenant, the Mad Dog, and the Hallowing King of Coweta, stayed with him. He also forwarded the news to state officials in Augusta, expecting, and even threatening, them to abide by the terms as well. When Seagrove did finally leave, months later, he brought with him the White Bird-Tail King and the Big King of the Cussetas, the Tuckabatchee King, a head warrior of the Tallassees, and forty or so additional headmen and warriors, "all influential men," on a trip to Augusta. They were determined "to brighten the chain of friendship with the Governor." They met George Mathews, who had recently succeeded firebrand Edward Telfair as governor, which further improved the prospects for peace. Seagrove reported to Knox, "Mathews received the Indian chiefs with kindness; and I believe was fully satisfied, from what they informed him, of their ardent wish to live in peace with this country." Ultimately, the trip to Augusta sealed Seagrove's compromise and made the Tuckabatchee conference a stunning success by bringing both federal authorities and Creeks to a better understanding of each other. It was a successful demonstration of the Federalist plan in the Southeast, even if it had to be forced on unwilling state residents.⁶⁷

The success Federalists gained at Tuckabatchee did almost nothing, in fact, to win over white Georgians, who remained unwavering in their approach to Creek communities. They continued to attack Creek hunters, it seemed, just about wherever they found them.⁶⁸ William

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:471. This last promise he pressed directly on Knox, to speed up the process of "apprehending and convicting the perpetrators of that horrid deed." Seagrove also promised to return all the prisoners taken during the Georgians' latest outrage—the raiding of a friendly Oakfuskee village. Because "the Governor hath already refused delivering them to me," Seagrove appealed to Knox: "I apprehend the interference of the General Government may be necessary, ere they are delivered. Should this be the case, I must request that no time be lost." *Ibid.* For a Spanish report of Seagrove's arrival and speech in Tuckabatchee, see Louis de Milford to Baron de Carondelet, March 20, 1794, Folder "Archivo General de Simancas Legajo 7235," Box 2, Elizabeth Howard West Papers, MS 111 (UF).

⁶⁷ James Seagrove to Henry Knox, November 30, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:471–72; Seagrove to Edward Telfair, November 30, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:471; Constant Freeman to Knox, May 11, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:485 (first and second quotations); Seagrove to Knox, May 16, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:486 (third quotation).

⁶⁸ James Seagrove to Edward Telfair, September 22, 1793, *ASP: IA*, 1:411. Georgians repeatedly attacked Cussetas, for instance, such as White Bird-Tail King and the Dog King. See Constant Freeman to Henry Knox, January 1, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:472; and Richard Brooke Roberts to Knox, May 10, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:482.

Blount, the governor of the Southwest Territory, began forming his own plans for an offensive, prompting a showdown in the spring of 1795 with newly appointed secretary of war Timothy Pickering.⁶⁹ Moreover, American Revolutionary War hero Elijah Clarke marched off with a sizable group of militiamen to attack Creek towns arbitrarily, while another militia commander mounted an all-out assault on a large group of Creeks camped outside Fort Fidius. During the last attack, the headmen were at Fidius awaiting the return of Seagrove and the Augusta delegation. The Creeks managed to escape into the fort for protection, but the Georgia militia commander “had the insolence to threaten” his federal counterpart, warning that if his men did not turn the Indians over, presumably to be massacred, the militia “should make an attack on his Garrison.” That United States forces “afford[ed] protection to the Indians,” Constant Freeman declared, “was irritating the militia.” Yet “to deliver them up,” no doubt to a certain death, “would be to violate the faith of the United States, in which they had confided.”⁷⁰ Seagrove decried the attacks and pushed for a court-martial of the perpetrators, but that pressure accomplished little, and Georgians persisted with intensifying acts of violence on the frontier.⁷¹

Clarke’s continued intrigues in the summer of 1794 finally forced Federalists into a more confrontational position with Georgia authorities. Clarke marched his army of men over the Oconee River and into Creek lands, where he began to construct an independent republic. His actions represented a flagrant attack on Creek rights as laid out by the Treaty of New York, not to mention a violation of multiple provisions of the Intercourse Acts of 1790 and 1793. Yet Clarke soon finished constructing one of his stockades, which he named Fort Advance, and was moving on to another, fittingly named Fort Defiance.⁷² As

⁶⁹ For Blount’s plans, see “Report of Committee of Congress: Territorial Defense,” April 8, 1794, in Carter and Bloom, eds., *Territorial Papers*, 4:335–36; and “A Bill for the Protection of the Territory,” May 29, 1794, *ibid.*, 4:342–43. For the secretary of war’s responses, see Timothy Pickering to William Blount, March 23, 1795, *ibid.*, 4:386–93; and Pickering to Bartholomew Dandridge, June 17, 1795, *ibid.*, 4:395.

⁷⁰ James Seagrove to George Mathews, May 26, 1794, in Hays, comp., “Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties,” 2:384–85 (first and second quotations on 384); Constant Freeman to Henry Knox, May 10, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:483–84 (third through sixth quotations on 483). See also Freeman to Mathews, May 10, 1794, in Hays, comp., “Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties,” 2:378; and Mathews to Seagrove, May 12, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:486.

⁷¹ A court-martial did indeed inquire into the incident and found no one at fault. For the investigation and court-martial, see the several reports included in Hays, comp., “Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties,” 2:387–90, 392–95; and Louise Frederick Hays, comp., “Georgia Military Affairs,” vol. 1, pp. 187–91 (Georgia Archives). For Seagrove’s complaints, see James Seagrove to Henry Knox, May 16, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:486; and Seagrove to George Mathews, May 16, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:487.

⁷² Elijah Clarke to Adams, May 17, 1794, in Hays, comp., “Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties,” 2:380.

obviously illegal and provocative as the expedition was, Georgia authorities did little to stop Clarke or even question his actions. One court, it appears, actually approved of the operation. When a local justice summoned the militia general to explain his actions, Clarke somehow convinced the court that he had not broken any local ordinances. "This decision greatly encouraged his party," Constant Freeman complained, "and the settlements were pushed with vigor." Soon a number of small forts were standing, houses were built, and a town was surveyed and laid out, and "every thing bore the appearance of a permanent settlement."⁷³

With state officials doing nothing, Secretary of War Knox confronted Clarke. Neither he nor President Washington wasted any time condemning the expedition. Americans "cannot expect to live in peace" with the Creeks "if individuals are at liberty to invade their lands," Knox declared. He immediately ordered Governor Mathews to bring militia units into federal service to remove Clarke as soon as possible. With little choice, the governor had General John Twiggs cross the Oconee. Clarke declared "that he would not relinquish his enterprise," and so Mathews ordered a much larger army to evict him by force. General Jared Irwin met Clarke with over one thousand militiamen, reading aloud a strongly worded letter from the secretary of war. Hoping to avoid violence, Irwin urged Clarke and his adherents to remove back across the river peacefully, offering them amnesty if they did. Clarke agreed, and as his settler-army evacuated, Irwin had everything burned, marking the end of the so-called Trans-Oconee Republic and sending a strong message of federal authority in the Southeast.⁷⁴

The threats against Seagrove, the attacks on Creek hunters, the harassment of headmen at Fort Fidius, and then the illegal marching of settlers into Creek country all demonstrate how deeply unpopular the Federalist plan remained among Georgians. Yet no general break of the peace resulted from those provocations, leaving authorities like Seagrove to reflect cautiously, but optimistically, that despite the Georgians' best

⁷³ Constant Freeman to Henry Knox, September 29, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:500.

⁷⁴ Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, July 13, 1794, in Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (27 vols.; New York, 1961–1987), 16:600–602; Henry Knox to George Mathews, July 28, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:501–2 (first and second quotations on 501); Mathews to Knox, October 12, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:499 (third quotation); John Twiggs to Mathews, October 2, 1792, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 2:411; Jared Irwin to Mathews, October 3, 1794, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 2:414–15. The Creeks expressed confidence that the federal government would do its duty, which surprised Constant Freeman. They were "at no time . . . more quiet than they are at present," and Gaither was making plans to send a messenger to the headmen explaining that the "encroachments" had been removed. See Constant Freeman to Knox, September 29, 1794, *ASP: IA*, 1:500 (quotations in note); and Irwin to Timothy Barnard, October 3, 1794, in Hays, comp., "Unpublished Letters of Timothy Barnard," 248.

efforts stability was creeping into the region. The "whole Creek Nation gives me the greatest assurance of their ardent desire of peace" with "every part" of the United States, he declared. It was with pleasure, he informed Mathews, that "every matter in that country which respects us, is in a more favourable way than for years past."⁷⁵ The direction of Federalist officials, the commitment of local actors, and the interest of Creek communities were all making coexistence, if not peace, a reality. As the atmosphere in the region continued to improve, federal officials shifted their focus back to the Treaty of New York. It had proved incredibly contentious in 1792 and 1793, yet perhaps it would be received better now, American authorities hoped, as Creek country seemed to be growing more trusting of the federal government. Under the direction of Pickering and then James McHenry, Coleraine was chosen as the place to host a conference, in June 1796, where United States commissioners would attempt to get the old treaty reaffirmed by a majority of Creek leaders.⁷⁶

The success of the negotiations at Coleraine depended largely on the legitimacy of the Creek delegation who took part, something that Americans had failed to ensure at New York. Seagrove reached out to scores of headmen from across Creek country and promised them, on behalf of the United States government, that they were needed, that they would be welcomed and well received, and that they would be protected from nearby Georgia settlers.⁷⁷ Soon a Creek delegation was on its way that was more than adequate to make whatever was agreed upon at Coleraine binding, demonstrating how trusted Seagrove had become in the region. Dealing with Georgia, however, was much more complicated. Almost as soon as Benjamin Hawkins, George Clymer, and Andrew Pickens were appointed by Congress to negotiate on behalf of the United States, they were forced to deal with a set of state counterparts who were, at best, unhelpful. Georgia officials stubbornly insisted that the Treaty of New York had been illegitimately made and that the previous treaties that Georgia state commissioners had made during the Confederation period were binding. While neither any federal official nor Creek headman believed the state's demands were valid,

⁷⁵ James Seagrove to George Mathews, May 13, 1795, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 2:436. See also Seagrove to Mathews, June 29, 1795, *ibid.*, 2:440.

⁷⁶ George Washington to the Senate, June 25, 1795, *ASP: IA*, 1:560; Timothy Pickering to George Mathews, March 20, 1795, *ASP: IA*, 1:561; Mathews to Pickering, April 16, 1795, *ASP: IA*, 1:561.

⁷⁷ James Seagrove to Jared Irwin, April 9, 1796, in Hays, comp., "Creek Indian Letters, Talks and Treaties," 2:470-71; Seagrove to Irwin, April 18, 1796, *ibid.*, 2:472-73; "A talk from James Seagrove," n.d., *ibid.*, 2:474-76.

the Georgia legislature unquestionably did. James Hendricks, James Jackson, and James Simms were soon en route as the duly authorized state commissioners. Although they were clearly going to be a source of tension, they had a right to be there; federal officials hoped for the best, but every effort was made to prepare for the worst.⁷⁸

The physical layout of the treaty grounds reflected the U.S. commissioners' determination. When Hawkins and the other commissioners arrived, they drew up a detailed set of rules and restrictions based on the intercourse laws. The Creek delegation was to camp adjacent to the garrison at Coleraine, and Seagrove was to camp with them. Any visitors anywhere near the Creek camp had to be unarmed, and no whites were permitted to trade with them or even camp near them without the express permission of the U.S. commissioners. These regulations were relayed to Gaither to implement and make visible, which he did by nailing them to the gates of the garrison. "Believe me, gentlemen," he penned, "the line you have drawn, I will, as far as in my power, have strictly observed by all ranks of citizens, and the soldiers under my command."⁷⁹

The Georgia commissioners tested that determination as soon as they arrived. They brought an armed militia detachment, which immediately raised eyebrows, particularly from Hawkins. Secretary of War James McHenry had, after all, made it clear in writing that the treaty proceedings would be secured by a more than adequate guard of U.S. troops, under Gaither's command, and that no additional state troops were necessary. The treaty grounds were situated in the shadow of Gaither's garrison. Hawkins and the others suspected that something more sinister was afoot. He and Gaither both feared "that an attempt would be made, under some pretext, to introduce some militia in arms" during the conference as a way to extort state demands. Georgia representatives had introduced such actions during previous treaty attempts, which were by that point legendary, and Hawkins and the other commissioners wanted no repetition of those past performances. The state guard was not necessary, the U.S. commissioners declared, and should be discharged immediately.⁸⁰ James Hendricks, leading the state

⁷⁸ George Washington to the Senate, June 25, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:560; Benjamin Hawkins to James Seagrove, May 13, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:587–88; Hawkins to James McHenry, May 19, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:588.

⁷⁹ Benjamin Hawkins and George Clymer, Regulations "in order to prevent quarrels, improper behavior, or mal-practices, during the negotiation [at Coleraine]," May 26, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:589; Hawkins to Henry Gaither, May 26, 1796, *ibid.*; Gaither to the U.S. commissioners, May 26, 1796, *ibid.* (quotations).

⁸⁰ U.S. commissioners at Coleraine, May 30, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:590 (quotation); Benjamin Hawkins, George Clymer, and Andrew Pickens to the Georgia commissioners, May 30, 1796, *ibid.*

commission, politely declined to do so, adding choice words about the insulting restrictions on the state guard's presence. This confrontation was the beginning of many between the federal and state commissioners that grew heated at times. Yet Hawkins made it clear that Coleraine was a federal undertaking, not a state one, and the U.S. commissioners were not interested in giving the Georgians control over any aspect.⁸¹

When the council began, the showing was impressive, doing Seagrove's attempts at legitimacy great justice. The six state and federal commissioners were in attendance, Seagrove was present as the superintendent of Indian affairs for the United States, and Gaither and the officers of the garrison sat in as witnesses. Across from the council square sat "twenty-two kings, seventy-five principal chiefs, and one hundred and fifty-two warriors," as well as hundreds of other onlookers, with the White Bird-Tail King of Cusseta appointed chief speaker. Pleased with that strong showing, the American authorities took charge. The U.S. commissioners found the Georgians' talks aggressive and even belligerent, and they pressured the Georgia delegates to tone down their message. In particular, Hawkins challenged their attempts to dwell on Georgia's old treaties and instead reiterated to the chiefs that the point of the conference was to uphold the Treaty of New York. When disagreements between the state commission and the Creek delegation arose, the federal authorities consistently sided with the headmen. This support emboldened the Creek representatives, prompting confrontations of their own with the Georgia commissioners. The headmen systematically rebuffed appeals to older treaties and belittled the state commissioners when they read aloud claims for property damage. When the Creek delegates worried that the state commission would become coercive, Hawkins clarified that the Creeks were under no obligation to discuss the sale of additional lands if they did not want to. "If Georgia has any other business to introduce," the White Bird-Tail King declared, "let them mention it." Otherwise, it was time to move along.⁸² Ultimately, the state's attempt to advance its claims became an embarrassment. The Georgia commissioners left empty-handed and bitter, revealing just how authoritative the federal position had become.⁸³

⁸¹ James Hendricks to the U.S. commissioners, May 31, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:591. For examples of the ongoing disagreements between the two sets of commissioners, see James Jackson and James Simms to the U.S. commissioners, June 24, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:603; and generally the correspondence and commentary, *ASP: IA*, 1:591-94.

⁸² See the records and documents of the Coleraine negotiations, June 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:597-605 (first quotation on 597; second and third quotations on 605).

⁸³ To the Georgia commissioners, Coleraine was a disaster, and they made their unhappiness known on their way out of town. See Benjamin Hawkins, George Clymer, and Andrew Pickens to

Discussions between the federal and Creek commissions, in contrast, continued to demonstrate an evolving relationship. The chiefs, for instance, voiced their irritation about Georgia's encroachments on their hunting and grazing lands and were adamant about stopping those trespasses, pushing for a more assertive federal role in policing local settlers. Early in the conference, in fact, the Creek representatives complained that despite promises "from the President of the United States and his officers, that no encroachments should be made on their hunting grounds, . . . the woods is full of cattle, hogs, and horses," some deep in Creek country, and their hunting grounds "are constantly full of white men, hunters, even going about in the night, hunting deer with fire light." Luckily, while at camp Hawkins and the other U.S. commissioners received copies of the third Intercourse Act, which had just been passed by Congress, on May 19, 1796, and they took the opportunity to discuss the strengthened law with the chiefs. Hawkins was pleased with it, having fielded days of Creek complaints in private, and noted that it would "enable us to do away a number of difficulties, suggested by the Indians, in their private conferences with us," as well as "to impress that confidence of which we have given them repeated assurances, in the uprightness of federal measures." Presenting the legislation the next day in council, he explained that it was conceived "and contains the provision necessary" to answer the headmen's complaints. The U.S. commissioners explained the articles in detail and "that the act was a remedy, through the whole extent of it, for abuses committed by the whites and Indians." The Creek delegation was pleased: "the white people . . . have now adopted measures which are likely to put all their affairs to rights, and carry all their promises into effect."⁸⁴

When deliberations shifted to the boundary line, the Americans insisted on an interpretation of the New York treaty that took more Creek lands than the chiefs believed they had ceded. On the one hand, headmen clung to those lands because they considered the area among their prime hunting grounds. On the other, they also provided a pragmatic argument for shifting the boundary elsewhere. The Americans' proposed boundary was drawn along a small creek, which the headmen complained would not be large or obvious enough to keep Georgians

Jared Irwin, governor of Georgia, July 1, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:612-13; and James Hendricks, James Jackson, and James Simms, "The Protest," June 28, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:613-14. The outcome of the Coleraine council more or less confirmed the Treaty of New York, which denied Georgia the lands it had claimed in previous treaties, as well as the bounties the state had promised its militia units. See Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 80-81.

⁸⁴Record of the negotiations at Coleraine, June 24-25, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:603-6 (first and second quotations on 604; third through seventh quotations on 605).

out. "If we agree to that line," they worried, "the cattle-hunters will be running into our country, and ours into yours, and peace will never be certain." Hawkins, however, was firm, explaining again the new intercourse act and assuring the chiefs "that it will be carried into effect, and that no infractions of it should be committed with impunity." When the chiefs complained about an illegal trapper who was caught on their land, the commissioners countered again with the new law. "Under the law we have explained, you see the case would be different now," they reiterated. The chiefs remained hesitant, convinced that if the boundary line were anything short of completely impassable, it would do nothing to stop illegal crossings, "nor would it be possible for all the soldiers in the world to prevent it, or even to remedy it." The maintenance of strong boundaries, in addition to exclusionary intercourse laws, was just as important to Creeks as it was to Federalists. Indeed, it was only with "utmost reluctance," Alexander Cornells explained, that the Creek delegation agreed to the Treaty of New York line, admitting "that there is no other way to save the rest of the lands, their wives, and their children," and so "induced by considerations of safety," they relented.⁸⁵

Both the Creek headmen and the American commissioners had a hand in shaping a significant expansion of the U.S. military presence in the region, giving meaning to the chiefs' rhetoric. The commissioners broached the subject early, suggesting a larger force along the new boundary line "to show the watchfulness of the Government of the United States, to protect the red people in their rights." In addition to a trading house that was designed to provide goods at a reasonable rate, several military posts were to be spread along both sides of the boundary, ostensibly to provide protection for traders and Creeks alike.⁸⁶ At first the headmen were wary, but as the conference bore on their attitude began to change. Soon the White Bird-Tail King was suggesting suitable locations for those posts on Creek lands, offering the assistance of knowledgeable hunters as well. Two days later he and other headmen returned to the subject. They had talked among themselves, "and the more they reflected" on the situation of the posts, "the better they liked what they had agreed to."⁸⁷ Hawkins and the other

⁸⁵ Record of the negotiations at Coleraine, June 26, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:606-7 (first through fifth quotations on 606; sixth, seventh, and eighth quotations on 607).

⁸⁶ Record of the negotiations at Coleraine, June 23, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:601-2 (quotation on 601). For the development of the trading houses at Coleraine and then at Fort Wilkinson, which were among the first, see Ora Brooks Peake, *A History of the United States Indian Factory System, 1795-1822* (Denver, 1954), esp. 11-12.

⁸⁷ Record of the negotiations at Coleraine, June 27-30, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:607-10 (quotations on 610).

commissioners were pleased with those requests, adding recommendations of their own for McHenry. "We find, in the present temper of the citizens" of the region that it was absolutely necessary for the posts to be built outside Georgia's jurisdiction "and solely under that of the United States." "Without obtaining this" authority, "we saw no prospect of peace on the frontiers." Nearby Georgians were still the largest threat in the region, and the U.S. commissioners, like the Creek headmen, continued to look toward the federal government to protect Creek lands.⁸⁸

Despite moments of strong disagreement, the Creek delegation at Coleraine displayed their approval of the federal government and its officers even as they demonstrated an extreme distaste for their Georgia counterparts. When the American commissioners spoke, the Creek representatives "showed a degree of confidence in, and an approbation of, all that was said to them," and "[t]hey gave an assent to every paragraph." When the Georgia officials talked, in contrast, the Creeks "rarely assented" and "remained generally silent." "The conduct of this State," the U.S. commissioners later reflected, "is viewed by the Indians, as inimical to them," which of course it was. The headmen complained of Georgia's constant "unfairness," had little faith in the state's promises to right past wrongs, and had "no reliance on the promises of the Governor, to do them justice." They expected justice "only from the interposition of the Government of the United States, or the bravery of their young warriors."⁸⁹

By the end of the meetings at Coleraine, enough people believed in the Federalist approach to give it some effect. Creeks and federal authorities were interested in the same things, it seemed, and the two were developing a strong working relationship that was having a dramatic impact on the region, despite Georgia's opposition. The White Bird-Tail King's words were particularly telling. At the close of the conference, he recalled specific examples to explain how far the Creek-American relationship had come. When "Washington's warriors" broke up the Trans-Oconee Republic, for instance, "it was a satisfactory demonstration, that General Washington meant nothing but their [the Creeks'] good: and consequently, we have all determined to confide in him." He then highlighted Seagrove's mission

⁸⁸ Benjamin Hawkins, George Clymer, and Andrew Pickens to James McHenry, July 1, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:610-11 (quotations on 610). Knox had drawn similar conclusions in 1789. See Henry Knox to George Washington, July 7, 1789, *Knox Papers Microfilm*, reel 24.

⁸⁹ Record of the negotiations at Coleraine, June 18, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:597-98 (first through fourth quotations on 598); Benjamin Hawkins, George Clymer, and Andrew Pickens to James McHenry, July 1, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:610-11 (fifth through ninth quotations on 610).

into Creek country. The chief lauded Seagrove's "constant advice to [the Creek] people, to listen to the talks of the agent, as they were the words of Washington himself." His Creek young men, "following this advice, restored peace in their land."⁹⁰ As the White Bird-Tail King's words of encouragement demonstrated, the Federalists' plan to bring stability and coexistence to the Creek-Georgia frontier seemed to be succeeding.

Lots of work remained after the close of the conference. Benjamin Hawkins, who had acquitted himself professionally, replaced James Seagrove as the federal agent for Indian affairs in the Southeast. That appointment changed the local face of the United States in Creek country. Despite being stern toward Creek headmen at times and pushing more strongly for cultural and political changes, Hawkins was also a strong proponent of Creek sovereignty, and he proved to be just as dependable an ally as his predecessor.⁹¹ Soon he was touring Creek country, passing through communities, taking account of the political landscape, and introducing himself. Very quickly he had positive things to report. Around Cusseta, for instance, one headman explained that his people had suffered tremendously at the hands of local settlers. But, he said, "you are now come; I rely entirely on the assurances given by you, that we may remain at home, and be under the protection of the United States." Headmen from across the region embraced the new federal agent, not only because they recognized him from Coleraine, but also, as Hawkins explained to McHenry, "out of the confidence they have in the justice of the U.S."⁹²

Like Seagrove, Hawkins recognized that stability was only possible if both sides of the frontier were controlled. Hawkins was pleased, as he explained to McHenry, about "how capable they [the Creeks] are of drawing a line between our government and that class of our fellow citizens who are unworthy members of it."⁹³ Even with two treaties and

⁹⁰ Records of the negotiations at Coleraine, June 28, 1796, *ASP: IA*, 1:608-9 (quotations on 608).

⁹¹ On Hawkins, see Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent*; Florette Henri, *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1816* (Norman, Okla., 1986); Thomas Foster, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1810* (Tuscaloosa, 2003); and Ethridge, *Creek Country*.

⁹² Benjamin Hawkins, journal entry for February 3, 1797, in C. L. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins* (2 vols.; Savannah, 1980), 1:42-43 (first quotation on 42); Hawkins to James McHenry, January 6, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:62-64 (second quotation on 63). See also Hawkins to Henry Gaither, January 1, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:62; and Hawkins to McHenry, March 1, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:85-87.

⁹³ Benjamin Hawkins to James McHenry, November 28, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:167-68 (quotation on 167).

three intercourse laws, counteracting Georgians' various trespasses remained a struggle. Fortunately, Henry Gaither and Constant Freeman remained in their positions, and James McHenry and the incoming John Adams administration moved forward quickly with implementing the promises made at Coleraine. By January 1797 Gaither was out inspecting possible spots to place the additional garrisons.⁹⁴ Those stations, along with the military men posted there, represented the personal presence of the federal government in Creek-Georgia affairs. When two Creeks applied to see friends on the Ogeechee River, which was probably on Georgia land, Hawkins sent them to the garrison at Beard's Bluff on the Altamaha River with a letter to the commanding officer, "requesting him to give them such directions as the existing state of things may require." Although the region was quite a bit more stable than in 1793, Georgia was still no place for Creek men, and coexistence still pivoted on exclusion. "It has been expressly enjoined on all the Indians now out not to cross the Oconee, on any account whatever," Hawkins reminded Gaither.⁹⁵ The Federalist Indian policy continued to work because Hawkins, Gaither, and others in the area remained committed to controlling interactions between Creeks and Georgians along a strong, well-defined boundary. Even Georgia governor James Jackson, who had been a state commissioner at Coleraine, admitted in 1798 that the federal measures were having a positive effect on the region. During his administration, "not an act against them [the Creeks] on our side . . . has taken place that I have yet heard of."⁹⁶

Standing behind Hawkins was Secretary of War James McHenry, who exhibited a commitment to the Federalist mission that rivaled Knox's own efforts. Reading the Georgia commissioners' complaints after Coleraine, he suggested that Washington write them back "lament[ing] that regulations calculated to preserve confidence in the Indians in the fairness of the intentions of government should have worn a different aspect to those gentlemen." Although he began to develop further Knox's vision for a future plan of civilization, he also shared his predecessor's determination to enforce coexistence through exclusion, providing detailed instructions governing how Hawkins should interpret and implement the newest and much stronger Intercourse Act. The secretary of war

⁹⁴ Benjamin Hawkins, journal entry for January 5, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:35.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Hawkins to Henry Gaither, January 7, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:64–65 (quotations on 64).

⁹⁶ James Jackson to Senators and Representatives [of Georgia] in Congress, February 15, 1798, Folder 12, Box 78, Telamon Cuyler Collection, MS 1170, Series 1 (Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Ga.), and available online, Document TCC218, in Southeastern Native American Documents, 1730–1842 (Digital Library of Georgia), <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/nativeamerican/>.

directed him to keep a book at his post and record every U.S. citizen who passed into Creek country. Only those with a legally issued pass were allowed across the border; those without one were trespassing. Hawkins was to report violators to the governor of Georgia as well as to Constant Freeman, to “signify to the Indians, that such person, being a Citizen of the United States has violated the law and may be expelled by them from their Nation.” Creeks were directed to drive the trespasser and his property out of Creek country—as peacefully as possible of course—and deliver them “to the officer commanding at the nearest post.” Hawkins was required to report any illegal settlement or surveying operation to the nearest federal post as well.⁹⁷ McHenry’s orders to local officers along the Creek-Georgia frontier were clear, demonstrating the continued commitment to the Federalist mission in the Southeast. Protecting Creek rights by policing Georgia citizens—something Hawkins had promised Creek headmen repeatedly at Coleraine—built trust in Creek country and, ultimately, ensured regional stability.

With clear directives, federal officers like Hawkins, Gaither, and Freeman stepped up their enforcement of the Intercourse Acts. Settlers seemed to be constantly buying stolen horses as well as hunting, fishing, driving livestock, or building houses directly in Creek country. Such infractions were a “source of vexation” in Creek country, Hawkins complained to McHenry, and kept “their young men unruly.”⁹⁸ Hawkins had gone to great lengths promising headmen at Coleraine that such incursions would be stopped, and from several accounts it seems neither he nor Gaither shirked their responsibilities. In March 1797, for instance, Hawkins wanted to reassure the chiefs that “the citizens on this frontier have some of them begun to remove their stock on their own lands” and that he anticipated most of that work would soon be completed.⁹⁹ Soon after, Henry Gaither apprehended four Georgians with guns on Creek territory. He had them secured and transported to the jail in Savannah, where they presumably would be charged with

⁹⁷ James McHenry to George Washington, August 11, 1796 (first quotation); McHenry to Washington, August 29, 1796; McHenry to Silas Dinsmoor, August 29, 1796; McHenry to Benjamin Hawkins, September 8, 1796 (second and third quotations), all in Box 14, Series D, James McHenry Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), microfilm, reel 5.

⁹⁸ Benjamin Hawkins to James McHenry, March 1, 1797, in Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, 1:86 (quotations); Richard Thomas to Henry Gaither, April 25, 1797, *Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796–1806*, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, Vol. 9 (Savannah, 1916), 459.

⁹⁹ Benjamin Hawkins to Timothy Barnard, March 7, 1797, in Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, 1:91–92 (quotation on 91).

violating the Intercourse Act of 1796, which must have pleased Creek communities tremendously.¹⁰⁰ Two years later two men were seized and fined for “stealing Indian horses.”¹⁰¹ Another Georgian, William Hodge, was actually tried and convicted of horse theft. His conviction did not sit well with his compatriots, yet the prosecution of horse thefts continued into 1799 and 1800.¹⁰²

By the turn of the nineteenth century, a handful of state officials at least appeared more willing to accept the Federalist plan, while a few even had good things to say about it. State militia commander John Clark wrote Governor Josiah Tattnall Jr. about the required military force “for the purpose of affording the necessary protection to the frontier of Jackson [County] as for preventing our Citizens from crossing the line between us & the Indians.” “It is certainly essential,” Clark continued, “that the depredations and intrusions on both sides should be checked and Government having interposed for this purpose (and in my opinion very properly) there ought to be no time lost in obtaining her wishes.” Passes to move through Creek country also reflected the growing involvement of Georgia officials. One such pass issued by the governor’s office gave specific instructions to its holder, “hereby charging and requiring him to conduct himself toward the Indians as an honest good citizen ought to do in strict conformity with the laws of this State and of the United States.”¹⁰³ At least in a few isolated instances, state authorities exhibited a readiness to accept the Creek presence on the western boundaries that was frankly surprising, an interesting acknowledgment of the Federalist policy’s possibilities.

The strongest examples of Federalist intervention, however, still required countering the desires of Georgia citizens, which was certainly

¹⁰⁰ Richard Thomas to Alexander Cornells, May 18, 1797, *Letters of Benjamin Hawkins*, 463–64. Such acts made men like Gaither incredibly unpopular among Georgians. There were reports early in 1798 that Gaither had gotten into a heated altercation and “had himself rescued from the hands of” a Hancock County sheriff. Governor James Jackson was confident that reports of the altercation were genuine, demonstrating the difficulties still facing federal agents. James Jackson to Senators and Representatives [of Georgia] in Congress, February 15, 1798, Folder 12, Box 78, Cuyler Collection.

¹⁰¹ “Receipt for fifteen dollars from T Johnson, signed by Joshua Smither,” February 9, 1799, Folder 19, Box 4, Cuyler Collection, and online, Document TCC746, Southeastern Native American Documents.

¹⁰² “To the Goaler of the Public Goal [*sic*],” April 10, 1799; Petition on behalf of William Hodge, April 1799; and Motion in case of State vs. William Hodge, April 4, 1799, Folder 5, Box 44; and Account of Peter Hutchinson and Merit Mitchel, July 8, 1799, Folder 19, Box 4, all in Cuyler Collection, and online, Documents TCC374–76, Southeastern Native American Documents.

¹⁰³ John Clark to Josiah Tattnall Jr., May 17, 1802, Folder 1, Box 48, Cuyler Collection (first, second, and third quotations); Passport for William Davies, April 19, 1802, Folder 20, Box 77, Cuyler Collection (fourth quotation); both online, Documents TCC461 and TCC114, Southeastern Native American Documents.

the case after the boundary line was completed. McHenry pressed to have it surveyed quickly and “marked in such a manner as to render them [the boundary markers] not only easy to be seen but as permanently visible as possible.” A certified plat was then to go to Gaither.¹⁰⁴ The difficult task of warning and then removing settlers on Creek lands fell ultimately to state authorities. Scores of Georgians were illegally settled, and evicting them promised to be an emotional and resentful business for area officials. Some settlers applied directly to Hawkins, “with the utmost decency and propriety,” seeking permission to stay. Yet the boundary was clear, and federal officials were “determined to fulfill their engagements with the Indians.”¹⁰⁵ If settlers “neglect the warning,” Hawkins assured Governor John Sevier of Tennessee, “painful as the task may seem to be” military officials “will faithfully execute the trust confided to them” and move the interlopers off forcibly.¹⁰⁶ If area Georgians intended to delay the running of the boundary line under various pretexts “and thereby to give time to the intruders to plant their crops,” Hawkins declared in April 1797, “we will frustrate it.”¹⁰⁷ Sixteen families were reported to be settled on the Creek side early in 1798, and while that number was far below what Hawkins and others had feared, the trespassers still had to be dealt with quickly to give the chiefs confidence. These Georgians had settled and planted according to state laws and were industrious, Hawkins lamented, but they still had to be gone by spring. His position, while aggressive, was necessary. Georgia governor James Jackson protested vigorously, even directly to Congress; however, federal authorities from Hawkins to President Adams were invested in the Federalist approach, and to ensure stability in the Southeast they fulfilled the promises made to the Creeks at Coleraine. Again in the spring of 1800, Georgia renewed its objections to the boundary line, but to no avail.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ James McHenry to Benjamin Hawkins, Andrew Pickens, and [James Wilkinson?], February 7, 1797, Box 14, Series D, McHenry Papers, reel 5.

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin Hawkins to David Henley, April 8, 1797, in Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, 1:99.

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin Hawkins to John Sevier, April 6, 1797, *ibid.*, 1:98–99 (quotations on 99). Although militia commanders were urged to use the utmost “paternal, benevolent, and favorable indulgences towards those unfortunate people, by Granting unto them all the time and suitable opportunity adequate to a preparation for their removal,” nevertheless they would be forced to move. See John Sevier to Captains Sparks and Wade, February 17, 1797, Folder 3, Box 1, Governor’s Papers: John Sevier (Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tenn.), transcription online in Tennessee Documentary History, 1796–1850 (Digital Collections, University of Tennessee Libraries, Knoxville, Tenn.), <http://digital.lib.utk.edu/tdh>.

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin Hawkins to James McHenry, April 11, 1797, in Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, 1:99–100 (quotations on 100).

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Hawkins to James McHenry, February 16, 1798, *ibid.*, 1:172–73; Hawkins to Silas Dinsmoor, August 10, 1798, *ibid.*, 1:216; James Jackson to Senators and Representatives

Ensuring regional stability by restricting the actions of Georgians did not last forever. Indeed, the same year that Georgia renewed its objections to the boundary line, in 1800, Federalists were being voted out of office. Incoming Republicans, beginning with President Thomas Jefferson, did not immediately reverse the old policies of Washington and Knox, but they did begin a slow retreat from the federal government's avowed disinterest in Creek lands.¹⁰⁹ Many things, in fact, did not change. Hawkins remained along the frontier, and he stayed committed to fulfilling Americans' obligations to the Creeks under the Treaty of Coleraine. The Treaty of Fort Wilkinson, which he negotiated in 1802, expanded the U.S. military presence along the border, which Creek chiefs continued to request. The intercourse laws were updated as well. Yet the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson was fundamentally different from its predecessors. Hawkins negotiated for a modest cession of land between the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers at the behest of the Jefferson administration and, ultimately, Georgians. The Treaty of Washington, concluded in 1805, ceded the remaining lands east of the Ocmulgee.¹¹⁰ Those accords, while they provided for many of the same protections against Georgia residents as the Treaties of New York and Coleraine, were requested by Georgians, who were hoping to acquire more lands, and honored by Republicans. Those two treaties, although they were concluded relatively easily, constituted a dramatic shift indeed. They marked the closing of an intriguing period of Federalist coexistence along the Creek-Georgia frontier and the opening of a much more familiar period of Republican dispossession.

[of Georgia] in Congress, February 15, 1798, Folder 12, Box 78, Cuyler Collection; Report of Charles Pinckney to the House of Representatives, 5th Cong., 2nd Sess., May 3, 1798, *ASP: IA*, 1:637; Survey Report of Levin Wailes, May 26, 1800, Folder 23, Box 24, Cuyler Collection, and online, Document TCC944, Southeastern Native American Documents.

¹⁰⁹ The transition from Federalist to Republican policies is illustrated well in Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, chap. 6; and Nichols, *Red Gentlemen and White Savages*, 191–202.

¹¹⁰ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816* (New York, 1999), 215–17.

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