

# Creek Trading House records

## Descriptive Summary

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| <b>Repository:</b>     | Georgia Historical Society               |
| <b>Creator:</b>        | United States. Office of Indian Affairs. |
| <b>Title:</b>          | Creek Trading House records              |
| <b>Dates:</b>          | 1795-1816                                |
| <b>Extent:</b>         | 0.02 cubic feet (1 microfilm roll)       |
| <b>Identification:</b> | MS 1390                                  |

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## Biographical/Historical Note

On March 3, 1795, Congress, exercising its constitutional authority to regulate trade with the native American tribes, appropriated \$50,000 to purchase goods for supplying the Native Americans within the limits of the United States and authorized the sale of these goods under the President's direction. Thus was initiated a venture in government ownership and operation of business that was to last more than a quarter of a century. Underlying this venture were broad considerations of public policy. Through the publicly owned trading house and through a parallel system of licensing private traders, the government hoped to gain greater control over the Native Americans, to exclude British and Spanish subjects from the trade, and to furnish the Native Americans with supplies of good quality at fair prices. The legislative history of the venture after 1795 is long and complicated, partially due to the temporary laws governing the public trading house. The Act of April 18, 1796, authorized the President to establish trading houses on the western and southern frontiers or in the Native Americans' territory, provided for the appointment of the necessary personnel, and appropriated the necessary funds. This act expired in 1799 but was revived and extended by the act of April 30, 1802. The act of April 21, 1806 restated with modifications the principal provisions of the act of 1802 and created the post of Superintendent of Indian Trade as central purchasing officer and general supervisor of the trading houses. The act of May 6, 1822 directed the abolition of the whole trading house system, and during the next two years its affairs were concluded.

Longest lived of all the trading houses, or "factories" as they were often called, was that established in 1795 to serve the Creek Indians on the southern frontier. Instructions issued on November 26, 1795, to Edward Price, the first factor, authorized him to open a trading house at Colerain on the St. Marys River in Georgia. When Price reached Colerain on January 6, 1796, he found United States troops under Captain William Eaton stationed there. Captain Eaton's instructions and those of Price mark the formal beginning of the associations of government trading houses and the Army of the frontier. In July 1797, the Creek Trading House, or Georgia Factory, was moved to Fort Wilkinson on the Oconee River. Early in 1799, Price died suddenly, and on March 15, 1799, Edward Wright was designated factor and directed to proceed expeditiously to Fort Wilkinson. Wright arrived on May 21, 1799, and continued as factor until he was succeeded by Jonathan Halsted on April 1, 1802. Late in September, 1806, the Trading House was transferred to a location known first as Ocmulgee Old Fields and later as Fort Hawkins. After Halsted's death on December 21, 1814, Charles Magnan, the assistant factor, was in charge of the Trading House until Major Daniel Hughes became factor.

Conditions at Fort Hawkins failed to improve after Hughes assumed charge, and in September 1816 the Superintendent of Indian Trade directed the factor to move the Trading House to Fort Mitchell on the west bank of the Chattahoochee and to utilize the Fort Hawkins buildings for storage purposes. Many months elapsed, however, before arrangements for the move were completed, and not until late 1817 was the Fort Mitchell site ready. When the change of location did not result in the expected revival of business, President Monroe authorized the discontinuance and sale of the factory, and in August, 1819, Hughes was notified to arrange the sale. The Native Americans were concerned that the factory would fall into unwelcome hands and urged the Indian Agent David B. Mitchell "very pressingly to purchase it on their account." As a result, after prolonged negotiations, the factory was sold to the Creek Indians on January 29, 1820, for approximately \$4,000.

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## Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of microfilmed copies of the records kept by the National Archives of the Creek Trading House in Georgia. These records were originally held by the Office of Indian Trade, which became the Office of Indian Affairs in 1834; the Office of Indian Affairs later transferred its early records to the National Archives. The collection was microfilmed by the National Archives in 1941.

The records include a letter book, 1795-1816; loose paper, 1795-1813; a book containing copies of bills of exchange, 1799-1802, and an account book, 1816-1820. The loose papers of the trading House consist mainly of letters received, but for the period of the Price and Wright factorship, they also include drafts of letters sent. The letter book contains copies of letters sent, but it is evidence from the presence of considerable chronological gaps that it is incomplete. The includes dates of the more conspicuous of these gaps are January 24-Deembe 19, 1796, February 7, 1799-April 2, 1802, October 1-December 7, 1807, November 19, 1808-February 28, 1809, and July 27, 1813-April 20, 1814. There are very few letters for the year 1914, and only two each for 1815 and 1816. Among the people mentioned in these records are: Lt. Col. Henry Gaither, Indian Agents James Seagrove and Benjamin Hawkins, and James Byers, Jr., the first factor of the Cherokee and Chickasaw Trading House at Tellico Blockhouse.

Though incomplete, these records are greater in quantity and more extensive in chronological coverage than those known to exist for any other factory. They concern chiefly the long activity of the government as entrepreneur in the Native American trade and who the difficulties that attended this effort on the southern frontier. They portray the close relationship between the War Department, the military establishment, and the factory system; between the Creek Trading House and various commissions that negotiated with the Creek Nation; and between the factor and the Indian Agent responsible for Native American affairs in general. Finally, they contribute details to the history of localities.

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## Index Terms

Account books.  
Cherokee Indians.  
Creek Indians.  
Creek Trading House.  
Financial records.  
Gaither, Henry Chew, 1777-1845.  
Hawkins, Benjamin, 1754-1816.  
Indians of North America--Georgia.  
Indians of North America--Government relations.  
Letter books.  
Microfilms.  
Trading posts--North America.  
United States. Office of Indian Affairs.

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## Location of Originals

Original records in the National Archives.

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## Physical and Technical Access Restrictions

A microfilm reader is required to access this collection.

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Unknown.

### Preferred Citation

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## Acquisition Information

Unknown.

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## Restrictions

### Access Restrictions

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## Container List

### roll

1 Roll 1: X-1390-01

Item 1: Introduction

Item 2: Instructions to Edward Price, 1795 November 26

Item 3: Instructions to Capt. William Eaton, 1795 November 26

Item 4: Records of the Creek Trading House, letter book, 1795-1816