

Bad Neighbors:

A Look into the Complex Relations within the Creek Nation through the Acorn Whistler Crisis  
of 1752

Brooke Hamilton

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Gunshots blared and chants echoed in the distance, awakening the sleepy town of Savannah in the summer of 1749.<sup>1</sup> Frightened and confused, the people of Savannah were startled by the commotion and summoned their local militia to investigate. The militia men returned, and the citizens of Savannah were astounded with their findings. Their men escorted over one hundred Lower Creek Indians into their town, a group who could not understand why their arrival startled the colonists.<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Mary Bosomworth, citizens of Georgia and two ingenious manipulators, had invited the Lower Creeks to a conference, “forgetting” to inform the Savannah government of the event they were to host. Invited to a conference by the Bosomworths, the Creek headmen arrived expecting to be showered with gifts by the Georgia government.<sup>3</sup> Instead, they were given a headache and a front row seat to the 1740s version of a reality television drama.

The conference was part of a shady scheme designed by the Bosomworths to trick the Georgia Trustees into giving them land. Mary Bosomworth, a half-Creek/half-British woman, asserted her “rights” to ownership of the Creek land located along the banks of the Altamaha River. Her claim contradicted Creek values of communal land ownership, creating tension amongst not just the Georgians, but among the different Lower Creek communities as well. Screaming matches, drunken debauchery, and several “bad talks” occurred throughout the conference.<sup>4</sup> Mary, Thomas, and Mary’s cousin Malatchi, Coweta headman, threatened that the Creeks would go to war if their demands were not fully met.<sup>5</sup> After a week of madness, the Creeks were dismissed and sent home by a shook up and frightened Georgia government, ending

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<sup>1</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 133.

<sup>2</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 135.

<sup>3</sup> *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*. Vol. 25; edited by Allen D. Candler and Lucian Lamar Knight (Atlanta, Georgia: Chas. P. Byrd, State Printer, 1915) 414.

<sup>4</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 135.

<sup>5</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 143.

the impromptu conference without a solution or a promise of peace. However, a Lower Creek headman returned a few short days later, a man by the name of Alleck.

As the Creeks began to journey home, Alleck, the headman of Cusseta and husband of three Yuchi women, abandoned the group and marched back to Savannah. His fellow headmen probably questioned why he and two other Yuchi headmen turned around. The Indians already received their presents, the “conference” was over, and there was no incentive to return back to Savannah. For Alleck however, there was. Alleck’s property neighbored the tract of land that the Bosomworth’s claimed to own.<sup>6</sup> If Alleck did not return to Savannah three things would happen. First, he would be forced to forever live next door to Thomas and Mary Bosomworth, a couple notorious for causing trouble in the colony. Second, Alleck would be turning his back on Creek culture and values of communal land ownership. Third, an unnecessary war would break out between the Creeks and the Georgia colonists, which would disrupt trade, damage property and potentially cause the death of numerous individuals. From Alleck’s perspective, Mary was a traitor, trying to manipulate both the Creeks and the British for personal gain, not regarding the grave consequences it would have on the Creek nation as a whole.

When Alleck entered the office of the Georgia Trustees’, President William Stephens, was probably bewildered and frightened by Alleck’s presence. President Stephens and the other Georgia Trustees began to listen intently as Alleck shared with them critical information about the character of Mary and Thomas Bosomworth. Alleck described the erratic traits the Bosomworths possessed, which the trustees had seen that week, explaining that it was all part of an act. According to the Trustees journal, “Three Chiefs from the Euchee Town in the Lower

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<sup>6</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 231.

Creeks with a Party of their People...[and] gave a very Friendly Talk” with the Georgia officials.<sup>7</sup> Alleck, being among the three, explained to the Georgians that the Creeks desired peace, not war, and that Mary Bosomworth “sent a great many bad talks to the Indians against white people,” and they were words that just fell onto deaf ears among the various Creek headmen.<sup>8</sup> Alleck explained that Malatchi had no power to grant lands, because lands were the property of the whole nation,” revealing the ridiculousness of the Bosomworths’ and Malatchi’s schemes.<sup>9</sup> This information assuaged the Georgian officials’ fear of eminent war with the Creeks.<sup>10</sup> Through this, Alleck and his fellow Yuchis gained favor with the Georgia Trustees and squashed the schemes of the Bosomworths, thus deepening the rift between the two parties.

From the perspective of the Europeans, all Indian tribes functioned as one cohesive unit. Europeans believed the Indians thought the same, reasoned the same, and their tribes were structured the same. The events in 1749 were just the beginning of an outpouring of conflict within the Creek nation, and the dysfunction between the Bosomworths and Alleck carried over into South Carolina in 1752. On April 1, 1752, the bodies of six Cherokee men were discovered on the lawn of Governor James Glenn. The deaths were caused by a skirmish that had occurred earlier that day between a group of Lower Creek and Cherokee men. Skirmishes similar to these were common throughout the colonies, however, this one event turned out to be extraordinary. The deaths of the Cherokee men were blamed on one individual, Acorn Whistler, an Upper Creek headman from Little Okfuskee. Acorn Whistler, who was not even in Charleston on April 1, was put to death a few months later, serving as the sacrifice to cleanse the sins of the Creek

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<sup>7</sup> *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*. Vol. 25; edited by Allen D. Candler and Lucian Lamar Knight (Atlanta, Georgia: Chas. P. Byrd, State Printer, 1915) 419.

<sup>8</sup> *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*. Vol. 25; edited by Allen D. Candler and Lucian Lamar Knight (Atlanta, Georgia: Chas. P. Byrd, State Printer, 1915). 419.

<sup>9</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 144.

<sup>10</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 144.

Indians.<sup>11</sup> The common question regarding this situation is how? How did an innocent man have to suffer for the actions of others? The answer is simple, years of conflict between neighboring tribes and individuals within the Creek nation caused Acorn Whistler's death. After the skirmish, conflicts between neighboring communities within the Creek Nation arose, struggling to make a decision on how to solve the "crisis" from April 1. Two neighboring communities in particular, the Coweta and Cusseta towns in Lower Creek territory, were constantly at odds with each other, and disagreed over the Acorn Whistler Crisis. Mary and Thomas Bosomworth, individuals connected to the Coweta community, and Alleck, headman of the Cussetas, came into great disagreement over the conflict.

The relationship between Alleck and the Bosomworths was more than a rivalry between dysfunctional neighbors, but was deeply rooted in years of tensions between the neighboring tribes of Coweta and Cussetas. These two sets of "bad neighbors" were the cause of the conflict that led to the death of Acorn Whistler. By first analyzing the communities of Coweta and Cusseta within the Creek Nation, one is able to see how the rivalry between the two communities caused tension among the Creeks. Both communities wanted to control the trade and to be the most powerful community in the Lower Creek Nation. The second set of "bad neighbors" that must be analyzed are Alleck and the Bosomworths. Their poor relationship is the result of the Coweta-Cusseta conflict, and reflects the issues between the two communities. Through investigating the relationships of these two sets of "bad neighbors" it is apparent that the conflicts and connections between the Cowetas-Cussetas and Alleck and the Bosomworths reveal how intra-tribal relations within the Creeks played a large factor in the death of Acorn Whistler.

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<sup>11</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 8.

The Creek Nation is composed of several different groups. First it is split into two groups, Upper and Lower Creek, and second, both groups are comprised of individual communities that have their own specific set of values and beliefs. According to Bryan Rindliesch, one of the great failures of the Europeans was that they misunderstood this structure, constantly attempting “to lump Creek people together to simplify cross-culture interactions and exchanges.”<sup>12</sup> Opposite of what the Europeans believed, Creek society was essentially a “landscape of conflicting town interest that superseded a unified national interest.”<sup>13</sup> Alliances within the Creek Nation between the different communities were very “now” based, focusing on what the tribe specifically needed at the moment and collaborating to solve any issues at hand. Creek politics functioned by creating “alliances with mutually interested Creek villages to attain a specific political and/or economic interest.”<sup>14</sup> The Creeks were able to connect to each other through regional associations, intra-Creek communication and trade networks, kinship and clan ties, shared origin stories and traditions. Ironically though, Daniel Richter points out that the “factional leaders independently cultivated ties to particular European colonies.”<sup>15</sup> These “factions” prevented any of the European nations from gaining sole control over the Creek Nation, and protected the Creeks from “political as well as economic dependence on powerful European neighbors.”<sup>16</sup> The dysfunction between the Cowetas and the Cussetas is a result of the two different “factions” or communities’ competing for favoritism from the British. For both the

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<sup>12</sup> Rindliesch, Bryan “Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution.” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 582.

<sup>13</sup> Rindliesch, Bryan “Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution.” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 582.

<sup>14</sup> Rindliesch, Bryan “Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution.” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 582.

<sup>15</sup> Richter, Daniel K. “Native American History; Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century.” *The world turned upside-down; the state of eighteenth-century American studies at the beginning of the twenty-first century*. (2001): 279.

<sup>16</sup> Richter, Daniel K. “Native American History; Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century.” *The world turned upside-down; the state of eighteenth-century American studies at the beginning of the twenty-first century*. (2001): 280.

Cowetas and the Cussetas, using the British to get what they want was not out of the ordinary, and was typical to use another people to see one's desires come to fruition.<sup>17</sup>

In the case of the Acorn Whistler crisis of 1752, the poor relationship between the Cowetas and the Cussetas was significant because the British did not understand why all of the Creeks were not of one mindset. They could not comprehend that like any nation, they were a diverse group of people with various interests. This made it difficult for negotiations with the Creek nation during the Acorn Whistler crisis, because in order for it to succeed, this set of bad neighbors would have to find common ground. In order for the two groups to find "common ground" either the Cowetas or the Cussetas were going to have to "give-in" to the other, becoming the "loser."

Compromise between the Cowetas and the Cussetas was difficult because the two communities had a history filled with feud and foul play. In 1718 the two groups made the "Coweta Resolution, pledging to negotiate with neutrality and peace with one another. Those were only mere words, and true peace between the Cowetas and Cussetas never happened. Instead from that point on, the Cowetas and Cussetas were "neighbor[s] and rival[s]" with each other, constantly trying to gain the upper hand of influence with the European traders and among other Creeks.<sup>18</sup> Rindleisch writes that "the Cusseta's leaders increasingly distanced themselves from the Cowetas despite shared histories of intercommunity, diplomacy, trade, and kinship."<sup>19</sup> These two neighbors disagreed over a myriad of issues and each had their own agenda. During the period after the Coweta Resolution, the two groups invested great amounts of energy into

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<sup>17</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan "Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution." *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 582.

<sup>18</sup> Dubcovsky, Alejandra "One Hundred Sixty-One Knots, Two Plates and One Emperor: Creek Information Networks in the Era of the Yamasee War" *Ethnohistory* 59: 3 (2011) 501

<sup>19</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan "Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution." *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 581

developing their relationships with European traders. The Cowetas and Cussetas wanted power, and both especially wanted favor with British Charles Town and South Carolina.<sup>20</sup>

Gaining favor with the Europeans was critical for the Cowetas and the Cussetas because it gave their community an advantage over the other. According to Steven Hahn, one of the primary ways the Creek communities gained this advantage was through trade commissions with the British.<sup>21</sup> Hahn writes that “aspiring chiefs and warriors, for example, may have used the commissions as a symbolic marker of their contact with the colonies.”<sup>22</sup> Traditionally among the Creeks, gaining “exotic items” from the “outside world” gave them great respect because it demonstrated their “connection to the outside world and their mastery of a wide array of esoteric knowledge.”<sup>23</sup> Seeking presents and items from the British, French and Spanish traders was not out of the ordinary for the Creeks, because possession of these items revealed favoritism from the foreign powers, and symbolized an alliance with these nations.

Seeking favoritism with the South Carolina government was advantageous for a more “practical reason” as well.<sup>24</sup> Trade commissions with the British were highly sought after amongst the different Creek communities, especially the Cowetas and the Cussetas. If a community gained a commission, the headmen of said town had the power to “speak as legitimate voices in Charles Town and to appoint friends and family members to subordinate

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<sup>20</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>21</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>22</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>23</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>24</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

positions of authority.”<sup>25</sup> By the time of the Acorn Whistler crisis, the British and Creeks were heavily intertwined with one another. Commissioned positions within the British government became “heritable property by passing their British-appointed titles from one generation to the next.”<sup>26</sup> The Cowetas and Cussetas competed for favor with the British government because once they held such positions they had an advantage over other tribes. The benefits of these positions made them irresistible and highly sought after, thus giving the British the upper hand. If at any moment a community fell out of favor or “chiefs proved to be unreliable allies to the English” the positions were easily replaced, because “more amenable souls were usually waiting in the wings.”<sup>27</sup> The Acorn Whistler crisis greatly affected both the Cowetas and the Cussetas because their position with the British rode on the outcome of the situation. Both competed with one another for trade, each possessing a different route that was critical for receiving goods from the British. According to Rindleisch, the primary goal of the Cussetas was to “divest their town agendas of Coweta input,” due to Cusseta headmen’s fears regarding “Coweta’s political dominance among the Lower Creeks.”<sup>28</sup> Whichever community “won” would gain favor with the British, thus making them a dominant force amongst the Lower Creeks. Power is what both communities desired, and they fought for it through gaining access to trade routes and presents.

The messy relationship between the Cowetas and Cussetas spilled over into the personal relationships between members of these communities. Returning to the events of 1752, one is able to see the effects of the dysfunctional relationship between the Cowetas and Cusseta’s,

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<sup>25</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>26</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>27</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 125.

<sup>28</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan “Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution.” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 584

through Alleck and the Bosomworths. Alleck was a Cusseta headman, and Mary Bosomworth, was a half-Coweta, half-British woman. Her husband Thomas was born in England and came to South Carolina as a minister, making for an interesting dynamics of people. The two parties' property bordered each other's, causing Alleck and the Bosomworths to consistently cross paths. The Bosomworth's wanted ownership of a parcel of land on the Altamaha River for trade purposes, and Alleck seemed to always be the one individual standing in their way. Alleck owned the land beside their desired tract on the Altamaha River, and had established a settlement there since earlier in the eighteenth century.<sup>29</sup> The Bosomworths were constantly opposed by Alleck, who went to great lengths in 1749, and again in 1752 to speak against their rights to that land and their legitimacy in the Creek nation.

On April 1 of 1752, Alleck was in South Carolina, traveling to visit Lieutenant Governor William Bull on his plantation, the same day the Osochi Creeks attacked a small band of Cherokees.<sup>30</sup> Upon receiving notice of the attack, Lieutenant Governor Bull instructed his son to send a letter to Governor Glenn, writing

“My father desires me to inform your Excellency that when Alec, the Creek Indian, comes to his House he will acquaint him with the Resolutions of this Government relating to Indians coming to Charles Town, that he will endeavor to acquaint him in such Manner as to avoid disquieting him, and advise him to stay at Sheldon till he sends to your Excellency and receives your answer”<sup>31</sup>

Lieutenant Governor Bull had received word that the attack had been launched by a group of Lower Creeks, and wanted to ensure Alleck that he was not being suspected for participating in

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<sup>29</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 231.

<sup>30</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 55.

<sup>31</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970) 235.

the attacks, and inform him so he could pass the message along to other Creeks as well.<sup>32</sup> Upon his arrival, Alleck was probably greeted by Lieutenant Governor Bull, and was immediately informed of the April 1 attack, and Alleck thought nothing more of it. Skirmishes between the Creeks and the Cherokees had been occurring for several years, which frustrated the British, whose "ambitious intent" since the 1720s had been to "end the Cherokee-Creek War."<sup>33</sup> However, the constant conflict between the Cherokees and Creeks made the April 1 attack seem nothing extraordinary, and probably Alleck did not think twice about it. Instead, he spent time with the Upper Creeks who were Little Okfuskee Headman, from Acorn Whistler's town. The Upper Creeks were awaiting the arrival of Acorn Whistler, so they would have known as well that the attack against the Creeks on April 1 would have been launched by the Lower Creeks.

The Bosomworth's found out about the April 1 Creek attack a few weeks after it happened, while in Charleston preparing to sail to England.<sup>34</sup> Upon receiving word of the attacks, the Bosomworths saw it as an opportunity to gain their hearts desires: land, power and revenge.<sup>35</sup> They then decided the "best route to London lay through Coweta," postponing their trip to England.<sup>36</sup> The events that followed suit were what David Cockran would call "the epitome of bosomworthism," due to the fact that Mary and Thomas were willing to see to the death of an innocent man, simply for wealth and social prestige.<sup>37</sup> The Bosomworth's claimed that Acorn Whistler, a Creek headman, was entirely responsible for the attacks, and in order to

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<sup>32</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970).

<sup>33</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 180.

<sup>34</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 220.

<sup>35</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 222.

<sup>36</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 220.

<sup>37</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 135.

restore peace among the Cherokees and Creeks, Acorn Whistler had to die. Whistler, who many knew had been traveling from a trip to Lieutenant Governor Bull's estate, was not even near the attacks, yet had become the Bosomworths ticket to favor with the South Carolina Government. For the Bosomworth's the April 1 attack was a "dream come true" granting them a second chance to make up for their embarrassing performance at their "conference" in Savannah just three years prior. The Bosomworths had an opportunity to not only gain influence over the South Carolina government, but to restore their reputation among the Creeks as well. Immediately Mary and Thomas wrote to the South Carolina government to have Mary appointed as an interpreter for Governor Glenn to help resolve the Creek-Cherokee skirmish to prevent war from erupting between the two nations in South Carolina.<sup>38</sup> From this, the Bosomworth's hoped to receive a tremendous amount of money, gifts and property. After several unsuccessful attempts, Thomas Bosomworth finally received a commission from the South Carolina government to serve as the agent to the Indians in 1752, with Mary as his interpreter.<sup>39</sup> With revenge as their motivation, the floodgates had opened for an outpouring of drama and disaster.

The Bosomworths began their death-campaign for Acorn Whistler in Coweta, the town Mary partially belonged to and the home of her cousin, Malatchi. The goal of the Bosomworths was to convince the Creeks that the death of one single Little Okfuskee would suffice in preventing the deaths several other Creeks at the hands of the Cherokees. One of the greatest frustrations of the British living in the North American colonies was the revenge killings that existed within the Creek Nation and among other Indian Nations as well. In the Creek Nation, Hahn explains that

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<sup>38</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970) 264.

<sup>39</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 220.

"When a murder occurs, for example, the victim's family reserves the right to avenge the death of its kinsman. This method of justice has the potential to spiral into a fratricidal war of cyclical revenge, but the Creeks lived in what might be called a provincial or small-town world that was intimately bound by ties of kinship and in which persons had much face-to-face contact with their peers"<sup>40</sup>

In order to gain their payment from the British, the Bosomworths had to convince all of the Creeks that Acorn Whistler had to die. This meant they would have to persuade the family of Acorn Whistler to abandon this policy, while also ensuring the different communities within the Creek Nation agreed to do the same. Not an easy task, however, the Bosomworths were not too concerned when they arrived in Coweta to begin their assassination assignment. However, on July 27, 1752 a certain neighbor of theirs paid a visit to Coweta as well, Alleck of Cusseta.<sup>41</sup>

Alleck, who had been in South Carolina at the time, not only knew the truth, but was one of the Bosomworth's greatest opponents. Much to their dismay, on July 27, 1752, Alleck arrived into the town of Coweta to share the true story of Acorn Whistler's innocence.<sup>42</sup> Alleck, who had visited Lieutenant Governor Bull within two days after the departure of Acorn Whistler, knew about the attacks, and would have been informed that the Governor publicly stated that Acorn and his followers were innocent.<sup>43</sup> In order to discredit Alleck and his story, the Bosomworths had to create a tale of their own.

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<sup>40</sup> Hahn, Steven. *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670-1763*. (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 147.

<sup>41</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 270

<sup>42</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 270

<sup>43</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 235

When Alleck arrived in Coweta, he began to share what the Bosomworth's claimed were "stories" that had been "told by the white people to report" from Georgia.<sup>44</sup> Alleck's goal, like it had been in Georgia in 1749, was to ensure that the Bosomworth's lies were not believed and that Acorn Whistler was not punished for a crime he did not commit. Unlike in 1749, the Bosomworths were prepared to battle Alleck, determined to defeat the headman from Cusseta. To combat their neighbor, Mary began to spread a story of her own. In his journal, Thomas wrote about that "one Ellick, an Indian.... Had stole[n] three of my own horses from the Settlements in Georgia," and had also "brought up to the Nation with him and several other Lies."<sup>45</sup> In continuation with what Dr. Joshua Piker describes as an "extraordinary campaign of character assassination," the Bosomworth's forced Alleck to "restore the Horses and acknowledge himself as a Lier both before the Indians and white people of which he was very much ashamed."<sup>46</sup> Through establishing Alleck as a liar, the Bosomworths knew that was the only way to assassinate the credibility about their Cusseta neighbor.

The campaign against Alleck did not stop there. That August the Bosomworth's continued the defamation of Alleck, discrediting his story wherever it had been told. In meeting with the Pallachuaskelas, Thomas Bosomworth wrote that "Elleck when he was in liquor" gave a "talk" stating that what the Bosomworth's were promoting was "very bad Talks, but they were not to mind them" and instead should listen to Alleck's story once he was sober because "he had brought a good Talk from the Governor to make all straight."<sup>47</sup> Once Thomas Bosomworth had

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<sup>44</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 270

<sup>45</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 270

<sup>46</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 270

<sup>47</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 285

started the stories, Alleck's credibility began to quickly diminish among the various Lower Creek headmen present in Coweta. Thomas and Mary continued to make assertions questioning why Alleck who "called himself a Head Man demean himself so much as to tell Lyes in order to screen a Man that deserved the greatest Punishment" for troubling the entire Creek Nation.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the lies that the Bosomworths continued to spread about Alleck, the Bosomworths could not shake him because Alleck continued to oppose their stories and pursue the truth. Angered by the fact that Alleck refused to listen to his "Talks" unless another white interpreter was present, Thomas wrote in his journal in anger that:

"I must observe that, that ungrateful Villain Ellick, who has received so many distinguishing Favours from the English has been one of the chief Instruments made Use of in opposing every thing I have done...But Captain Ellick who is a very great Man in the Opinion of some.... the real Truth is, he is thought of so little Consequence in the nation that he is never asked or consulted upon any Public Affairs."<sup>49</sup>

The hatred and determination to kill the reputation of Alleck is puzzling. Although they had prior conflicts with Alleck before, the Bosomworth's had poor relationships with numerous individuals besides Alleck. However, they chose only Alleck, the "headman with a sterling reputation and a glittering future" to pile their "sustained verbal abuse" onto him.<sup>50</sup> Their reasoning was more than just a need to settle an old score, but instead was critical to protect the Bosomworth's reputation. Up to that point, the Bosomworths had been using other Creeks, such as Malatchi and word of mouth to plant lies regarding Acorn Whistler and spread propaganda of

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<sup>48</sup> 2 *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 286

<sup>49</sup> 2 *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 98

<sup>50</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013)

Acorn Whistler's guilt.<sup>51</sup> If Alleck's story was seen as the truth, then the Bosomworth's would have to personally defend their story, and openly play the role as the accuser of Acorn's guilt, instead of using others to spread their lies.<sup>52</sup> Having learned their lesson from their experiences in Savannah, Georgia in 1749, destroying Alleck's credibility seemed to be the simple, effective method to prevent their plans from being foiled.

The tenacity which the Bosomworth's possessed towards the defamation of Alleck is deeper than just an expression of frustrations with a poor neighbor. It is a reflection of the rivalry between the Cowetas and Cussetas, and the two communities' intense struggle for power among the Creeks. Kinship and relationships were critical in the Creek nation, making politics messy and hard to follow. The Cowetas and Cussetas, being long-time rivals, had a very messy relationship, which determined the individual relationships of its community members.

Mary Bosomworth, understanding the complexities of Creek politics, used her various connections to work to her advantage in the murder of Acorn Whistler.<sup>53</sup> Mary Bosomworth's cousin was a Creek named Malatchi, who was the headman of the Cowetas and a person of great influence. In both the Savannah incident in 1749 and again in the murder of Acorn Whistler, Mary boasted of her strong connections to the Coweta tribe. Mary claimed to be the "queen" of the Coweta tribe.<sup>54</sup> However, Mary was also a descendant of another Creek community, the Osochis. The Osochis were the Lower Creek tribe that was the original perpetrators Governor

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<sup>51</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 234

<sup>52</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 234

<sup>53</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 234

<sup>54</sup> Cockran, David H. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) 135.

Glenn held responsible for the April 1 attacks on the Cherokees<sup>55</sup>. Ironically, although Mary did not claim association the Osochis tribe, she managed to shift the blame onto Acorn Whistler, who was not just from another community, but was an Upper Creek as well. Additionally, The Bosomworth's knew that by choosing to associate with the Cowetas, they would have a lot more leverage and influence over the Lower Creeks, based on their reputation of power they had among the Creek nation.<sup>56</sup> The Bosomworths were able to successfully set themselves to be in a position of authority, and to protect her Osochis relations.<sup>57</sup>

Besides his knowledge of the truth and his Cusseta heritage, the Bosomworths had to eliminate Alleck because of his relationships with other Creek communities. The Bosomworths may have had the commission from Governor Glenn to prevent all-out war amongst the Indians; they were not easily accepted by all of the Creek towns. The Coweta-Cusseta rivalry, big in itself, was much greater based on the relations that the two towns had with other Creek communities as well. It was pivotal that the Bosomworths eliminate Alleck because he not only was the headman of the Cussetas, but was of the Yuchis as well. The alliance between the Yuchis and the Cussetas was incredibly strong, dating back to the 1720s.<sup>58</sup> Both the Yuchis and the Cussetas were "two of the three Creek communities" that chose to ally with the British instead of making peace with the Spanish-allied Yamasee in the 1720s.<sup>59</sup> The Cowetas however, chose to preserve their relationship with the Spanish, thus pitting themselves against both the

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<sup>55</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 55, 114.

<sup>56</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 228.

<sup>57</sup> Piker, Joshua. *The Four Deaths of Acorn Whistler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013) 228.

<sup>58</sup> Piker, Joshua. "To the Backcountry and back again," *The Yuchi's Search for Stability in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast*, ed. Jason Baird Jackson (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 95

<sup>59</sup> Piker, Joshua. "To the Backcountry and back again," *The Yuchi's Search for Stability in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast*, ed. Jason Baird Jackson (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 195

Cusseta and Yuchi communities. The Yuchi's loyalty to the British went even a step further than the Cussetas. To demonstrate their pledge of allegiance to the British they presented a "British agent with scalps from a Spaniard and a Yamasee."<sup>60</sup> The Cusseta-Yuchi ties were also strengthened by "Captain Ellick, [who] married three Uchee wives."<sup>61</sup> Thus, making the tarnishing of Alleck's reputation that much more pivotal, because if the Bosomworths eliminated Alleck, they also eliminated the Yuchees.

This is significant in regards to the Acorn Whistler crisis in that the Yuchis community was located just a few miles from Sheldon, the home of Lieutenant Governor Bull.<sup>62</sup> Due to their close proximity to Lieutenant Governor Bull's plantation, the Yuchis would have been able to serve as witnesses to Acorn Whistler's whereabouts during the April attacks.<sup>63</sup> Both the Yuchis and the Cussetas had possessed stronger ties to the Europeans for the majority of the eighteenth century, and the Bosomworth's saw destroying Alleck as an opportunity to discredit both of these communities of people. Not only would they be able to seek revenge on their personal and regional rivals, they would be able to discredit the Yuchis and the Cussetas in the eyes of the British in South Carolina. Then they hoped the Cowetas would gain favor with the South Carolina government, giving the Coweta tribe, headed by Malatchi the upper-hand with the Europeans. Not only would it place the Coweta's in the dominant position, and due to Mary Bosomworth's kinship to Malatchi, would benefit her and Thomas greatly.

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<sup>60</sup> Piker, Joshua. "To the Backcountry and back again, *The Yuchi's Search for Stability in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast*," ed. Jason Baird Hackson (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 195

<sup>61</sup> Piker, Joshua. "To the Backcountry and back again, *The Yuchi's Search for Stability in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast*," ed. Jason Baird Hackson (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 195

<sup>62</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 235.

<sup>63</sup> *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1750-1765*, Vol. 1; edited by William L. McDowell, Jr. (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1958, 1970). 235

The question is, why would Alleck allow his reputation to be tarnished to protect Acorn Whistler, when it was inevitable that someone's life would have to be sacrificed in order to bring about peace? There are two specific reasons, the first of which has to do with trade. The ability to trade was critical in gaining favor with the South Carolina government, and Alleck would have shared his story in order to try to prevent the Bosomworth's and Malatchi from gaining the upper hand for the Cowetas. For the Cussetas, one of their greatest fears was the Cowetas controlling the eastern trading path.<sup>64</sup> The eastern path was critical to economic and political power because was the key "trade connection between Charleston and Creek Country."<sup>65</sup> The Cussetas were located in a place in which they were positioned with "quick access to British trade routes," control over the distribution of European goods, and "political prestige due to their close proximity to the eastern seaboard."<sup>66</sup> However, they feared the "fact that Coweta headmen largely controlled that diplomatic and economic highway" through the earlier part of the eighteenth century.<sup>67</sup> The Cussetas, who had spent a good portion of the first half of the eighteenth century trying to gain control over the eastern trade path, knew that if the Bosomworth's, Malatchi, and the Cowetas gained favor with the South Carolina government, trade would be tough for them. In order for Alleck to protect the interests of the Cusseta people, he had to share his story regarding Acorn Whistler and had no choice to not put his reputation and dignity on the line for his community.

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<sup>64</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan "Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution." *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013):583

<sup>65</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan "Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution." *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 583

<sup>66</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan "Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution." *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 584

<sup>67</sup> Rindleisch, Bryan "Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution." *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013):583-584

There is one last key reason as to why Alleck had to intervene in the Acorn Whistler crisis. One of the ways the Cussetas tried to prevent the Cowetas from having total control of the eastern trading path from Charleston to Creek Country, is through an alliance with the Okfuskees of the Upper Creek. Since the 1720s, the Cowetas and the Okfuskees had been in conflict with one another. The Cowetas were encouraging the Okfuskees to rebel against the British in 1723, yet “the Okfuskees rejected efforts by Lower Creek headmen from Coweta.”<sup>68</sup> They instead traveled to Charleston to solidify relationships with the South Carolina government, thus pinning the Okfuskees against the Cowetas, and joining the side of the Cussetas.<sup>69</sup> The relationship between the two communities proved to be necessary in order to prevent the Cowetas from gaining control of the entire path. This alliance was beneficial for the Cusseta’s political interests and economic desires as well because they were able to contain the Cowetas sphere of influence. The headmen of Okfuskee “exhibited similar concerns for the eastern path,” inferring that they too, were probably worried about the influence that the Cowetas had on the eastern trade path.<sup>70</sup> For Alleck, preventing the death of Acorn Whistler was not a crusade for justice, but an effort to protect a political alliance. Without a headman, the community of Little Okfuskee would be lost politically, creating strife and weakening their abilities to trade effectively with the British. It was essential that Alleck keep the Okfuskee people as strong as possible because without their influence, the Cowetas could take greater control over the Eastern Trade Path, leaving the Okfuskees and the Cussetas with nothing at all.

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<sup>68</sup> Piker, Joshua. *Okfuskee: A Creek Town in Colonial America*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004) 26.

<sup>69</sup> Piker, Joshua. *Okfuskee: A Creek Town in Colonial America*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004) 27.

<sup>70</sup> Rindfleisch, Bryan “Our Lands Are Our Life and Breath: Coweta, Cusseta, and the Struggle for Creek Territory and Sovereignty during the American Revolution.” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 584

For the Bosomworth's selecting Acorn Whistler to be their sacrificial offering to the British in Charleston made perfect sense. It frustrated their neighbor Alleck and harmed opposing communities of the Cowetas. Choosing an Okfuskee headman was an easy target because of the poor relations between the Cowetas and Cussetas. For the Bosomworths, targeting Acorn Whistler was simple because of his Okfuskee heritage, and it would be attainable to convince the Cowetas and their allies to side against Acorn. Several years' worth of conflict between the two groups made it easy for the Cowetas to comply and to not care whether the Bosomworths were being truthful or not. Not only by doing so did the Bosomworth's save the real perpetrators, the Osochis and kin of Mary, but they were able to hurt an ally of the Cusseta's whom Mary's Coweta cousin Malatchi held much disdain for. Alleck's decision to try to save Acorn Whistler's life when put into this context is not just a demonstration of good character, but is an attempt to save the reputation of his beloved Cusseta community, and prevent the Cowetas from gaining the upper hand.

Both the conflicts between Alleck and the Bosomworths during the Savannah Incident and the death of Acorn Whistler are reflections of a deeper rooted conflict between the Cowetas and the Cussetas of the Creek Nation. At first glance one might chalk up the circumstances as bad neighbors seeking revenge on one another, but it is so much more than that. Through analyzing the relationship between Alleck and the Bosomworths primarily through the years 1749 and 1752, one is able to step into the dynamic world of the Creek Nation. For many Europeans, it was hard to not see the Native tribes as single-minded nations, who act, think and feel the same way on various political and economic issues. The British government soon found out through the experiences of the Georgia and The South Carolina governments dealing with the relationship between Alleck and the Bosomworths that all Creeks were not of one mind. The

death of Acorn Whistler, although tragic, brings to light the dysfunction between the Coweta and Cusseta communities, along with exposing the difficulty that Native Tribes had with commitment and loyalty to anyone besides their selves. Both of these tribes were dedicated and loyal to the interests of their communities, being very consumed by what is going on within their communities, and often forgetting about the outside world. Both the Savannah incident and the death of Acorn Whistler prove that these were more than just fluke events that happened within Creek society, but were repercussions of a century long conflict. Acorn was forced to lose his life, and Alleck, saw the death of any credibility or notoriety that he had within the Creek community. What can be learned from this is that one must always choose their neighbors wisely.