Red Men of Violence

Seminole chief, Asseola, was one of warriors who fought the whites. Today he is better known as Osceola.

Pushmataha, a Choctaw chief who lived in Mississippi, was.

These Indian Chiefs of Southeastern United States were all closely associated one way or another with the white man who came to their land.

Some allied themselves with the whites, some fought them. But in each case their lives, and the lives of their peoples, were closely linked with those of the whites, sometimes with tragic results. Their careers were as full of violence as was the early history of the United States.


Pushmataha, a Choctaw who lived with his people in what is now the state of Mississippi, was a chief who allied himself with the whites. Born about 1764, he achieved renown as war chief and hunter by the time he was 20.

Pushmataha used to cross the Mississippi to hunt the buffalo that roamed in herds on the great plains beyond the river. On one of these hunts his group was attacked by the Callageheah Indians and almost wiped out.

But Pushmataha escaped and spent five years brooding about revenge. One night, alone, he slipped into a Callageheah village, killed seven of the enemy and, setting fire to the lodges, burned everyone else in the village alive.

During the War of 1812 he fought on the side of the Americans, earning the name General Pushmataha. Once he came upon a soldier arrested for drunkenness. "Is that all?" he exclaimed, releasing the culprit. "Many good warriors get drunk."

In 1824, he died of croup at the age of 60 while visiting Washington, D. C. He was given such an impressive funeral—with bands, cavalry and booming cannon—that a young Choctaw chief said gloomily, "I'm sorry it wasn't me."

Asseola, a Seminole, was a chief who went against the whites. He was known by a variety of names, the most familiar today being Osceola.
The name Asseola has its origin in two Indian words meaning "black drink" and "waterfall." The drink was an emetic that Indians would take to purge themselves before entering into council. Asseola was known to drink great quantities of the nauseous concoction.

"Seminole" is a Creek word for "runaway." The Seminoles of Florida were either outlaws from their own Creek people or fugitives from the whites.

Asseola was born on the Tallapoosa river in Alabama around 1800. At the age of 12 he was a Redstlck, a member of the Creek warring faction (so called because the braves painted their war clubs red). When the whites demanded the return of the war, and the two shared a mutual high regard.

SELOCTA was a Creek, son of Chinnaby, a chief who sided with the Americans during the Creek war of 1813-14. When the Redstlck attacked Chinnaby's fort, Selocta escaped and brought relief from Andrew Jackson.

Selocta fought with the American general throughout the rest of the war, and the two shared a mutual high regard.

YAHU HAJO, a Seminole war chief, was a comparatively mild and benevolent person. But eventually he lived up to his name, which means "Mad Wolf."

He was a member of a deputation of chiefs appointed to examine the country west of the Mississippi that had been assigned to the Seminoles by the Treaty of Payne's Landing. But he decided he didn't want to leave Florida and declared war on the whites.

On March 29, 1836, the main body of American troops in Florida was about to encamp on the banks of the Ocklawaha river in North Central Florida when scouts spotted two fires. Investigating, the troops found several freshly abandoned lodges. In them were the scalps of 50 whites—men, women and children.

Gen. Joseph Shelton of South Carolina sighted a Seminole and ran forward. The Indian whirled and faced him. Shelton fired his musket, hitting the Indian in the neck. Then he drew his pistol and, shoving it against the chest of the still-standing warrior, pulled the trigger. The weapon misfired. The Seminole shot Shelton in the hip. A second soldier fired. The Indian fell to his knees, desperately trying to reload his musket, then toppled over. Thus died Mad Wolf.

TAHCEE was a Cherokee born in 1790 at Turkey Town, Ala., on the Coosa river. His name means "Dutch," but whatever significance this has is unknown.

As a mere boy he went on a retaliatory raid led by his uncle, Dirt Seller, against the Osages. Because of his extreme youth he was given the ignominious task of carrying the baggage and cooking pots, but he nonetheless managed to kill two Osages himself.

A man of great muscular power and endurance, Dutch used to go off on long hunts. After one that lasted more than a year, he returned to his mother's lodge late one night. She, thinking it was some drunk, yelled out to go away—she had no whiskey.

Rather than identify himself, Tachee, in typical Indian fashion, slipped around to the side of the darkened lodge and cut his way inside. His mother attacked him with a club and beat him off.

Still refusing to identify himself, the battered Tachee made another assault on the lodge. This time he got to his mother before she could clobber him and she greeted him warmly.

After a treaty with the United States in 1828, Tachee moved to the Red river with his people. Meanwhile he went on fighting Osages. His personal tally was 26 scalps. The US government at one time offered $500 for his capture, but later he made his peace with the whites and even served as scout and buffalo hunter for the US Army.

In 1842 Dutch was living quietly in Canada, a happy and prosperous farmer.

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