

# *The Red Feather*

## Beneath the Blackberry Moon Part One

Supplemental Audiobook File

**April W Gardner**



*Beneath the Blackberry Moon Part 1: the Red Feather*

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Scripture quotations taken from the King James Version.

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ASIN: B01AU3C3L0

ISBN: 978-1-945831-05-8

Published by Big Spring Press

San Antonio, Texas

Printed in the United States of America.

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## Cast of Characters

### Wolf Clan

Totka Hadjo (TOTE-kuh, Mad Fire), head of family

White Stone, elder sister to Singing Grass and Totka

Singing Grass, wife of Nokose Fixico

Children: Fire Maker, Rain Child, Speaks Sweetly

Tall Bull, cousin to White Stone, Singing Grass (and children), and Totka

Amadayh(Ah-muh-DAHEE), widow

Zachariah McGirth, adopted Wolf

### Beaver Clan

Nokose Fixico (Noh-KOH-suh, Heartless Bear), husband to Singing Grass

Pawa (PAH-wuh) to Leaping Waters and Long Arrow

Leaping Waters, wife to Tall Bull

Long Arrow, brother to Leaping Waters

Galena McGirth, adopted Beaver

Adela McGirth (Copper Woman), adopted Beaver

Lillian McGirth (Bitter Eyes), adopted Beaver

### McGirth Family

Zachariah and Galena McGirth

Daughters: Elizabeth, Adela, Lillian

### Other Notable Characters

Gray Hawk, Totka's father

Old Grandfather, Kossati's Beloved Old Man

Hester, McGirth's servant

## Cast of Historical Figures

Please note that while I enjoy using and following history as closely as possible, I made the characters—even the historical figures—as I wanted them to be. I try not to misrepresent history, but I always put the fiction first.

### **Major Daniel Beasley**

Commander of the garrison at Fort Mims who ignored reports of Red Stick sightings and neglected to make proper preparations for an attack. He died while trying to close the fort's gate and was one of the first casualties in the assault.

### **General Ferdinand Claiborne**

Commander of the Mississippi Territory militia. He was sent to Tensaw in the summer of 1813 and led the first organized offensive after the Battle of Fort Mims. His troops destroyed the Red Sticks' supposedly impregnable Holy Ground, the location of Red Eagle's famous leap from the bluff. After the war, he returned to his plantation in Natchez, Mississippi Territory where he died in 1815 due to health issues stemming from the hardships of the Creek War.

### **Captain Sam Dale**

Sam Dale's is a little-known name that should rival that of Davy Crockett and Sam Houston. All three fought during the Creek War, but Captain Dale saw the most action. He fought the Battle of Burnt Corn and participated in the campaign against Holy Ground, but he is most known for his famous canoe fight in which he and two others killed nine Red Sticks in hand-to-hand combat while straddling two canoes floating down the Alabama River. (The account of this can be read in my supplemental reading *Beneath the Blackberry Moon: the Untold Stories*.)

### **Josiah Francis**

One of the most notable Red Stick prophets, Francis was the son of a white trader and a Creek woman. He claimed to have been rendered blind by his prophetic visions. After a miraculous healing, he became the most ardent of the Creek prophets. He played a significant role in the construction of Holy Ground. After the war, he worked with the English and Spanish to renew the Red Stick cause. General Andrew Jackson considered Francis his worst enemy during the Creek War, and in April 1818 was finally victorious over him. Josiah Francis died in 1818 by order of Old Sharp Knife.

### **General Andrew Jackson**

Jackson served as major general of the Tennessee militia during the Creek War. He led several campaigns against the Red Sticks, and their defeat is due in large part to his frontier experience and dogged persistence. Through the Treaty of Fort Jackson, he secured millions of acres of Creek land for

the United States. Shortly after, the capture of Pensacola and the victory at the Battle of New Orleans earned him a name that would eventually lead him to the White House in 1829.

### **Peter McQueen**

A mixed-blood, McQueen led the Battle of Burnt Corn and participated in the destruction of Fort Mims. After refusing to sign the Treaty of Fort Jackson, he fled to Spanish Florida where he continued to resist American intrusion into Creek territory.

### **Zachariah McGirth**

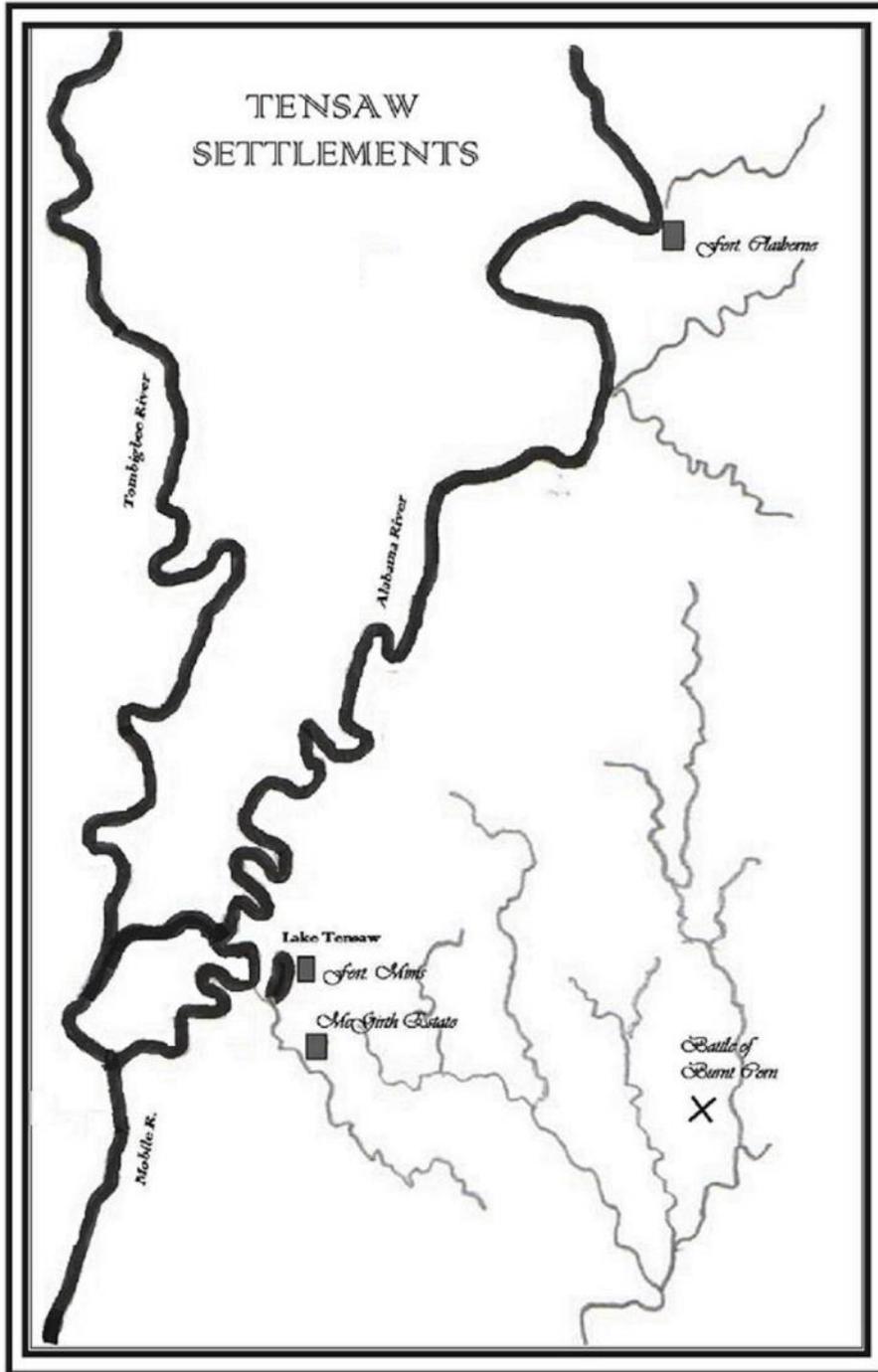
Son of a British commander from the Revolutionary War, Zachariah grew up in Creek country and married a half-Creek woman named Vicey. He became a wealthy planter in the Tensaw region of Mississippi Territory and narrowly escaped the Battle of Fort Mims by being absent the day of the attack. Believing his wife and children dead, Zachariah became overridden by grief and employed himself the duration of the Creek War by riding as courier between his settlements and Georgia when no one else could be found brave enough to go. Learn more about the fictional McGirths' story in *Beneath the Blackberry Moon* Parts 2 and 3: *The Sacred Writings* and *The Ebony Cloak*.

### **Samuel Mims**

Trader and ferryboat operator, Sam Mims owned the largest home in the Tensaw settlements. Because of its size and centralized location, his home was frequently used to host social events. Its use as the site for a fort was the natural choice. He died during the battle.

### Maps





## Glossary

**Acadians:** descendants of 17<sup>th</sup>-century French colonists who were exiled from Canada by the British. Those who settled in Louisiana become known as Cajuns.

**Alabama:** Roll Tide! (Couldn't help myself.)

**Alabama Town:** a town of my creation based off a tribe that still exists, the Alabamas. Ancient Alabamas lived in seven towns near the location of my fictional Kossati. Alabama Indians were *not* Muscogee but a separate tribe of the Muskogean linguistic group and part of the confederacy. They were closely related to the Koasatis (see Kossati) and more distantly to the Choctaws.

**Beloved Men:** old war leaders retired from battle but venerated in council.

**Blood Vengeance:** among the topmost legal principle of Southeastern Indians of the time. If a person was killed, it was the responsibility of his male clansmen, under guidance of the clan mothers, to retaliate in equal manner. The purpose being to restore balance in the clans.

**Bluecoat:** soldiers in the United States Army. So named because of their blue wool coatees. For this era, my creation.

**Breechcloth:** a long rectangular piece of animal hide or cloth that was brought up between the legs and under a belt at the waist. The ends hung like a flap over the belt in front and behind. Worn as outerwear by men and sometimes as underwear by women.

**Broken Days:** counting sticks bundled together to keep track of the passage of time. They were distributed to towns to mark the approach of special events such as battle or ceremony.

**Chokofa (Choh-KOH-fuh):** circular townhouse found in the ceremonial centers of some towns. Used in cold or inclement weather in a manner similar to the town square.

**Chunkey:** a variety of hoop and pole game in which a stone was rolled and sticks were thrown to the location the player believed the stone will land.

**Clan:** a category of people who believed themselves to be blood relatives, even if untraceable. Clan permission, authority, and protection were often called upon. The blood law fell on clan shoulders.

Clan structure and responsibilities extended across the confederacy so that a member of Deer Clan would expect to be received as a family in any Deer Clan home in any town. Clans were associated with particular animals and natural phenomenon, the care of which they were often responsible. Deer Clan elders, for example, would monitor proper hunting in proper season.

**Cock Fletch:** the fletch of an arrow that varies in color from the other two. Often points down when nocked on the bowstring.

**Couch:** used for sitting and sleeping. Couches were arranged along the wall, raised two-three feet off the ground, made of saplings and cane, and covered with split-cane mats and animal skins.

**Creek Confederacy:** formed by survivors of the devastation wrought by 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish expeditions. The Muscogee were the strongest tribe at the time, and over the course of one hundred plus years, accepted refugee tribes under the umbrella of their protection. At its peak, it was so mighty George Washington treated the confederacy on a level of respect equal to that of France and Britain. The Creek War of 1813-14 began its decline.

**Creek countrymen:** sons of European traders and Creek women who grew up in Creek country yet lived slightly apart in a blended lifestyle.

**Darkening Land:** the spirit world; where a soul goes after death; located in the west. Also called Spirit Land, or the Haven of Souls.

**Earth Spirit:** female; one of the four law-giving elements. Takes forms such as soil, rock, and Corn Woman who is the embodiment of the spirit and from whose body corn originated. Also called Mother Earth.

**East, Sacred:** one of four sacred cardinal directions; associated with the Sun Spirit, the sacred fire, life, and success.

**Elder Brother:** 1. a title of honor. Elder brothers were supposed to be kind and protective toward their younger brothers. 2. A woman's brother was her closest blood relative, and in some ways closer to her than her husband. Their relationship carried over to her children. In place of their father, an elder brother taught her sons much of what they needed to know to be men. In the absence of an elder brother, a younger brother filled the role.

**Federal Road:** a U.S. postal route bisecting Creek country. It linked trading establishments and became a route for pioneers passing through to lands in the west. The road became a point of disturbance between Creeks and Americans.

**Five Civilized Tribes:** consisted of Creeks, Seminoles, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Cherokees. So named by George Washington in his “plan for civilization.”

**Fire Spirit:** male; assistant to the Sun Spirit.

**Flageolet:** a simple wind instrument made of cane.

**Four, Sacred:** a “magic” number that is expressive of the Creek belief system. Their *four* can be understood in a rough comparison to the Christian *three* for the Holy Trinity.

**Four-day Journey:** the number of days it was believed to take for a soul to journey to the darkening land.

**Go to Water:** ritualistic bathing done all year at dawn to overcome pollution and increase longevity.

**Grand Council, 1811:** the annual Creek grand council in which Shawnee-Creek Tecumseh arrived from the north with a plea for all tribes to join forces against the whites. There is debate on whether he preached peace or violence, but regardless, it was the spark that eventually enflamed the Creeks to civil war.

**Great Warrior:** the warrior selected led the town in war. He arranged ball games with Great Warriors from other towns and carried out the will of the micco.

**Healing Song:** a formula chanted or sung over a patient with the intent of engaging his spirit, restoring the correct flow of energy, and returning him to full health.

**Herbal Warriors:** the spiritual role of herbs as they work to heal a person’s body.

**Hunting Dreams:** instead of saying “good night,” the Creeks said, “I go to hunt a dream.”

**Ibofanga (ey-boh-FAHN-guh):** neither male nor female; was above all and was the unifying principle of the spirit world. Ibofanga was the impersonal Creative Force. It created and set in motion laws that govern the universe. Every element of nature had a part of Ibofanga residing inside it. Its counterpart was the Chaotic Force, represented by such beings as the tie-snake.

**Knower:** an individual with spiritual and psychological wisdom who also possessed second sight. A knower could foretell death and interpret dreams, among other things. A knower diagnosed but did not cure illness. Not to be confused with medicine maker.

**Kossati (Koh-SAH-tee):** a town of my creation based off of a Muskogean tribe that still exists, the Koasatis. Ancient Koasatis lived in two towns very near the location of my fictional Kossati both bearing the name Wetumpka. Big Wetumpka was situated on the site of present-day Wetumpka, Alabama. Koasati Indians were *not* Muscogee but a tribe of the Muskogean linguistic group and part of the confederacy. They were closely related to the Alabama.

**Lineage:** a Creek's closest blood relatives, specifically those who lived together in the same family settlement. The Creek social system was organized as follows: individual, lineage, clan, town. The Creeks were a matrilineal society, meaning their blood (and clan) was traced through the women. Although a man was involved in his children's lives, he was not their blood relative nor was he ultimately responsible for their upbringing.

**Little Brother of War:** stickball. Defined as such because of its violent nature and its use as a substitute for war.

**Long Guns:** Indian term for white settlers. My creation.

**Long Hairs:** extinct Muskogee term for Choctaws. The Choctaws originally wore their hair long and unshaven. By the historic period (the story's setting), warriors had begun to shave their heads in a manner similar to the Creeks, but I revived the term to add flavor.

**Long Snake:** a term I borrowed from the Cherokee's river deity.

**Lower Towns:** all Muskogean towns established along the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers and their tributaries. Being geographically closer to Georgia colonists, the Lower Towns had easier access to trade goods. Because of that, they became dependent on the whites and were supportive of keeping peace with whites and assimilating their cultures. Many Lower Towns allied with the Americans during the Creek War. See Upper Towns.

**Lunar Retreat:** the time during menstruation when a woman was to stay separate in a designated moon lodge. Her latent power during that time would weaken a man. To break a lunar retreat rule was to commit a crime similar in nature to adultery or even murder.

**Maddo (mah-DOH):** thank you (Muskogee language).

**Master of Breath:** see Wind Spirit.

**Medicine:** Creeks' equivalent to our terms "magic" or "power." Bad medicine was used by witches. Examples of good medicine were herbal warriors or healing songs. Medicine could also be neither good nor bad. A woman's medicine during menstruation was powerful but not bad, so long as it was properly handled.

**Medicine Bundle:** small items wrapped in a package and worn by warriors for spiritual protection. Items varied from individual to individual but each held special significance to that warrior.

**Medicine Maker:** men who were trained in the nature of diseases and healing herbs. Valued for their knowledge, not for any innate power they might have.

**Micco (ME-koh), talwa (TAL-wuh):** town chief. There were many levels of micco in both civil and military roles. This particular title was political.

**Milledgeville:** capital of Georgia from 1804-1868.

**Minko (MIN-ko):** chief. Choctaw language.

**Mississippi Territory:** an organized incorporated territory of the United States that existed from 1798-1817 and was comprised of present-day Alabama and Mississippi.

**Moon Lodge:** a place set apart for women.

**Muscogees:** an indigenous people who once dominated the Southeast. They occupied land from the Atlantic coast to central Alabama and were the founders of the Creek Confederacy. Also known as the Creeks.

**Muskogee:** language spoken by the Creeks and Seminoles.

**Muskogean:** indigenous languages originating in Southeastern United States. They consist of many dialects which are divided into two regions. East – Creek and Seminole (Muskogee), plus four others. West – Chickasaw and Choctaw.

**North, Sacred:** one of four sacred cardinal directions; associated with cold, trouble, and defeat.

**Old Beloved Path:** tribal traditions handed down by elders generation after generation.

**Order of Things:** natural law that encompasses ecological principles. A way of doing things to promote harmony, show reverence for law-giving elements, and to avoid their displeasure.

**Owl:** an ill-omen, a witch on the wing.

**Pawa (PAH-wuh):** maternal uncle. A pawa oversaw the discipline and training of his sisters' sons. See elder brother. (Muskogee language.)

**Peace Town:** a sanctuary where no violence could take place. Places of refuge for runaway slaves, the homeless, bands in conflict, and lawbreakers. The peace was enforced by Red Sticks.

**People of the Point:** Muskogee term for Seminole Indians. So called because of the peninsula (Florida) they lived on.

**Red Sticks: 1.** one of two social labels available to Creek men (Red Sticks/White Sticks). Red Sticks were known for courage, strength, alertness, physical skills. They held leadership roles in warfare, security, and law enforcement. So called because of the red war club, the symbol of war. **2.** During the Creek War, the term "Red Stick" took on new meaning for the white settlers. For the duration of the war, a Red Stick was a Creek warrior who opposed the Americans; however, many warriors of the white persuasion shared their views and fought alongside them.

**Red War Club:** symbol of war. Before the musket, it was the preferred hand-to-hand combat weapon. To call men to battle, a red war club was raised in the square.

**Regular Army:** soldiers under the direction and pay of the federal government. Contrast with militiamen, who were volunteers organized by state.

**Roach:** a stiff crest of hair running down the middle of the head. Also called a Mohawk.

**Sacred Fire:** the principle symbol of purity. Sun's representative on earth. Believed to report evil to the Sun who would dispense punishment. Found in each town's square and chokofa.

**Scratching:** a practice used to train for hardiness, to purify, to seek spiritual knowing, and to invoke the spirit of the individual's totem animal. A sharp, four-pointed instrument was raked across the chest,

back, arms, legs. Depending on gender, age, and purpose, scratches varied from simply breaking the skin to creating wounds that bled and left scars.

**Shadows:** ghosts, evil spirits. The term is my invention, although the Muskogees did believe that ghosts of bodies improperly buried or those of ancestors whose deaths were not avenged could haunt a man. The Muskogees before Christian influence did not have a “good Creator” or an evil counterpart such as Satan. Their concept of “evil” was one of chaos.

**Sight, a:** as far as one could see. Rough equivalent to our mile.

**Single-pole Ball Game:** played by men and women together around a pole up to fifty feet tall. A player who succeeded in hitting an object on the pole with a ball earned points. Men used stickball sticks; women used hands.

**Slave Pole:** a pole stationed in the town square to which slaves and captives were tied and often tortured. By the historic period (the story’s setting), slave poles were no longer in use. I brought them back into use to serve the story’s purpose. However, during the Creek War, soldiers *did* come across Red Stick towns (see Red Sticks definition 2) that featured red poles adorned with scalps.

**Sleeps:** the marking of days or the passage of time. One sleep equals one day.

**Sofkee:** a thin gruel made of cornmeal or rice. Cooked with wood-ash lye and often eaten after being left to sour.

**South, Sacred:** one of four sacred cardinal directions; associated with warmth, peace, and happiness

**Standing Militia:** the most reliable units of militia (volunteer soldiers). They were well-equipped (at their own expense), organized, and met annually to train.

**Stickball:** a violent team sport resembling lacrosse in which a set of cupped sticks were used to lob a ball against a pole or between two poles that formed a goal. Used as training for battle and sometimes used as a substitute for war. Also called the little brother of war.

**Stomp Dance:** intertribal celebrations or social events. As with most every Creek event, stomp dances were religious in nature and, through ritual, blended the four law-giving elements in a reverential way.

**Sun Spirit:** female; one of the four law-giving elements. Source of all light and life. Also known as Grandmother Sun.

**Tafia (TAH-feeuh):** a cheap trade rum, the primary liquor consumed by the Southeastern Indians of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Talwa (TAL-wuh):** a Creek community. Muskogee language.

**Tippling House:** an establishment in which liquors are sold in small quantities.

**The Floridas:** the combination name given the two regions of Florida (West Florida and East Florida) which existed during the setting of this book. In 1813, both were owned by Spain. Also called Las Floridas.

**This World:** the middle world of the Indian three-world cosmos. The place Indians lived.

**Tie-snake:** believed to be powerful snakes that crawled up on land to drag victims under water.

**Under World:** the lowest of the Indian three-world cosmos. Existed below the earth and water. Epitomized chaos.

**Upper Towns:** all Muskogean towns established along the Alabama River, its branches (the Coosa and Tallapoosa), and their tributaries. Being sheltered from the Georgia colonists by geographic distance, the Upper Towns were more staunchly traditional. Because of that, they resisted assimilation and fought to retain their way of life. Many Upper Towns put out the red war club against the Americans and their allies during the Creek War. See Lower Towns.

**Upper World:** the highest of the Indian three-world cosmos. Existed above the sky. Epitomized order.

**Warriors' House:** the communal lodge where warriors met for council, purification, and to plot warfare.

**Water Spirit:** female; one of the four law-giving elements. Takes the form of rivers, lakes, rain, mist, streams, and the ocean.

**West, Sacred:** one of four sacred cardinal directions; associated with the Moon Spirit, souls of the dead, and death.

**White Sticks: 1.** one of two social labels available to Creek men. White Sticks were known for reasonability, patience, mediation skills, scientific knowledge. Their roles included medicine maker,

civil duties, diplomacy, ensuring of peace. **2.** During the Creek War, the term “White Stick” took on new meaning. For the duration of the war a White Stick was a Creek warrior who allied with the Americans; however, many warriors of the Red persuasion shared their views and fought alongside them.

**White Drink:** an herbal tea brewed for ceremonial purposes. It was consumed in large quantities in the council square and had a stimulating effect similar to excessive quantities of coffee. It often caused vomiting, which was done outside the square and was said to empty the body of impurities (alcohol) and ensure a clear mind. Called black drink by the Anglos.

**Widow:** required to mourn four years. During that time she was to crop her hair (representing a severing of accumulated memories) and not care for it. She was to dress unattractively and sleep over her husband’s grave.

**Wind Clan:** the most prestigious clan. Specialized in predicting weather.

**Wind Spirit:** male; one of the four law-giving elements. Also called Master of Breath and Hesagedemesse. Assistant to Ibofanga. Controlled energy links of all living things. Took and gave life.

**Winters:** the span of a year. My creation. The Creek year began in late summer at the Green Corn Festival.

**Witch:** any person who is heartlessly evil as to be beyond forgiveness. A witch sought the demise of others to add the deceased person’s life to the span of his own.

**Yatika (yah-TEE-kuh):** speaker, orator (Muskogee language). Every talwa had a yatika who was well-versed in the nuances of the many Muskogean dialects. Typically, a micco did not make public speeches. This job fell to the yatika who knew the micco’s mind and used his oratory talents to convey the micco’s (and the council’s) wishes.