

Mary Musgrove: Exploration, Encounter and Exchange in the Life of an Indian Princess

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For this year's National History Day Project, we chose a topic that was closer to home, a subject that began with our American heritage. When we were in 5th grade, we read the children's book, "An Angry Drum Echoed," about Mary Musgrove and her contributions to the explorations, encounters, and exchanges between the Creek Indians and the English in the mid 1700s. We chose to enact her story and tell of her impact on history because, without her, Oglethorpe's explorations would have been hindered by misunderstandings with the Natives. His encounters would have been rough, and he would not have had many peaceful exchanges.

First, we contacted Mr. Joel Walker at the National Archives, who directed us to the Georgia Archives for many primary sources on Mary Musgrove. We found tons of great information and were able to read an entire book of the original letters between Oglethorpe and Mary. We found the original colonial records of Georgia from 1732-1763, in which are described all of the meetings at which Mary Musgrove was present and involved. We also uncovered several letters from other men, including John Wesley and John M. Bolzius, two pastors who met Mary and sent positive reports of her assertiveness to their connections in Europe. We were privileged to have Pamela Mueller, the award-winning author of the book that inspired our play, go over our bibliography and give us the sources we'd missed.

We chose to do a performance because we felt it was the best way to bring Mary's story to life. As we began writing our script, we incorporated excerpts from the letters of Oglethorpe, Wesley, Bolzius and Thomas Bosomworth (Mary's third husband).

These letters proved to be excellent primary sources that we were often able to use word-for-word in our presentation. We made our costumes, completed our script, memorized our lines, stage-blocked, and rehearsed until we were confident in ourselves and our performance.

Mary's life was filled with encounters of and exchanges between Oglethorpe and the Colonists during his explorations of Georgia. Her work as his interpreter enabled the exchange of culture and customs between the Creek Indians and the English colonists, which contributed to Georgia's success as a colony. She eased Oglethorpe's encounters with her people in a way that only she, a woman with familial connections to both people groups, could have done. During her heated encounters with the Georgia Trustees, Mary recognized an extreme difference between the Creek and English cultures. She exchanged her own Creek methods of protest for the more civil and diplomatic European style. Rather than forceful action, she petitioned the Trustees to win back her rightful property, which the English had taken as their own, and to claim her interpreter's dues. In this she influenced her Creek nation to do the same.

Mary Musgrove was the perfect translator to assist Oglethorpe and the English settlers in their explorations of early Georgia. Because of her influence on both worlds, the colony of Georgia had an extremely smooth beginning.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Army List. House of Commons, 1758. Georgia Historical Society. Accessed 2 Jun 2016.

A list of all the Generals and Lieutenants in the British army of 1758. This showed Oglethorpe's position in the army after his return to England.

Bolzium, John Martin. *[She] Has a Special Talent for Knowing the Equivalent of Indian Terms in English...* c. 1734. Ebenezer, Georgia. Print.

We read this letter in our play. John Martin Bolzium was the German immigrant pastor of a small church a few miles away from Oglethorpe's explorations, but he became acquainted with Mary upon his arrival to the colonies. He was so impressed by her talent for linguistics that he wanted Mary to teach him her native language herself. Bolzium saw it as a way to reach the Creek Nation with the Gospel.

Bosomworth, Thomas. *In Answer to the Charges and Allegations of the Late President.*

A Narrative. 15 July. 1756. The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia. Vol. 27. Athens: U of Georgia, 1977. 4. Print.

Here Mary's third husband defends her reputation and standing in the colony to

the Trustees. He explains that she is still expecting her payment for her part in Oglethorpe's explorations, encounters, and exchanges with her people.

Demeré Family Bible. Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, n.d. Print. Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

This Bible, published in 1733 in London, was brought over to the colonies in 1733 with Mary's third and last husband, Thomas Bosomworth. It held a detailed but short biography of "Cousaponakeesa's" entire life, written (presumably by Mrs. E. Demeré) in the cover. After the deaths of Mary and Thomas Bosomworth, the Bible went to Thomas's brother, who passed it through the family until it reached the Demeré's of Atlanta in the early 1900's. They donated it to the Georgia Historical Society.

Knight, Joseph. *Southeastern Native American Documents*. GALILEO Southeastern Native American Documents. 22 Dec. 1775. Web. Accessed 28 Jan. 2016.
<http://metis.galib.uga.edu/ssp/cgi-bin/tei-natamer-idx.pl?sessionid=9ccb4085-205b994283-7572&type=doc&tei2id=KRC036>

The GALILEO Southeastern Native American Documents Digital Library provided us with the scans and direct transcriptions of several letters, contracts, and deeds (some damaged by time) signed by and made out to Mary Musgrove,

Malatchi (the chief of the Creek Nation), General Oglethorpe, and many other notable people in the area of that time. We have cited below the titles of the original documents still preserved from the land disputes, composed somewhere in the woods on the banks of the Savannah River in the mid 1700's.

Malatchi, Chief Opiya. *Deed of Feoffment from Malatchi Opiya Mico to*

Thomas[and] Mary Bosomworth, 1747 Jan. 4 / sworn before J. Mullryne.

Levy, Isaac. *Legal Claim Pertaining to the Private Purchase of Creek Indian Land.*

Joseph Wright. *Deposition [of] Joseph Wright, 1755 Dec. 22, Augusta, Georgia / [sworn to] before Jonathan Copp.*

Unknown author. *Deposition [of] Lachlan McGillivray, 1755 Dec. 22, Augusta, Georgia / [sworn to] before Jonathan Copp.*

Unknown author. *[Legal claim pertaining to the cession of] Ussaba [i.e. Ossabaw and] Sappola [i.e. Sapelo] Islands.*

Ellis, Henry. *[Legal] indenture executed by Henry Ellis and Thomas [and] Mary Bosomworth [with sworn statements and opinion], 1760 Apr. 19.*

Oglethorpe, James. *[Partial legal statement concerning Great Britain's treaties with the Creek Indians and Thomas Bosomworth's purchase of Creeklands]*. Date uncertain.

Oglethorpe, James. *Letters to Mary Musgrove Matthews*. 16 Aug. 1742 - 16 Jul. 1746.

The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia. Vol. 27. Athens: U of Georgia, 1977. Print.

The General wrote many letters to Mary during his explorations in Georgia and time in Florida, while he held back the Spanish intrusion. We used excerpts from eight of these letters directly into our play, with no alterations to their composition.

Oglethorpe, James E. *Letter Book*. Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, n.d. Print.

1733 - 1744. Accessed June 2, 2016.

James Oglethorpe would copy every letter he wrote into a large, leather-bound book which we accessed at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah. Three of those letters held direct references to Mary's upstanding work in the colonies.

The letters from which we used excerpts in our play are listed below:

J. E. Oglethorpe. *Letter to the Trustees*. 16 Mar. 1736. Print.

J. E. Oglethorpe. *Letter to Mr. Bolzius*. 16 Mar. 1736. Print.

J. E. Oglethorpe. *Letter to the Trustees from Frederica*. 9 May 1742. Print.

Oglethorpe, James E. *Wills of Theophilus, Eleanora and James Edward Oglethorpe*.

British Public Records Office. 15 Oct. 1770. Print. Georgia Historical Society.

Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

A copy of James's handwritten will from 15 years before his death.

Secondary Sources

Bois, Danuta. *Mary Musgrove (Cousaponokeesa)*. Distinguished Women of Past and

Present. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

<http://www.distinguishedwomen.com/biographies/musgrove-m.html>

This web page provided us with another list of events and important negotiations in Mary's life.

Bosomworth, Mary Musgrove. Georgia Historical Society. Web. 18 Feb. 2016.

<http://georgiawomen.org/2010/10/bosomworth-mary-musgrove/>

Here we found a quote from John Wesley's letter (a few sentences of which we used directly in our play) about Mary Musgrove. This page described Mary's life in short, and gave us pointers to other sources.

Dedman, Stanley C. *James Edward Oglethorpe: The Man and His Mark*. Puttenham and Wanborough Historical Society, Marwick Hall, Puttenham. 3 Jun. 1962. Georgia Historical Society. Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

An extensive essay with a brief description of Oglethorpe's relationship with the Indians.

Dedman, Stanley C. *Report of the Borough Librarian and Curator of Godalming, Mr. S. C. Dedman*. 1962.

A report of the curator of James Oglethorpe's estate, in Godalming, on his journey to Georgia to see artifacts from James Oglethorpe and the Wesleys, as well as give speeches at several luncheons concerning them. Mr. Dedman pointed us to the locations of many more primary sources, including the Wesley brothers' letters and a diary.

Doris Fisher, "Mary Musgrove: Creek Englishwoman," (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1990).

A pamphlet written on Mary Musgrove's life and business relations, as well as her friendship with Oglethorpe.

Encounter and Exchange in a New Colony. Georgia Historical Society. Web. Accessed 18 Mar. 2016.

<http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/online-exhibits/encounter-and-exchange/early-georgia/encounter-and-exchange-in-a-new-colony/>

Here we found information on Oglethorpe's arrival in Georgia, along with a brief background of Mary's upbringing and her parents. It concerns his immediate friendship with the Creek Chief Tomochichi along with Mary's contributions to this friendship. This website also gave a long description of Mary's life as a business woman. It gives info on her trading post, the Cowpen, and gives a long narrative on each of her three husbands. It explains in depth the injustice to which the Trustees treated her, and includes several scans of important documents pertaining to Mary's 20-year land dispute with the Trustees.

Exploration and Settlement of Georgia. United States History, 2016. Web. Accessed 03 Feb. 2016. http://www.aboutnorthgeorgia.com/ang/Exploration_and_Settlement

This article provided us with a full history of the Georgia land, from before the arrival of the English settlers to the end of Georgia's establishment as a colony.

Exploration and Settlement of Georgia. Exploration and Settlement of Georgia. Web.

Accessed 18 Mar. 2016.

<http://www.ourgeorgiahistory.com/history101/gahistory02.html>

This website gave a helpful summary on Oglethorpe's discoveries. It shows the background of Georgia exploration and the relations of the General as he negotiated with the Creeks. It also describes the Battle of Jenkin's Ear and how it affected South Georgia.

George Fenwick Jones, Ed., *Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America...* Vol.2, 1734-1735, Ed. Samuel Urlsperger (Athens : University of Georgia Press, 1969), 106-107, quotation on p. 75. Print.

A commentary on John Martin Bolzius's letter, which explained his message more clearly. We also found more information on the people living in the area as well as more sources on the Salzburgers.

Garrison, Webb. *Georgia*. The Atlanta Weekly. Georgia Historical Society, n.d. Web. 2 June 2016.

A two-page article describing Georgia's establishment as a colony. Here we learned that Oglethorpe was, at one point, the senior commander of the entire British army.

Haggard, Dennis. *The Oglethorpes of Godalming*. Georgia Historical Society. Print.

Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

An extensive essay on Oglethorpe's life which identified him as "the noblest and best known" of Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe's sons.

Indian Trading Post: Home of Mary Musgrove. Georgia Historical Society. Web. 20 Apr.

2016.

<http://georgiahistory.com/ghmi_marker_updated/indian-trading-post-home-of-mary-musgrove/>.

This page held the contents of a historical marker located at the old Savannah Sugar Refining Co., on the old Musgrove land. It gave a moderately detailed history of the land and its original owner, Mary Musgrove, as well as a description of her contributions to the establishment of Georgia as a colony.

Irby, Richard, Jr. *Mary Musgrove, Queen of the Creeks*. Golden Ink. Web. 14 Feb. 2016.

http://www.aboutnorthgeorgia.com/ang/Mary_Musgrove_Queen_of_the_Creeks

A very long biography on Mary Musgrove, with cited sources pointing us to the Colonial records and other books on the Indian princess and her people.

John Wesley. Christian History. Christianity Today. Web. 18 Feb. 2016.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/john-wesley.html>

We used the information on this web page to learn more about John Wesley, before portraying him as a meritable source in our performance.

Mary Musgrove. Georgia Public Broadcasting. Georgia Public Radio, 2015. Web. 28 Jan. 2016. http://www.gpb.org/georgiastories/stories/mary_musgrove

This was short biography and a video narration on Mary Musgrove. This was one of our first stops in research, and it gave us a basic, condensed timeline of the events in Mary's life.

Morris, Michael. "The Peculiar Case of Mary Musgrove Matthews Bosomworth: Colonial Georgia's Forgotten Leader, 1733-1759". *International Social Science Review* 71.1/2 (1996): 14–23. Web.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41882192.pdf?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

This article provided a summary of Mary's incredible ability to help people- even in ways that seemed miniscule at first glance. She impressed Oglethorpe with her talent for linguistics, and her thoughtfulness toward both the colonists and the Creeks.

Mueller, Pamela Bauer. *An Angry Drum Echoed: Mary Musgrove, Queen of the Creeks*. St. Simons Island, GA: Piñata Pub., 2007. Print.

An Angry Drum Echoed, by Pamela Bauer Mueller, was the inspiration for our performance. It is a novel based off Mary's life and encounters/exchanges with the English.

Mueller, Pamela Bauer. "Mary Musgrove History Project Interview." E-mail interview. 14 Apr. 2016.

Mrs. Pamela gave us what information we missed in our research, and pointed us to more sources, primary and secondary. She also reviewed our project and

bibliography, and told us the locations that would have some of Mary Musgrove's belongings on display, including the Musgrove family Bible.

"Oglethorpe's Journey." *Savannah Morning News*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 June 2016.

This was a brief but detailed account of Oglethorpe's journey to America with the first batch of English settlers, and described the beginning of his establishment of Savannah.

Rodney M. Baine, "Myths of Mary Musgrove," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 1992).

This quarterly newspaper described how Mary soothed relationships between the Creeks and the English traders. It also listed and debunked many myths surrounding her impetuosity concerning the Trustees' alcohol prohibition laws.

"Savannah History." *Savannah History*. Visit Savannah History. 18 Jan. 2016. Print.

This pamphlet gave us a detailed narration of Savannah Georgia's beginnings from before Oglethorpe's arrival to the late 1800's. It helped us gain a general understanding of all the laws and mandates that the Georgia Trustees passed, including anti-liquor laws, as well.

Stifter, Ann. *James Oglethorpe: Founder Leaves Mark on Georgia*. Savannah Morning News. 1996. Georgia Historical Society. Accessed 2 Jun. 2016.

A brief biography of Oglethorpe and his encounters with the Creeks.

Sweet, Julie Anne. *"That Cursed Evil Rum": The Trustees' Prohibition Policy in Colonial Georgia*. Savannah, GA: Georgia Historical Society, 2010. Print.

Here Professor Julie Anne Sweet described in detail the colonial liquor-prohibition Acts and Mandates passed by the Trustees of early Georgia. These were laws that Mary and her husband refused to obey. Oglethorpe was wary of compelling her to do so, as she was not only the best interpreter for miles around, but also highly respected by her people. She had enough power and merit among them that only a word would stir them to battle.

Sweet, Julie Anne, Betty Wood, and Kathleen Ann Clark. *Georgia Women: Their Lives and Times*. 2009. Athens: U of Georgia. Print.

A chapter on Mary Musgrove in this book gave us an extensive summary of her life. We were able to find several more sources from the author, Julie Anne Sweet.

Weldon, Ellen. "Oglethorpe Pays Surprise Return." *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*.

Georgia Historical Society, 1 Sept. 1963. Web. 2 June 2016.

An article informing of the discovery of a painting of General Oglethorpe in a Texas home. This helped with costuming.

Westberry, Cecelia Kay. Telephone interview. 27 Jan. 2016.

Devin's grandmother, Miss Kay, was a tremendous help at the start of our project. Miss Westberry is a member of the Guale Historical Society, and is an active author and advocate for the preservation of Historic St. Marys, about two hours south of Savannah. She has lived in the Savannah area her entire life, and gave us helpful information for where to look for sources, as well as a brief history of the land around the Savannah River, where Oglethorpe first landed with his colonists.

Worthy, Larry. *The Creek Indians of Georgia, Part I*. The Creek Indians of Georgia, Part

I. Our Georgia History, 2008. Web. 28 Jan. 2016.

<<http://www.ourgeorgiahistory.com/indians/Creek/creek01.html>>.

This article provided a detailed history of the Creek Tribes' territories. Larry

Worthy writes that the first inhabitants of South Georgia were “Moundbuilders,” a culture that survived some 4,000 years, but was in the process of dying out by the time the Spanish conquistadors stepped foot on American soil. Worthy details the Spanish settlements and trading habits, then continues on through the arrival of the English, Yamasee wars and Cherokee invasion.