

## ZILLAH HAYNIE BRANDON

### *Memoir*

1830-1838

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After my marriage, your father thought proper to make an investment of all the money in his power in lands in Ga. He accordingly bought in Troop and Tolbert, from which he would, no doubt, have realized considerable profit if he had lived near them. But as it was, in view of so much land coming into market, after lying out of the use of his money for several years, he sold at a discount. He then engaged in the mercantile business in 1830, and at the close of two years, found his money all gone for goods and himself in possession of a pile of accounts and notes of no value, a low shaving<sup>1</sup> having been previously passed, denominated by some the poor man's law, which enabled many whose principle it was to keep from paying, to throw themselves upon its protection. So your father had to suspend business in the mercantile line.

Georgia, in the meantime, was pressing her claims for the lands ceded to her by the United States which was then in possession of the Cherokee Indians. But throwing herself upon her sovereignty, she gave it to her citizens by a state lottery. Many who had a right of claim acted like Esau with his birthright.<sup>2</sup> They were offering to sell their chance, and your Father, thinking he might thereby mend his broken fortune, gave what money he could raise, and all the property he could spare, and by that means became interested in thirteen chances, none of which drew a single dollar's worth. As soon, however, as those lands came into market, he bought some in Cass County on the Etowah River. . . . and in December 1835, we moved to our lands in Cass. . . .

The weather was excessively cold, but on the sixth day after our departure, we arrived at the place of our destination [and] found a family of *Indians occupying our house*, which, by the way, was a very poor one without floor or loft. The Indians set about moving out, tho, with looks as magisterial as if they had been kings seated upon thrones in royal robes with a retinue about them, leaning upon the sceptres. They would not deign to look at us, much less speak to us.

<sup>1</sup>The practice of purchasing a note or debt for less than the amount actually owed.

<sup>2</sup>In Genesis 25:29-34, Esau, son of Isaac, is tricked into selling his birthright to his twin brother, Jacob.



That, though, was characteristic of that people: they are seldom known to speak to strangers, that is, among the white people. As soon, however, as they were out, we spread carpets over the dirt floor and unloaded the wagons and went in with thankful hearts, yet at the same time suffering from unavoidable circumstances, something of which you that were with me felt, but I in its intense rigor. . . .

In sixty yards of our house there lived three families of Indians, who like their whole tribe, looked as if the very shafts of desolation was hanging around them, madnening that nation with more than death-like quiver, whose venom darts lay but half concealed in brave unconquered hearts. The tide of discord among their own nation wove a web which fettered those hands which were stained with the blood of one of their noblest chiefs, McIntosh, hung powerless while their tongues cursed the shrine upon which the white people knelt in prayer to God. And although there were many well informed and religious among that tribe, yet those nearest us were not of that class, especially the males. The women I believe were chaste and very civil, but their husbands would drink to drunkenness, and were very cruel when under the influence of the fire water. And though death had come among them and with an unpleasant brow, when on the very brink of the sable shore, warned them to drink no more, yet it seemed like a mirror held before them which lost its brilliancy in a few weeks, and then the poisoned cup was again placed to their lips. The death referred to was an old man, the English of whose name was Peacock, being a nobleman among them. He was taken sick a month or two after we settled there. We had so far gained upon their good graces as to have a nod of their head when we spoke to them, or an occasional call when they wished to barter fish for salt or some other little matter relating to their necessities. A white woman in her degradation had some years before come in among them, and then had an Indian husband. She, after visiting the sick one day, called at my door and answered my enquiries in English. I came to the conclusion that the old man had pneumonia. I told her that I thought several things which I had in my power to supply them with would be of service to him. But she said I had better not offer to assist them, for if the means did not cure him, they would at once believe I had killed him. So as I was so much of a stranger, I did not offer them any assistance, but sincerely did I pity them when, from the want of knowledge, their sufferings were so much augmented. A few weeks past, and one night at mid hour, we were awakened by the lamentable wail of many voices. We guessed the cause, which was proven to us as soon as daylight came,



for they came in for plank to make a coffin, each family having their burying ground. Preparation was going on in sight of our house for the interment. However deep their lamentation, whenever any white person would go in, they would suppress it. But the white woman, before alluded to, told me of the closing scene, when the soul and body was about to be rent assunder. Then the heathen, the Indian, was honest with himself when his destiny was about to be sealed for eternity. He past in review over the past: the frightful rocks, the treacherous seas, the dangers he had dared; the strife of death with which he had contended; the storms, the lightnings, he had braved; the iron hearted he had faced; the barbarous rites to which he had submitted; the oppressive yoke under which his tribe was then labouring, sinking beneath the flashing frown of laws long past, which they regarded as a blighting simoon<sup>3</sup> crushing all their hopes in its onward sweep. Oh! Such moments as these they snatched like a minute's gleam of sunshine, when scarcely a beam of life lit up his marble like brow, his fluttering heart and trembling voice burned, and spoke of Liberty even when death was summoning the aged, way worn chieftain before the Great Spirit. Yea, with falling voice he spoke of that liberty the Great Spirit had given them, though the star that had given them light was growing dim, their glory as a nation lost. Their cause he thought was betrayed by two of their Chieftains, McIntosh and Ridge, which had sunk them into wretchedness, with a doom still darker gathering over them. But oh! One rapturous thought kindling out of woe. He said he "had lived a long time, had done much but had never done much harm." He said he "had sometimes drank too much but he had not been bad while drinking." I am thus particular in relating these things to show that truly that Spirit enlightenith every man that cometh into the world, had been doing its work even in the heart of the heathen. We stood with them as the grave closed over him without any ceremony or any burial service. Yet mentally we could say "Christ is the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me shall never die." Glory, glory to God. How gladly we would have pointed these broken hearted people to the foot of the cross and the victory of Calvary for balm to heal their wounded spirits.

During the time they lived by us, we attended three of their burials. Their interments are pretty much like ours with the exception of the shallowness of their graves. They place in the coffin all that had been dearest to the departed, [and] all throw in a handful of dirt upon the

<sup>3</sup>Desert wind.



lid. I had noticed the man about whom I have been telling you wearing a beautiful large merino shawl which I saw them pack in around his head and shoulders.

When they were sober, we were not afraid of them, but their drinking was so common a thing, a whiskey shop being kept by a white man in a quarter of a mile of us, that it was impossible to tell when we were safe. The contiguity of our habitations rendered our situation perilous. When they got drunk from home and their death like yells were heard by their families, they would look as if the cord of their souls were torn asunder. They would stand outside of their houses weeping and looking so doleful, that it would move any heart, not possessed of a demon, to pity. But presently the wives of those whose husbands were drunk would dress and take their babes and go and meet them with appearance of the soul of love and bravery, and from their husbands' savage eyes the truth was thus concealed and their secret well kept while they remained drunk. I have thought of all the women in the world, the wives of those drunken savages knew the least about a resting place.

I recollect once, while your father was on a journey, that a dozen or more Indian men came to the houses of those bordering on our yard, bringing whiskey with them, and it happened on a day when one of their wives were across the river, a quarter from her home. The first she knew of the troubles at home she heard the shrill panther-like screams which at once admonished her to get home in order, with pleasant alacrity, to attend to the nod of his lordship—her husband. But she was too late. He had taken the death drougt till his anger was excited. Thinking it might endanger her life to go in, she and some lads came into our house. Her babe was snugly placed against her shoulders, cradled there by a large piece of canvas. I noticed that she did not take it down, and her distressed looks plainly told us her situation. One or two of the boys stood at the back of the chair on which she was seated, their hands placed upon it as if they intended to shield her. One of them in the meantime, watching to see if he could get a glimpse of some of the women from whom he could learn something relative to the wife's safety, after remaining a few minits, he walked boldly to the house. In a few minits, with a hurried step, he returned, telling her to fly. Quick as possible, they were again to the river, leaving us almost parilized with fear for ourselves. A resolve was instantly taken that I would take you children and go to a neighbor's for that night. So locking our door, we were off instantaneously. Having gotten about eighty steps from the house, we looked back and saw



the enraged husband turn off from our door with his gun in his hand. Seeing us look at him, he gave one of his war whoops such as only rolls from the caverns of devils. We had at that time the society of three white families who lived in less than a half of a mile of us, one on the east of us and the other two west. The continued noise among the Indians on the evening referred to, excited the fears of our neighbors so much that when the men of one of those families came in, they asked the landlady what they should do in regard to us. She said, "By all means go and look after their safety," saying she expected they had killed me and all my children. The white man whose name was Spence, taking a Negro who was also able to measure arms with any of the Indians, came stealthily to our house. It was then getting dark, and they, acting the spy, had come to the back part of the house to see if they could hear us, but finding all was still and dark within, they redily came to the conclusion that the lady's conjectures had proven a reality. Spence, who had been living among the Indians for two or three years, having learned their language and understanding their true character, said to his companion, "Let us go round. And if they are killed," with an oath he swore, "the last one of them should die before day light." As soon as he got to the door, discovering the lock, he said, "We were safe." Like a bird we had escaped. But as anger was burning in his soul and not fearing danger and death, and the yell of havoc ringing in his ears with curses poured forth upon the whites, he burst in among them like a spirit of fire, and being armed for battle, fell on them with his stick, and after beating several of them, avenging himself for the alarm they had caused, left by telling them if their fury was not sufficiently cooled that he would return with hellish force and rend the last one of them. That led them as soon as they were sufficiently sober to scatter. Soon after that your Father hired them to move a quarter of a mile farther from us. That however endangered his life, for although they had received pay for their possessions, one of them, in a drinking spree, came to our house to kill him, but was prevented by a young Indian man running ahead of him to give us warning, which we could not fully understand till the wife who came with her unmanageable husband bid us go away. But to our great comfort the liquor shop was demolished, and from that time, we had less to fear.

All the kindness we could show to any living people, we were assiduous to show to them. All that would relieve their sufferings or ameliorate their sorrows, that was in our power, we did for them, looking to God for his approval and reward. And at length, when the time

came for their removal, their regard and kind feelings for us were made manifest, bursting the cold bars of silence that were raised like a wall of adamant around them, manifesting an unbounded preference for us by giving us those articles which were dearest to them, though of no real value to us. Two middle aged men, Duck and Etowah, though William and John their bows and blow guns which, although nearly a score of years have passed, are still here, the former with their dressed squirrel skin strings wrapped loosely around, while their brawny hand, is far away, by which they have been so often tightened, born and nurtured in dangerous paths; whose skill and fierceness we would not dare to tempt, for whenever the fatal aim was taken and the pointed arrow flew, they were sure of their prey. Yet poor Cherokee, here lies your great bows unstrung. And although the sun has risen and set so often and torrents have flown, and streams of carnage have passed over portions of the land, and the word of the Lord demolished the thrones of the living, yet hope and courage still kindle along the track of those two boys by whom these mementoes are kept.



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## United States Policy

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Andrew Jackson's election to the presidency in November 1828 has been widely regarded as a watershed in the history of United States Indian policy. Scholars have debated his motivations with arguments ranging from his history as an Indian fighter and "hater," to claims that his main concern was national security, to assertions that he was anxious to halt the decline and extinction of the Native peoples in the East. Despite their disagreements, none have suggested that his role was unimportant.

Jackson's contemporaries also believed that his election was a turning point. The first westerner to occupy the White House (Tennessee was then considered the West), his victory dramatized the rapidly growing political power of the region west of the Appalachians. If one believed that western needs and interests differed from those of the Atlantic states, Jackson's election seemed like the dawn of a new day. Jackson also represented the coalescence of a new political movement, the Democratic party, viewed by many as an important alternative to the political philosophy and American system of John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay. Jackson, in other words, personified change. While many welcomed a new order, others feared and resented it.

Seen in this light, the debate over Indian removal during 1829-30 represented a larger set of issues that went to the heart of American public life. What were the proper relationships between the federal government and the states? Could the concept of shared sovereignty that marked the constitutional system be satisfactorily defined? The emerging conflict over slavery made these questions increasingly crucial, just as it polarized the attempts to answer them.

But, of course, the debate over Indian removal was also much more than a part of the ongoing dispute over constitutional interpretation. For forty years the United States government had followed a set of