



African Creeks: Estelvste and the Creek Nation (Race and Culture in the American West Series)

Dr. Gary Zellar Ph.D

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Among the Creeks, they were known as Estelvste—black people—and they had lived among them since the days of the first Spanish *entradas*. They spoke the same language as the Creeks, ate the same foods, and shared kinship ties. Their only difference was the color of their skin.

This book tells how people of African heritage came to blend their lives with those of their Indian neighbors and essentially became Creek themselves. Taking in the full historical sweep of African Americans among the Creeks, from the sixteenth century through Oklahoma statehood, Gary Zellar unfolds a narrative history of the many contributions these people made to Creek history.

Drawing on a wealth of primary sources, Zellar reveals how African people functioned as warriors, interpreters, preachers, medicine men, and even slave labor, all of which allowed the tribe to withstand the shocks of Anglo-American expansion. He also tells how they provided leaders who helped the Creeks navigate the onslaught of allotment, tribal dissolution, and Oklahoma statehood.

In his compelling narrative, Zellar describes how African Creeks made a place for themselves in a tolerant Creek Nation in which they had access to land, resources, and political leverage—and how post-Civil War “reform” reduced them to the second-class citizenship of other African Americans. It is a stirring account that puts history in a new light as it adds to our understanding of the multi-ethnic nature of Indian societies.

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