GEORGIA
HISTORY FESTIVAL

TOMOCHICHI

A Legacy of Leadership

An educational resource from the
Georgia Historical Society

Tomochichi's Life

While little is known of his early life, scholars believe Tomochichi was born ca. 1644. It is also believed that he was a Creek with ties to the Creek Confederacy and to the Yamasee tribes in the geographic region that today makes up the state of Georgia. Around the year 1728 Tomochichi formed his own tribe, the Yamacraw, consisting of about 200 Lower Creeks and Yamasees. The Native Americans who made up the Yamacraw tribe broke away from their respective tribes following disagreements over the future of relations with Europeans settlers. The Yamacraw settled on the bluffs of the Savannah River, an area in close proximity to the final resting place of their ancestors and to English traders from South Carolina.

Tomochichi and Toahahwi, 1739

On February 12, 1733, General James Oglethorpe and the first 114 colonists from Great Britain landed on Yamacraw Bluff and founded the colony of Georgia. Given his previous experience with colonists (most likely from South Carolina), Tomochichi was not afraid of the new Georgia colonists but chose to use caution in his interactions with them. About a month after the colonists arrived, Tomochichi came to visit Oglethorpe in Savannah. Through the efforts of interpreter Mary Musgrove, he and Oglethorpe drafted a treaty allowing Oglethorpe to establish the City of Savannah and Tomochichi to benefit from trade with the colonists.

The Gentleman's Magazine in London published Oglethorpe's account of the peace treaty, asserting that the Yamacraw "freely gave up their Rights to all the land they did not use themselves…" Once an agreement was reached, Oglethorpe and Tomochichi exchanged gifts. Tomochichi gave Oglethorpe buffalo skins "on which an eagle head and feathers was painted." In return, Oglethorpe presented the chief with European-styled clothing, cloth, gun powder, tobacco, and pipes.

Tomochichi and the Yamacraw proved to be invaluable resources during the early years of the colony. Tomochichi helped the colonists lay out roads, including the first one

VOCABULARY

Bluff: a cliff with a flat front overlooking a river or another area

Interpreter: a person who speaks two or more languages and translates from one language to another to allow two other people to communicate

Mediate: to act as a middle man between two individuals or groups to reach an agreement

Yamacraw: a tribe consisting of Lower Creek and Yamasee Indians who left their respective tribes over disagreements regarding future relations with Europeans settlers

Yamasee War: The Yamasee War took place between 1715 and 1717. It was fought mainly between the British settlers of South Carolina and the Yamasee tribe. The Yamasee were angry over settlers encroaching on their lands and unresolved debts arising from the fur trade. They attack the colonist along the South Carolina frontier. Many other Native American tribes near South Carolina and the Savannah River joined forces with the Yamasee except for the Cherokees and Creeks.

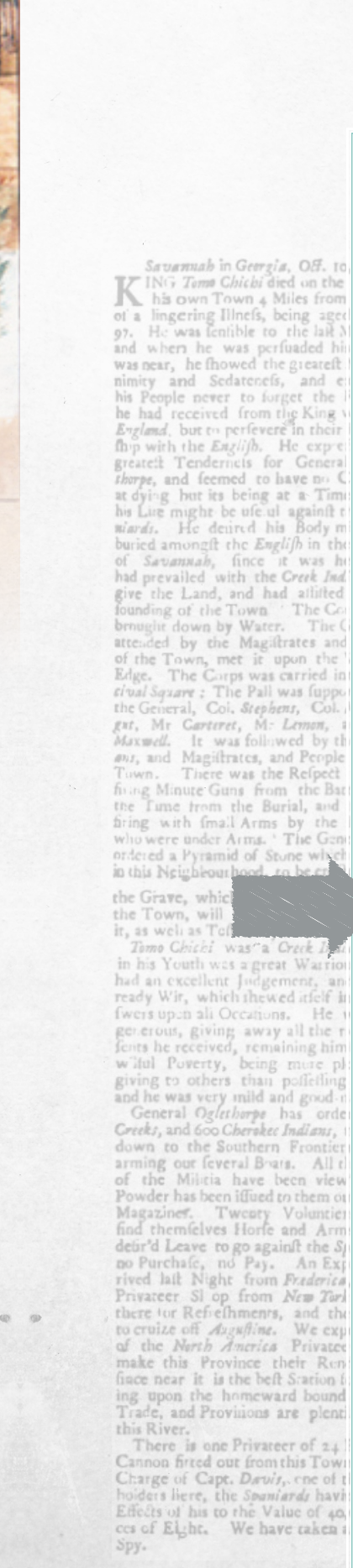
from Savannah to Darien (or New Inverness) to the south. He also aided Oglethorpe as a mediator between the Yamacraw and surrounding tribes and the British colonists.

In addition to helping Oglethorpe establish Savannah and the colony of Georgia, the Yamacraw chieftain also accompanied Oglethorpe to Great Britain in 1734, along with members of his family and a delegation of Yamacraw tribesman. Tomochichi was a capable mediator for his people as he attended meetings with British dignitaries, including King George II and Queen Caroline, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Parliament, and the Georgia Trustees. The chief presented the King and the Georgia Trustees with the requests of the Yamacraw for education and fair trade. Upon returning to Georgia, Tomochichi met with Lower Creek Chieftains and convinced them to ally themselves with the British.

In 1736, Tomochichi oversaw the establishment of a short-lived school for the Yamacraw in Irene (on property owned by the present-day Georgia Ports Authority in Savannah) with the help of Benjamin Ingham, a friend of John and Charles Wesley. That same year, Tomochichi also continued to work with Oglethorpe, mediating interactions with the Spanish and participating in an expedition to determine the southern boundary of Georgia. Throughout the colony's early years, Tomochichi and Oglethorpe often worked together and asked advice of one another. It was the goal of both men to maintain peace between the British colonists and the surrounding Native American tribes.

In August 1739, Oglethorpe traveled to meet the leaders of the Creek Nation at Coweta (in western Georgia) to reinforce the existing relationships, which primarily revolved around land and boundaries. Tomochichi was unable to accompany Oglethorpe on this diplomatic trip due to a severe illness. On October 5, 1739, the chieftain died. William Stephens, Trustee Secretary, wrote that Tomochichi was "upwards of ninety years old" at the time of his death, although some modern historians believe he was younger than ninety.

When Oglethorpe returned from his trip to Coweta, he learned of Tomochichi's death. Because of the chieftain's help in establishing the Colony of Georgia, Oglethorpe held a military funeral to honor Tomochichi and acted as a pallbearer at the funeral. Tomochichi was buried in what is now Wright Square (formerly Percival Square) in Savannah.



TRANSCRIPTION OF TOMOCHICHI'S OBITUARY, AS IT APPEARED IN THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE V. 10 (1740)

Savannah in Georgia, Oct. 10, 1739.

KING Tomo Chichi on the 5th at his own Town 4 Miles from hence, of a lingering Illneſs, being aged about 97. He was ſenſible to the laſt Minutes, and when he was perſuaded his Death was near, he ſhowed the greateſt Magnanimity and Sedateneſs, and exhorted his People never to forget the Favours he had received from the King when in England, but to perſevere in their Friendſhip with the Engliſh. He expreſſed the greateſt Tenderneſs for General Oglethorpe, and ſeemed to have no Concernat dying but its being at a Time his Li[?]e might be uſe:ul againſt the Spaniards. He de[?]ired his Body might be buried amongſt the Engliſh in the Town of Savannah, ſinceit was he that had prevailed with the Creek Indians to give the Land, and had aſſiſted in the founding of the Town[.?] ‘ The Corps was brought down by Water. The General, attended by the Magiſtrates and People of the Town, met it upon the Water's Edge. The Corps was carried into Percival Square: The Pall was ſuppported by the General, Col. Stephens, Col. Montaigut, Mr Carteret, M. Lemon, and Mr Maxwell. It was followed by the Indians, and Magiſtrates and People of the Town. There was the Reſpect paid of firing Minute Guns from the Battery all the Time from the Burial, and funeral firing with ſmall Arms by the Militia, who were under Arms. ‘ The General has ordered a Pyramid of Stone which is dug in this Neighbourhood, to be created over the Grave, which being in the Centre of the Town, will be a great Ornament to it, as well as Teſtimony of Gratitude.

Tomo Chichi was a Creek Indian, and in his Youth was a great Warriour. He had an excellent Judgement, and a very ready Wit, which ſhewed itſelf in his Anſwers upon all Occaſions. He was very generous, giving away all the rich Preſents he received, remaining himſelf in a w[il?]lful Poverty, being more pleaſed in giving to others than poſſeſſing himſelf, and he was very mold and good-natured.

General Oglethorpe has ordered 400 Creeks, and 600 Cherokee Indians, to march down to the Southern Frontiers, and is arming out ſeveral Boats. All the Arms of the Militia have been view'd, and Powder has been iſſued to them out of the Magazines. Twenty Voluntiers, who find themſelves Horſe and Arms, have deſir'd Leave to go againſt the Spaniards, no Purchſe, no Pay. An Expreſs arrived laſt Night from Frederica, that a Privateer Sl_op from New York put in there for Refreſhments, and then failed to cruize off Augustine. We expect moſt of the North America Privateers will make this Province their Rendezvous, ſince near it is the beſt Station for cruizing upon the homeward bound Spaniſh Trade, and Proviſions are plentiful upon this River.

There is one Privateer of 2+ Pieces of Cannon fitted out from this Town, at the Charge of Capt. Davis, one of the Freeholders here, the Spaniards having ſeiz'd Effects of his to the Value of 40,000 Pieces of Eight. We have taken a Spaniſh Spy.

Timeline

CA. 1644

Tomochichi is born. Exact date and location is unknown.

1715-1717

Yamasee War takes place between the Native Americans and the British colonists in South Carolina. Yamasee Indians, angry over settlers encroaching on their lands and unresolved debts arising from the fur trade, attack and kill colonist along the South Carolina frontier. Many other Native American tribes near South Carolina and the Savannah River joined forces with the Yamasee except for the Cherokees and Creeks. The years following the war cause a great deal of division amongst Native Americans in the region regarding future interactions with Europeans.

CA. 1728

Tomochichi forms the Yamacraw tribe. The tribe consists of Lower Creek and Yamasee Indians who left their respective tribes over disagreements regarding future relations with Europeans settlers. The Yamacraw settle on the bluffs of the Savannah River, an area in close proximity to the final resting place of their ancestors and to English traders from South Carolina.

FEBRUARY 12, 1733

General James Edward Oglethorpe and the first 114 colonists from Great Britain land at Yamacraw Bluff and found the colony of Georgia.

MAY 20, 1733

Oglethorpe and the Yamacraw agree to a peace treaty between the Yamacraw and the colonists. At this time, the Oglethorpe and Tomochichi exchange gifts. Tomochichi gives Oglethorpe buffalo skins "on which an eagle head and feathers was painted." Oglethorpe presents the chief with European-styled clothing, cloth, gun powder, tobacco, and pipes.

MARCH 23, 1734- DECEMBER 27, 1734

Tomochichi and a delegation from the Yamacraw tribe travel to London to meet with the Georgia Trustees and King George II. While in London, Tomochichi advocates for fair trade agreements and education for his people.

SEPTEMBER 1736

A school is opened for the Yamacraw at Irene (on property owned by the present-day Georgia Ports Authority in Savannah).

AUGUST 21, 1739

Oglethorpe travels to meet the leaders of the Creek Nation at Coweta to reinforce the existing relationships, which primarily revolved around land and boundaries between the Native Americans and the British.

OCTOBER 5, 1739

Tomochichi dies and is buried in Wright Square (formerly Percival Square) on the orders of General James Edward Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe acts as a pallbearer at the funeral.

MARCH 1740

Tomochichi's obituary appears in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in London.

Tomochichi Travels to Great Britain

In 1734, General Oglethorpe made plans to return to London to report to the Georgia Trustees about the young colony's status. Tomochichi, his wife Senauki, nephew Toonahowi, and a delegation from the Yamacraw tribe accompanied Oglethorpe on his voyage to Great Britain. The chief sought assurances that his people would receive education and fair-trade policies with the English.

Oglethorpe, Tomochichi, and the Yamacraw delegation departed from Savannah on March 23, 1734, on the ship *Aldborough*. Tomochichi and the Yamacraw spent six months in Great Britain. As part of negotiations between the Creek Confederacy (primarily the Lower Creeks) and Great Britain, Tomochichi and the Yamacraw delegation met with King George II, Parliament, and the Georgia Trustees.

Audience Given by the Trustees of Georgia to a Delegation of Creek Indians by William Verelst

During their visit, the Yamacraw delegation also visited many sites in London and the surrounding countryside. It was during this visit to London that Tomochichi and the Yamacraw delegation had their portraits made by William Verelst. He also painted the scene in which Tomochich and the Yamacraw met with the Georgia Trustees. On December 27, 1734, Tomochichi and the Yamacraw delegation arrived back in Georgia on the *Prince of Wales*. Upon his return, Tomochichi met with Lower Creek Chieftains and convinced them to ally themselves with the British.

An Important Meeting

At their first meeting, Tomochichi gave King George II the feathers of an eagle, a live eagle, and a bear cub. These gifts were meant to show respect to the king and were a sign of peace between the leaders.

What would you give someone you just met as a gift? Draw a picture in the space below.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Yamacraw delegation toured the Tower of London and viewed the Royal Menagerie (a collection of wild or foreign animals kept especially for exhibition). The Earl of Egmont asked Tomochichi what souvenirs he would like to bring back to Georgia after his visit to London. Tomochichi answered he would like to have the lion from the Royal Menagerie. The Earl of Egmont later presented him with a drawing of the lion.

VOCABULARY

Delegate: a person chosen to act for or represent another individual or group

Petition: a formal request by a person or group addressed to another person or group in a position of authority

Parliament: The British Parliament is the governing body of the United Kingdom and is composed of the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

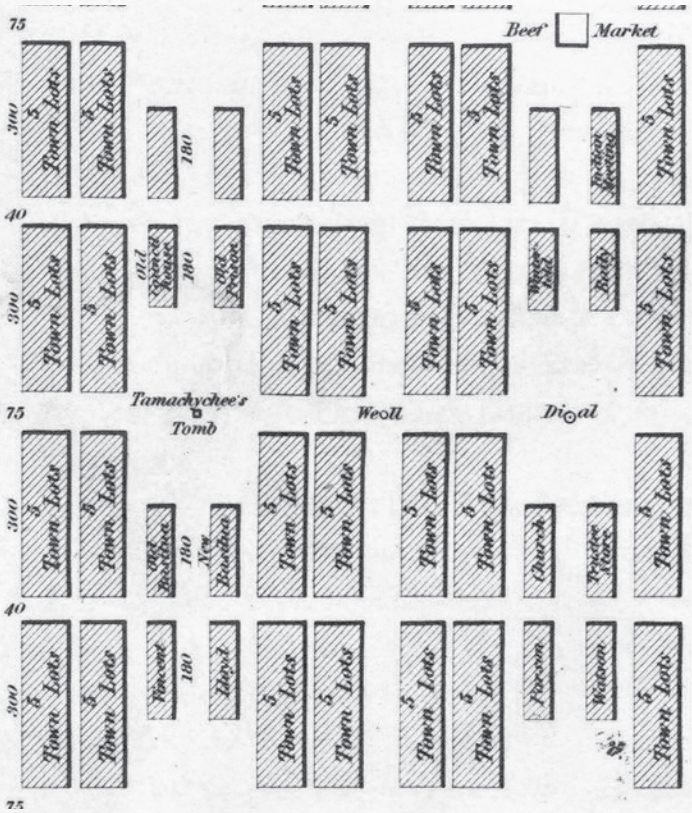
Prime Minister: the executive leader of the United Kingdom and Member of Parliament

Trustee: a member of a Board of Trustees that governed Georgia during the first 20 years of its existence

Death and Burial

On October 5, 1739, Tomochichi died after suffering from a serious illness. Oglethorpe learned of Tomochichi's death when he returned from his diplomatic trip to the Lower Creek town of Coweta. Oglethorpe held a military funeral to honor Tomochichi because of the chief's help in establishing the Colony of Georgia. The Yamacraw chieftain had expressed a desire to be buried in the town he helped to create. On Oglethorpe's orders, Tomochichi was buried in Wright Square (formerly Percival Square) in Savannah, and his grave was marked with a pyramid of stones.

Today, a monument to William Washington Gordon stands in the center of Wright Square. So what happened to Tomochichi's grave and the pyramid of stones Ogelthorpe ordered erected in his honor?



Detail of De Brahm's *Plan of Savannah*

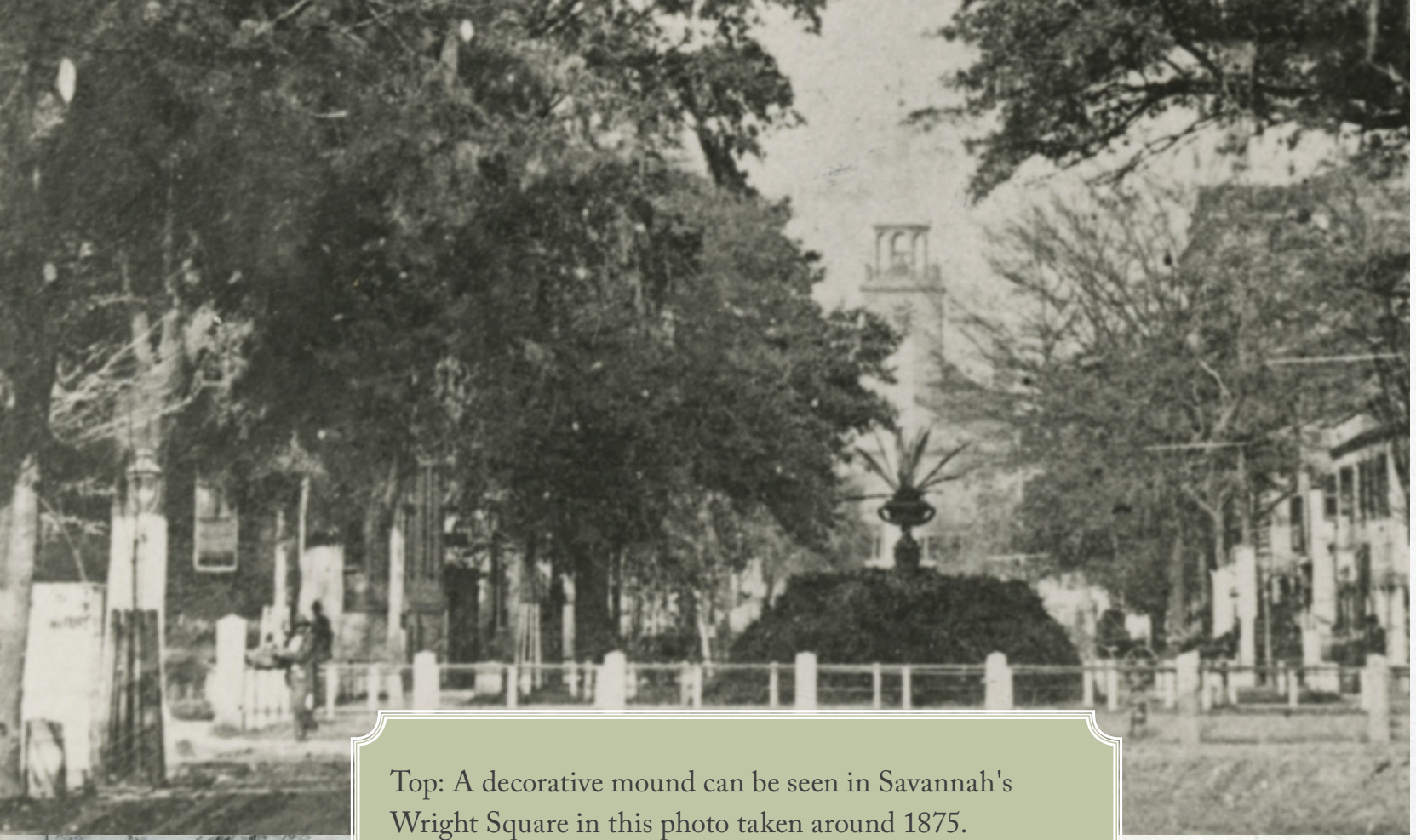
Dr. Robin B. Williams, Chairman of the Architectural History Department at the Savannah College of Art and Design, compared historical maps and images of Savannah to demonstrate the changes in Tomochici's burial place. In William Gerard De Brahm's *Plan of Savannah, 1757* map, Tomochichi's grave is depicted in Wright Square. At the time of Tomochichi's death, Oglethorpe ordered a monument to be placed to honor his friend and ally. In reports, the monument was translated as a pyramid of stone. However, by the 1830s, the pyramid of stones was no longer in Wright Square. In his famous painting, *View of Savannah from 1837*, Joseph Louis Firmin Cerveau depicts the view of Savannah from the City Exchange on Bay Street looking down on Bull Street. In the painting, there is no monument or pyramid of stones in Wright Square. It is unknown what happened to the monument between the creation of these two sources. Perhaps the memory of Tomochichi's burial was simply forgotten by the citizens of Savannah, or perhaps the memorial was purposefully removed due to changing relationships with Native Americans, especially after the American Revolution.

View of Savannah from 1837, Joseph Louis Firmin Cerveau

In the late 1800s, Tomochichi came back into the spotlight. In his biography of the chieftain, *Historical Sketch of Tomo-Chi-Chi, Mico of the Yamacraw* (1868), Charles C. Jones, Jr. laments that Tomochichi had not been remembered by the public. The biography caused the public to once again recall the role Tomochichi played in establishing the young colony of Georgia. A few years later a series of mounds appeared in some of Savannah's Squares, including Wright Square. However, these mounds were not meant as a monument to Tomochichi or anyone else. It is believed that the city placed the decorative mounds in the center of the squares to prevent streetcar tracks from being laid through the squares on Bull Street.

In 1883, the mound at the center of Wright Square was removed, and the William Washington Gordon monument was erected by the Central of Georgia Railroad. Resurgence of interest in Tomochichi caused some resistance to the new monument. In a letter to the editor, one gentleman referenced the biography of Tomochichi by Charles C. Jones, Jr., stating that Tomochichi was buried in Wright Square. In his opinion, the City of Savannah should instead erect memorials to General Oglethorpe and Tomochichi in Wright Square.

Gordon's daughter-in-law, Nellie Kinzie Gordon, later advocated for a monument to Tomochichi to be erected in Wright Square. On April 21, 1899, the Tomochichi Monument, a granite boulder, was dedicated by the Georgia Society of the Colonial Dames of America. The boulder can still be seen in the southeast corner of Wright Square in Savannah, along with a copper plaque commemorating Tomochichi.



Top: A decorative mound can be seen in Savannah's Wright Square in this photo taken around 1875.

Bottom: A drawing of the Tomochichi Monument was made by artist Augusta Oelschig.

Writing Activity

You have been asked to write a new plaque to commemorate Tomochichi and his role in the founding of Georgia. It will be displayed as a plaque on the Tomochichi Monument to help visitors to Savannah and local residents learn more about the Yamacraw chieftain.

Images

All images are from the Georgia Historical Society unless otherwise noted.

p. 1	Tomochichi and Toahahwi, 1739. From the Foltz Photography Studio Photographs, MS 1360.
p. 2	British and Indians Sketch. Courtesy of Ed Jackson.
p. 3	View of Savannah as it stood on 29th of March 1734 (detail). From the GHS Map Collection, MS 1361MP.
p. 7	Audience Given by the Trustees of Georgia to a Delegation of Creek Indians. by William Verelst, gift of Henry Francis du Pont, 1956. Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum.
p. 9	*Plan of Savannah, 1757.* William Gerard De Brahm. (From History of the Province of Georgia. With Maps of Original Surveys [1849].)
p. 10	*View of Savannah, 1837.* Joseph Louis Firmin Cerveau. On display at the Georgia Historical Society.
p. 11	Top: Wright Square, looking north on Bull Street, Savannah, Ga. Ca.1875, Foltz Photography Studio Collection, MS 1360. Bottom: Drawing of the Tomochichi Monument. From the Augusta Oelschig drawings and Other Materials Collection, MS 1383.

Georgia Standards of Excellence

SECOND GRADE

- SS2H1 Describe the lives and contributions of historical figures in Georgia history.
- SS2H2 Describe the Georgia Creek and Cherokee cultures of the past in terms of tools, clothing, homes, ways of making a living, and accomplishments.
- SS2G2 Describe the cultural and geographic systems associated with the historical figures in SS2H1 and Georgia's Creek and Cherokee in SS2H2.

THIRD GRADE

- SS3H3 Explain the factors that shaped British Colonial America.

EIGHTH GRADE

- SS8H1 Evaluate the impact of European exploration and settlement on American Indians in Georgia.
- SS8H2 Analyze the colonial period of Georgia's history.

HIGH SCHOOL

- SSUSH1 Compare and contrast the development of English settlement and colonization during the 17th Century.

TOMOCHICHI

A Legacy of Leadership

by

GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

About the Georgia Historical Society

Georgia Historical Society (GHS) is the premier independent statewide institution responsible for collecting, examining, and teaching Georgia history. GHS houses the oldest and most distinguished collection of materials related exclusively to Georgia history in the nation.

Whether through hands-on activities with primary sources in the GHS Research Center, in-school presentations by GHS staff, or curriculum aligned with state and national education standards, the Georgia Historical Society enables students of all ages to experience history beyond the textbook.

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