



RESOURCE GUIDE: “The African Case”

Research Materials at the Georgia Archives Relating to “The African Case” and the Slave Trade 1817–ca. 1821

Records housed in the Georgia Archives document the stories of two or three ships (at least one of which operated out of Portugal) carrying cargoes of Africans that were overtaken by pirates while en route to Cuba in 1817 and brought into port at Amelia Island, Florida. The Africans from the ships then were dispersed; some of those were brought into Georgia through the Creek Indian Nation territory, came into the possession of the state, and, in accordance with Georgia law at the time, were subsequently sold. Legal proceedings ensued as the owners of the ships attempted to obtain compensation for their lost cargo. In at least one instance, accusations of wrong-doing were filed against individuals, including former Governor and then-U.S. Indian Agent David Brydie Mitchell. This particular case continued for a number of years and became known as “The African Case.”

The Georgia Archives holds a substantial body of materials relating to the African Case, some of which may pertain to other cases as well. These materials include original documents as well as a published work by D. B. Mitchell, as described below. This list probably is not exhaustive; it is very possible that additional references exist in other records series, and suggestions for likely locations are included below.

File II (RG 4-2-46)

File II is an artificial series of primary and secondary materials relating to specific names, counties, and subjects. Original records relating to the African Case can be found in:

- File II: Names, Box 15, Bowen, William
- File II: Names, Box 57, Habersham, Richard W.
- File II: Names, Box 95, Mitchell, David Brydie, Gov. (this file contains the majority of the documents)
- File II: Signatures [autographs], Adams, John Quincy
- File II: Subject Originals, Box 109C, African Slaves.

It is possible that other documents relating to this case can be located in other places in File II. Suggested possible locations include File II: Names (using the names of the people who were involved with the African Case); File II: Subjects (using all relevant subjects, including Indians, Indians: Creek, Slaves, and Negroes); and File II: Counties (searching the files on all of the counties where events relating to the African Case took place).



THE GEORGIA ARCHIVES

Rare Books

The Archives holds one book that is directly related to the African Case. *An Exposition of the Case of the Africans Taken to the Creek Agency by Capt. William Bowen, on or about the 1st December, 1817* was authored by David B. Mitchell (the former governor of Georgia who was directly involved in the case) and published in 1821. It contains transcripts of a number of the documents housed in the File II folders on the case.

Additional Resources

It is recommended that individuals interested in exploring thoroughly the resources relating to this case review other official government records from that time period. Although a number of records from that time are housed now in File II, other relevant documents may still be filed in their original series. Series suggested for review include:

- Enrolled Acts of the General Assembly (RG 37-1-15, available in published form and microfilm)
- House and Senate Journals (available in published form)
- House and Senate Bills and Resolutions
- Governor's Letter Books (RG 1-1-1)
- Executive Secretary's Letter Books (RG 1-1-4)
- Governor's Subject Files/Incoming Correspondence (RG 1-1-5)
- Governor's Order Books (RG 1-1-2)
- Executive Department Minutes (RG 1-1-3)
- Executive Orders, unbound (RG 1-1-40)
- State and county court records
- Federal court records located in the National Archives, Southeast Region