

# The History of the Mvskoke Alphabet

## ORIGINS OF THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The language of the Mvskoke people originated in their historic homeland of modern-day Alabama, Georgia, Southern Tennessee, Southern South Carolina and Northern Florida, and followed its people during the removal to what is now Oklahoma and Florida. The Language, (also known as Mvskoke, Creek, or Seminole) was a “Verbal Only” language, there were no accounts of any attempt to write the language until 1736 when a German man named Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck, to record the local Flora and Fauna in an area where the only language was Mvskoke.



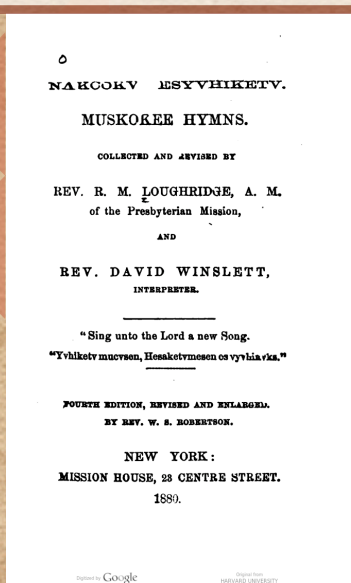
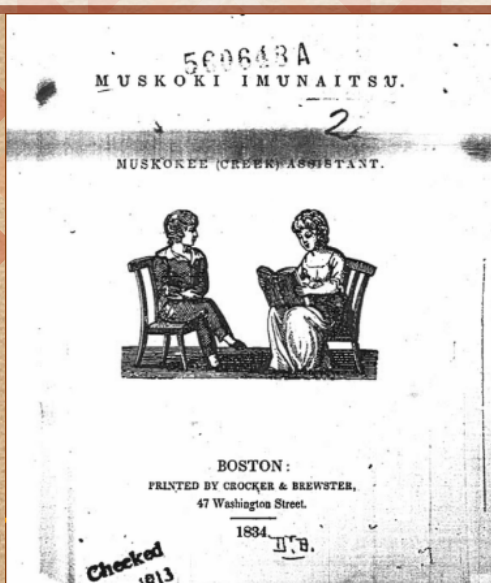
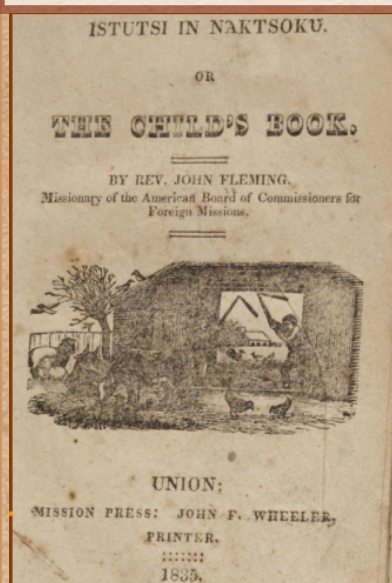
Some of the words included:  
 Wajo (wvyo 'flying squirrel')  
 Fu-Zag-ta (fus-cahtv 'cardinal')  
 Jo-wei-ka (yowhikhv 'bluebird')

## BECOMING COMMONPLACE

John Flemings wrote the very first book, which was his version of the Mvskoke alphabet, in 1834. It was titled "Muskoki Imunaitso", which has a very different spelling and letters from the modern Mvskoke alphabet.

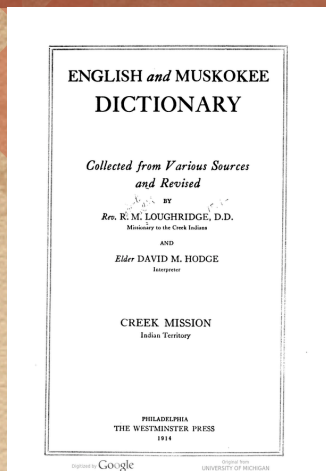
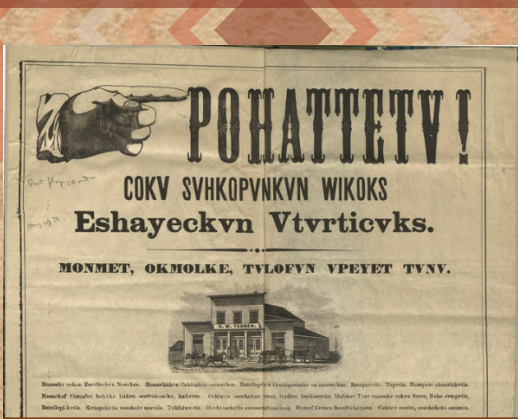
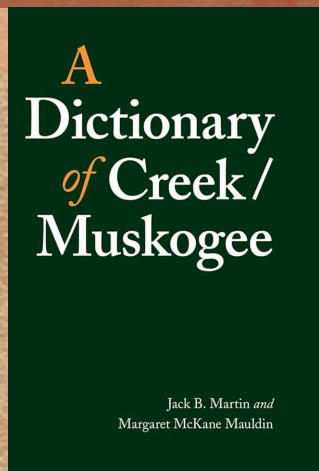
At around the same time, Baptist missionaries Johnston Lykins and John Davis published a translation of the Book of John called Heat Oponaka Hera Cane Coeatetest [This is the gospel that John wrote]. They introduced the use of c for “je”, y for “ay”, and r for “th”.

During this time, other groups also developed their methods. They wrote words in their own ways, and laws and other written materials, such as Songbooks, Grammar books, and the translation of the Bible, started to be written in the Mvskoke Language as well.



## STANDARDIZATION OF THE LANGUAGE

The written language would become standardized in 1853, influenced mostly by the missionaries, with the first dictionary finally being printed in 1890. A new dictionary wouldn't be made for another 100 years! Even between Loughridge's Dictionary in the 1890s and Martin & Mauldin Dictionary in 2000 (both from standardization and on), the language continues to change and evolve like every other language!



## THE LANGUAGE IN MODERN TIMES

Today, the language is alive on the reservation of the Mvskoke Nation. Being used for children's books, hymns, learning resources, and other written materials of all kinds. Currently, we estimate that out of our 100,000 enrolled citizens, there are only 250-400 fluent speakers and approximately only 50 can read and write in the language. The nation's language program is working to change this, teaching spoken and written language to Mvskoke youth and adults. We believe that the language is the beating heart of the nation, and its alphabet, along with its long history, will forever survive in the heart of the nation!

