

# Cadet David Moniac: A Creek Indian's Schooling at West Point, 1817–1822

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Many of the [Creek] half breeds, who have received education, appear to possess good sense and abilities.  
—John Norton (Teyoninhokarawen)  
*The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816*  
ed. Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman  
(Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1970), 139

**D**AVID MONIAC (MacNac; Manak; Monack), a Creek Indian, attended the United States Military Academy from 1817 to 1822. Historians have often credited Moniac as the first Native American to attend and graduate from West Point, which may or may not be accurate; however, scholars have not fully explained why he attended the United States Military Academy in the first place, since some of his Creek Indian kin fought against the American army just prior to his admission.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they have not provided a complete portrait of this Native American cadet's life during his five-year residence along

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<sup>1</sup>Benjamin W. Griffith Jr., "Lt. David Moniac, Creek Indian: First Minority Graduate of West Point," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1981): 73–98. Despite the title, Griffith devotes fewer than five pages to Moniac's student days at West Point. See also Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "The Brave Major Moniac and the Creek Volunteers," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 23 (1945): 96–106. Foreman devotes one page to Moniac's education at West Point. According to the records housed in the United States Military Academy Library's Archives and Special Collections Division (hereafter cited as USMA Library, ASC), two other cadets of American Indian descent attended West Point and were graduated prior to Cadet Moniac: Lewis Loramier (1806) and William Wayne Wells (1821). Little information is available about these cadets, even though Wells attended during Moniac's years at West Point.

the Hudson River.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Moniac's schooling there occurred precisely at a turning point both in the history of his Creek peoples and in the evolution of West Point as the premier American training ground for military service and leadership.<sup>3</sup>

Strange as it may seem, Moniac attended West Point only three years after the conclusion of the bloody Creek War of 1813–14. The United States Army, with American Indian allies, including Lower Town Creeks, fought against Upper Town Creeks led by Moniac's uncle, William Weatherford, Chief Red Eagle.<sup>4</sup> Among the Indians fighting the American army were those Creeks known as "Red Sticks," who aggressively sought to return their society to what they deemed to be the traditional ways of the past.<sup>5</sup> The number of casualties and the property destruction within the Creek world during this conflict, known as the Red Stick War, were immense. Even before General Andrew Jackson's final victory in the war at the Battle of Tohopeka, Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River, where more than eight hundred Creeks perished, the Creek Country in today's Alabama and Georgia had been laid waste.<sup>6</sup> Historian Gregory Dowd has noted that Creek casualty rates in the war rose "to a level proportionally comparable with that of any force in American history, including Confederate soldiers in the Civil War."<sup>7</sup> As a result of this defeat at Horseshoe Bend, in the federal treaty of Fort Jackson in March 1814 the Creeks were forced to cede more than half

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<sup>2</sup>For West Point in these years, see Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History* (Lawrence, Kans., 2002), 81–105; George S. Pappas, *To the Point: The United States Military Academy, 1802–1902* (Westport, Conn., 1993), 99–128; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* (Baltimore, 1966), 62–105.

<sup>3</sup>Over the last decade and a half, scholars have largely rewritten the history of the Creeks in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an era that proved to be a turning point in the world of these Indians. See Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816* (New York, 1999); Kathryn E. H. Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade and Anglo-America, 1685–1815* (Lincoln, Neb., 1993); Robbie Etheridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2003); Joshua Piker, *Okfuskee: A Creek Town in Colonial America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); Andrew K. Frank, *Creeks and Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier* (Lincoln, Neb., 2005).

<sup>4</sup>For the best treatment of William Weatherford, see Benjamin W. Griffith Jr., *McIntosh and Weatherford: Creek Indian Leaders* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1988).

<sup>5</sup>Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 249–90; J. Leitch Wright Jr., *Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction and Regeneration of the Muscogulge People* (Lincoln, Neb., 1986), 166–82. See also Frank L. Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815* (Gainesville, Fla., 1981); Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogee Struggle for a New World* (Boston, 1991); Henry S. Hulbert and T. H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814* (1895; ed. Frank L. Owsley Jr. [Boston, 1991]).

<sup>6</sup>Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 270; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 80–83; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 166–82.

<sup>7</sup>Gregory E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, 1992), 187.

their tribal estate, an enormous L-shaped tract containing twenty-two to twenty-three million acres in Alabama and southern Georgia, including lands of Lower Creeks who had not joined in with, or had fought against, the Red Sticks.<sup>8</sup>

White Americans also had lasting memories of the war and its devastation. They recalled the tragic events that had transpired at Fort Mims in Alabama, then Mississippi Territory, just north of the Spanish Florida line. In an attack on the fort on 30 August 1813, hundreds of American soldiers and civilians, including children, were killed; only thirty-six white occupants survived and a few American-allied Creeks and black survivors were taken prisoner. Significantly, Red Eagle, David Moniac's uncle, was later blamed for what is known in history as the Fort Mims "Massacre."<sup>9</sup>

Moniac's years at West Point were in the shadow of what happened in the Red Stick War. They also occurred at the same time as the First Seminole War. In 1817, General Andrew Jackson invaded Florida, then administered by the Spanish empire. The Seminoles, an offshoot of the Creeks, had harbored fugitive slaves from Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, and had allied themselves with Spain. Although Jackson's campaign was short-lived, it had significant consequences, including Spain's sale of Florida to the United States and continued tensions between whites and Indians on the southeastern frontier.

David Moniac was born around Christmas day in 1802 at Pinchong Creek, Montgomery County, Mississippi Territory. His father, Samuel Takkes-Hadjo Moniac, was descended from the son of a Creek woman and her Euroamerican husband, Dixon Moniac, who had been in the region since 1756. His mother, Elizabeth Weatherford, was the sister of Red Eagle from the Upper Creek town of Tuskegee.<sup>10</sup> At the time of David's birth, his parents were living in a prosperous manner in Tuskegee, at the forks of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers, not far from the battlefield of Horseshoe Bend. In that flood-susceptible plain, the Creeks constructed thirty buildings. In and around the area were vestiges of French occupation—Fort Toulouse—and ancient Indian moundbuilder sites.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 271–72. For the Treaty of Fort Jackson, see Charles J. Kappler, comp., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2 (1904), reprinted as *Indian Treaties, 1778–1883* (Mattituck, N.Y., 1972), 107–10.

<sup>9</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 38–39; Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford*, 104–10; Florette Henri, *The Southern Indians and Benjamin Hawkins, 1796–1816* (Norman, Okla., 1986), 284–85.

<sup>10</sup> For David Moniac's genealogy, see chart 1.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799*, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (Savannah, Ga., 1971), 37–39. For more on the McGillivray and Weatherford families, see Benjamin Hawkins, *Letters, Journals and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, ed. C. L. Grant (Savannah, Ga., 1980), 1:22–27.

The Moniacs at Tuskegee were among the most prosperous of the Creeks before the Red Stick War. Three years before David's birth, Benjamin Hawkins, the federal Indian superintendent, trader, and longtime resident of Creek Country, described this low-lying Indian community:

The people of Tuskegee [*sic*] have some cattle, and a fine stock of hogs, more perhaps than any other town of the nation. One man, Sam Macnack [Moniac], a half breed, has a fine stock of cattle. He had, in 1799, one hundred and eighty calves. They have lost their language [English], and speak Creek, and have adopted the customs and manners of the Creeks. They have thirty-five gun men.<sup>12</sup>

This revealing passage shows that despite his European-Indian ancestry, David Moniac's world was largely that of the Creek. Although there were acculturative forces at work, namely European-introduced livestock as well as the change from a barter to a market economy, the young Moniac was raised primarily within the parameters of Creek society.

Historians writing about Creek history in the period have characterized the Moniac family as "mixed bloods" or "mestizos," at times making it appear that they were somehow less Indian culturally and in their outlook. To historian Claudio Saunt, they were "neither entirely Creek nor entirely American." Despite their prominent lineage and their residence in the Creek town of Tuskegee, Saunt argued that their wealth in cotton, slaves, and real property as well as their military service against the Red Sticks in 1813–14 made them less "Creek." This view is problematic.<sup>13</sup> The Creek world was composed of numerous individual towns that were distinct culturally and economically but at times politically allied in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Being Creek was not based on physical appearance or on a singular identity, but was determined by the regions individuals lived in and the towns they resided in, as well as the kinship network to which they belonged. Thus, despite some historians' assertions to the contrary, "real Creeks" fought "real Creeks" in the war of 1813 and 1814.<sup>14</sup>

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Creek Indians were diverse peoples. A significant number of peoples of European descent, especially Scots; Africans—many enslaved; and other native peoples lived within the boundaries of Creek Country. Recently, historian Andrew Frank has challenged past categorizations of Creeks based on race, culture, and language. Frank insisted that there was a fluidity to Creek identity in this period. Creeks defined themselves during

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<sup>12</sup>Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country*, 39.

<sup>13</sup>Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, 260–63.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 133.

Moniac's childhood in matrilineal terms, not by racial attributes, and did not use "the language of blood quantum or hybridity." Creek identity was in flux "with new peoples and technologies constantly entering their community. Nothing prevented Creeks from speaking English, herding cattle, owning slaves, having blond hair, or marrying non-Creeks."<sup>15</sup> The fair-skinned David Moniac, who was on at least two occasions mistaken for a white, was seen by his southeastern native peoples as a Creek, since his mother, Elizabeth, was Creek and since he grew up in her home community of Tuskegee.<sup>16</sup> The presence of Euroamericans, mostly Scots, in his ancestry did not negate that fact.

The diversity within Creek society was recognized by travelers passing along the famous Federal Road linking Fort Wilkinson, near Milledgeville, Georgia, and Fort Stoddert, north of Mobile, Alabama. The thoroughfare traversed the heart of Creek territory. Adam Hodgson, a prominent English businessman and philanthropist, clearly recognized that these Indians had differences of opinion about Western education, about entrepreneurship, and about the future of the Creek Nation. Writing in 1820, when David Moniac was attending West Point, Hodgson observed that the "more reflecting of the Creeks think much, but say little of the change which is taking place in their condition." He added that they "see plainly that, with respect to their future destiny, it is a question of civilization or extinction; and a question, the decision of which cannot long be postponed." Thus, this group within the Creek world had "become very solicitous for the establishment of schools. . . ." Hodgson then went on to describe Creeks with substantial numbers of slaves, herds of cattle, and flourishing farms, indicating to him the "considerable progress" made by these Indians.<sup>17</sup> The Moniacs and Weatherfords were from precisely this segment of Creek society. Now David Moniac was to follow the path described by Hodgson. Anthony F. C. Wallace

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<sup>15</sup> Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 5–6. Recently, Thomas N. Ingersoll suggested that racial categorization was propagated by federal policymakers from Jefferson's to Jackson's time to rationalize Indian removal and deny the possibility of racial amalgamation. See *To Intermix with Our White Brothers: Indian Mixed Bloods in the United States from Earliest Times to the Indian Removals* (Albuquerque, N.M., 2005), 165–67.

<sup>16</sup> For references to Moniac's physical appearance, see Jacob Rhett Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field During the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836–1838*, ed. James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, Fla., 1953), 22, 255n9; and Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston, 1883), 92–93.

<sup>17</sup> Adam Hodgson, *Letters from North America Written During a Tour in the United States and Canada* (1824), reprinted in *Travelers' Accounts of Crossing Alabama's Old Creek Territory, 1810–1847*, comp. Jeffrey C. Benton (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Historic Chattahoochee Commission, 1998), 11–12. Although misidentifying David Moniac as a "free Negro," Carter Woodson stated that Moniac owned twenty-seven slaves on his plantation in Clark County, Alabama, in 1830. *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1924), ix.

has noted that during the Jeffersonian presidency, dozens of Creek men “had assumed the Southern plantation lifestyle, with slaves and cotton and fine horses,” and that Charles Weatherford, David Moniac’s grandfather, “bred race horses and built a race track near his house.”<sup>18</sup>

The Creeks, including David’s own relatives, had established kinship ties to the Euroamerican traders. Although these whites benefited financially by this arrangement, the Creeks were not simply victims. Clan and village leaders recognized the importance of having connections with the deerskin traders and interpreters in their midst. These whites frequently married women of the Creek’s Wind Clan, such as David’s mother, Elizabeth, and these kinship ties helped control non-Indian trade practices. Moreover, the sons and daughters of the intermarriages became part of these Creek communities.<sup>19</sup> By this procedure and by intermarrying with these Euroamerican traders, the Creeks received “a steady flow of trade goods, fair prices for their skins, protection from debts and access to colonial society.”<sup>20</sup> Sam Moniac, David’s father, was especially to benefit from these Creek-Euroamerican connections.

Much of David Moniac’s pre-West Point education was typical for a Creek male. He learned early to track and hunt the white-tail deer, to withstand the hardships of life to become a successful Creek warrior, to value the diplomatic and oratorical skills of great tribal leaders such as McGillivray, McIntosh, and his uncle Chief Red Eagle, so that he too would be listened to in council.<sup>21</sup> Creek boys were taught early that their day would come and, until that time, they must deferentially perform “the menial tasks of lighting the warrior’s [*sic*] pipes, hauling wood for the ceremonial fires, and cooking the black drink, a potion of great ritual importance.” Creek initiation into manhood occurred between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, just around the age Moniac became a cadet at West Point.<sup>22</sup> The ceremony, conducted by a “great leader,” involved the boy’s fasting to achieve purification and then the gathering and drinking of a tea made from the leaves of the *sou-watch-cau*, a bitter root that when eaten produces intoxicating results. The boy, who would be isolated from his community, would then eat three spoonfuls of gruel from coarsely-ground maize for four days. On the fifth day, he would come out of his confinement and gather corn cobs, burn them into ashes, and rub the ashes over his body. The boy would have other

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<sup>18</sup>Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 189. See also Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1951), 107–17.

<sup>19</sup>Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 31–36.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>21</sup>Griffith, *McIntosh and Weatherford*, 23–37.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

restrictions on his diet and would be allowed little food except such things as old bucks, which would have to be cooked and eaten at separate fires. This process would be repeated for twelve months. At the end of this period, the boy would sweat under blankets and then run into the water to finish his initiation into manhood.<sup>23</sup>

These and other Creek rituals were not lost on Moniac, who at West Point achieved his highest grades in conduct (discipline). Griffith has pointed out that “rigorous training required admirable discipline, but for most young Creek boys the principal aim at this stage of life was not to become a priest or medicine man but to perform some war-like exploit that would earn for them a war name and title.” In the aftermath of the devastation of the Red Stick War, Creek Indian young men searched for new ways to “earn their stripes” as warriors.<sup>24</sup>

Because of the hostilities between Creeks and Americans during that period, Moniac’s attendance at West Point seems bizarre. But his path to the academy began well before the Creek War of 1813–14. In 1790, Chief McGillivray, David Moniac’s grand-uncle, negotiated a treaty with federal officials. In one of the secret agreements later made public, this treaty provided for the education of four Creek youths by the United States.<sup>25</sup> David’s father, Sam, had been one of the Creek interpreters who had gone to New York City with Chief McGillivray. Sam Moniac returned to Creek Country after receiving a peace medal from President Washington. Between 1790 and the outbreak of the Creek War in 1813, Sam Moniac prospered, not only as a rancher and slave owner, but also as the proprietor of a tavern on the famous Federal Road, the major commercial route through the Southeast.<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of the devastation of the Red Stick War and the destruction of the Moniac family property—tavern, inn, herds, and all—David attempted to take advantage of the secret provision in the Treaty of 1790 by formally applying to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Although he had had a limited education, having been

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 24–27.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>25</sup>Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, 25–27; J. Leitch Wright Jr., “Creek-American Treaty of 1790: Alexander McGillivray and the Diplomacy of the Old Southwest,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 51 (December 1967): 379–400; Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley, 1994), 79–84. For the secret provisions of this treaty, see Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., 1931), 2:344.

<sup>26</sup>Thomas S. Woodward, *Woodward’s Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians contained in Letters to Friends in Georgia and Alabama* (1859; repr. Birmingham, Ala., 1939), 88–103. For the famous Federal Road, see Henry D. Southerland Jr. and Jerry E. Brown, *The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation and Alabama, 1806–1836* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1989).

tutored by a man named John McLeod, David's prominent lineage among the Creeks; his exposure to the customs, ideas, and religious beliefs of his white relatives; and the growing presence of non-Indian Scot traders and Moravian missionaries all contributed to his education, albeit in a non-formalized school setting.<sup>27</sup> Despite Moniac's limited Western education, his preparation was comparable to that of other entering cadets. At the time, the United States Military Academy had minimal academic standards for admission.<sup>28</sup>

Federal Indian education policies in the early republic had little concern for the separation of church and state. Much of it was a carry-over from the late colonial period, the Great Awakening, with its emphasis on instruction by missionaries.<sup>29</sup> After 1790, federal treaties besides the Creek accord provided for teachers and schools for American Indians, but did not exclude clergy from being hired.<sup>30</sup> In 1819, at the urging of Thomas J. McKenney, superintendent of Indian trade and later head of the Office of Indian Affairs, as well as through lobbying by various missionary societies, the United States Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act, the first major federal subsidy of Indian education; it provided moneys to support religious groups and private individuals willing to reside and teach in native communities.<sup>31</sup> Previously, some native peoples had attended schools of higher learning, including Eleazer Wheelock's Moor's Charity School, and Samuel Kirkland's Hamilton-Oneida Academy, the precursors of Dartmouth and Hamilton colleges, respectively.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Griffith, "Lt. David Moniac," 73–78. For the Scot-Irish traders, see Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels*; and Edward J. Cashin, *Lachlan McGillivray, Indian Trader: The Shaping of the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens, Ga., 1992). For the Moravian missionaries, see Edmund Schwarze, *History of the Moravian Missions Among Southern Indian Tribes*, Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society (Bethlehem, Pa., 1923), 1:93–98.

<sup>28</sup> See n. 2. See also Samuel E. Tillman, "The Academic History of the Military Academy, 1802–1902," in *The Centennial History of the United States Military Academy at West Point, 1802–1902* (Washington, D.C., 1904), 2:223–33.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607–1783* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 259–63.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the Treaty with the Oneida (1794), 7 *Stat.*, 47; Treaty with the Kaskaskia (1803), 7 *Stat.*, 78.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1:141–54. See also Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policies, 1816–1830* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> For Wheelock and Kirkland, see William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 539, 548–63. For Indians at Wheelock's school, see James Dow McCallum, ed., *The Letters of Eleazer Wheelock's Indians* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 1932). For Kirkland's school, see Walter Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland* (Clinton, N.Y.: Hamilton College, 1980), 192–93, 245–49, 270–79.



Moniac was not the first Creek to be educated by being sent away from his community. As early as 1783, Spanish missionaries in Florida had established schools with the avowed goal of extending Christianity and totally transforming the Indians, including the Creeks. In 1799, John Pierce established the first American school in Alabama, then Mississippi Territory, on the edge of Creek Country, an institution that attracted dozens of Indians whose fathers were of Euroamerican ancestry. Moreover, David Tate, David Moniac's uncle, had been sent to Abernethy, Scotland, and later to Philadelphia for his education. By virtue of this worldly education and his membership in the Sehoj lineage of the Wind Clan, Tate later became a leader of the Tensaw Settlements in Alabama Creek Country. By encouraging David Moniac's application to and tenure at West Point, Tate, Moniac's maternal uncle, was actually grooming the young cadet to follow in his footsteps.<sup>33</sup>

The correspondence concerning Moniac's appointment to West Point reveals much. On 1 March 1816, Colonel Gilbert Russell wrote the secretary of war that David's father, Sam Moniac, was one of "the friendly Creeks." Despite David's young age—he was only thirteen years old at the time—Colonel Russell insisted that he was more industrious "than boys generally are of riper age" and therefore his age should "constitute no objection in this case." Colonel Russell wrote that Moniac's application had the support of the Creek Nation and that he was the only tribal member put forth to attend West Point. He then explained why Moniac's appointment would be essential to the needs of the United States: "The distinguished McGillivray was the great uncle of the boy—his father has been eminently useful in the late war—his friends are numerous and powerful and are anxiously waiting the result of his application. *Educated in our National Seminary [West Point] he will acquire a permanent attachment to our Government and our laws [emphasis ours].*"<sup>34</sup>

In other words, much like those of later foreign nationals who attended the academy, Moniac's appointment was seen in terms of the national interest, as an important bridge to ameliorate tensions caused by the Creek War. Concluding that Moniac's appointment was essential to both the Creeks' and America's future, Russell added, "By his example he will inspire a love for the whites, their manners and customs" that would make him "productive" and a "benefit to the Country."<sup>35</sup>

Although this strong recommendation did not lead to the Creek

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<sup>33</sup>Frank, *Creeks and Southerners*, 65–66. Frank mistakenly says that David Moniac "proved his martial prowess in the Red Stick War of 1813–1814" (65). David Moniac would have been a boy of eleven or twelve at the time of the war.

<sup>34</sup>Gilbert Russell to William H. Crawford, 1 March 1816. United States Military Academy Application Papers, Record Group 94, Records of the United States Department of War, National Archives Microfilm Reel 5, File #35 (1816), USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>35</sup>Russell to Crawford, 1 March 1816.

boy's immediate appointment, the Moniacs and their supporters continued to lobby for David's admission. The following year, David Tate, Moniac's uncle, and Tate's influential white political allies appealed directly to Secretary of War W. H. Crawford in an attempt to get the boy admitted. This second effort led to Moniac's admission to the school in September 1817 when Moniac was only fourteen years, eight months old.<sup>36</sup> Since he decided to repeat the first year at West Point, he is officially listed in his Cullum file as entering as a fifteen-year-old.<sup>37</sup> Despite his youth, Moniac was not the youngest cadet in his class.<sup>38</sup> Later, in the 1850s, one family friend claimed that Moniac's admission and education at West Point stemmed from his father Sam's "faithful and disinterested friendship . . . to the whites."<sup>39</sup>

When Moniac arrived at West Point in 1817, the academy was in crisis. Superintendent Alden Partridge had done little to improve training in the years from 1814 to 1817. The physical condition of the post was not adequate for the growing needs of the institution, despite new barracks, a mess building, and an instructional academy; the library was inadequate; cadet discipline was undermined by administrative favoritism; faculty morale was low; and a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum was nonexistent, despite the presence of several distinguished faculty. Among faculty members were David Bates Douglass, professor of natural history and later of mathematics and civil engineering; Andrew Ellicott, professor of mathematics; and Claude Crozet, assistant professor of engineering.

Douglass, a hero of the War of 1812, came to the military academy in 1815. An aspiring young scientist interested in natural history, he later served on Lewis Cass's Expedition of 1820, which surveyed the northwestern regions of Michigan Territory; supervised construction as a civil engineer on the western section of the Erie Canal; and designed New York's famous Croton Aqueduct as well as Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery.<sup>40</sup> His father-in-law, Andrew Ellicott, was the "star" of the military

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<sup>36</sup> Russell to Crawford, 9 January 1817, United States Military Academy Application Papers, Record Group 94, Records of the United States Department of War, National Archives Microfilm Reel 6, File #78 (1817) under "David Manack," USMA Library, ASC; Sylvanus Thayer to Joseph G. Swift, 22 May 1818, in *Sylvanus Thayer Papers* (West Point, N.Y.: Association of Graduates, 1965), vol. 3 (non-paginated).

<sup>37</sup> Cadet David Moniac Cullum File No. 324, USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>38</sup> See chart 2.

<sup>39</sup> Woodward, *Woodward's Reminiscences*, 89.

<sup>40</sup> For David Bates Douglass, see George W. Cullum, comp., *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York from Its Establishment, in 1802, to 1890*, 3rd ed., rev. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1891), 1:35–36 (#77 on the Academic Board). See also William B. Shaw, "Douglass, David Bates," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 5:405–07.

academy, and consequently Douglass soon became involved in every aspect of West Point's administration, from the importing and purchasing of textbooks from overseas, to admissions and dismissals of cadets, to overseeing the care of the cadets themselves. His vast correspondence is filled with letters from well-heeled politicians and high-ranking military officers asking him to intercede on behalf of individual students; however, nowhere does one find correspondence with Moniac or his family, suggesting that the Creek Indian was largely on his own and fending for himself during his tenure at West Point.<sup>41</sup>

Ellicott, one of the leading surveyors of the time, had achieved much before taking his position as professor of mathematics at West Point in 1813. Significantly, he was an active member of the American Philosophical Society, having been elected in 1786. Ellicott had been part of the team that extended the survey of the Mason-Dixon Line in 1767; had helped define the western boundary of Pennsylvania in 1786; had laid the base line for the survey of the Northwest Territory; had determined the boundaries of New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania; had completed Pierre Charles L'Enfant's work on the plan for the District of Columbia; and had tutored Meriwether Lewis before his epic expedition. Ellicott was to die of a stroke at West Point in 1820.<sup>42</sup>

Crozet, a graduate of the French *École Polytechnique* who had earlier served in Napoleon's army, later became the first superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute. The brilliant Crozet, who barely spoke English on his arrival, soon found that even if the cadets understood his limited English, his level of instruction was beyond the comprehension of most of his students. Since many military texts were written in French during the age of Napoleon, all cadets at West Point were required to take courses and demonstrate proficiency in the language.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately for Moniac, that language requirement was to be his major stumbling block at the academy.

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<sup>41</sup>Douglass protested tariff duties placed on textbooks imported from overseas. David Bates Douglass to Joseph Anderson, 25 November 1821. The wife of the prominent congressman (and later secretary of war) Peter Porter sent \$40 to him for the care of her son. Lattia Porter to Douglass, 11 June 1821. A military officer asked Douglass to look after Congressman David Trimble's son while he was at West Point. Colonel Roger Jones to Douglass, 25 November 1818. The renowned military officer Josiah Snelling asked Douglass to intercede after his son was dismissed from the academy. Josiah Snelling to Douglass, 6 May 1822. David Bates Douglass MSS, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>42</sup>Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 1:36–37 (#70 on the Academic Board). See also a brief survey of Ellicott's life and accomplishments: Silvio A. Bedini, "Ellicott, Andrew," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7:415–16.

<sup>43</sup>See n. 2. For Crozet, see also Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 1:35 (#76 on the Academic Board).

In 1817, Sylvanus Thayer took over the reins of administration at the United States Military Academy. Thayer initiated wide reforms and demanded a higher level of academic performance. To the new superintendent, the curriculum had “to relate to the mission of training engineers or soldiers; all other instruction, however interesting, was irrelevant.”<sup>44</sup> Thayer had to contend with the lax admission standards that required proficiency only in reading, grammar, and arithmetic; the extreme variation in the students’ educational preparation led to a substantial attrition rate. Only 40 out of 119 students in Moniac’s class were to be graduated in 1822.<sup>45</sup> In order to deal with this variation in student preparation, Thayer began a system of tracking. Each class was formed into sections of from 10 to 20 cadets, based on the proficiency of the cadets; they could be transferred to more advanced or slower sections based on their oral and written performances. Much weight for class evaluation was placed on daily oral recitation at the blackboard.<sup>46</sup>

Much more formal than the four previous superintendents, Thayer carried out the idea of ranking cadets in every activity, class, and section, and on the drill field; infractions of the regulations at any time lowered a cadet’s standings. The cadet was graded in every single class, every day, and every week. He had to take semiannual examinations in January and June, with certain subjects, especially mathematics, given the most weight in his final academic standing. Thayer instituted an “Academy Board,” modeled on France’s *École Polytechnique*, under his supervision. The duty of the board was “to fix and improve the system of studies and instruction, to conduct and decide upon all examinations, and to specify in detail the duties of the several instructors.”<sup>47</sup> Besides formalizing routine and adding an “aura of pomp and dignity” to cadet life, Thayer required that the students’ June examinations be held before a group of distinguished outside observers. This Board of Visitors, first established by Thayer’s predecessor, would judge individual cadets as well as the successes or failures of the academy’s overall program. The Board of Visitors would also make recommendations for improving specific courses as well as for the overall curriculum, set procedures to regulate cadets’ behavior and enforce discipline, and evaluate

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<sup>44</sup>Peter Michael Molloy, “Technical Education and the Young Republic: West Point as America’s *École Polytechnique*, 1802–1833” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1975), 389.

<sup>45</sup>David Moniac’s Academic Record, 18 September 1817–1 July 1822. Register of Officers and Cadets, USMA, 1817–1822. Both found in USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>46</sup>Molloy, “Technical Education and the Young Republic,” 425–28.

<sup>47</sup>Edgar Denton, “The Formative Years of the United States Military Academy, 1775–1833” (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1964), 184–85.

library holdings. They would make suggestions about areas of future development.<sup>48</sup>

The superintendent placed a “heavy stress upon the need for a total control of the student’s activities.”<sup>49</sup> He believed that idleness was not conducive to instilling discipline. Thayer filled the cadet’s entire day on a year-round basis, ending the three-month winter recess. To ferret out gambling activities and limit cadets’ access to the nearby North (Gridley’s) Tavern, all of the students’ money was kept by the college treasurer; the cadets were not allowed to bring or receive moneys from home. Thayer decreed that a cadet’s final ranking would include a conduct grade, whose weight of importance would increase with progression from the first to the fourth year.<sup>50</sup> Thayer required a battalion of cadets, making up most of the academy’s student population, and including Cadet Moniac, to make forced marches to Hudson, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston during the hottest month of the year and give performances of their precision drills.<sup>51</sup> Thayer as well as the Board of Visitors was especially troubled by the mischief that cadets would get into because of the location of a tavern just outside the gates of the post and the relative proximity of the academy to “New York and other cities” where cadets could flock on vacations “to indulge in dissipation and to contract disease, vices and debts.” To counteract these vices, Thayer instituted compulsory chapel attendance in 1818. The chapel followed a Protestant service.<sup>52</sup>

Cadet Moniac was a respectful cadet who obeyed nearly all of the rules of the academy. His overall rank in conduct was 15, placing him in the top 40 percent of his class in this category.<sup>53</sup> At a time when Thayer instilled a stern hand and students were subject to military court-martial, Moniac’s record was impressive. He received very few demerits

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<sup>48</sup>United States Military Academy, *Annual Report of the Board of Visitors* for 1819, 1821, and 1822. USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>49</sup>Molloy, “Technical Education and the Young Republic,” 425.

<sup>50</sup>See n. 2; see also *General Regulations for the Army; or Military Institutes* (Philadelphia, 1821).

<sup>51</sup>*A Journal of a March Performed by the Corps of Cadets of the United States Military Academy [to Hudson, New York] in the Year 1819* (Newburgh, N.Y., 1819), 6, 44; *A Journal of a March Performed by the Corps of Cadets of the United States Military Academy [to Philadelphia] in the Year 1820* (Newburgh, N.Y., 1820); *Journal of a March Performed by the Corps of Cadets of the United States Military Academy [to Boston] in the Year 1821* (Newburgh, N.Y., 1821), all found in USMA Library, ASC. Cadet Moniac is listed as a private in 1819 (6), a corporal in 1820 (8), and a private again in 1821 (40).

<sup>52</sup>Sylvanus Thayer to Joseph G. Swift (?), 14 April 1818, Sylvanus Thayer MSS (no pagination); *Annual Report of the Board of Visitors . . . 1822*, 75–76.

<sup>53</sup>David Moniac Cadet Record Card, USMA Staff Records, No. 1: 1818–1845; USMA Register of Merit, No. 1: 1817–1835; David Moniac’s Academic Record, 18 September 1817–1 July 1822, Register of Officers and Cadets, USMA, 1818–1822.

during years when two hundred per year led to automatic dismissal from the academy. Moniac was cited twenty-one times for alleged delinquencies, none of which were alcohol-related or indicated that he was involved in fights with his classmates. Ten of the infractions dealt with cutting, or talking during, study hall. Twice he was written up for failing to sign his name when he was paid his monthly stipend. Twice he was reprimanded for staying in bed after morning roll call, and, on another occasion, he was cited for not being in bed before curfew. He was also “delinquent” for cutting two classes in tactics, and once for missing military drill. On two occasions he neglected to hail the officer of the day, perhaps the most egregious of his offenses while a cadet at the academy.<sup>54</sup> These records, however, reveal another aspect of Moniac’s days at West Point: he was in financial debt. “These cadets [one of whom was David Moniac] did not sing [*sic*] the payroll because their pay was passed directly to their creditors.”<sup>55</sup> It should be pointed out that his family’s declining fortunes in Alabama eventually led to Moniac’s resignation of his military commission soon after his graduation from West Point.

Thayer’s emphasis on discipline led to a crisis in 1818. The superintendent had appointed Captain John Bliss, an army officer, as commandant of cadets. Bliss, an overly strict disciplinarian, angered the cadets when he grabbed a cadet, Edward L. Nicholson, by the collar and shook and publicly rebuked him. One hundred eighty cadets, well over half of those enrolled at the academy, wrote a bill of particulars about the incident, adding the accusation that Bliss had thrown stones at them, and condemning the commandant’s treatment of Nicholson. Five of the cadets then tried to bring their complaints to Thayer. The superintendent rejected the petitions twice, calling the action a cabal unworthy of cadets; he ordered them to desist from their mutinous actions. The five cadets then went to a tavern off base, whereupon Thayer dismissed them from the academy. Subsequently, Thayer asked for a court of inquiry, which eventually concluded that Bliss had maltreated Nicholson, but then found that the cadets had been mutinous.<sup>56</sup>

At the court of inquiry, Moniac, who had not been one of the five dismissed in the incident, gave written testimony that Bliss had thrown

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<sup>54</sup>Register of Delinquencies, Cadet David Moniac, 1819–1822, USMA Library, ASC. Papas maintains that two hundred “demerits” led to expulsion. *To the Point*, 159–60.

<sup>55</sup>Register of Delinquencies, Cadet David Moniac.

<sup>56</sup>*Exposé of Facts Concerning Recent Transactions Relating to the Corps of Cadets of the USMA at West Point, New York* (Newburgh, N.Y., 1818), 13–20. David Bates Douglass later questioned the procedure involved in dismissing Bliss. David Bates Douglass to John Bliss, [?] February 1819, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

stones at him and other cadets.<sup>57</sup> Both the court of inquiry and later the United States attorney general, William Wirt, upheld Thayer's actions in dismissing the five cadets. In the wake of this crisis, instead of relaxing discipline, Thayer hardened his position, appointing two assistants, junior officers in the army, to aid the commandant in enforcing discipline in the barracks.<sup>58</sup>

Although the Creek youth successfully navigated his first year at West Point, ranking nineteenth in the class, he was held back at his own request on completion of the June examinations. The next year, he repeated the year's curriculum. It is interesting to note that Moniac's new class, the graduating class of 1822, which entered West Point in September 1818, had thirteen other cadets younger than or approximately the same age as Moniac, suggesting that the Creek Indian's youth was a factor in his repeating the first year's course work.<sup>59</sup>

The class of 1822, Moniac's graduation class of forty, included five future generals in the United States Army, two generals in the New Jersey militia, two high-ranking officers in the Confederate army, three college presidents, and at least five civil engineers and/or chief operating officers of railroads. At least ten of the forty graduates resigned their commissions or died before the outbreak of the Second Seminole War in 1835. Seventeen of the cadets served on the frontier, including three in Creek Country, ten in the Second Seminole War, and one in the Cherokee removal. Three in the class of 1822 died during the Second Seminole War, including Moniac himself.<sup>60</sup> Among the most distinguished members of the class was David Hunter, who served in the Black Hawk War, Second Seminole War, and Civil War. Rising to the rank of major general, Hunter later served on the military commission for the trial of the conspirators in President Lincoln's assassination.<sup>61</sup> Joseph K. F. Mansfield was ranked second in the class of 1822; he was the nephew of Professor Jared Mansfield of the United States Military Academy. Rising to the rank of major general after a record of excellence in the Mexican War and Civil War, Joseph Mansfield was killed in

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<sup>57</sup> Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 79.

<sup>58</sup> According to Cadets Moniac and McCormick, "We do hereby certify on honor, that on or about the 26th of October, 1818, captain John Bliss, without the least provocation, did throw stones at us, and at several other cadets of the Military Academy." *An Exposé of Facts*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Cadet David Moniac's Academic Record, Register of Officers and Cadets, USMA, 1818–1822; "June 1818 turned back to 4th Class by his own request." David Moniac Cadet Record Card, USMA Library, ASC. See also chart 2.

<sup>60</sup> See chart 2.

<sup>61</sup> Conrad Lanza, "Hunter, David," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 9 (1932): 400–01.

action at the Battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862.<sup>62</sup> His cousin, George Dutton, who was first in the class but only achieved the rank of major before his death in 1857, later served as commander of federal harbor fortifications in New York City.<sup>63</sup> Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, another of Moniac's classmates, later played a key role in the Confederate army in Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley operations in 1862, at the Second Battle of Bull Run, and as a major general at Gettysburg, where he lost a leg and was captured.<sup>64</sup> Nicholas Trist, later the renowned diplomat who negotiated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), ending the Mexican War, was Moniac's classmate, but dropped out of the academy before his graduation.<sup>65</sup>

Although we have no documents revealing Moniac's interaction with his fellow cadets, the Creek Indian appears to have served as mentor for at least one plebe. Just before his departure from West Point in 1822, Moniac apparently befriended young Maskell C. Ewing from Pennsylvania. The fifteen-year-old Ewing wrote home that June about his attendance at an evening parade and how he was roused from his lovely sleep by the roar of a cannon at 3:00 a.m. Ewing, who later served in the Second Seminole War and went on to a brief but prominent career as chief canal engineer of Georgetown in the District of Columbia and surveyor of Alexandria, Virginia, wrote that he was aided in drafting a letter home by "Cadet Moniac."<sup>66</sup>

No matter what their academic ability was, cadets had to face similar challenges beyond their performance in coursework. Just existing at West Point in these years was a difficult challenge. The United States Military Academy was largely isolated. Even though the institution could be reached by river boat from New York City, its inaccessible location in the often fog-covered Hudson Highlands and the poor roads of the time made overland travel difficult, especially in the winter months. The only diversion for the cadets was an illicit visit to the North (Gridley's) Tavern just outside the post's gate. Moreover, the cadet accommodations were Spartan at best. The barracks had no running water; as a result, cadets had to haul it in buckets from a well. Since there was no central heating, cadets had to obtain firewood from the wood

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<sup>62</sup>For Mansfield, see William B. Skelton, "Mansfield, Joseph King Fenno," in *American National Biography*, 14 (1979), 451–52.

<sup>63</sup>For George Dutton, see Cullum File No. 286, USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>64</sup>Gustav J. Fieberger, "Trimble, Isaac Ridgeway," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, 18 (1936): 641–42.

<sup>65</sup>Willard C. Klunder, "Trist, Nicholas Philip," in *American National Biography*, 21 (1991): 832–34.

<sup>66</sup>Maskell C. Ewing, Cullum File No. 444; Journal of Maskell C. Ewing, 1807–1849, USMA Library, ASC.



yard near the barracks. Because of the constant threat of fires, a water bucket and a tinderbox were required in the barracks. The barracks contained little furniture, and cadets themselves had to buy all furnishings with the \$18 monthly stipend provided to them by the federal government.<sup>67</sup>

On recommendations from the superintendent and the Board of Visitors, the academy's curriculum was constantly being revised, especially in the early Thayer years. Much of the focus was on mathematics. The mathematics curriculum included course work in algebra, geometry—both conic sections and descriptive geometry, surveying techniques, and trigonometry. Cadets had to take engineering courses that dealt with the science of war, field and permanent fortifications, and artillery, as well as other aspects of civil and military engineering. Besides the French language and moral philosophy, as previously mentioned, the academy required courses in chemistry and mineralogy; drawing; geography, history, and ethics (sometimes grouped separately as history and national and political law); and natural and experimental philosophy, which, despite its designation, included statistics and dynamics—the laws of falling bodies and the motion of projectiles and pendulums.<sup>68</sup>

Besides translations of French textbooks on military science inspired by Napoleon, such as Gay de Vernon's *Treatise on the Science of War and Fortification*, cadets were exposed to other classics such as M. D. Vattel's *Law of Nations* and Jedidiah Morse's *American Geography*, both of which had direct relevance to Moniac and his Creek peoples.<sup>69</sup> In chapter 26, Vattel maintained that a country that entered into an alliance, even by paying tribute to a stronger nation, did "not derogate from its sovereignty, and has no other difference between it, and ordinary treaties of alliance, than what arises from the difference it produces in the dignity of the contracting parties." Using this logic, Moniac could rationalize his presence in the seat of America's military power, namely as a Creek ally of the more powerful United States, the "protector" of his people's interests.<sup>70</sup>

In his geography, history, and ethics course, Moniac read Morse's *American Geography*. This book had gone through many editions and revisions since its first publication in the decade after the American Revolution. Morse's geographies dealt with the frontier and reflected the

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<sup>67</sup>Pappas, *To the Point*, 114–15; Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 70.

<sup>68</sup>See n. 2.

<sup>69</sup>[Simon François] Gay de Vernon, *A Treatise on the Science of War and Fortification*, trans. John O'Connor (New York, 1817).

<sup>70</sup>M. de Vattel, *The Law of Nations, or Principles of the Law of Nature Applied to the Conduct of Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (repr. ed., Northampton, Mass., 1805).

widespread belief in the inevitability of America's westward destiny. Morse's work was a compendium of knowledge—anthropology, astronomy, biology, geology, geography, history, and philosophy. Through his crystal ball and religious faith, Morse, a Protestant minister, predicted America's continental destiny, namely, the annexation of Florida, the Mexican War, and the Oregon settlement. Predestination—geographical and religious—had ensured the success of the rising American empire. To Morse, in this and his other widely read works, the Indians had to be removed and assimilated as quickly as possible “for their own good,” a fact obviously not lost on a Creek cadet reading this work at West Point.<sup>71</sup>

Moniac's overall record in these courses must be read with care. Even though he was graduated 39 out of 40 in overall rank, the class of 1822 started with 117 cadets in 1818.<sup>72</sup> The Creek cadet's record is also somewhat ambiguous and hard to interpret. For example, in August 1820, he was appointed fourth sergeant of the second company of cadets. Later, in June 1821, he was promoted to first sergeant, but after only a week he stepped down from this appointment. The reasons for this action remain a mystery.<sup>73</sup>

In 1818, the Swedish government sent Baron Alex Klinkowstrom, a lieutenant colonel on their fleet's general staff, to study and report on America's revolutionary achievement in the construction and use of steamboats. Baron Klinkowstrom spent a year and a half traveling through the eastern part of the United States, writing two reports that ended up describing much more than his intended mission. In one letter from 1820, he described his visit to West Point, the physical setting, the school's admissions policy, the library and other facilities, the military training, and the nature and quality of instruction. He was especially curious about the academy's heavy emphasis on mathematics and civil engineering.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Jedidiah Morse, *American Geography*, 2nd ed. (London, 1792), 463, 469, 474–75; Mollo, “Technical Education and the Young Republic,” 414. Morse wrote specifically about Indians and Indian policies; see, for example, his major report of 1820: *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs Comprising a Narrative of a Tour Performed in the Summer of 1820 . . .* (New Haven, Conn., 1822). For a full listing of textbooks used at West Point during Moniac's attendance and after, see Edward S. Holden and W. L. Ostrander, “A Tentative List of Text-Books Used in the United States Military Academy at West Point From 1802 to 1902,” in *Centennial History of the United States Military Academy*, 2:439–65.

<sup>72</sup>David Moniac Academic Record While a cadet at the United States Military Academy, 18 September 1817–1 July 1822. Register of Officers and Cadets, USMA, 1818–1822, USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>73</sup>Post Orders No. 1: 1817–1822; Post Orders No. 2: 1822–1823, USMA Library, ASC.

<sup>74</sup>Baron Axel Klinkowstrom, “A Swedish View of West Point in 1820: A Letter from Baron Axel Klinkowstrom,” ed. Franklin D. Scott, *New York History* 33 (1950): 313–19.

The baron contrasted the training there with that of the military schools of Europe. He pointed out that the United States Military Academy demanded more mathematics than its European counterparts, but less training in “tumbling, equestrian skills, or dancing” and less foreign language proficiency. He was surprised to learn that many of the cadets abandoned the military profession after graduation and became “mechanical engineers or surveyors or the like,” feeling “no obligation to stay in government service, and the government never refuses them discharge.”<sup>75</sup>

Klinkowstrom was taken to a class in mathematics, where he witnessed what he considered an extraordinary scene: an American Indian student in the process of “demonstrating and analyzing the relation between cosine, sine and radius.” The Indian “did this by means of a rather involved calculation during which the instructor repeatedly interrupted to refer him to other theories which might have some relation to the problem demonstrated.” The Swedish visitor then added, “This youth is a descendant of the Creek nation; his name is Moniac. In all probability he does not intend to go into the service of the United States, but to return to his people in order to give them the benefit of his achieved knowledge. He can also check the American surveyors in case the United States wishes to buy more land from the Creek territory.”<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps seeing this scene as a contrast to the Swedish government’s policies toward the Sami (Lapps), the indigenous peoples of Scandinavia, the baron praised American efforts to “uplift” the “Red men.”<sup>77</sup> Whether the encounter was staged by Thayer to show the success and/or cultural diversity of the academy, we will never know; however, the incident does reveal something confirmed by Moniac’s later actions, namely, that he, as was true of some of the other cadets, came to the academy with more complex motives than a burning desire for a lifelong military career. His first priority appears to have been self-improvement, taking advantage of a free education, not a deep commitment to defend the American flag. He clearly saw the advantage of this training and of the government stipend paid to cadets at the time. In some ways, he was no different from other cadets. Thirty percent of the class of 1822 left military service for civilian careers in the decade after graduation,

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 319.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid. Franklin D. Scott, the editor of Klinkowstrom’s letter, claims that “David Moniac must have had one of his better days when Klinkowstrom visited the class, and the event may have been staged for his benefit.” This suggestion appears to be quite condescending and unfounded, based on the evidence uncovered by the authors.

indicating that patriotic military service often took a back seat to economic realities after the War of 1812.<sup>78</sup>

In August 1821, more than two hundred cadets marched from West Point to Boston. When they arrived in the city, they performed their drills with precision, and their marching band played rousing martial music. One observer, Josiah Quincy, accompanied his famous relative, the former president John Adams, to the pageantry and wrote, “Here was a military corps, splendidly equipped and composed of the most promising young men in the country. The training at West Point was then far superior to any given at the colleges, and these young gentlemen were known to be subjected to an intellectual discipline which was quite as severe as their physical drill.”<sup>79</sup>

One of those young men was David Moniac. The corps then marched across the bridge to Cambridge, where they were honored at a banquet at Harvard University. Subsequently, they returned to the city, where they toured the Bunker Hill battlefield. Former president John Adams then invited the cadets to his home in nearby Quincy. There, the corps once again went through their exercises and musical performances. The venerable Founding Father then addressed the troops, suggesting that their education “should give them knowledge much more than military tactics.”<sup>80</sup>

At Quincy, the commandant of cadets, one Major William Worth, tried to induce Cadet Moniac to meet with the former president. Moniac refused. Worth informed Adams, “He [Moniac] is too bashful.” Worth added, “I have myself been taken for the Indian all along the road. People would point to me and say, ‘Look there! there’s the Indian!’”<sup>81</sup> Despite Moniac’s education in the white world of West Point and his long absence from Creek Country, Moniac was still *the* Indian in the ranks, gawked at for being the exception, the “civilized Red Man” in the bastion of American military power. He still saw himself as in a foreign land far away from his homeland, the Creek Towns, his kin, his people. Moreover, being the center of attention—a celebrity—was not a value taught in Creek Country. The group, rather than the individual, had been emphasized during his childhood in Tuskegee. Although the values of teamwork were emphasized at West Point, individuals were set apart from each other and competition was stressed by Thayer’s extensive ranking system.

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<sup>78</sup> See chart 2.

<sup>79</sup> Quincy, *Figures of the Past*, 89.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–93.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 92. Major Worth, a graduate of West Point, had been a hero of the War of 1812. William Worth Cullum File No. 26, USMA Library, ASC.

In April of his last year at West Point, Moniac received an impassioned plea from his uncle David Tate: "I would advise you to get home as quickly as you can conveniently do it, as your presence is very much wanted at home." Tate informed his nephew that Sam Moniac had become a habitual drunk and that he had made bad trades that had resulted in the loss of all his property. Tate recommended that David take on the family responsibilities since his father could no longer carry them out. Although David's mother still owned some land and some slaves, she and her daughter now needed David's assistance. Tate then informed his nephew that he had arranged through an attorney in New York City for David's passage by ship to Mobile, Pensacola, or Blakely.<sup>82</sup>

Moniac, nevertheless, waited to complete his education and was graduated from the United States Military Academy in June of 1822, receiving a commission as second lieutenant in the 6th United States Infantry in early July. Although he accepted the commission that he had worked so long to achieve, he subsequently received a leave of absence and resigned from active duty on 31 December 1822.<sup>83</sup> He went back to Alabama, where he rebuilt the family's financial prospects. Eventually, he established a plantation in Baldwin County, Alabama, where he raised cotton and bred race horses. He later married Mary Powell, the cousin of Osceola, the Creek-born leader of the Seminoles.<sup>84</sup>

Ironically, when the Second Seminole War erupted in 1835, Moniac received a military commission the next year. Promoted to major, he was responsible for raising and leading 750 mounted Creek volunteers against Osceola and the Indians of Florida. On 20 November 1836, Major Moniac was killed in action while leading his Creek troops in a frontal assault on the Seminoles at the Battle of Wahoo Swamp, in today's Sumter County, Florida.<sup>85</sup>

Because of his later involvement in fighting Seminoles, Moniac may be judged by some contemporary Native Americans as an "apple," red on the outside and white on the inside, a label that became widespread in the 1960s to characterize acculturated Indians who stressed accommodation or less militant strategies; however, the designation appears to be unfair to Moniac. To be sure, West Point instilled in him "duty, honor, country" as it did for all its graduates. No doubt, both his sponsor Colonel Russell and Superintendent Thayer believed that Moniac,

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<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Foreman, "The Brave Major Moniac and the Creek Volunteers," 98–99.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, 98–99; David Moniac's Cullum File No. 324.

<sup>84</sup> T. Tate Tunstall [David Moniac's cousin] to General Daniel Tyler, 23 March 1876, found in David Moniac's Cullum File No. 324. Griffith, "Lt. David Moniac, Creek Indian," 104.

<sup>85</sup> Motte, *Journey Into Wilderness*, 22, 255n9; *Army and Navy Chronicle*, New Series (July 1–December 31, 1836): 374–75.

of distinguished Indian ancestry, could be useful to facilitate improved Creek–United States relations.

Moniac’s life demonstrates the problem of generalizing about the Native American experience. The world he lived in, today’s Alabama, could not be schematically set out in a neat racial divide—white, black, and Indian. Creek identity was multidimensional, dependent mostly on the town the individual Creek happened to be born in, or on the economic or kinship ties a Scottish trader happened to gain. Just as self-interest motivated American colonists to choose to become rebels or Loyalists in the American Revolution, so Creeks chose different sides throughout their history, as late as the Civil War. Just as American identity was in the process of evolving in the years before and after 1776, many of the Indians of Georgia and Alabama living and existing in different towns under different circumstances were becoming a Creek Nation. Moreover, to claim that the Indian world was a cohesive reality similar to a European nation-state unified against the white invader is simply a fiction, reading back into the past what is “politically correct” today.

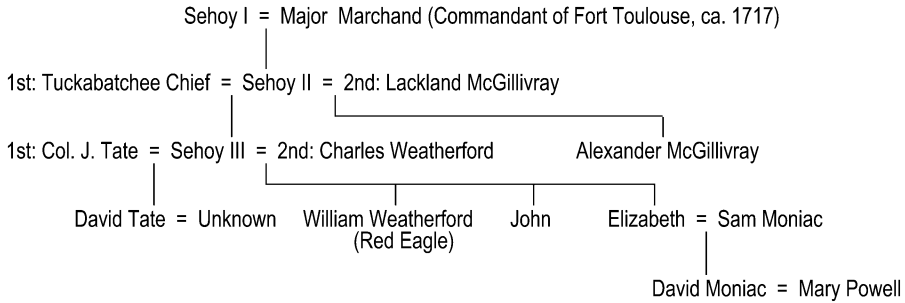
Although the Creek cadet was patronized by Commandant Worth, who pushed him forward as an example of the “civilized Indian,” Moniac’s experience at West Point is clearly distinct from the rabid prejudice faced by three African Americans fifty years later after the Civil War. Perhaps Thayer’s dominating presence, his careful efforts to limit favoritism, and the academic demands made West Point different from the way it was years later, when hazing, and with it open racism, became more rooted in the academy’s experience.<sup>86</sup>

Moniac’s early Creek training clearly had a bearing on his ability to deal with the rigors of West Point. Some of his actions at the academy, most notably his response to President Adams’s request, could have been motivated by his upbringing. The warrior ethos of his people and the respect it brought led him to fulfill his mission, even while delaying his return home. Hence, his West Point experience did not eradicate his “Indianness,” but rather, in some ways, redefined it.

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<sup>86</sup> See Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper, *The Colored Cadet at West Point: An Autobiography* (New York, 1878).

CHART 1  
David Moniac's Genealogy



Genealogy compiled from the following sources: Henry D. Southerland Jr. and Jerry E. Brown, *The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation and Alabama, 1806–1836* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1989), 117–18; David A. Bagwell, “David Moniac: The Clarke County Farmer Who Was the First Indian West Point Graduate,” *Clarke County [Alabama] Historical Society Quarterly* 19 (Winter 1994–95): 18–27; and Thomas S. Woodward, *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek or Muscogee Indians Contained in Letters to Friends in Georgia and Alabama* (1859; repr. Birmingham, Ala., 1939), 88–103.

CHART 2  
The Graduating Class of 1822, United States Military Academy

<i>Cadet's Name</i>	<i>Class Rank</i>	<i>Place of Birth</i>	<i>Age and Year of Death</i>	<i>Highest Rank Achieved</i>	<i>Major Military Service</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Dutton, George	1	Connecticut	54; 1857	Major	In charge of federal harbor fortifications, New York City; died in military service	
Mansfield, Joseph K. F.	2	Connecticut	59; 1862	Major General	Mexican War, Civil War, KIA at Antietam	Cousin of George Dutton and nephew of Col. Jared Mansfield of U.S.M.A.
Smith, Charles G.	3	Connecticut	29; 1827	2nd Lieutenant	Artillery officer and assistant instructor at U.S.M.A.; died in military service at Fort Moultrie, S.C.	
Ingalls, Thomas R.	4	New York	66; 1864	2nd Lieutenant	Served briefly until resignation from the military in 1829	Later professor of chemistry, college president, medical doctor in Louisiana
Bliss, Horace	5	New Hampshire	76; 1878	1st Lieutenant	Resigned from U.S. military service in 1832; Brigadier General N.J. Militia, 1848–65	Later railroad engineer

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Cook, William	6	New Jersey	64; 1865	1st Lieutenant, resigned 1832	Brigadier General, New York Militia, 1848–65	Later railroad engineer
Rose, William	7	New York	24; 1825	2nd Lieutenant	Limited military service; died in military service	
Gwynn, Walter	8	Virginia	80; 1882	1st Lieutenant, resigned 1832	Artillery officer in Virginia and Louisiana	Later, officer in Confederate States of America, 1861–65
Graham, Campbell	9	Virginia	67; 1866	Major, Corps of Engineers	Second Seminole War, cited for heroism; various civil engineering projects from Mississippi to Massachusetts to California	
Wheelock, Thompson	10	Massachusetts	35; 1836	1st Lieutenant (returned to service after four-year hiatus in 1833)	Second Seminole War, died at Fort McCanopy, Fla.	Later college president, 1830–33
Cooke, James H.	11	North Carolina	39; 1833	1st Lieutenant	Artillery officer at various posts; resigned in 1833	Civil engineer
Young, William C.	12	Ohio	unknown	2nd Lieutenant	Limited military service; resigned in 1826	Engineer and president of various New York railroads
Canfield, Augustus	13	New Jersey	53; 1854	Captain	Corps of Engineers—various assignments on Great Lakes; died in military service	
Vinton, David H.	14	Rhode Island	70; 1873	Colonel; assistant quartermaster general	Second Seminole War and Creek War; Mexican War; Civil War, POW	
Schuler, John	15	Pennsylvania	85; 1888	2nd Lieutenant	Limited military service; resigned in 1828	Later postmaster, merchant, teacher
Pickell, John	16	Pennsylvania	63; 1865	Colonel	Black Hawk War, Second Seminole War, Cherokee removal, Civil War	Later civil engineer, congressman from Maryland, director of C&O canal, coal merchant, newspaper editor
Trimble, Isaac R.	17	Virginia	85; 1888	2nd Lieutenant	Resigned from U.S. military in 1832; Army of the Confederacy	Later engineer for various railroads



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Gird, Henry	18	New York	44; 1845	2nd Lieutenant	Assistant instructor, U.S.M.A.; resigned in 1829	Later professor and college president in Louisiana
Wright, Benjamin	19	New York	80; 1881	2nd Lieutenant	Limited U.S. military service; resigned in 1823	Later railroad engineer in Cuba
Boyce, William	20	Maryland	54; 1855	Captain	Creek War, topographical surveys, frontier duty; resigned in 1836	Later assistant to geodetic survey of the Atlantic coast; died in railroad disaster
Denny, St. Clair	21	Pennsylvania	58; 1858	Major	Frontier duty along northern frontier; Second Seminole War (paymaster)	
Lacey, Westwood	22	Virginia	26; 1829	1st Lieutenant	Limited military service; served in Creek Country 1828–29; died there	
Trenor, Eustace	23	New York	44; 1847	Major	Served in Creek nation, 1825–26; frontier duty in Indian Territory; died in military service	
Wright, George	24	Vermont	62; 1865	Brigadier General	Second Seminole War, Mexican War, Civil War; died in shipwreck in 1865 after commanding Department of the Pacific	
Hunter, David	25	District of Columbia	84; 1886	Major General	Black Hawk War, Second Seminole War, Mexican War, Civil War; Military Commission for the Trial of the Conspirators in President Lincoln's assassination	
McCall, George	26	Pennsylvania	65; 1868	Brigadier General	Second Seminole War, Mexican War, Civil War	Later farmer, 1863–68
Lincoln, Albert	27	Connecticut	20; 1822	2nd Lieutenant	Died right after graduation from U.S.M.A.	
Lee, Francis	28	Pennsylvania	55; 1859	Colonel	Frontier duty in Indian Territory, Second Seminole War, Mexican War; later throughout West	

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Stephenson, James R.	29	Virginia	40; 1841	Captain	Frontier duty in Indian territory, Second Seminole War; died of sickness in Florida	
Hopson, John D.	30	Vermont	31; 1829	1st Lieutenant	Limited military service on frontier	
Morris, Thompson	31	Ohio	70; 1870	Lieutenant Colonel	Second Seminole War, Mexican War	
Wilcox, John R.	32	Vermont	39; 1839	2nd Lieutenant	Limited military service; resigned in 1824	Later fur trader, sutler, merchant
Johnston, Thomas	33	Pennsylvania	33; 1835	Assistant Quartermaster	Frontier duty; "dropped" 1834	
Folger, George	34	Massachusetts	46; 1845	1st Lieutenant	Limited military service; resigned in 1826	
McNamara, Thomas	35	Virginia	unknown	1st Lieutenant	Limited military service, frontier duty; resigned in 1830	
Wright, Aaron	36	New Hampshire	unknown	2nd Lieutenant	Frontier duty, limited military service; dismissed from service in 1823	
Abercrombie, John	37	Tennessee	79; 1877	Brigadier General	Black Hawk War, Second Seminole War, Mexican War, Civil War; cited for meritorious conduct	
Wragg, Samuel	38	South Carolina	25; 1828	2nd Lieutenant	Limited military service	
Moniac, David	39	Alabama	34; 1836	Major	KIA at Battle of Wahoo Swamp, Second Seminole War	Later planter/rancher, 1822-35
Clark, Henry	40	Connecticut	30; 1830	1st Lieutenant	Frontier military service, limited service; died on recruiting mission	

CHART 3  
David Moniac's Final Grades and Rank upon Graduation from the  
United States Military Academy, June 1822\*

	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Class Rank</i>
1. Mathematics	150	26
2. French	0	41
		(tied for last)
3. Philosophy	108	40
4. Engineering	130	41
5. Drawing	50	37
6. Geography/History/Ethics/Natural Law	125	35
7. Chemistry and Mineralogy	143	34
8. Tactics	170	33
9. Conduct	281	15
General Merit	1157	
(highest attainment in class by George Dutton: 1958 1/2)		
Overall Class Rank: 39 (40 graduate)		

\* Compiled from U.S.M.A. Register of Merit No. 1, 1817-1835, U.S.M.A. Library, Special Collections Division.