

OAKAFUSKEE TRAIL/SEVEN ISLANDS ROAD

Before Hernando de Soto and other European explorers first set foot in current-day Georgia in the 1500s, Native Americans had developed a primary trading route connecting tribes in the Charleston, South Carolina area to tribes of the Mississippi River delta. By various connections and spurs, the trail reached the Cherokee tribe of North Georgia, the Creeks of Eastern Alabama and Central Georgia, and the Choctaws and Chickasaws of northern Mississippi. The trail probably had different names among the various tribes, but was likely called Oakfuskee by the Georgia Creeks in the Jasper County area.

In the 1770s, William Bartram of Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Botanical Society explored much of Georgia, noting a string of islands in the Ocmulgee River and calling the area "Seven Islands." In 1790, a treaty between the United States and the Creek Indian nation provided for a new stagecoach route between Augusta, Georgia and Mobile, Alabama. The new route overlaid the Oakfuskee trail and was called the Seven Islands Road.

In 1804 the United States obtained the land between the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers from the Creek nation. Surveyors were dispatched to divide the new public land in preparation for the 1807 land lottery. The surveyors made note of the location of the Seven Islands Road on their survey plats, providing us with a good record of the original route, and indicating that it passed along the northwest side of land lot 111, land district 15, in Jasper County, Georgia.

The Seven Islands Road became a thriving commercial route for the delivery of cotton and other goods to seaports before the advent of the region's railroads. In November 1864, Union troops laid two pontoon bridges across the Ocmulgee at the Seven Islands Road crossing to allow troops to enter Jasper County.

Most evidence of the original road has been destroyed, and some new county roads partially follow the original Seven Islands Road route. But in a few locations, the original road bed remains as a lasting monument to the original Indian trading route between the Atlantic and the Mississippi.