

THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS
OF THE WAR OF 1812

*The
Creek War*

1813-1814



Cover: The Georgia militia under General Floyd attacking the Creek Indians at Autossee, *a colored engraving by an unknown artist, c. 1820* (Courtesy of Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries)



The Creek War

1813–1814

by

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Introduction

The War of 1812 is perhaps the United States' least known conflict. Other than Andrew Jackson's 1815 victory at New Orleans and Francis Scott Key's poem "The Star-Spangled Banner" written in 1814 during the British attack on Baltimore, most Americans know little about the country's second major war. Its causes are still debated by historians today. Great Britain's impressment of American sailors, its seizure of American ships on the high seas, and suspected British encouragement of Indian opposition to further American settlement on the western frontier all contributed to America's decision to declare war against Great Britain in June 1812.

None of these factors, however, adequately explain why President James Madison called for a war the country was ill-prepared to wage. Moreover, the war was quite unpopular from the start. Many Federalists—chiefly in the New England states—opposed an armed conflict with Great Britain, continued to trade with the British, and even met in convention to propose secession from the Union. Some members of the president's own Republican Party objected to the war's inevitable costs and questionable objectives, such as the conquest of Canada.

To declare war was one thing, but to prosecute it successfully was a different matter. Much of the story of the War of 1812 is about the unpreparedness of America's Army and Navy at the conflict's outset, and the enormous difficulties the new nation faced in raising troops, finding competent officers, and supplying its forces. Most of America's military leaders were inexperienced and performed poorly, particularly in the first two years of war. Only gradually did better leaders rise to the top to command the more disciplined and well-trained units that America eventually fielded. But despite costly initial setbacks, by the time the fighting stopped American arms had won key victories at Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and New Orleans under excellent officers such as Winfield Scott, Jacob Brown, and Andrew Jackson. Although the United States achieved few of its political objectives in the War of 1812, its Regular Army emerged more professional, better led, and fit to take its place as the foundation of America's national defenses.

I encourage all Army leaders and soldiers to read this pamphlet and the others in our series of campaign pamphlets in commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812. We can all profit from greater knowledge about the beginnings of our Army: an Army forged in victory and defeat during what has often been called the second war of American independence.

RICHARD W. STEWART
Chief Historian



The Creek War

1813–1814

About a year after the United States declared war on Great Britain in June 1812, a conflict erupted in the American South that would become known as the Creek War. The Creek War was a complicated affair. It was both a civil war between two factions within the Creek Nation and an international struggle in which the United States, Spain, Britain, and other Indian tribes played a part. America's ultimate victory in the conflict helped shape the outcome of the broader war with Britain and gained significant new territory for white settlement in the American South.

STRATEGIC SETTING

After the end of the American Revolution in 1783, Georgia experienced an explosion in population, and many new settlers looked for opportunities to acquire land in the western part of the state, largely occupied by Creek Indians. Their homeland included riverside towns, crop fields, and hunting grounds that extended into what is now Alabama. The Creeks were historically and culturally divided into two groups: the Upper Creek towns, located primarily along the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers and their tributaries in what is now Alabama, and the Lower Creek towns, found in the Flint and Chattahoochee river valleys of western Georgia.

Before 1790, Georgia made several treaties in which Lower Creek headmen ceded the land between the Ogeechee and Oconee Rivers to the state, but Upper Creek leaders refused to acknowledge the validity of these agreements. This disagreement resulted in frequent Creek attacks on Georgia settlers in the disputed territory. In 1790, the U.S. government made its first treaty with the Creeks, one in which both Lower and Upper Creek leadership participated. In subsequent treaties, the Creeks ceded more lands to the United States until the Ocmulgee River became the boundary between the Creek Nation and Georgia in 1805.



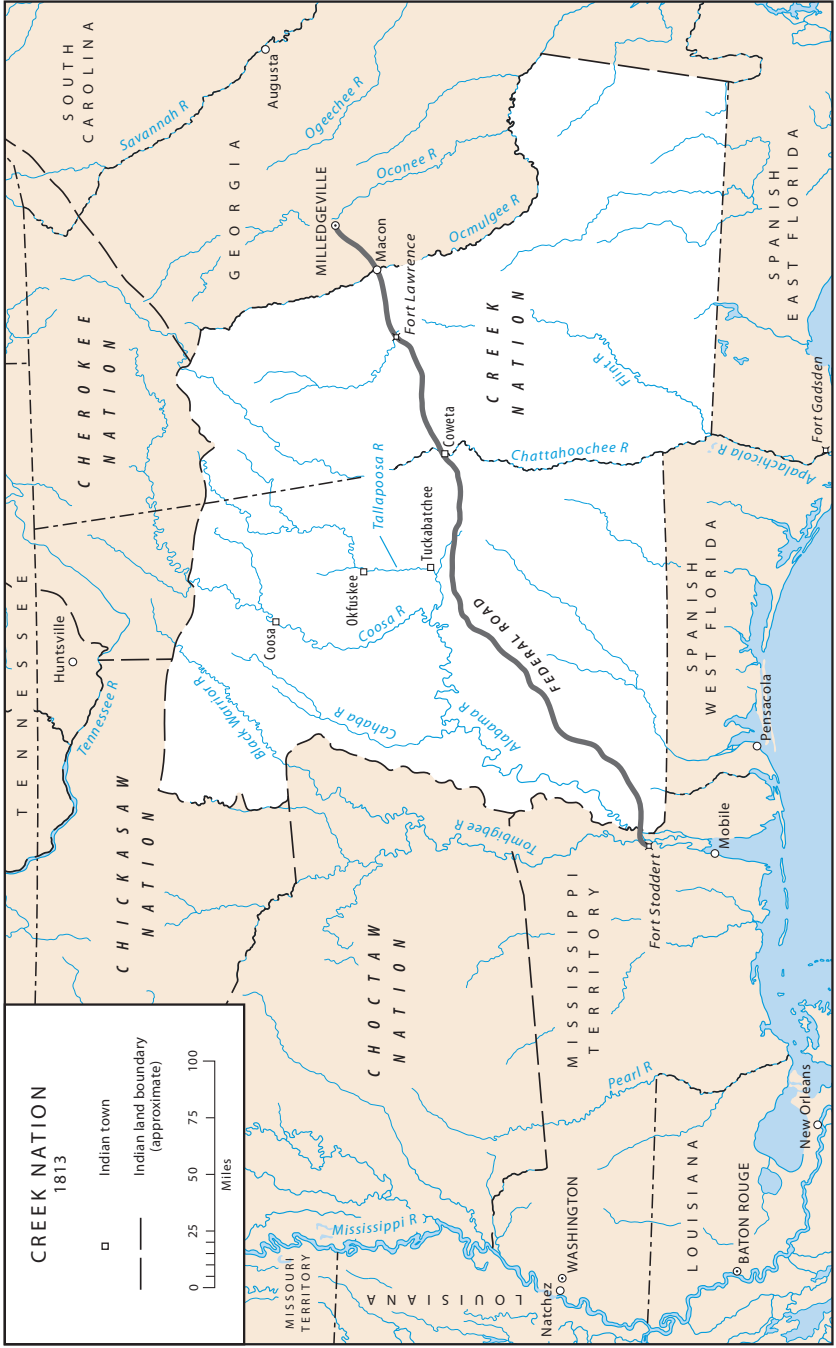
Benjamin Hawkins
(New York Public Library)

Federal officials also instituted a “civilization program,” implemented and promoted by the Indian agent for the United States, Benjamin Hawkins. His program of teaching agriculture and “domestic arts” to the Creeks succeeded primarily with the Lower Creeks. Their conversion from a hunting/bartering economy to a market economy produced great wealth among many of them, particularly those of mixed-blood ancestry who claimed a white father (usually a trader or merchant) and a Creek mother. This, however, caused resentment between those economically successful Lower Creeks and many Upper Creeks who opposed assimilation.

Hawkins created a governing body for all Creeks, the National Council, which intentionally circumvented the previous polity

of town headmen. The council redistributed political power from the town level to the national level. Benjamin Hawkins naturally exercised great influence over who sat on the council and selected those Creeks sympathetic to the United States. Traditionalist Creeks resented the National Council and sought to eliminate it.

Further cause for division occurred when the United States sought to extend the Federal Road through Creek territory to connect Georgia with the Mississippi Territory (*Map 1*). William McIntosh, a powerful Lower Creek leader with strong ties to the U.S. government, convinced those Creeks opposing the road to support the project in an 1805 treaty. Though the pathway provided some Creeks with a source of income from tolls and businesses along its route, the track also brought a flood of settlers to the Mississippi Territory, adding another cause of friction between whites and Indians. As tensions between the United States and Great Britain increased, in 1811 the U.S. government authorized the further expansion of the Federal Road to facilitate the rapid movement of military forces to the Gulf Coast. The National Council Creeks supported the project while traditionalists opposed it.





William McIntosh,
*by Albert Newsam from a
painting by Charles Bird King*
(National Portrait Gallery,
Smithsonian Institution)

The United States had legitimate concerns regarding the possibility of foreign military action in the region. Since the beginning of colonization in North America, European powers had regarded the Gulf Coast as a key asset. In the post-Revolutionary years, the British had attempted to stem the westward flow of American settlers by supporting Indians from coastal trading posts. Spain, in possession of the Floridas, also had an uneasy relationship with the United States, and had long sought to influence local Indians to shield its territory from American encroachment.

Into this turbulent situation in the fall of 1811 came Tecumseh. A Shawnee warrior from north of the Ohio River, Tecumseh and his brother “the Prophet” (Tenskwatawa) had forged an alliance between the

British and many northern tribes. Tecumseh advocated an armed uprising by all Indians against the encroachments of American settlers. In the summer of 1811, Tecumseh sought to expand his pan-Indian alliance into the South. He first visited the Chickasaws. Rebuffed, he continued on to the Choctaws, but one of their chiefs, Pushmataha, was a staunch friend of the United States and countered Tecumseh’s efforts. He then ventured on to the Creek Nation, where he encountered a more receptive audience. Admonishing his adherents not to strike until the pan-Indian alliance was ready to act in unison, Tecumseh returned to his home in the north before the end of the year.

In the spring of 1812, a few of Tecumseh’s Creek followers killed several white travelers on the Federal Road. Hawkins responded by calling a meeting of the National Council in June. The council condemned the perpetrators to death and sent out warriors to execute the sentences. That same month, news filtered into the backcountry



Tecumseh
(Library of Congress)

that the United States had declared war on Great Britain and that a party of Creeks, led by Little Warrior, returning from a meeting with Tecumseh in the north, killed two white families along the Duck River in Tennessee. Small-scale attacks against settlers continued sporadically during the remainder of 1812, as did condemnation and retaliatory justice by the National Council. A serious rift soon developed in the Creek Nation. One faction consisted of those leaders who received monetary emoluments from the United States, who supported the National Council, and who rejected Tecumseh's call to war. Members of the other faction, known as Red Sticks, disliked the council's challenge to local autonomy, resented the growing influence of white culture at the expense of traditional values,

and embraced Tecumseh's political vision and the Prophet's religious teachings. As the year wore on, the animosity between these two factions became intense.

President James Madison's initial response to the growing tensions on the Southern frontier focused not on the Creek Nation, but on Spanish West Florida. Although the United States and Spain were not at war, Spain was an ally of Great Britain in Europe. Madison feared that the Spanish might either stir up the Southern Indians against the United States or allow the British to use the West Florida ports of Mobile and Pensacola as bases from which to attack New Orleans. As few federal troops were available in the South, Secretary of War William Eustis asked Tennessee Governor William Blount to organize an expedition against West Florida. Blount turned to his state militia commander, Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson, who quickly raised two thousand volunteers to reinforce New Orleans and to attack the Spanish.



William Blount
(Library of Congress)

On 8 January 1813, Jackson and his infantry departed Nashville, Tennessee, by boats down the Cumberland, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers, while the Tennessee cavalry under the command of Col. John Coffee rode down a trail known as the Natchez Trace. In February, the two columns converged at the capital of the Mississippi Territory, Washington, located six miles east of the Mississippi River town of Natchez. There, Jackson waited for further instructions concerning the movement on West Florida. By this time, however, the mood had changed in Congress and the administration shelved plans to invade West Florida. Informing Jackson that “the causes for embodying and marching to New Orleans the Corps under your command having ceased to

exist,” the Secretary of War John Armstrong instructed the general to dismiss his volunteers from service, to turn over all equipment to U.S. Army authorities of the 7th Military District (which included Louisiana, Tennessee, and the Mississippi Territory), and to return to Tennessee.

When Jackson received Armstrong’s letter in mid-March, he became enraged. He immediately fired off a reply informing him that he would disobey the order to turn in equipment and tents, which his men would need for their return journey. Since the U.S. government would not pay for rations on their return trip, Jackson arranged to procure them himself. He led his two thousand volunteers back to Tennessee on foot, giving up his own horse to carry the sick. Jackson’s men dubbed him “Old Hickory” for the strength of character and fortitude he displayed.

Tensions along the frontier had not abated, however. In March, about the same time that Jackson started his trek back to Tennessee, Little Warrior, returning from another meeting with Tecumseh, murdered



John Coffee
(Alabama Department of
Archives and History)

seven families at the mouth of the Ohio River. Moreover, Red Stick warriors began targeting Creeks friendly to the United States. The Madison administration reversed course yet again and ordered Maj. Gen. James Wilkinson, who was based at New Orleans, to capture Mobile to stop British merchants located there from supplying the Red Sticks with arms. Wilkinson complied, capturing Mobile without a fight in April. The fall of Mobile left Pensacola as the only source of weapons and ammunition available to the Red Sticks.

By June 1813, the Creek Nation was descending into civil war. Having won the backing of the majority of Creeks, the Red Sticks began gathering their forces near the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. There they executed several Creeks who had enforced the

National Council's orders to bring perpetrators of violence to justice. Red Stick leaders announced that they intended to kill Hawkins and all headmen who supported the United States. They also planned to destroy both the national Creek capital of Tuckabatchee and the Lower Creek capital of Coweta.

In July, a Creek youth by the name of Latecau, who claimed to be a prophet, gathered a group of followers and traveled to the Creek town of Coosa. There, he invited all of the National Creek headmen who did not support the Red Stick movement to come and experience his religious powers. Many headmen from surrounding towns gathered to witness the proceedings. Latecau and other Red Stick believers began by performing the dances Tecumseh had taught them. During the dances, Latecau and his followers suddenly attacked the National Creek headmen, killing three. The other headmen fled Coosa, gathered together their warriors, and returned seeking revenge. The National Creeks managed to kill Latecau and eight of his followers at Coosa before moving on to Okfuskee and

attacking more Red Stick followers. Fighting quickly escalated between the opposing factions as did the danger posed by the Red Sticks to whites traveling through or living near Creek lands. The governors of Georgia and Tennessee could not support the council since states could not send their militia into federal territory without the permission of the U.S. government.

OPERATIONS

Battle of Burnt Corn, July 1813

With open warfare now all but assured, Red Stick leader Peter McQueen traveled to Pensacola with three hundred fifty Red Stick warriors to obtain arms and ammunition. At Pensacola, McQueen presented the Spanish governor, Mateo González Manrique, with a letter from a British general in Canada recommending that the Spanish supply the Red Sticks with weapons and ammunition. After hesitating at first, Manrique gave McQueen three hundred pounds of gunpowder and a proportionate amount of lead. While in Pensacola, the Creeks made statements that they intended to attack white settlements once they returned home. As verification of their statements, they spent several days engaged in dances and other ceremonies usually performed before going to war.

News of these developments quickly made its way to the settlers living in the Tensaw District of the Mississippi Territory, and the local militia commander, Col. James Caller, mobilized his force. He decided to intercept McQueen and his party on their return trip from Pensacola before they could deliver the war supplies to the main Red Stick forces. Setting out on 25 July, Caller took three companies of mounted militiamen armed with their own rifles and shotguns. Another company under the command of Capt. Samuel Dale joined Caller. After crossing the Alabama River, Caller received additional reinforcements. He now commanded about one hundred eighty militiamen and National Creeks.

On the morning of 27 July, Caller's scouts reported that the Red Sticks were camped a few miles ahead on the Pensacola Road in what is now northern Escambia County, Alabama. A council of war decided to divide the militiamen into three columns for the purpose of surrounding the Creek encampment, which was situated in a bend of Burnt Corn Creek. The hilly terrain hid the approach of Caller's troops, and the three-pronged assault surprised the Red Sticks and forced them to evacuate their camp. The militiamen then became occupied in leading off the Indians' packhorses. After McQueen

realized that the militia had stopped pursuing him, he regrouped his warriors and counterattacked, forcing the militiamen to flee. Both sides lost about a dozen men, but the militia escaped with most of the Indians' supplies (*see Map 2*).

The Fort Mims Massacre, 30 August 1813

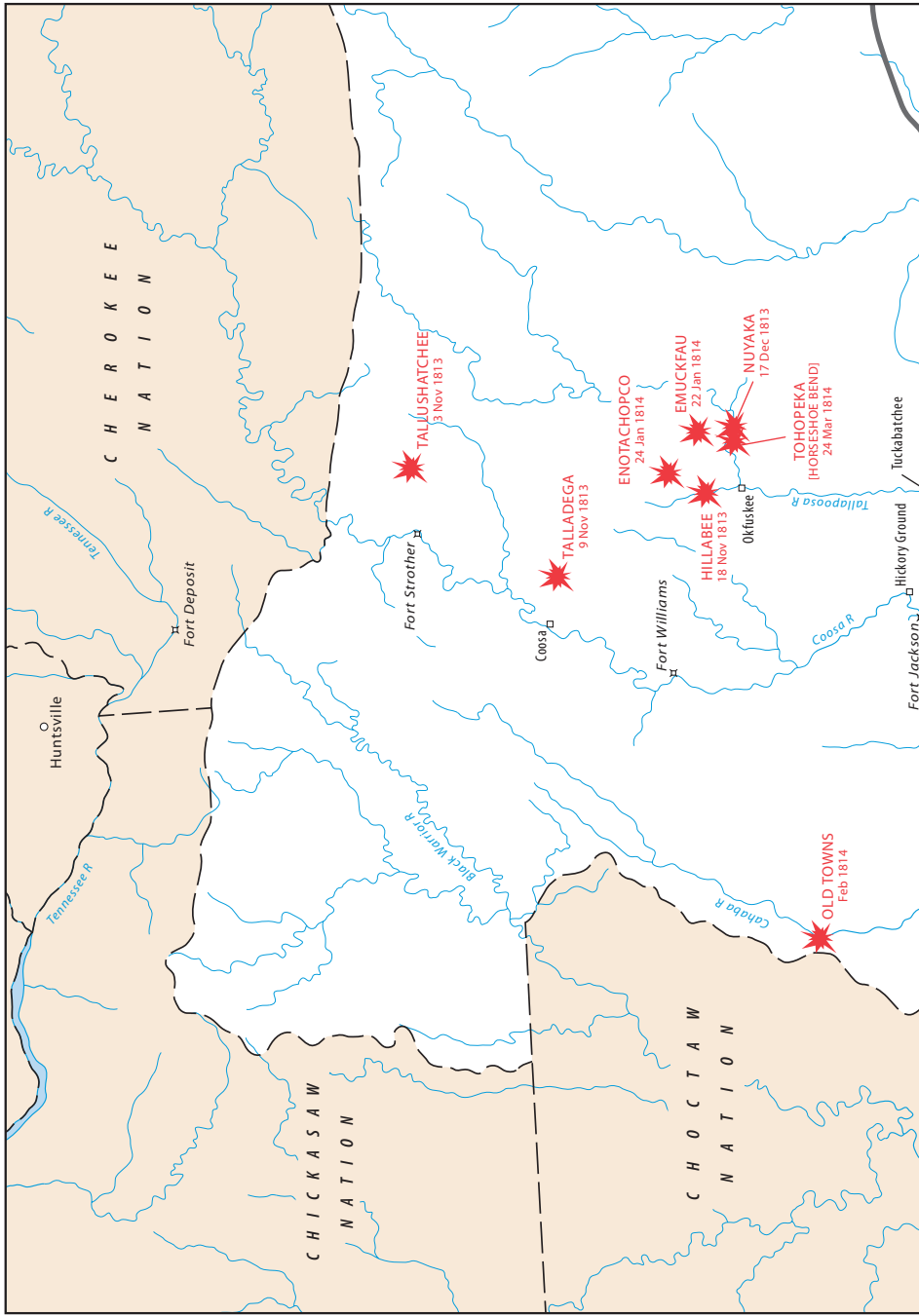
Immediately after the action at Burnt Corn Creek, the Red Sticks initiated a war on white settlers in the Tensaw District. The attacks caused many settlers to leave their remote homesteads for settlements near the confluence of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers. Scattered throughout the region were small stockade forts that generally consisted of a palisade erected around a settler's dwelling and other nearby structures. Each fort usually boasted at least one blockhouse in a corner to provide some cross-fire capability.

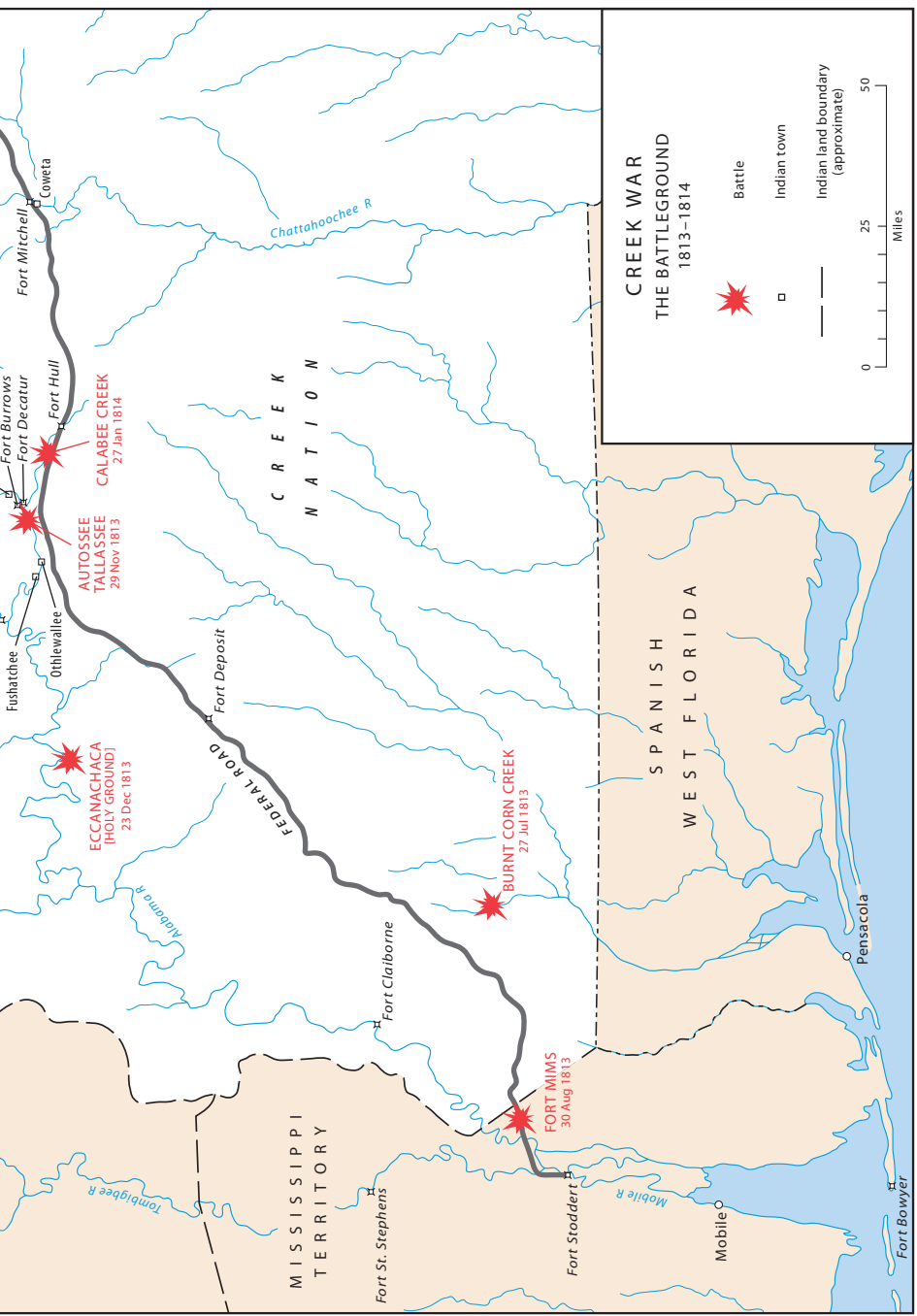
In response to the Creek attacks, Mississippi Territory authorities sent Brig. Gen. Ferdinand L. Claiborne to the Tensaw District with a large force of Mississippi Territory militia. Claiborne distributed his men so that every stockade fort would have at least some semblance of a garrison. He stationed 175 militiamen under the command of Maj. Daniel Beasley to one of the largest of the posts, Fort Mims, built around the house of local planter Samuel Mims about forty miles north of Mobile.

Fort Mims sheltered several hundred white and mixed-blood settlers along with their slaves. The fort consisted of a compound of about one acre surrounded by a stockade. A lone blockhouse had been partially constructed on the southwest corner and some five hundred loopholes cut in the stockade about three and a half feet off the ground. A building attached to the north palisade wall, referred to as "the bastion," had additional picketing around it. Although the fort sat on a small hill, potential attackers could approach close to the walls without being detected due to the nature of the surrounding terrain.

General Claiborne visited Fort Mims in early August. To his dismay, he found that the population of the settlement had become complacent. The general ordered Beasley to strengthen the palisade, to construct two additional blockhouses, and to send out regular patrols. By the end of August, Major Beasley still had not made the improvements ordered by General Claiborne and had even grown so careless as to allow the fort gates to be left open.

On 30 August, about one thousand Red Stick warriors rushed the open eastern gate to Fort Mims in a noon assault. Before the garrison realized the danger, the warriors had control of three-fourths







An engraving of the massacre at Fort Mims, depicting an attack on settlers and allied Creeks by the Red Sticks
(Alabama Department of Archives and History)

of the palisade loopholes and had struck down Major Beasley as he tried to close the gate. Capt. Dixon Bailey assumed command of the garrison and attempted to mount a defense, but he could not shift troops sufficiently to regain portions of the fort. Instead, the garrison divided into small groups and retreated toward the Mims house in the center, the unfinished blockhouse in the southwest corner, and the bastion on the north wall. Eventually, the warriors overran the blockhouse but could not budge the defenders from the Mims house and the bastion. The defenders continued to fight off attacks on the remaining two enclaves until late afternoon when the Creeks withdrew. During this lull, the garrison regrouped and prepared as best it could for a renewed assault, which came almost immediately.

During the second assault, the Red Sticks shot flaming arrows into the two remaining defensive positions. These had the desired effect of flushing out the defenders of the Mims house into the open where Red Sticks shot them down. With most of the fort now in flames and only

a few whites left alive, Captain Bailey directed the survivors to escape as best they could. The battle was over by 1700. The warriors took no prisoners, killing the inhabitants without mercy.

Tennessee and Andrew Jackson

Before the attack on Fort Mims, Benjamin Hawkins had assured Secretary of War Armstrong that the Red Stick hostilities could be dealt with by the National Council and those Creeks who supported it. Tennessee's Governor Blount, however, had suggested in June 1812 that the best means of preventing further Red Stick hostilities might be to mount a military expedition into Creek territory. The continued attacks by Red Stick warriors throughout the summer also made the secretary realize that force might be necessary. He wrote to Georgia Governor David B. Mitchell on 13 July 1813 requesting that he organize an army of fifteen hundred militiamen for operations in the Creek territory. Armstrong delineated a plan for the Georgia militia to cooperate with Tennessee forces and the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment stationed at Mobile. He sent a similar letter to Governor Blount. This three-pronged pincer movement from the north, east, and southwest would, the secretary hoped, overwhelm the Red Sticks. Armstrong asked the governors to give him a timeline of when they could have their forces ready to take the field so that he could coordinate their movements with those of the 3d Infantry.

Like Mitchell, Blount planned to raise fifteen hundred militia for the coming campaign. Naturally, he turned to the commander of Tennessee's militia, General Jackson, to lead the foray. Friends of Jackson in Washington, D.C., had already informed him of the government's decision to send military forces into Creek territory. Before Blount could advise Jackson, the general wrote to the governor offering suggestions as to Tennessee's role in the pending conflict. He suggested that the need to guard supply lines and the possible involvement of the British and Spanish meant that Tennessee should provide three thousand to five thousand militia. He recommended that the manpower be drawn evenly from the eastern and western militia districts of the state.

When news of the Fort Mims disaster reached Nashville on 18 September 1813, Jackson was bedridden with wounds received from a recent duel. He nevertheless assured Blount and the town's leading citizens that he would personally lead the expedition into the Creek lands. Heeding Jackson's advice, Blount directed the general to raise twenty-five hundred militia from the western part

of the state and a like number from the eastern part. The next day, Jackson issued orders calling out the state militia. Knowing that assembling men from around the state would require time, he ordered the immediate formation of a cavalry regiment and sent it south to the Creek frontier. He entrusted the command of the mounted unit to Colonel Coffee, hoping that the horsemen would be able to stabilize the frontier until he arrived with the main army. Jackson directed Coffee to move south toward Huntsville in what is now the state of Alabama. Jackson personally planned to lead the western militia then gathering at Fayetteville, Tennessee, eighty miles south of Nashville. The eastern militia gathered at Knoxville, Tennessee, under the command of Maj. Gen. John A. Cocke.

Jackson arrived at the Fayetteville militia camp on 7 October 1813. Friendly Cherokee warriors also joined his assembling army. Soon after his arrival, he received word from Coffee that Red Stick warriors were moving northward toward the Tennessee River. The colonel feared that his regiment of five hundred mounted militiamen might be overwhelmed if not immediately supported. On 11 October, Jackson and his army reached Huntsville, having traveled over thirty miles in ten hours. The alarm proved to be false, but Jackson now had his army close to the Creek towns.

After several days at Huntsville, Jackson sent Coffee's cavalry along the upper reaches of the Black Warrior River to raid Red Stick towns located in that region. Meanwhile, he moved the infantry up the Tennessee River to establish a new supply base, Fort Deposit, in the northern part of the Mississippi Territory. He intended to march south down the Coosa River to the important Creek town of Hickory Ground, located near the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, hopefully in coordination with Brig. Gen. John Floyd's Georgians supposedly advancing from the east. Moving from Fort Deposit, Jackson and his Tennesseans had to negotiate the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains, building a road as they went so that supply wagons could follow them. Once over the mountains, Jackson reached the Coosa River at the Ten Islands on 1 November. There, he had Fort Strother constructed as a forward supply point.

In the meantime, General Cocke and his army of East Tennessee militia made their way down the Tennessee River, to present-day Chattanooga, then overland through northwest Georgia. As commander of Tennessee's militia, Jackson clearly intended Cocke to join his own forces, but Cocke held the same

rank in the state militia and did not feel obligated to subordinate himself to Jackson's authority. He considered Jackson a political rival and wanted any victories won by the East Tennessee forces attributed to himself, and not Jackson.

While his men built Fort Strother, Jackson learned of a large Red Stick force located at the Creek town of Tallushatchee, some fifteen miles distant. He ordered Coffee to attack the town with about one thousand mounted militia. Coffee surrounded the village on 3 November, and then sent two companies to lure the warriors out of their position. The Red Sticks took the bait and rushed out of the town and into the ring of Tennessee militia. The subsequent militia attack forced the Red Stick warriors back into the town as the dragoons tightened the circle. After the battle the horsemen set fire to the buildings. Red Stick losses amounted to 186 warriors killed and some 80 women and children captured, while Coffee sustained less than 50 casualties.

After Coffee's victory at Tallushatchee, many nearby Creek towns pledged their loyalty to the United States. About one hundred loyal Creeks sought refuge at Fort Leslie near the Creek town of Talladega in what is now the state of Alabama. About one thousand Red Sticks led by William Weatherford surrounded Fort Leslie, stating that he would kill all inside unless the occupants joined him in warring against the United States. A Creek Indian from the fort managed to elude the besiegers and carry word of the situation to Jackson at Fort Strother.

Although low on food and supplies, Jackson thought that a victory at Talladega might end the war. Learning that a contingent of East Tennessee militia under Brig. Gen. James White was approaching, Jackson ordered White to hasten to Fort Strother and secure the post. He then left a small guard and the wounded from the Tallushatchee fight behind and immediately marched to Talladega, about twenty miles farther south, with twelve hundred infantry and eight hundred cavalry. On the night of 8 November, a courier from Fort Strother arrived with a letter from White informing Jackson that his East Tennessee militia would not be arriving at Fort Strother because General Cocke had ordered his troops back to their main camp in western Georgia. Undeterred, Jackson continued with his offensive. On 9 November, his two thousand Tennesseans approached Talladega. Through an error, his force failed to encircle the town as Jackson had intended. Weatherford escaped with about seven hundred warriors, leaving three hundred men to perish in a furious battle when Jackson's troops attacked. Jackson's army

sustained about one hundred casualties. The general complained afterward that “had we had provisions, this stroke by following it up would have put an end to the war.”

The battles at Tallushatchee and Talladega significantly diminished Red Stick strength, and by rescuing friendly Creeks at Talladega, Jackson further cemented the relationship between National Council Creeks and the United States. Impressed by American power, the Creeks of the Hillabee towns, located in the northern Creek territory, pledged not to war any further against the United States. In return, General Jackson promised not to attack their towns.

Unfortunately, General Cocke knew nothing of these arrangements. On 10 November, he directed General White with his mounted East Tennessee militia and some three hundred Cherokee warriors to attack the Hillabee towns. Since the Creeks did not expect an attack, they were completely defenseless when White attacked on 18 November. In fact, when White attacked at first light, many residents came out to greet the Tennesseans and Cherokees. The towns contained many warriors wounded from the battles at Tallushatchee and Talladega as well as women and children. White took the women and children prisoners and reported killing sixty-nine Creek warriors. His own command sustained no casualties. When Jackson heard of the attack he became furious. He viewed the slaughter as evidence of Cocke’s insubordination. The surviving Hillabees believed they had been double-crossed by Jackson and henceforth pledged to war against the United States.

His string of victories notwithstanding, Jackson struggled to keep a respectable military force assembled. Upon his return to Fort Strother after Talladega, he found that supplies had not reached that post from Fort Deposit as intended. The men grumbled about the lack of supplies and threatened to leave camp. Jackson issued a proclamation imploring the militiamen to remain at Fort Strother, stating that the campaign would end thirty days after sufficient supplies had arrived. Assuming the supply train from Fort Deposit would arrive momentarily, he promised his troops that if provisions did not arrive in two days, he would personally lead them back to the Tennessee River.

When no supply train arrived, Jackson led his troops northward toward Fort Deposit on 17 November, where he knew there would be provisions. The column had only marched about twelve miles when it met a supply column from Fort Deposit consisting of nine wagons carrying flour and one hundred fifty head of cattle. Jackson’s troops halted and gorged on the supplies.

After the hungry troops had eaten, Jackson ordered the column back to Fort Strother, but some militia units decided to continue their march home. Jackson and his staff blocked the road and the troops, in “a turbulent and mutinous disposition,” backed down. After having to stop a second mass desertion, this time with loaded muskets, Jackson rode to Fort Deposit, accompanied by Coffee and his mounted troops, to investigate the supply situation. At Fort Deposit, Jackson sent Coffee northward to the Huntsville area so he could obtain remounts and forage his horses in greener pastures. He also wrote to Maj. Gen. Thomas Flournoy, the commander of the 7th Military District that included the Mississippi Territory, asking for supplies and reinforcements.

The Georgia Militia and the Offensive from the East

During the summer of 1813, Governor Mitchell had appointed Brig. Gen. John Floyd to lead Georgia’s contribution to war against the Red Sticks. Floyd established his headquarters at the state capital at Milledgeville to supervise logistical preparations and the assembling of the troops. Like Jackson, supply shortages bedeviled the Georgian leader. He quickly discovered that Maj. Gen. Thomas Pinckney, the commander of the 6th Military District that included Georgia, had no tents or camp equipment for his use. Additionally, any rations provided to the army could only be transported as far as the western limit of the state. Beyond that, Floyd would have to arrange wagons, horses, and drivers. As summer faded into fall, Georgia officials struggled to feed Floyd’s growing army, and to accumulate the thirty days’ supply of food stocks Floyd deemed necessary to sustain the campaign once it began. With so many men assembled in closely confined camps, sanitation became an issue and disease broke out.

With his force only partially trained and the supply problem still not overcome, Floyd moved out of Milledgeville on 29 October. He carried with him only a twenty days’ supply of flour and three days of beef for his army, but anticipated being overtaken by additional supply trains. On 3 November, the day Coffee’s mounted Tennesseans defeated the Red Sticks at Tallushatchee, Floyd arrived at Fort Lawrence on the Federal Road west of the Flint River, roughly twenty miles from Macon, Georgia. He intended to use this post as the major supply point for his campaign and as the final staging area for his forces. Within two weeks, he had accumulated enough supplies for twenty days and began marching toward Coweta on the Chattahoochee River that was under siege by the Red Sticks. He had almost fifteen hundred men and two cannon with him, having left

over two hundred fifty sick men at Fort Lawrence. By the time Floyd's column reached the town, however, the Red Sticks had learned of his approach and had abandoned the siege.

After picking up some interpreters from Benjamin Hawkins, the Georgians crossed the Chattahoochee River on 24 November 1813. There, Floyd established Fort Mitchell in what is now Alabama to act as a forward supply center. At this point, Floyd decided to attack the Red Stick town of Autossee, situated along the Tallapoosa River about sixty miles to the west. Without waiting for Fort Mitchell to be completed, he led his army westward and arrived within eight miles of Autossee late in the day of 28 November. Curiously, the Red Sticks did not attack. Floyd roused his army in the middle of the night and arrived outside the town around daybreak on the twenty-ninth. He wanted to surround the town so that no warriors could escape, but on surveying the area, he discovered that another settlement, Tallassee, lay contiguous to Autossee. Together, the villages were too large for him to encircle. He therefore divided his forces to attack the two towns simultaneously. After two to three hours of exchanging small arms fire, neither side had gained a decided advantage. Floyd then employed his two field pieces with telling effect. After the artillery had made its impression, he ordered a bayonet attack that finally cleared the towns. The chiefs of both Autossee and Tallassee perished in the combat along with about two hundred others, but many other warriors escaped. The Georgia casualties amounted to over sixty, including Floyd, who retained command despite a serious wound in the knee.

Floyd allowed his Creek allies to plunder the villages before putting them to the torch. Like Jackson, the victorious Georgian did not have the resources to maintain a sustained campaign, and he ordered his army to withdraw. A few Red Stick warriors attacked his rear guard, but the Georgians quickly dispersed them. Once back at Fort Mitchell, Floyd set about tending to the wounded and stockpiling supplies for a second campaign.

While General Floyd and the other wounded Georgians recuperated, General Pinckney ordered Maj. Gen. David Adams with his independent command of five hundred Georgia militiamen to keep the Red Sticks on the defensive and disrupt their food supplies. Adams led his men westward toward the Tallapoosa River, and on 17 December he struck the town of Nuyaka. The Georgians found the place deserted. Adams surmised correctly that the Red Sticks had learned of his approach and had fled rather than offer battle. After burning the town, Adams led his troops back to Georgia.

The Mississippi Militia



Pushmataha, by John
William Gear from a painting
by Charles Bird King
(National Portrait Gallery,
Smithsonian Institution)

The third thrust into Creek lands by American forces in the fall of 1813 originated in the southern part of the Mississippi Territory. In response to a request from Jackson, General Flournoy ordered General Claiborne to advance northward with his Mississippi militia up the Alabama River. Claiborne advanced with about two hundred fifty men under Col. Joseph Carson, another one hundred fifty Mississippi militia under Maj. Benjamin Smoot, one hundred fifty mounted Mississippi militia under Major Cassels, and one hundred fifty Choctaw warriors under Pushmataha—in all about seven hundred men. In mid-November, Claiborne built a fort on the Alabama River at Weatherford's Bluff, situated about halfway between present-day Montgomery and

Mobile, Alabama. While gathering supplies at the new post, named Fort Claiborne, he also conducted operations against Red Stick communications with the Spanish at Pensacola. In late November, about fifty Choctaw warriors under Chief Pushmataha ambushed a Red Stick force at the old Burnt Corn Creek battleground.

On 28 November, the same day Floyd camped near Autossee, Col. Gilbert C. Russell arrived at Fort Claiborne from Mobile with four hundred regulars of the 3d Infantry. Russell and Claiborne devised a strategy that called for a quick strike deep into Red Stick territory. Their primary target was the most important Red Stick town, Eccanachaca, or the Holy Ground, located on a bluff on the Alabama River ten miles east of present-day Montgomery. A group of militia officers drafted a petition against the intended offensive, citing the approaching expiration of their enlistments, supply shortages, wintry weather, and the

lack of warm clothing. Not wanting to be accused of mutiny, however, the officers concluded their remonstrance with an affirmation that they would continue to serve if Claiborne decided to conduct the offensive.

Claiborne indeed opted to attack Eccanachaca, and he marched his army eighty miles northward to establish another depot he dubbed Fort Deposit (not to be confused with the post of that name established by Jackson on the Tennessee River). He left his supply train and all unnecessary baggage there and continued his march to the vicinity of Eccanachaca. Six days after Adams' Georgians had attacked Nuyaka, Claiborne's men began their final march on Eccanachaca. Around 1100 on 23 December, Claiborne halted some two miles from the village and issued his last orders. Choctaw scouts advised him that only about six hundred Creeks were in the village. At that point, Claiborne thought he could completely encircle the town and made his dispositions accordingly. He divided his force into three columns. He placed the 3d Infantry and the reserve in the center under his personal command, positioned the Mississippi militia led by Colonel Carson on the right, and posted a battalion of militia under Major Smoot with Pushmataha's Choctaw warriors on the left. He directed the mounted militia to place itself between the town and the Tallapoosa River, while Carson circled around to attack the town from the north.

Carson encountered difficult terrain that prevented him from executing the envelopment maneuver. When his troops finally emerged northeast of Eccanachaca, Red Sticks lying in defilade ambushed them. Undeterred, the Mississippi militia absorbed the volleys and continued with their attack. About half an hour later the Red Sticks withdrew.

By this time, the central column under Claiborne and the left column under Smoot and Pushmataha had engaged the Red Sticks at Eccanachaca. As Claiborne's militiamen and the 3d Infantry began to push the enemy warriors from the south, Smoot and Pushmataha also pressed their attack from the west and north. The three-sided attack proved too much for the Red Stick warriors who gradually fell back into a smaller circle of defense. After a while the Red Stick warriors lost all cohesion. Those who had been in the town began to flee. Some crossed the Alabama River, while others escaped into the marshland.

Claiborne allowed Pushmataha and his Choctaw warriors to pillage the town, while his soldiers searched for hidden inhabitants. He then burned the community. His soldiers had killed thirty-three Red Stick warriors while sustaining only one killed and twenty

wounded. Though not as complete a victory as Claiborne had hoped, the engagement at the Holy Ground boosted the morale of his men. It also showed the Red Sticks that they could be attacked in remote places that they had presumed to be immune from assault.

The army spent the night at Eccanachaca and the next day began a sweep through the area destroying everything that could aid the Red Sticks. Claiborne headed to the plantation of Red Stick leader William Weatherford. Claiborne discovered a letter of Weatherford's that proved the complicity of the Spanish in supplying arms, ammunition, and other provisions to the Red Sticks. He also found a letter from the Spanish governor of Pensacola congratulating Weatherford for the destruction of Fort Mims and advising against a contemplated Red Stick attack on Mobile.

After spending a cold, miserable Christmas huddled around campfires in a drenching rain with nothing to eat but parched corn, the Mississippians and Choctaws began their return march to Fort Claiborne. Most of the enlistments of his militiamen had already expired, but the men had stayed in the field out of devotion to Claiborne. Once back at the fort, the now exhausted militiamen eagerly returned to their homes. The Choctaws under Pushmataha also departed, as did Claiborne, who received permission to return home due to illness. This left Colonel Russell with his regulars of the 3d Infantry and a company of Mississippi militia whose enlistments had not yet expired as the only cohesive American force in the Tensas District. Refusing to remain idle, Russell dispatched a force of Chickasaws under the command of John McKee to raid Red Stick towns located along the Black Warrior River north of Fort Claiborne. McKee advanced as far as present-day Tuscaloosa, but he found all the towns abandoned and returned to Fort Claiborne.

Jackson and the Tennessee Volunteers

While Generals Floyd and Claiborne harried the Red Sticks from the east and south, respectively, during the closing weeks of 1813, supply shortages had kept General Jackson idle in the north. After spending several weeks at Fort Deposit wrestling with logistical matters, Jackson returned to Fort Strother in early December confident that he and Governor Blount had finally alleviated the army's supply problems. Eager to resume the offensive, to his dismay Jackson found the army in a mutinous mood, with many militiamen asserting that their enlistments would expire on 10 December. Fearing that he would lose most of his men, Jackson ordered General



Jackson Quelling the Mutiny (Library of Congress)

Cocke to bring his East Tennessee militia to Fort Strother and asked Blount to raise more militia. He also warned Coffee, whose mounted militiamen were recuperating near Huntsville, to be prepared to prevent defectors from returning to Tennessee.

On 10 December, those militiamen who sought to return home found their way barred by Jackson, a small body of loyal troops, and two pieces of artillery. “Old Hickory” threatened to shoot the first man who attempted to leave camp, and to show that he meant what he said, he ordered the artillerymen to light their matches in preparation for firing the guns. The mutineers backed down and returned to camp.

A few days later, Cocke arrived at Fort Strother with some fifteen hundred men. Reinforced, Jackson allowed his own volunteers to begin their way home. Soon afterward Cocke informed Jackson that the enlistments of most of his troops would expire in one week and none of his soldiers would be in the field past mid-January 1814. Disheartened, Jackson had even more reason to be concerned when he received a letter from Coffee informing him that many of his troopers had also opted to return home. Coffee could do nothing to prevent them as he had been ill and confined to bed. The new year thus marked a low point for Jackson. “My situation for several

weeks past has been exceedingly unpleasant,” he wrote, with “discontented troops . . . scarcity of provisions and an enemy before me whom I could not advance [against] to conquer.” Governor Blount responded to Jackson’s request for more militia by suggesting that Jackson return to Tennessee with the “handful of brave men” that remained with him. Jackson, however, was adamant. He remained at Fort Strother with a little over one hundred troops, condemning Blount for not supporting him and swearing that he would either defeat the Creeks or die trying, with or without reinforcements.

A New Year and a Renewed Effort

To date, long distances, fragile communications, rough terrain, and competing visions had made it difficult to coordinate the various independent arms of the American war effort in the south. To improve coordination, in November 1813 Secretary of War Armstrong had directed General Pinckney to leave his headquarters in South Carolina and to travel to Georgia to assume overall command of war against the Red Sticks. Rather than take to the field himself, he chose to provide recommendations and advice to his subordinates for how they could better implement the government’s strategy of using converging columns to penetrate the Creek homeland. By the time he was in place and in communication with all of his subordinates, it was too late to impact events in 1813, but his presence would facilitate operations in the new year. His primary contribution was the establishment of more effective communications between the Georgians at Fort Mitchell and Jackson at Fort Strother by using allied Creeks as runners. He also created a company of allied Indians as scouts, which he attached to Jackson’s command.

By mid-January 1814, the Tennesseans and Georgians were ready to embark on a renewed effort. Their ultimate objective was the Red Stick bastion of Tohopeka, a town located on a curve of the Tallapoosa River known as the Horseshoe Bend. Once they captured the town, the combined armies would be positioned to dominate the rest of the Creek heartland. Assisting them would be a third column advancing from Fort Claiborne in the south.

At Fort Strother, the arrival of the remnants of Coffee’s command and about eight hundred new volunteers boosted Jackson’s forces to about nine hundred thirty men. Having experienced the disadvantages of campaigning with raw recruits whose enlistments were about to expire, Jackson asked that he be allowed to use the 39th U.S. Infantry, a well-equipped and disciplined regiment then recruiting in East Tennessee. General Flournoy agreed to the request, but Jackson did



*Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812, by Mallon & Hanson
(Library of Congress)*

not have time to wait for its arrival. Pinckney had notified Jackson that the Georgians were about to march, and knowing that he must act before his volunteers' two-month enlistments expired, Jackson broke camp on 17 January and headed south toward the Tallapoosa

River without the 39th Infantry. The following day, about two hundred Indian allies joined his ranks. By the twentieth, Jackson reached Emuckfau Creek, several miles north of Tohopeka.

On the same day that Jackson left Fort Strother, Floyd departed his base at Fort Mitchell with some seventeen hundred militiamen, three hundred allied Creek warriors, and a couple of cannon. On the twentieth, he halted his army to construct Fort Hull as a supply point five miles southeast of present-day Tuskegee, Alabama, and about forty miles south of the Horseshoe Bend. Realizing that they would have no chance should Jackson and Floyd join forces, the Red Sticks decided to go on the offensive. With Floyd engaged in building Fort Hull, the Indians opted to strike the most immediate threat.

During the night of 21 January, scouts reported to Jackson that the Red Sticks had advanced from Tohopeka and intended to strike him before dawn. The Red Sticks sniped at the camp throughout the night to prevent the Tennesseans from resting. The warriors then mounted a determined predawn attack, which the Americans repulsed. Jackson reported that in the face of a Creek assault, his troops “though raw met their bold and ferocious attack with firmness and undaunted resolution.” After dawn, part of Jackson’s troops “where the battle waxed hottest” showed signs of breaking. Jackson ordered his small body of reserve troops to bolster the weakening line, and a sudden charge led by Coffee forced the Indians to leave the field. The Tennesseans repulsed a renewed Red Stick attack later in the day “with stubborn firmness.”

The Red Sticks did not renew their assault on the Tennesseans’ camp on the twenty-second, which gave Jackson time to consider his next move. He received intelligence from his scouts that the Red Sticks had constructed strong defensive works at Tohopeka. In addition, Coffee had suffered a serious wound, and Jackson’s nephew and aide, Maj. Alexander Donelson, had been killed in the fighting. A shortage of supplies exacerbated the situation as well, and Jackson decided to return to Fort Strother.

Jackson began his withdrawal on 23 January, with the Red Sticks harassing the column as it retired. After allowing most of the column to cross Enotachopco Creek on 24 January, the Red Sticks attacked in force. Jackson had anticipated such a move, however, and had reversed the march of the column, which brought a sizable force to bear along the east bank of the creek. Many of his men fled during the Indian attack but enough soldiers remained, supported by two artillery pieces, to prevent the Red Stick warriors from crossing the creek. The militiamen then pursued the Red Sticks for several miles.

Following the battle of Enotachopco Creek, the Tennesseans returned to Fort Strother without further incident. Their safe passage reflected a strategic decision on the part of the Red Stick leadership. Having repulsed one arm of the advancing pincer, the Red Sticks turned to meet the second threat to the Tallapoosa towns, that posed by the Georgians approaching from the south.

After spending several days building Fort Hull, Floyd arrived south of Tohopeka on 25 January, the day after the engagement at Enotachopco. Rather than rush to the attack, he stopped to drill his army. He then marched his men a mile and a half on the twenty-sixth only to stop again when he received word of a large Red Stick force moving toward him. Unwilling to risk an open engagement, General Floyd chose to construct a fortified encampment dubbed Camp Defiance, on Calabee Creek.

The Red Sticks struck Camp Defiance during the predawn hours of 27 January. About thirteen hundred warriors crept through the swamps of Calabee Creek undetected. When they reached the sentinels, they fired on them and rushed into the camp. Completely surprised, the pickets nevertheless made a stout resistance behind barricades, giving time for the rest of the troops to fall into the formations Floyd had taught them two days earlier. The Georgians soon realized that they could not maneuver effectively within the small encampment. Fortunately for them, daybreak allowed them to target the Red Stick warriors more effectively. Supported by their artillery, the Georgians gained the advantage and the Red Sticks withdrew.

Floyd's losses were terrible for the Creek War, twenty-five killed and one hundred fifty wounded. The attack had wrought so much damage that the Georgians and their Creek allies spent the next six days recuperating. Floyd and his army then limped back to Fort Hull. With the enlistments of many of his militiamen about to expire, the general left a small garrison at Fort Hull under the command of Col. Homer Milton and brought the rest of the force back to Fort Mitchell where much of it disbanded. Although they had suffered heavy losses, the Red Sticks had by aggressive action defeated each of the two thrusts directed at Tohopeka.

As Jackson's and Floyd's columns recoiled, the third column, unaware of their fate, got under way. In early February, Colonel Russell and his regiment of six hundred regulars departed Fort Claiborne on the lower Alabama River to attack the Old Towns located on the Cahaba River. Rather than use supply wagons, Russell sent a barge loaded with supplies to rendezvous with his column. He intended for the barge, commanded by Capt. James Dinkins, to meet him and

his troops at the Old Towns. Somehow, Dinkins missed the turnoff for the Cahaba River and did not make the rendezvous. Though the troops moved quickly without the encumbrance of wagons, the Red Sticks still learned of Russell's advance and abandoned the towns. Lacking supplies, the troops lingered in the Old Towns for two days, destroying them before beginning the return march to Fort Claiborne. Russell's winter expedition marked the last U.S. military operation against hostile Creeks in the southern part of the Mississippi Territory.

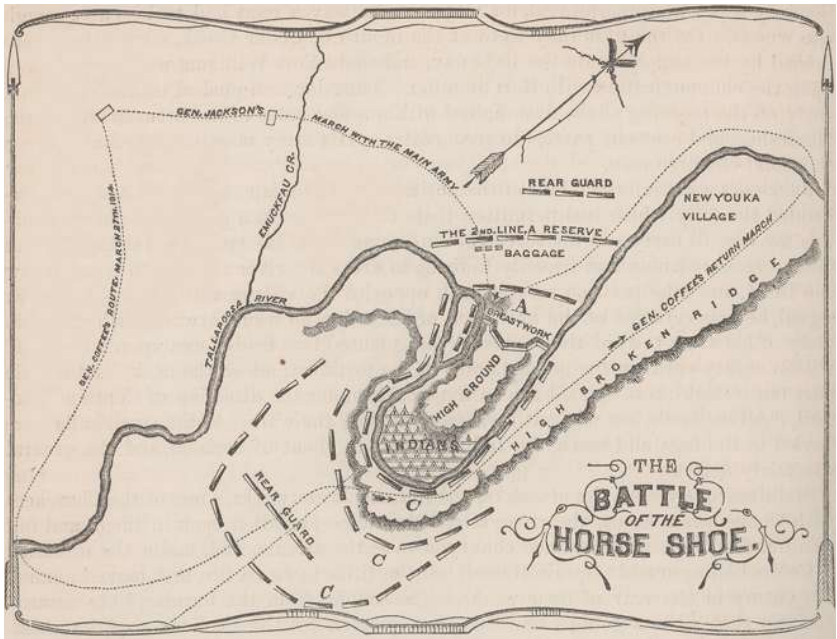
Andrew Jackson and the Final Campaign

Back at Fort Strother, Jackson busied himself with preparations for a new offensive. In addition to gathering supplies, the general received most welcome reinforcements on 6 February when Maj. Lemuel P. Montgomery arrived at the head of the 39th Infantry. About twenty-five hundred volunteers from Tennessee also arrived that week. Meanwhile, Pinckney informed Jackson that he was organizing new columns to advance from Forts Claiborne and Mitchell in a reprise of the January campaign.

After having gathered a sufficient quantity of supplies, Jackson marched out of Fort Strother on 14 March with twenty-two hundred infantry, Coffee's seven hundred mounted troops, and six hundred American Indian allies (five hundred Cherokees and one hundred National Creeks). The army also had two cannon, a 6-pounder and a 3-pounder. The troops moved south along the Coosa River with the 39th Infantry following the bank of the river guarding the supply barges. About sixty miles from Fort Strother, Jackson halted his army and built a supply post named Fort Williams.

On 24 March, Jackson's column left Fort Williams and approached Tohopeka after a three-day march. What Jackson found impressed him. "It is difficult to conceive a situation more eligible for defense than the one they had chosen," he reported to Pinckney. At the large bend of the river, the Red Sticks had built across the peninsula a zigzag log fortification, five to eight feet high, which could allow them to enfilade attackers as they got close to the wall. The Red Sticks had constructed the barricade so that their fire could be delivered through loopholes, minimizing their exposure to enemy musket fire. Menewa, "the Great Warrior," acted as overall Red Stick commander at Horseshoe Bend.

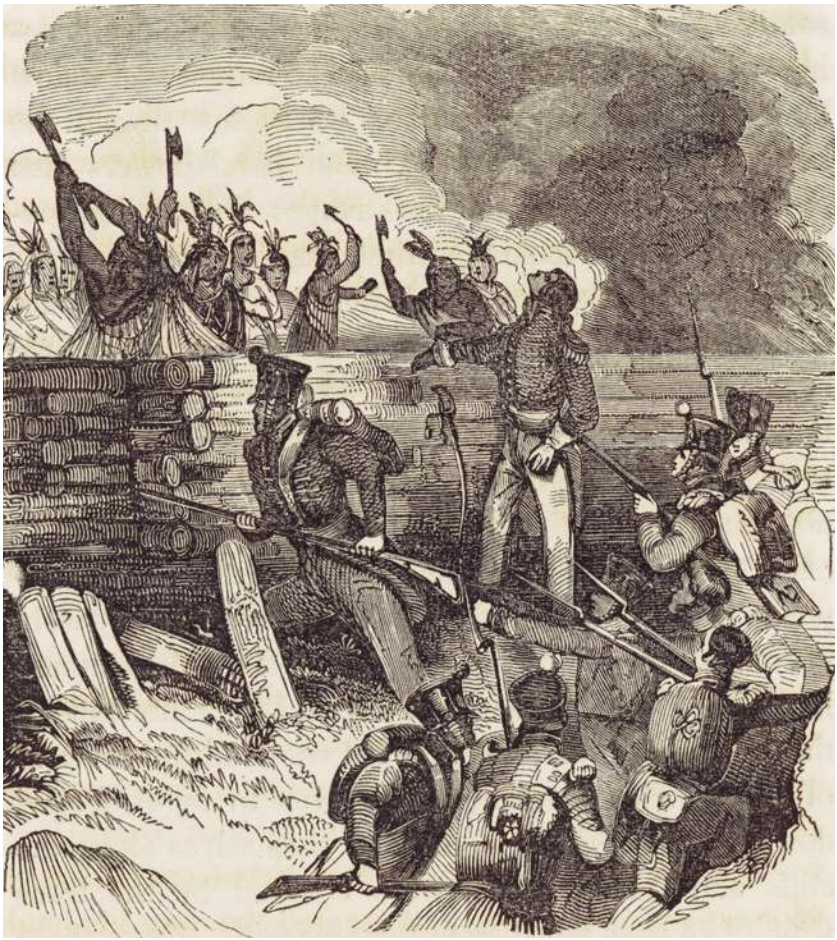
Jackson, "determining to extinguish them," wanted to encircle the Red Sticks so none could flee the area and continue the war if defeated. Accordingly, he sent Coffee with his mounted volunteers and Indian allies to line the southern bank of the Tallapoosa River to cut off the enemy's line of retreat. He deployed his main force with



*Battle Plan of Horseshoe Bend from Benson John Lossing's
The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*

the 39th Infantry in the center and the two regiments of Tennessee volunteers on either flank. At 1030, he “planted” his two artillery pieces on an eminence about eighty yards from the barricade and had his chief engineer direct a point-blank artillery barrage on the center of the barricade. The Red Sticks attempted to shoot down the artillery crews, but the American troops laid down such a suppressing fire that the Red Sticks could not aim effectively. After a two-hour bombardment, the artillery had caused only a few casualties among the Red Sticks and only minimal damage to the barricade itself.

To the south of Horseshoe Bend, the impetuous Cherokee warriors became impatient listening to the artillery fire. Many swam the waters of the Tallapoosa River under a covering fire from their comrades. Once on the south bank, they captured the canoes the Red Sticks had left at the riverbank. Soon about one hundred fifty to two hundred National Creeks under William McIntosh and many of Coffee’s volunteers crossed the river as well, capturing the town and setting it on fire. They then advanced into the wooded hills that lay between



Battle of Tohopeka—Death of Major Montgomery
(New York Public Library)

the town and the rear of the barricade. With the barricade's defenders now surrounded, Jackson ordered his infantry to storm the defenses.

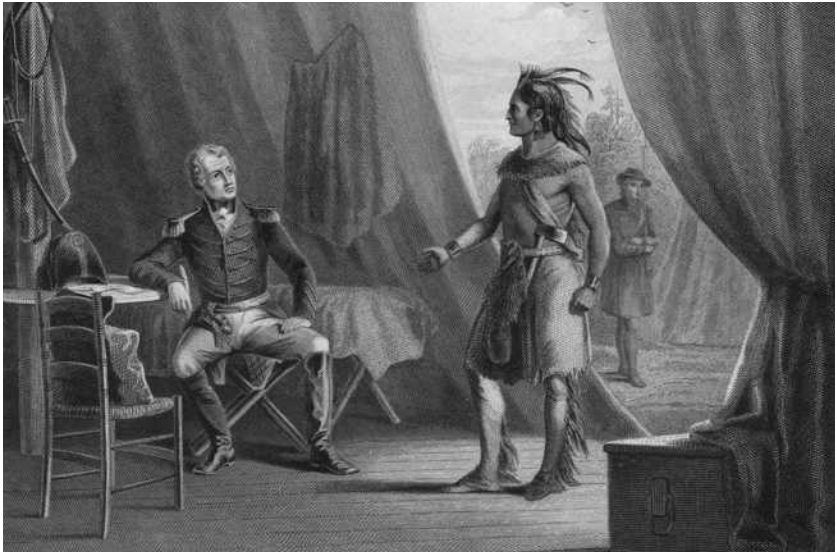
At about 1230, the drums of the 39th Infantry began to beat the long roll to arms. Major Montgomery took the lead with his regiment in the center and the Tennessee volunteers on either flank, the whole looking like a large wedge of troops. "The spirit which animated them was a sure augury of the success which was to follow," Jackson observed. Montgomery reached the barricade first, but fell with a bullet

to the head. In an instant, the entire 39th had mounted the barricade and became embroiled in savage hand-to-hand combat with the Red Sticks, “in the midst of a most tremendous fire.” One of the first to make it over the barricade was Ens. (3d Lt.) Sam Houston. Moments after entering the Creek position, Houston received an arrow in his upper thigh, piercing the groin and taking him out of the action.

The Red Sticks fought fiercely, but they were soon overwhelmed. They fled the breastwork and scattered throughout the peninsula. Many made their way to the Tallapoosa and attempted to cross it, but Coffee’s volunteers and Indian allies ensured that few Red Sticks made it to the opposite bank alive. It took five hours for the volunteers and regulars to hunt down the surviving enemy warriors, with Jackson writing to his wife that “it was dark before we finished killing them.” The next day, his men counted 557 enemy warriors “left dead upon the peninsula,” not counting the several hundred casualties inflicted by Coffee’s command. Only about 200 of the 1,000 defenders escaped. Jackson and his Indian allies suffered about 260 casualties. The victors also rounded up some 350 women and children as prisoners. Jackson later boasted that “the history of warfare furnishes few instances of a more brilliant attack.”

After securing the prisoners and tending to the wounded, Jackson turned his army toward Fort Williams. From there he could plan the next phase of the war. He believed that the remaining Red Stick warriors would regroup near the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, about forty miles from the Horseshoe Bend. Expecting to be joined soon by a new militia army advancing from Georgia under the command of Colonel Milton and Colonel Russell’s 3d Infantry from Fort Claiborne, Jackson intended to sweep the country of the lower Coosa River from Fort Williams to the old Fort Toulouse site (near modern Montgomery) to eliminate all resistance. Jackson set his sights on the last major Red Stick stronghold at Othlewallee on the Tallapoosa River, near present-day Wetumpka, Alabama. He thought Weatherford, who had not been at Horseshoe Bend, might make a stand there. He wanted to march his army down the Tallapoosa River to the Hickory Ground while having Milton’s force, marching from Fort Hull, join him along the way. Although short on supplies, Jackson had been reassured by General Pinckney that Milton had stockpiled sufficient provisions at Fort Hull to support the operation, and Colonel Russell was to advance supplies up from the south as well.

On 7 April, Jackson began his march with the 39th Infantry, over six hundred fifty mounted Tennesseans under Coffee, and almost two thousand Tennessee volunteers. Six days later, he reached

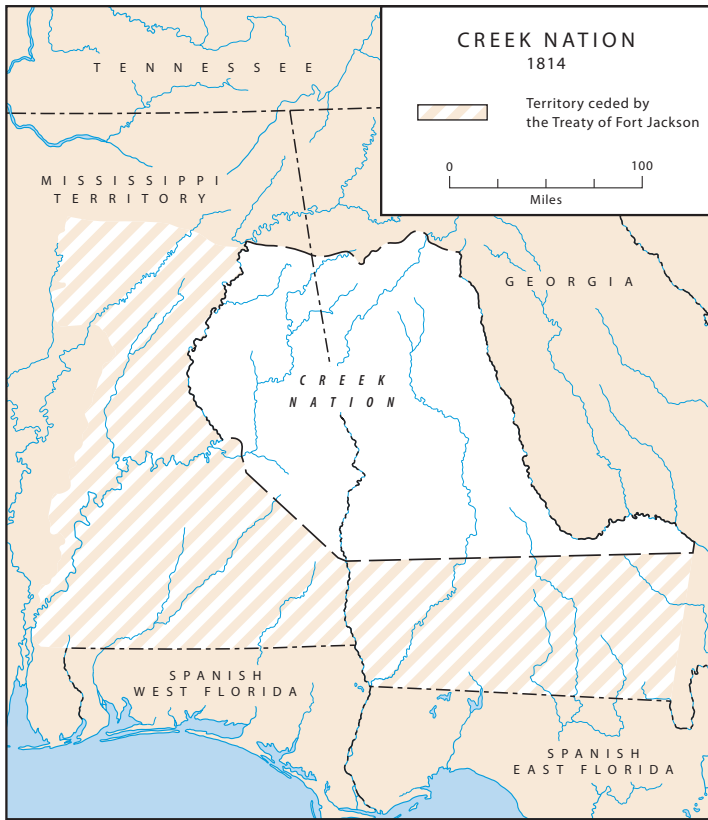


Interview between Gen. Jackson & Weatherford, *engraving by John Reuben Chapin, depicting Weatherford's surrender after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend* (Library of Congress)

Fushatchee on the Tallapoosa River and found it deserted. He also found Othlewallee deserted. After putting both towns to the torch, Jackson marched his troops toward the Hickory Ground. By the time he reached it on 17 April, Milton had already arrived. Jackson had his troops build another fortification on the site of old Fort Toulouse, which they named Fort Jackson in his honor.

The absence of further resistance signaled an end to the Creek War. Secretary of War Armstrong selected General Pinckney to represent the United States in peace negotiations with the Creeks, with Hawkins as his adviser. Pinckney ordered Jackson to march his troops back to Tennessee, and “Old Hickory” arrived at Nashville in May with most of his men. Soon thereafter, the now-famous Jackson received a brevet major general’s commission in the U.S. Army and command of the 7th Military District. The government also made him its representative at the upcoming treaty conference instead of Pinckney. In July, the Tennessean ordered Hawkins to have all the Creek headmen meet at Fort Jackson on 1 August 1814.

The federal government dictated to Jackson what the terms of the peace treaty would be. The Creeks would have to cede enough



MAP 3

land to pay for the expenses of the war (*Map 3*). Since the Spanish had supplied the Red Sticks, the Creeks could have no further interaction with them and trade only with the United States. Furthermore, the Creeks had to grant the United States the right to build roads, forts, and trading posts, and to have free navigation of all waterways through their remaining territory. Last, the Creeks had to turn over all the surviving Red Stick leaders, including the religious prophets whom the United States held responsible for inciting the war.

At the treaty negotiations, Jackson stunned the Creek headmen by adding to the list of concessions a requirement of his own—the cession of 23 million acres of land, fully one-half of the Creek territory. He made no distinction between those Creeks who had been his allies and those who had fought against the United States. The Creek

headmen rejected the demand, but Jackson was adamant. After delaying for a week, the Creek headmen realized that they could not resist him further, especially with his army still in the field. On 9 August 1814, the thirty-six Creek headmen present signed the treaty. Because of his unyielding manner in obtaining the harsh terms, the Creeks dubbed Jackson “Sharp Knife.”

The treaty signing occurred just in time. Several days later, a British expedition arrived in the Gulf of Mexico at the Apalachicola River and in Pensacola. With the Creek War at an end, Jackson could turn his full attention to the new adversary. He marched his army to Mobile where he repelled a British attack in mid-September 1814. He then marched to Pensacola and forced the British to withdraw completely from the Gulf Coast. Anticipating a British attack on New Orleans, he then marched to Louisiana, giving Pensacola back to the Spanish.

ANALYSIS

The volunteer militias of Georgia, Tennessee, and the Mississippi Territory bore the brunt of the Creek War. Augmenting them were two regiments of regulars, the 3d and the 39th U.S. Infantry; and friendly Choctaws, Cherokees, and Creeks who, while outnumbered by the militia, nevertheless played important roles in determining the outcome of the conflict. In terms of combat effectiveness, the volunteer militia proved brave if inexperienced and undisciplined. The greatest handicap posed by the militiamen was their frequent unwillingness to serve for longer than their initial term of enlistment, which was often six months and sometimes less. Short-term enlistments became serious obstacles since the tasks of raising, organizing, and moving a force into the Red Stick territory; establishing supply points; and conducting operations proved time consuming. This was particularly true given the daunting terrain, which ranged from swamps and creeks in the lower Mississippi Territory to the mountains of northern Alabama, with few roads on which to bring in supplies. Inclement weather also impeded progress, especially during winter when soldiers frequently lacked proper shelter and camp equipment. Taken together, short enlistments, inadequate logistical arrangements, and the challenges posed by terrain and weather hamstrung many American operations.

During the Creek War, the Americans followed a strategy that they had often employed against Indians east of the Mississippi River. Targeting Indian settlements forced the Red Sticks to make difficult

choices—either they could stand and fight to protect their property at the risk of suffering heavy casualties in battle or they could abandon their settlements, avoiding casualties but losing the shelter, property, and food stores that the towns provided, particularly in winter. Whatever course the Indians chose, over time they would suffer sufficient attrition in either men or resources to break their will to resist. Using several columns to converge simultaneously on the Creek heartland only magnified the dilemma facing Red Stick leaders.

Though their strategy was fundamentally sound, American commanders found that it was difficult to execute given all the impediments enumerated above. Poor communications and loose command arrangements further increased the challenges. Personal rivalries prevented Jackson and Cocke from waging a successful combined campaign in 1813, while communication obstacles impeded the coordination of the Tennesseans' movements with those of the Georgians and Mississippians. The appointment of General Pinckney as overall commander somewhat reduced but did not overcome the barriers to successful coordination. In January 1814, Floyd and Jackson came close to affecting a juncture at Tohopeka, but sufficient time and space between their movements allowed the Red Sticks to exploit their central position and to repulse each of the columns in turn. Had the movements of Jackson and Floyd been more in sync, or had Tohopeka's defenders not responded to the converging threat aggressively, the war might have ended a few months earlier than it did.

Taking to the offensive also seemed to be the best tactic for the Red Sticks. When on the attack as at Fort Mims and at Calabee, Emuckfau, and Enotachopco Creeks, they emerged victorious either by inflicting more casualties or by turning back the advancing Americans. When the Red Sticks remained on the defensive, allowing the Americans to attack them in their towns, they usually incurred stinging defeats. It is curious then why they allowed themselves to be attacked at Tohopeka in March 1814. Notwithstanding its impressive fortifications, the town proved to be a deathtrap for the Red Sticks.

Total deaths for U.S. forces, regulars and militia, are estimated at 575. About 1,600 Red Stick warriors died. Many Indian civilians died of starvation or disease brought on by the loss of their homes in winter. While some Creeks moved westward or into Florida after 1814, most stayed on their greatly diminished territory in present-day Alabama. In 1832, the Treaty of Cusseta transferred the ownership

of Creek lands from the tribe to individual Indians. Sales by the owners of these individual allotments to white settlers and land speculators, as well as illegal encroachment, caused continued friction and eventually sparked the Second Creek War of 1836. The conflict provided Jackson, now president of the United States, with the pretext to force all of the remaining Creeks to emigrate to Indian Territory (modern-day Oklahoma) west of the Mississippi River during August and September 1836.



The Author

Richard D. Blackmon is an independent author and historian who has recently published *Dark and Bloody Ground: The American Revolution Along the Southern Frontier*. His current projects include slavery in the Western Hemisphere, Southern literature, the American Civil War, and the Second Seminole War.



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For more information on the U.S. Army in the War of 1812, please read other titles in the U.S. Army Campaigns of the War of 1812 series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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CREEKS 1813-1814

