

The War of 1812 ended in victory for the United States. America's old foe, Great Britain, had been fought to a standstill and the frontier-long threat of British support for an Indian uprising was no more. In the South, the powerful Creek Confederacy had been destroyed, and 20 million acres of land had been added to the United States.¹ The rising of the Creek had brought to an end the arguments of white frontiersmen as to whether the Federal policy of assimilation with the Indians would work, or not. The United States Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins championed the governments' policy with the Creek, and for many years it seemed to bear fruit. Other Southerners, such as Andrew Jackson, mistrusted the policy and pointed to periodic attacks upon settlers as proof of failure. Many Indians were assimilating, but it only took what at first was a small group, willing to listen to a nativist message, to bring on fighting. This message became appealing to an ever increasing number of Indians, and in time they posed a real threat to the frontier. The Creek were defeated; but so too was the policy of assimilation. In the minds of white Southerners tolerance had led to the butcheries of women and children: the Indians could not be trusted. By 1815 Southern whites were well down the road that led to Indian resettlement west of the Mississippi River in the 1830's.²

In the years following the war that won the United States her independence, men on the frontiers watched in ever increasing consternation as the signs of an approaching Indian conspiracy grew. Indian unrest had been prevalent all along the frontiers, from the North-West bordering Canada to the Spanish frontier in the Floridas, since the Revolution had ended. But in the first decade of the new century Tecumseh and his brother the Prophet began to stir up their fellow Shawnee, whose home was south of the Great Lakes. Their nativist message, for all Indians to join in a league whose goal was to recover their ancient lands from the whites, spread through the various tribes of the old Northwest. Tecumseh came South in 1811, attended meetings and spread his word that the whites should be cleared from the land. He went among the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and then to the heart of the Creek Confederation at Tuckabatchee. The frontier settlers were aware of Tecumseh's activities, and their fears intensified. Rumors spread, and cruel butcheries were awaited from the hands of the Indians. The Indian war did come; many settlers did die. But the uprising was ill-timed and disjointed, and the separate Indian groups were shattered. Many Indians, including most Choctaw and some Creek, fought by the side of the whites. Yet, the long pent-up worry as well as the barbaric nature of the frontier war itself "caused so much distrust of the

Indians by the whites that it was no longer possible for them to live together on the frontier."³

Those on the frontier and in the bordering states lived in fear for themselves and their loved ones.⁴ An examination of their letters, journals, and documents brings to light the spectre of doom most felt to be close at hand, and whence comes their reaction to it. This understanding of the frontiersmen's perceptions is the explanation for their feeling of triumph in 1815. This is their story - in their words.

The evidence presented comes from all over the frontier. This is a representation of what men thought was happening, and to a remarkable extent, there was a similarity on certain issues. One, there was a general deepening fear that the policy of assimilation was not working and a war would be the result of this failure. Two, the Federal government, listening to its own agent Benjamin Hawkins' mistaken view of the situation, was not dealing with the problems along the frontier. Three, behind all the Indian unrest, from the Great Lakes region to the Gulf of Mexico, stood Great Britain. She was inciting the bloodshed; impressing seamen was bad, but the massacre of frontier families was worse. The Creek War of 1813-14, was inescapably part of the War of 1812, and Creek power was

destroyed - ending Southern fears of Britain and their Indian proxies. Manifest Destiny was on the roll westward.

Indians had a long history of warfare with whites in America. The fighting had consumed many settlers before the Revolutionary War, and intermittently conspiracy was found among the random depredations. The Virginia War in 1622, The Yamassee War of 1715, and Pontiac's 1763 conspiracy are some that resonated from the colonial experience.⁵ During the American Revolution the Southern Indians often sided with the British. As early as 1774 the Creeks had attacked the whites, and in 1778 the fighting became general. The close of the war did not stop the Indian raiding. In particular, the powerful Creek Confederacy remained a feared threat, harrying the Georgia frontier. Sam Dale, who would figure prominently in the coming Creek War of 1813, told of his early days on the Georgia frontier. It is dismal reading as settlers were slaughtered, men planted with rifles at hand, and Dale himself was shot in the face while digging potatoes.⁶ Such was frontier life. Georgia and the Creek had signed treaties together, but could not agree what those papers contained. The Creek did not think that they had signed away all of the lands that the Georgians said they had, and so fighting ensued. In 1789, the Federal government intervened, much to the Georgians' dismay (they

did not like the meddling in what was seen as a states-rights affair), and briefly considered sending a regular army force. George Washington wrote to the United States Senate on 22 August, "But the case of the Creek Nation is of the highest importance and requires an immediate decision." The Federally imposed decision was against the use of force (too costly), but rather to sign The Treaty of New York, which gave some disputed land back to the Indians and gave the Creek money in return for title to some other lands. A secret provision of the Treaty of New York gave Indian leaders stipends; boundaries were also guaranteed. The frontiersmen did not like this at all.⁷

The killings spread. In 1792, near Nashville, murders and kidnappings occurred. One woman, Elizabeth Baker, escaped the Indians but told of her captors dancing around a scalp-pole decorated with her parents' and siblings' hair. The next year, the Georgia militiamen petitioned the Federal government to invade the Creek nation to stop the killings; they were denied as the government had little money and less interest.⁸ The bloodshed did not end with the dawn of the new century. Instead eyes were becoming fixed upon the port of Pensacola and British intrigues to stir up the Indians. James Powell, a settler in Washington county, Mississippi Territory, swore a statement on 17 June, 1805, that he had been in Pensacola at the home William Pantan, a British

merchant. Panton had as another guest a chief of Creek Confederacy.

Panton then told him (the Creek chief) that he expected that the Americans had settled nearly all around them (meaning the Creek Nation) and would take away their lands... and that the only way to prevent the Americans from taking their land was for the Indians to take the hair of the Americans...⁹

And in 1808, another massacre occurred, reminding Andrew Jackson of "the horrid barbarity committed on our frontier in 1777 under the influence of and by the orders of Great Britain...".¹⁰ Jackson had fought the British and Indians before, and had become alarmed at a perceived continuation of the earlier struggle. The latest atrocity happened three miles below the mouth of the Duck River in Tennessee. Twenty-five whites were killed by a party of over four hundred Creek Indians. Twelve white men were with the Indians; as Jackson wrote to Thomas Jefferson, the white renegades "must be agents of a foreign Nation, exciting the creeks to hostilities..."¹¹ To the Westerners, the hands of Spain and most importantly, Britain were behind the Indian barbarities.

Charges against Britain of inciting the Indians to attack the United States' frontier, from the old North-west to the Gulf of Mexico, had been leveled since the colonies had broken free.¹² Spain was also accused of using the ports of Mobile and Pensacola to funnel arms and ammunition

for Indian use against the Americans. The men on the frontier chaffed at the perceived inability of their government either to help them or to allow them the opportunity to settle the score themselves.¹³ Colonel Arthur Cambell of the Regular Army, posted at the Cumberland Gap, was disgusted at what was occurring to his north.

From late accounts from Indiana the Indians are become very insolent no doubt excited by the British to commence hostilities against us. Will we succumb to the Savages and so hieghten the degredation of the American character? This was not the Spirit of the Heroes and Patriots of 1776.¹⁴

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Federal officials were more concerned by looming war clouds over the Atlantic than with a few hostile Indians. Among other efforts to strengthen America's defenses, a road was built across the Creek lands; it was completed in 1810. As early as the Fall of 1807, this had become a source of anxiety for the Creek, for down it came an ever increasing number of white immigrants, enlarging white settlements along the lower Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers.¹⁵ But the road had been allowed by treaty. Further, inns were stipulated at certain distances along the road for travelers to rest. The road itself cut through Creek lands, beginning at Fort Hawkins (now site of Macon, Georgia) and running to Fort Mitchell (a few miles below Columbus, Georgia). From there the road ran through east Alabama to a few miles south of what is now

Montgomery, Alabama, and then to Mims' Ferry on the Alabama River. Near the end of the road were the settlements north of Mobile.

Indians marrying with whites became more prevalent, and many Indians and mixed-bloods accepted the white men's way.¹⁶ These new ways were propagated by Benjamin Hawkins, United States Indian Agent. He had lived among the Creek since President George Washington had appointed him to his post and had gained their trust. Under his guidance, more modern agricultural pursuits as well as livestock raising were introduced to the Indians. The Creeks agricultural practices had been primitive, and their meat had come from hunting, but the deer population had been over-hunted. Hawkins taught the Indians both how to use a plow and to raise cattle.¹⁷ Most chiefs accepted the change, with Federal stipends to help ease their consciences. It is difficult to explain this cooperation with the government with certainty. The payments (going directly to the chiefs) were a secret provision of the Treaty of New York, and Hawkins thought the chiefs were suspicious of one another, each thinking the others were conspiring to get a larger cut out of the annual Federal stipend. Perhaps the greed Hawkins suspected was the answer, as each chief tried to enlarge his own share at the unknowing expense of his tribesmen's acceptance of the white-man's road.¹⁸

Resentment among the Indians grew over the years of assimilation, and voices for war were raised even before the road came. As early as 1802, Creeks had complained to General James Wilkinson, commander of the Seventh Military District (which included the Gulf region) that whites were violating the treaties and that the Indians were "systematically being surrounded and squeezed out of existence."¹⁹ Opposition had crystallized around the road, the road allowed by the chiefs. As the whites poured into Indian lands the Creeks began to divide on how to meet the new reality. A census by the Federal government in 1810 found 69,000 whites and blacks in Georgia counties bordering Creek lands, 4,000 around Huntsville, and a like number in the settlements around Mobile. Including Mississippi Territory, there were about 85,000 whites and blacks in the areas surrounding the Creek lands with only 20,000 Creeks within their imperiled homeland.²⁰ Open hostility to the chiefs from their own people developed as the chiefs' obsequious behavior continued. To those advocating a rejection of white culture, the complacent chiefs and assimilated Indians became as much of a target as the whites. One party of the Creek favored peace with the whites and accepted inter-marriage and the new more-productive farming techniques. Most of the Lower Creeks, living in the south of the Nation, tended toward peace. The

Upper Creek, in the north of the Nation, were hostile to the influx of the whites. Perhaps significantly, the Lower Creeks had the Mobile settlements in their midst and lived in peace, whereas the Upper Creek had been fighting the Georgians for many years. In 1811, a second Federal road was built, this time through what is now Coosa county, Alabama, but was then the middle of the Creek Nation. Civil war among the Creek loomed.²¹

Onto this tinder fell in 1811 the rhetoric of Tecumseh. He had already been forming his league in the North, and was known to both Indians and settlers. Tecumseh's mother was a Creek, and he had spent a few years in the south. As rumor had it, some Northwestern Indians were to attend the great annual Creek council meeting at Tuckabatchee, a Creek town on the Tallapoosa River. That October, about 5,000 Indians, mainly Creek, and many whites and mixed-bloods came. Both Sam Dale and Benjamin Hawkins were there.²² With a band of his followers, all in war dress, Tecumseh arrived at the council. It was known that Tecumseh would talk, and his speech was eagerly awaited. But days passed without it. While Dale grew agitated by what he saw among the Indians, Hawkins remained calm. Both men had been among the same Indians for years, and were intelligent observers. This is worth noticing, for like the Creeks, the whites were divided as to what was occurring around them. Hawkins was not

alarmed at Tecumseh's appearance, and he grew tired of waiting for the speech. As he made ready to leave, Hawkins was intercepted by a worried Dale. As Dale reported, "I told him the Shawnees intended mischief; that I noted much irritation and excitement among the Creeks, and he would do well to remain." Hawkins replied that the Creeks were under his control and added, "Sam, you are getting womanly and cowardly." Hawkins left - Dale remained.²³

In war paint, Tecumseh then delivered a rousing speech, castigating assimilation to the white culture, and delivering visions of a frontier-long alliance among the tribes to sweep away white civilization. Dale, a respected frontiersman who knew Tecumseh personally, witnessed the speech and the following war dance. He was so alarmed that he hurried to catch up with Hawkins and reemphasize "that mischief was on foot." Hawkins again chose to believe that Tecumseh's influence was not as great as his own. Others reacted differently: "The settlers, alarmed by the symptoms of the times, were then building Fort Madison."²⁴

The War Department in Washington had been informed of Tecumseh's activities by Hawkins. Some Chickasaw, unreceptive to the war message, reported Tecumseh and the Shawnees movements to authorities in Nashville, who also passed it along to the Federal government. But agent

Hawkins' less gloomy assessment, coupled with the more pressing British opponent, prevented action.²⁵

The year 1812 brought war: between the United States and Great Britain, and to the Creeks, civil war. The omens had been bad, with a comet seen in 1811, and the strong series of earthquakes from the time of Tecumseh's visit through early 1812. The spring brought flowers to bedeck the many fresh graves, as the Indians who believed in Tecumseh's way found victims. Sam Dale had begun to restrict his travel to nighttime while within the Creek lands. He understood the danger: "The hostile portion of the Indians were in small parties, murdering friendly Indians and whites."²⁶ Other whites either did not feel the same level of danger or chose to see things as did Benjamin Hawkins. On 26 March, a party of whites on the Federal road crossing the Catoma Creek in what is now Montgomery County, Alabama were ambushed, and Thomas Meredith, Sr. was killed. Soon after, and nearby, William Lott was murdered close to his home. Worse followed; on the Duck River south of Nashville, a party of Creek massacred members of two families. A Mrs. Crawley was kidnapped and taken to a town on the Black Warrior River, from which she was eventually rescued. The Creek involved in the Duck River killings were on their way home after staying with Tecumseh in the north. Little Warrior, a noted firebrand, was their leader. He

claimed to have a letter from the British which he was to present to the Spanish governor in Pensacola. Little Warrior thought that the British had promised him war material.²⁷

The butchery of women and children outraged the South. The Tennessee Legislature considered a resolution demanding that the Creek hand over the murderers or they would "order out a sufficient force to exterminate the Creek nation." On 4 June, Andrew Jackson wrote to the Governor of Tennessee, William Blount: "my heart bleeds within me on the receipt of the news of the horrid cruelty and murders... ". Further, Jackson advised that Cherokees had relayed that "the Creeks are making every preparation for war." The following day, Jackson wrote to George Colbert, a chief of the Chickasaw, with a warning. He wrote that the friendship between the whites and Chickasaw would stop "if the Creeks are suffered to march through your nation to attack our frontier." The Creek would be destroyed if they did not hand over the murderers, "and their lands shall be divided among the whites." Then in replying to a letter from Governor Blount on 17 June, Jackson agreed that no faith could be placed in Indian promises, "and the spirit of the times here says speedy vengeance will await the friends of the prophet (the brother of Tecumseh), for let Col. Hawkins say what he will

the truth is the great body of the creeks are for war...".²⁸

On 10 July, Jackson again wrote to Governor Blount,

When we make the case of Mrs. Manly and her family (one of the murdered families) and Mrs. Crawley or own - when we figure to ourselves our beloved wives and little prattling infants, butchered, mangled, murdered, and torn to pieces, by savage bloodhounds and wallowing in their gore, you can Judge of our feelings.²⁹

Governor Blount had needed little urging; on 25 June, he wrote the War Department that Federal military assistance might be needed against the hostile Creek.³⁰

Benjamin Hawkins reacted quickly to the murders, understanding his countrymen's anger. He confronted the Creek chiefs in their villages and demanded that the murderers be brought to justice. The chiefs responded by hunting down the killers, including Little Warrior, and executing them. This had the effect of igniting a civil war between the war party of Creeks, the Red Sticks, and those loyal to the whites. The Red Sticks retaliated by murdering chiefs friendly to the whites, and those who took part in finding the settlers' killers. This civil war and the increasing toll of whites killed alarmed the frontiersmen. The inactivity of the Federal authorities greatly vexed the Southerners, but since hostilities had opened with Britain, no troops were available. Governor David Holmes of Mississippi Territory did not wait; on 16 July, he ordered a draft of the militia.³¹

On 1 June, President James Madison presented a message to the Congress outlining the problems with Britain. Among the problems he listed were:

In reviewing the conduct of Great Britain toward the United States, our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one of our extensive frontiers: a warfare which is known to spare neither sex nor age, and to be distinguished by features peculiarly shocking to humanity.

Two days later, the report of the Committee on Foreign Relations agreed that the British contributed to the hostile elements among the Indians, whose form of warfare had "been at all times indiscriminate in its effect, on all ages, sexes, and conditions, and so revolting to humanity."³² For these and other offenses (such as impressment), war was soon declared on Britain. It was widely suspected in the Northwest as well as the South, that British agents were at work among the Indians. With war their efforts would intensify. All along the frontier the settlers perceived Indian preparations for war growing. Thomas Owen, Jr. lived in Hardinsburg, Kentucky (just south of the Ohio River in Breckinridge County), and on 2 September 1812, he wrote to his brother John in Tennessee. "Harrison + Edwards, governors of Indianna + Elinoi Territories has applied to us for assistance having discovered that the Indians are making formidable preparations to attack them."³³ Calls for action came from more than just the beleaguered frontiersmen. From

Richmond, Virginia, John Cambell wrote his brother David (a major in the Army) on 5 October, asking, "Why does he (James Madison) not call upon the Militia to drive the damn infernal Indians off the face of the earth...?"³⁴ Regular military men did not have the same alarm about the Indians as the settlers, at least until they came in close proximity with the frontier. Those who already served in advanced posts saw the rising threat. The commander of Fort Stoddart (below the confluence of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers) was Colonel Edmond P. Gaines. He had gained fame as having arrested Aaron Burr in 1807, had been at his southern post since, and understood the frontier. He too was alarmed and wrote on 16 November,

I am sure that no man acquainted with the Indians, their want of Government and their corrupt British principles, would... doubt that most if not all of them (the Upper Creeks) would join the enemy unless our army should awe them...³⁵

But the Army did not awe, the militia had not been called, and as 1812 came to a close, tensions across the South grew.³⁶

Both the Federal government and those who had a more direct stake in events believed that the Indians would receive aid through the Spanish on the Gulf Coast and help the British to defeat the Americans. With the threat of an uprising from Canada to the Gulf, it was not difficult for the Americans to believe that their old foe had been

preparing the Indians for their day of vengeance - to include an invasion of the Gulf Coast by regular British troops. It was also believed that the British would encourage a slave revolt when the fighting erupted.³⁷ Taken as a whole, and added to the uncertainty as to when the blow would fall, the men of the frontier had much to tremble about.³⁸

Patrick May lived near St. Stephens, a white settlement on the Tombigbee river, in what is now Alabama. He recalled that when it became known that the United States and Great Britain were at war;

there were various opinions & surmises in relation to the path which the Creek Indians would act in the war... but the prevailing opinion [2 words illeg.] was, that they, the Creeks, would become an ally of G. Britain & would take up arms in her behalf and against the U. States.³⁹

In February 1813, near the mouth of the Ohio River, seven families were massacred by a party of Indians, including some Creek. Extreme brutality was used, including cutting open a pregnant woman and sticking her unborn child upon a stake. During the spring the killings of whites by Indians became more numerous. The Federal road was not safe, nor was any part of the Creek lands. Even Benjamin Hawkins became worried, but thought that the British and Spanish were behind the atrocities.⁴⁰

The Creek civil war also grew more heated. Some of the killers of the Ohio River people had been hunted down and slain by other Creek. But the Red Sticks' following only seemed to grow, and they in turn slew supporters of chiefs friendly to whites.⁴¹ In April, a group of prominent men of St. Stephens felt that they had to advise the Federal military commander of the area, who was in Mobile, that;

serious apprehension of a hostile disposition in the Creek Indians toward the Americans prevails generally among the inhabitants of Clark and Washington County's -- their fears and alarms have been much increased the last three or four days; many of the families residing near the Indian boundary line are preparing to leave their farms and retreat down the river for safety.⁴²

In Tennessee, the violence was taken as a "prelude" to an upcoming Indian uprising. The whites were also concerned as to whether the other tribes, particularly the Choctaw, would join the Red Sticks. The hostiles' rejection of all traces of assimilation terrified the settlers. The Red Sticks left fields untended and killed cattle. They pulled down fences and burned the fence posts. All perceived white ways were destroyed or abandoned, all but the use of firearms.⁴³

On 28 June, the new commander of the Seventh Military district, General Flournoy (who had recently replaced General Wilkinson), ordered General Claiborne to march from Baton Rouge to Mt. Vernon (north of Mobile) with his 600 volunteers, men raised from the Mississippi Territory and

Louisiana. There Claiborne was to prepare to meet any attack, "either from Indians, Spaniards, or English."⁴⁴ The troops when in position were still not close enough to the area of danger across the Mobile and Tensaw Rivers. The former commander, General Wilkinson, understood this as he made the dangerous passage through the Creek nation on his way to a new command in the north. On 29 June, from the middle of the nation, he wrote to his old friend, Territorial Judge Harry Toulmin.⁴⁵ He reported that some friendly Indians were being attacked and that the Red Sticks were "daily... increasing in strength..." and that, according to all with whom he spoke, after settling with the loyal Indians "their intention is to make war on the whites. This seems to be the general impression; but no one can tell or even guess where a blow will be struck." The dark note continued:

Francis [a Red Stick leader] and his followers to the number of more than three hundred, are assembled at a camp on the Alabama...they were about to move down the river to break up the half-breed settlements and those of the citizens in the forks of the river. I know not what stress to lay on these wild reports, but the whole road is deserted...and consternation and terror are in every countenance I meet...I think the volunteers should be called up, to your frontier, without a moments delay...Colonel Hawkins is profoundly silent. Alexander Cornells has fled the country... I fear that Hawkins' government will be found too feeble to bind a herd of savages...⁴⁶

On the 6 July, safe at Milledgeville, Georgia, Wilkinson wrote Major-General Morgan Lewis; "I have just arrived here,

with my scalp, after passing the Creek nation, with some peril and more anxiety, than half a dozen, well fought battles could produce."⁴⁷

Finally, at long last, Benjamin Hawkins realized that he was losing control of the situation. In late June he had received news from Alexander Cornells that the friendly chiefs were shocked to find that Red Stick power was deeper and wider than they had thought. Their position was deteriorating and they warned that extermination of the white men was the ultimate goal of the hostile Creek. Cornells was of mixed-blood, and one of the powerful men in the Creek Confederacy; but now he was marked for death by the Red Sticks. Hawkins had viewed the situation as a civil war between the Upper and Lower Creek. But by 6 July, something else had entered his mind as he wrote to the United States Secretary of War, John Armstrong;

A great number of Indians seem to be astonished exceedingly, alarmed and timid at the sudden explosion of this Fanaticism. Its boasted magic powers deters them from obeying the calls of their chiefs.

Hawkins' conversion and bleak report came too late.⁴⁸

On 27 July, 1813, John Innerarity wrote from Pensacola to his brother James in Mobile. About three hundred Red Sticks under Peter McQueen had come to Florida to get arms and ammunition that they thought had been promised them by the British in Canada. They carried a letter from a British

official, which they inherited from Little Warrior (one of the principals in the Ohio River atrocity, who had been hanged by Alexander Cornells and other Creek who remained true to the Americans).⁴⁹ The Spanish governor balked, but after blood was almost shed, he relented and gave them some of what they asked. The Indians were quite open as to their intentions. The chiefs told Innerarity that "they had taken up the Tomahawk" and were followed by most other Indians, and that war was coming from Mississippi to Canada. They said that "they were determined to make the land clean of the Americans or to lose their lives..." Their determination was clear for they committed a most uncompromising act: "It is remarkable that of the whole band of Indians, not a single one would taste a drop of liquor..." Another white man's way cast aside. Innerarity continued:

The league seems to be very formidable & I fear will daily gain much additional strength. They have all gone stark mad & the fermentation will communicate like wildfire. They will spill much innocent blood with the Ammunition which the Govr involuntarily gave them.

But they lost most of that ammunition at the Battle of Burnt Corn Creek, the same day that the above letter was written. The crisis was only days away.⁵⁰

In the middle of July, 1813, Jeremiah Austill was at his father's farm outside of St. Stephens (on the lower Tombigbee River) when "Cornells came riding up in great haste on a fine horse and went on to St. Stephens with the news, stirring up the inhabitants." Cornells had seen the Red Stick party on its way to Pensacola, after they had burned his farm and taken his wife.⁵¹ Colonel James Caller, the senior military officer on the frontier west of the Creek lands, sent spies to Pensacola who reported back to St. Stephens that the Creek were receiving arms from the British (allowed to operate there by the Spanish) with a view toward waging an "exterminating war against the infant settlements." Caller called out the local militia from around St. Stephens and set off to intercept the Indians. On 27 July, the militia attacked the Red Sticks' camp at Burnt Corn Creek, on the boundary between the present Alabama counties of Monroe and Conecuh. After initial success, the frontiersmen were put to flight, but they had captured most of the Indians' ammunition.⁵²

Settlers had begun to build forts across the frontier in the early summer. About twenty were built by the frontiersmen who despaired of help from anyone but themselves. In late July the forts began to fill as fear-struck settlers abandoned their outlying farms and sought safety in numbers. After the news of Burnt Corn, the rush

quicken⁵³. As far south as Mobile, settlers fled, including Thomas Powell and Nicholas Weeks, who owned a brick factory on the Fish River. They took their slaves to Mobile, and within days their factory was destroyed by a marauding band of Creek. Many citizens lost most or all of their property. As Harry Toulmin later wrote in a letter to William Lattimore (Dec. 1815):

The wealth of many of our citizens consists in extensive herds ranging at large in the woods. These could not be collected in the very face of the foe, and driven to distant regions. Others depended upon their crops which were but half grown when hostilities commenced. All had houses and some articles of furniture which they had no means of removing. As to resistance, and mutual efforts for general safety, our population was too thin and scattered to do anything effectual. Our Governor recommended our erecting and retiring to block-houses & stoccades. We did so. It was the only chance of saving our lives. But in doing so, we abandoned our property.⁵⁴

The alarm grew across the South. A broadside dated 29 July, 1813, from the journal office of The Chronicle, a newspaper of Milledgeville, Georgia, announced,

INDIAN WAR!

The clouds of war thicken around us - rupture with the Indians appear now to be inevitable - The signal for combat we trust will be the signal for their destruction.

The paper includes a post from a worried Benjamin Hawkins, dated 27 July. He had come to the same conclusion that others had long evinced; the Creeks had been set to war by the British in Canada, and that when the civil war was over the Indians would attack the frontier settlements. The

friendly chiefs had sent a request to Hawkins for assistance and reported the Red Sticks strength had increased to 2500 warriors. Hawkins wanted Georgia to send 300 men to the aid of the friendly chiefs, but the newspaper only sent scorn. It noted that the requested men would not be enough and was "exactly in character with the whole conduct of Col. Hawkins; it shows a deadly jealousy of the people of Georgia." If and when the Georgians went to war, they would bring a force large enough to ensure victory. The men of Georgia cared little for the failed policy of Hawkins or his government and were determined to end the drama as they thought it should have been ended long before.⁵⁵

Colonel Joseph Carson wrote General Claiborne on 30 July, (Claiborne would reach Mount Vernon that very day) that "A number of the Creek Indians have for some time evidenced a Disposition hostile to the American Government..." Carson continued, "A large majority of the Creeks have declared for war, and the settlements here will doubtless be speedily attacked." He had sent a detachment of troops under Lieutenant Osborne, a doctor, to Fort Mims to add security there and enclosed a letter from that same officer relating the defeat at Burnt Corn. Carson concluded, "The Indians have shot the post-rider, and siezed the mails...I think as Soon as these Indians find themselves in a Situation, they will endeavour to revenge themselves on

our frontier."⁵⁶ Sam Dale thought citizens upon the frontier "universally" believed Benjamin Hawkins' talk of a mere civil war among the Creek wrong. Rather the Red Sticks aimed at exterminating the whites. It did not take General Claiborne long after he had arrived at Mt. Vernon to believe as the frontiersmen did.⁵⁷ Taking command, Claiborne became alarmed at what he found. On 2 August he wrote to his commander, General Flournoy, with a plan to attack the Red Sticks;

With one thousand men and your authority to march immediatly, I pledge myself to turn any town in the Creek nation. Three months hence it might be difficult for three Thousand to effect what can be done with a third of the number at present. They gain strength, and their munitions of war enlarge every day.⁵⁸

Again, on 14 August, Claiborne urged his commander that he be allowed to "strike for the heart of the Creek nation." But Flournoy, at his headquarters at Bay St. Louis on the Gulf of Mexico, was worried about the British phantom in the Gulf, poised to strike; so Claiborne played the part of Cassandra, and his requests were denied. All the commander on the scene could do was to divide his scant force among the forts and pray they would be enough.⁵⁹

General Claiborne next tried the Governor of Georgia on 14 August. He thought that he should warn of

circumstances relative to the approaching War with the Creek Indians...when I arrived I found the inhabitants on Tombigby and Alabama in a

state of the utmost confusion and alarm. They were flying from all quarters to the west side of the Tombigby...

He went on to state that preparations for a fight must begin immediately as the Indians had decided on their course.

Further, the instigators could be found in Canada, i.e., the British. Claiborne had already begun to prepare by splitting up his 600 men among the frontier forts. Until he received reinforcements, he could only dig in and wait.⁶⁰

He had gained further information from a half-breed, Sam Manac, that war-dances had begun the previous December, and more than half of the Creek nation were in league with the Red Sticks. Manac had met High Head Jim, a hostile leader, who told him that the great attack was imminent.⁶¹

At one of the stockades, Fort Mims, Major Daniel Beasley commanded a force of Mississippi Territory volunteers. On the 6 August he wrote to Claiborne, "We have no hostile Indians about as yet but it is believed by the Inhabitants here that they will come." The next day Claiborne arrived and inspected the fort. He recommended it be strengthened and that two more bastions be built. Frequent scouting would help prepare to meet an attack, but Claiborne felt the need to remind Beasley, "To respect our Enemy, & to prepare in the best possible way to meet him..." Perhaps he sensed Beasley had begun to think, as had others: that after Burnt Corn, the Indians had vanished, maybe for

good. Most settlers were still alarmed, but inside of a well-manned fort a seeming security could prevail. On 12 August, Beasley wrote to Claiborne from Fort Mims: "We are perfectly tranquil here..."⁶²

Like Claiborne, others still saw danger. In Nashville, Andrew Jackson was calling for the Tennessee militia to be raised. On 14 August, Governor William Blount wrote Jackson that;

I have been notified by the Secy of War that the General Government, satisfied of the hostility of a portion of the creek nation, has determined that it is necessary to order a campaign to be carried on against a portion of the creek Indians to punish them for their hostility...

Slowly, the Federal government began to take action.⁶³

Along the frontier rumors continued to fly. Indians assembled, unseen, ready to attack various forts. On 23 August, Claiborne wrote to Beasley that recent word pointed toward an imminent attack on one of the settlements in the area.⁶⁴ The same day, John Pitchlyn wrote to George S. Gaines at St. Stephens, "The statement of the Indians says 2000 are in arms against the United States."⁶⁵

On 24 August, Lieutenant B.W. Osborne wrote to General Claiborne from Fort Mims, "At this time there is very little necessity for my medical services at this post." He wanted to go where the action was, because he could not get a promotion while others did the fighting. "I would be asked

at the end of this campaign, where were you on such a day when the enemy (evacuated?)."⁶⁶

On the 25th, General Flourney wrote to Claiborne that from information given to him by Benjamin Hawkins, the Creek "must finish their civil war before they go to war with us...", and their war's outcome was still uncertain. The same day Claiborne was not as sanguine. He wrote to Captain J.P. Kennedy, a trusted subordinate, that rumors of an imminent attack abounded, and "The people here [St. Stephens] are very much alarmed, all are abandoning their homes." Hawkins still was able to delude himself and others. It may be that he wanted to preserve his relations with the Indians and could not believe that so many had chosen the path lit by Tecumseh.⁶⁷

At Fort Stoddart, Judge Toulmin fired off a prophetic letter to Governor David Holmes of the Mississippi Territory. On the 27th, he wrote, "The cloud blackens. I fear that the enemy will come too soon at last. I am seriously apprehensive that without further aid a large part of our population will fall a sacrifice." Toulmin enclosed information from others including George Gaines, who wrote him that the alarm was great and that small forts were breaking up as the people fled to larger forts. The Creek on the Black Warrior were doing the war dance. Toulmin was disgusted with those who did not believe in the

severity of the situation. He asked, "Has the New England spirit diffused itself over part of the Mississippi Territory..." He had heard a regular regiment was on the way, but felt that the soldiers "may come indeed to punish, but they will come too late to save."⁶⁸

At Fort Mims, a strange sense of calm existed on the 30th. There had been alarms just the day before that groups of Indian warriors were hard by, but scouts sent out could find no signs of them. On this day, all was fine with those in the fort. "Some were playing cards - some courting the girls - some washing - some playing the fiddle."⁶⁹ Major Beasley wrote to General Claiborne that he was pleased with the way his men responded the day before to the alarms, and their defensive improvements were almost done. If the Indians did ever show up, things would be well, for "the Soldiers very generally appeared anxious to see them." He sent his last report not knowing that within four hours his soldiers' hopes would be realized.⁷⁰

Unbelievably, at least one of the two main gates at Fort Mims was open and had been long enough for soil that accumulated from the wash of the summer rains to act as a wedge. Even at the last, there was one more chance to avoid calamity. Jim Cornells, the Paul Revere of St. Stephens, had left the fort earlier in the day on a scout. He found the Indians. Flying back to the fort, he raised the alarm

to Beasley and others who gathered around. Beasley claimed that Cornells had seen a herd of cattle and ordered him to be arrested. Cornells galloped away to warn Fort Pierce.⁷¹

The dinner bell rang, and about 1,000 unexpected guests arrived. Dr. Thomas Holmes was at the fort that awful day and was one of its few survivors. He watched as "with horrible contorsions & painted faces, those hell hounds came as though certain of their prey." Too late in understanding his folly, Beasley rushed to close the jammed gate. He was among the first to fall. The slaughter went on all afternoon as small bands of defenders rallied in various locations within the fort. But they succumbed singly or in groups: "A bout two o'clock Dr. Osburne was shot through the body" and carried inside. "He then lay until he died." The houses and bastions were stormed or burned by the Indians bringing death by Tomahawk or fire. Near four o'clock, with the end in sight, a group of defenders fled, but only about 20 made it to safety. The other few hundred men, women, and children were butchered.⁷²

Cornells reached Fort Pierce where Lieutenant Montgomery commanded 40 soldiers. There were some 200 settlers in the small fort, only three miles from Fort Mims' open gate. The sounds of the battle reached them, and smoke rising from Mims' unfinished bastions was seen; about four o'clock the noise ceased. That night in Fort Pierce few

slept. What the ominous silence from the direction of Fort Mims meant was discovered by scouts sent out the next day at noon. The horror of their predicament and probable fate led to a risky decision; after dark, Fort Pierce was abandoned and an all-night forced march ensued, culminating at dusk the next day when Mobile, and safety, was reached. Three days later, Lieutenant Montgomery wrote his father about the ordeal.⁷³

At Fort Stoddart, Judge Toulmin had also seen the smoke rising above Fort Mims, and understood its meaning. He sent a hasty note to General Flournoy who had arrived in Mobile advising of the attack, and its likely outcome.

Such is unhappily the fluctuating temper of the public mind, that premature fears are perpetually indulged in, which are immediatly followed by a security equally premature but infinitely more dangerous.⁷⁴

Another Red Stick war party attacked Fort Sinefield, but here the Indians made a mistake - not insuring all their victims were silenced. During the evening of the last day in August, at a farm near Fort Sinefield, the dogs began barking. The settlers, who until the day before had remained within the safety of the fort, ignored this last warning. The next day, the Indians attacked and killed twelve people, and left two for dead. But young Mrs. Sarah Merrill saved herself and her infant (who the Indians had attempted to scalp). After being beaten unconscious and

scalped, she regained enough of her senses to struggle to the nearby fort. She made it to Siquefield after dark, having had to leave her baby a mile away due to weakness. But courageous men, maddened by the bleeding woman in front of them, went out into the dark and recovered the child. Again the Indians attacked in daylight, but the settlers fought with grim determination. It was a small affair, with about 100 Red Sticks opposed by 26 armed men: "but to the inmates of that stockade it meant death; and death by Indian barbarity, whether to many or to few is no little thing." The fort was held. The Indians gave up their attacks and retreated north after losing 11 men. There would be other killings of settlers, but Fort Mims would remain the only Creek victory of the war.⁷⁵

Captain Kennedy was ordered on 8 September to take a detachment to Fort Mims and get a view of the tragedy. The next day he reported to General Claiborne what he had found. His soldiers were deeply affected, finding their friends' and relatives' bodies mangled. As they numbered the dead they

found forty five more, women and children in one heap, they were stripped of their cloths without distinction of age or sex, all were scalped, and the females of every age were most barbarously and Savage like butchered, in a manner which neither decency nor language can convey. Women pregnant, were cut open and their childrens heads Tomahawked...

Bodies were everywhere. In the burned houses were bones.

The soldier and officer with one voice called on Divine Providence to revenge the death of our murdered friends and despaired of this unhappy country deserted by its inhabitants, seeking an asylum in some more happy clime, where the Peace Songs and Civil War stories will not delude the people and deceive those who are appointed to govern and protect them.⁷⁶

Here was an underlined indictment against Benjamin Hawkins' incorrect analysis of the situation within the Creek Confederacy. With Hawkins lays the name of siren: His soothing song brought horrid death to many frontier men, women, and children.

On the frontier, "the greatest panic imaginable" occurred, and all sought safety in the forts. Across the country, news of the Fort Mims massacre spread. Andrew Jackson wrote that "The horrid butcheries... cannot fail to excite in every bosom a spirit of revenge."⁷⁷ And on the same day that Captain Kennedy wrote of his findings at Fort Mims, A.L. Osborne was also writing to General Claiborne. He was thinking of his brother, the doctor, dead at the fort. "I was informed my dear General of the disastrous fate of the officers and soldiers who were butchered at Mimms fort." He wanted the General to write to his parents of his brothers fate, for he could not.

My feelings since I saw your letter has not permitted me to enjoy rest. I hope the dead will be honorably buried, but that they may live eternally in the recollection of Americans. I hope too that we may be

permitted to revenge their deaths.⁷⁸

The Tennessee legislature was bombarded with petitions demanding action. The citizens of White County sent one on 27 September, and they had no doubt who was to blame; "behold the sword of a proud tyrant in close combination and alliance with the tomahawk and scalping knife of a barbarous and savage foe..."⁷⁹ Another came from Overton County, dated the 26th of October; We

feel disposed to have a part in the present war with his Britannic Majesty's savage allies, viz. the Creek Nation of Indians...and fight them in their own savage way...⁸⁰

From Hardins Creek Georgia, Daniel Owen wrote to his brother John in Tennessee, "The Indians (are) destroying our people in the settlements on Tombigbe and your State refuses to go to their assistance."⁸¹ But the men of Tennessee were acting. Men such as David Crockett answered the call to arms. "For when I heard of the mischief which was done at the fort, I instantly felt like going..." His wife did not want him to go,

but my countrymen had been murdered, and I knew that the next thing would be, that the Indians would be scalping the women and the children all about there, if we didn't put a stop to it.⁸²

Stop it they did. General Flournoy's orders to General Claiborne on 12 October reflect what was coming for the Creek, and what was thought about the British;

you will proceed to the towns of the Indians...and literally burn, kill, and destroy. This mode of warfare it is true is considered to be contrary to the practice, which ought to obtain among civilized nations. But when we consider that the British nation has conducted itself in the present contest, in a manner which characterizes the savage, & that our Indian enemies, urged by their examples, and acting under their auspices, pursued a system of ferocity which leads to an indiscriminate destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions. I feel that I am not only excusable but justifiable in giving these instructions.⁸³

The Creek paid a heavy price for their war. As a nation, they were effectively destroyed. The frontiersmen did not forget the barbarity of the Creek warfare, and it had once again been exposed to the nation. Benjamin Hawkins and the policy of assimilation were discredited and the search for an answer to the Indian problem east of the Mississippi began again in earnest. Assimilation had only been partial; when two very different cultures attempt it, there is always a great risk of a nativist stirring in the culture that is being forced to change. In this case, what began as a small part of the Creek nation brought on a war. Benjamin Hawkins made matters worse for the settlers by misreading the situation. As Colonel McKee (he was an emissary to the Choctaw) recognized, "The white people had long been deluded with the report that the troubles in the Creek nation were confined to a few young men, and that these men would be put down by the Creek authorities."⁸⁴

The Creek War is inseparable from the War of 1812. The South saw the hand of the British and to a lesser extent,

the Spanish, behind every death. The frontiersmen knew who their enemies were and what they had to do about them. The Indians were to be destroyed; the European opponents had to be driven out of their toe-holds in the South. General Claiborne, flush with his victory at the Battle of Holy Ground, on 5 December, 1813, wrote the Tennessee Governor there were English ships docked in Pensacola and he wanted to be "authorized to take that sink of iniquity, the depot of Tories and instigators of disturbances on the Southern frontier."⁸⁵ William B. Lewis had the same idea in a letter to Andrew Jackson. "Chastise those perfidious instigators of the Indians to Savage cruelties and you at once unnerve the arm that draws the bow and raises the tommyhawk." He too urged an expedition to take Pensacola.⁸⁶ And the man who would carry out this dream wrote to the American Secretary of War on 16 December that Pensacola "is the origin and source of the war." There was where the Indians received their supplies and encouragement, thus "delenda est Carthago, or we will never have peace with the Indians."⁸⁷

When peace came again to the frontier, the British had been beaten and their Creek allies had been destroyed. Indian depredations would continue in the South, but the wars to come did not threaten the survival of the frontier settlements. The land available for incoming whites had vastly increased, and the retention of Mobile gave a port at

the end of the newly conquered rivers. Effective foreign opposition had been destroyed with Spanish East Florida shortly to pass into Americas' hands, and this was the last effective Indian uprising east of the Mississippi before the removal.

ENDNOTES

¹ John K. Mahon, The War of 1812, Gainesville: 1972, p. 382-383.

² Southerners saw victory because of the retention of Mobile, preserving their claims upon New Orleans and the Gulf Coast from British attacks, and the destruction of the long dreaded Indian uprising. See, Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., Struggle for the Gulf Borderland: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815, Gainesville, 1981. Also, Julius W. Pratt, "Western Aims in the War of 1812", The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XII, June, 1925, p. 36-50. "After the War of 1812 the obvious failure of assimilation over most of the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley quickly brought a policy of Indian removal with a new goal not of union, but of the separation of whites and Indians.", Reginald Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812. Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 1967. P. 170.

³ For the drift toward the Creek uprising and Tecumseh's activities, as well as the course of the war see, Henry S. Halbert & T.H. Ball, The Creek War of 1812 and 1813, Tuscaloosa: 1995 reprint of 1895. Also, Mahon, The War of 1812, p. 231-244. In particular this reaction was to the Fort Mims massacre, Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "The Fort Mims Massacre", The Alabama Review, XIV, July, 1971, p. 192-204.

⁴ "There can hardly have been a family in the larger and older settlements which had not kinsmen on the border of the wilderness, where men thought of the Indian menace as a very personal matter." Pratt, "Western Aims in the War of 1812", p. 38-39.

⁵ The conspiracies resulted in great loss of life among the colonialists. Albert James Pickett, History of Alabama, and incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the earliest period, Birmingham: 1962 reprint of 1851 p. 329, 378, 381, 399-415.

⁶ J.F.H. Claiborne, Life and Times of Gen. Sam Dale. The Mississippi Partisan. Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1976. P.26.

⁷ John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799. Volume 30, June 20, 1788-January 21, 1790. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1939. p. 385-387. Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, p.72-73.

⁸ Ibid., p.425-437. The Georgia-men's reply to Washington is worth noting. The militia, "many of whom entertained for the President the most implacable hostility, [had] placed his effigies upon pine trees, and fired guns at them." p. 433. See too, Randolph C. Downs, "Creek American Relations 1782-1793", The Georgia Historical Quarterly, XXI, June, 1937, p. 142-184.

⁹ James Robertson, "Correspondence of Gen. James Robertson", The American Historical Magazine, V, January, 1980, p.83.

¹⁰ F. P. Prucha, "Andrew Jackson's Indian Policy: A Reassessment", The Journal of American History, LVI, June, 1969, p. 527-539.

¹¹ John Spencer Bassett, Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol. 1. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926. P.186.

¹² "Only Federalists denied the charge that England was inciting the Indians against the United States, but even they had to be aware that Britain's gifts to the natives had at least doubled." Mahon, The War of 1812, p.22.

¹³ Pickett, History of Alabama, p. 426, 434-437.

¹⁴ Col. Arther Cambell to David Cambell, September 15, 1810, Cambell Family Papers, Box 1, Correspondence 1774-1811, Folder: 1810.

¹⁵ Benjamin W. Griffith Jr., McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1988. P.65.

¹⁶ The Indians had already seen much inter-marrying with the whites. By the time of the Creek War, almost all of the chiefs on either side, including William Weatherford, High Head Jim, and Peter McQueen were of mixed race.

¹⁷ Arthur H. Hall, "The Red Stick War, Creek Indian Affairs During the War of 1812", Chronicles of Oklahoma, XII, September 1934, p. 267.

¹⁸ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 10-11. Frank Herman Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge: The Creek War of 1813-1814", Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1975, p. 117-118. Griffith, McIntosh and Weatherford, p. 65.

¹⁹ Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p. 120.

²⁰ Hall, "The Red Stick War", p. 269-270.

²¹ Griffith, McIntosh and Weatherford, p. 68-69, 79. George Cary Eggleston, Red Eagle and the Wars with the Creek Indians, New York: 1980 reprint of 1878, p. 48-49. Also, Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 11. And, Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p. 128-133.

²² Claiborne, Life and Times of Gen. Sam Dale, p. 50-51.

²³ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 11. Claiborne, Life and Times of Gen. Sam Dale, 52-53.

²⁴ Notes of J.F.H. Claiborne in Albert J. Pickett Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Box 2, Folder 13, Manuscript, p. 1-2.

²⁵ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p. 64.

²⁶ Claiborne, Life and Times of Gen. Sam Dale, 65-67.

²⁷ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 11-14. Halbert & Ball, Creek War, p. 85-86.

²⁸ John Spencer Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: 1926, p. 226-228. Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p. 204. Mrs. Crawley later reported that Colbert had seen her while she was a captive and did not attempt to help her. Colbert's band of Chickasaw was larger than the group that held Mrs. Crawley, but had acted friendly to the Creek moving through their land. Thus Jackson was warning of exactly what had already happened. The whites, with good reason, were wary of all the tribes.

²⁹ Bassett, Correspondence, Vol. 1. p. 231.

³⁰ Halbert & Ball, Creek War, p. 86-87. Robert B. McAfee, History of the Late War in the Western Country, Bowling Green: 1816, p. 492.

³¹ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 15-16. Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p. 138. J.F.H. Claiborne, Mississippi, as a Province, Territory and State, Jackson: 1964 reprint of 1880, p. 318.

³² John Brannan, ed., Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States During the War with Great Britain in the Years 1812, 13, 14 and 15, Washington, D.C.: 1823, reprinted 1971, p.13, 21.

³³ Thomas Owen Jr. to Dr. J. Owen, September 2, 1812, Cambell Family Papers, Box 2, Correspondence 1812-1813, Folder 1812 January-September.

³⁴ John Cambell to Major David Cambell, October 5, 1812, Cambell Family Papers, Box 2, Correspondence 1812-1813, Folder 1812 October-December.

³⁵ Samual C. Williams, "A Forgotten Campaign", Tennessee Historical Magazine, VIII, January 1925, p. 269.

³⁶ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 9.

³⁷ The South in particular was ever ready for a slave revolt. The British had encouraged this during the Revolution; see Robert Middlekauff, The Glorious Cause, The American Revolution 1763-1789, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, p.316. They would do so again during the current war; see Walter Lord, The Dawn's Early Light, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972, p. 37-38, 68. Also in 1814, a Major Edward Nicolls of the Royal Marines was stationed at Pensacola. His task was to encourage the Indians and to recruit runaway slaves to fight the Americans; see Frank L. Owsley Jr., "British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During the War of 1812", The Florida Historical Quarterly, XLVI, October 1967, p.117. This could have been decisive in securing the support of Louisianans at the Battle of New Orleans. According to Owsley, the inhabitants of Louisiana sided with the Americans in part because the British had encouraged the Indians and slaves. Many of the Frenchmen had lived through the nightmare on Santo Domingo; see Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 130. The Governor of Louisiana, W.C.C. Claiborne, mistakenly believed that Fort Mims had fallen as

a result of a slave uprising as well as Indian attack; see Ibid, p. 39. After the fall of Fort Mims General Claiborne was ordered by his commander, General Flournoy, "to exterminate captured slaves". General Claiborne's son, J.F.H. Claiborne, reported to Albert Pickett, "Before you put too hard a construction on his letter, ordering my father to exterminate the captured slaves, remember the atrocities the savages were then perpetrating on the frontier, the fall of Fort Mims & the fact that negroes were in all the war parties & more savage & inexcorable than the Indians themselves". J.F.H. Claiborne to Albert J. Pickett, August 23, 1847, MS, Albert J. Pickett Papers, Box 2, Folder 13. The fact that runaway slaves had fought and died with the Indians at the Battle of Holy Ground in 1813 raised the anger and bitterness of the whites; see Halbert and Ball, The Creek War, p. 259.

³⁸ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p. 88 Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 18-19.

³⁹ Gen. Patrick May notes on Burnt Corn Fight, MS, Albert J. Pickett Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, p.1.

⁴⁰ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p.16.

⁴¹ Pickett, History of Alabama, p.517.

⁴² John Hanes, William McGrew, James Woods, & George S. Gaines, to M. Gen. James Wilkinson, April 17th., 1813, Typed Copy, Alabamians at War, War of 1812 & 1st Creek War, SG13377 Vertical File, Folder 8.

⁴³ McAfee, History of the Late War, p.492. T.H. Palmer, ed., The Historical Register of the United States, Philadelphia: 1814, p.33

⁴⁴ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p.88.

⁴⁵ Harry Toulmin was an interesting man. He had been president of Transylvania University in Kentucky as well as Secretary of State of Kentucky. Thomas Jefferson appointed him to his territorial post. Colonel Edmund Gaines was his son in law. Lucille Griffith, Alabama- A Documentary History to 1900, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1968. P.53.

⁴⁶ Claiborne, Mississippi, p. 321-322.

⁴⁷ James Wilkinson, Memoirs of My Own Times, Philadelphia: 1816, p. 115-116.

⁴⁸ Griffith, McIntosh and Weatherford, p.80,87.

⁴⁹ Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p.25.
This letter has never been found. Perhaps it never existed, yet the Indians clearly thought they had received the promise of help from both the British and Spanish. Also, in the remains of the Indian village after the Battle of Holy Ground, several letters were captured by the Americans. The letters were from the Spanish Governor at Pensacola, congratulating the Red Sticks on their victory at Fort Mims.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Howard West, ed., "A Prelude to the Creek War of 1813-1814, John Innerarity to James Innerarity", The Florida Historical Quarterly, XVIII, April, 1940, p. 247-266.

⁵¹ Jeremiah Austill in conversation with A.B. Meek, May 5, 1857, A.B. Meek Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Fox 151 Folder 7. Austill would be with Sam Dale in the famed Canoe Fight later in the year.

⁵² Patrick May notes, Pickett Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, p. 2. Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p.30-32.

⁵³ Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p.144. Halbert and Ball, The Creek War, p. 106-117. "it is certain that the inhabitants of these river settlements, these pioneers along the Mobile and Tensaw and the Alabama and Tombigbee, saw a dark looking war cloud rising to the eastward, and that they felt it needful, and that it was needful, for them to do the best which they could do in preparing for self-defense." P. 106.

⁵⁴ Richard S. Lackey, ed., Frontier Claims in the Lower South, New Orleans: 1977, p.3-4, 30. From a deposition by Thomas Lowell over losses suffered, and a letter from Toulmin.

⁵⁵ The Chronicle, broadside, Chronicle Office (Atlanta, GA) Monday Evening, August 2, 1813; Journal Office, Milledgeville, 29th. July, 1813. Indian War!

⁵⁶ Col. Joseph Carson to Brig. Gen. F.L. Claiborne, Typed Copy, Alabamians at War, SPR42 Vertical File. Claiborne, Life and Times of Sam Dale, 78-79.

⁵⁷ Claiborne, Life and Times of Sam Dale, p.91-92.

⁵⁸ Eggleston, Red Eagle, p. 93.

⁵⁹ Claiborne, Life and Times of Sam Dale, p.93.

⁶⁰ West, "A Prelude", Gen. Claiborne to Governor of Georgia, p. 263-265.

⁶¹ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p.91-92. Sam Manac had given his deposition to Judge Harry Toulmin on 2 August. Manac had also witnessed what Sam Dale had seen at the council meeting at Tuckabatchee when Tecumseh had given his famous speech. The deposition is interesting, for Manac states that it was not until Christmas following Tecumseh's visit (1811) that the Creek had begun to war-dance. And here was a new tradition, for the Creek had always danced after the battle, never before. This new way was a Shawnee import (as Manac said, a "Northern custom"). Further, in the beginning there had only been about forty warriors in the Red Stick party - a year and a half later they counted at least half of the Creek nation as followers.

⁶² James F. Doster, ed., "Letters Relating to the Tragedy of Fort Mims: August-September, 1813", The Alabama Review, XIV, October, 1961, p.269-285, p. 271,272,274. Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p.148. Pickett, History of Alabama, p.526.

⁶³ Bassett, Correspondence, Vol. 1. p.315.

⁶⁴ Doster, "Letters", The Alabama Review, p. 276. Akers, "The Unexpected Challenge", p. 151.

⁶⁵ Henry S. Halbert Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, "Creek War", MS, Box 4, Folder 8, p. 13. Pitchlyn was among the Choctaw.

⁶⁶ Pickett Papers, B.W. Osborn to Genl. F.L. Claiborn, MS, Box 2, Folder 18. "evacuated" is my best guess at reading an illegible portion of the letter. I took his meaning to be along the line of "Where were you when the enemy was beaten?"

⁶⁷ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p. 95. Doster, "Letters", The Alabama Review, p. 277.

- ⁶⁸ Doster, "Letters", The Alabama Review, p. 278-280.
- ⁶⁹ Dr. Thomas Holmes in conversation with Albert J. Pickett, Pickett Papers, Box 2, Section 25, MS, p.2.
- ⁷⁰ Doster, "Letters", The Alabama Review, p. 282.
- ⁷¹ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p. 151-153.
- ⁷² Dr. Thomas Holmes in conversation with Albert J. Pickett, Pickett Papers, Box 2, Section 25, MS, p. 3,8.
- ⁷³ Doster, "Letters", p. 284-285.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid. p.283.
- ⁷⁵ Halbert & Ball, The Creek War, p. 177-178, 195-197, 329. Pickett, History of Alabama, 544-545.
- ⁷⁶ J.P. Kennedy to Brig. Gen. F.L. Claiborne, Pickett Papers, MS, Notes upon the history of Alabama, Section 7, Number 6.
- ⁷⁷ Pickett, History of Alabama, p.546. Owsley, Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands, p. 39. Eggleston, Red Eagle, p. 141-142.
- ⁷⁸ A.L. Osborne to Gen. F.L. Claiborne, Pickett Papers, MS, Box 2, Section 2.
- ⁷⁹ Documents relating to the Creek War, The American Historical Magazine, VII, July 1902, p. 213.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 215.
- ⁸¹ Daniel Owen to Dr. John Owen, October 5, 1813, Cambell Family Papers, Box 2, Correspondence 1812-1813, Folder 1813 July-December.
- ⁸² David Crockett, The Autobiography, New York: 1923, p. 51-52.
- ⁸³ General Thomas Flournoy to General Claiborne, October 12, 1813, Pickett Papers, MS, Notes upon the History of Alabama, Section 7, Number 7.

⁸⁴ Col. Mckee to Choctaw chiefs in council, October 20th., 1813, Halbert Papers, MS, Box 4, "Creek War", Folder 8, p.38-39.

⁸⁵ Halbert and Ball, The Creek War, p.243.

⁸⁶ Bassett, Correspondence, Vol. 1.p. 357-358.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 397.

NOTES ON SOURCES

The Creek War of 1813-1814 has been largely overlooked by historians. It was played out during the War of 1812, which involved sea battles and set-piece regular warfare in the Continental style. In the age of Borodino and Waterloo, of The Nile and Trafalgar, Indian fighting could easily be overlooked in favor of Lundy's Lane, New Orleans, and the victories of the "Constitution". This is unfortunate, because it enables the myth that the War of 1812 ended in a draw to be perpetuated. To understand why the war ended in a great victory for Westerners and Southerners, the Indian fighting, in particular The Creek War, must be examined.

Many general histories of The War of 1812 overlook or downplay the significance of The Creek War; Donald R. Hickey's The War of 1812 - A Forgotten Conflict (1990) is a good example. Perhaps the best to use is John K. Mahon's The War of 1812 (1972), which has a chapter on The Creek War.

A few works have been devoted to the Creek War, and it is a major subject of others. The best starting point is Albert J. Pickett's History of Alabama (1851). Pickett interviewed many of the white and mixed-blood participants of the war, including survivors of the Fort Mims massacre. Henry S. Halbert and Timothy H. Ball's The Creek War of

1813-1814 (1895), also includes many personal reminiscences and much useful information. Halbert lived among the Choctaw for years, and this must be remembered in reading the book. Nathaniel H. Claiborne's Notes on the War in the South (1819), is useful, as is Frank Herman Akers, Jr.'s Ph.D. dissertation (Duke), "The Unexpected Challenge: The Creek War of 1813-1814" (1975). Perhaps the best is Struggle for the Borderlands, The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815 (1981), by Frank L. Owsley, Jr. This book is particularly useful for understanding why Southerners could see a great victory while others only saw survival.

Great men in American history participated in the Creek war, and a few wrote or were interviewed about their experiences. Worth a look are David Crockett's Autobiography (1834) and J.F.H. Claiborne's Life and Times of Gen. Sam Dale (1860), containing much of that mighty man's own writings. Some biographies of other participants stand out, such as, M.K. Wisheart's Sam Houston - American Giant (1962). Gordon Thomas Chappell's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Life and Activities of John Coffee" (1941), provides a detailed look at Andrew Jackson's right-hand man; Coffee began his military career in his 40's and proved competent. On Andrew Jackson there are more works. See James Marquis' Andrew Jackson - The Border Captain (1933), John Henry

Eaton's The Life of Andrew Jackson (1824) (Eaton was a close friend of Jackson), and Robert U. Remini's Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire(1977). The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson (1926), John S. Bassett, ed., is also very useful.

Other studies provide balance on the Creeks and other Indians. James F. Doster's The Creek Indians and their Florida Lands(1974), and Angie Debo's The Road to Disappearance(1941), are among the best sources for general history. For Creek leaders, see George Cary Eggleston's Red Eagle (1878), and Benjamin W. Griffith, Jr.'s McIntosh and Weatherford(1988).

Published documents that should be examined include the aforementioned Jackson correspondence, The Historical Register of the United States(1814), Official Letters(1823), and perhaps most useful of all, The American State Papers.

Manuscript collections in the United States containing information on the Creek War are scattered. In Montgomery, Alabama, are that State's archives which have, among other items, both Pickett's and Halbert's papers. Other archives potentially of use are: Georgia Department of Archives, Atlanta; Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; the Tennessee Historical Society and the Tennessee State Library and Archives, both in Nashville; the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; North Carolina

Department of Archives and History, Raleigh; the Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham; and the Library of Congress and the National Archives, both in Washington, D.C.

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