

Ocmulgee Mounds

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Ocmulgee Mounds NHP



The Creek Indian War of 1813-1814



RIFT OF THE CREEK CONFEDERACY

In the fall of 1811, the great Shawnee chief Tecumseh came to incite the Creeks of Georgia against the whites. He gave a speech at the town of Tuckabatchee challenging the Creeks to regain their former glory. In Florida, the Spanish encouraged the discord between Indians and settlers, hoping to gain politically and economically. A rift opened in the Creek Confederacy between those who wanted to remain loyal to the settlers and those who wanted to expel the whites. The latter group, called the Red Sticks because of the red-painted clubs they carried, needed more arms to accomplish their goals and in 1813 a contingent journeyed to Pensacola, Florida to purchase guns and gunpowder from the Spanish. On their return journey, they were attacked by militia and settlers who wanted to prevent the Red Sticks from acquiring ammunition. This skirmish, called the Burnt Corn incident because of the nearby Burnt Corn Creek, escalated the conflict to a point of no return for the Red Sticks.

CREEK RETALIATION

Two weeks after the Burnt Corn incident, the Red Sticks gathered on the banks of the Alabama River to discuss plans for retaliation. It was decided to divide the Creeks into two sections and attack Fort Mims and Fort Sinquefield. Fort Mims was selected because a large number of people within the fort were involved in the Battle of Burnt Corn. There was also a very special twist to the hatred because many within the fort were of mixed blood. August 30, 1813 approximately 1000 heavily armed Red Sticks, led by William Weatherford, Red Eagle, Peter McQueen, and Josiah Francis, attacked Ft. Mims. Ft. Mims was little more than a stockade built around a cluster of houses on the Mims plantation, but it contained 553 people. In the end almost 250 of the settlers' party died and the Red Sticks lost 100 warriors.

Fort Sinquefield protected a group of settlers, including refugees from the recent trouble, friendly Creeks and 15 armed men. Unaware of the approaching danger, the inhabitants, along with a contingent of 11 men from Fort Madison, were engaged in burying victims of previous Creek attacks. During one of the burial ceremonies, at 11:00 AM a small guard detail spotted the Red Sticks. The Indians, a group of at least 100, began to run at full speed toward the fort to cut off the retreat of all they could. The attack lasted 2 hours and eventually the Red Sticks retreated, taking all the horses that they could find near the fort. At the final outcome two settlers had been killed and eleven of the Red Sticks. The settlers abandoned the fort and all moved to Fort Madison.

GENERAL JACKSON'S OFFENSIVE

In October General Andrew Jackson began positioning his militia forces against the Creeks. Colonel Dyer was sent to attack Littlefuchee where he burned the town and took thirty prisoners. Jackson ordered Brigadier General Coffee to attack Tallasseehatchee (Near present-day Jacksonville, AL) where hostile Creeks had gathered. The Creeks and Cherokees among his forces wore deer tails and white

feathers in their hair to signify that they were friendly Indians.

On the morning of November 3, 1813 Coffee advanced his army of 1000 men to Tallasseehatchee and surrounded the village at sun rise. The troops advanced quickly and slaughtered the one hundred and eighty-six Creeks, including women and children. Five settlers died and

GENERAL
JACKSON'S
OFFENSIVE
(CONTINUED)

eighty-four Creek women and children were taken prisoner. Coffee crossed back over the Coosa and returned to his camp that night.

In November 1813, Andrew Jackson moved into the Mississippi Territory to prepare for an offensive. He waited at Fort Strother for supplies and 3,500 volunteers. The supplies never came. Men went out into the forest and shot game when possible, but there was never enough, and some soldiers mutinied.

The Red Sticks were on a warpath, burning friendly Creek towns as they moved. Settlers in Talladega heard of the burnings and fled to Fort Leslie for protection. The fort was a stockade built around the house of Alexander Leslie, a mixed blood. Over 1,000 Red Sticks set up camp at nearby Hogan Spring and began a siege of the fort.

On November 7, 1813, word reached Jackson about the plight of Leslie's Fort. By midnight, Jackson's troops were crossing the river and marching towards Talladega, despite the fact that General White would not join the operation, though he was much needed to "hold the fort down" while Jackson took care of the Fort Leslie dilemma. Just before dawn, Andrew Jackson, frustrated and hungry, moved his men to within a mile of the Red Sticks who were hidden in thickets by a stream. Jackson ordered his men to form a crescent surrounding the enemy. When the fighting began many Red Sticks broke through the lines, but Colonel Dyer's reserve forces stood their ground and met the enemy. The hostile Creeks were now in a struggle to survive. In the end almost 300 Red Sticks died and Jackson lost only 15 men (plus two that died later of wounds).

BATTLE OF
HORSESHOE
BEND

Jackson next moved against Horseshoe Bend – the log and dirt barricade of the Red Stick Creeks of Chief Menawa and the Prophet Menahee. On March 27th Jackson detached 1,300 militiamen, Cherokee, and "White," or Lower, Creeks to ford the Tallapoosa and surround the bend to prevent reinforcements or retreat for the Red Sticks who were "penned for the slaughter," according to Jackson. Jackson and the troops of the Thirty-Ninth U.S. Infantry and the Tennessee Militia Infantry, about 2,000 soldiers, marched into the peninsula of the Horseshoe to confront the 1,000 Red Sticks behind their log and dirt barricade. His cannons tried, but failed, to breach the wall. Meanwhile, Cherokees and White Creeks swam the Tallapoosa despite its frigid depth and swift current, stole canoes from the bank, and ferried militia soldiers across the river. These troops attacked the Red Sticks from the rear, burning the crude log huts of Tohopeka, and capturing the 300 women and children.

Jackson ordered an infantry charge with fixed bayonets. The combat raged with severity for about five hours; but the firing and slaughter continued until night. The Red Sticks fled to the thickets around the banks of the Tallapoosa. In a battle earmarked by its savagery, 800-900 of the 1,000 Creeks were killed while Jackson's army suffered 49 killed and 154 wounded, many mortally.

The Battle of the Horseshoe Bend was one of the most sanguinary battles of the Creek Indian War of 1813 - 1814, and is perhaps the bloodiest slaughter ever suffered by natives at the hands of an American army. The power of the Creeks was forever broken by the carnage on the banks of the Tallapoosa; the hopes of the Red Sticks were immolated in the fires of the war's desolation. The end officially came with the Treaty of Fort Jackson on August 9, 1814. This treaty ceded to the government 23 million acres of Creek land.