# The Red Stick War 1813–1814

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Abstract

The Red Stick War (1813–1814), often overshadowed by the broader War of 1812, represented both a Creek civil war and a decisive moment in U.S. expansion into the Southeast. Sparked by divisions within the Creek Confederacy between accommodationist Lower Creeks and traditionalist Upper Creeks, also known as Red Sticks, the conflict embodied the struggle between cultural preservation and assimilation under mounting U.S. pressure. Inspired by Tecumseh's call for pan-Indian resistance and fueled by spiritual revival, the Red Sticks launched attacks that culminated in the Fort Mims massacre, prompting a full-scale U.S. military response under General Andrew Jackson. Key battles at Tallushatchee, Talladega, Emuckfau Creek, and ultimately Horseshoe Bend shattered Creek resistance, leading to the Treaty of Fort Jackson and the cession of over 21 million acres of land. The war accelerated the decline of Creek sovereignty, deepened internal divisions, and set a precedent for future U.S. policies of removal and displacement. This study situates the Red Stick War within the dual context of Native resistance and American expansionism, arguing that it was not merely a regional conflict but a transformative episode that reshaped the political and cultural landscape of the 19th-century American South.

***Keywords:*** Red Stick War, Creek Confederacy, Creek Civil War, Andrew Jackson, Horseshoe Bend, Treaty of Fort Jackson, Tecumseh, Native American resistance, U.S. expansionism, Southeastern frontier, War of 1812, Creek sovereignty, U.S. Removal policy, Fort Mims Massacre

# La Guerra de los Bastones Rojos, 1813-1814

Resumen

La Guerra de los Bastones Rojos (1813-1814), a menudo eclipsada por la Guerra de 1812, representó tanto una guerra civil creek como un momento decisivo en la expansión estadounidense hacia

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el sureste. Desatado por las divisiones dentro de la Confederación Creek entre los Creek Inferiores, acomodaticios, y los Creek Superiores, tradicionalistas, también conocidos como Palos Rojos, el conflicto representó la lucha entre la preservación cultural y la asimilación bajo la creciente presión estadounidense. Inspirados por el llamado de Tecumseh a la resistencia panindia e impulsados por un renacimiento espiritual, los Palos Rojos lanzaron ataques que culminaron en la masacre de Fort Mims, lo que provocó una respuesta militar estadounidense a gran escala bajo el mando del general Andrew Jackson. Las batallas clave en Tallushatchee, Talladega, Emuckfau Creek y, finalmente, Horseshoe Bend, desmantelaron la resistencia creek, lo que condujo al Tratado de Fort Jackson y a la cesión de más de 21 millones de acres de tierra. La guerra aceleró el declive de la soberanía creek, profundizó las divisiones internas y sentó un precedente para las futuras políticas estadounidenses de expulsión y desplazamiento. Este estudio sitúa la Guerra del Palo Rojo en el doble contexto de la resistencia indígena y el expansionismo estadounidense, argumentando que no fue simplemente un conflicto regional, sino un episodio transformador que transformó el panorama político y cultural del sur de Estados Unidos del siglo XIX.

***Palabras clave:*** La Guerra de los Bastones Rojos, Confederación Creek, Guerra Civil Creek, Andrew Jackson, Horseshoe Bend, Tratado de Fort Jackson, Tecumseh, resistencia indígena, expansionismo estadounidense, frontera sureste, Guerra de 1812, soberanía creek, política de expulsión de EE. UU., Masacre de Fort Mims

# 1813年至1814年的红棍战争

## 摘要

1813年至1814年发生的红棍战争常常被更广泛的1812年战争所掩盖，它既是一场克里克族内战，也是美国向东南疆域扩张的决定性时刻。这场冲突源于克里克邦联内部主张迁就的下克里克族与主张传统的上克里克族（也称为红棍族）之间的分裂，体现了在日益增长的美国压力下，克里克族在文化保护与同化之间的斗争。在特库姆塞号召全印第安人抵抗的鼓舞下，在精神复兴的推动下，红棍族发动了进攻，最终导致了米姆斯堡大屠杀，这促使安德鲁·杰克逊将军率领的美国军队进行全面反击。在塔卢沙奇、塔拉迪加、埃木克福克里克以及最终的马蹄湾战役中，克里克族的抵抗被粉碎，最

终促成了《杰克逊堡条约》的签订，克里克族割让了超过2100万英亩的土地。这场战争加速了克里克族主权的衰落，加深了内部分裂，并为美国未来的驱逐和流离失所政策开创了先例。本研究将红棍战争置于原住民抵抗和美国扩张主义的双重情境中，认为它不仅仅是一场地区冲突，更是重塑19世纪美国南部政治和文化格局的变革性事件。

关键词：红棍战争，克里克邦联，克里克内战，安德鲁·杰克逊，马蹄湾，《杰克逊堡条约》，特库姆塞，美洲原住民抵抗，美国扩张主义，东南边疆，1812年战争，克里克族主权，美国驱逐政策，米姆斯堡大屠杀

## Introduction

The War of 1812 is generally studied in the broader context as a conflict between the United States and Great Britain over territorial control of the Northwest Territory and maritime rights. However, in 1813–1814, another conflict in the southeastern U.S. involving the powerful Creek Confederacy fighting its own Civil War would fall to an opportunistic American force led by General Andrew Jackson during tensions with international powers along the coastal region. Many factors fueled the engine of this conflict, ultimately leading to open hostility between the Creek Confederacy and American troops. The early 19th century experienced a new resistance from Native Americans towards American expansion. Efforts by Shawnee leader Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa, "The Prophet," led to a significant initiative to unify native tribes into a confederation for a common cause. For Tecumseh, a world in which white men expanded meant the death sentence for each native tribe, individually, one after another, unless a unified front was presented to stop expansion. Tecumseh's dream was the "uniting of campfires." Therefore, along with his brother, he began speaking to neighboring tribes to return to the old ways in the Native lands of the Northwest and Southeast around 1810.[1] There was no communication over long distances except for traveling to each tribe along the path and gaining buy-in one by one to this common cause. After visiting the neighboring Chickasaw and Choctaw and failing to gain support, Tecumseh found a spark in the attitudes of some Creek Confederacy leaders to take up a more traditional way of life.[2]

During the post-Revolutionary War period, the Creek Confederacy faced increased pressure from American expansion as the population of new settlers grew in Georgia, but this pressure multiplied as new lands were acquired west of Creek territory in places like the Mississippi Territory, which included present-day Mississippi and the port area of Mobile along the Tensaw and Tombigbee Rivers. Additionally,

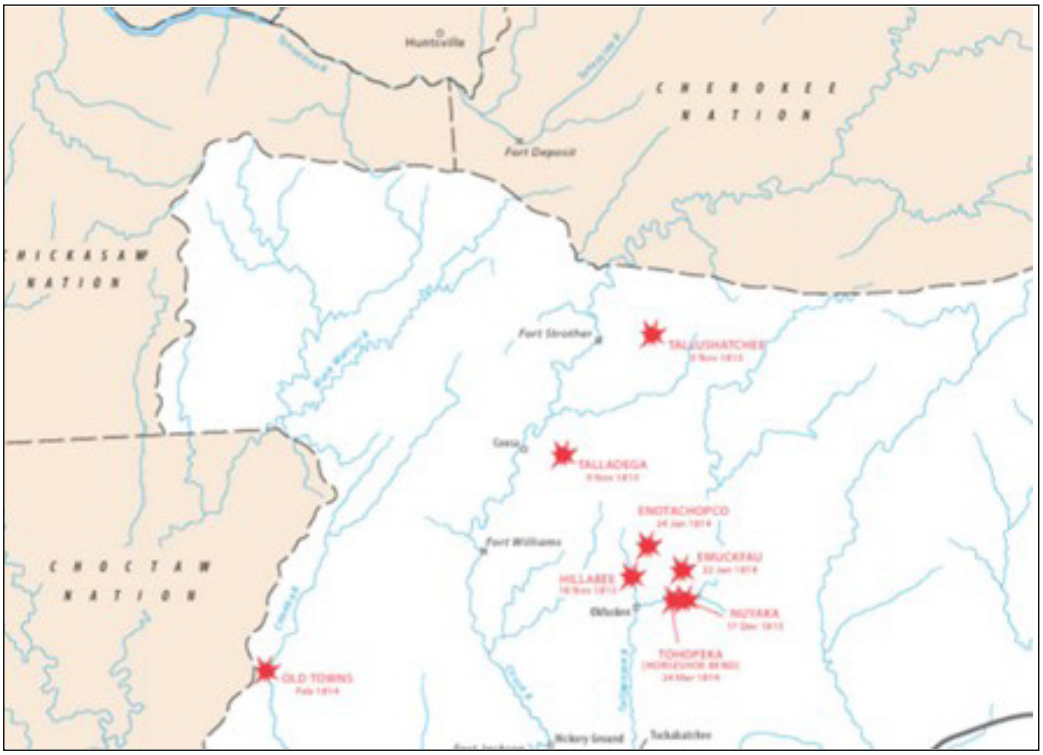
the admission of the States of Louisiana (1812) and Tennessee (1796) into the Union secured the expansion of American settlement and commerce in those states. U.S. interaction and engagement with the Creek leadership was conducted by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, the United States Representative to the Creeks; Hawkins devised a "plan of civilization," destabilizing traditional tribal customs in four areas. First, Hawkins's plan transformed the roles of men and women. Second, the Confederacy was to adopt American norms, abolish communal field usage, and, finally, accept private land holdings for commercialization.[3] By 1811, the powerful Creek Confederacy population was divided on the issue of American expansion, thus splitting into two factions. The Lower Creeks, in towns such as Coweta, Cusseta, Eufaula, Hitchiti, Okmulgee, Okfuskee, Ochessee, and Apalachicola, advocated for accommodating Americanization (Headmen from these towns became members of the Creek National Council). The traditional faction, the Upper Creeks, also known as Red Sticks, took on Tecumseh's vision, and this faction was determined to resist American expansion.[4] A civil war resulted amongst the Confederacy from 1813 to 1814, thus allowing American forces to engage the tribe while the opportunity was there. Furthermore, the war marked a turning point in Native American resistance in the Southeast, thus accelerating the loss of Creek sovereignty and paving the way for future U.S. policy of removal and displacement. This article explores the origins of the Red Stick War, highlights key themes, events, and battles, and explores the lasting consequences of the Red Stick War, shedding light on how this conflict influenced the broader struggle for Native American autonomy and reshaped the American South in the 19th century.[5]

## The Creek Confederacy

Creeks weren't a tribe, *per se*, but a confederacy of tribes with a long lineage in the Southeastern region of North America. Creeks were a matrilineal society, yet multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, consisting of Muskogee, Hitchiti, Alabama, Yuchi, Natchez, Tuckabatchie, and Shawnee, among others. Creeks were centrally located in present-day Alabama and Georgia. However, the Confederacy controlled most of Florida at its height of power, along with access to land and trade networks as far west as the Mississippi River, North to the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, and east into the Appalachians and the southeastern Atlantic coastline. The Creek Confederacy was vast; an estimated 25,000 people lived in the territory by the 1800s.[6]

The Creeks are topically categorized into two geographical divisions based on early European encounters: the Upper and Lower Creeks. Despite the complexity of social and political dynamics that formed over time among the Creek Confederacy, geography makes the divisions easy to understand.[7] Upper Creek towns in the Muskogee region were 200 miles inland, along the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. Their extensive tributary network was crucial

for the British, who referred to them as "Creeks."[8] Upper Creek towns resisted outside encroachment into Creek land and culture, seeking to preserve traditional ways of life, as the Prophet and Tecumseh encouraged. Thus, Upper Creeks were hostile to American expansion, and anyone friendly or supportive of Americans. Alternatively, the Lower Creeks were much closer to American settlements in Georgia, along coastal areas of Spanish Florida, cities such as Mobile, and up the Tensaw and Tombigbee Rivers. The Lower Creek region increased the adoption of European American customs through trade and settlement interactions, leading to the early support of initiatives offered by foreigners (see Map 1).[9]




**Map 1.** "Map of Battle Sites in the Creek War (1813–1814)," adapted from Richard D. Blackmon, *The Creek War, 1813–1814* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004).

The Creeks' matrilineal clan system shaped social, political, and cultural life. Clan inheritance was passed through the mother's line, and every Creek individual belonged to their mother's clan for life. These clans, such as the Wind, Bear, Deer, Tiger, Beaver, Panther, Snake, and others, governed identity, marriage, and social responsibilities. Clan membership determined rules for behavior, particularly concerning marriage (as marrying within one's clan was forbidden), and influenced an individual's role in the Creek society.

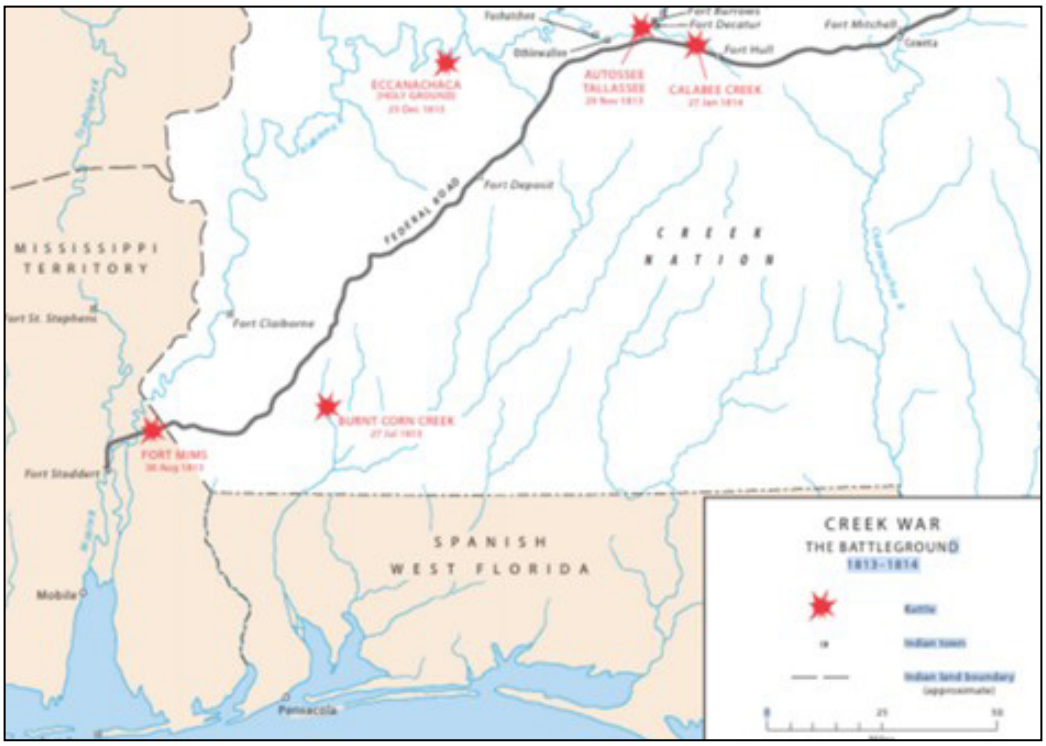
Clans played a vital role in governance, spiritual practices, and justice, with clan representatives contributing to town councils and setting a standard for determining peace or war.[10] Each clan was considered a family responsible for protecting and supporting its members. In times of conflict, clans helped organize warriors and oversaw justice for offenses committed against or by their members. This system fostered strong communal bonds and ensured the survival of traditions and values.

"Towns" formed the nerve centers of the Creek Confederacy. Creek Towns were autonomous and governed by a "Mico," or chief, and a council of elders. Towns, or Talwa, were designated as red, or war, towns, and white, or peace, towns. Red and White towns also had additional "Headmen," which included the Tustunnuggee (War Chief) and Heniha (Speaker). Red and White towns were in both the upper and lower divisions of the Creek territory. A stick was also a Red or White town designation, and members of each town were called Red Sticks or White Sticks. Additionally, a town could transition from Red to White or White to Red based on the most males.[11] Male children were identified early in life as either extroverted or introverted. For example, extroverted males were encouraged to become warriors, and introverted males were encouraged to study medicine. When Red Sticks and White Sticks experienced leadership changes, white towns selected a Red Stick Mico for a Red Town, and Red Sticks selected a White Stick Mico for White Towns.[12]

## Forging Relationships (1755–1813)

European encounters, relationships, and interactions in the Southeast are recorded in the 16th century. The Spanish expeditions through Florida and the heart of the Southeast to the Mississippi River led to French, British, and eventually American interaction with Natives in the Southeast. Over time, each international entity vied for influence over the Creeks and their neighboring tribes via trade, commerce, and war. Relationships were strengthened or weakened based on what impacted the Creek territory. One documented instance of this going back to the mid-18th Century was the Cherokee-Creek War. Red Sticks in Upper Towns were outraged that sick warriors returning from an expedition to Charlestown with British Agents, which resulted in the Treaty of Charlestown of 1749. French leaders urged the Creeks not to trust the British, who allied with the Cherokee. The Cherokee permitted the Senecas' passage through their lands into Creek lands, thus violating the treaty. For several years (1749–1755), the Creeks and Cherokee fought each other, destroying towns, killing hunters, or raiding each other in the Georgia backcountry. Hostilities halted due to European expansion into the region.

Throughout the 1760s and again in the 1780s, Creeks asserted power through international prowess with international forces, making their way to Havana, Cuba, via ferry on Cuban boats. The relationship bore fruit as




**Map 2.** "Map of Battle Sites in the Creek War (1813–1814)," adapted from Richard D. Blackmon, *The Creek War, 1813–1814* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004).


**Map 3.** "Creek Nation and Federal Road, 1813," adapted from Richard D. Blackmon, *The Creek War, 1813–1814* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004).

Creeks and Spanish Cubans frequented coastal destinations for trade freely.[13] However, after geopolitical realignment from the Seven Years' War in 1763, Creeks feared British aggression against them, versus the Spanish and French, and localized its advantages through diplomatic means, with the British having started by sending an envoy to Charles Town, South Carolina, to have conversations.[14] British trade was demanding and unscrupulous. In 1765, the Creeks and Choctaws went to war, and the British Agent, John Stuart, sent weapons and ammo to the Choctaw to occupy the Creek and prevent Red Stick assaults against British settlement in the Georgia backcountry until the American Revolution began. Creek families no longer received gifts nor had access to Spain and France, leaving them indebted to traders' demands.[15] Geopolitics was predominant between Britain and Spain, and the Creek supported it throughout the American Revolutionary period. During the 1780s Franco-Spanish dispute, Spain encouraged the idea of arming and supplying the Creek Indians to aid in destabilizing British operations.

Creek authority over its lands was respected by those governments they encountered. The Creeks maintained a rich history as farmers and hunters, primarily of deer, which resulted in overhunting to trade with European powers. The deer pelt trade was highly demanding, and Creeks expanded their economic empire into new areas in Florida in search of skins. Thus, Creeks dominated most, if not all, political interaction among European countries by lending them land within their territory and routinely enforcing the understanding that it was not European land.[16] In Pensacola, Creeks asserted that Spanish authority was not recognized over Creeks; when the British took over Spanish posts in Pensacola and St. Augustine, Creek and Seminole leaders highly encouraged the British to remain along the coast and not venture out into the land.[17] Taking this approach ensured Creek autonomy, and the lands remained a conditional borderland.

## External Pressures and Internal Divisions

Evidence of external pressure and internal divisions among the Creek Confederacy is seen from the onset of the Franco-Spanish conflict. Lower Creeks supported the Spanish in retaking posts occupied by the British, and the Upper Creek, Choctaws, and Seminoles (related to the Creek) assisted in defending British positions.[18] European settlements of Britain and Spain along the Gulf Coast continued to widen this internal void as the encounters with the Lower Creeks continuously happened, unlike with the Upper Creeks. Treaties between the Creeks and Britain or between the Creeks and Spain set boundaries around trade and commerce, military assistance, land rights, and mutual defense. Leverage Creeks, built with European governments, now included another entity to cooperate with, and a worldview of autonomy evolved into a new, more significant identity crisis as Creeks shifted to policy agreements focused on survival. Before

the American Revolution, Lower Creek Mikos ceded land near Lower Creek towns in the Georgia colony. However, Upper Creek leadership openly disputed any agreement because of their lack of involvement in the disposition, thus leading to attacks on settlements in the Georgia backcountry.

Alexander McGillivray, a half-blooded Creek, acquired considerable wealth through plantation ownership after the American Revolution in 1783. Georgia's backcountry exploded with new settlements, and the American population now impacted Lower Creek. McGillivray used influence and power to unite the Creek towns over the new American government, signing the Treaty of New York in 1790, first for the Cusetahs and 23 other Creek town leaders.[19] The 1790 treaty recognized Creeks as the "Masters of their own country," having title to their lands and respect from the U.S. Government. The agreement between the Creeks and the U.S. Government outlined peace and friendship to Upper and Lower Creeks, acknowledged U.S. protection, established boundaries along the Oconee River in Georgia for U.S. settlement, and set annual payments to the Creeks for trade goods and services. Additionally, the Treaty of New York (1790) outlined the behaviors of each party in the event of injustices or violence. It included that Creeks advise U.S. agents of any intentions of themselves or neighboring tribes designed to target the U.S. or its interests.

U.S. Agent Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, appointed by President Washington in 1796, initiated programs and endeavors aimed at Creek assimilation under the "civilization plan." Lower Creeks were receptive to American initiatives; several Creek leaders and families made fortunes owning plantations for farming. The National Council of Creeks was formed to comprise Upper and Lower Creek towns, and the council was responsible for managing treaties and diplomacy for the Creek Confederacy. Additionally, diplomatic negotiations in 1796 resulted in the signing of the Treaty of the Creeks, also known as Colerain, thus defining boundary lines and establishing trading or military posts in regions designated by the U.S.

The early 19th century presented unprecedented American expansion fueled by economic interests in commercializing land for profit. The Creek National Council faced additional external pressure in subsequent treaties, such as the Treaty of Fort Wilkinson (1802) and the Treaty of Washington (1805). The Treaty of Washington, signed on November 14, 1805, resulted in a massive land cession in present-day Georgia (see Map 1). The newly ceded lands included a swath of territory between the Oconee and Ocmulgee Rivers, excluding a small tract roughly 3 miles by 5 miles where the Ocmulgee Old Town was located; the region was rich for farming and coveted by American settlers. The Treaty of Washington also established the federal road, a significant source of contention and a divisive topic between the Upper and Lower Creeks. In exchange, the United States promised to pay the Creeks $200,000

in annuities and provide supplies, such as livestock and tools, to support their transition program to an agrarian economy promoted by Benjamin Hawkins.[20]

Another treaty indirectly impacting the Creek Confederacy was the Treaty of Fort Wayne, signed on September 30, 1811. The Fort Wayne Treaty included land cessions in the Old Northwest (present-day Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan). It characterized a broader pattern of U.S. treaty-making, involving similar themes of Native American land and internal tribal divisions. Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison negotiated the treaty, which involved land cessions totaling more than 3 million acres, and several tribes, including the Delaware, Shawnee, and Miami, signed the treaty. The Treaty of Fort Wayne inspired Tecumseh and his brother, who argued that no single tribe had the authority to cede land. Tecumseh traveled extensively to speak and unite tribes against the United States and to resist further land cessions. Tecumseh's effort culminated in building up Prophetstown in the Northwest Territory, the center of Native resistance, ranging in size from 650 to 3,000 warriors, some of whom were Creek tribe members.[21] This was not the first instance of Shawnee's outrage at American authority; in 1793, there was anger and violence over acculturation. However, he urged supporters to resist American expansion and unite to defend their lands, significantly impacting the Red Sticks' attitudes toward Americans and tribal supporters.[22]

Upper Creek leadership was found through Red Eagle or William Weatherford. Tecumseh worked with Red Eagle, mentored him, and saw his leadership capability.[23] Weatherford was half-blooded (Creek mother and Scottish father) but lived the life of the Creeks. Red Eagle's hometown, Coosada, is in Lower Creek territory. His mother was a Princess from the Wind Clan; therefore, he was royalty by default. There was no higher clan than the Wing Clan, and he maintained the highest influence on the Creek Confederacy, but he was also an advocate of raising the Red Stick.[24] Red Eagle's involvement with the Red Sticks was rooted deep in tradition. Through Red Eagle's insistence, The Shawnee Prophet "inspired" several Creek Prophets who then spiritually fueled young warriors of Upper Creek Towns. Josiah Francis, or Hillis Hadjo, was chosen and spent almost two weeks in isolation before the Creek Prophet proclaimed visions and supernatural abilities. The Creek Prophet supported spiritual warfare and resistance to assimilation.

A fully inspired Upper Creeks' spiritual awakening and spiritual revival was underway, and Josiah Francis called for the purification of Creeks, acknowledging that a Great Spirit would protect them from Americans and anyone embracing assimilation. Upper Creek Prophets viewed this as a fight to preserve their traditions, land, and sovereignty, which made this impending crisis a holy war, and they shared this sentiment with their peers.[25] While a spiritual awakening occurred in Upper Creek towns, Tecumseh continued to travel regionally among Creek towns and attempted to inspire as many Creek

leaders as possible to raise the Red Stick with Red Eagle. Headman Tustinnuggee Thlucco, or Big Warrior, received and welcomed Tecumseh, but he could not inspire him to raise the Red Stick. Circumstances were not that Big Warrior supported Americans, but he foresaw the destruction of the Creek Nation because of a war. For Red Sticks, the goal was simple: destroy the National Council and remove foreign, illegitimate, American legal and political sentiment that built the council's foundation.[26]

By 1812, the U.S. was at war with Britain. British forces, preoccupied with France, recognized that the Indians were valuable enough to cause problems for Americans, so they promised aid in return for open rebellion.[27] A conflict between Americans and the British was a sign that Upper Creeks would benefit from an alliance with the British in the long run. This was, in fact, a fear for the U.S. Government. President Madison was more concerned about Spanish than British activities in the southern United States. For the U.S. Government, the fear was a European power riling up Southern Indians and the British being allowed to use West Florida and the ports of Mobile and Pensacola to stage and launch attacks on New Orleans.[28] Madison preliminarily asked for U.S. troops to mobilize against West Florida. Major General Jackson raised 2,000 Tennessee militia to reinforce New Orleans. Additionally, the U.S. Government expanded the Federal Road through Creek land to increase military supply traffic from the east into the Mississippi Territory.

After the Battle of Tippecanoe, Creeks engaged in open hostilities on roads leading into Creek territory; Americans were singled out as the target of violence since the roads that Creeks attacked were occupied by the increased presence of settlers entering Creek territory on these roads. Pressure mounted externally and internally for the Creek Confederacy over acts of violence committed by Creeks or U.S. citizens and how justice would be served. Per the Treaty of New York, the Creek National Council was responsible for the justice of crimes committed by Creeks within the sovereign territory. A new paradigm was the legitimacy of the Creek National Council to bring justice to those who committed crimes outside Creek boundaries. This was tested as an envoy of Upper Creeks, returning from visiting the Shawnee in the North, who assaulted and killed settler families in Tennessee; these crimes were quite heinous and led to the immediate demand to have those responsible brought to justice by American standards. Colonel Hawkins reminded the National Council of the treaty of 1796 and demanded swift action for further acts of violence, meaning that those responsible be brought to justice. Hawkins informed that Upper Creeks would not be brought alive and insisted that the legal principle was to bring criminals to justice. Thus in January of 1813, Jackson began moving troops in two forces. First, Jackson's main force moved via the Cumberland, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers, where this force met with the second column of cavalry under Colonel Coffee, who traveled

via the Natchez Trace. Both forces were in or near the capital of the Mississippi Territory when Jackson received word that the strategy had changed, and West Florida was no longer within the scope of U.S. interest.[29] Jackson began demobilizing his force and began the march back to Tennessee from the Mississippi Territory in March 1813.

Concurrently, acts of violence from the Upper Creeks were designated a "war on American settlers" in general terms by Upper Creek headmen. Around March 1813, the Tuskegee Warrior and Little Warrior of Upper Creek towns advocated violence on settlers; in this instance, a pregnant woman was murdered, her child removed from her womb, and her womb impaled on a stake. Hawkins decried, "Of any act of savagery towards the U.S., this is most outrageous."[30] Hawkins proclaimed these incidents were not random, asserting that headmen encouraging violence speak for the entire Creek Nation. The National Council sought to maintain the friendship established with Americans. Still, Upper Creeks did not wish to maintain a National Council, even plotting to kill anyone friendly or supportive of Americans. In June 1813, Red Sticks had amassed support for raising the Red Stick against those who did not support them. Red Sticks gathered their forces at the fork of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, where they executed several Creeks who adhered to Hawkins's policy on justice. There, the Red Sticks decided to destroy the national Creek capital, Tuckabatchee, and the Lower Creek capital, Coweta.[31]

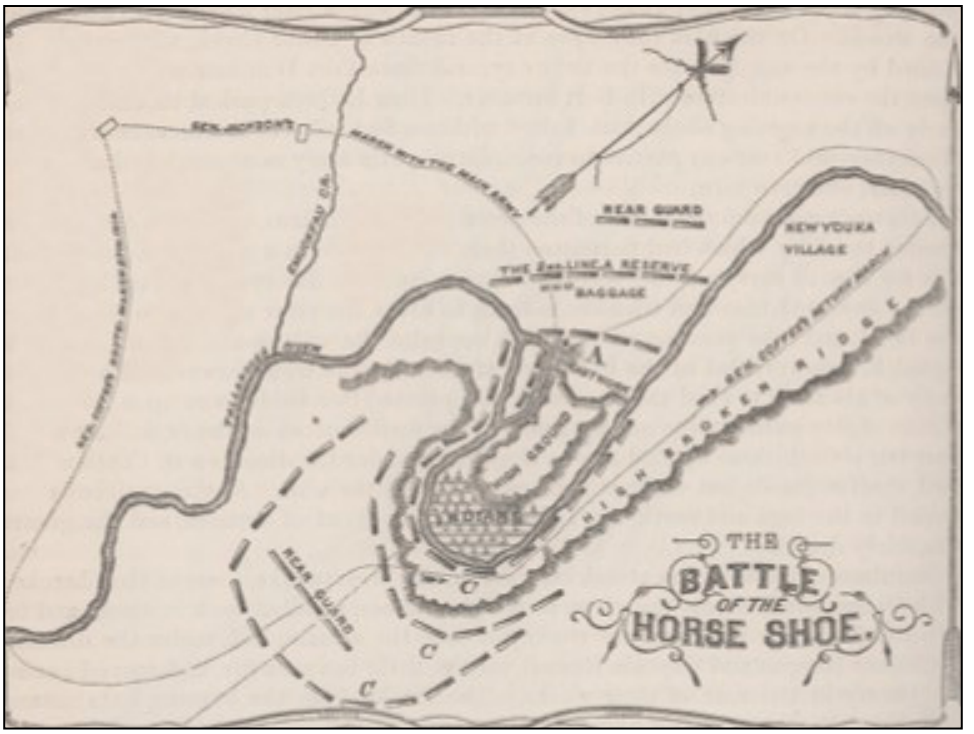
## Raising the Red Stick (1813–1814)

By the summer of 1813, the Creek Confederacy was in a Civil War. Red Sticks began planning and preparing full assaults on Creek towns that opposed them, along with American settlements. Rumors circulated widely in the region about the Red Sticks and their supply network, including British and Spanish sources. President Madison ordered General Wilkinson at New Orleans to capture Mobile to prevent the British supply of the Creeks. Mobile was captured without any incident and, in doing so, left Pensacola as the principal supplier of weapons and ammunition to Creek forces.[32]

Upper Creeks, led by a Creek prophet, Latecau, went to Coosa and invited any leader from the National Council who had hesitations to support the Red Sticks to come and participate in conversations. Through dances and spiritual movements, Latecau attempted to convert the hesitations into support from these headmen. Instead, there was an attack, and three headmen were killed. In retaliation, headmen who escaped gathered their warriors and attacked on Coosa. During the engagement, Latecau himself was killed along with eight of his companions, and then the National Council Creeks moved on Ofuskee to target more Red Sticks.[33]

The first engagement between Red Sticks and American forces occurred at Burnt Corn Creek (see Map 2). A group of Red Sticks, led by Peter McQueen, traveled to Pensacola, Flor-

**Image 1.** "Massacre at Fort Mims," engraved by Alonzo Chappel, 1857. In *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.




**Map 4.** "Map of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend," in Richard D. Blackmon, *The Creek War, 1813–1814* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004).

ida, to secure arms and ammunition from the Spanish Governor. On the way back to Upper Towns, a U.S. militia force under Colonel James Caller ambushed the Red Sticks near Burnt Corn Creek. Initially, the U.S. forces successfully controlled the engagement, but the Red Sticks regrouped and counterattacked, forcing the militia to retreat in disorganized fashion. The battle heightened the senses of many people living in that region. American officers felt that the Red Sticks were attempting to "broaden" the war and use these supplies and ammunition against settlers.[34]

Ammunition and arms the Red Sticks received came from the Spanish, who were coerced into believing that the Red Sticks would aid the Spanish if an American invasion occurred; since they had just surrendered Mobile, the deal seemed appealing.[35] The U.S. government played into the fears of settlers by using the savagery of attacks by Native Americans to leverage the chance of carrying out much broader operations in the area.[36] After Burnt Corn, Red Stick headmen saw that the U.S. militia force was a direct threat and escalated their attacks against settlements. The Battle of Burnt Corn motivated the Red Sticks to believe they were formidable against an American foe, concreting confidence and laying the groundwork for future engagement planning. A U.S. loss sent settlers into panic, and many packed up and moved to fortified communities, fearing that a full-scale war with the Red Sticks was among them.[37] The Battle of Burnt Corn was a Red Stick victory, and Red Eagle immediately planned a strike against Ft. Mims in the Tensaw District.

The most infamous event of the Red Stick War occurred at Fort Mims. Fort Mims consisted of a makeshift stockade near the confluence of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. (see Map 2) Rising tensions forced settlers and Lower Creek allies to flee there, fearing attack. Several hundred families of Lower Creeks and settlers, along with their slaves, made their way to Fort Mims for protection. On August 30, 1813, around 1,000 Red Stick warriors under Peter McQueen, Red Eagle, Josiah Francis, and other headmen attacked Fort Mims. In two waves of attack, Red Sticks set fire to Fort Mims and killed hundreds of settlers and mixed-blood Creeks; no quarter was given to those who could not escape, and women and children who were not usually targeted in Creek warfare were involved in the slaughter.[38] The massacre shocked American settlers and prompted an immediate military response from the United States.

General Andrew Jackson, now back in Tennessee, personally accepted the opportunity to lead a force of 2,500 Tennessee militiamen from the western division of Tennessee, allied with Cherokees, to attack Red Stick villages.[39] A section of the East Tennessee militia was also called up under the leadership of Gen. Cocke, and this section of the force made its way through Georgia. Jackson approached from the North, traveling South via the Coosa River. The force established Fort Strother inside Creek territory as a supply position for further engagements with Red

Sticks. Meanwhile, Jackson sent General John Coffee with about 900 troops to attack Tallushatchee.[40] American forces encircled the city and launched an all-out assault, killing approximately 200 Red Stick warriors. Women and children were also among the casualties, and the town was destroyed. Creeks, not Red Sticks, were impressed with the American force and offered support via loyalty to the U.S. Tallushatchee demonstrated Jackson's brutal counter-insurgency, thus intensifying the war, and displayed the implementation of allied Native American forces, such as the Cherokees, and loyal Creeks who opposed the Red Sticks.[41]

Shortly after Tallushatchee, Jackson received word that a group of pro-American Creeks (Lower Creeks) were besieged by 1,000 Red Sticks at Fort Leslie at Talladega. Red Eagle proclaimed that all inside would perish if they did not join the Red Sticks in warring with U.S. forces.[42] Jackson marched 2,000 Tennessee militia and engaged the Red Sticks in battle. While *en route* to Talladega, General Cocke recalled his force back to Western Georgia. However, this was not communicated until after the recall started, and Ft. Strother was left with limited protection. The Red Sticks found a weakness in the U.S. force at Talladega, taking advantage of it to escape annihilation.[43] After fierce fighting, the U.S. and Creek allies defeated the Red Sticks, killing approximately 300 warriors. The victory relieved Creek supporters of American forces and further weakened the Red Stick faction.[44] The battle was another significant victory for Jackson, reinforcing his military reputation and demonstrating the effectiveness of combined American and Native forces against the Red Sticks. The tactics of American officers were based on lessons learned from previous victories. For example, American troops formed a semicircle around the Red Sticks at Tallahatchie and Talladega, lured them to attack, and then surrounded them. The Creeks of the Hillabee towns pledged their allegiance to U.S. forces, and Jackson promised that there would be no military action against them. However, that promise was void as the East Tennessee Militia attacked those Creek towns in the North. The Creeks there were defenseless. Jackson suggested Cocke was utterly insubordinate. The Hillabee Creeks declared war on U.S. forces as a result.[45]

The Georgia and Mississippi Militias were involved in the offensive on the Red Sticks through a U.S. response. When General Floyd's Georgia men were supplied and ready to march, they moved into Fort Lawrence along the Federal Road in the Lower Creek region the same day General Coffee defeated Red Sticks at Tallushatchee. From Ft. Lawrence, Floyd's 1,500 troops and cannon battery marched on Coweta, surrounded by Red Sticks, in November of 1813. Red Sticks gave up their siege when they learned of the U.S. force bearing down on Coweta.[46] Floyd's army crossed the Chattahoochee River and established Fort Mitchell, which acted in the same capacity as Fort Strother, established by Jackson. The towns of Autosee and Tallasee were targets for the Georgia Militia column.

During the assaults, they killed the chiefs. General Floyd employed the strategy of surrounding the towns, but this strategy was not acted out. After the artillery barrage, a bayonet assault cleared the towns; Creeks were also allowed to ransack the villages before burning them.[47] Floyd, after recuperating from a wound to his knee, marched his troops back, and the Red Sticks harassed them. Red Sticks used communication to determine the movement of the militia and vacated the towns before militia surrounded the town. Such was the case for Nuyaka; when Georgia militia entered the town, it was empty. Thus, the town was burned, and the militia traveled back to Georgia.[48]

A third column of militia comprised the Mississippi Militia, which operated from the Mississippi Territory. General Claiborne was ordered to lead about 700 militia and Choctaw warriors, led by Pushamataha, up the Alabama River. Fort Claiborne was established up the Alabama River between Mobile and present-day Montgomery.[49] From Fort Claiborne, Choctaw Chief Pushamataha and several warriors assaulted Red Sticks at Burnt Corn Creek, disrupting communication with Pensacola. In November 1813, a target was selected for engagement: The Red Stick Holy Ground, Eccanachaca. Like other militia terms, the Mississippi Militia enlistments were running out, and Winter was coming. The offensive on Eccanachaca involved an 80-mile march and rugged terrain to navigate upon the arrival of U.S. forces, which

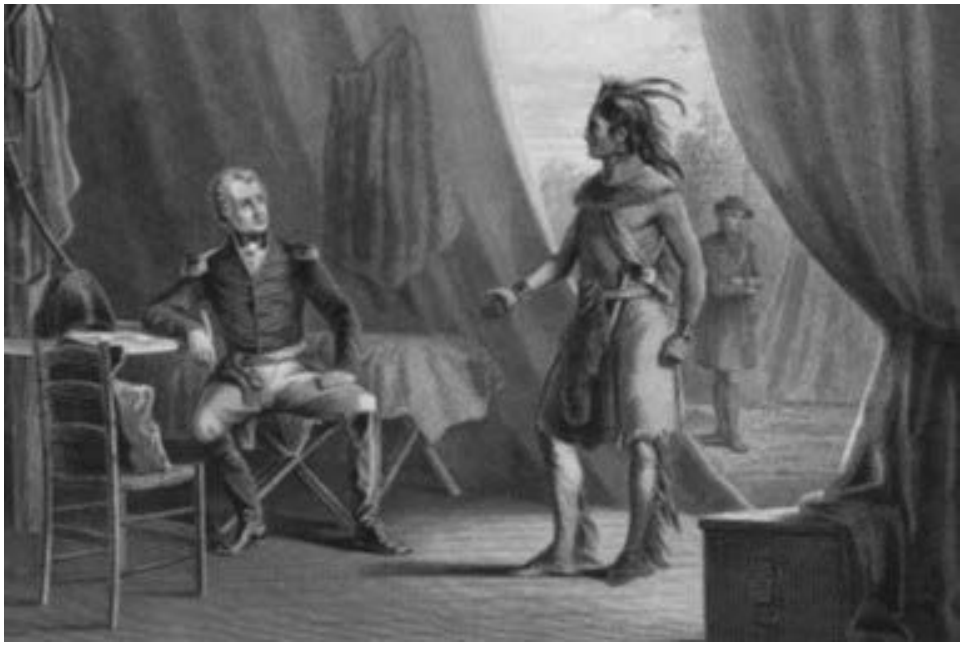


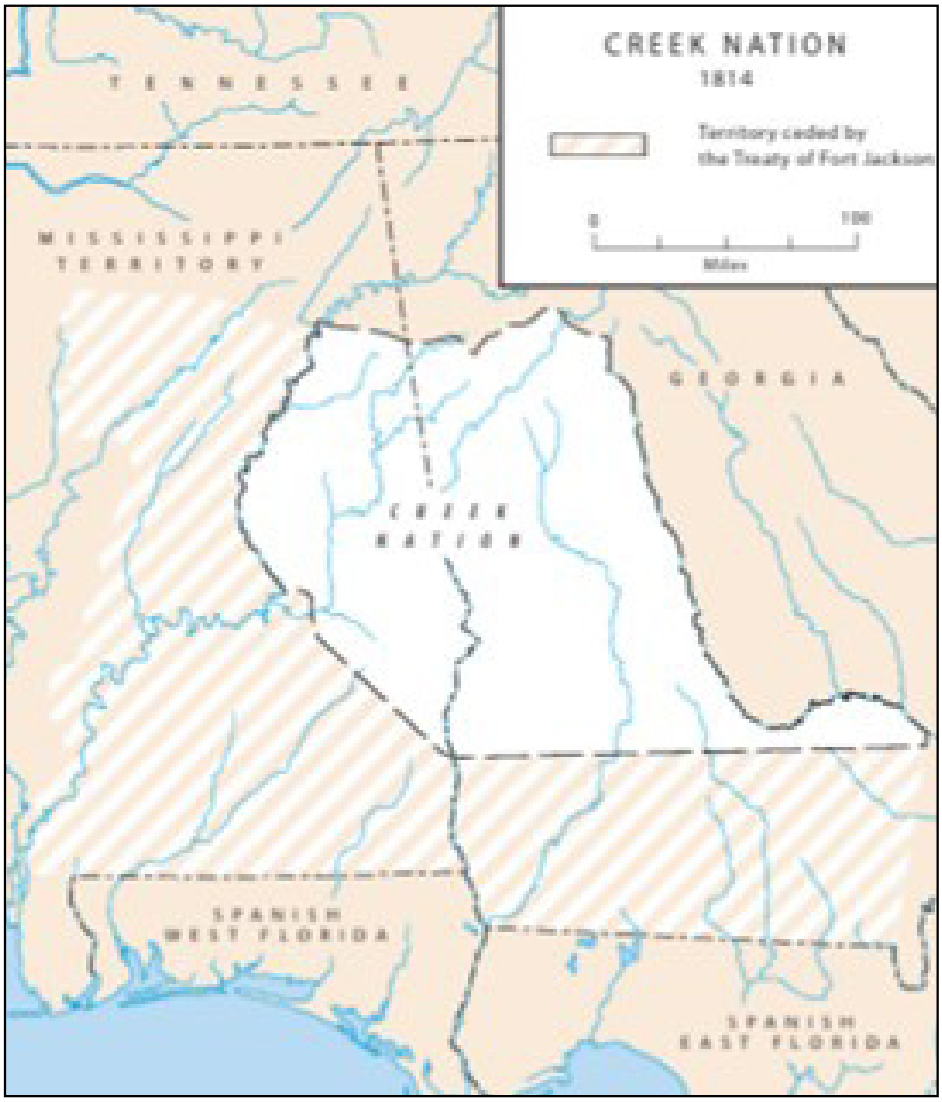
**Image 2.** "William Weatherford's Surrender to Andrew Jackson," in Richard D. Blackmon, *The Creek War, 1813–1814* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004).

now included U.S. Regulars and militia. Claiborne's force engaged the town in a three-sided attack on Eccanachaca and overwhelmed Red Sticks, with 33 killed, who escaped across Alabama or fled elsewhere. U.S. forces searched for people, while the Choctaw were permitted to burn the town. The force was also allowed to burn or destroy anything that could aid the Red Sticks in continuing the conflict.[50] Claiborne raided one of Weatherford's (Red Eagles) plantations before returning to Fort Claiborne. The U.S. regulars were all left with active orders to fight Red Sticks, so the force and Chickasaw warriors attacked Red Stick towns North of Fort Claiborne, up to Tuscaloosa, but the towns were empty.

In January 1814, governmental support for the conflict and the enlistments of militiamen were growing short; therefore, Jackson marched his command into the heart of Upper Creek territory and fought at Emuckfaw Creek and Enotachopco Creek, claiming several hundred more Creek casualties at those battles. At Emuckfaw Creek, Jackson's forces were attacked by a large Red Stick War party. Though the Americans repelled the assault, Jackson's force incurred heavy casualties. Two days later, at Enotachopo Creek, Jackson's army was ambushed again while attempting to retreat. Again, suffering heavy losses, Jackson managed to withdraw successfully and regroup. These battles demonstrated that the Red Sticks remained a formidable force and that defeating them would require more excellent military resources.

The Red Stick War's strategically decisive battle occurred at Horseshoe Bend on the Tallapoosa River, where the Red Sticks fortified a defensive position. Jackson led 3,300 men, including Tennessee militia, U.S. Regulars, Cherokee warriors, and Lower Creeks into their positions. The Red sticks, numbering around 1,000, were trapped in a river bend, with their only escape route blocked. After bombarding the Red Stick fortifications, Jackson's troops stormed the position. Cherokee and Lower Creek allies attacked from the rear, cutting off Red Stick escape routes.[51] The battle resulted in a massacre of Red Stick warriors, with over 800 killed and only a few escaping. Horseshoe Bend effectively ended the Red Stick War. The massive defeat shattered the resistance, and its leaders, including William Weatherford, surrendered to American forces.

Following the Red Stick defeat, a negotiated peace occurred in the U.S. Government on August 8th, 1814. The Treaty of Fort Jackson, overseen by Andrew Jackson, required the Creeks to cede 21 million acres of land to the United States. The treaty was meant to punish the Red Sticks. Still, the conditions of land cessation also impacted the pro-American Creeks who had fought alongside the U.S. Members of the National Council were present for negotiations. There was no involvement in the settlement; Jackson dictated the settlement. The treaty marked the beginning of large-scale U.S. expansion into the Deep South, laying the groundwork for the forced removal of Native Americans in the 1830s.




**Map 5.** "Creek Nation and Territory Ceded by the Treaty of Fort Jackson, 1814," in Richard D. Blackmon, *The Creek War, 1813–1814* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2004).

## Legacy of the Red Stick War

The Red Stick War left a profound legacy on Native American sovereignty, U.S. expansion, and the political landscape of the Southeast. An internal Creek civil war, influenced by growing tensions over American encroachment and cultural divisions, had far-reaching consequences that shaped the future of the Creek people and the American South. One of the most immediate legacies of the Red Stick War was the devastation of the Creek Nation. The war resulted in the deaths of thousands of Creek warriors and civilians, the destruction of villages, and the

disintegration of the future of the Confederacy. Perhaps most consequential was the Treaty of Fort Jackson (1814), where the Creek Nation ceded over 23 million acres of land to the United States. This cession, which included lands belonging to both hostile and allied Creeks, severely diminished Creek sovereignty and opened vast territories for American settlement in present-day Alabama and Georgia.[52]

The war also exacerbated internal divisions within Creek society. The conflict between the "Red Sticks" (traditionalists who opposed American influence) and the more progressive faction (aligned with the National Council and American interests) left a lingering fracture. The defeat of the Red Sticks and the suppression of traditionalist beliefs marked a shift toward greater assimilation, as surviving Creeks faced mounting pressure to adopt American customs and agricultural practices.[53] For the United States, the war had significant implications for westward expansion. The victory not only secured valuable land but also signaled a broader policy of aggressive expansionism and dispossession of Native lands. The war helped elevate Andrew Jackson's national reputation, setting the stage for his later political career and controversial Indian removal policies in the 1830s.[54]

## Conclusion

The Red Stick War contributed to the erosion of Native American political autonomy. The weakening of the Creek Nation symbolized the broader decline of Native power in the Southeast. It also foreshadowed future conflicts and forced removals, including the infamous Trail of Tears in the 1830s, which culminated in the relocation of thousands of Native Americans west of the Mississippi River. In conclusion, the Red Stick War's legacy was marked by loss and transformation—the loss of land, sovereignty, and cultural independence for the Creek Nation and the acceleration of American territorial expansion. It is a critical chapter in the broader narrative of Native American resistance and the inexorable advance of American imperialism.

## About the Author

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## Endnotes

1 Eggleston, George. Red Eagle and the Wars with the Creek Indians of Alabama.

2 Braund, *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War & the War of 1812*, 1. Daniel Dupre suggests that Tecumseh, the Prophet, and the militant faction of Creeks were loosely aligned despite the distance between the two nations. See Dupre, The Creek War, 211. Some literature suggests that Creek warriors, albeit small, were in the Northwest, with Tecumseh having allied with travelers South.

3 Braund, 1.

4 Marianne Mills, foreword to Tohopeka, xiii, suggests that the Southeast region of the U.S. post-Revolution was defining its identity as diverse people joined to fight for a new country. She notes that the Creek Nation was the largest and most influential tribe in the Southeast from the late 18th century to the early 19th century.

5 The Redstick War (1813–1814) is often framed as a civil war within the Creek Nation, as the division between the traditionalist Redsticks and the more accommodationist Lower Creeks created internal strife. However, this interpretation overlooks the broader context of American expansionism and how U.S. policies exacerbated these divisions. The Redsticks' resistance was not merely a rejection of Lower Creek leadership but also a rejection of previous treaties that ceded Creek lands to the United States Government—often without the consent of much of the Creek population. For a deeper analysis of these internal divisions, see Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 185–189.

6 Fixico, 67.

7 Ibid, 40.

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18 Hill, 64.

19 Treaty of New York, (1790). *Indian Affairs* (Vol 11), pg. 25.

20 The Washington Treaty of 1805.

21 Source—Creek in Prophetstown.

22 Kevin Kokomoor, *Of One Mind and Of One Government: The Rise and Fall of the Creek Nation in the Early Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), Chap. 10, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvb1hrps.15.

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