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Shapiro: Andrew Jackson Camped Here
ANDREW JACKSON CAMPED HERE,
OCTOBER 11, 1813
By Norman M. Shapiro

In 1951, the newly formed Huntsville Historical Society (later renamed Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society) assisted the Acme Club in erecting a historical marker to commemorate Andrew Jackson's encampment in Huntsville on the way to what became the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. The marker stands in the triangular median at Holmes Avenue and Lincoln Street, Huntsville, Alabama and was dedicated on May 4, 1952. The marker reads:

ANDREW JACKSON

On this spot camped his army, October 11, 1813, after marching from Fayetteville, Tenn., - "32 miles without halting." - en route to the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

Recent research by the late Ms. Renee Pruitt, Archivist of the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, revealed the actual location of the campsite at Brahan Spring in Huntsville. Ms. Pruitt noted that David Crockett wrote on page 74 of his Autobiography, "We all met and went ahead till we passed Huntsville, and camped at a large spring called Beaty's spring."¹ She also found that Robert Beaty and his wife Sarah had sold the two hundred and fifty-one acres containing the spring to John Brahan and John Read in 1819. The spring is about two miles southwest of the Madison County Court House which was indeed "passed Huntsville" in those early days. The campsite at Beaty's spring is also confirmed by John Coffee's first letter of the campaign to his wife Mary which was written from Beaty's spring and appears in the Appendix. The reason for the unusually quick march from Fayetteville to Huntsville was because word had been received (and later proved to be false) that a war party of Creeks was rapidly approaching and planning to attack Huntsville.

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend was actually some five months in the future and it was thought that the Creeks would be defeated and subjugated long before then. A new marker was erected at Brahan Spring Park in Huntsville in 2012

The two-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the War of 1812 was observed on the 18th of June, 2012, was fought between the United States of America and the United Kingdom and its colonies, especially Upper Canada (Ontario), Lower Canada (Quebec), Nova Scotia, Bermuda and Newfoundland. The war was fought from 1812 to 1815 on both land and sea. By the end of the war, about 1,600 British and 2,260 American troops had died. The number of American Indian casualties is unknown.

Great Britain had been at war with France since 1793, and to impede neutral trade with France imposed a series of restrictions that the U.S. contested as illegal under international law. The Americans declared war on Britain for this and a number of other reasons including: outrage of the impressments (conscription) of American sailors into the British navy; anger at British military support for American Indians defending their tribal lands from encroaching American settlers; and a desire for territorial expansion of the Republic.

The Creek War of 1813-1814 became associated with the War of 1812 because of the British support of the Indians in their raids on American settlers but they also had long been allies. The war was fought in two phases. The first phase occurred in what became the state of Alabama, then part of the Mississippi Territory and it included three distinct campaigns:

1. The Campaigns of the Mississippi Territorial Militia: These campaigns, which include the war's first battle and the attack on Fort Mims, were conducted primarily in what is today southwest Alabama.
2. The Campaigns of the Georgia Militia: These campaigns, which include the battles of Autossee and Calabee Creek, were conducted in portions of western

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Georgia and present-day east-central Alabama.

3. The Campaigns of the Tennessee Militia: These campaigns, which include the battles of Talladega and Horseshoe Bend, were conducted primarily in what is today northeast and east-central Alabama. The second phase of overall conflict, a campaign of the larger War of 1812 resulted in the capture of Pensacola by U.S. forces and the defeat of the British at the Battle of New Orleans. This phase took place along the Gulf Coast in the present-day states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.²

It can be argued that the War of 1812 was a war that should never have been fought. Two days before Congress declared war on June 18, 1812, the British government stated that it would repeal the "Orders in Council", the laws which established the blockades that became one of the principal reasons for the conflict. If there had been telegraphic communication with Europe, the war might well have been avoided. Speedy communication would also have prevented the greatest battle of the war that was fought at New Orleans 15 days after a treaty of peace had been signed. But the war was fought and the conflicts dramatically altered the United States' history. In particular, the Creek War and the War of 1812 brought about several far-reaching changes in the Old Southwest, the frontier region of west Georgia, and the future states of Mississippi and Alabama. They gave rise to the development of slave-based cotton agriculture in the region, led to the forced removal of native tribes, secured large portions of the Gulf South against European powers and launched the career of one of America's most influential military and political leaders.

It is perhaps strange that the war which was essentially fought for freedom of the seas began with an invasion of Canada when General William Hull, governor of the Michigan Territory, led an unsuccessful invasion of the British colony on July 12, 1812. The

British and Native Americans threw him back, besieged him at Detroit, and forced him to surrender his whole army. After Hull's failure, it was feared the British would direct their released forces against the ports of the Gulf of Mexico, particularly New Orleans, and this brought Andrew Jackson into the war for the first time, if only temporarily. The War Department responded to the supposed threat and subsequently ordered Governor Willie Blount of Tennessee to detach fifteen hundred militia to the lower Mississippi to meet the British should they make an attempt on New Orleans. On November 1st, 1812, Governor Blount issued the requisite orders to Andrew Jackson who was Major General, Second Division, Tennessee Militia. Jackson immediately began the task of preparing for the descent of the Mississippi River with volunteers he had recruited earlier in anticipation of a need for his services. On the January 7, 1813, the infantry embarked from Nashville, Tennessee, and the flotilla sailed down the Cumberland River to the Ohio; down the Ohio to the Mississippi; down the Mississippi toward New Orleans, stopping here and there for supplies. Colonel (later General) John Coffee and his six hundred mounted men traveled across the country and were to rejoin General Jackson at Natchez.³

"I have the pleasure to inform you," wrote Jackson to the Secretary of War, just before leaving home, "that I am now at the head of 2,070 volunteers, the choicest of our citizens, who go at the call of their country to execute the will of the government, who have no constitution scruples; and if the government orders, will rejoice at the opportunity of placing the American eagle at the ramparts of MOBILE, PENSACOLA, AND FT. ST. AUGUSTINE, effectually banishing from the southern coasts all British influence."⁴

The flotilla reached the little town of Natchez, Mississippi, on the 15th of February and found that Colonel Coffee and his mounted regiment had already

arrived in the vicinity. Here General Jackson received a dispatch from General Wilkinson, who commanded in New Orleans, requesting him to halt at Natchez as neither quarters nor provisions were ready for them at New Orleans; nor had an enemy yet made his appearance in the southern waters. Wilkinson added that he had received no orders respecting the Tennesseans and did not know their destination. The troops disembarked at Natchez camped a few miles from town and passed their days learning the duties of a soldier.

And the days passed and the month of February frittered away and the army was still in camp, employed in nothing more serious than the daily drill. On the first day of March, Gen. Jackson wrote a letter to the Secretary of War in which he suggested that, if there was nothing for the Tennesseans to do in the South, they should be employed in the North. It wasn't until the end of March that Jackson received the following letter from the Secretary of War, dated February 6, 1813, terminating the expedition:

“Sir:--The causes of embodying and marching to New Orleans the corps under your command having ceased to exist, you will on receipt of this letter, consider it as dismissed from public service, and take measures to have delivered over to Major General Wilkinson all the articles of public property which may have been put into its possession. You will accept for yourself and the corps the thanks of the President of the United States.”

Jackson was distressed and furious with this result and resolved that the troops would be paid and not disbanded until he had led them back to the borders of their own State. At the last moment new orders were received from the government directing that the forces under General Jackson would be paid off and allowed pay and rations for the journey home.

The little army started the five hundred mile march from Natchez through the wilderness on March 25 and

made surprisingly good time. It was on the homeward march that the nickname of “Old Hickory” was bestowed on the General. From the time of leaving Nashville, General Jackson had constantly grown in the confidence and affection of his troops as they realized he could be a father as well as a chief. On approaching the borders of the State, the General again offered his services to the government to aid in, or conduct, a new invasion of Canada. His force, he said, could be increased, if necessary, and he had a few standards wearing the American eagle, that he should be happy to place on the enemy’s ramparts. But the desired response never came and so on the 22nd of May the last of his army was drawn up on the public square of Nashville waiting only for the word of command to disperse to their homes.. A pleasant little ceremonial preceded the separation.

During the following summer, Native American violence against ordinary Americans became very evident in the South. Some of the incidents were probably incited by the British that was considered as another of the causes of the War of 1812. But the idea for a general Indian uprising was a part of Tecumseh’s grand scheme of uniting all the western tribes from Florida to the Northern lakes in a confederation against the whites, with the design of recovering the Indian’s ancient heritage. Tecumseh went to the South in the spring of 1811 and preached his crusade in Florida, among the persistent Seminoles; in Georgia and Alabama, among the powerful Creeks and Cherokees; in Missouri, among the tribes of the Des Moines. Tecumseh also played a large part in Hull’s defeat when he invaded Canada early in the war.

The first battle of the Creek War of 1813-1814 took place in southern Alabama, then a part of the Mississippi Territory, on July 27, 1813. Relations between the whites and the Creeks had seriously deteriorated in that area after Tecumseh’s earlier visit and the start of the 1812 war. A group of about 80

hostile Creeks were returning from Pensacola, Florida to the Upper Creek towns along the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers in central Alabama, with guns and powder that they had purchased from the Spanish, when they were intercepted by about 180 white militia. The whites had heard about the gun purchase and were afraid of the consequences of such action. The militia swooped down on these Creeks (called “Red Sticks” because of the red-painted clubs they carried) as they were camped on the banks of Burnt Corn Creek about 80 miles north of Pensacola. The Red Sticks were routed at first and fled into the woods and swamps but they returned to the fight when they saw the militia plundering and gathering horses and guns. Now it was the whites who retreated in humiliation with the Creeks in swift pursuit.

William Weatherford, a Native American chief also known as Red Eagle, was the son of Scottish trader Charles Weatherford and a Creek chieftain's daughter. In his early thirties he became an ally of Tecumseh, and led one of the Creek factions to resist the advance of the white frontier. After the debacle at Burnt Corn Creek, Red Eagle assembled a force of a thousand warriors and trailed the attackers to Fort Mims, an outpost north of Mobile. Hundreds of men, women and children had gone to the fort for safety after Burnt Corn Creek. On August 30, 1813, the Creeks overran the poorly defended fort and killed almost all of its 550 occupants, who consisted of whites, black slaves, and Creeks loyal to the U.S. Many scalps were also taken and the affair has been called the most brutal Indian massacre in U.S. history.

The Red Sticks' victory at Fort Mims spread panic throughout the Southeastern United States frontier. After the bloodbath, parties of Indians roved about the country rioting in plunder. The massacre marked the transition from a civil war within the Creek tribal factions to a war between the United States and the Red Stick warriors of the Upper Creek Nation. And

since Federal troops were occupied with the northern front of the War of 1812, Tennessee, Georgia, and the Mississippi Territory mobilized their militias to move against the Upper Creek towns that had supported the Red Sticks' cause.

In Nashville, the man destined to lead Tennessee's response to the Creek's campaign of terror spent most of the next month sick and defeated, laying wounded in bed with his arm bound up, and his shoulder bandaged, waiting impatiently for his wounds to heal and his strength to return. On 4th of September he had suffered these wounds in an unfortunate and intangible incident with brothers, Jesse and Thomas Hart Benton. Jackson had served as second for William Carroll, one of his young officers, in a duel with Jesse Benton earlier in the summer where each of the participants received minor wounds. Words about the affair continued over the Summer and Thomas Benton, unhappy with the fact that the General had taken a part against his brother, joined the dispute which ended in an armed quarrel between Jackson and the Bentons. John Coffee was also present and participated in the struggle on Jackson's behalf as did Stokely Hayes, a nephew of Mrs. Jackson. The General received balls in his arm and shoulder from Jesse Benton's pistol and Jesse suffered several flesh wounds from the blade from Stokely Hayes' sword cane. Thomas Benton had served previously as Jackson's military aide and as one of his regimental commanders and their relationship, unfortunately, was estranged for many years after this affair.

On the 19th of September, eighteen days after the massacre, the people of Nashville assembled in town meeting to deliberate upon the event. A committee, of which Colonel Coffee was a member, was appointed to confer with Governor Blount and General Jackson and report on the following day. The next day a series of resolutions were made urging immediate aid for the southern settlers. It was

announced that that Governor Blount supported the measure. "We have to regret," said the committee, "the present indisposition of our brave and patriotic General Jackson; but we have the utmost confidence, from his declaration and his convalescent state, to announce that he will be able to command as soon as the freemen of Tennessee can be collected to march against the foe."

The Legislature of Tennessee passed on the 25th of September an act empowering Governor Blount to call thirty-five hundred volunteers to the field, in addition to the fifteen hundred already enrolled in the service of the United States, the State guaranteeing their pay and subsistence in case the general government should refuse to adopt the measure as its own. A sum of three hundred thousand dollars was voted to defray immediate expenses. Subsequently, Governor Blount visited General Jackson with General John Cocke of East Tennessee. They found the General extremely worn and debilitated. Governor Blount said that he had just ordered General Cocke to summon the troops of East Tennessee to rendezvous at Knoxville and he was prepared to give General Jackson a similar order for the western division, if he was able to take the field. Jackson replied that his wounds were improving and he thought that by the time the troops could assemble he would be ready to assume the command. General Blount then gave the order. Jackson inquired if provisions could be procured in East Tennessee for both divisions. General Cocke thought it possible and promised at, General Jackson's request, to make the necessary requisition upon the government contractor at Knoxville. The availability of munitions, food and fodder for an army on the move is always a most important consideration.

The ailing General gave the task his full attention. On the 25th of September, in another of his spirit-stirring addresses, he called his division to the field naming the 4th of October as the time and Fayetteville, near the Alabama border, as the place. On

the 26th, he dispatched his old friend and partner, Colonel Coffee, with his regiment of five hundred horse, and such mounted volunteers as could instantly join, to Huntsville in northern Alabama to restore confidence to the frontier. One of these volunteers who would prove to be invaluable as a scout was “David Crockett, then the peerless bear-hunter of the West (to be a member of Congress by and by, to be a national joker and to stump the country against his present commander) was there with his rifle and hunting-shirt, the merriest of the merry, keeping the camp alive with his quaint conceits and marvelous narratives.” On the 4th of October, the energetic Coffee had reached the place, his force increased to nearly thirteen hundred men; and volunteers, as he wrote back to his commander, flocking in every hour.

The day named for the rendezvous at Fayetteville was exactly one month from the day that the commanding General received his wounds in the brawl with the Bentons. He could not mount his horse without assistance when the time came for him to travel to Fayetteville. His left arm was bound and in sling. He could not wear his coat-sleeve; nor, during any part of his military career, could he long endure the weight of an epaulette on his left shoulder. Often, in the crisis of a maneuver, some unguarded moment would send such a thrill of agony through his attenuated frame as almost to deprive him of consciousness.

Traveling as fast as his healing wounds permitted, General Jackson reached Fayetteville on the 7th of October and found that less than half of the two thousand men that he had ordered out had assembled. But good news from Colonel Coffee awaited him. He had previously been very concerned about the safety of Mobile and had anticipated a long and weary march into Southern Alabama. He now learned from Colonel Coffee’s dispatch that the Indians seem to have abandoned their designs upon Mobile and were making their way in two parties toward the borders of Georgia

and Tennessee. This was joyful news to the weakened but fiery commander. "It is surely," he wrote back to Coffee the same evening, "high gratification to learn that the Creeks are so attentive to my situation as to save me the pain of traveling. I must not be outdone on politeness and will therefore endeavor to meet them on the middle ground."

At one o'clock on Monday, the eleventh of October, a courier dashed into camp with another dispatch from Colonel Coffee announcing the approach of the enemy (toward Huntsville). This information had come from David Crockett who had been on a scout into Indian lands about sixty-five miles south of the Tennessee river.⁵ The General then exhibited his impetuous energy in command. The order to prepare for marching was given *immediately*. A few minutes later, the courier was galloping back to Coffee's camp carrying a few hasty lines from Jackson to the effect that in two hours he would be in motion with all his available force. Before three, he had kept his word; the army was at full speed on the way toward Huntsville. Excited more and more as they went by rumor of Indian murders, the men marched at an incredible pace in order to reach Huntsville, *thirty-two miles* from Fayetteville, by eight o'clock the same evening! It is hard to believe that an army could march six miles an hour for five hours, but the fact is stated on what may be considered the authority of General Jackson himself.

At Huntsville, It was found that the rapid approach of the Indians was exaggerated. The next day, therefore, the force marched leisurely to the Tennessee River, crossed it at Ditto's Landing, and toward evening came up with Colonel Coffee's command, encamped on the south side of the river. Here Jackson continued to be concerned about supplies for the campaign and on the 14th of October he sent Col. Coffee on a scout of the adjoining country while he gave the infantry who remained some hard drilling.

The camp on the bluff broke up on the 19th of

October and three days of marching, climbing and road cutting brought the little army to Thompson's creek, a branch of the Tennessee, twenty-two miles above the previous encampment. He was terribly disappointed to find there neither provisions or word of provisions. He halted at Thompson's creek, and while his men were employed in throwing up a fort (Fort Deposit) to be used as a depot for the still expected provisions, he sat in his tent for three days writing pleading and pathetic letters to all he knew who might have the authority or ability to help. Colonel Coffee rejoined the army on the 24th October. He had burnt three Indian towns but had not seen a hostile Indian. Runners were still arriving from Ten Islands with entreaties from the friendly Indians for relief and Jackson, with two day's supply of bread and six of meat, resolved to march and depend for subsistence upon chance and victory.

Leaving Fort Deposit on the 25th of October, Jackson marched southward into the enemy's country as fast as the state of his commissariat permitted. A week brought the whole force, intact, to the banks of the Coosa within a few miles of the Ten Islands near a town called Tallushatchee where it was known that a large body of the Indians had assembled. Tallushatchee was thirteen miles from General Jackson's camp. On the 2nd of November came the welcome order to Colonel Coffee to march with a thousand mounted men to destroy this town.

Early on the morning of November 3, 1813, Coffee's troops had progressed to within a mile of Tallushatchee at which point they split and completely surrounded the Red Stick village. Two detachments of scouts were then sent into the heart of the village in an effort to draw the warriors out of their houses. In response, the Red Sticks rushed to the outer perimeter of federal soldiers, where they were driven back by a hail of lethal gunfire. Fighting lasted until the last warrior fell. In all, 200 Red Sticks were killed, including a number of women and children. The

remaining women and children were taken prisoner. Coffee's troops, by contrast, suffered only five killed and 41 wounded.

On the evening of the same day, General Coffee, having destroyed the town and buried his dead, led his victorious troops back to Jackson's camp, where he received from his General and the rest of the army the welcome that brave men give to brave men returning from triumph. A brief dispatch from General Jackson to Governor Blount, written on the 4th of November, and soon published in all newspapers, was the first of a long series of dispatches that associated his name with victory: "We have retaliated for the destruction of Fort Mims. On the 2nd, I detached General Coffee with a part of his brigade of cavalry and mounted riflemen, to destroy Tallushatchee where a considerable force of the hostile Creeks was concentrated. The General executed this in style."⁶

"One of the Creek children orphaned by the fighting was taken from the battlefield to Fort Strother, where he caught the eye of General Jackson. The ten-month-old boy, named Lyncoya, was the same age as Jackson's adopted son, Andrew Jr. When Creek women prisoners refused to care for him, Jackson arranged to have the baby sent to Huntsville and provided financial support for his immediate care. The boy later was adopted into the Jackson family and lived at their home near Nashville, Tennessee."⁷

It was General Jackson's turn next. Thirty miles from his encampment on the Coosa stood a small fort, Fort Leslie, into which a party of a hundred and fifty-four friendly Creeks had fled for safety. The site of this fort is now covered by part of the town of Talladega, the county seat of Talladega County, Alabama. While General Coffee was returning in triumph from Tallushatchee, more than a thousand Red Sticks suddenly surrounded the friendly fort and invested it so completely that not a man could escape. Some days passed. The suffering of the beleaguered Indians began

to be intolerable. A noted chief of the party resolved to make one desperate effort to escape and carry the news to Jackson's camp. Wrapping himself in the skin of a large hog, with the head and feet attached, he left the fort and went about rooting and grunting, gradually working his way through the hostiles until he was beyond the reach of their arrows. Throwing off his disguise he then fled and not knowing precisely the location of Jackson's camp, he did not reach the camp until late in the evening of the next day and told his story.

This was on the 7th of November, four days after the affair at Tallushatchee. The army was still, as it had been from the beginning of the campaign, only a few days removed from starvation. Despite this and other problems, he decided to go to the relief of the friendly Creeks, justly supposing that the massacre of such a body, within so short a distance from an American army, would intimidate all the friendly Indians and tend to unite the southern tribes, as one man, against the United States.

"On November 9, 1813, Jackson's forces encircled the Red Sticks surrounding Talladega in the hope of entrapping all of the warriors in a manner similar to that accomplished by General Coffee's troops at Tallushatchee. In the ensuing battle, Jackson's forces killed approximately 300 Red Stick warriors and were successful in breaking the siege. Despite orders to the contrary, three companies of militia retreated as the Red Sticks advanced, creating a gap in Jackson's encircling forces. This error allowed approximately 700 of his warriors to escape. Jackson, nevertheless, characterized the battle as a significant victory and was praised throughout the United States for having inflicted two devastating defeats upon the Red Sticks within just six days.

Jackson's victory at Talladega was significant in two respects. The rescue of Creeks trapped at Fort Leslie further strengthened the alliance between the

Creek Nation and the United States in the war against the Red Stick faction. Also, the combined victories at Tallushatchee and Talladega, which left more than 1,000 warriors dead, wounded, or missing, seriously depleted the number of Red Stick warriors available for the later Battle of Horseshoe Bend, which effectively sealed the fate of the Creek Nation in Alabama.”⁸

After the battle, there was a significant lull in the fighting between the Red Sticks and Jackson's army. By December, the U.S. force was down to almost 500 because of desertion and enlistments running out. The sharp contrast between John Coffee's last two letters to his wife in the in the Appendix exemplify the state of affairs. And by the end of 1813, Jackson was down to a single regiment whose enlistments were due to expire in mid January.

Although Governor Blount had ordered a new levee of 2,500 troops, Jackson would not be up to full strength until the end of February. When a draft of 900 raw recruits arrived unexpectedly on January 14, Jackson decided to get the most out of his untried force who had enlistment contracts of only sixty days. On January 17, 1814, Jackson started his army southward again. The elusive Creeks under Red Eagle answered by attacking his army twice during the month - at Emuckfaw Creek and at Enotachopco Creek. Neither battle was decisive, but the Creeks suffered much higher casualties than did Jackson's soldiers. Following these engagements, Jackson returned to Fort Strother in February to gather the reinforcements that had arrived from Tennessee. He spent the next month building roads and training his force.

In mid March, he moved against the Red Stick force concentrated on the Tallapoosa at Tohopeka (Horseshoe Bend). He first moved south along the Coosa, about half the distance to the Creek position, and established a new outpost at Fort Williams. Leaving another garrison there, he then moved on Tohopeka with a force of about 3,000 effectives

augmented by 600 Cherokee and Lower Creek allies. The Battle of Horseshoe Bend, which occurred on March 27, was a decisive victory for Jackson, effectively ending the Red Stick resistance.

A proud but defeated Red Eagle surrendered himself to General Jackson in April, stating that "If I had an army, I would yet fight, and contend to the last: but I have none; my people are all gone. I can now do no more than weep over the misfortunes, of my nation." Red Eagle's surrender set the stage for total capitulation by the entire Creek nation, consummated by the Treaty of Fort Jackson in July 1814. The Indians were forced to turn over some 23 million acres to the United States, land that would constitute most of the future state of Alabama.

The Creek War of 1813-14 thus ended favorably for the United States. The campaign that seemed doomed to failure by a mutinous army, an inadequate supply system, and an elusive enemy was waged successfully by a sick but determined commander who kept his army together and maneuvered it against the enemy through the sheer power of his will.⁹ And when the victorious army was returning home to Tennessee they paused in Huntsville on the 18th of May, 1814, to receive the applause and toasts of all of the grateful citizens of Madison County.¹⁰

APPENDIX

Excerpts from John Coffee's Letters to his Wife Mary Donelson Coffee¹¹

Camp Batey near Huntsville Date not given (probably Oct. 4 1811)

* * * I have been here five days getting ready to enter the Indian country. Tomorrow morning I shall take up my line of march, shall go from this to Fort Hampton, near the mouth of Elk river, from there by way of

Shapiro: Andrew Jackson Camped Here

Colbert's ferry and then on towards Fort St. Stephens, our first place of destiny. There is no more appearance of Indians doing mischief here than there is on Stones river, and the best informed here have always thought so. The alarm has arisen from the poor cowardly creatures that have run off and left their all in every direction, and without knowing for what. We have sent spies over the river that have been seventy miles direct into the Indian country who have this day returned and say that there is no appearance of the Indians coming this way at all. Seeing the people here are perfectly secure, I shall now proceed to the relief of the poor suffering people on the Mobile (river). George Smith and Sandy with twenty men have gone on. I have under my command upwards of thirteen hundred men and have been compelled to turn off several hundred others that I could not provide for. I am sufficiently strong to go anywhere without any kind of danger and when Genl. Jackson comes on with his 2,500 men now at Fayetteville we shall be able to overrun the Creek nation and I fear we shall never see an Indian for as they hear of our strength they will fly before us and never risk an action. If men flock in to the Genl. in the proportion of what they have done to me he will have an army that can drive the Creek nation like a flock of bullocks and from all I can learn they will and more so.

Camp Coffee - South Side Tennessee River

13th October, 1813

We have had plausible intelligence of the enemy intending to come against Madison County (Alabama) which halted me here until the facts could be ascertained. Seeing I had to detain, I moved about seven hundred of my men over the Tennessee river to build a small fort and encamped at this place which is two miles above Ditto's Landing on the south side of the river. Soon after I encamped, there came other news that the whole Creek nation was moving on this way in

one body and would in all probability reach us the same night that we received the information. We prepared and expected an attack and continued in expectations two days and nights when Genl. Jackson with his army arrived and joined me, which was yesterday. We are now without any apprehension of being attacked, being strong enough to meet the enemy anywhere we can find them. They will no doubt try to evade a meeting, which they can easily accomplish, as they know the situation of the country much better than we do. The Genl. and the principal part of his army will necessarily detain here a few days preparing for their further march. Tomorrow I shall make a small excursion into the adjoining country with about 650 of my Regt. and return and move on with the Genl. The East Tennesseans are in motion and we will all unite before we enter the Creek nation when we can be able to drive them out of their country or cut them off if they attempt to support it. Things are fixed in such a train that there can be no doubt of the success of the campaign. I hope and flatter myself that it will be a short war and that we can again return home to our families and friends. * * *

Headquarters – 24 Miles South from Ditto Landing
24 October 1813

I have this moment arrived here from a scout into the Indian country of ten days. I have been to the Black Warrior towns. * * * I burnt three towns and never saw an Indian. I am now convinced that the Indians will never meet us in action. All our fighting will be scouting parties. We move out from here this day and will not halt again until in the heart of the enemy country. Our spies have been to the place where the Indians were said to be embodied and find no sign of their ever being there. They will certainly desert their country before us. * * *

Shapiro: Andrew Jackson Camped Here
Camp Brown – 30 miles from Ditto Landing
25th October 1813

I wrote you yesterday by Col. Hays from Genl. Jackson's camp, 10 miles below this (place), where I mentioned to you that I had just returned from a tour in the interior of the enemy country. The Genl. has gone on with his army and I will follow him tomorrow and join in the evening when we will keep all together until we reach the heart of the Creek country. To the end of any engagement should take place our forces should all be present to act together in which event there will certainly be * * * . I expect the East Tennessee troops will join us before we get to the Creek country, which will still strengthen us.

After writing you yesterday, Col. Hays detained while I wrote your father. By the Col., I read a letter from him wherein he mentioned never having reached you of Major Gibson being killed – the report is false. There has not been a gun fired by either an Indian or white man at each other of our army? and I am doubtful but few will be fired. The Indians gives up their country before us as we approach. So far as we have yet been and I think that will continue to be the case.

Yesterday I received letters from Capt. Geo. Smith and Col. McKee in the Choctaw country who had gone in expecting me to follow. They state that the Indians had fled from that part and had all gone to the center of their country from where they will move down no doubt to Pensacola to their friends and allies, the Spaniards and British. * * *

Ten Islands – Coosy (sic) River
14th November 1813

We are progressing onto the Indian country as fast as we can get provisions. And a very few days more will bring up the East Tennessee troops when the whole will move on together.

I have (had) a small skirmish with the Indians, and a part of my Brigade, where we killed 200 & took 80 prisoners, the particulars of which I have this day to Captain Parks and who will show it to you for your information

The die is now cast and I don't expect after this the enemy will ever meet us. They have no kind of chance. Our men will drive them wherever they find them. We shall build a fort at this place for a deposit of provisions and to leave the wounded men in. The only man killed of my party that you have any knowledge of is young Thomas Hudson, son of Mr. Hudson of Haysborough. He was killed with an arrow. Our loss is so small when compared with that of the enemy that it's not felt here. Our men are in excellent spirits. We shall very soon finish the work of destruction of those

will and return home, which time will afford me the greatest pleasure on earth, but not withstanding my inclination to be at home, I cheerfully yield it to duty, until the work is completed. * * *

Headquarters- Camp Strother, Ten Islands, Coosy (sic) River

12th November 1813

Last night we returned to this place after having advanced thirty miles south of this (place) towards the enemy where we had a battle at Talladega Creek. Our party consisted of 2000 men commanded by Genl. Jackson in person. The enemy were a little upwards of 1000 chosen warriors sent in to meet us and intercept our march. By the friendly party we were advised of their approach and position which enabled us by forced marching night and day with our detachment to meet them thirty miles in advance of our main army.

We met them in the morning early, when we surrounded them, and in a few minutes put the whole to flight, having killed 300 of their best warriors on the ground and the most of the balance were wounded.

Thus the two first chosen sets of our enemy have been completely cut off and destroyed. We have in the two battles, one on the 3rd and the other on the 9th Instant, killed 500 of the warriors and wounded at least as many others besides upwards of 100 prisoners of their families now in our possession. In the first battle, I lost five men killed and forty some wounded. In the latter battle, we lost 15 men killed and eighty-five or six wounded, the most slightly. Upon the whole calculation we shall not lose more than 30 men killed in both battles. Whereas the enemy on as fair calculation will have lost 600 killed, counting on such as must die of their wounds. Although we regret the loss of our brave fellows, yet the great disproportion, is beyond the most sanguine calculations on our part.

We only want supplies to enable us to finish the campaign in three weeks. We will wait here until we get them which it is supposed will be in a week from this time when we will advance forward and not stop until we reach the Georgia army in the Creek nation, which will be easily done. And when done, our work will be completed and we can return home where I hope we can remain in quiet with our families and friends and not be called upon again during the present war. * *

Huntsville, 19th December 1813

I have been confined at this place by the complaints I labored under when I left home having increased to a very aggravated state. Since the 11th Inst., I am much mended. So as I think I can leave this (place) tomorrow or next day and proceed on my march.

Great discontent hath prevailed in all our camps; men in all directions deserting; some going off in companies. I apprehend before I reach Genl. Jackson he will be compelled to yield to the multitude and all be compelled to return. But this will be the last resort and I hope may not be the case, yet I fear it.

General Hall's Brigade has already left him. Thus we are clear of the Scotch Irish in that quarter. My Brigade are ordered to halt (since I marched them) at Fort Deposit and there wait for further orders. When I shall be called on to march I cannot say, perhaps in very few days. I have now no expectation of any fighting being done this campaign.

1 David Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, (Philadelphia: E. Carey & A. Hart, 1834), p.74.

2 Mike Bunn & Clay Williams, *The Creek War and The War of 1812 in the Gulf South*, (Charleston SC: History Press, 2008).
<http://creewarandwarof1812.com/overview.html>.

3 The information herein on Andrew Jackson's military campaigns in 1812-1815 was adapted without attribution (except where noted) from James Parton's *Life of Andrew Jackson*, Vol. 1, (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861). James Parton (1822-1891) was the most popular biographer of his day in America. In his Pulitzer prize winning biography *American Lion-Andrew Jackson in the White House*, (New York: Random House, 2008), p. 365, Jon Meacham writes: "Anyone who contemplates Jackson owes a special debt to three important historians and their monumental work. James Parton's three-volume life of Jackson is indispensable." The other historians mentioned are Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Robert V. Remeni.

⁴ Parton adds, "Not yet, General, not yet. Two years later, perhaps."

5 Crockett, *loc.cit.*

6 In Coffee's letter to his wife on the 4th Nov. 1813 in the Appendix he modestly describes the engagement as "a small skirmish with the Indians * * * where we

Shapiro: Andrew Jackson Camped Here
killed 200 and took 80 prisoners.”

7 In *Encyclopedia of Alabama*,
<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2350>

8

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2620>

9 <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army/csi-battles.htm#IV>

10 Nancy Rohr, *Jackson's Victorious Return to Huntsville One Fine Day*, (The Huntsville Historical Review, Summer-Fall 2000, Vol. 27, No. 2), pp. 1-20.

¹¹ From the Dyas Collection of John Coffee Papers, Tennessee State Library & Archives, Nashville, Tennessee