

The Ghosts of Horseshoe Bend
Myth, Memory, and the Making of a National Battlefield

by

Justin Scott Weiss

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Donald Fixico, Chair
Jack Schermerhorn
Nancy Dallett

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the various and often conflicting interpretations of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, an event seemingly lost in the public mind of twenty-first century America. The conflict, which pitted United States forces under the command of Major General Andrew Jackson against a militant offshoot of the Creek Confederacy, known as the Redsticks, ranks as the single most staggering loss of life in annals of American Indian warfare. Today, exactly 200 years after the conflict, the legacy of Horseshoe Bend stands as an obscure and often unheard of event. Drawing upon over two centuries of unpublished archival data, newspapers, and political propaganda this research argues that the dominate narrative of Northern history, the shadowy details of the War of 1812, and the erasure of shameful events from the legacy of westward expansion have all contributed to transform what once was a battle of epic proportions, described by Jackson himself as an “extermination,” into a seemingly forgotten affair.

Ultimately, the Battle of Horseshoe Bend's elusiveness has allowed for the production of various historical myths and political messages, critiques and hyperboles, facts and theories. Hailed as a triumph during the War of 1812, and a high-water mark by the proponents of Manifest Destiny, Jackson's victory has also experienced its fair share of American derision and disregard. Whereas some have criticized the battle as a “cold blooded massacre,” others have glorified it as a touchstone of American masculinity, and excused it as a natural event in the unfolding of human evolution. Despite the battle's controversial nature, on 3 August

1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a strong supporter of the National Park Service, approved act HR 11766 establishing Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, the very first national park in the state of Alabama. Hailed and forgotten, silenced and celebrated, exploited and yet largely unknown. This research explores what happened after the smoke cleared at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. It is a story about the production of history, the power of the past, and the malleability of the American mind.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On March 27, 1814, United States forces and a militant faction of the Creek Indian Confederacy, known as the Red Sticks, waged a deadly and decisive battle at a curve in the Tallapoosa River in present day Alabama. For the commanding officer of the American army, future president General Andrew Jackson, the victory was total. By sundown, well over 800 Red Stick warriors lay dead on the field or sunk in watery graves. Jackson's losses, by comparison, amounted to a mere 49 making the day's death ratio a startling 17 to 1. In the battle's aftermath, a local Creek Indian reported that perhaps "not more than ten Red Sticks escaped from the horse shoe" alive to "tell the tale of the slaughter." Jackson and his men personally referred to the conflict as an "extermination" and a "dreadful carnage." Never before or since in the history of the United States have so many American Indians met death in a single military conflict. With their country decimated by war, and their people lingering on the brink of extinction, the remnants of the once mighty Creek Confederacy sued for peace at the Treaty of Fort Jackson, agreeing to cede over 23 million acres of their ancient homeland to the United States government.¹ The vast territory, which included the bulk of the future state of Alabama, as well as a large portion of southern Georgia, was the largest Indian land grab in American history, and remains to this day an unprecedented event in the annals of westward expansion.

¹ Charles Kappler, "Treaty of Fort Jackson, August 9, 1814," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 107-110.

This year, 2014, marks the bicentennial of Jackson's triumph over the Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend, an event seemingly lost in the public mind of twenty-first century America. While the popular battles of Little Bighorn, Gettysburg, and the Alamo, among others, continue to mesmerize Americans and perplex both academic and amateur historians alike, the Battle of Horseshoe Bend receives only the slightest nods of scholarly interest and recognition. Although today a National Military Park of over 2,000 acres preserves the expansive forest and river where the young and energetic General Jackson once forged his military career, the site is often found empty or only partially understood by the curious individuals who walk the grounds in search of a connection to their nation's past. This lack of attendance and comprehension stems not from the National Park Service's interpretation at Horseshoe Bend, but from nearly 200 years of hijacked history books, political propaganda, and now academic revising, all of which have served to transform what once was an event of national glory into a guilty footnote, or at worse, a forgotten affair collecting dust in the annals of purportedly insignificant history. The obscurity of Jackson's battle is by no means confined to the public sphere alone. Within the walls of the ivory tower, graduate students' eyes glaze over with unfamiliarity when confronted with the enigmatic words of "Horseshoe Bend." Professors, too, frequently fail to grasp the battle's significance or incorporate its history into their classroom lectures and readings. While emphasizing the heroic deeds of the Shawnee Chief Tecumseh and the Indian wars of the North, most university textbooks hastily pass over the southern Battle of Horseshoe Bend, or bury its details erroneously in the shadowy history of the War of 1812. Such public and academic unknowingness has not always been the hallmark of Jackson's battle. At various points in history, the legacy

of Horseshoe Bend has basked in the sunlight of national significance, hailed as one of the greatest triumphs of the War of 1812, prized as a notch on the Christian pioneer's war rifle, and celebrated as a score for the armies of civilization over savagery.

The legacy of Horseshoe Bend has experienced a number of ups and downs, as well as ebbs and flows, and it should be noted that the current historical malaise is not the first in American history. Outshined by the Battle of New Orleans, denigrated during Jackson's run at the presidency, and left for dead by a passing generation of veterans from the War of 1812, the shine and celebratory power of the "Horseshoe" faded from memory in the chaotic years of the Civil War and Reconstruction. A search of over 6,500 newspapers and history books from 1860 to 1890 reveals a massive gap in the battle's legacy, an almost complete silence in the written record, as if Jackson's defeat of the Redsticks at Horseshoe Bend had never taken place. This historical neglect, however, was soon to change and by the end of the nineteenth-century a new American generation, anxious over an increasingly foreign, urbanized, and emasculated country, gave new meaning and ultimately new power to an old and forgotten conflict. The works of Frederick Jackson Turner and Theodore Roosevelt, as well as the arts and performances of western dime novels and Wild West shows celebrated the frontier hero as a purveyor of peace and the vanguard of white civilization. With a vigor not seen since the 1830s, Americans, particularly in the war-torn South, dusted off the old and forgotten Battle of Horseshoe Bend and proclaimed it the high-water mark of western expansion. The resurgence of interest in Jackson's victory came also as a means of empowering the South while unifying a nation torn asunder by the Civil War. At the turn of the century, those who advocated the creation of a national park at Horseshoe Bend proclaimed the

battle a triumph for *all* white Americans, and a glorious victory for both Northerners and Southerners alike. Thus, the logic of national reconciliation demanded that the memory of Horseshoe Bend be rekindled and the battlefield preserved.

As the country entered into the First World War, however, the memory of Jackson's battle receded for a second time into the dusty annals of the American past. Eclipsed by a more glorious war, lost under a roaring wave of 1920s cultural transformation, and forgotten entirely by an impoverished society fraught with the Great Depression, Jackson's battle vanished, once again, from the collective conscious. Despite its frequent abandonment, the legacy of Horseshoe Bend resurfaced for a second time in the 1950s, as the nation found itself locked in an ideological standoff on a strange and perilous "New Frontier." Throughout the Cold War era, America's politically conservative leaders frequently harkened back to the age of Indian warfare and rugged individualism as a means of galvanizing the American people behind a banner of democracy and free enterprise. They seized upon the Jacksonian propaganda of the late 1820s and the era of Indian removal, refashioning savage Indians into Communists "Reds" while glorifying the white pioneer as the epitome of human freedom and Christian morality. The rekindling of the frontier past was by no means confined to the political podiums of Washington alone. Across the country, millions of Americans threw themselves wholeheartedly into the mythical world of the pop-culture frontier. While millions of coonskin capped youngsters shot down plastic Indians with peacemakers at frontier-themed amusement parks, others attended western morality-tales cast in spectacular Technicolor on the silver screen. It was within this high ebb of frontier fascination that a circle of well-endowed Southern philanthropists purchased and donated

the historic battlefield at Horseshoe Bend to the federal government for safekeeping. The product being the establishment of the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, created by an act of congress and signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956.²

Since the park's dedication, Americans' understanding of the frontier has changed drastically. The widespread social and political transformations unleashed by the 1960s, such as the rise of Indian activism, the growth of anti-imperialism abroad, and, most recently, the genesis of New Western History have naturally soured the country's once glorious narrative of national expansion. Today, park goers wax sentimental as they sullenly wind their way through the formerly celebrated, and now lonely battlefield. They attempt to enact their patriotism by walking in the footsteps of national giants, but nonetheless find their veneration for the country's frontier past confounded by the park's interpretive signs, revised in the mid-1990s to meet the standards of a new academic generation. Despite the Park Service's efforts, their interpretive overhaul at Horseshoe Bend has not translated effectively into higher foot traffic. In fact, over the last fifteen years annual visitation has gradually plummeted to a near all-time low of 58,668 in 2012. The decrease is staggering when one considers that in the same year over 8.5 million people visited the twenty-one other historic battlefields administered by the National Park Service. While park-goers continue to ritually visit the sites of Gettysburg and Little Bighorn, among others, they tend to shy away from the triumphant battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, the scene of the greatest white victory in the annals of American Indian

² "H.R. 11766, July 3, 1956," *United States Congressional Serial Set* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1956), 471; Kappler, *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties*, Vol. VII, 1241-1242.

warfare. Today, it seems, the average citizen of the United States continues to prefer a country won without conquerors, murderers, or guilt.

These various ebbs and flows of memory are testament to the power of political rhetoric and the malleability of the nation's past. What we think we know about the Battle of Horseshoe Bend today is ultimately the construction of a long and winding sociohistorical process, a collection of purported facts and theories, critiques and hyperboles. To use the illustrative words of Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot, it is a history of "that which is said to have happened."³ The propaganda of Indian Removal, the doctrine of Cold War democracy, the social platforms of multiculturalism, among others, have all effectively seized the reigns of Jackson's victory as a means of furthering a political agenda. The power to shape and define that history has ultimately come from the battle's elusiveness in the American mind. In 1828, an inflammatory pamphlet deriding the Battle of Horseshoe Bend noted that "the scene was too bloody for the public eye. Concealment and misrepresentation have been practiced to prevent the nation from forming a just and indignant judgment of it."⁴ With no publically active Redstick survivors to "tell the tale of the slaughter," silence began at the source. The temporal and geographic location of the battle has furthered its relative obscurity. For one, the so-called "Second War of Independence," for which Jackson's victory was ultimately a part, has maintained a low profile in the American conscious for nearly 200 years. Donald Hickey, author of *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, and the leading

³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 2.

⁴ *A Review of the Battle of the Horseshoe and of the Facts Relating to the Killing of Sixteen Indians on the Morning after the Battle*, Indiana University, Lilly Library: War of 1812 Collection.

historian on the subject, has argued that “the War of 1812 is probably our most obscure war. Although a great deal has been written about the conflict, the average American is only vaguely aware of why we fought or who the enemy was.”⁵ Likewise, the history of South has failed to figure prominently in the grand epic of American achievement. In 1954, historian Herbert Sass of South Carolina proclaimed that “the vast region between Monticello and Key West, between the Ohio River and the Gulf of Mexico is a historical blank in the minds of most Americans.”⁶ Shrouded by the rhetoric of national expansion, lost in the mythic haze of the War of 1812, and silenced by the grand narrative of the North, the Battle of Horseshoe Bend has moved quixotically, to-and-fro, from the spotlight of center stage to the darkest corners of the nation’s collective conscious. The shifting identity, meaning, and exploitation of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend over the course of last 200 years is the subject of this analysis. Ultimately, it draws upon the leading works of public memory, defined by social historian John Bodnar as the “body of beliefs and ideas that help a public or society understand its past, present, and by implication, its future.”⁷ It is a story about the production of history, the power of the past, and the malleability of the American mind.

This research began over the summer of 2013 during an internship with the National Park Service at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. Although my original

⁵ Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 1.

⁶ Herbert Ravenel Sass, “They Don’t Tell the Truth About the South!,” January 9, 1954, *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 15; for other works on public memory applicable to this research see Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1991); David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

intention had been to explore the religious dimensions of the Redstick War and the trans-Appalachian frontier, I discovered within the park archives, and in the surrounding community, a rich story of remembrance and commemoration. With the invaluable assistance of Park Ranger Heather Tassin, I delved into the site's historical letters, newspaper articles, land deeds, and ephemera produced in the *aftermath* of Jackson's battle. Chief of Interpretation, Ove Jensen, also provided a number of excellent reading suggestions (many of which served as primary resources) and private insights that helped clear the air of confusion during my earliest encounters with the Redstick War. Without the support of Rangers Tassin and Jensen, a number of the oral interviews, networking connections, and personal observations vital to this research would not have come about. I also owe an extension of gratitude to Dr. Tom Kanon at the Tennessee State Archives in Nashville whose assistance and kind words of wisdom facilitated my search through the state's endless pages of historical newspapers, diaries, and documents on the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. After reluctantly leaving behind the lively environment of Nashville, Dr. Kanon's helpful correspondence by email continued to make clear the often confusing political and military alliances of Jackson's proud and historically vibrant state of Tennessee. Finally, this research would not have been possible without the guidance of Professor Donald Fixico at Arizona State University and Justin Giles at the Muscogee Nation Museum and Cultural Center whose thought-provoking words on cultural relativism and the "Third Dimension" aided in the completion of this research, and in particular, the cultural balancing of the final chapter on the bicentennial of Horseshoe Bend.

In addition to these invaluable primary and personal resources, I relied upon an abundance of electronic databases now available online. EbscoHost, in collaboration with the American Antiquarian Society, have produced a number of historical newspaper and printed material collections on the Early American Republic. So, too, has the Library of Congress whose Chronicling America project makes available over 7 million pages of historical newspapers from ranging from 1826-1922. Also noteworthy is Proquest's Historical Newspapers Collection which features over 130 valuable publications including the *New York Times*, *Hartford Currant*, and *Nashville Tennessean*. Finally, the Alabama Department of Archives houses a digital wellspring of historical documents and photos pertaining to the Redstick War and the creation of the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. Other emerging databases online such as Archive.org, Google Books, Genealogy Bank, and the Making of America websites have also provided a number of resources vital in the making of this study.

After keyword searching, collecting, and tagging a veritable mountain of newspapers, periodicals, letters, and ephemera on the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, I discovered within the historical record a number of spikes and silences – periods of time in which the battle seemed to dominate all aspects of public memory, only to be followed by an era in which the conflict failed to appear. These ebbs and flows of remembrance, ultimately, guided my research and gave shape and context to the chapters that follow. Here, the voices of the past – as well as present – remain entirely unaltered, unabashed, and, I hope, as loud and clear as the first time they cut through the air or appeared in print.

CHAPTER 2

A GLANCE AT THE BATTLE OF HORSESHOE BEND

The destruction of the Redsticks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was the final page in a long and violent chapter of American expansion on the trans-Appalachian frontier. In the early 1770s, on the eve of Revolutionary War, thousands of American settlers had swarmed over the western mountains to settle the areas of Kentucky and Tennessee. Within a matter of months, these pioneer families had built forts and towns, turned forests into fields, and established systems of government that laid claim to the land on the sunset-side of the Appalachians. Their newly found paradise in the American West, however, was by no means a vacant or uninhabited wilderness. For hundreds of years the land had served as a communal hunting ground and animal preserve for the various indigenous tribes of the region. “It abounded in various valuable game,” noted the backwoods preacher Peter Cartwright, “and hence the Indians struggled hard to keep the white people from taking possession of it.”⁸ In the spring of 1780, after a number of years of tenuous trade and negotiations, war for the coveted lands commenced, pitting Creek, Shawnee, and Cherokee-Chickamauga warriors against the well-armed and fortified white settlements of the frontier. “Many hard and bloody battles were fought,” Cartwright recalled, “and thousands killed on both sides; rightly it was named the land of blood.”⁹ In 1790, after a string of devastating defeats at the hands of the Tennessee militia, the Creek Nation broke with their Indian allies and sued for peace at the Treaty of New York. In addition to articles exchanging prisoners of war and specifying territorial

⁸ Peter Cartwright, *The Backwoods Preacher: An Autobiography of Peter Cartwright*, Edited by W.P. Strickland (London: Alexander Heylin, 1860), 21-22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

boundaries, the Creek delegation agreed to adopt a comprehensive “plan of civilization.”

Article XII of the treaty read as follows:

That the Creek nation may be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters, the United States will from time to time furnish gratuitously the said nation with useful domestic animals and implements of husbandry. And further to assist the said nation in so desirable a pursuit, the United States will send such, and so many persons to reside in said nation as they may judge proper, who shall qualify themselves to act as interpreters. These persons shall have lands assigned them by the Creeks for cultivation, for themselves and their successors in office.¹⁰

With the ink dry on the Treaty of New York, the United States embarked upon a systematic campaign to “civilize” the Creek people.¹¹ President George Washington appointed Benjamin Hawkins, a planter politician from North Carolina, as General Superintendent of Indian Affairs and principle agent to the Creek people. In 1796, Hawkins went south and soon after established an agency, better described as a cultural factory, on the east bank of the Flint River in the presence of the Lower Creek Confederacy. There, he constructed the physical essence of the United States plan for civilization, a model to be marveled and replicated by the Creek people. The agency

¹⁰ For the Tennessee Indian Wars (also known as the Chickamauga Wars) see: Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 182-212; John Buchanan, *Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001), 67-104; for the Treaty of New York see *American State Papers, Class II: Indian Affairs* (Washington: 1832), I: 81-82; Charles Kappler, “Treaty of New York, June 29, 1796,” *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 46-50.

¹¹ Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II*, 46-50.

featured “a large farm under regular cultivation,” thoroughly stocked with cattle, hogs, and goats. It showcased “a Saw and grist mill, Blacksmith shop, tanyard, hatters shop, boot and shoemaker, a tinman & cooper, cabinet workman and wheelwright, a weaver, an instructor in spinning and weaving, and a Schoolmaster for instruction.”¹² Hawkins encouraged those who attended his agency to embrace the benefits of commercial agriculture and stock raising. He also sought to morally revolutionize Creek society by emphasizing the principles of personal ownership, the importance of nuclear families, and the evils of thievery and indolence. To maintain a presence of control and authority, Hawkins established a Creek National Council consisting of chiefs sympathetic to the American cause as well as a system of crime and punishment overseen by an official police force dubbed “the warriors of the nation.” Hawkins proclaimed proudly that it was his plan to “unrivet the [Creek’s] shackles of error, to protect innocence, to punish guilt, and to fit them to be useful members of the planet they inhabit.”¹³

While several peace-seeking chiefs and towns in the Lower Creek Nation accepted Hawkins’ civilizing overtures, others reached back to the cultural practices and beliefs of the past for strength and guidance. Far from Hawkins’ agency, in the nation’s isolated upper towns, Creek traditionalists adhered rigidly to their ancient customs. They protested that market oriented agricultural eroded Creek communal practices while producing deep social and economic rifts between Creek countrymen. Domestic husbandry, likewise, threatened to emasculate Creek males by forcing them into non-

¹² Benjamin Hawkins, *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins*, Edited by C. L. Grant (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1980), II: 256, 520; hereafter cited as Hawkins, *Letters*.

¹³ Joel Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 96-98; for descriptions of Hawkins agency see Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 551-553; also, Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 67-68.

hunting roles typically performed by women. Traditionalists also complained that the increase in free-ranging cattle and hogs damaged crops, exhausted soil, and frightened away indigenous game. In addition to these issues, Upper Creek traditionalists failed to see eye-to-eye with their fellow countrymen when it came to military matters. Whereas the majority of the Creek Confederacy cared not to see a re-hatching of hostilities with the United States, Upper Creek warriors exacerbated Indian-white relations by violently raiding the Tennessee and Georgia frontiers for game and horses. They also attempted to forge military alliances with equally disgruntled members of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee nations. Although nothing came of their cherished pan-Indian alliance, it did succeed in officially severing the ties between the upper and lower towns by 1808.¹⁴ Among themselves, Upper Creek relations were equally poor. Chiefs and headmen entrusted by Hawkins with the tribe's annual treaty annuities regularly embezzled funds and fought for power while the people grew increasingly poor and hungry. "The Upper Creeks are retarded by the Demon of politiks," observed Hawkins. Their "great men embezzle their stipends and leave the people to shift for themselves."¹⁵ Hopoie Micco, the head of the National Council, pleaded with his fellow countrymen to end the political infighting, accept the American's terms of peace, and adopt the comprehensive plan of civilization: "It is time for us to look about ourselves and to act accordingly to our

¹⁴ Hawkins discusses the internal division between the Upper Creek towns in Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 477, 525-527; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 214-215; for a general discussion of resistance in the upper towns see "Gaze of Development" in Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 87-113; for gender roles see Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 99; for class divisions see Martin, *Sacred Revolt*, 108; Claudio Saunt, "Taking Account of Property: Stratification Among the Creek Indians in the Early Nineteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 57 (October 2000), 733-60.

¹⁵ Hawkins to Reverend Christian Benzien, 7 October 1810, Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 569.

judgment for the good of the country. Let us accommodate the President and thereby enable him to accommodate us, and to perfect our plan of civilization. Great changes are daily taking place around us for the happiness of men and we alone seem, of choice, still to grope in the dark.”¹⁶

The outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Britain in 1812 brought the cultural and political tensions within the Creek Confederacy to a head. In the North, above the Ohio River, a number of Indian tribes, having grown desperate in the face of American expansion, had thrown in their lot with the charismatic Shawnee war leader Tecumseh and his newly found allies Sir Isaac Brock and the British army. To galvanize support for a war against the Americans, Tecumseh traveled tirelessly throughout the American South, delivering forceful and energetic speeches to all who would listen. At the ancient Creek town of Tuckabatchee, the Shawnee leader urged an audience of over five thousand Creeks to end their political infighting, spiritually revitalize their communities, and join the northern tribes in war against the United States. With a “determined manner” he exhorted his listeners to “kill the old chiefs and friends of peace; kill the cattle, the hogs, and fowls; do not work, throw away your plows and everything used by the Americans. Shake your war clubs” Tecumseh proclaimed, and “you will frighten the Americans.”¹⁷ Reaction to the message varied among the Creek people. Those loyal to the United States snubbed the speech as the violent ramblings of a “mad man” and “great liar,” but others, predominately the young warriors of the Upper Creek

¹⁶ Hopoie Micco quote see Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 477.

¹⁷ For Tecumseh’s speech see Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 687-688; John Sugden, “Early Pan-Indianism; Tecumseh’s Tour of the Indian Country, 1811-1812, *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Autumn 1986), 286; Henry Halbert and T.H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814* (Chicago: Donehue and Henneberry, 1895), 66-71.

towns, embraced Tecumseh's call for spiritual rejuvenation and eagerly joined his militant, pan-Indian alliance. In the wake of his visit, a number of towns in the Upper Creek Confederacy prepared themselves for war. They revitalized their ancient ceremonies, painted their war clubs red, the traditional color of war, and rallied around an emerging cohort of Creek prophets whose spiritual message of cultural regeneration through violence called for the destruction of all things American.¹⁸

In the late summer of 1813, the Redstick movement commenced hostilities. Hawkins wrote to the Secretary of War, John Armstrong, that "the declaration of the prophets is to destroy everything received from the Americans, all the Chiefs and their adherents who are friendly to the customs of the white people, [and] to put to death every man who will not join them."¹⁹ In the upper town of Okfuskee, Red Stick warriors "killed five chiefs and destroyed almost all the cattle." The same took place at the "friendly" town of Kialijee, which Hawkins described as "destroyed."²⁰ After resupplying at the Spanish port of Pensacola, which had tenuously allied itself with the British, a small company of Mississippi militia made up of white settlers, mixed blood Creeks, and full-bloods loyal to the American cause ambushed the Redsticks at Burnt Corn Creek in southern Alabama. Retribution for the offensive would be staggering. The following month, some 750 Redsticks stripped down and painted black broke through an unattended gate at Fort Mims station on the lower Alabama River near present

¹⁸ For a general discussion of Tecumseh's influence in Creek country see Hawkins, *Letters*, I: 687-688; Saunt, 234-235; Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 144-147; George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian Tribe of Indians, by One of the Tribe* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 83-87.

¹⁹ Hawkins to John Armstrong, July 28, 1813, Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 652.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, II: 652.

day Mobile. The carnage was total. “Soldiers, women, children, friendly Indians, fell together in heaps of mangled bodies,” reported a Mississippi contemporary. “The dying and dead scalped, mutilated, and bloody, to be consumed by fire, or become food for hungry dogs and buzzards.”²¹ In all, over 250 Creeks, mixed-bloods, and white settlers fell victim at Fort Mims, the majority of whom were women and children.²²

As a result of the bloody massacre at Fort Mims the state of Tennessee unhesitatingly declared war on the Redsticks in September of 1813. Having grown increasingly paranoid over the Indian uprising to their south, and anxious to join in the fight against the British, Tennessee statesmen quickly raised a well-sized volunteer army totaling over 3,500 soldiers who eagerly sought the glories of war and the destruction of the rebellious Redsticks. It mattered little whether or not the victims at Fort Mims had been predominately Creek and mixed-blood, or if the conflict had more to do with internal Indian affairs than the international War of 1812. For Tennesseans, the massacre was an attack on the “imagined community” of the white American frontier. Articles calling for volunteers often described the victims at Fort Mims as “the defenseless women and children of *our* frontier” and “*our* unarmed citizens.”²³ In Nashville, Andrew Jackson, brigadier general of the Tennessee militia, addressed his army in the aftermath of the massacre. “Brave Tennesseans!” he roared to his army. “Your frontier is threatened

²¹ Halbert & Ball, 154.

²² For Okfuskee, Kialigee, and the “declaration of the prophets” see Hawkins to John Armstrong, July 28, 1813, Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 652; for Red Stick destruction see Martin, 142-143; Saunt 263-266; for the definitive analysis of the massacre at Fort Mims see Gregory Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006) 116-138; also see Halbert & Ball, 143-164; Buchanan, 220-225; Stiggins, 106-113; the death toll at Fort Mims remains a subject of debate.

²³ Buchanan, 227; “Indian Massacre,” *Norfolk Herald* (October 5, 1813); the phrase “Imagined Community” hails from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 6.

with invasion by the savage foe! Already do they advance towards your frontier with their scalping knives unsheathed, to butcher your wives, your children, and your helpless babes. Time is not to be lost. We must hasten to the frontier, or we will find it drenched in the blood of our fellow-citizens.”²⁴ There were, to be sure, other incentives for going to war with the Redsticks beyond the nonphysical benefits of glory and vengeance. The geography of the Creek country abounded with navigable waterways, lush stands of timber, and fertile swaths of land. “The country to our south is inviting,” Jackson proclaimed to his frontier troops on the eve of war. “The soil which now lies waste and uncultivated may be converted into rich harvest fields to supply the wants of millions.”²⁵ Jackson and his men wasted no time. Within weeks they were conquering the rich countryside of the embattled Creek Confederacy.

The Tennessee volunteer army spent the next five months setting towns ablaze, inflicting heavy casualties, and chalking up conspicuously one-sided victories against the Redsticks. At the Battle of Tallushatchee, General John Coffee, commanding a regiment of 900 mounted riflemen, slaughtered an entire war party of 186 Redsticks. Two days later, the army routed a large contingent of warriors outside the Creek town of Talladega, killing 299 in the process. In both battles, Jackson’s Tennessee army faced poorly armed warriors who fought valiantly with little more than traditional war clubs and bows and arrows. In his personal memoirs, Jackson’s personal scout, Davy Crockett, noted

²⁴ “To the Tennessee Volunteers,” 24 September 1813, in Andrew Jackson, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, Vol. I ed. by Sam Smith and Harriet Owsley, Vol. II ed. by Harold Moser (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980) II: 428-29, hereafter cited as Jackson, *Papers*.

²⁵ For Jackson’s quote on the riches of Creek country, see July 27, 1813, *Nashville Whig*, Nashville, TN.

ominously after the Battle of Tallushatchee that “we shot them like dogs.”²⁶ Although Jackson was winning the war on the ground, he suffered a number of logistical setbacks in the form of supply shortages, punishing cold, and enlistment disputes, all of which contributed mass desertions during the winter of 1813-1814. Nonetheless, by early spring Jackson had resupplied and rendezvoused with what would soon become the backbone of his new army, the 39th U.S. Infantry, a force of over 600 well-disciplined regulars. He also received the military support of roughly 600 Creek and Cherokee allies bringing his rag-tag unit to roughly 3,300 men. While Jackson’s army regrouped and prepared for war, the scattered remnants of the Redstick movement consolidated their forces and families behind a massive log barricade on a peninsula surrounded by a bend in the Tallapoosa River. Jackson’s soldiers scouting the area, including Crockett, described the defensive location as “Horse-shoe Bend,” the Indians, however, referred to it as Tohopeka, the “log fortified place.”²⁷

On the morning of 27 March 1814, the American allied forces set out for the Redstick stronghold. “Determining to exterminate them,” Jackson wrote, “I detached Gen. Coffee with the mounted and nearly the whole of the Indian force to cross the river about two miles below their encampment, and to surround the bend in such a manner, as that none should escape by attempting to cross the river.”²⁸ While John Coffee and his Tennessee riflemen, along with nearly 600 “friendly” Creek and Cherokee allies dug in

²⁶ David Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett, of the State of Tennessee* (New York: Nafis & Cornish, 1845), 88-90, “dogs” quote see 96.

²⁷ For this period of the war see Tom Kanon, “Before Horseshoe Bend: Andrew Jackson’s Campaigns in the Creek War Prior to Horseshoe Bend,” in *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 105-118; Buchanan, 235-241.

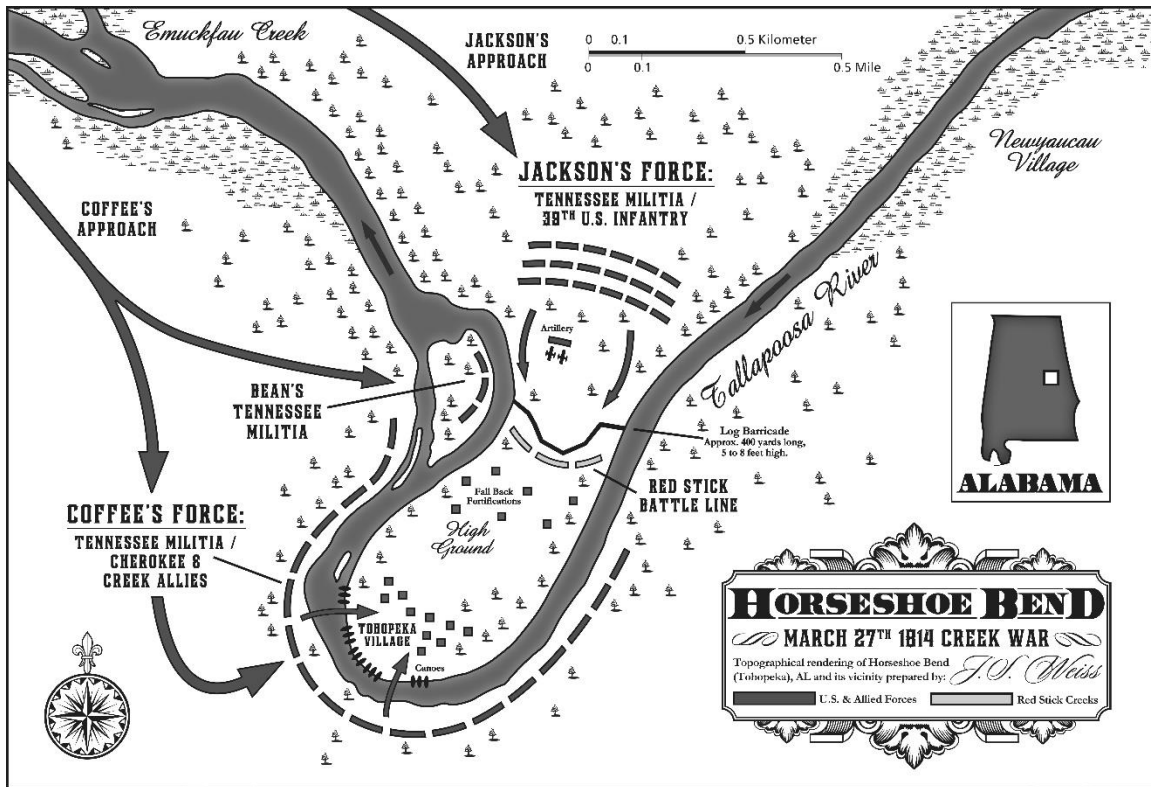
²⁸ For “exterminating” quote see Jackson to Gen. Pinckney, March 28, 1814, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, III: 52-53; also on file at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Daviston, Alabama, hereafter cited at HOBE Historical Files.

on the far side of the bend, Jackson concentrated the main force of his army, some 2,000 men plus artillery, within firing range of the Redstick barricade. Many within Jackson's army described the defensive structure as impressive beyond comprehension. "You cannot imagine a situation more eligible for defense or rendered more secure by art," wrote Jackson's aid-de-camp, John Reid. "Across the point of land along which we must approach them, they had extended a breastwork from five to eight feet high, of large pine logs fitted in with greater skill and strength, by far, than any I have ever witnessed. It was of such a form that you could only approach it by being exposed to double and cross fire from the enemy who lay concealed behind it."²⁹ Jackson possessed two small field guns: a six and three pounder, neither of which was capable of knocking down the Redsticks' well-crafted fortification. Nonetheless, Jackson ordered his artillery to position themselves roughly eighty yards from breastworks on small rise known as Gun Hill. At 10:30 am, he ordered the barricade's bombardment. "I opened a brisk fire upon its center," Jackson wrote, "but although the balls which passed through killed several of the enemy they were not dispersed nor was any important damage done to works. This was continued with a few short intermission for two hours."³⁰

Behind the defensive log wall, approximately 1,000 Redstick warriors from a number of Upper Creek towns had taken refuge with their families. Although the majority of non-combatants had fled the bend at some point prior to Jackson's arrival,

²⁹ For descriptions of the barricade see John Reid to Betsy Reid, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files; April 12, 1814, *Clarion* and *Tennessee State Gazette*, Nashville, TN.

³⁰ For the failed bombardment of the barricade see Jackson to Gov. Willie Blount, April 5, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, reprinted May 25, 1814, *Nashville Whig*, Nashville, TN; for this period of the battle see Ove Jensen, "Horseshoe Bend: A Living Memorial," in *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 148-149.



The Battle of Horseshoe Bend, by Justin Weiss

roughly 300 remained at Horseshoe Bend with their warrior kin, sheltered in dozens of traditional Creek cabins at the toe of the peninsula. At the barricade, Redstick warriors commanded by the mixed-blood Chief Menawa danced in preparation for war while others opened up a steady musket fire upon Jackson's artillery and skirmishing forces. While Jackson hammered away at the barricade, the sounds of battle could be heard across the river where General John Coffee's impatient forces had taken position. "The firing of cannon and small arms animated our Indians," Coffee reported, "and seeing the squaws and children of the enemy running among the huts was open to our view. They could no longer remain silent spectators. While some kept up a fire across the river,

others plunged into the water and swam for the [opposite] shore.”³¹ Once across, the Cherokee warriors, led by the Colonel Gideon Morgan, cut loose the Redsticks’ escape canoes, sending them adrift or ferrying them back across the river. Others advanced into the Redstick refugee camp, setting buildings ablaze and scattering the inhabitants like birds to the wind. The ominous smoke from the smoldering huts billowed upwards into the air above the battlefield, no doubt catching the eye of Jackson. “The knowledge that General Coffee had now completely occupied the opposite bank of the river, determined me to take possession of their works by storm. There seemed to be no other means of bringing the conflict to a speedy and successful termination.”³²

At 12:30 p.m., Jackson ordered a bayonet assault of the Redstick barricade. “Never were men more anxious to be led to the charge than both our regulars and militia,” reported Jackson’s aid, John Reid. “I never had such emotions as while the long roll was beating, and the troops in motion. It was not fear, it was not anxiety or concern for the fate of those who were so soon to fall, but was [rather] a kind of enthusiasm that thrilled through every nerve and animated me with the belief that the day was ours.”³³ The fighting that commenced would prove to be the bloodiest of the day. After charging the breastworks and firing a few pistol shots through a defensive porthole, Major Lemuel Montgomery of the 39th, described by Jackson as the “flower of his army,” fell “gallantly,” shot through the head by a musket ball.³⁴ Others, such as Ensign Sam

³¹ General John Coffee to Andrew Jackson, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files.

³² For this period of the battle see Tom Kanon, “‘A Slow, Laborious Slaughter’: The Battle of Horseshoe Bend,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LVII, No. 1 (Spring 1999), 2-16; Jackson to Gov. Willie Blount, April 5, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, reprinted May 25, 1814, *Nashville Whig*, Nashville, TN; Jenson, 151.

³³ For Reid’s account see John Reid to Betsy Reid, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, reprinted April 12, 1814, *Clarion* and *Tennessee State Gazette*, Nashville, TN.

³⁴ For Montgomery’s death see Coffee to Donelson, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files.

Houston of the 39th, took heavy fire from the storm of arrows and war clubs that pummeled their bodies as they scaled the colossal wall. Despite their heavy losses, the Americans breached the Indian barricade in relatively short order, driving the Redsticks back towards the smoldering ruins of the refugee camp while others dove into the river for safety. At this point, the killing became near systematic for the American forces. At numerous redoubts, or fall back fortifications, described as “caverns” covered with “fallen timber,” Jackson’s men dislodged Redsticks with fire, then shot them as they scattered. Along the river, Coffee had ordered Lieutenant Jesse Bean and forty Tennessee riflemen to take possession of a small island and keep up “a destructive fire on those who attempted to escape.”³⁵ Captain John Donelson wrote that “hundreds were killed attempting to swim the river,” their heads bobbing along the surface like helpless turtles.³⁶ Coffee reported a likewise grisly account of those who met death in the water. “Attempts to cross the river at all points of the bend was made by the enemy, but not one ever escaped. Very few reached the bank and that few was killed the instant they landed.” Jackson, himself, noted in a letter to his wife, Rachel, that the “carnage was dreadful. It was dark before we finished killing them.”³⁷

The next morning the Tennessee army detailed the field of battle rounding up non-combatants and counting the dead. Jackson reported that “the prisoners have been sent to Talladega by the friendly Creeks – They are all women and children, and exceed

³⁵ Coffee to Jackson, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files.

³⁶ Donelson Jr. to Captain John Donelson, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files.

³⁷ For the barricade assault see Kanon, “A Slow and Laborious Slaughter,” 7-8; Jenson, 151; Kanon, 9; for Jackson’s quote see Jackson to Rachel, April 1, 1814, Jackson, *Papers*, III: 264-265; for redoubts see Jenson, 151; for Houston’s account of the battle see Samuel Houston, *The Life of Sam Houston: The Hunter, Patriot, and Statesman of Texas; The Only Authentic Memoir of Him Ever Published* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter, 1867), 29-35.

over three hundred.”³⁸ Scattered across the peninsula lay an additional 557 dead Redstick warriors, their faces mutilated to ensure an accurate “nose count,” while in the river, Coffee observed “that from two hundred & fifty to three hundred of the enemy were buried under water.”³⁹ As if the massive death toll failed to meet the expectations of the Tennessee army, Private Alexander McCulloch wrote that the Americans discovered “sixteen wounded” warriors in caves along the riverbank which they “killed the next morning.”⁴⁰ It was also rumored in the aftermath of the war that Jackson’s men “cut long strips of skin from the bodies of the dead” to make “bridle reins.”⁴¹ With the Redstick stronghold smoldering in ashes and the work of death complete, the Tennessee army sunk their dead to prevent the Redsticks from mutilating the bodies. All would rest on the bottom of the Tallapoosa River except one soldier, the valorous officer Major Lemuel Montgomery, who received a military funeral on the field of battle. Jackson’s men “bore off the surplus dirt which remained above the grave and threw it into the river.” They then “burned the brush over the grave to conceal it from the keen eyes of the savages.”⁴² The army then packed up their wagons, broke their camp, and returned in the direction from which they came, leaving the bodies of the Redstick slain exposed to the elements on the field of war.

³⁸ Andrew Jackson to Governor Willie Blount, April 5, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, reprinted May 25, 1814, *Nashville Whig*, Nashville, TN.

³⁹ General John Coffee to Andrew Jackson, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files

⁴⁰ Alexander McCulloch to Frances McCulloch, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files.

⁴¹ For “nose count” and “bridle reins” see Halbert & Ball, 277.

⁴² Quote regarding Major Montgomery’s burial can be found in the *Memorial of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Commission, Created by the State of Alabama, Praying Congress to Establish a Military Park on the Battlefield at Horseshoe Bend*, HOBE Historical Files, reprinted in *Senate Documents, Volume 22* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 29.

The massive death toll and decisiveness of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was not lost on those who survived to tell the tale of the “glorious fight.” While Colonel William Carroll wrote from the battleground that “I think it is the most complete victory that has been obtained over the Indians in America,” artillery supervisor Captain William Bradford observed that “the success” of the conflict was “without a parallel. I had thought that the numbers killed in former battles had been exaggerated but I cannot be mistaken in what passes before my own eyes – that 557 Indians were found dead on the ground is a fact, and that the river ran red with blood is equally true – I never witnessed such carnage.”⁴³ A number of other accounts supported Bradford’s claim of a river “drenched in blood.” Mounted rifleman Martin Burke noted that the Tallapoosa “stained his gray horse red as high as the water came up,” while Private Alexander McCulloch commented that “the water was perceptibly bloody, so much so that it could not be used.”⁴⁴ It was only a matter of time, it seemed, before the surviving remnants of the Redstick movement sued for peace with the United States. In a speech to his army a week after the battle, Jackson proclaimed that “the expedition from which you have just returned, has been rendered prosperous beyond any example in the history of our warfare.” The Redsticks, he continued “have disappeared from the face of the Earth” and “in their place, a new generation will arise who will know their duties better. The weapons of warfare will be exchanged for the utensils of husbandry and the wilderness

⁴³ Carroll to Unnamed Friend, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, reprinted April 12, 1814, *The Clarion* and *Tennessee State Gazette*, Nashville, TN; Bradford to William H. Harrison, April 5, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, also on file at the Tennessee State Archives, see Presidential Papers microfilm, William H. Harrison Papers, Reel 2: Series 1, 1813 – Sept. 1839.

⁴⁴ Kanon, 10; Alexander McCulloch to Frances McCulloch, April 1, 1814, HOBE Historical Files.

which now withers in sterility will blossom as the rose.”⁴⁵ Jackson’s commanding words would prove strikingly prophetic. Four months later, at the Treaty of Fort Jackson, a delegation of Creek chiefs crumbled under the relentless and unyielding demands of “Old Mad Jackson.” They agreed to abandon their communications with the British and Spanish, surrender their instigators of war, and transfer roughly 23 million acres of lush terrain and navigable waterways in the heart of the Creek territory to the United States government.⁴⁶ So ended the revivalist reign of the Redsticks, and the sovereign power of the Creek Nation in the American Southeast.

⁴⁵ “Jackson’s Address to the Army,” April 2, 1814, HOBE Historical Files, also reprinted in Jackson, *Papers*, III: 322-323.

⁴⁶ For the Treaty of Fort Jackson see Kappler, 107-110.

CHAPTER 3

HORSESHOE BEND IN THE AGE OF JACKSON, 1814-1845

Throughout the Jacksonian Era, the memory of Horseshoe Bend remained alive in hearts and minds of the Tennessee army, as well as the nation at large. Returning veterans took part in various social functions that reiterated the glories of war and strengthened the bonds between former brothers in arms. At patriotic fetes, church services, and militia musters, the veterans of the Redstick War fine-tuned their identity as not only selfless “volunteers,” but as the true defenders of America’s physical borders and ideological beliefs. During the 1820s and 1830s, however, Andrew Jackson’s political opponents made inflammatory allegations that sought to undermine the achievements of the Volunteer State and vilify its most celebrated leader. In an effort to silence his enemies and build a political base, Jackson, along with a circle of unwavering loyalists, crafted a patriotic narrative of bloodthirsty savages and volunteer soldiers determined to conquer the military foes of the nation. As Jackson’s message poured forth into the public sphere, it gradually became the thematic fodder for the young country’s literary, artistic, and historical landscape. The Jacksonian Era witnessed an outpouring of pro-expansionist novels, sculptures, and history books that transformed for the indefinite future the meaning of indigenous extermination and military conflicts such as the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Not until the nation reached its full continental extent in the 1850s would the resounding popularity of Indian war and “manifest destiny” lose its hold on the American public. By then, the nation stood poised to inaugurate a new era of military history capable of pushing the memory of General Andrew Jackson and his Indian wars into the deepest and darkest corners of the American mind. In the smoke and carnage of

the Civil War, the legacy of Old Hickory and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was almost entirely forgotten – at least for a time.

Jackson's victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend produced an incredible outpouring of nationalist sentiment and celebration throughout the country. Newspapers in every state of the union ran editorials on the "distinguished and accomplished officer" General Jackson and his triumphant campaign against the "savage" Redsticks. The *New York Evening Post* pronounced a "Great Victory over the Indians!" while a widely circulated article described the "Battle in the Bend" as "honorable for our country, and more bloody and disastrous to the enemy than any in the annals of Indian warfare."⁴⁷ Because the nation had fared so poorly during the War of 1812, the Battle of Horseshoe Bend took on a life of its own, with both Jackson and his Tennessee army elevated to heroic celebrity status. As Old Hickory and his "invincible columns" marched home in the wake of the Redstick War, a steady stream of Tennessee celebrants poured forth gradually transforming his exhausted trek into a grand parade of patriotic expression. At Fayetteville, Tennessee, before a sea of spectators, Jackson addressed his army whose achievements, he proclaimed, "will long be cherished in the memory of your General, and not be forgotten by the country which you have so materially benefited."⁴⁸ The procession of celebrants then ushered the army and its leader to the Nashville courthouse, where an outpouring of "huzzahs" and honorary speeches filled the air. Afterwards, the celebration moved to the intimate Bell Tavern where Jackson, again, delivered a patriotic speech that connected the achievements of Horseshoe Bend to the Revolutionary Era.

⁴⁷ "Great Victory over the Indians!" April 19, 1814, *New York Evening Post*, New York, NY; "General Andrew Jackson," June 18, 1814, *The Providence Patriot*, Providence, RI.

⁴⁸ Buchanan, 295.

“The Sons of Tennessee who fell contending their rights” the general declared, “have approved themselves worthy of the American name – worthy descendants of their sires of the Revolution.”⁴⁹ It was within this high ebb of jingoistic sentiment and national recognition that the mythical identity of the “volunteer” soldier was born, a persona that came to define not only the veterans of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, but the entire culture of the state of Tennessee, and soon, the political identity of Jackson and his Democratic Party. As a result of Old Hickory’s rise to fame, the “volunteers” of Tennessee enjoyed a bevy of opportunities for rekindling the memories of war. From 1814 well into the 1830s, celebratory occasions held in their honor permeated nearly every institution in the Volunteer State.

Perhaps the most conspicuous means by which Jackson and his former volunteers maintained the camaraderie of combat was through elaborate celebrations and balls that paid homage to their military achievements. In 1819, one such event took place at the Nashville Inn where President James Monroe “dined and drank his wine” alongside the city’s most prestigious families, entertainers, and politicians. To his left and right sat two of the most celebrated men in the state of Tennessee, generals Andrew Jackson and William Carroll. In the crowd stood a multitude of citizens and former soldiers of all ranks and classes. The President paid mind to “the volunteers of Tennessee” and praised them for answering “the call of your country” and for protecting “our frontiers against the calamities of savage warfare. Impartial history,” he continued, has recorded your

⁴⁹ Buchanan, 296-297.

achievements that “will never be forgotten.”⁵⁰ President Monroe’s address concluded with 13 toasts, beginning with the Commander-and-Chief himself, followed by Old Hickory, the Union, the volunteers, and the heroes of the Revolution, among others. Rousing dinner toasts, such as these, occurred with near regularity in the aftermath of the war. In 1818, on the Fourth of July, a patriotic crowd in Clarksville drank to “Gen. Jackson – the hero of the south, all foes shrink before him,” and “the volunteers of Tennessee – they undergo privations for the good of their country, may government appreciate their meritorious services.”⁵¹ Frontier fetes also presented opportunities for heartfelt reunions between former companions in arms. In 1826, at an honorary dinner dedicated to the Governor of Tennessee, General William Carroll, a sea of soldiers and citizens descended on the small town of Mount Pleasant to reunite and remember the glories of battle. “To meet with so many of my old fellow soldiers” is truly “gratifying,” noted the former general. “A recurrence to the scenes of war awakens my sensibility, and revives the strong feelings and attachments which were formed in dangers and difficulties that can never be forgotten.”⁵²

A strong showing of Jackson’s army also maintained camaraderie through religious participation. On the Tennessee frontier the fires of the Second Great Awakening continued to burn well into the post-war era as scores of former soldiers exchanged their muskets for Bibles. John Brooks, a tall man with a “sallow complexion”

⁵⁰ “The arrival, reception, and entertainment of the President of the United States,” June 12, 1819, *Nashville Gazette*, Nashville, TN.

⁵¹ “A Copy of the Address delivered by col. Williamson, and the President’s answer,” June 19, 1819, *Nashville Gazette*, Nashville, TN.

⁵² “Dinner to Gov. Carroll,” October 21, 1826, *Nashville Republican*, Nashville, TN; “Fourth July,” July 22, 1818, *Weekly Chronicle*, Clarksville, TN; “William Carroll,” *The American Historical Magazine and Tennessee Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. VII (1902), 392-393.

served in the militia at Horseshoe Bend before becoming a Methodist preacher in 1818. The captain of the fifty-third Tennessee, James McFerrin, too, became an “enterprising worker in the cause of Christ.” Among Jackson’s Indian allies one could also find Christian converts in the wake of the war. Turtle Fields, a towering Cherokee warrior present at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend became “instrumental in turning many of his forest brethren to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵³ Even Jackson himself, while engaged in the act of slaughtering his Redstick foes, grew increasingly confident that a higher authority dictated the course of the war. “With the blessing of Providence,” he declared on the eve of Horseshoe Bend, “I will conquer my enemies.” For Jackson, the “overruling power” of God became “more conspicuous in the field of battle.” By the war’s end his devotedly pious wife, Rachel, could sincerely proclaim, “I can almost say thou arte a Cristian (sic).”⁵⁴ In the aftermath of the war, Jackson, along with thousands of other veterans across the state of Tennessee came together in forest churches to find solace through the redeeming power of Christ. At a Methodist service in Nashville, one attendee witnessed an evocative moment shared between Old Hickory and a former member of his volunteer army. The presiding minister “while young, had been with Jackson in the Creek War,” the observer noted. “The General recognized him and called him by name. Tears of joy filled the eyes of both parties, while the whole conference entered into the feelings of the two veterans.”⁵⁵ The physical structure of the church itself could also serve as a community-gathering place. In the aftermath of the War of

⁵³ John McFerrin, *History of Methodism in Tennessee, Vol. III: From 1818-1840* (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1875), 22-24, 236-241, 330, 487.

⁵⁴ Arda Walker, “The Religious Views of Andrew Jackson,” *East Tennessee Historical Society Publications*, No. 17 (1945), 61-63.

⁵⁵ McFerrin, *History of Methodism in Tennessee*, 500-502.

1812, the Tennessee Legislature held an open ceremony in honor of Jackson and his Tennessee army at Nashville's First Presbyterian Church. To "enthusiastic ovation" the Reverend Gideon Blackburn presented Old Hickory with a "gold medal" and generals Coffee and Carroll with "elegant swords" inscribed with the battles of "New Orleans and Tohopeka."⁵⁶

Militia musters and membership also functioned as a means of preserving the memory, friendship, and culture forged in the fires of the Redstick War. In 1826, the Maury County 51st Regiment of the Tennessee Militia invited Governor William Carroll, their former general in battle, to attend a regimental drill and muster. "Your presence among us," announced the presiding colonel, "brings at once the recollections of the battles of the Horse-Shoe and the ever memorable Eight of January at New Orleans."⁵⁷ Militia musters, such as the one attended by Carroll, provided not only the "spark of military pride" that so often went dormant during periods of peace, but also the proving ground where Tennessee's politically ambitious rose through the ranks of community standing. Militia membership prefigured the political careers of Redstick War veterans such as Sam Houston (major general turned governor and congressman), David Crockett (colonel turned congressman), and William Carroll himself (major general turned governor). Even the perpetually frail and sickly future United States President, James K. Polk, served as a major in the Tennessee Militia before entering the House of Representatives. For the aspiring politician, the militia formed his political base, and

⁵⁶ "William Carroll," *The American Historical Magazine and Tennessee Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. VII (1902), 392-393; for frontier religion see also Merrill Gaddis, "Religious Ideas and Attitudes in the Early Frontier," *Church History*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (September 1933): 152-170.

⁵⁷ October 21, 1826, *Nashville Republican*, Nashville, TN.

with each rise in the chain of command that base grew exponentially.⁵⁸ For Governor William Carroll, the militia was a political machine that “gave the highest evidence of their friendship and confidence in elevating me to the office which I now have the honor to fill.”⁵⁹ In a highly militarized and purportedly egalitarian society, such as the Tennessee frontier, the honorary titles of militia membership became badges of community trust that “bore no taint of aristocracy.” This could also be said of the Indian warriors who received American military titles alongside Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. In the wake of the war, Cherokee officers such as Major Ridge retained not only their military ranks, but their uniforms as well, as a means of demonstrating their “civilized” status in American society.⁶⁰

Whether it be at a militia muster or Sunday service, the lives of nearly every Redstick War veteran revolved around Andrew Jackson, and his rise to the American presidency. Beyond the laurels of military victory wrought by the Redstick War, Old Hickory inherited the guts and gear to build a political machine in the American West akin to a modern Sparta.⁶¹ While those who stood beside him in combat, particularly at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, received the blessing of a firstborn child, Jackson breathed fire at the mutinous men who deserted him in the frozen forests of the Creek territory. While Jackson’s trusted soldiers rose to the highest seats in the land, his military rivals, at least for a time, stood defenseless against an untouchable circle of men, known as the

⁵⁸ Kenneth McCreedy, *Palladium of Liberty: The American Militia System* (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991), 89-91.

⁵⁹ October 21, 1826, *Nashville Republican*, Nashville, TN.

⁶⁰ Susan Abram, “Souls in the Treetops:” Cherokee war, Masculinity, and Community, 1760-1820 (PhD Dissertation, Auburn University, 2009), 189.

⁶¹ For “modern Sparta” see John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 2, 248.

Nashville Junto, spearheaded by none other than Old Hickory himself. The power of Jackson's political circle rested on finely tuned networks of personal loyalty and patronage that connected a variety of commercial and cultural institution in the state of Tennessee. The militia, for example, became not only the organizational means by which the veterans of the Redstick War maintained camaraderie; it also became an unstoppable engine of political gain. Likewise, the perpetual flood of frontier fetes and ceremonies that Jackson and his loyalists hosted for patriotic holidays and battle anniversaries sought to unify the veterans of the Redstick War behind a single and seemingly unconquerable political front. Public events such as the Monroe Ball and Carroll Dinner, while paying homage to the achievements of the Redstick War, delivered finely tuned political messages, most of which focused on Jackson's platform of aggressive nationalism, Indian Removal, and territorial expansion. They also elevated political candidates, such as Old Hickory himself, to the status of military gods while celebrating the common man in the guise of the "volunteer." Thus, opposing Jackson, the politician, became akin to both striking the sun *and* spiting in the face of the nation's sacrificial soldier. To combat Jackson's consolidation of power in the West, an alliance of politicians began to rally behind an anti-Jacksonian banner that slowly made inroads into the Volunteer State. During the 1820s and 1830s, in an effort to crumble the walls of Old Hickory's political fortress, Jackson's enemies rewrote the celebratory script of the Redstick War, and in particular, his victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.⁶²

⁶² This argument is best articulated by Lorman Ratner in *Andrew Jackson and His Tennessee Lieutenants: A Study in Political Culture* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).

Jackson's critics began articulating their message as early as 1814. In the wake of the Redstick War, a handful of Americans accused the ambitious general of waging war and seizing Indian land in Alabama for personal gain. It was certainly true that Jackson had speculated widely throughout the 1810s, and his penchant for dirty gold seemed only to grow stronger in the war's aftermath. Following the Treaty of Fort Jackson, Old Hickory partnered with his former second in command, General John Coffee, to form the Yahoo, Mammoth, and Cypress Land Company.⁶³ Together they personally surveyed, financed, and secured huge tracks of Alabama wilderness on behalf of their closest friends and family in Tennessee. Although Jackson and Coffee never denied their speculative ventures, their growing reputations as land hungry capitalists threaten to undo the selfless and patriotic legacy of the Redstick War.⁶⁴ Jackson also stood accused of conspiring with the treasonous ex-Vice President Aaron Burr, and threatening the very future of the United States by hastily declaring war without congressional authorization. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun wanted Old Hickory stripped of his military powers and censured in the halls of Congress. "Remember that Rome had her Caesar, England her Cromwell, and France her Bonaparte," proclaimed Calhoun's political ally, Speaker of the House Henry Clay. "If we would escape the rock on which they split, we must avoid their errors."⁶⁵ Making matters worse, in 1819 congress approved a federal appropriation of \$25,000 to be paid to the Cherokee Nation for "outrages committed on their property by the Tennessee Volunteers." An editorial in the *Nashville Gazette* proclaimed the bill's foremost proponent, Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford, a

⁶³ For the Treaty of Fort Jackson see Kappler, 107-110.

⁶⁴ Mark Cheatham, *Andrew Jackson: Southerner* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), see Chapter XII: "The Old Hero Stands Heedless of the Pelting Storm," 94-95.

⁶⁵ Henry Clay, 20 January 1819, in *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 2d sess., 654-655.

“despoiler of glory” whose sole objective “was to traduce the reputation of Gen. Jackson, lessen in the eyes of the world his public services, and tarnish the well-earned fame of the Tennessee militia.”⁶⁶

With Jackson’s nomination for the presidency in 1824 and again in 1828 the accusations against Old Hickory and his martial victories only intensified. That January, at an anti-Jackson convention in Virginia, Chapman Johnson presented a scathing address that transformed Jackson’s victory at Horseshoe Bend into a shameful slaughter of innocent Indians. “Impartial posterity,” he proclaimed will refuse Jackson the “rays of true glory when they review the history of his Indian campaigns, and especially when they read the stories of the cold blooded massacre at the Horseshoe.”⁶⁷ Two months later, a shadowy pamphlet appeared entitled *A Review of the Battle of the Horseshoe and of the Facts Relating to the Killing of Sixteen Indians on the Morning after the Battle*. The anonymous author, while paying tribute to the achievements of the Tennessee army, nonetheless lambasted the unfettered conduct of General Jackson. “This productive victory which gave present and future security to the frontier was tarnished by a most *bloody, unnecessary, and wanton*” killing of sixteen “unresisting” warriors, ordered by Jackson, the day after the battle. “Who does not feel indignant at this bloody stain on our military banner?”⁶⁸ John Binns, the editor of the *Philadelphia Democratic Press* and staunch ally of President John Adams, issued a ruthless anti-Jackson broadside known as the “Coffin Handbill.” Beyond excoriating Jackson for his political outbursts, bloodlust,

⁶⁶ Cheatham, 108-110; July 31, 1819, *Nashville Gazette*, Nashville, TN.

⁶⁷ “Address of the Anti-Jackson Convention of Virginia,” *The Ohio Repository* (Canton: February 15, 1828).

⁶⁸ *A Review of the Battle of the Horseshoe and of the Facts Relating to the Killing of Sixteen Indians on the Morning after the Battle*, Lilly Library, Indiana University, War of 1812 Collection.

and tyrannical behavior, Binns' broadside declared the Battle of Horseshoe Bend a "tragic and merciless cruelty" wrought by the hands of a "butcher." The most incendiary passages accused Jackson of sleeping on the field of battle surrounded by his victims, and mercilessly executing unarmed Redsticks in "cold blood" the day after the battle. Binns' use of artistic coffins and grisly excerpts lifted directly from Jackson's own military correspondence gave his captivating broadside an air of truth that took the nation by storm.⁶⁹ "There is nothing more revolting" about the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, declared the Maryland *Torch Light*, "than Gen. Jackson's *own* account of the affair. It is appalling and soul harrowing almost beyond parallel."⁷⁰ Other inflammatory broadsides and newspapers depicted Jackson's Redstick enemies as unarmed, and their "*squaws and children*" among those "indiscriminately exterminated" by the Tennessee army. In an editorial entitled "Gen. Jackson's Cruelty," the *New Orleans Argus* described the Battle of Horseshoe Bend as an "indelible stain upon the character of our country."⁷¹ There was nothing that Jackson could say or do to erase the grisly passages he himself had penned in the heat of the war. "Burnish it, polish it, and whitewash it as you please," one American proclaimed, nothing in the annals of time could "blot a blacker page in history."⁷²

In an effort to protect the legacy of Horseshoe Bend, a number of supportive veterans and newspaper editors came forth with personal statements defending the conduct of Old Hickory and the volunteers from Tennessee. General John Coffee, for example, sought to remind the American public that the "Creek Nation had shed more

⁶⁹ *The Coffin Handbill*, 1828, Washington D.C., Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera, Portfolio 186, Folder 14.

⁷⁰ "The Coffin Handbills," March 6, 1828, *Torch Light*, Hagerstown, MD.

⁷¹ "Gen. Jackson's Cruelties," March 1, 1828, *New Orleans Argus*, New Orleans, LA.

⁷² Cheatham, 108-109.

innocent blood on our frontier than all other Indians in the United States,” and that “no man who knows the real character of Gen. Jackson will give credence to the charges against him.”⁷³ Coffee’s former brigade inspector, Governor William Carroll also furnished a statement that referred to the accusations of the anti-Jackson Convention of Virginia as “wholly destitute of foundation.” In a scathing correspondence published in the *Niles’ Weekly Register*, Tennessee Senator Sam Houston also stepped forward to personally harangue Virginia’s Chapman Johnson and his criticism of Horseshoe Bend as a “cold blooded massacre.” For Houston, the slanderous remarks not only vilified Jackson, they denigrated his entire state. Your “disparaging reflection,” he wrote to Chapman, “cannot be confined to the distinguished patriot at whom they are pointed. They cast a stigma on the courage and humanity of the officers and the men who fought... You say the *imputation was intended to be confined to gen. Jackson alone!* But you chose to cast an *imputation* calculated to effect a community!”⁷⁴ Houston’s public attack on Chapman inspired other Volunteers to speak out through the press. In the *Nashville Republican* an unnamed soldier asked rhetorically “Who were these determined and deluded savages” who fell in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend? “The same who rose like an inundation on the settlements of Alabama,” he proclaimed, “herding hundreds of women and children into Fort Mimms (sic)” where a “feast of butchery” ensued. These are the beings” he continued, “who self-provoked destruction in a fair and hard fought action!”⁷⁵ Public toasts also turned defensive. One Mount Pleasant celebration drank to Adams’ Tennessee allies: “the demagogues and promoters of faction

⁷³ “The Battle of the Horse-Shoe,” April 18, 1828, *Baltimore Republican*, Baltimore, MD.

⁷⁴ October 25, 1828, *Niles’ Weekly Register*, Baltimore, MD, 139-141.

⁷⁵ “Nashville Republican to the Editors of the Richmond Enquirer,” April 22, 1828, *New Hampshire Gazette*, Portsmouth, NH.

– may their bosoms be warmed by a hedgehog, and their livers preyed upon by a vulture, until they repent their folly.” Another to “the man that will sacrifice virtue on the altar of popularity, may he be scourged with the scorpion lash of ridicule.”⁷⁶ Support for Jackson and the Tennessee volunteers spread to the Atlantic seaboard as well. In April of 1828, the *Baltimore Republican* observed, “‘a cold-blooded massacre!’ This is the language of the Adams party, but let us show our readers what was thought of the Horse-Shoe at the time it occurred.” For instance, “what said Mr. NILES” of the *Niles’ Weekly Register*. “Hear his own words. ‘It seems just that they, who without provocation conducted themselves, SHOULD BE SWEPT FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.’ Mr. Niles,” the editor of the *Baltimore Republican* concluded, “was right.”⁷⁷

Joining the chorus of Jackson supporters was Old Hickory himself, who in 1828 oversaw the publication of his very own three-hundred page biography complete with dirty boots, dead Indians, and scores of patriotic pomp. Written by John Eaton, a former private in the Tennessee army, *The Life of Major General Andrew Jackson*, was the first ever mass-produced, campaign biography in American history.⁷⁸ The narrative, which embodied Jackson’s political and ideological views, transformed the highly criticized General Jackson into the larger than life western hero, “Old Hickory,” a self-made man whose determination in battle crystallized from an unfaltering dedication to his country. Eaton, who also served as Jackson’s campaign manager, eliminated any of Jackson’s questionable conduct in war, dramatized his greatest military victories, and converted any

⁷⁶ “Dinner to Gov. Carroll,” October 21, 1826, *Nashville Republican*, Nashville, TN.

⁷⁷ “The Battle of the Horse-Shoe,” April 18, 1828, *Baltimore Republican*, Baltimore, MD; Cheatham, 112;

⁷⁸ John Henry Eaton, *The Life of Major General Andrew Jackson: Comprising a History of the War in the South; From the Commencement of the Creek Campaign to the Termination of Hostilities before New Orleans* (Philadelphia: McCarty and Davis, 1828).

negatives put forth by Jackson's pundits into positives. Not surprisingly, Eaton also used the opportunity to highlight the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and discredit those who had considered Jackson's victory a "cold blooded massacre." Eaton assured his readers that during the battle, "General Jackson, perceiving that further resistance must involve them in utter destruction," offered the Redsticks a flag of truce that they not only refused but fired upon. "Savages," he explained, "seldom extend or solicit quarter; faithless themselves, they place no reliance on the faith of others." Eaton further elaborated on the Redstick warriors, describing them not as spiritual defenders of their ancient homelands, but as "misguided savages" who with "grimaces and horrid contortions of the body, danced and howled their cantations to the sun." He reserved his strongest language, however, for Old Hickory himself who proclaimed in the aftermath of Horseshoe Bend that "the *fiends* of Tallapoosa will no longer murder our women and children or disturb the quiet of our borders. Their midnight flambeaux will no more shine upon the victims of their infernal orgies." Eaton's biography, which drew clear parallels between "savage" and "civilized" was political propaganda in its purest form. Reprinted a half dozen times from Cincinnati to Boston the American people willingly and enthusiastically eat up Old Hickory, the hero of the frontier.⁷⁹

Despite the political slings and arrows cast in his direction, Jackson swept the polls that December with a resounding victory over his presidential rival, John Quincy Adams. In his home state of Tennessee, General Jackson raked in an astonishing 95

⁷⁹ Eaton, *The Life of Major General Andrew Jackson*, 92-98; Eaton's edits to the Old Hickory narrative have been carefully annotated by Frank Owsley, Jr., in a facsimile edition published by the University of Alabama Press; Jill Lepore, "Bound for Glory: Writing Campaign Lives," October 20, 2008, *The New Yorker*, New York, NY.

percent of the popular vote while tallying 90 percent in Alabama and no less than 81 percent in the four remaining states of the Lower South.⁸⁰ The undeniable triumph belonged to Jackson's circle of loyalists as well, who helped finance and organized the general's presidential campaign. The three Johns (Eaton, Coffee, and Overton), two Williams (Hall and Lewis), Robert Armstrong, and Ephraim Foster, had all served honorably alongside Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and continued to do so in the wake of the war. Not surprisingly, President Jackson awarded his most trusted comrades for their labors and loyalty making Eaton his Secretary of War, Lewis his Treasury auditor, and Armstrong the Postmaster of the Volunteer State. William Hall and Ephraim Foster also joined the triumphant precession to Washington as congressmen from their respective districts in Tennessee. Jackson's victory also brought fame and political power to the American West. In a very short matter of time, the presidency of Old Hickory transformed the land of the setting sun into the iconic embodiment of all that was truly American. The West was home to the "common folk," the rustic cabin, and the majestic vistas of the North American continent. Moreover, the West was the land of the Indian fighter whose rough exterior epitomized American masculinity in an era of increasing urbanization and feminization. Those who rallied around General Jackson during the 1828 presidential campaign demonstrated their virile manliness by joining Hickory Clubs, drinking from Jackson flasks, and singing the "Hunters of Kentucky" as if they themselves had grown up fighting Indians in the rugged canebrakes of the American West.⁸¹ In the aftermath of Jackson's victory, the American public would send

⁸⁰ Cheatham, 108, 116-117.

⁸¹ Jordan Wright, *Campaigning for President: Memorabilia from the Nation's Finest Private Collection* (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2008), 16-18.

a swarm of “coonskin congressmen” to the nation’s capital, all of whom followed the model forged by Old Hickory in 1828. As the new “westernized” propaganda of the political system bled out into the public sphere it gave shape and context to a uniquely American cultural genre that focused on the frontier of the American West.⁸²

The Jacksonian Era witnessed an explosion of frontier art and literature unprecedented in the young nation’s history. Facilitated by the rise of an American middle-class and inspired by the transformative ideologies of Indian removal and Manifest Destiny, the Western genre sought to rationalize, and popularize, what was ultimately a violent and chaotic settling of the continent. Evident in all depictions of the West, whether humorous or grave, epic or nostalgic, was the irreconcilable clash between America’s savage and civilized societies. Epitomized by Old Hickory’s own campaign biography, the savage/civilized genre spoke to those who supported Jackson’s Indian Removal and celebrated the commercial and imperial expansion of the era. Naturally, the western genre glorified the frontier man-on-the-make who in a bustling struggle for fortune and self-transcendence perpetually fought, scalped, hunted, and seized land on his way to the top. The genre also viewed the violent, interracial behavior of frontier heroes, such as Old Hickory, as a temporary, yet necessary evil for conquering enemies, avenging white victimization, and extending the reach of a more naturally civilized and peaceful society. Not surprisingly, artists and authors of the genre depicted Indians as uncontrollably violent facets of the untamed wilderness that stood stubbornly in the path of American progress. Horatio Greenough’s marble sculpture, *The Rescue*,

⁸² Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 395, 416-417.

commissioned by the Jackson administration in 1836, embodied the theme with its colossal pioneer subduing a diminutive, but no less vicious, Indian warrior. The western genre also claimed an air of American authenticity that defined itself and its leaders from the decadent and seemingly unpatriotic culture of the Old World. The West presented a “peculiar Americanism,” wrote author Herman Melville; “for the Western spirit is, or will yet be, the true American one.”⁸³ With Jackson’s election, the scepter of the United States passed into western hands, and with it went the identity of the nation. “In the destinies of the west,” observed the *American Quarterly Review* in 1836, “all take a deep interest.”⁸⁴

Throughout the Jacksonian Era, numerous artists and authors from throughout the country seized upon the Redstick War for thematic fodder and inspiration. Perhaps the best known was Old Hickory’s former scout and political ally, Davy Crockett, who after leaving Jackson for the Whig Party published his own presidential campaign biography, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*.⁸⁵ Written with the help of a Whig ghostwriter, the narrative sought to replicate the success of Eaton’s “Old Hickory” by casting Crockett as a poor farmer and selfless volunteer soldier turned congressman. Crockett’s narrative, like that of Old Hickory’s was political propaganda, but the popularity of the larger-than-life “coonskin congressman” battling bears and shooting Redsticks “like dogs”

⁸³ Herman Melville on Ethan Allen, see Herman Melville, *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Co., 1855), 149.

⁸⁴ Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 416-417; Robert Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 72-96; see also Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953); *The American Quarterly Review*, March and June, 1836, Vol. XIX (Philadelphia: Adam Waldie, 1836), 29.

⁸⁵ David Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett, Written by Himself* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1834).

transformed the autobiography into an American classic, and Crockett into the quintessential frontier hero. Another veteran of the Redstick War, Jesse Denson, Jackson's former secretary and chaplain, published the *Chronicles of Andrew*, a religious diatribe that morbidly celebrated the graphic exploits of "King Andrew," the "mighty man of the west," who "carried an exterminating war into the heart of the Creek Nation." Denson relentlessly maligned Jackson's enemies, the Redsticks, as "inhuman savages," "false prophets," and "uncircumscribed Philistines."⁸⁶ Other less politically and ideologically driven publications set against the backdrop of the Redstick War included Charles Jones' *American Lyrics* (1834), Alexander Beaufort Meek's *The Red Eagle: A Poem of the South* (1855), and Rev. Michael Smith's epic novel *The Lost Virgin of the South* (1832).⁸⁷ Writing in the vein of the Noble Savage, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's *Alhalla: A Tale of the Creek War* (1843) used the Redsticks' rejection of American culture to critique the commercial and imperial designs of the Jacksonian Democrats. The war also had its principle historian.⁸⁸ In 1851, Albert James Pickett, a plantation owner with an itch to "make himself useful," published the remarkable *History of Alabama from the Earliest Period*.⁸⁹ Although Pickett labored extensively and went to great lengths to obtain eyewitness interviews for his research, his perspective of the Redstick War was ultimately that of the white settler and soldier. Pickett relied almost entirely on documentation derived from the American side of the conflict, and thus, his research failed to consider seriously the motives of the "savage" and "heathen" warriors

⁸⁶ Jesse Denson, *The Chronicles of Andrew* (Lexington, Kentucky: 1815).

⁸⁷ Charles Jones, *American Lyrics* (Mobile, AL: Pollard & Dade, 1834); Alexander Beaufort Meek, *The Red Eagle: A Poem of the South* (Montgomery, AL: The Paragon Press, 1855).

⁸⁸ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Alhalla, Or, The Lord of Talladega: A Tale of the Creek War* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1843).

⁸⁹ Albert Pickett, *History of Alabama* (Charleston: Walker & James, 1851).

who selflessly fell before the onslaught of American civilization. Moreover, and perhaps most controversial, Pickett grossly overestimated the number of “whites” killed during the massacre at Fort Mims. His death toll of 500 was virtually double that recorded by Captain Kennedy’s burial party. It also completely failed to address the complex multiracial dimensions of the victims, most of whom were not “white” in a traditional sense at all. In 1858, Alonzo Chappel, the prolific American artist, converted Pickett’s words into what became arguably the most iconic, and grisly, image of the Redstick War, the “Massacre at Fort Mims.” Chappel’s engraving of stalwart American soldiers shielding terrified women from the tomahawks of demonic warriors further engrained the Jacksonian theme of white victimization in the minds of the American public.⁹⁰

As Pickett’s history attests, America’s obsession with the frontier produced a steady stream of political fabrications and mythologies that made locating the true history of Redstick War increasingly difficult. The first, and perhaps most common misconception of the war was that the victims of Fort Mims were invariably *white*. In the immediate aftermath of the event, a number of newspaper editors sidestepped the ethnic complexity of the massacre as a means of propagating a war in the South. Articles calling for volunteers often described the victims as “the defenseless women and children of *our* frontier” and “*our* unarmed citizens.” The *Nashville Whig* aggressively proclaimed “*our* fellow citizens have been butchered, and ample vengeance, alone, can appease us!” Not surprisingly, proponents of national expansion seized the rallying cry

⁹⁰ Gregory Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 177-196. See also Wayne Curtis, “Clarifying a Historical Event: Archaeologists are Working to Uncover the Details of the Massacre at Fort Mims” *American Archaeology* (Fall 2007), 12-17. For Alonzo Chappel’s “Fort Mims Massacre” see Henry Dawson, *Battles of the United States: By Sea and Land, Vol. II* (New York: Johnson, Fry, and Company, 1858), 764.

of “Remember Fort Mims” to justify the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and subsequent removal of the Creek Nation from the American Southeast.⁹¹

In addition to the galvanizing propaganda surrounding Fort Mims, newspapers throughout the country reported that the British had excited the Redsticks to violence. “The *tomahawk* of the *savage* and *torch* of *Cockburn* are in HOLY LEAGUE,” proclaimed the Niles’ Register. “These facts are notorious and indisputable.” Other accounts of the war referred to the Redsticks as “British savages” and the “hirelings of England.” Unbeknownst to most Americans, the British had yet to commence a southern campaign. Not until May of 1814, in the aftermath of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, would the British ally themselves with the last remnants of the Redstick army.⁹²

Nonetheless, blood had been shed and newspapers throughout the country proudly proclaimed that Old Hickory had righteously brought peace by the sword, and security to the frontier through violence. In a military dispatch, widely circulated in the aftermath of the war, Charles Pinkney, the two time presidential candidate of the Federalist Party, proclaimed that “while a sigh of humanity will escape for this profuse effusion of human blood” we must remember that peace has been brought “to our women and children who would otherwise be exposed to the indiscriminate havoc of the tomahawk and horrors of savage warfare.”⁹³ Although Jackson’s victory at Horseshoe Bend eliminated over 800 Redstick warriors hostile to the United States, it did nothing to appease the subsequent

⁹¹ Waselkov, 190-193; “Jackson’s Victories,” December 18, 1813, *Carthage Gazette*, Carthage, TN; “Tennessee in Arms,” October 29, 1813, *Universal Gazette*, Washington D.C.; “Nashville Republican to the Editors of the Richmond Enquirer,” April 22, 1828, *New Hampshire Gazette*, Portsmouth, NH; “Indian Massacre,” October 5, 1813, *Norfolk Herald*, Norfolk, VA.

⁹² “The Destiny of the Creeks,” December 18, 1813, *Niles’ Weekly Register*, Baltimore, MD, 370;

⁹³ Thomas Pinckney to James Madison, printed Saturday, April 23, 1814, *Niles’ Weekly Register*, Baltimore, MD, 130; also on file at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Daviston, Alabama.

Indian Wars that ravaged the American South for the next 20 years. If anything, Horseshoe Bend initiated a period of perpetual *war*, not peace, which ended only with the physical removal of the Redsticks and their allied Indian forces to lands beyond the reach of the Jacksonian frontier. Nonetheless, the legend of peace by the sword resonated throughout the century. Upon Jackson's death, the nation's preeminent historian, George Bancroft, immortalized Old Hickory as the peacemaker and father figure of the frontier. "Who has not heard of [the Redsticks] terrible deeds, when their ruthless cruelty spared neither sex nor age? When the infant and its mother, the planter and his family who had fled for refugee [at Fort Mims] were slain. The cry of the West demanded Jackson for its defender," Bancroft proclaimed to the nation. "Through scenes of blood the avenging hero sought only the path to peace."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ George Bancroft, *Memoirs of General Andrew Jackson: Seventh President of the United States* (Auburn, NY: James C. Derby & Co., 1845), "Bancroft's Eulogy," 254-256.

CHAPTER 4

THE PHYSICAL IMPACT, 1814-1845

Andrew Jackson's victory over the Redsticks at Horseshoe Bend and his subsequent hard bargaining at the Treaty of Fort Jackson rendered possible the dreams of national expansion, and in particular the Jeffersonian dream of an agrarian republic. Pro-expansionists inspired by the vision of a global breadbasket, or "garden," springing to life in the American interior had long eyed the rich territory of the Creek Confederacy with rapacious intent. In 1775, while standing at the soon-to-be site of Fort Jackson, just downstream from the future site of Horseshoe Bend, William Bartram, a thirty-five year old Quaker from Pennsylvania, reported that "This is, perhaps, one of the most eligible situations for a city in the world; a level plain between the confluence of two majestic rivers, each navigable for vessels, and spreading their numerous branches over the most fertile and delightful regions."⁹⁵ The people of Tennessee, too, coveted the Creek country for its rich soil and deep waterways to the Gulf Coast. On the eve of the Redstick War a Nashville editorial described the Creek's homeland as "extremely beautiful and finely watered with excellent springs and navigable rivers. The land is also in a very considerable state of cultivation, affording a vast number of farms."⁹⁶ Thomas Hutchins, "Geographer to the United States" spoke prophetically when he described the potential for expanding the borders of the United States into the American Southeast: "If

⁹⁵ William Bartram, *Travels of William Bartram*, edited by Mark Van Doren (New York: Dover Publications, 1928), 355.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Tom Kanon, "'A Slow Laborious Slaughter': The Battle of Horseshoe Bend," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* Vol. LVIII, No. 1 (Spring 1999), 4.

we want it, I warrant it will soon be ours.”⁹⁷ With Jackson’s victory at Horseshoe Bend, and the scratch of a pen at Fort Jackson, the United States acquired from the Creek people over 23 million acres of lush terrain stretching from the coast of Georgia to the port of Mobile and north into the vast swath of earth that would soon become the state of Alabama - the largest Indian land cession in American history. “We have conquered. We have added a country to ours,” the victorious Jackson proclaimed to men upon their honorable discharge in Nashville. Now begins the process “of populating that section of the Union.”⁹⁸ With the war at an end, and the remnants of the once mighty Creek Confederacy confined to a relatively small and foreseeable surrounded track of land, the young American nation turned its attention to transforming what had been perceived generally as a “Devil’s den” and “a waste of howling wilderness” into an agricultural utopia of sprawling farms and bustling ports – the proverbial garden of the American West.⁹⁹

Within weeks of the treaty signing at Fort Jackson a veritable tidal wave of white squatters and speculators, planters and merchants from all ranks and regions inundated the former land of the once powerful Creek Confederacy. In the words of one Alabamian, “the home of his ancestors was no longer for him.” He must remove or perish “before the triumphant march of white man’s civilization.” But the grand parade of Americans marching into the defeated Creek territory failed to resemble the

⁹⁷ Thomas Hutchins, *An Historical Narrative and Topographical Description of Louisiana and West-Florida* (Philadelphia, 1784), 93-94.

⁹⁸ Jackson quoted in Buchanan, 296.

⁹⁹ For a general overview of the “American Garden” see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 3-12.

mythologized procession of peace and civility that many came to equate with the settling of the continent. Rather, the commotion that became known nationally as “Alabama Fever” spiraled wildly out of control and created a frontier of fraud and economic exploitation that looked more like the grounds of Bedlam than an agrarian paradise. From roughly 1815 to 1840, a rowdy stream of speculators and city boosters from throughout the United States descended upon the former body of the Creek Confederacy. In areas both legally held by the federal government and not, they dispossessed Creeks of their property, bought huge tracks of land, and parceled the proceeds into small fields and city lots. They then promoted their imaginary towns and “get rich quick” advertisements in newspapers throughout the United States. The rumors of cheap land and cities rising out of the Alabama wilderness precipitated one of the largest domestic migrations in American history. One traveler headed west on the Federal Road from Georgia described the scene: “The number of emigrants surpasses all calculations.... For six or eight miles at a time you find an uninterrupted line of walkers, wagons, and carriages.”¹⁰⁰ The rate at which Americans uprooted themselves destined for the former Creek country alarmed those who remained behind. A North Carolina planter noted, “The Alabama *fever* rages here with great violence, and has *carried off* vast numbers of our Citizens.” The masses that poured forth increased the population of Alabama by twelvefold, making the territory eligible for statehood by 1819, and reaching upwards of 128,000 in 1820.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Joan Cashin, *A Family Venture: Man & Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 56-57.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 125-126; Anne Kendrick Walker, *Backtracking in Barbour County: A Narrative of the last Alabama Frontier* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1941), 5-7. For boosters and city growth see Stuart Sprague, “Alabama Town Production during the Era of Good Feelings,” *The Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (Spring, 1974), 15-20.

As the tide of white settlement pushed against, and into, the shrunken borders of the Creek Confederacy, the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend faded into obscurity. From roughly 1814 to 1836, Jackson's field of glory remained in the hands of his former adversaries, the Upper Creeks, who chose not to revisit the battlefield or its surrounding countryside for a number of practical as well as cultural reasons. For one, the war itself had severely reduced the Upper Creek population. Roughly 3,000 Creeks total, 1,900 of whom were warriors (40 percent of the able bodied male population), had died by the time Jackson declared victory at Horseshoe Bend. Hundreds more had fled south into Florida, or fallen victim to Cherokee enslavement. At Horseshoe Bend alone, Cherokee and Creek warriors took captive some 250 women and children, most of whom were related to the fallen Redstick warriors. The Creeks also chose not to repopulate the area surrounding Horseshoe Bend in the immediate aftermath of the war. U.S. forces had put 32 Creek towns to the torch (including Newyucua, the nearest settlement to Horseshoe Bend) along with their neighboring agricultural fields. The war chief Menawa found "neither shelter nor property" at his former village of Okfuskee. "The desolating hand of war had swept it all away."¹⁰² With nowhere to go, and the land providing little to no nutritional value, the majority of Redstick survivors gathered at Fort Jackson, sixty miles southwest of Horseshoe Bend, where government rations "kept alive" over 8,000 hungry and homeless refugees. Starvation and sickness had grown prevalent in the war's aftermath. Agent Hawkins noted dolefully that while the great majority of the Redsticks "have surrendered and begged for bread," others were "scattered throughout the woods,

¹⁰² Menawa's observations can be found in Thomas McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes* (Philadelphia: Frederick Greenough, 1838), 301-302.

dying of hunger.”¹⁰³ Even General Jackson pitied the sad state of his former enemies. “To see the distressed situation of the Indians,” he wrote his wife Rachel, “is enough to make Humanity shudder.”¹⁰⁴ While the war’s refugees struggled to survive, the bodies of the brave Redstick fallen remained unburied and exposed to the elements on the field of battle at Horseshoe Bend.¹⁰⁵

Beyond the physical practicality of visiting the former battlefield, a number of Creek customs and taboos made returning to Horseshoe Bend undesirable, or even forbidden. For one, the war’s tremendous loss of life and high rate of enslavement made the logistics of organizing a burial party simply impossible. Even if survivors did remain in the area of Horseshoe Bend the task of burying anywhere from five to eight hundred bodies would have required a tremendous amount of strength and numbers, neither of which the Creek people had. There were also a number of Creek taboos that made contact with the Redstick slain spiritually dangerous. For one, the bones of a lifeless body were thought to attract ghosts that could only be driven away by burning a particular type of cedar incense. The physical remains and burial hole, too, required a tremendous amount of precision ranging from the body’s posture and wardrobe to the pit’s depth and location. If not performed carefully, the individual tasked with burying the dead could suffer horrible consequences ranging from death and disease to poor harvests. It was reported in the aftermath of the war that Menawa “entertained a

¹⁰³ Hawkins to Secretary of War John Armstrong, June 21, 1814, Hawkins, *Letters*, II: 687.

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, *Papers*, III: 89.

¹⁰⁵ Some of the assumptions regarding Redstick visitation stem from a personal correspondence with historian Katheryn Braund; for Cherokee enslavement see Susan Abram, *“Souls in the Treetops”: Cherokee War, Masculinity, and Community, 1760-1820* (PhD Dissertation: Auburn University, 2009), 163-164; for death tolls see, Buchanan, 301.

superstitious dread” of Horseshoe Bend, and that the great chief “could never be prevailed upon afterwards to revisit the battle ground.” Menawa explained to his biographer in the 1830s that “a malign influence existed” at Horseshoe Bend, “fatally hostile to his people and himself.”¹⁰⁶ Although Menawa’s spiritual fear of the old battlefield stood entirely consistent with Creek customs, one cannot dispel the power of human pride and the unconquerable spirit held among military men of high repute. Menawa and his fellow Redsticks warriors would have ultimately seen no purpose in revisiting a battlefield awash in memories of death and humiliation. In the words of a nineteenth century historian: “Napoleon, bereft of imperial power, would have taken no pleasure in retracing the road to Moscow.”¹⁰⁷

The ascendance of Menawa’s former enemy Andrew Jackson to the presidency marked the death knell for the once proud and powerful Creek Confederacy in the American Southeast. In 1832, after nearly two decades of failed congressional appeals to stem the tide of white encroachment, a delegation of accommodating Creek chiefs ceded the last five million acres of Creek Territory to the United States at the Treaty of Cusseta. With it came an eruption of violence that spread across the state of Alabama like hot wildfire. Roving bands of warriors lashed out in unfettered violence killing frontier settlers and burning crops and cabins from Tennessee to Montgomery, Alabama. President Jackson, rekindling the spirit of the Redstick War called, for a second time, upon his brave Tennessee brethren to raise a volunteer army of 2,500 soldiers. The

¹⁰⁶ McKenney & Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, 302.

¹⁰⁷ John Reed Swanton, *Creek Religion and Medicine* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 651-653; Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 343; Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 229-230.

Governor of Tennessee Newton Cannon, who served for a time alongside Jackson as a mounted rifleman, spurred his countrymen to arms on behalf of their former general, the current President of the United States. “Our old chief, under whose orders we have met and conquered our enemies in times gone by, will now call on you again,” he proclaimed in the *Nashville Whig*. We must, “relieve our Southern frontier from those scenes of savage cruelty under which *our citizens* are now suffering.”¹⁰⁸ Across the state of Tennessee newspapers played upon the legacy of Fort Mims and the Redstick War with images of bloodthirsty Indians and white patriots defending their homes. “Volunteers for the Frontier: Alabama needs the presence of our gallant Tennesseans. Let them now evince their eagerness by protecting the women and children, farms and towns of *their own country* from the tomahawk, the scalping knife, and the firebrand of the merciless savage.”¹⁰⁹ The parallels between mobilizing troops for the Redstick War and the violence of 1836 were shockingly similar not only in tone and rhetoric, but ultimately in outcome as well. Once again, thousands of volunteer soldiers from Tennessee allied themselves with Alabama frontiersmen and accommodating Creek warriors to suppress an Indian insurgence on the old Southwestern frontier. The act of volunteerism and Indian fighting had essentially become a tradition, passed down from one generation to the next. By the end of the so-called “Second Creek War” the identity of the brave Tennessean and his fellow Alabamian was firmly in place. In their minds, they represented not only the fortitude of pioneer settlers and Indian fighters, but the

¹⁰⁸ “A Call from the President of the United States for 2500 Volunteers from the State of Tennessee,” June 6, 1836, *Nashville Whig*, Nashville, TN.

¹⁰⁹ “Volunteers for the Frontier,” June 6, 1836, *Nashville Whig*, Nashville, TN.

patriotism of the “volunteer” soldier, prepared to selflessly unsheathe his sword to defend the borders and beliefs of the Jacksonian empire.¹¹⁰

The Second Creek War not only solidified the identity of the Volunteer State, it also served as the final backdrop for the disorderly and ultimately shameful process of Creek removal. The determined warriors who had taken up arms in 1836 faced “the humiliation of being chained together and marched from east Alabama to Montgomery,” where armed agents loaded them aboard steamers southbound for the Gulf Coast. The *Montgomery Advertiser* reported: “To see the remnants of a once mighty people fettered and chained together, forced to depart from the land of their fathers into a country unknown to them, is of itself sufficient to move the stoutest heart.”¹¹¹ The last of the warriors ushered out of Alabama followed in the footsteps of 23,000 Creeks who between 1827 and 1837 took the Trail of Tears west. The agents contracted by the federal government to oversee the process of Creek removal reaped huge profits from the ultimately “dirty work.” The Alabama Emigrating Company (AEC), for example, earned \$28.50 for each Creek “head” transported to Indian Territory. Not surprisingly, the chairmen of the AEC, which the *Columbus Sentinel* described as a “large company, possessing a great deal of ready capital, an efficient force of active and energetic men, and having considerable experience in business,” were also some of the largest land

¹¹⁰ For an overview of the Second Creek War see John T. Ellisor, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collusion on a Collapsing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Mary Elizabeth Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); for the Treaty of Cusseta see Kappler, 341-343.

¹¹¹ “Upwards of 1500 Hostile Creeks Arrived Yesterday,” June 9, 1836, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; reprinted July 29, 1836, *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, MD.

speculators in Alabama.¹¹² Among the thousands of unfortunate Creeks ushered west by the AEC during the era of removal was Jackson's former Redstick nemesis, Menawa. The defeated chief of Horseshoe Bend commented on the day of his departure west that "last evening I saw the sun set, and its light shine upon the tree tops, and the land, and the water, that I am never to look upon again."¹¹³ Along the Trail of Tears, Menawa took ill and died suddenly. His family buried his body in an unmarked grave, in an unknown location. His Indian enemies at Horseshoe Bend, the Cherokee, too, found themselves exorcized from their ancient homelands in the American Southeast. Chief Junaluska conveyed to a biographer that "if I had known Jackson would drive us from our homes I would have killed him that day at the Horseshoe."¹¹⁴

With the Indian nations of the American Southeast defeated, dismantled, and removed, the Alabama Legislature quickly divided up the former Creek and Cherokee territories into nine new counties, the names of which immortalized the white conquerors of the Redstick War. "The names of Jackson and his captains have not only been perpetuated in history," proclaimed an early governor of Alabama, they have been indelibly written on the landscape. "The principle counties of Jackson, Houston, Montgomery, and Coffee will forever recall the splendid valor and heroic exploits of these great Americans."¹¹⁵ The rising capital of the Cotton South, Montgomery,

¹¹² "Removal of the Creeks," August 18, 1836, *Columbus Sentinel*, Columbus, GA; reprinted August 25, 1836, *Arkansas Weekly Gazette*, Little Rock, AR.

¹¹³ McKenney, 304.

¹¹⁴ Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 150-157; Alabama Emigrating Company, see Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, 90; "Removal of the Creeks," August 18, 1836, *Columbus Sentinel*, Columbus, GA; for Junaluska see Rachel Eaton, *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Company, 1914), 26.

¹¹⁵ "Governor O'Neal Signs Praise of Old Heroes," July 5, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

Alabama had “more right to celebrate the battle [of Horseshoe Bend] than any city in the country,” a local newspaper declared. The bustling frontier post, as well the county of Montgomery in which it resided, had derived their namesakes from “Major Lemuel P. Montgomery, of Tennessee, the brave officer of Jackson’s army... shot through the forehead at Horseshoe Bend.”¹¹⁶ Other towns such as “Blount Springs,” “Coffeeville,” and the short and simple “Jackson,” too, rose from the physical ashes of the former Creek territory. The iconic names themselves stood not only as constant and unwavering reminders of American expansion and frontier heroism, but also as figurative memorials on the Early Republic’s monumentally barren and uncommemorated landscape.¹¹⁷

No town in Alabama did more during the early 1830s to identify themselves with the legacy of the Redstick War than the small and isolated frontier town of Dudleyville, situated just twelve miles southeast of the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend. The town’s citizens paid perhaps the highest, and certainly the most morbid, tribute to the Redstick War during the summer of 1839 when they hallowed the ground of their public square with the body of Major Lemuel Montgomery, the greatest American martyr of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. The decision to physically sanctify the community in such a manner stemmed from a number of demographic and political factors. For starters, the citizens of Dudleyville included “a number of veterans from Jackson’s army” who would have been not only familiar with the battlefield’s location, but perhaps the man, Montgomery, as

¹¹⁶ “Montgomerians at Horseshoe Bend,” June 20, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹¹⁷ For this particular period of Alabama development see Malcolm Rohrbough, “The New Counties of Alabama and Mississippi: A Frontier More South than West” in *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions: 1775-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 297-320; it should also be noted that the Creek themselves carried the names of their former towns and geographic features to their homes beyond the Mississippi. Towns such as Okmulgee, Nuyaka and Wetumpka, Oklahoma, among others, pay homage to the Creeks’ former homelands in the American Southeast.

well. We can only assume from their actions that the citizens of Dudleyville felt both a physical and mental connection to the fallen soldier whose body remained on the forgotten field of war, unmarked and burned over “to conceal it from the keen eyes of the savage.” Beyond the act’s sentimentality, and perhaps religious dimensions, stood the political and economic benefits gained from having the bones of such a prominent figure sleeping under the town square. During the 1830s, Dudleyville vied politically with fellow community upstarts such as Dadeville and Jackson’s Gap for the Tallapoosa County seat of government. In very much the same way that the early churches of Christianity required the bones of a saint or an equally desirable reliquary to proclaim legitimacy, so too did Dudleyville in its quest for the county seat. Human relics from the Redstick War, such as the remains of Major Montgomery, embodied not only the legacy of the past, as did the names of “Coffeeville” and “Blount Springs,” but power in the form of a direct and physical connection to Alabama’s true founders, the martyrs and men of Jackson’s volunteer army from Tennessee.¹¹⁸

The Dudleyville expedition to Horseshoe Bend, and subsequent unearthing of Major Montgomery’s body, became a spectacle of patriotic display complete with militia muster, parade, and military funeral. On an early summer morning in 1839, “tents were pitched, rolls were called, and the assemblage duly organized for inspection and drill.”¹¹⁹

A Dudleyville resident recalled that “citizens who attended as spectators imbibed some of

¹¹⁸ The 1830 census for Tallapoosa County lists a number of individuals whose names also appear on the muster rolls for Horseshoe Bend. *Tallapoosa County: A History* (Alexander City, Alabama: Alexander City Centennial Committee, 1976), 163-165; for a general description of Montgomery’s burial site see *Memorial of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Commission, Created by the State of Alabama, Praying Congress to Establish a Military Park on the Horseshoe Bend Battlefield*, Senate Documents, Vol. 22 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1909).

¹¹⁹ All accounts of the festivities at Dudleyville, AL are taken from an untitled letter published June 26, 1839, *Wetumpka Argus and Commercial Advertiser*, Dadeville, AL.

the ‘spirit of the times.’” Afterwards, the officers and volunteers from the surrounding counties mingled on Main Street with Dudleyville’s finest “woodland lasses.” Following the festivities, a “committee of gentlemen accompanied by a soldier who had fought in the battle, and a negro who acted as drummer” marched northwest in search of the lost battlefield of Horseshoe Bend. After several hours of scouring the Alabama wilderness the committee discovered the old Indian barricade and burial site of the forsaken soldier. “About 2 feet from the surface the bones were found in a state of considerable decay,” noted an unnamed participant. Furthermore, “The indication of a bullet hole through the skull proved them beyond question to be the remains of Montgomery.” A commanding officer with the militia provided a “neat and pathetic address” to the soldiers who formed a hollow square around the grave. They then gathered up the remains and returned to Dudleyville by dusk “as the declining sun illumined the horizon with variegated rays.” In their absence, local residents prepared “a neat coffin and grave dug within a few feet of the main street.” Although the tides of time had reduced the body of Major Montgomery to a collection of bones and buttons, the ceremony that ensued featured all of the military pomp and honors customary for a recently departed officer. A band played the death march while the men of the committee, acting as pallbearers, lowered the coffin into the earth. “Several addresses were spoken, a salute was fired, and the scene closed.” For the veterans of the Redstick War, and residents of Dudleyville, the memory of Horseshoe Bend remained tremendously close to the surface, not only figuratively speaking, but quite literally as well.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ June 26, 1839, *Wetumpka Argus and Commercial Advertiser*, Dadeville, AL. In a strange twist of irony, Montgomery’s own father, Richard, a major general in the Continental Army, was also reburied after

The unearthing and subsequent reburial of Major Montgomery's corpse was part of a popular, antebellum era movement that sought to reclaim the bodies of soldiers lost during the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. Throughout the country, thousands of Americans took to the woods or sent expeditions into the unknown to locate, disinter, and rebury the bodies of their lost loved ones. Ironically, Major Montgomery's own father, Richard, a Revolutionary War general killed at the Battle of Quebec, experienced his own highly celebrated reburial after spending forty-three years in a Canadian grave. At King's Mountain in 1855, an emotional crowd of nearly 15,000 gathered to reinter and commemorate the heroic patriots "who for long years tenanted the abodes of silence and neglect." The most renowned reburial of the time, however, occurred at Queenston Heights, along the Niagara River, where Sir Isaac Brock, a recently knighted British General, fell mortally wounded during the War of 1812. Brock's body would rest in four different locations over the next forty years, the first being a crude and uncommemorated grave seven miles from the battlefield at Fort George. Then, in 1824, Brock's body moved when Parliament erected a 600-foot monument and vault to memorialize the knightly general at Queenston Heights. A spectator who witnessed the reburial commented that "although twelve years had elapsed since the interment, the body of the general had undergone little change, his features being nearly perfect and easily recognized." In the vault at the base of the monument, described as a "lofty column," Brock's body laid in peace until 1840 when a Canadian extremist toppled the monument with a cache of explosives. The destruction of Brock's memorial triggered not only

forty-three years under ground. He died while assaulting the city of Quebec in 1775. In 1818, the governor of New York, Stephen Van Rensselaer, obtained permission to move Montgomery's remains from Quebec to Manhattan, NY where they currently reside under his monument at St. Paul's Chapel.

outrage, but two additional moves as well. Not until 1856, upon the completion of a second monument, would the remains of Sir Isaac Brock discover their eternal resting place. By then, his body amounted to little more than bones and buttons.¹²¹

The traveling cadavers and burials of Major Montgomery, and by comparison Sir Isaac Brock, illustrate the commemorative identities of two nations with vastly dissimilar views. Whereas the English continued to memorialize their finest military minds and battlefields with towering shrines and tombs built of brick and mortar, the young nation of the United States chose to do otherwise. After visiting Westminster Abbey in London, the American statesmen Nathaniel Hawthorne proclaimed that “the fame of a buried person does not make the marble live. The marble keeps merely a cold and sad memory of a man who would else be forgotten.” Hawthorne’s words echoed well into the 1830s as Americans struggled to keep the memory of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, as well as the principles of the nation fresh in the minds of the people. Thomas Jefferson argued that the only way to perpetuate the ideals of America were through civic-minded words and deeds. A “genuine national memory,” his advocates proclaimed, “belonged in the people’s hearts, not in piles of stone.”¹²² Brock’s towering monument, which stood just across the Niagara River in clear view of American soil, represented the unabashed hero worship and idolatry of the Old World. “Democracy,” proclaimed John Quincy Adams, “has no monuments.”¹²³ When the first memorials dedicated to the

¹²¹ Thomas Chambers, *Memories of War: Visiting Battlefields and Bonefields in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 146-156, 166; Michael Kammen, *Digging Up the Dead: A History of Notable American Reburials* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 50-53.

¹²² Quoted in Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., The National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 41.

¹²³ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1874), VIII: 433.

Revolutionary War did finally appear on the commemorative landscape in 1840s, Americans mocked their elaborate constructions as “pretensions of officialdom.” One popular critic described Horatio Greenough’s seminude rendition of George Washington as “a ridiculous affair” that “excites only laughter... instead of demanding admiration.” Prior to the 1850s, only memorials of modest expense and humble “plainness” marked the American landscape without opposition. Thus, when the residents of Dudleyville disinterred the body of Major Montgomery, carried it *away* from the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, and reburied it in a modest grave they were acting in accordance with the beliefs and commemorative practices of the era. Strikingly, when the winds of national commemoration did begin to change in the 1850s, the first truly colossal monument in the nation’s history was of Andrew Jackson dressed not as a politician, but as a general on horseback, surrounded by cannon, engaged in the act of war.¹²⁴

While the nation immortalized *General* Jackson in bronze, his battlefield at Horseshoe Bend remained in an entirely unmarked and unpreserved state of obscurity. With no federal funding or national organization to oversee the protection and commemoration of America’s battlefields, most simply faded back into the undeveloped landscape of the North American continent. This was particularly true in the South where a lack of infrastructure during the antebellum period made the prospect of battlefield tourism and preservation seemingly futile. Numerous sites associated with the

¹²⁴ Chambers juxtaposes the commemorative culture on both sides of the Niagara River. While American allowed the battlefields outside of Buffalo to exist unmarked and unpreserved, Lundy’s Land and Queenston Heights became sites of Canadian and British memorialization, see 127-158; for the commemorative culture of the Early Republic see Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars*, 35-44, 50-51, 77-80; James M. Goode, “Four Salutes to the Nation: The Equestrian Statues of General Andrew Jackson” in *Outdoor Sculptures of Washington D.C.* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1974).

Revolution, such as King's Mountain, Cowpens, and Camden stood beyond the pale of American development, and as a result, remained uncommemorated well into the post-Civil War era. Jackson's field of glory at Horseshoe Bend, arguably the most isolated battleground in the country, suffered a similar fate. Throughout the century, visitation remained entirely local. One interested traveler at Montgomery found the roads to the battlefield "excessively broken up, especially the Indian bridges which cross the great swamps."¹²⁵ As a consequence, President Monroe chose to bypass Horseshoe Bend on his 1919 tour of the southern states, and so too did the Marquis de Lafayette while traveling the country in 1824.¹²⁶ The lack of battlefield visitation was also indicative of the times, as well as the commercially and progressively minded people who ventured into the former lands of the Creek Confederacy. In short, Americans were fixated on the future, as well as the booming enterprises of cotton production and land speculation, and found little time to dwell on the past victories and accomplishments of a bygone era. One plantation owner living in the vicinity of Horseshoe Bend wrote that there was "something exhilarating in the prosperity and activity of everything about us, when compared to the lifeless despondency of the old states." James Fennimore Cooper, the prolific American writer of the West, expressed a similar sentiment in 1833. "A nation is much to be pitied, that is weighted down by the past," he observed after an extensive tour of Europe. "Its industry and enterprise are constantly impeded by obstacles that grow out of it recollections." For those Alabama settlers who did take time to visit the historic

¹²⁵ Jeffrey C. Benton, *The Very Worst Road: Travellers' Accounts of Crossing Alabama's Old Creek Indian Territory, 1820-1847* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 99.

¹²⁶ Lafayette apparently visited the Redstick War battleground at Autosee, just downstream from Horseshoe Bend but was unable to make the trip to Jackson's iconic field of glory, see A. Levasseur, *Lafayette in America, 1824-1825; or, Journal of a Voyage to the United States* (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1829).

battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, the site was a mere curiosity, an escape from the bustle of everyday life, and perhaps, a place to reflect on the nation's history. The fact that so many Americans removed the bodies of fallen soldiers from battlefields, such as Horseshoe Bend, is testament to their perceptive insignificance during the Jacksonian Era. Only a handful of sites in the North, accessible by the Hudson River and Erie Canal, became regularly visited curiosities and picturesque playgrounds for the rich and powerful. Americans simply saw no need to preserve and memorialize the remote locations of their greatest battles, especially when most of the victors themselves, men such as Old Hickory, Sam Houston, and David Crockett stood as living and breathing monument of the nation's military past.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ For the lack of nostalgia during the Jacksonian Era see Chambers, 4-5, 39-40; Cashin, 63.

CHAPTER 5

THE DEATH OF THE FRONTIER, 1890-1914

The Civil War and Reconstruction cast a long shadow over the memory of Andrew Jackson and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. The dissolution of the union, the end of slavery, and the death of over a half million Americans created an environment of cultural and psychological shock that many struggled or even refused to overcome. Americans, particularly in the war torn south, longed for the days of old, but nonetheless, found their retrospective fantasies confounded by the pervasive anxiety over the road that lay ahead. Nothing could compare to the carnage of the war, and nothing else mattered more than reestablishing a functioning and economically viable society. In an effort to rebuild the region, energetic reformers, such as the *Atlanta Constitution*'s Henry W. Grady, called for a "New South" with modern industries, outside investors, and paid laborers in place of slaves. Promoters touted the "New South" as "feminine and free," rising out of the ashes of the Civil War she stood "upright, full-statured and equal among the people of the earth, breathing keen air and looking out upon the expanded horizon."¹²⁸ What loomed in the distance, however, was an unfamiliar future, and though thousands of enterprising Southerners in cities such as Atlanta welcomed the prospect of change with open arms, other lashed out with bitterness and even violence. For the guardians of tradition, the struggle was an onerous crusade. In some cases, the region's "New South" identity literally erased the physical past overnight. Developers and city boosters demolished old buildings and homes to make way for new factories, businesses,

¹²⁸ Quoted in Joel Chandler Harris, *Life of Henry W. Grady* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890). Reprinted in Paul D. Escott and David R. Goldfield, *Major Problems in the History of the American South, Vol. II, The New South* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990), 71-73.

railroads, and communities. Where cotton fields and forest once dominated the landscape, cities such Birmingham sprang rapidly from the soil. As the culture and memory of the Antebellum South retreated into a timeless slumber, so too did the veterans of the War of 1812 and a generation of Americans reared in the patriotic age of Jackson. For a time, the vast physical, ideological, and demographic transformations to the country created a physical and cognitive smoke screen that rendered the military achievements of the antebellum era, such as the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, not only seemingly irrelevant, but misunderstood, and in many cases, forgotten. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the legacy of Andrew Jackson and his victory over the Redsticks, would lie dormant, relegated to the dustbin of history, for nearly 40 long years.¹²⁹

As the South approached the twentieth-century, however, a wave of nostalgia for the history and material culture of the American past inundated the region. Spurred on by the massive influx of foreign immigration and industrialization, native-born citizens, disillusioned by the vast and relentless transformations to their country, sought refuge in the bucolic and invariably white annals of the American past. In the last two decades of the century, Americans across the country came together to organize preservation societies in an effort to restore the nation's greatest structures such as George Washington's Mount Vernon and the Paul Revere House in Boston. Others joined forces to form Sons, Daughters, Dames, and other genealogical groups. In 1890, the most prolific of these societies, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), formed with a determination "to teach patriotism" through the dedication of monuments and

¹²⁹ Denise D. Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 26-27; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 121.

protection of historical sites. A network of gentlemanly scholars and academics also united under the banner of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1884 to foster the development of historical scholarship. Although most instances of national preservation and memorialization worked across the aisle, uniting North and South, a number of distinctly Southern organizations sought to advance the memory of the pre-Civil War era and the myth of the “Lost Cause.”¹³⁰

From Richmond to Nashville and seemingly everywhere in-between, Confederate monuments sprang from the earth like wildflowers. In Virginia, the all-women’s Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA), chose to protect only sites connected with the “honorable intentions” of the Confederacy and rallied publically against the enfranchisement of poor men – both black and white. Southern women’s societies also employed the rhetoric of early American domesticity and virtue to challenge the emergence of the “New South” and the “New Woman” that followed in its path. For Southerners, the nation’s history was more than a mere rallying point for patriotic pride and empowerment; it was a weapon capable of warding off those, both foreign and domestic, political and commercial, who threatened the cultural heritage of the Southern states and their people.¹³¹

The first signs of a renewed interest in Andrew Jackson and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend occurred *after* the-turn-of-the-century, in the later years of the American commemorative boom. Condemned to a secondary role of importance by the

¹³⁰ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1991), 244-248.

¹³¹ Meringolo, 30-31; Lowenthal, 121-124; William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

achievements of the Revolutionary Era, the War of 1812 and its greatest heroes found themselves adrift in a sea of memory, lost in the waves of time without a mooring to the present. The death of the American frontier, as proclaimed by the historian Frederick Jackson Turner, however, inspired a new generation of artists and authors to salvage the rough and uniquely American history of the frontier from its dusty state of obscurity. It was within this high ebb of Western fascination that Americans began to re-explore the lost history of Old Hickory and his Indian Wars in the South. In 1905, the *New Orleans Picayune* featured a full spread article, the first of its kind, entitled “The Horseshoe Battle: Andrew Jackson’s Last Campaign against the Creeks.” The article’s author, Confederate General Marcus Wright of Tennessee, spoke on behalf of a nation still reeling from the destruction wrought by the Civil War. “It is not perhaps unnatural for the people of this day, so lately removed from the scenes of the greatest war of the world, to look with some indifference upon the results of former battles and underrate their importance,” the general wrote. “The greater numbers engaged and the greater losses on both sides of the Civil War” have tended to render “these battles of the past as comparatively small” and thus, “regarded without proper admiration.” But Americans, he proclaimed, had misjudged the nation’s military past. The true touchstone of martial excellence was achievement, and the general felt it his duty as a patriotic American, to “write of a battle little heard of in this day... the details of which are familiar not even to the average well-read person. This,” he proclaimed, is “the battle of Horseshoe Bend.”¹³²

¹³² Marcus Wright, “The Horseshoe Battle,” March 12, 1905, *New Orleans Picayune*, New Orleans, LA; republished March 19, 1905, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; a keyword search of over 6,500 newspaper publications reveals scant evidence of even the most remote interest in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend prior to the year 1900. In fact, no references to Horseshoe Bend could be found from

General Marcus Wright was not the only American troubled by the lack of attention paid to Jackson's victory. In a follow up editorial published by the *Macon Telegraph*, C.C. Anderson, a concerned Confederate veteran residing in Georgia, lambasted the nation's public school system for burying the Battle of Horseshoe Bend under a heap of New England bedtime stories. "Every Southern child has read of Paul Revere's ride," he raged, "but they look in wild-eyed astonishment when asked about the battle of Horseshoe Bend. They could not even tell you where Horseshoe Bend is, by whom fought, nor why. They know nothing of Southern history!"¹³³ Anderson was just one of numerous well-read and educated Southerners driven to near madness over the North's seemingly intentional exclusion of Southern achievements from the grand narrative of American history. A female contributor to the *Southern Women's Magazine* fumed over the recent publication of *American History for Grammar Schools*. "The Creek War is dismissed with a line," she wrote frantically, "and the battle of New Orleans with a paragraph."¹³⁴ The same was true at public libraries where a Louisiana scholar failed to find mention of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in the "leading encyclopedias, nor in some of the popular histories presumed to give accurate accounts of the leading events in history." Henry Halbert, an Alabama scholar, noted that in "a valuable history" of the Indian Wars, published in the North, several significant conflicts are noted, "but of the Creek War, no mention is made. Did the writers forget that war,"

1865-1900 using the Library of Congress's Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, a database of over seven million newspaper pages.

¹³³ C.C. Anderson, "Questions in History," January 30, 1915, *Macon Telegraph*, Macon, GA.

¹³⁴ "Halt! Who Goes There" *Southern Woman's Magazine*, 4 (September 1914), 12-13; September 16, 1914, *Nashville Tennessean*, Nashville, TN; Tom Kanon, "'Forging the Hero of New Orleans:' Tennessee Looks at the Centennial of the War of 1812," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 71 (Summer 2012), 144.

he questioned, “or did they consider it of little importance?”¹³⁵ Old Hickory, the war’s greatest victor, also received short shrift in the late nineteenth century history books. With no wars to wage nor enemies to conquer, Jackson stood symbolically disarmed and stripped of his military laurels. Schoolbooks, in particular, portrayed the former general as the archetype of the “self-made man” and the honest and energetic “president of the people,” but never the iconic military hero of Southern fanfare. Even in his home state, Jackson’s glory faded from prominence. A Nashville businessman lambasted the people of Tennessee “whose very name he immortalized,” for abandoning the memory of Jackson “to a few loving women” at the Hermitage, “who are doing what they can to rescue the tomb of Tennessee’s immortal hero.”¹³⁶

Although the marginalization of “General” Jackson’s victory at Horseshoe Bend seemed the work of malicious Northern academics, the event’s erasure had more to do with late nineteenth century interpretations of the West and the settling of the continent. In 1893, at the Chicago World’s Fair, Frederick Jackson Turner (son of Andrew Jackson Turner whose namesake stemmed from Old Hickory himself) encouraged Americans “to stand at Cumberland Gap and watch the procession of civilization marching single file – the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur trader and hunter, the cattle raiser, the pioneer family – and the frontier has passed us by.”¹³⁷ Turner’s “frontier thesis,” as it came to be known, was largely the product of national expansionists,

¹³⁵ Halbert & Ball, 17.

¹³⁶ For the Louisiana scholar see Marcus Wright, “The Horseshoe Battle,” March 12, 1905, *New Orleans Picayune*, New Orleans, LA; republished March 19, 1905, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; for schoolbooks see Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 210-211.

¹³⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Rinehart Editions, 1962), 6.

railroad firms, and city boosters who with artistic strokes had lured hundreds of thousands of Americans across the continent with images of vacant land and wagon trains extending into the sunset. Turner seized upon these ubiquitous icons of the American West to craft a narrative of “peaceful paths” and “human progress.” With an air of sophistication and academic training, Turner argued that in the settling of the frontier, Americans had filled a seemingly uninhabited territory where land was free and Indians mere aspects of the natural environment. Like the continent’s ancient stands of pine and buffalo herds, Turner’s Indian passively “disintegrated” before the inevitable march of American progress. Such a clean and calculated narrative of the country’s ultimately violent expansion quickly emerged as an incantation reiterated in thousands of American classrooms, paintings, songs, and narratives.¹³⁸ Joaquin Miller’s *Westward Ho* proclaimed the continent a “kingdom won without guilt” while schoolbooks, such as Emma Willard’s widely used *History of the United States*, portrayed the land beyond the thirteen colonies, including Alabama, as vacant wilderness with maps devoid of Indian nations.¹³⁹ In instances where frontier violence demanded acknowledgement, Americans simply reversed the roles of westward expansion transforming white settlers into victims and conquerors into martyrs of American progress. While the names of George Custer and Little Bighorn (as well as the Alamo) grew into mythic immortality, the memory of General Jackson and Horseshoe Bend vanished from the nation’s collective conscience. Not surprisingly, Turner himself, who incessantly referred to Jackson as the

¹³⁸ For an in depth analysis of Turner’s “frontier thesis” through the lens of modern scholarship see John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’ and Other Essays* (New York: Henry, Holt & Company, 1994).

¹³⁹ “Westward Ho,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Joaquin Miller* (San Francisco: Whitaker and Ray Co., 1897), 187-188; Emma Willard, *History of the United States, or Republic of America* (New York: White, Gallagher, & White, 1831).

personification of the frontier, barely made mention of his Indian wars and never once addressed his destruction of nearly a thousand Redsticks at Horseshoe Bend. In Turner's eyes, axes and plows had conquered the American continent, not armies, and certainly not generals with a thirst for blood and glory.¹⁴⁰

While Jackson's victory faded from the nation's history books, his battlefield at Horseshoe Bend fell into a forgotten state of obscurity. In the aftermath of the Civil War, private owners deconstructed the bulk of the Redstick barricade and converted the battleground into an uncommemorated cotton field and buck rabbit farm. Although the site lured handfuls of relic hunters and curious locals awestruck by the mythical tales of the "Rock of Sorrow" and the "Jackson Hanging Tree," the battleground itself remained officially unmarked and unprotected. In 1908, the *Montgomery Advertiser* observed, "The battle of Horse-shoe Bend is one of the most interesting ever fought in the South," and yet, "there is no marking whatsoever on the battlefield. The place is almost entirely forgotten by the public."¹⁴¹ The burial ground of Major Lemuel Montgomery, the lone soldier buried at Horseshoe Bend and reinterred in the small village of Dudleyville, had also grown obscure with the passing of time. The once proud and bustling Alabama trading post had reverted back into the wilderness and with it went the location of Major Montgomery's body. In 1886, during an unusually long spell of wet weather, Hall McIntosh, an Alabama farmer, discovered a grave-shaped depression and skeleton of an

¹⁴⁰ Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 60-62; Turner, 1-38, 168, 206, 252-254.

¹⁴¹ "Andy Jackson and the Buck Rabbit Farm," May 14, 1911, *Rockford Chronicle*, Rockford, AL; "To Celebrate Noted Battle, That of Horseshoe Bend," December 6, 1908, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

early nineteenth-century soldier, on his property near Horseshoe Bend. News of the strange cadaver, however, failed to rattle the interest, nor the commemorative spirit of the local population. Twenty years later, Montgomery's true burial place remained a mystery. Local residents debated the body's location in a series of letters featured in the *Montgomery Advertiser* during the spring of 1905. While some, having read Albert Pickett's *History of Alabama*, pointed erroneously to the city of Dadeville, others directed attention to the original burial ground at Horseshoe Bend. The resounding consensus, however, called for the lost town of Dudleyville, and in particular, the property formerly owned by Hall McIntosh. M.F. Gibson, a former resident of Dudleyville, wrote with confidence that although no "written evidence" describing Montgomery's burial place could be found, "there appears to be no doubt about the body resting in the former front yard of Mr. McIntosh. It remains for the patriotic citizens," he continued, "to come forward and erect a monument to the memory of a hero who has almost been forgotten."¹⁴²

The 100-year anniversary of the War of 1812 provided a once in a lifetime opportunity for Southerners to right the wrongs of commemorative neglect and pay due homage to the region's greatest hero, Andrew Jackson, along with the Tennessee volunteers, and their victorious battle at Horseshoe Bend. During the decade preceding the centennial a veritable flood of historical interest and commemorative proposals inundated the states of Tennessee and Alabama. In Nashville, the Ladies Hermitage Association (LHA) effectively influenced the Tennessee school system to commission an

¹⁴² "Wetherby's Surrender to Jackson at Horseshoe Bend," April 16, 1899, *Age Herald*, Birmingham, AL; "Letters to the Editor," March 26, April 1, April 8, 1905, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

annual Jackson Day, in honor of the state's favorite son.¹⁴³ Joining the chorus of commemorative interest was the Andrew Jackson Memorial Association (AJMA) who called for the construction of a "Jackson Boulevard," as well as an extravagant "Jackson Park" and memorial building. By 1914, the *Nashville Tennessean* could proudly proclaim that at last "Tennessee has roused herself to pay tribute to the soldier and statesmen whose memory has so long been neglected."¹⁴⁴ The frenzy of memorialization was also palpable in Alabama. In 1907, the state legislature established the Horseshoe Bend Battle Anniversary Commission to plan and orchestrate a grand centennial celebration for the forgotten conflict. To gather support for the upcoming event, the commission announced a public picnic, to be held on the Horseshoe Bend battlefield on the Fourth of July. "Enjoy a day's outing on the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the white man's three hundred year war of conquest," read the *Montgomery Advertiser*.¹⁴⁵ The public picnic, heralded as "the greatest gathering of people ever known in Tallapoosa Country" went off without a hitch, complete with military reenactments, brass band, and dozens of speeches filled with patriotic pomp.¹⁴⁶ Working alongside the anniversary commission was the Daughters of the American Revolution who from 1908 through the centennial seized the reins of Alabama commemoration with an unprecedented determinism. "Every chapter in the state," proclaimed Mrs. Walter Black of Montgomery, "is cordially urged to help erect memorials to 'Old Hickory.'"¹⁴⁷ From

¹⁴³ For the efforts of Ladies' Hermitage Association see Kanon, "Forging the 'Hero of New Orleans,'" 139.

¹⁴⁴ Kanon, "Forging the 'Hero of New Orleans,'" 136.

¹⁴⁵ "Picnic at Horse Shoe Bend," July 3, 1909, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁴⁶ "The Great Picnic: Horseshoe Bend Celebration a Success," July 8, 1909, *Tallapoosa Courier*, Dadeville, AL.

¹⁴⁷ "Daughters of the American Revolution of Alabama," April 2, 1916, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

Camp Blount, Tennessee to the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, the Daughters resolved to mark the “route over which the ‘conquering hero went’ with suitable stones” and bronze tablets telling “the story of a state’s gratitude to General Jackson.” The Daughters also lobbied for the creation of an interstate highway, dedicated to Old Hickory, stretching from Chicago to Mobile, and agreed to preserve the memory of Major Montgomery’s sacrifice by locating the remains of his body and dedicating a monument in his honor on the field at Horseshoe Bend. The spot of his death “should be marked,” noted the Daughters: “Ere it passes from the memory of man.”¹⁴⁸

In Alabama, all commemorative efforts revolved around the movement to create a national park at Horseshoe Bend. Inspired by the federal government’s recent acts of preservation, the Alabama state legislature expanded the duties of the Anniversary Commission to draft a memorial “praying congress to establish a military park on the Horseshoe Bend battlefield.” The same industrial and demographic transformations that had given rise to the nation’s commemorative boom had also inspired congress to preserve a handful of naturally and historically significant sites as public parks “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” Among those designated were four national military parks: the Civil War battlefields of Gettysburg, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chickamauga-Chattanooga, all of which preserved the scenes of Northern victory over the Confederate armies of the South. Unlike the hotly contested battlegrounds of the Civil War, however, the field at Horseshoe Bend represented a victory that all white Americans could commemorate with pride. S.S. Broadus, a longtime advocate of the

¹⁴⁸ For Jackson’s memorialization in Tennessee see Tom Kanon, “Forging the ‘Hero of New Orleans,’” 136-139; “Convict Labor on Roads is Success,” May 25, 1911, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; “Daughters of the American Revolution,” April 2, 1916, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

park at Horseshoe Bend, noted that “For forty years, without ever an expressed regret, Alabama, as one of the reunited States, has been helping to pay for elaborate federal cemeteries on battlefields that were Confederate defeats, and costly monuments to brave leaders from the North.” Horseshoe Bend, he continued, was a place that all could “join heartily in commemorating.” On 3 March 1909, on the floor of congress, the Commission from Alabama, led by Senator John Bankhead and Governor Braxton Bragg Comer, pleaded their case for the creation of a national military park at Horseshoe Bend. “Its establishment,” Bankhead proclaimed “would be a lasting memorial to the brave *Americans* who fought in those trying days when hostile Indian aggression threatened *our* frontier civilization.” It was made all the more urgent provided the North’s purported exclusion of Southern achievements from the annals of American history. “It is respectfully urged that due consideration be given,” the committee pleaded, to “those great events in the history of our country which have heretofore been neglected, and consequently in a sense forgotten.” The Battle of Horseshoe Bend “has never yet received the attention from the General Government which its importance has demanded... The bill [before you],” Bankhead continued, “seeks to meet what appears to be an apparent duty, long neglected in a way which ought to commend itself to immediate and favorable action on the part of your honorable body.”¹⁴⁹

For the firm and demanding Commission from Alabama, the timing seemed to be perfect. Throughout the country, white Americans had grown increasingly anxious over

¹⁴⁹ *Senate Documents, Volume 22* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909) [Congressional edition, Volume 5409 by United States Congress] December 7, 1908 - March 4, 1909 756. Memorial of Horseshoe Bend Battle Commission; Virginia Henderson Dillon, *The Story of The Russell Manufacturing Company 1902- 1952: 50 Years of Progress* (Alexander City, AL: The Outlook Publishing Company, 1952), 5.

the emasculating tendencies that came with the “closing of the frontier” and the growth of American urbanization. From the late nineteenth-century through the First World War, intellectuals such as Henry Cabot Lodge and G. Stanley Hall, inspired by the prevailing theories of human evolution, insisted that America’s state of decadence and demilitarization had produced a population of soft handed men, sapped of virility and vulnerable to foreign displays of superior manliness. “We boast that we live in a more civilized age, an age in which man’s inventive skill and progress has added enormously to the comforts of life,” observed Alabama’s Governor Emmett O’Neal, a proponent of the Horseshoe Bend National Park, “it is not, however, an age which breeds the stern and adventurous race of men, who penetrated the wilderness with muskets in their hands.”¹⁵⁰ In an effort to combat the emasculating forces seizing the country, the President himself, Theodore Roosevelt, the self-styled “Cowboy of the Dakotas,” called for a return to the rough and tumble ways of the American past. He pointed to the great heroes of the unbroken frontier, men such as Jackson and his Tennessee Volunteers “clad in shirts of buckskin and wearing coonskin caps,” as icons of American masculinity worthy of emulation. Moreover, Roosevelt, like Governor O’Neal, argued that Jackson, as well as his fellow pioneers, were the first of a new breed of men forged in the fires of Indian warfare. In his multi-volume *The Winning of the West*, Roosevelt described the frontier as a mechanism, or crucible, which united the various groups of white Europeans into a single, biologically superior, and battle tested “American Race.”¹⁵¹ Within the

¹⁵⁰ For Governor O’Neal’s discussion of masculinity see *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and Dedication of the Park Visitor Center, Friday, March 27, 1964*, HOBE Historical File.

¹⁵¹ For “buckskin and “coonskin caps” see Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, *Hero Tales from American History* (New York: The Century Company, 1902), 140; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the*

parameters of Roosevelt's theory, climatic showdowns such as Horseshoe Bend served as "ultimately righteous" proving grounds of "incalculable importance" where the human species advanced through Darwinistic principles of violence and survival. The President's promotion of rustic living, and his cosmic glorification of the frontier hero, evoked a deep response among white Americans that contributed to the widespread popularization of outdoor athletics, such as hunting, rowing, and mountaineering as well as the early twentieth-century campfire movement epitomized by the Sons of Daniel Boone and the American Boy Scouts. To help cultivate the "vigorous manliness" of the nation, Roosevelt called for the creation of several national parks and hunting preserves where a new age of Americans could experience the "free, self-reliant, and adventurous life" of the frontier past.¹⁵² The nation's new-fangled obsession with emulating the world of Old Hickory, along with Roosevelt's high praise for Jackson, who he studied and discussed extensively in his writings, made the idea of establishing a national park at Horseshoe Bend seemingly obvious. "The bill before congress is expected to pass," announced an Alabama newspaper, "and rightfully so. The preservation of this battlefield would not only be a lasting tribute to Jackson and his adventurous men, but to the greatness and goodness of our sturdy American race."¹⁵³

The bill, however, was destined to fail. The American Antiquities Act of 1906, the same legislation that allowed for the creation of national parks and monuments, also

West, seven volumes (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907); see also Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, Co. 1913).

¹⁵² Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 170-196; Phillip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 95-127.

¹⁵³ "Movement for National Park Endorsed," June 12, 1909, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

specified that those lands be “owned or controlled by the Government of the United States.”¹⁵⁴ Unlike the natural parks established in the sparsely populated wilderness of the American West, the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend belonged to a handful of private individuals, some of whom requested high sums for their historically significant land. It would certainly not be the first time in history that American citizens owned the rights to a battlefield worthy of national preservation. The same had occurred at historical Gettysburg, where on July 1-3 of 1863, Civil War soldiers spilt the blood of their enemies on over 6,000 acres of privately owned commercial and agricultural real estate. In the immediate aftermath of the battle, President Lincoln chartered a private organization, the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA), to commemorate those who had fallen and preserve the site’s historic appearance. Over the next thirty years, the GBMA tirelessly surveyed, mapped, and purchased the land on which the battle took place. Then, in 1895, the patriotic association donated their holdings, which included an astonishing 320 state monuments, to the federal government who by an act of congress established the Gettysburg National Military Park.¹⁵⁵ A somewhat similar fate awaited the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, where advocates initially lacked the monetary funds and philanthropic interest to secure the vast peninsula on which Jackson slaughtered his Redstick foes. Fortunately for the Alabama Commission, they found an “untiring” and supportive ally in Mrs. Nora E. Miller, a wealthy and respected resident of Dadeville whose family owned the nucleus of the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend. No stranger to the

¹⁵⁴ For the Antiquities Act see David Harmon, Francis P. McManamon, and Dwight Pitcaithley, *Antiquities Act: A Century of American Archaeology, Historic Preservation, and Nature Conservation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 1-12; Meringolo, 48.

¹⁵⁵ John Gatewood and Catherine Cameron, “Battlefield Pilgrims at Gettysburg National Military Park,” *Ethnology*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Summer 2004), 194-196; Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: American and Their Battlefields* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 89-118.

commemorative boom, Miller was a proud Daughter of the American Revolution and the state historian for the recently formed U.S. Society of the Daughters of 1812. She had also “demonstrated her splendid spirit of upbuilding” by personally raising the funds for an eleven mile highway connecting the city of Dadeville to the proposed park at Horseshoe Bend. In 1911, as a gesture of her undying appreciation for the history of Alabama, Miller agreed to sell approximately five acres of her property in the heart of the battlefield to the Commission for the sum of one dollar. The deed, however, specified that the land donated “be used for the purpose of erecting a monument to the memory of Andrew Jackson and his men,” and further noted that “should the United States Government refuse or fail to build [the] said monument, [the] land shall revert to Mrs. N.E. Miller, her heirs, and assigns at the expiration of four years from this date.”¹⁵⁶

Although congress had rejected the initial proposal for a national park at Horseshoe Bend, it was suggested that an alternative bill be introduced requesting funds for a congressional monument. “There will be no great opposition to its passage,” observed Congressman Robert Mann, of Illinois. “Every state has contributed great men, great deeds, and great events to the history of our country. Alabama may well be proud of her history,” and so too shall the people of the United States.¹⁵⁷ In 1914, the distinguished senator from Alabama, Oscar Underwood, requested on the floor of congress “a small appropriation to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of an event that opened up the entire southeastern portion of the country to white civilization.”

¹⁵⁶ Deed, Mrs. Nora E. Miller to Horseshoe Bend Battle Anniversary Commission, January 18, 1911, HOBE Historical Files; for a brief bio of Miller see Elizabeth D. Schafer, *Lake Martin: Alabama's Crown Jewel* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2003), 50-52.

¹⁵⁷ “Monument to be Unveiled in 1915,” July 7, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

Underwood spoke without opposition for a near half hour interrupted only by the occasional rain of patriotic applause. “This monument,” he proclaimed, “will not only memorialize a battle, but the memory of one of America’s greatest generals, greatest statesmen, and greatest men. (Applause) When we think of Jackson the soldier we think of the Battle of New Orleans, but that battle was only a half hour’s engagement. It was a great conflict, but Jackson was made in the Creek War. It was the long marches, the great deprivations, the courage in holding the small band of patriotic soldiers together in the wilderness without supplies, without provisions, and without relief, to blaze the way for the great civilization of this land of ours. The Battle of Horseshoe Bend was the culmination of that campaign,” Underwood boomed, “and when the guns ceased and the smoke of the powder cleared away, on that battlefield, Jackson, the great soldier, was born. (Applause)”¹⁵⁸ A reporter for the *Washington Post* noted that “Mr. Underwood’s forceful speech made certain the passage of the bill” and “removed practically all opposition to the measure.” The bill, which guaranteed \$5,000 for the construction of a monument at Horseshoe Bend, carried the floor of congress overwhelmingly. For the first time in American history, the reporter noted, “a monument will be erected on Alabama soil by the United States government, and its splendid history will be given recognition.”¹⁵⁹

While Senator Oscar Underwood secured funding for the memorial in Washington, the proud people of Alabama commemorated the Horseshoe Bend

¹⁵⁸ For Senator Underwood’s speech see “Where was Capt. Hobson,” March 6, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁵⁹ *Washington Post* correspondence published in “Where was Capt. Hobson,” March 6, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; see also Paul Ghioto, “The Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XL (Spring and Summer, 1978), 78.

centennial with a score of celebratory events. For the anniversary itself, the city of Dadeville unveiled a bronze tablet at the county courthouse dedicated to the “greatest Indian battle [fought] on American soil.” Over a thousand attended the ceremony, enacting their patriotism through speeches, benedictions, and celebratory songs such as “Our Country” and “Sing Me a Song of the South.”¹⁶⁰ Three months later, Dadeville again played host to an outpouring of patriotic sentiment. For the Fourth of July weekend, thousands of travelers from “every part of the South” flooded the city to celebrate the official Horseshoe Bend Centennial at the nearby battlefield. All of Dadeville “is a glow tonight,” wrote a man from Montgomery, “and all the offices, stores, and residences are bedecked in flags and bunting. The place is imbued with true holiday spirit.”¹⁶¹ At dawn on the Fourth of July, “a steady procession of automobiles, wagons, and every other description of conveyance” followed a trail of American flags through the Alabama wilderness to the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend. The *Montgomery Advertiser* reported: “under ideal weather conditions and with more than 8,000 people in attendance, the one hundredth anniversary of the famous battle was gloriously celebrated.” Patriotic festivities began with a round of speeches typical of white, turn-of-the-century America. “We are here today,” proclaimed Margaret Wilson of the Ladies’ Hermitage Association, “because 100 years ago General Jackson and his Tennessee troops were here, ridding this beautiful southland of savages so that a higher type of manhood might inhabit it.”¹⁶² After speeches by Governor Emmett O’Neal and

¹⁶⁰ “Horseshoe Bend’s Fight Celebrated,” March 28, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁶¹ Paul Stevenson “Horse Shoe Bend’s 100th Anniversary Draws Big Crowd to Battlefield,” July 5, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; “100th Anniversary,” July 10, 1914, *Alexander City Outlook*, Alexander City, AL.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Congressman Thomas Heflin, among others, the Daughters of the War of 1812 dedicated a granite monument marking “the terminus of the route traced through the wilderness by Jackson’s army.”¹⁶³ With the marker unveiled, attendees took to the battlefield in curious exploration. One celebrant noted that “Mr. Smith took us on a tour around the bend to see the old trenches and barricades.”¹⁶⁴ Another recalled that “you could see where the Indians built the log breastworks” and “we found relics such as arrowheads and broken pottery.”¹⁶⁵ Other festivities included an old fashioned barbeque and lively “sham battle” fought between two contingents of the Alabama State Militia. A wide-eyed spectator stated that “as the soldiers came over the hill shooting blanks, farmers started running, and horses and mules tore loose and scattered all over the place.” Despite the smoke and chaos of the reenactment, newspapers heralded the Horseshoe Bend Centennial a spectacular success. “No celebration in Alabama has ever surpassed the one held here in brilliancy of oratory or in real enthusiasm,” noted the *Montgomery Advertiser*. It was “glorious,” “patriotic,” and in the words of one young participant who camped in a wagon on the battlefield, “a trip I’ll never forget.”¹⁶⁶

The events, editorials, and commemorative monuments of the Horseshoe Bend Centennial were also educational. In their effort to immortalize the history of the Redstick War, the citizens of Alabama and Tennessee constructed a patriotic narrative that exaggerated the heroic and noble characteristics of national expansion. Ultimately,

¹⁶³ “Battle of Horseshoe Bend was Celebrated,” July 5, 1914, *Columbus Ledger*, Columbus, GA.

¹⁶⁴ Nora Blankenship Gunn to R. Wayne Hay, May 30, 1978, HOBE Historical Files.

¹⁶⁵ Ghioto, 80-81; N.E. McCain to R. Wayne Hay, March 20, 1979, HOBE Historical Files.

¹⁶⁶ “Horse Shoe Bend’s 100th Anniversary Draws Big Crowd to Battlefield,” July 5, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; For a brief overview of the centennial see Paul Ghioto, “The Centennial Celebration of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XL (Spring and Summer, 1978), 7; Nora Blankenship Gunn to R. Wayne Hay, May 30, 1978, HOBE Historical Files.

the tale told focused on the selfless efforts of Old Hickory, the avenger of white victimization who brought peace and civilization by the sword. From the hilltop podium at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama Governor Emmitt O'Neal reiterated that "Jackson's invincible columns were fighting for their homes and the graves of their dead."¹⁶⁷ He paraphrased from Old Hickory's dispatches. "It is indeed lamentable that the path to peace should lead over the bodies of the slain." The *Columbus Daily Inquirer* boasted that with the Battle of Horseshoe Bend a "continent changed owners, and peace and security were restored to that mighty tide of immigration rolling west."¹⁶⁸ Such an event proved transformative for not only the nation, but for Alabama as well who equated the Battle of Horseshoe Bend with the state's foundational genesis. Mrs. Walter Black, a Daughter of the American Revolution, wrote that Jackson's victory "made it possible for the pioneer to take possession of the unoccupied lands" where "cities arose and the state began its growth of prosperity and happiness."¹⁶⁹ Naturally, the fruits of civilization ripened in the peaceful path blazed by Jackson and his hardy pioneer army. On the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama Congressman "Cotton Tom" Heflin proclaimed that "Here once stood a vast and unbroken forest made hideous by the warwhoop, the scalping knife, and the tomahawk of the red man. It is now the scene of the white man's industry and enterprise." Channeling his inner Turner, Heflin decreed that "where the terror striking warwhoop was once heard we hear the music of the woodman's axe and the song of the saw mill. Where he brandished his death-dealing tomahawk the white

¹⁶⁷ Governor O'Neal and Congressman Heflin's speeches are on file at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park; Ghioto, 82-83; "Governor O'Neal Sings Praise of Old Heroes," July 5, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁶⁸ T. Simmons, "Battle of Horseshoe-Bend," May 17, 1914, *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, Columbus, GA.

¹⁶⁹ "Daughters of the American Revolution," April 2, 1916, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

man wields his scythe in the fields of waving grain. And where his wigwams stood and horrid war councils met we now have school houses and churches that adorn and bless the country.”¹⁷⁰ Whether it be in speeches or editorials, written in pen or engraved in stone, the narrative constructed around the 1914 centennial invariably spared the often ugly details of the region’s transformation from “savage” to “civilized” society. The bronze tablet placed at the Tallapoosa County Courthouse in Alabama championed the bloodless and oversimplified rhetoric of the age in a brief passage: The Battle of Horseshoe Bend “broke the power of the fierce Muskogee, brought peace to the frontier, and made possible the speedy opening up of Alabama to civilization.”¹⁷¹

Most every speech, editorial, and monument dedicated to Horseshoe Bend referred to the theory of human “progress.” Popularized by none other than Theodore Roosevelt, the political and ultimately racist rhetoric of “progress” veiled the violent and complicated realities of western expansion as a means of galvanizing support for military imperialism abroad. Roosevelt and his supporters argued that natural law dictated the rise and fall of races, and that the American Indians’ destruction before the march of white, western expansion was simply one “form of a process still at work.”¹⁷² Centennialists often spoke of Indians as a “vanishing race” and an “inferior” people inevitably doomed to extinction.¹⁷³ The Director of the Alabama Department of Archives

¹⁷⁰ For Congressman Heflin’s speech see Paul Stevenson “Horse Shoe Bend’s 100th Anniversary Draws Big Crowd to Battlefield,” July 5, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁷¹ Observations of the tablet at the Tallapoosa County Courthouse, Dadeville, AL, made by the author in person, Summer, 2013.

¹⁷² For “progress” see Richard Slotkin, “Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt’s Myth of the Frontier,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (Winter 1981), 608-637.

¹⁷³ The theme of the “vanishing Indian” appeared with regularity throughout the period of analysis, see specifically “Fertile Cotton Field was once the Creeks’ Capitol: Where in the Days of Yore Indians Met in

and History, Dr. Thomas Owen, referred to the Creeks as the “last obstacle to the progress and development of Alabama.”¹⁷⁴ Such rhetoric justified not only the conquest of the American continent, but the perpetuation of a race and class based hierarchical order in the South. It also implied a moral and religious superiority. During the Horseshoe Bend Centennial, Senator Thomas Bulger declared that the American “flag is not a red banner of bloodshed and conquest, but is rather the emblem of civilization and Christianity, peace and good will to all men everywhere.”¹⁷⁵ Likewise, the *Alexander City Outlook* announced their support for the Horseshoe Bend centennial, as well as “anything else that perpetuates the glory and achievement of making this a land of peace and a land of people who stand for Christianity and progress.”¹⁷⁶

To be fair, the centennialists were working with an old and biased script, handed down from generations of national expansionist sold on the theory of Manifest Destiny. While conducting research for his multivolume the *Life of Andrew Jackson*, historian James Parton found only “mountains of lies and trash” known as “campaign literature.”¹⁷⁷ Roosevelt, too, found his studies confounded by the undisciplined research methods of early American historians.¹⁷⁸ Even the academically trained scholars of the late nineteenth-century, such as Turner and the advocates of “progressivism,” produced historical theories that often stretched the truth and misguided the American public. T.

Solemn Conclave, the White Man’s Plow Now Holds Full Sway,” April 21, 1905, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁷⁴ “Notables Invited by Dr. T.M. Owen,” June 14, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁷⁵ For Senator Bulger’s speech see “Hon. Thos. L. Bulger Accepts Markers Presented by the State President of the Daughters of 1812,” July 14, 1914, *Alexander City Outlook*, Alexander City, AL.

¹⁷⁶ “For the Horseshoe Park,” June 2, 1911, *Alexander City Outlook*, Alexander City, AL.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Jill Lepore, “Bound for Glory: Writing Campaign Lives,” October 20, 2008, *The New Yorker*, New York, NY.

¹⁷⁸ Roosevelt gripes over the poor practices of early American historians on the frontier in *The Winning of the West, Vol. I, The Spread of English Speaking Peoples*, 14.

Simmons of Columbus, Georgia, for instance, noted that Jackson's bloody victory "paved the way for peaceful paths that white men trod, and helped swell the tide of prosperity as it swept toward the golden west."¹⁷⁹ Before a crowd of nearly ten thousand, Alabama's Governor O'Neal referred to Horseshoe Bend as a "contest between civilization and savagery."¹⁸⁰ Centennialists, such as Timmons and O'Neal, seldom deviated from the popular scripts of the day and infrequently paid mind to the various multi-cultural perspectives of the battle. They invariably excluded the military contributions of Jackson's Cherokee and Creek allies, and likewise, failed to consider seriously the motives of those who fell before the onslaught of American expansion. Centennialists also continued to exaggerate the claims of a Redstick-British alliance. Mary Dorris of the Ladies' Hermitage Association, described the Redsticks as "scalp brokers" and "fiendish" Indians "incited by the British to deeds of atrocity."¹⁸¹ There was no discussion of the cultural turmoil within the Creek Confederacy, nor a casting of light on the war's ethnic complexities. Alabamians, in particular, avoided the fresh and unbiased research of their state's own Henry Halbert and Timothy Ball, who in the 1890s "proposed to do even-handed justice to both the Indians and the whites" by "stating the facts fairly and truly without coloring."¹⁸² Ultimately, the centennialists followed in the footsteps of imperial historians whose virtuous, hero-centered wars of "white victimization" and "progress" sidestepped the often ugly realities of frontier violence. The historical facts and dates,

¹⁷⁹ T. Simmons, "Battle of Horseshoe-Bend," May 17, 1914, *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, Columbus, GA.

¹⁸⁰ "Governor O'Neal Sings Praise of Old Heroes," July 5, 1914, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; HOBE Historical Files, see Paul Ghioto Papers.

¹⁸¹ Kanon, "Forging the 'Hero of New Orleans,'" 135.

¹⁸² Halbert and Ball, 287, the authors also suggest that battle may in fact have been a "massacre," noting that "This battle may well be placed along side of that destruction that came upon the Pequods in New England. Of that, Martyn says, 'it was not a battle--it was a massacre,'" 275.

which centennialists frequently mistook, mattered little, so long as the message vindicated the history of Horseshoe Bend and the glorious legacy American expansion.

CHAPTER 6

THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD, 1950-1964

The nation's entrance into the First World War in April of 1917 cut short the patriotic festivities of the Horseshoe Bend Centennial and the commemorative efforts it served to unleash. Alabama's hope for a "great educational revival" beginning with the 1914 Fourth of July battlefield celebration, and climaxing with state's 100-year anniversary in 1919, lost precedence as the nation grew increasingly embroiled in war. While the country cast its gaze overseas, the federal government hastily erected the congressionally approved Horseshoe Bend monument at the battlefield in the late summer of 1918. Timing proved detrimental. The colossal granite headstone, so coveted by Alabamians, arrived with the wrong date carved across its face. No editorials, nor patriotic celebration, marked its raising which went entirely unrecognized publicly.¹⁸³ The state's centennial also passed without proper recognition. The people of Alabama, noted the *Montgomery Advertiser* "had not fully recovered from the emotions and events of the world war, and a general celebration was hardly practical."¹⁸⁴ While the rest of the nation slipped into an uncommemorated stupor, the untiring Daughters of the American Revolution maintained the course, erecting small but seemingly vital monuments to Old Hickory at Fort Jackson, Mobile, and Pensacola. "General Jackson has been honored and memorialized in many ways," noted an Alabama Daughter in the midst of Great War,

¹⁸³ "Monument to Commemorate Horseshoe Bend to be Shipped Next Month," July 7, 1918, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁸⁴ "Alabama Centennial Celebration," February 1, 1919, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; "The One Great Date in Alabama History," December 15, 1921, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

“but providence left it for [us] to add a few more leaves to his ‘laurel wreath of fame.’”¹⁸⁵

By the early 1920s, however, the age of nostalgia had passed away before a roaring wave of mass consumerism, industrial growth, and cultural transformation. Eclipsed by the glory of the First World War and forgotten by a country fixated on the future, Jackson’s victory, once again, receded into the unlit annals of the American past. Likewise, his once glorious battlefield at Horseshoe Bend faded into an unkempt state of decay. By the 1940s, vandalism had become so pervasive that the Alabama Legislature erected an iron cage around Jackson’s shrine to ward off the legion of ruffians and late night romantics who defaced and carried off portions of the granite monument with relentless disregard.¹⁸⁶ Not until the 1950s, after a slumber of some 40 odd years, would the legacy of Old Hickory and his larger-than-life army of squirrel hunting backwoodsmen bask in the sunshine of popular culture and national significance for a third, and perhaps final, time.

While the country turned its attention, and respect, elsewhere, one man remained devoutly committed to the dream of preserving the memory of Horseshoe Bend as a nationally recognized military park. Thomas Wesley Martin, a small statured man with the demeanor of a giant, known popularly as “Mr. Alabama,” was the state’s premier businessman and leading philanthropist. Described by admirers as a “genius, meticulously concerned with the public good,” Martin served actively in his home state

¹⁸⁵ Walter Black, “Daughters of the American Revolution of Alabama,” June 4, 1917, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

¹⁸⁶ “Historic Spots Preserved,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Spring 1945), 83.

as an attorney, economic recruiter, state booster, and utilities executive.¹⁸⁷ As president and chairman of the Alabama Power Company, the dynamic Martin directed the construction of over ten hydroelectric dams and power generating facilities along the Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Black Warrior rivers. Honored as a “pioneer in the electric industry” by *Forbes Magazine* and the Edison Electrical Institute, “Mr. Alabama” was also a gentlemanly scholar with a passion for the frontier past. His roots in the cotton state were as deep and dated as the Redstick War itself. Cut from pioneer cloth, Martin’s great grandfather served as a private under Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and settled in the immediate aftermath of the war in the rugged mountains of Northern Alabama. Thus, Martin, born in the aptly named country of Jackson, entered a world shrouded in the rich and rustic history of Old Hickory and the Southwestern frontier.¹⁸⁸ “Andrew Jackson belongs almost as much to Alabama as he does to Tennessee,” Martin noted. He “cast the longest and strongest shadow of any public man ever to serve her interest” and “kept the love and admiration of her people even unto this day.”¹⁸⁹ As a young man, Martin grew enamored with the legendary tales of the Redstick War and kept throughout his life a cherished copy of A.S. Colyar’s *Life and Times of Andrew Jackson*, a well-worn and heavily noted volume passed down from his late father in 1907.¹⁹⁰ He was also among the vast and patriotic crowd who gathered at the Horseshoe Bend

¹⁸⁷ This description of Thomas Martin belongs Congressman Albert Rains, see *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend*, HOBE Historical Files, 43, hereafter cited as *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*.

¹⁸⁸ For a general history of Thomas Martin see William Murray Jr., *Thomas W. Martin: A Biography* (Birmingham, AL: Southern Research Institute, 1978); the author has also gleaned personal facts on Martin from his speech at Horseshoe Bend, see *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial* 25, 31, 61.

¹⁸⁹ *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 40.

¹⁹⁰ A.S. Colyar, *Life and Times of Andrew Jackson: Soldier, Statesman, President* (Nashville, TN: Marshall and Bruce Co., 1904); *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 61.

battlefield on the Fourth of July in 1914. A decade later, while surveying the Tallapoosa River in anticipation of hydroelectric development, Martin, revisited the historic battlefield, slated for inundation, alongside his chief engineer, Oscar Thurlow. “We concluded that the battleground should remain in its natural state,” he recalled, “in the hope that at some time the national significance of the battle would be recognized, and its military and its civic importance declared by an act of congress.”¹⁹¹ That night, in 1923, Martin dusted off his father’s former copy of Colyar’s *Life and Times of Andrew Jackson*. He left a yellow marker with a few notes, as well as the date, on page 159, “Chapter XII, The Battle of the Horseshoe.”¹⁹²

While Martin diligently strove to immortalize the legacy of the Redstick War through the preservation of the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, he willingly submerged an incalculable score of other memories and sacred places under a sea of hydroelectric development. Across the country, Americans, predominately from urban environments, sought to harness the natural energy of the nation’s grandest river systems through the construction of dams and reservoirs as a means of electrifying the country. In 1923, the same year that Martin self-consciously proposed to preserve the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend, the city of San Francisco raised a controversial dam inundating the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park, described by the American naturalist John Muir as “one of Nature’s rarest and most precious mountain temples.”¹⁹³ The same was true

¹⁹¹ Quote taken from ephemeral program, *The Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend*, n.p. HOBE Historical Files, see text adjacent to Albert Rains photograph.

¹⁹² Martin’s quotes are taken from his recollections in Thomas Martin, “The Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park,” published by the Newcomen Society in North America, 1960; *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 61.

¹⁹³ For a general overview of the Hetch Hetchy Dam see Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America’s Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University

along the tempestuous Colorado and rolling Columbia Rivers, where human modifications threatened to not only obliterate a handful of scenic wonderlands, but the region's ancient flora and fauna as well.¹⁹⁴ Although proponents hailed the benefits of hydropower as "the greatest good for the greatest number," there was clearly much to lose in the transformative waves of electric development.¹⁹⁵ Despite his passion for philanthropy, and his love of frontier history, Martin, the widely endeared Mr. Alabama, championed the development and inundation of the state's historic Coosa and Tallapoosa River valleys. From the 1910s through the 1950s, Martin and his associates at Alabama Power relocated thousands of long-standing and often reluctant citizens whose homes stood in the path of hydroelectric progress. Once removed, they wiped clean the physical landscape, devouring forests, tearing up infrastructure, and setting ablaze wooden structures such as schools, historic cabins, and pioneer churches. They paved over nineteenth-century cemeteries with concrete and sealed shut the graves of the dead. When loved ones could be identified and contacted, Alabama Power respectfully removed the deceased to high ground or distant locales. They were "good in this" commented one relative, "carefully marking the removal of remains with names, numbers, and metal stakes for careful exactness."¹⁹⁶ When the time arrived, and the floodgates opened, the powerful waters of change washed away the physical past with

Press, 2006); John Muir, *The Writings of John Muir, Sierra Edition, Vol. V: The Mountains of California* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1917), 285.

¹⁹⁴ For the development of Colorado River see Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin, 1987); for the Columbia River see Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); for Alabama, see Elizabeth D. Schafer, *Lake Martin: Alabama's Crown Jewel* (Charleston SC: Arcadia, 2003), 54-76.

¹⁹⁵ Gifford Pinchot, the leaded proponent of the Hetch Hetchy dam adopted the quote "the greatest good for the greatest number" from Utilitarian philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

¹⁹⁶ Schafer, 54-58; quote see Schafer, 57.

reckless abandon. At Lay Lake, the remains of Old Hickory's winter encampment, Fort Williams, surrendered to the elements slipping below the waterline in 1928. So, too, did the remains of numerous Redstick villages and burial grounds situated along the ancient banks of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. Ironically, as the waters rose, they carried to the surface the relics of a bygone era. "Beads, arrow-heads, spear points, pipes and tomahawks have been washed up" by the rising waters, noted one editorial, reminders of a distant and seemingly romantic past, vestiges of an age that came and went before the era of hydroelectric power and the march of white progress.¹⁹⁷

The same political and economic influence that gave Martin the authority to transform the landscape, also gave him the power to protect it. In 1955, following his retirement from the Alabama Power Company, Martin established the Horseshoe Bend Battle Park Association (HBPA), a non-profit corporation dedicated to making Jackson's field of glory a congressionally authorized, permanent, full-fledged, national military park. The association drew officers and trustees from five Southern States, including the indomitable textile tycoon from Alabama, Thomas D. Russell, of Russell Athletics, who proudly served as the organization's president. A trustee of three institutions of higher learning, and the president of the Alexander City Board of Education, Russell, like Martin, had expressed an interest in preserving the historic battleground at Horseshoe Bend for decades. Together, the two men, arguably the most powerful and affluent in central Alabama, locked up over 500 acres of real estate on or encompassing Jackson's

¹⁹⁷ August 8, 1928, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL; in a personal correspondence between Greg Wilson of Alabama, and the author, Wilson noted: "*Arrowhead collecting – in my time growing up most of it seemed to have been focused around the shores of Lake Martin when the water was low during the winter months. Arrowheads and Indian relics were found in all parts of the county not just around Horseshoe Bend.*"

field of glory.¹⁹⁸ To ensure the park's approval, Martin, Russell, and the HBPA employed the assistance of numerous state judges and politicians, including Congressman Albert Rains, who personally urged the Ways and Means Committee of the Alabama State Legislature to appropriate a sum of \$150,000 for the "acquisition of additional land in connection with the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park."¹⁹⁹ Rains, who provided the political leadership that the HBPA so desperately needed, argued effectively that a nationally recognized battlefield in Alabama would attract thousands of visitors to the state annually. "I sincerely hope that the [legislature] will provide the necessary funds for the project," Rains noted in the *Tuscaloosa News*, it will not only "focus national attention on our role in this country's early history," but will also "afford proper recognition to the momentous military engagement" which is long overdue.²⁰⁰ Either way, the legislature's decision mattered little if Rain's fellow HBPA trustees, of which he was a proud member, failed to convince the federal government of the "historical significance" of Horseshoe Bend. No longer could places deemed sacred to one man's heart, or the heart of a community, slip into the park system without first demonstrating their national and historical value, a prerequisite that had gone seemingly unregulated prior the Park Service's founding in 1916 (after Alabama's first bid at federal preservation). During their earliest hearings with the Department of the Interior, it became abundantly clear that Martin, and his HBPA trustees, would have to convince the members of congress, and president himself, that the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was "more than a mere Indian fight." In the words of Congressman Rains, they would have to

¹⁹⁸ For the creation of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Park Association see Martin, "The Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park," 27.

¹⁹⁹ "Rep. Albert Rains to Urge Horseshoe Bend Park Funds," July 21, 1957, *Tuscaloosa News*, Dadeville, AL.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

demonstrate that Jackson's victory, "was in reality, a battle of great historical significance in the building of our great country."²⁰¹

The timing, once again, seemed perfect for the creation of a national park at Horseshoe Bend. In the wake of Second World War, with gas rationing reduced and travel restrictions lifted, middle-class Americans took to the great outdoors, traversing the country in family-sized automobiles with an unprecedented resolve. For many during the 1950s, the circumnavigation of the states in search of national parks such as Yellowstone, Gettysburg, and the Great Smoky Mountains, among others, became a rite of passage. Rising from a wartime low of 6.8 million visitors annually, nationwide attendance quadrupled by 1950, and exploded to an astounding 80 million by the end of the decade. In 1955, it was said that one out of every three Americans visited at least one national park per year.²⁰² "The moment you enter the gates of Yellowstone," noted a frustrated Charles Stevenson of the *Readers Digest*, "you were in a big city traffic jam. Pause to look at sites you've come thousands of miles to see, and cars pile up bumper to bumper a quarter of a mile behind you."²⁰³ In 1955, Conrad Wirth, Director of the National Park Service, notified congress that the national parks were "in danger of being loved to death." To facilitate the dramatic rise in popular visitation, the federal government approved the ambitious \$787 million, ten-year program dubbed Mission 66, "to solve the

²⁰¹ The near entirety of this paragraph is taken from descriptions of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Park Association provided in the program and subsequently published *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend*, (on file at the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park), 18-19, 32; Martin, "The Story of Horseshoe Bend," Newcomen Society; for an overview of "historical significance" see Donald Hardesty, *Assessing Site Significance: A Guide for Archaeologists and Historians* (New York: Alta Mira, 2009).

²⁰² For statistics see Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), see "Chapter 9: Mission 66 and the Road to the Future;" Ken Burns's documentary *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* also covers statistics in Episode VI: The Morning of Creation.

²⁰³ Charles Stevenson, "The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks," January, 1955, *The Reader's Digest*.

difficult problem of protecting the scenic and historic areas of the National Park System from over-use and, at the same time, of providing optimum opportunity for public enjoyment of the parks.”²⁰⁴ The comprehensive scheme, described fairly as a Park Service “renaissance,” allotted half of its federal funding to reconstruction, and half to new parks and visitor’s centers complete with full facilities, expanded campgrounds, and educational museums featuring state-of-the-art displays and presentations.²⁰⁵ The trustees of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Park Association, especially those from the state of Alabama, hoped to capitalize on the growth of the National Park Service and cash in on the spirit of tourism sweeping the nation. Not surprisingly, the HBPA formed and organized its first trips to Washington in the immediate aftermath of the president’s approval of Mission 66.²⁰⁶

Then, as if the ghosts of Old Hickory and his Tennessee Army had planned it themselves, a flaming arrow flew across the television screens of America, setting ablaze an animated Fort Mims, and rekindling the spirit of the Redstick War. In 1954, Disney’s wildly popular *Davy Crockett: Indian Fighter*, the first of three episodes featuring Jackson’s former scout, debuted before an audience of 40 million Americans.²⁰⁷ As if the past had seemingly surged forward into the households of 1950s suburbia, Disney’s Crockett fought Indians, bears, and morally inferior frontiersmen as he rose through the ranks of American society. Choosing not to tinker with a good thing, Disney lifted his

²⁰⁴ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 32.

²⁰⁵ For Mission 66 see Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

²⁰⁶ Dates regarding the HBPA were taken from the *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend*, (on file at the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park), 30.

²⁰⁷ *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*, dir. Norman Foster (Walt Disney Productions, 1955).

larger than life frontier hero straight from the political pages of Crockett's 1834 Whig biography. Unlike the tame and academically calculated view of the Redstick War put forth by the 1914 centennialists, Disney's version harkened back to the hero-worshipping age of violent national expansion and Indian removal. The success of the film, which had youngsters across the country donning coonskin caps and peacemakers, drew thousands of the same families scouring the country for national parks, to Disney's theme park in Anaheim, California which opened its gates to the public in 1955. As the first curious tourists made their way through the wondrous park they encountered a mythical space known as Frontierland, "a sweeping panoptic vision of American expansion."²⁰⁸ In 1958, the *Saturday Evening Post* reported that within the virtual cyclorama that was Disney's Frontierland, children "can fire air-operated, bulletless rifles at plastic Indians."²⁰⁹ Surrounded by water at the heart of the park stood the island stockade of Fort Wilderness, "the outpost of civilization," described by Disney himself as the headquarters of "Major General Andrew Jackson in the Indian campaign of 1813." From behind the log palisades, noted one park goer, young ones "can sight in with guns on the forest in which Indians lurk. The guns don't fire bullets – they're hydraulically operated – but the recoil is so realistic that you'd never guess they aren't the genuine article."²¹⁰ When tourists tired themselves shooting mythical savages, they relaxed their bones on a riverboat cruise that ushered park goers around the shores of Jackson's fantasy fortress. "Watch out for Indians and wild animals along the riverbanks," the ship captain cautioned. "Some

²⁰⁸ Richard Francaviglia, "Walt Disney's Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West, *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Summer 1999), 155-182.

²⁰⁹ Robert Cahn, "The Intrepid Kids of Disneyland," June 18, 1958, *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, PA, 22-23.

²¹⁰ Ira Wolfert, "Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom," April 1960, *Reader's Digest*, 147.

Indians are hostile, and across the river is proof... a settler's cabin afire. The pioneer lies in his yard," he observed, "the victim of an Indian arrow." Disney's theme park brought to life not only the violent experience of frontier warfare, but the development of the West and the romance of national expansion. In Frontierland, canoes, war stockades, and covered wagons gradually gave way to railroads, mining towns, and saloon girls as the virtual experience of the frontier marched forth through the nineteenth-century. Channeling his inner Turner, Disney, a political conservative, made blatant his glorification of the West as a land of rugged individualism and economic freedom, where man's entrepreneurial spirit gave shape to the American character while carrying the world towards a brighter and more civilized future. "In Frontierland we meet the America of the past," Disney noted in a True West article, "out of whose strength and inspiration came the good things of life we enjoy today."²¹¹

Disney's rekindling of the Redstick War and his adoration for frontier individualism was largely a reflection of the American political system at mid-century. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the "free" nations of the globe stood challenged by the "red menace" of communism. To win over the hearts and minds of the American people, and to construct an impenetrable barrier against the influx of socialist ideologies, conservative political and cultural leaders, such as Disney himself, reached back to the galvanizing rhetoric of the nineteenth-century frontier. They found within the writings of the Jacksonian Era a script easily adapted to the country's ideological standoff with the international Communist threat. "Reds" replaced Redskins while the Iron

²¹¹ Walt Disney, "Frontierland," True West, Vol. 5 (May-June 1958); Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit*, 214-215; for more see Patricia Nelson Limerick, "The Adventures of the Frontier in *The Twentieth Century*," in *The Frontier in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 70.

Curtain replaced the frontier as the edge of freedom. Likewise, the self-made pioneer, epitomized by Disney's Crockett, embodied the inviolable rights of all mankind, and the social opportunism unleashed by American democracy. Behind the Iron Curtain, the evils of Communism stripped the pioneer of his unfettered individuality and aspirations. It was believed that if America, the world's "last best hope" was to win the ideological war against the Red menace – as it had won the struggle for the West – it would need to unify itself in very much the same manner that Roosevelt's pioneers had forged themselves in the crucible Indian war.²¹² In 1960, President John F. Kennedy adapted Roosevelt's American creed of "progress" with a new motto that harkened back to age of Jackson and the Redstick War. "From the lands that stretch three thousand miles behind me," declared the president from a podium on the Pacific Coast in 1960, "the pioneers of old gave up their safety, they comfort, and sometimes their lives to build a new world here in the West. They were determined to make that new world strong and free, to overcome its hazards and its hardships, to conquer the enemies that threatened from within and without." Kennedy was laying a foundation for the "New Frontier," an ideological realm of unknown opportunities and perils. He called for the American people to push into the uncharted areas of science and space, to solve the problems of peace and war, and to conquer the pockets of ignorance, poverty, and prejudice. "I am asking you," the president appealed, "to be new pioneers on that frontier." Like Roosevelt at the turn-of-the-century, and Jackson on the eve of the Redstick War, President Kennedy evoked the popular image of the frontier as a means of galvanizing

²¹² Limerick, *Ibid.*, 80-83; Francaviglia, *Ibid.*, 167-168; Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 1-5.

support for a political agenda; an agenda aimed at winning a war over the perceived enemies of the American state.²¹³

While the country reimagined themselves as frontiersmen, Martin and the fellow trustees of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Park Association searched for the “historical significance” of Jackson’s infamous frontier victory. The pitch made by Alabamians at the turn-of-the-century – that the Battle of Horseshoe Bend deserved recognition for forging the career of Andrew Jackson and unleashing the wave of white civilization that inundated the American Southeast – was simply no longer a tenable line of reasoning. As Martin, Thomas Russell, and Congressman Albert Rains continuously reiterated, “we had to prove to the Congressional committees in both the House and the Senate, with certainty, that the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was something much more than an Indian fight, and was in reality of great ‘national significance’ in our nation’s history.”²¹⁴ To do so, Martin, the gentlemanly scholar, looked to the history of Horseshoe Bend he knew best, his father’s former copy of the *Life and Times of Andrew Jackson*, by A.S. Colyar. A native of Tennessee, Colyar had practiced law in Nashville, just as Jackson had, and wrote extensively on Old Hickory and the Redstick War following his retirement in the 1890s. Unlike many of his fellow Tennessee historians, however, Colyar situated the Redstick War, and in particular the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, squarely within the context of the War of 1812. Colyar’s line of reasoning was simple: the favorable terms of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, “would not have been made if General Jackson had not destroyed England’s greatest ally, the Creek Nation.” The former

²¹³ “*Let the Word Go Forth*”: *Speeches, Statements, and Writings of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1988), 100-102.

²¹⁴ Martin, “Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park,” 7.

Tennessee lawyer turned historian argued that between August and December of 1814, as the United States and England negotiated a treaty in the Belgian city of Ghent, news arrived of Jackson's victory, and with it brought "a change in British attitude and a modification to the terms of peace."²¹⁵ Colyar observed that initially the English had refused all proposals lacking vast territorial retrocessions in the American West. Their commissioners demanded not only a return of the Northwestern Territory, which England intended to set aside as an Indian barrier state, but the entire Louisiana Purchase which commissioners insisted had never rightfully belonged to Napoleonic France, let alone the United States. As negotiations stalled in Ghent, the British launched two military offensives, one in the American Northeast by way of the Hudson Valley, the other, on the Atlantic coast directed at the ports of Maryland, both of which the United States repelled at the battles of Plattsburg and Baltimore, respectively. For Colyar, these defeats left the British with a small window of opportunity to win the war, which shifted to the South where English officials devised an offensive directed at the American ports of Mobile and New Orleans. Such an operation, however, required the military aid and intelligence of the "powerful Creek Nation," which the Tennessee historian described as the largest and "most warlike tribe on the continent." From here, Colyar hammered home his argument. Jackson's destruction of the Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend shattered the designs of a southern offensive, and, as Colyar observed, marked a political watershed as the terms of peace quickly turned in favor of the United States. On 24 December 1814 the delegations signed the Treaty of Ghent, an agreement that not only brought the war to a close, but deprived the English of their earlier demands for territory

²¹⁵ Colyar, *Life and Times of Andrew Jackson*, 159-168, 270; for a general overview of Martin's interpretation of Colyar see *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 61-65.

in the American West. Thus, in Colyar's eyes, it was the decisive victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend that prevented the "dismemberment of the United States," and "saved the entire nation from the deepest humiliation."²¹⁶

Here was the compelling argument that transformed Jackson's "Indian fight" into what Congressman Rains referred to as a "battle of great historical significance in the building of our country." Even so, Martin, whose quest for a national park at Horseshoe Bend knew no bounds, admitted that he "felt some inclination to authenticate the work of Colyar."²¹⁷ To do so, he called upon a Miss Vera Ledger of London, a "devoted researcher with wide experience in the field of history," to conduct an extensive study of the peace negotiations at Ghent. After an in depth combing of the vast archives at the British Public Record Office, the War Office, the Foreign Office, and the British Museum of London, Miss Ledger presented a comprehensive report to Martin including an additional 1,200 sheets of historical manuscript. Of particular note were two documents, the first, a dispatch sent from Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, a member of the five man American peace commission in Ghent, to Secretary of State James Monroe on 24 October 1814. Clay informed his superior in Washington that British forces were most likely to "be directed towards the southern parts of the U. States" and that "if we could hear

²¹⁶ *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 61-65; for dismemberment see Martin, "Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park," 15; for humiliation see Colyar, 270; although Colyar argued cogently that connection between the war with Britain in 1812 and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was worthy of further analysis, most modern scholars have studied the conflict not as an entirely separate event inspired by the international conflict, but by domestic cultural and spiritual phenomenon, see Joel Martin *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity 1745-1815*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

²¹⁷ Martin, "Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park," 20.

shortly of their being beaten in that quarter I think we should make peace.”²¹⁸ The second document confirmed that intelligence of such a victory had been received by both the American and English delegations just prior to the renegotiation of terms. Among the British papers, Ledger discovered a congressional address, delivered by President James Madison in late September of 1814, regarding Jackson’s destruction of the Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. “On our southern border victory has continued to follow the American standard,” the president proclaimed. “The bold and skillful operations of major general Jackson have subdued the principle tribes of hostile savages, and,” he continued, “by establishing a peace with them, has best guarded against the mischief of their cooperation with the British enterprises which may be planned against that quarter of the country.”²¹⁹ Madison’s address made plain the connection not only between the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and the War of 1812, but between Jackson’s victory in the American South and the renegotiation of terms at Ghent. With evidence in hand, an elated Martin proclaimed “the British Archives tell the story in unmistakable terms.” The discovery provides “the sands of time a whole new set of footprints.”²²⁰

Still, not everyone thought of the Jackson’s “Indian fight” as “historically significant.” At Princeton, Professor Walter Phelps Hall made public that he had “never heard of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend,” and his colleague, Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, defended him, noting that “you would not expect anyone born in the state

²¹⁸ For Miss Ledger’s research notes see *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend*, 62-66, HOBE Historical Files.

²¹⁹ For Madison’s speech see *The Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States at the Third Session of the Thirteenth Congress in the Thirty-Ninth Year of the Independence of the United States* (Washington: A. & G. Way Printers, 1814), 9-10; HOBE Historical Files; also “Political: Washington, Sept. 20, This Day the President of the United States transmitted to Congress the following MESSAGE,” September 29, 1814, *Northern Post*, Salem, NY.

²²⁰ Martin, “Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park,” 7.

of New York to know anything about the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.”²²¹ The Princeton professor’s statements prompted a vigorous rebuttal by Southern historians, the first of which appeared in the *Augusta Chronicle* in June of 1955. John Temple Graves of Georgia, a graduate of Princeton, fired back noting that “we, who have lived our lives presuming” that Jackson’s victory was a “major event” are “amazed that Alabama’s Congressman Rains in his will to have the battleground made a national park should encounter opposition on grounds that Horseshoe Bend wasn’t important. Can this be more of the Great Taboo?”²²² Graves was referring to that long smoldering suspicion, drawn out by the Alabama centennialists in 1914, of the North’s conscious exclusion of Southern achievements from the annals of American history. Just a few months prior to Graves’ editorial, South Carolina’s Herbert Ravenel Sass blasted the North in the *Saturday Evening Post* for “depriving” the Southern people of their American heritage. “In the consciousness of the great mass of Americans,” he wrote, “the South has no place in the grand epic of American achievement. The “exclusion of the South from all that is positive and constructive in our country’s story” was, in the eyes of Sass, a “soul deadening delusion.”²²³ In light of such sectional tensions, Martin and the trustees of the HBPA sought allies in the Northern academic community. They found in Samuel Eliot Morrison of Harvard a formidable friend who offered a public statement on Martin and the HBPS’s behalf. “You may quote me that it [the Battle of Horseshoe Bend] was important, both for breaking the power of the Creek Nation and for bringing General

²²¹ John Tempe Graves, “The Great Taboo is Sighted Again,” June 5, 1955, *The Augusta Chronicle-Herald*, Augusta, GA.

²²² Ibid.; Graves, “This Afternoon,” July 26, 1955, *Rome News-Tribune*, Rome, GA; Graves, “What Will Happen to Court Revolt,” August 21, 1955, *The Augusta Chronicle-Herald*, Augusta, GA.

²²³ Herbert Ravenel Sass, “They Don’t Tell the Truth About the South!,” January 9, 1954, *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, PA.

Jackson into prominence.” By the end of 1955, having weathered the storm in the press, and compiled a mountain of evidence from both American and British archives, Martin felt confident that the time was right to forward their findings to the Department of the Interior and schedule a hearing for the 84th Congress of the United States. The *Tuscaloosa News* reported that “in the efforts to get what they regard as proper national recognition,” the HBPA “have prepared considerable literature and historical documentation as to the importance of this battle in American history.” Although “the measure has been considered before and turned down,” the proponents of the park movement have “new hopes.”²²⁴ That summer, Martin and the trustees of the HBPA forwarded their research to the members of congress, gathered up their manuscripts, and headed for Washington with the highest of hopes.

In June and July of 1956, before the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the House, and later the Senate, Congressman Rains of Alabama introduced a bill to declare and designate the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend a federally recognized, national park. Martin, having just crossed the threshold of his mid-seventies, took the floor with a youthful resolve, defending the “historical significance” of Jackson’s victory, which he deemed a transformative event, vital to not only the “winning of the West,” but the War of 1812. The Battle of Horseshoe Bend, he proclaimed, created “a chain reaction of national and international forces that cleared the Indians out of the Southwest, drove the Spaniards out of Alabama and Florida, and terminated permanently the Spanish and

²²⁴ “Horseshoe Bend May Become New National Military Park,” May 6, 1956, *Tuscaloosa News*, Dadeville, AL.

British menace to the Gulf Coast and to the lower Mississippi Valley.”²²⁵ Despite the jeers of northern historians, both the House and Senate passed the bill unanimously. On 3 August 1956 President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a strong supporter of the National Park Service, approved the act HR 11766 establishing Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, the very first national park in the state in Alabama.²²⁶ In a subsequent meeting in Washington, Martin formally presented the deeds to 2040 acres, to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Fred Seaton. “At this time,” the secretary announced, “I want to thank Mr. Martin, chairman of the Horseshoe Bend Battle Park Association, for his generosity in presenting the deed of this valuable property. In particular,” Seaton noted, “I want to emphasize the patriotic vision of a business leader like Mr. Martin whose Alabama Power Company long ago purchased the site of Jackson’s great victory for the purpose of building a hydro-electric dam. But Mr. Martin,” he continued, “recognized the historical value of the site, and gave up the proposed dam in order to preserve the battlefield in its natural state for future generations.”²²⁷ Per the energizing spirit of the Mission 66 Plan, the newest edition to the National Park Service entered a phase of planning and construction almost immediately. Secretary Seaton set the deadline for 1964; the sesquicentennial of Jackson’s victory over the Redsticks. “After 143 years,” observed the enthusiastic *Gadsden Times*, “the ‘forgotten war,’ of 1813-14, has received

²²⁵ Martin, “Story of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park,” 9; *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend*, 43-45, HOBE Historical Files

²²⁶ President Eisenhower to Thomas Martin, August 3, 1956, HOBE Historical Files; for the act itself see “H.R. 11766, July 3, 1956,” *United States Congressional Serial Set* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1956), 471; Kappler, *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties*, Vol. VII, 1241-1242.

²²⁷ *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 44.

proper recognition. Alabama will soon have a park of historical importance to add to its treasure of scenic beauty and wealth.”²²⁸

On 27 March 1814, over 4,000 sun-drenched Americans meandered their way through the Alabama wilderness to attend the dedication of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. On a large stage situated at the rear of the newly created visitor’s center, the trustees of the HBPA addressed an endless sea of park goers decked in fedoras and coonskin caps. Unlike the fiery, racially honed rhetoric of the 1914 centennial, however, the park dedication of 1964 featured a lackluster array of back slapping speeches and “thank you’s.” Also marking a transition from the days gone by was a respectable presence of American Indians, and in particular a proud representative of the Oklahoma Muscogee. “I think no occasion at Horseshoe Bend would be complete unless we had the brave ‘Red Sticks’ represented,” announced Judge C.J. Coley, the day’s presiding speaker and a leading light within the HBPA. “They hallowed this soil with their blood. They are a grand and brave people and we are pleased to have them.”²²⁹ Coley welcomed to the stage Creek Chief Calvin McGhee, who before the vast crowd of “pale faces” thanked the HBPA for their efforts. “We have heard in the wailing winds” of the work done here, “preserving the frontier history of our people... the assessment has been fair and we come today to pay tribute.”²³⁰ Also in attendance was Cherokee representative Chief Richard Crow who presented Martin with a tomahawk peace pipe and certificate adopting him as an honorary villager “in the ancient homeland of the

²²⁸ “Horseshoe Bend Park a Reality,” August 12, 1959, *The Florence Times*, Muscle Shoals, AL; “Horseshoe Bend Battle Park, August 22, 1957, *Gadsden Times*, Gadsden, AL.

²²⁹ *Ceremonies Attending the Sesquicentennial*, 14, HOBE Historical Files.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

Cherokee.”²³¹ Despite the environment of good cheer, a few speeches echoed the rhetoric of the 1914 centennial. In his opening invocation, the Reverend Denson Franklin of Birmingham declared that “on this spot, blood was shed to save men from the darkness of savagery, and their minds were opened to the light of democracy. May we realize,” he continued, “that every new path of progress has been made possible by human blood, sweat, and tears.”²³² Also rekindling the violent spirit of the occasion was Martin himself who proclaimed that at Horseshoe Bend, “Jackson settled finally the course of the United States,” deciding for all eternity “that this country would be American and not Indian.”²³³

With the speeches long-winded and attendees flushed from the sun, the crowd made its way indoors to explore the state-of-the-art Horseshoe Bend visitor’s center and museum. Park goers stood in wide-eyed amazement before a massive “light board” reproduction of the battle that illuminated not only Jackson’s troop movements, but the burning of the Redstick village as well. “Just pick up an earphone, press a button, and you can hear a complete commentary describing the entire Battle of Horseshoe Bend,” noted one visitor.²³⁴ As the lights flashed before the eyes of the crowd, a firm and commanding voice brought Jackson’s victory over the Redsticks to life. The tale told extended far beyond the military maneuvers and casualties of the battle itself. It was a nationalist message drenched in the rhetoric of anti-Communism, a narrative that reified the roles of the war by distinguishing heroes from villains and savage from civilized. Not

²³¹ Ibid., 14.

²³² Ibid., 1.

²³³ Ibid., 40; for newspaper coverage of the park dedication see “Horseshoe Bend Comes of Age,” March 27, 1964, *The Tuscaloosa News*, Dadeville, AL; “Alabama Military Park: Horseshoe Bend Dedicated,” *Alabama Today and Tomorrow: Monthly Bulletin of the Alabama State Chamber of Commerce in Montgomery*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (May 1964); “Horseshoe Bend State’s Only Military Park,” June 25, 1965, *Times Daily*, Florence, AL.

²³⁴ “Horseshoe Bend State’s Only Military Park,” June 25, 1965, *Times Daily*, Florence, AL.

surprisingly, the National Park Service cast the larger than life Jackson as an immortal hero basking in the limelight of national glory. “This is the story that Horseshoe Bend will tell – bravery, the risking of much to gain lands, and to build a nation,” reported Georgia’s *Marietta Journal*. “From this victory, Jackson vaulted into national fame.”²³⁵ The light-board battlefield narrator summed up the legacy of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in a brief but powerful passage stripped from the pages of Charles Lester’s 1866 biography of Sam Houston: “The sun was going down, and it set on the ruin of the Creek Nation, where, but a few hours before a thousand brave warriors scowled on death. There was nothing to be seen but volumes of dense smoke and the burning ruins of their fortifications... but Jackson and the Horse Shoe would live in history.”²³⁶

The National Military Park touted by Thomas Martin and the HBPA came as advertised. In the first year alone, just under 50,000 Americans marched through the halls of the Horseshoe Bend’s visitor’s center and museum. The *Tuscaloosa News* noted that “the historic value of the new park, as well as its picturesque setting can prove to be one of the state’s most popular vacation and tourist attractions.”²³⁷ Just 15 miles from Lake Martin, dubbed “the World’s largest artificial lake” by *Scientific American*, the area surrounding Jackson’s former field of glory became a veritable beehive of summertime activity.²³⁸ Frontier themed restaurants and motor lodges sprang from the earth where the mighty Creek Nation once fought for their ancient homelands. The most conspicuous of

²³⁵ “Horseshoe Bend Battlefield Presented to the Park Service,” May 19, 1960, *Marietta Journal*, Marietta, GA.

²³⁶ The light-board battlefield remains a feature of the Horseshoe Bend museum today, narration recorded by the author, March 29, 2014; quote can be found in Charles E. Lester, *The Life of Sam Houston: The Only Authentic Memoir of him ever Published* (Philadelphia: Davis, Porter & Coates, 1866), 35.

²³⁷ “Horseshoe Bend Comes of Age,” March 27, 1964, *Tuscaloosa News*, Dadeville, AL.

²³⁸ Schafer, 78.

the commercial attractions was a colossal log fortress situated just down the road from Horseshoe Bend. The pop-culture reconstruction, which looked almost identical to Disneyland's Fort Wilderness, stole foot traffic from the national military park with its gargantuan American flag and "Battle of Horseshoe Bend" road sign. The replica fort, which undoubtedly lured thousands of disoriented travelers, housed not only a large cache of Jackson memorabilia, but a three million piece diorama touted as "the world's largest battle in miniature."²³⁹ By the 1960s, it seemed that Old Hickory and his fellow combatants had seen and heard it all. Hailed as a triumph during the War of 1812, and a high-water mark by the proponents of manifest destiny, Jackson's victory also experienced its fair share of American derision and disregard. Whereas some criticized the battle as a "cold blooded massacre," others glorified it as a touchstone of Americans masculinity, and excused it as a natural event in the unfolding of human evolution. Hailed and forgotten, silenced and celebrated, exploited and yet largely unknown. Now, in 1960s, the Battle of Horseshoe Bend was a tourist attraction whose most salient combatant, Old Hickory, lived on, once again, as a mythical hero slaying Indians on the American frontier. He was a Disney character, a light on map, and now, a miniature man on a massive table painted to look like a battlefield.

²³⁹ Tim Hollis, *See Alabama First: The Story of Alabama Tourism* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 117-118.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE HORSESHOE BEND BICENTENNIAL

The historical meaning and interpretation of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend has transformed dramatically in the wake of the park's 1965 establishment. Due in large part to the rise in pan-Indian activism in the 1970s, the narrative of glorious western expansion grew increasingly muffled under the rallying cry of Red Power. At historical sites such as Alcatraz Island, Wounded Knee, and Custer National Battlefield (since renamed Little Bighorn National Battlefield in 1991), activist organizations such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Indians of All Tribes (IAT) demanded the acknowledgement of past political and military injustices committed by the United States government and army. In 1976, during the Little Bighorn centennial ceremonies, held by the National Park Service, Indian activist Russell Means announced before a crowd of invariably white and patriotic Americans that "Custer invaded us over gold," and furthermore, in this "supposedly enlightened age of civilization our people are still being hunted, herded, and killed under circumstances that challenge all laws."²⁴⁰ The era of activism marked a profound turning point in the relations between the United States and indigenous people. No longer would Indians submissively stand alongside national leaders at places such as Little Bighorn and Horseshoe Bend, acting as wards of the state and mere accessories to the celebrations of American expansion. From the 1970s through the end of the century, the country's Indian nations grew increasingly organized, establishing tribal governments and universities, as well as cultural institutions, all of

²⁴⁰ "After 100 years Wounds of Bighorn Still Festering," June 25, 1976, *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles, CA; see also Edward T. Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 143-144.

which sought to undermine the dominate narrative of American expansion through the empowerment of native people and the teaching of history from the Indian perspective.

Among those to delve into their historical past for strength and guidance were Jackson's former enemies, the Creeks (known today as the Muscogee Nation), who in 2004 established their own tribal college and cultural center complete with archives and museum exhibits. Not surprisingly, the Battle of Horseshoe Bend has continued to loom large in their educational programs and publications as a pivotal and disastrous event in the history of the Muscogee Nation. It also remains an extremely heated and highly emotional story of intra-tribal conflict in which the United States government acted as a land-hungry and genocidal interloper. "There have been many historical accounts of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend," notes contemporary Muscogee historian Corky Allen "but none have addressed the fact that it was not a single battle at all, but a stopping point in a civil war within the Creek Confederacy, intervened in by American politicians through an armed invasion that had no regard for the loyalties, or neutrality, of anyone in their path."²⁴¹ Likewise, Robert Thrower, Cultural Director for the Poarch Creek Tribe, describes the conflict as a "house divided" and the American offensive as an exercise in wrongful revenge and brutality. "News about the Fort Mims Massacre was the perfect propaganda tool for recruiting Americans to fight against the Redsticks," Thrower observes. It was also a justifiable excuse to "destroy the Creek Confederacy" and "expand the boundaries of the United States."²⁴² A majority of the Muscogee people

²⁴¹ Quotes from Corky Allen made personally, summer 2013, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. Allen's views of the Redstick War can be found online at www.Tohopeka.org

²⁴² Robert Thrower, "Casualties and Consequences of the Creek War: A Modern Creek Perspective," in *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War & the War of 1812*, 10-26.

have also maintained a vicious animosity towards their ancestors' former enemy, Andrew Jackson. Current Interim Director of the Muscogee Nation Museum, Justin Giles, refers to the former President of the United States candidly as an "Indian killer and genocidal maniac akin to Adolf Hitler." To this very day, Giles observes, "most Muscogees won't even carry a twenty dollar bill in their pocket. I certainly don't do it. My mom used to say 'go change out that twenty. That's Hitler on there. That's the devil.'" ²⁴³

If the Muscogee-Creek people, past and present, have agreed on the nature of the Redstick War, as well as the character of Andrew Jackson, they have divided over the legacy of the Redstick movement itself. In the immediate aftermath of the war, and during the tumultuous period of removal, many Creek people from both the upper and lower towns came to view the Redsticks themselves as the cause of their suffering. In the 1820s, George Stiggins, a Creek half-blood born in 1788, referred to the Redstick movement as a "deluded multitude," and its spiritual leaders as "wicked" prophets whose "fanatical pretensions caused the downfall of the (Creek) tribes."²⁴⁴ Others, such as William Weatherford, or Red Eagle, who fought alongside the Redstick prophets at Fort Mims, sought to distance themselves from the polarizing figures of the movement for political and economic reasons. By the end of the twentieth-century, however, the once universally maligned Redsticks resurfaced as cultural crusaders worthy of remembrance and veneration. As the Muscogee-Creek people strove to reinvigorate their cultural ways through historical education, they gave new emphasis and meaning to an old and often

²⁴³ Justin Giles correspondence with the author, April 23, 2014.

²⁴⁴ George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions, and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian Tribe of Indians, by one of the Tribe*, on file at the Wisconsin Historical Society, reprinted by the University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 1989, see 96, 122, 136.

painful memory. “The Redsticks were the true patriots,” noted Corky Allen in 2011, they were the ones who defended “their lands, and homes, and families against the invaders.”²⁴⁵ Testament to the Redsticks’ resurgence is the recently organized Redstick Society, a community of Muscogee combat veterans from all branches of the American armed forces including soldiers from both world wars, Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. Among those listed as members on the Redstick Society’s webpage is Chief Menawa, Jackson’s one time adversary at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.²⁴⁶

The Creek people were not the only Americans reinterpreting the Redstick War and the narrative of national expansion at the end of the twentieth-century. During the cultural wars of the 1990s, a cohort of academically trained scholars, reared in the iconoclastic era of the 1960s and self-styled as “New Western Historians,” emerged to take aim at the patriotic legacy of American expansion. Led by scholars Patricia Limerick and Donald Worster, the disciples of New Western History derided old school scholars for perpetuating an essentially ethnocentric, nationalist, and ultimately racist history of the American frontier. What “we” are trying to convey, proclaimed New Western Historian Richard White in 1990, “is that there are people left out, that the continent wasn’t empty, and that bad things happened that have to be mentioned.”²⁴⁷ Applying the principles of the emerging field to the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Joel Martin’s *Sacred Revolt*, published in 1991, sought to rescue the Redstick legacy through

²⁴⁵ Quotes from Corky Allen made personally during the summer 2013 at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. Allen’s views of the Redstick War can be found online at www.Tohopeka.org

²⁴⁶ For the Redstick Society see Kathryn Braund, “Redsticks,” in *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War & the War of 1812*, 98-99.

²⁴⁷ White quoted in Richard Bernstein, “Unsettling the Old West,” March 18, 1990, *The New York Times*, New York, NY.

an exploration of Creek spirituality and cultural relativism.²⁴⁸ Later in the decade, Claudio Saunt's *A New Order of Things. Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians* effectively detailed the ways in which American encroachment and acculturation efforts brought about the Redstick uprising, the massacre at Fort Mims, and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.²⁴⁹ Although historians such as Henry Nash Smith (*Virgin Land*, 1950) and Roy Harvey Pearce (*Savages of America*, 1953) had begun deconstructing the national narrative of American expansion as early as the 1950s, the historical revisionists of the 1990s brought to the fore a radical new attitude that swept through the popular press, arousing the ire of traditional western scholars and patriotic Americans alike. Not surprisingly, the guardians of the "Old West" lambasted the leading lights of the emerging movement as "flag burners" while criticizing their research as overly "cynical and slanted revisionist crap." Richard Bernstein of the *New York Times* observed from afar that "among historians, the Old Frontier is turning nastier with each revision."²⁵⁰

Despite its controversy, the rise of New Western History inspired a handful of historical institutions dedicated to the honorable achievements of American expansion to reevaluate their interpretative programs and confront controversial issues that once seemed untouchable. In 1994, for instance, thousands of open-minded Americans across

²⁴⁸ Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muscogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

²⁴⁹ Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things. Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁵⁰ Richard Bernstein, "Among Historians the Old Frontier is Turning Nastier With Each Revision," December 17, 1989, *The New York Times*, New York, NY; for more on New Western History in the press see Bradley J. Birzer, "Reflections on the New 'Western History' of the 1990s," August 4, 2012, *The Imaginative Conservative*; Miriam Horn, "How the West was Really Won," May 21, 1990, *U.S. News and World Report*; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953).

the country attended the traveling Newberry Library exhibit *The Frontier in American Culture*, created by New Western Historians Richard White and Patricia Limerick. The subversive exhibit, which opened to mixed reviews in Chicago, challenged the dominate storyline of national expansion by deconstructing the wildly popular master narratives of Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill.²⁵¹ Other popular reinterpretations appeared at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana (*Crossing Cultural Fences: The Intersecting Material World of American Indians and Euro-Americans*), as well as the Autry National Center in Los Angeles (*Home Lands: How Women Made the West*).²⁵² The NPS, too, revamped a number of historical parks dedicated to the once glorious legacy of national expansion. After decades of Indian activism, the NPS finally erected a commemorative memorial at Little Bighorn National Battlefield honoring the victorious Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors who in 1876 annihilated George Armstrong Custer's overconfident Seventh Cavalry. The NPS also revamped interpretations at Washita National Battlefield in Oklahoma and Bent's Old Fort National Historical Site in Southwestern Colorado.²⁵³ Most recently, and perhaps most tellingly, the NPS helped locate and subsequently establish the Sand Creek Massacre Historical Site in Colorado. The controversial decision to not only make public, but to interpret the U.S. Army's destruction of roughly 150 non-hostile Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, roughly two-thirds of whom were women and children, as a "massacre," in contrast to a "battle"

²⁵¹ Richard White and Patricia Limerick, *The Frontier in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); see Walter Nugent's review in *Journal of American History*, 82 (December 1995), 1148.

²⁵² Marsha Weisger, "No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 42 (Autumn 2011), 289-296.

²⁵³ For an overview of Little Bighorn see Jerome Greene, *Stricken Field: The Little Bighorn since 1876* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); also Michael Elliot, *Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and George Armstrong Custer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

(which it certainly was not), is testament to the NPS's increasing efforts to provide an unbiased narrative of the nation's ultimately violent history of western expansion.²⁵⁴

As the walls of western mythology came crumbling down across the country, the NPS followed suit at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, undertaking an interpretive overhaul in the mid-1990s.²⁵⁵ At the entryway to the park's visitor's center, NPS exhibit designers positioned a somber and yet powerfully succinct statement acknowledging the battle's colossal Indian death toll. "On this site, on March 27, 1814, a deadly and decisive battle was waged. Never before or since in the history of our country," the panel reads, "have so many Native Americans lost their lives in a single battle." Other new features included an expanded installation with artifacts focusing on Creek culture prior to the Redstick War, as well as a section devoted to the acculturation efforts undertaken by the United States government. The 1995 overhaul also made conscious efforts to temper the hero-centered rhetoric and jingoism of the Cold War era, but nonetheless, chose to retain a number of outdated displays and interpretive themes from the original installment. The NPS, for instance, chose to keep the battle's most pivotal and legendary hero, Andrew Jackson, in a seemingly irreproachable role. They also chose to preserve the antiquated light-board battlefield, as well as a gargantuan rendering of the massacre at Fort Mims, complete with oversized Redstick warriors drawn menacingly with teeth bared and tomahawks drenched in blood. Textually speaking, the interpretive overhaul

²⁵⁴ Jerome Greene and Douglas Scott, *Finding Sand Creek: History, Archeology, and the 1864 Massacre Site* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004); Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

²⁵⁵ The interpretive overhaul is detailed in Mary-Ellen Cummings and Caroline Gebhard, "Treaties and Memorials: Interpreting Horseshoe Bend National Military Park" *The Public Historian*, Vol. 18, No. 4 Representing Native American History (Autumn 1996), 19-36; Jason Black, "Memories of the Alabama Creek War, 1813-1814: U.S. Governmental and Native Identities at the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park," *The American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring 2009), 200-229.

likewise retained the mythical narrative of white victimization. The story of Horseshoe Bend, as told by the NPS, for instance, begins not with the encroachment of American settlers, nor with the divisive period of comprehensive acculturation, but with the Redsticks' violent atrocities committed at Fort Mims, an event that park historians conspicuously tied to the shadowy British-Redstick alliance during the War of 1812. The massacre, with all its graphic detail and evocative gore, serves as a clean and calculated starting point from which the Redstick War and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend unfolds.²⁵⁶

The efforts to further revise the history of Horseshoe Bend came to a head at the Horseshoe Bend Bicentennial Celebration in late March of 2014. During the event's academic symposium, hosted by the NPS at Auburn University, Edwin Marshall, Public Relations Manager for the Muscogee-Creek Nation, challenged the long uncontested and nationally recognized history of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. "We have our terms backwards," Marshall announced to the crowd. "We call it the 'massacre' at Fort Mims and the 'battle' of Horseshoe Bend. It should be the 'massacre' at Horseshoe Bend and the 'battle' of Fort Mims."²⁵⁷ In addition to Marshall's historical revising, the symposium featured an array of quirky comments and jeers directed at the once celebrated "man of the people," Andrew Jackson. An illuminated image of the former general and president elicited only "boos" and laughter from the seemingly anti-Jacksonian crowd. Other lectures cut from the cloth of New Western History focused on the forgotten roles of Redstick women, the erasure of Cherokee participation at Horseshoe Bend, and the legacy of Indian Removal, described by Poarch-Creek

²⁵⁶ Observations made personally by the author, March 27-29, 2014.

²⁵⁷ Speech unpublished, recorded in person by the author March 21, 2014, Auburn, Alabama.

representative Robert Thrower assertively as the “American holocaust.” Thrower, an instructor of history at the Southeastern Anthropological Institute in Montgomery, Alabama, noted that in a recent survey of 520 students, ranging in age from eighteen to fifty, only five knew of the Redstick War. “I found that that appalling” Thrower recalled. “How can we learn from history if we have forgotten it, embellished it, or simply ignored it? That is why these symposiums are so important.”²⁵⁸

On the actual anniversary of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, over 3,000 park goers from various regions of the country poured through the gates of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park to pay homage to those who perished courageously exactly 200 years ago. Among those in attendance were approximately 350 Muscogee-Creek Indians, descendants of the Redsticks, who just days before had retraced the infamous Trail of Tears from their adopted homelands in Oklahoma back to the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend. The strong turnout was due in large part to the networking efforts of Park Ranger Heather Tassin as well as the desire among Muscogee cultural leaders to reinvigorate an interest in the nation’s history outside of Oklahoma. Out of the eleven speakers to take the podium that day, five hailed from the Muscogee Nation, a conspicuous increase from the small party of Indians present at the park’s 1965 dedication. After a round of native hymns and speeches, the Principle Chief of the National Council, George Philip Tiger, presented a traditional blanket to park Superintendent, Doyle Sapp. “I would like to ask that you display this blanket here at Horseshoe Bend so that the people know that the great Muscogee-Creek Nation is still alive and well, and that we support the efforts of

²⁵⁸ These quotes and observation were made personally by the author at the Horseshoe Bend Bicentennial Symposium, March 21-22, 2014 at Auburn University.

this place, and that we look forward to continued collaborations with the National Park Service.”²⁵⁹ Two hundred years after a seemingly catastrophic blow at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, and a devastating forfeiture of land at the Treaty of Fort Jackson, the Redsticks had returned to re-stake a claim in their ancient homelands. “This place, more than any other place in the state of Alabama,” noted the day’s keynote speaker, Dr. Kathryn Braund of Auburn University, “remains an essentially Creek place. The National Park Service is the caretaker. But this place belongs to the Creek people.” Braund invoked the symbolism of the Redstick barricade that once divided the armies of American expansion from the traditionalist of the Creek Confederacy. “Today, as we gather here, let no barrier exist between us. Let no barrier stand between those of different backgrounds and cultures who seek to know and understand the past. Let no barrier stand between those who look to a future marked by compassion for every person and respect for the rights of all.”²⁶⁰

With the speeches exhausted and the crowds scattered throughout the battlefield in curious wonderment, the Muscogee delegation migrated to the toe of the bend where two hundred years prior the Redsticks had sung and danced in desperate preparation for war with the American allied forces led by Andrew Jackson. There, in the exact location where the cabins of the refugee camp once stood burning in the fires of combat, the Muscogee delegation rekindled the spirit of the Redstick movement through a variety of

²⁵⁹ Speech unpublished, recorded in person by the author March 27, 2014, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Daviston, Alabama.

²⁶⁰ These quotes and observation were made personally by the author at the Horseshoe Bend Bicentennial Celebration, March 27, 2014 at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Daviston, Alabama. For Kathryn Braund’s speech see “Hundreds attend commemoration,” March 27, 2014, *Alexander City Outlook*, Alexander City, AL.

sacred ceremonies and stomp dances. For their final ritual, they invited the rangers of the NPS present to join in a traditional stomp dance of friendship. The mingling of iconic flat-brimmed hats and turtle shell leggings represented not only the reunion of races once violently at odds, but a symbolic restoration of harmony and earthly balance. As the circle of dancing bodies spiraled outward in a counterclockwise motion, the voices of both white and Indian participants sang together as one. The dance was a pivotal moment in the unfolding of the day's events as it embodied not only the themes of peace and reconciliation put forth by the day's speakers, but the energetic optimism shared by both park rangers and Muscogee representative for future engagements and historical collaborations at Horseshoe Bend.²⁶¹

As the stomp dance drew to a close and the daylight receded to night, park rangers, along with a score of local volunteers, illuminated 870 candles for each life lost at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Divided by a dozen lanterns situated along posts marking the location of the former defensive barricade, 800 luminaries, representing the Redstick losses, stood in striking contrast to the 70 candles lit on behalf of Jackson's American, Cherokee, and Creek allied casualties. Although the luminary stood as a staggering reminder of the horrors of war, it was also a powerful moment of realization for those familiar with the long history of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. After two hundred years of distorted tales, political rhetoric, and scientific explanations justifying the destruction of the Creek Confederacy, the NPS, acting under the auspices of the federal government, seemed willing to right the wrongs of commemorative ethnocentrism

²⁶¹ Observation of the stomp dance made personally by the author at the Horseshoe Bend Bicentennial Celebration, March 27, 2014 at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Daviston, Alabama.

and accept the history of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend for what it truly was. Through a number of speeches, historical demonstrations, and textual handouts the NPS communicated to the American public a narrative of aggressive national expansion stripped of its myths and jingoistic propaganda. The honesty and sound scholarship of the bicentennial also marked a turning point as it sought to reconcile the often-tenuous relations between the United States and Muscogee-Creek Nation. “I don’t know if wounds can ever be healed,” observed Chief Tiger. “Man is not perfect and we’re not always going to agree. But that’s ok, because I believe today is a good start. In the future, two hundred years from now, our following generations will look upon the history made here today and say that things were getting better.”²⁶²

Chief Tiger was referring not only to the mending of fences between the United States and the Muscogee people, but to the tensions dividing the former tribes of the American Southeast. Conspicuously absent from the day’s festivities were the Poarch-Creek and Cherokee tribes whose ancestors allied themselves with Jackson’s American forces at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Two hundred years after the conflict, the internal divisions forged in the fires of war remained palpable among the battle’s Indian combatants. The Muscogee-Creek Nation of Oklahoma, for instance, and the Poarch-Creek people who retained control of their ancient homelands in the aftermath of Indian Removal, have yet to bury the hatchet of war. Tensions came to boil between the former kinsmen in 2012, when the dislocated Muscogee Nation unanimously adopted a resolution supporting efforts to halt the Poarch-Creek’s construction of a \$246 million

²⁶² These quotes and observation were made personally by the author at the Horseshoe Bend Bicentennial Celebration, March 27, 2014 at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Daviston, Alabama.

hotel and casino on the ancient ceremonial site of Hickory Ground in south-central Alabama. Two months later, the Muscogee people upped their efforts by filing suit, claiming that the desecration of their beloved Hickory Ground violated not only their religious beliefs, but the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Not surprisingly, as Chief Tiger and the Oklahoma Muscogee Nation grew increasingly involved with the NPS and the Horseshoe Bend Bicentennial, the leading representatives of the Poarch-Creek people withdrew their interest and participation from the historic festivities.²⁶³

The descendants of Jackson's former allies, the Cherokee, too, remained aloof from the battle's 200-year anniversary. Their absence remains a point of speculation, as Cherokee representatives provided no official statement as to why they declined the Park Service's invitation. Perhaps they saw no purpose in revisiting a battlefield awash in memories of inter-Indian bloodshed, nor a reminder that two hundred years ago, to the day, American forces exploited their military services, used them as pawns, and then tossed them aside without the slightest signs of appreciation. In 1836, on the eve of Indian Removal, a delegation of Cherokee leaders reminded their former ally, President Andrew Jackson, that we once "participated with you in the toils and dangers of war, and obtained a victory over the deluded red foe at Tohopeka. We were then your friends—and now, in these days of profound peace, why should the gallant soldiers who in times

²⁶³ Gale Toensing, "Muscogee Nation Sues Poarch Band Over Hickory Ground Desecration," December 14, 2012, *Indian Country*; the debate over Hickory Ground can found at www.savehickoryground.org; see also "Creek Indians Fight Over Sacred Site Where Casino Located," August 26, 2012, *Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL.

of war walked hand in hand not still be friends?”²⁶⁴ The Cherokee’s plea for amnesty fell upon only deaf ears in Washington. Just two years later, the Cherokee joined with their former enemies, the Redsticks, on the devastating Trail of Tears.²⁶⁵ For those who courageously swam the Tallapoosa River, and for those who torched the Redstick refugee camp, there was no glory to be found in the lost cause of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, not in 1830s, nor in the twenty-first-century.

Today, standing on the hill that overlooks the peaceful Horseshoe Bend National Military Park it seems strikingly profound to consider not only the carnage that once took place exactly two hundred years ago, but also the long and winding interpretive battle for the meaning and memory of Horseshoe Bend. Gone are the days in which white men demonized the Creek people in an effort to expand the boundaries of the United States. So too, are the speeches that once justified the travesties of war as a means of furthering the racist rhetoric of white progress and imperialism abroad. Nonetheless, the battle continues to rage between the advocates of New Western Historians and the defenders of the celebrated Old West. Although a number of revisionists, such as Jay Price, Director of Public History at Wichita State University, have cogently argued that New Western Historians are “still facing John Wayne after all these years,” the interpretive turn has clearly arrived.²⁶⁶ At Horseshoe Bend, for instance, a new generation of historians have helped increase the public’s awareness with a variety of new exhibits, perspectives, and

²⁶⁴ Ross, Richard Taylor, Daniel McCoy, Hair Conrad, and John Timson to President Andrew Jackson, March 28, 1834, in Gary Moulton, *The Papers of Chief John Ross* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), I: 284.

²⁶⁵ William L. Anderson, *Cherokee Removal: Before and After* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991); William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Gary E. Moulton, *John Ross, Cherokee Chief* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978).

²⁶⁶ Jay Price, “Still Facing John Wayne After All These Years: Bringing New Western History to Larger Audiences,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (November 2009), 80-84.

publications that lay forth the true history of Horseshoe Bend without the political agendas or historical biases of the past. They have also helped transform what once was a land of conquest and control into a place of peace and cultural unity through events such as the bicentennial. “Before you come back here,” noted Darlie Dirksen, a Muscogee-Creek weaver, “you wonder if you will be accepted? But I feel connected to this place like I didn’t think I would.” Dirksen, whose first visit to Horseshoe Bend came over the bicentennial weekend, admits that many elders of the Muscogee-Creek Nation continue to harbor deep animosities towards the American government for the atrocities of the Redstick War and the punitive removal of their ancestors. “It’s not a wrong or a right way of thinking,” she observed candidly, “but we have to get past these grudges. This commemoration is part of that.”²⁶⁷ Darren DeLaune, a reporter for the *Muscogee Nation News*, shared a similar sentiment in an editorial published in the aftermath of the bicentennial. “This past week has been an emotional rollercoaster. A lot of words and emotions are stirred when you are back in the homelands of your ancestors,” he noted candidly, “sadness and anger to name a few, but also perseverance and staying strong.”²⁶⁸

Only time will tell if the new legacy of Horseshoe Bend, forged in the commemorative fires of the 2014 bicentennial, will create a greater sense of historical awareness, or rather, push the battle’s memory further into the deepest and darkest corners of the American conscious. To ponder upon the future of the battle’s legacy brings to mind a number of intriguing questions ranging from the ability to share

²⁶⁷ For Darlie Dirksen’s quotes see Ashley Cleek, “Bicentennial of Horseshoe Bend Brings Muskogee Creeks Back to their Land,” April 1, 2014, *Aljazeera America*.

²⁶⁸ Darren DeLaune, “DeLaune’s Corner: My Reflection on Horseshoe Bend,” April 15, 2014, *Muscogee Nation News*, Okmulgee, OK.

historical authority to the increasing popularity of non-white victimization. For instance, 50 years from now, will the battlefield at Horseshoe Bend be a forgotten location, a site of mourning, or a symbol of national strength? Will white park goers take interest in a historical narrative that ultimately vilifies their victorious ancestors while glorifying their defeated enemies? And by contrast, will American Indian visitors appreciate the depiction of their relatives as victims “massacred” by a superior force, as opposed to a contingent of brave warriors defending their ancient homelands? As we move into the uncharted waters of the nation’s commemorative future, one thing remains certain; the efforts on behalf of the NPS to connect with Indian communities, listen to their historical considerations, and act upon their commemorative input has helped to not only expand the historical knowledge of West, but also, to heal the nagging wounds of the nation’s ultimately violent past. Martha Ann Whitt, a Daughter of the War of 1812 present at the bicentennial, noted astutely that “what I think we are observing is a time in history to reflect back and see how far we have come. Now,” she continued, “we can be at peace, and that’s the most important thing. We have come a long way, and have a long way to go.”²⁶⁹ One can only hope that in the future, Americans will look back on the era of the bicentennial and consider it a transformative moment in the genealogy of the topic, an interpretive turn for the better, and a drastic stride in the relations between American people who once fought so desperately at a curve in the Tallapoosa River known as Tohopeka, or Horseshoe Bend.

²⁶⁹ “Event Creates Emotional Response,” April 15, 2014, *Muscogee Nation News*, Okmulgee, OK.

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