

AMERICA'S FIRST GULF WAR: THE UNITED STATES  
CAMPAIGN FOR THE GULF COAST,  
1810-1819

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A Thesis  
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to the Faculty of  
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in  
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by  
Russell H. Eads  
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ABSTRACT

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As we approach the 200-year anniversary of the U.S. acquisition of Florida, it is important to take another look at what led to that event in our nation's history.

Although several conflicts occurred in the old Southwest prior to the 1819 treaty with Spain, no historian has linked them together as a single conflict. This thesis aims to show how the Patriot War, the War of 1812 in the South, the Creek War and the First Seminole War are all part of a singular conflict instigated by American southern expansionists in 1810, which concluded in 1819 with the Adams-Onís Treaty and the U.S. acquisition of Florida.

Prior to 1810, the U.S. government severed the unending western claims of the original thirteen states to create territories west of the Appalachian Mountains. In the North, displaced Indian tribes, nominally supported by Great Britain, remained the only

obstacle to westward expansion. In the South, however, multiple barriers existed. The Mississippi Territory, sparsely settled by European-Americans, was inhabited by sedentary Indian tribes and boxed in by the Spanish, who controlled all access to the Gulf of Mexico. White populations lived primarily along the borders of Georgia and Tennessee with the vast interior inhabited by the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek peoples. Southern expansionists sought to increase white settlement in these lands to acquire more wealth, as well as to eliminate the wilderness safe haven where many escaped slaves sought sanctuary. By living with the Indians or creating their own communities, these escaped slaves, known as Maroons, posed a menace to plantation owners and increased the threat of armed rebellion. Regarding socioeconomic changes in the Gulf Coast region, this thesis will examine the pace of white American settlement as well as the intentions of southern expansionists regarding Indian removal.

Although U.S. interest in the Spanish Floridas developed in the 1780s, an outright invasion could not be justified. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the nation quickly gained a western empire—especially with the addition of New Orleans. But New Orleans, the vital gateway to the Mississippi River, remained vulnerable and detached due to its proximity to Spanish West Florida. Additionally, the United States inherited a sundry population of French, British, and Spanish inhabitants with the acquisition of this territory.

The West Florida Rebellion in 1810 sparked the idea that internal Spanish struggles could be exploited to acquire the region. By 1812, American intervention escalated into the Patriot War in East Florida. That same year, war with Great Britain increased the prospect of U.S. intervention against Britain's European ally, Spain. By

1814, military activities endorsed by Great Britain accelerated American military intervention in the Spanish Floridas and initiated the ruin of the Creek Confederacy. In 1815, the War of 1812 ended with the Treaty of Ghent, which allegedly returned borders to “status quo ante bellum.” However, captured Creek lands were retained and settlers flooded the region. In Florida, remaining hostile Creeks and Seminoles displaced by warfare caused continued border tensions leading to the First Seminole War, which lasted until 1818. By 1819, the constant pressure and violations of Spanish sovereignty compelled Spain to cede both East and West Florida to the United States. This thesis will examine the conduct of these wars and argue that they are all really one conflict; a conflict that gave southern expansionists the power to realize their territorial ambitions and advance the westward movement of the Cotton Kingdom across the American South.

This study is primarily from the point of view of American policy makers, not to demonstrate bias, but to look into their decision making process based on the context of their knowledge at the time. To maintain the integrity of historical documents I have not corrected original spelling errors unless absolutely necessary to understand the words of a document’s author. This theater of American history is not new to me. Not only did I begin researching this period of history more than eight years ago, but I have also personally visited the locations of most of the critical events of this conflict. Although I have not found new primary sources, I believe those that are already known are more than enough to support my argument. The events of this struggle are well documented and with my re-evaluation of the historical record I intend to re-write this chapter of American history.

## CHAPTER I

### A FEARSOME COLOSSUS

In 1783, the idea of an independent United States came to fruition with the American victory over Great Britain. This victory would not have been possible without European allies, but rather than championing liberty, those allies joined the war to fulfill their own imperial goals. While France and the Dutch Republic profited primarily by weakening Britain, Spain profited in this war by retaining Louisiana and recovering Florida, along with the Mediterranean island of Minorca. However, an unwelcome result of this victory for Spain was the creation of a new contender for continental dominance. The young United States immediately entered into a three-hundred year rivalry over North America. The Conde de Aranda, Spain's most astute minister of the time, made a particularly accurate prediction about the new nation. "The day will come, when it will grow into a giant, even a fearsome colossus in the hemisphere. Then it will forget the assistance it received from [us] and will think only of its own exaltation. The first step of this Power ... will be to seize upon the Floridas, in order to dominate the Gulf of Mexico."<sup>1</sup> The Conde de Arada's prediction would turn out to be more accurate than he may have liked. As it would happen, the United States' expansionist aims did include

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<sup>1</sup> Rafael Olaechea and Jose A. Ferrer Benimeli, *El Conde de Aranda, Mito y Realidad de un Político Aragonés* (Zaragoza: Diputación de Huesca, IberCaja, 1998), 142, in James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 16-17.

Florida and the Gulf Coast. However, for lack of a just pretext, U.S. officials would not attempt belligerent measures until 1810.

### *Imperial Competition*

European competition for the Gulf Coast had begun shortly after Spain laid claim to it in 1513 and began to settle the Atlantic coast of the Florida peninsula for strategic reasons.<sup>2</sup> The Gulf Stream, which carried their treasure ships back to Europe, began off Florida, between the Bahamas and the Carolinas. Meanwhile, rough seas around the Florida Keys caused many shipwrecks, and Spanish settlements along the Gulf Coast helped to recover sailors and cargo as well as prevent European rivals from establishing bases for privateering.<sup>3</sup>

By the eighteenth century, competition from other European powers extended to the Gulf. In 1699, the French started the colony of Louisiana with the establishment of a post at Biloxi.<sup>4</sup> The greatest threat to this new colony came not from Spanish Florida but from the British Carolina colony, established in 1670, that was pushing west. Louisiana lacked a large French population to combat English expansion and had to ally with Tohomé and Mobilian tribes for support.<sup>5</sup>

The Seven Years War (1754-1763) caused profound changes for European possessions in the Gulf, although little fighting took place there. Victorious Great Britain

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<sup>2</sup> Ponce de León believed Florida to be an island. He named it *Pascua Florida* (Flowery Easter) in honor of the day he landed. David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 33-34.

<sup>3</sup> Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 15-17.

accrued considerable territory from the defeated nations. France, which had controlled the Mississippi Valley and Canada since the seventeenth century, lost both with a forced cession of nearly all its North American possessions. In the South, Britain took Florida and the east side of the Mississippi from Spain and transferred the west side of Mississippi from France to Spain.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter, the British divided Florida into two parts. The new colony of West Florida, governed from Pensacola, would be bound by the Mississippi River to the west and the Apalachicola River to the east. East Florida ran from the Apalachicola eastward to the Atlantic and was governed from St. Augustine. The northern border, as under Spanish control, remained at 31° north latitude, which ran east from Lake Pontchartrain. The British soon found that this boundary left fertile valleys north of Mobile and Baton Rouge out of the colony's influence. Thus, in 1764, the British Board of Trade moved the border north to 32°28' north latitude, which ran east from the junction of the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers.<sup>7</sup>

The American War of Independence (1775-1783) further changed the European boundaries of the Gulf region, with Great Britain embarrassingly pushed to the periphery. In 1779, Spain joined the American colonies, not in support of their cause, but as an ally against its old rival Great Britain. Spain's primary goals were to enact revenge on Britain for its defeat in 1763, reclaim lost territory, primarily Florida, and to protect its fleets that still sailed past Florida from New Spain. During the war Spain seized Natchez, Mobile, Pensacola, and all the territory east of the Mississippi up to the Yazoo River. In the Treaty of Paris of 1783, Britain not only recognized the independence of the United

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher Morris, *Becoming Southern: The Evolution of a Way of Life, Warren County and Vicksburg, Mississippi, 1770-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>7</sup> John Ray Skates, *Mississippi: A History* (New York: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 33.

States but also returned West Florida and East Florida to Spain. The borders of the United States were defined in the north at Canada and in the west as the Mississippi River, but due to competing assumptions during negotiations, the southern border remained unspecified, creating a disputed zone between 31° and 32°28' north latitude.<sup>8</sup>



Map 1. Territory Disputed between the United States and Spain. Map created by author.

During the Treaty of Paris negotiations in 1783, American diplomats assumed their new nation's southern border was along the 31° north latitude, the original border between the British colonies and Spanish Florida, which gave the U.S. more land. The Spanish had assumed the most recent 1764 border established by the British; this border gave Spain more land as it lay over 80 miles north of the old Spanish border (Map 1).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 265, 268, 269.

<sup>9</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 17; Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 279.

## *Leisurely Settlement*

European settlement on the Gulf Coast was slow until after the Seven Years War. With the Proclamation of 1763, the British crown sought to make peace with the Native nations in the Ohio Valley by preventing white settlement there. Settlement was limited to Atlantic watersheds and British West Florida, where any land east of Spanish Louisiana was open to settlement. Settlers who would have moved west across the Appalachians now migrated to the southwest, primarily utilizing the Mississippi River. Up to 1774 the British government even offered free land grants in both West and East Florida to encourage settlement, primarily by individual families starting subsistence farms. Settlers arriving in the Floridas came down the Mississippi from Ohio and Kentucky, by sea, or overland from Georgia. As riots regarding taxes and equal representation began to engulf the colonies, many Americans migrated to the Floridas to avoid the impending violence. Many envisioned West Florida as a Loyalist haven. British land grants offered one hundred acres for each family head, plus fifty acres for each additional family member, including slaves. The land was free but officials charged large, prohibitive sums for the services of expediting petitions, surveying tracts, drawing plats, and filing claims. Settlers oftentimes paid off these fees by signing away some of their acreage. This may seem bad deal, but there was so much available land that this did little to hinder settlement. The fertile soil and rare conflicts with Choctaws and Creeks made settlement in the region comparatively easy. Most of the settled land, along the Mississippi River or on the Gulf Coast, stood mostly uninhabited by Native tribes.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Morris, *Becoming Southern*, 8-9.

The American War of Independence was particularly hard on the pioneer settlements of the Lower Mississippi who attempted to remain neutral. The British blockade of New Orleans halted nearly all trade and many went in debt and were forced to move closer to cities or back to the eastern seaboard. Most of the Indian tribes in North America allied with the British including the Choctaws and Creeks who took advantage during the war to pillage southern homesteads. As a result, the population declined. But the war's interruption proved brief. With peace in 1783, migration into now Spanish West Florida resumed and new settlers replaced those who had left, often moving into the same homesteads.<sup>11</sup>

When the Spanish regained the Floridas they were more eager to populate their colonies than when they last held them. Increased population meant increased security. Thus, their government hastened the claims-and-titles process as long as the settlers swore an oath of loyalty to the king of Spain. Consequently, the population around Natchez, for example, increased from five hundred in 1770 to 2,000 by 1790 (plus 1,000 blacks, mostly slaves).<sup>12</sup> Many of the settlers were Loyalists, fleeing persecution in the victorious American colonies.<sup>13</sup>

Early Euro-American settlers lived in single-family homes and survived by raising hogs and planting small fields with corn and vegetables. They hunted and trapped to supplement their diet and made a small trade income by selling or bartering furs and timber. They made most commodities themselves and purchased all else at the nearest town or trading post. Neighbors in small communities exchanged their goods and

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<sup>11</sup> Morris, *Becoming Southern*, 21-22.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 10; Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 279.

reciprocated favors. There were no public buildings, and all legal proceedings occurred in Natchez or Pensacola.<sup>14</sup>

The relative ease for homesteaders to begin a life in the old Southwest provided them time for profitable endeavors such as selling timber in coastal cities or experimenting with new crops such as cotton or tobacco. The fertile soil and ample rains permitted undemanding agriculture and also allowed farmers the time required to make the long treks to the nearest city to sell their products. Waterways and crude paths provided the only means of travel. Initial exports were primarily furs and timber to the West Indies. But, by the late 1770s, Natchez farmers were growing tobacco for sale in New Orleans and England. This was supplanted by cotton beginning in the 1790s.<sup>15</sup> By 1800 Natchez area cotton production reached more than a million pounds annually.<sup>16</sup> Export crops made sense as both Louisiana and West Florida had little demand for food crops – local farms easily produced all the local populations' needs.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Pawns of Empire*

When the Spanish first arrived in the Gulf Coast region there were hundreds of tribes with a total population of millions.<sup>18</sup> Old world disease quickly reduced these numbers and by the eighteenth century small coastal tribes such as the Tallahassee, Mobile, and Biloxi were virtually extinct. War had also taken its toll, reducing tribes like

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<sup>14</sup> Morris, *Becoming Southern*, 11-12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 281-282.

<sup>17</sup> Morris, *Becoming Southern*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> April Lee Hatfield, "Colonial Southeastern Indian History," *The Journal of Southern History* 73, no. 3 (Aug. 2007): 569.

the Mississippian Natchez to virtually nothing.<sup>19</sup> The Indian population of the lower Mississippi, for example, was 100,000 upon initial European contact, but by the 1760s this had been reduced to 32,000.<sup>20</sup>



Map 2. Lands of the Five Major Tribes in the Gulf Region. *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma* (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).

While European populations remained small in the region, they traded with the tribes and made alliances for military security against European rivals. By the eighteenth century the region that now encompasses Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, and western Georgia, was dominated by five major tribes, the Creeks,

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<sup>19</sup> For more on early European conflicts with the Indians see Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 15-24.

<sup>20</sup> 3,000 Indians lived along the Mississippi, 4,000 along the Red River, 25,000 in the interior that belonged to the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Upper Creek tribes. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 279.

Chickasaws, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Seminoles, all being courted by the European powers (Map 2).<sup>21</sup> These tribes typically allied with France or Spain, with only the Chickasaws siding with the British.<sup>22</sup> The tribes supplied Europeans with deerskins, furs, corn, beans, squash, and meat, in exchange for manufactured goods, liquor, and arms.<sup>23</sup>

After 1783, with an expanding United States to the north, Spain sought Indian allies more than ever. The colonial governors intended to use the Natives as buffers to American expansion as they lacked the troops necessary to ensure the security of the provinces.<sup>24</sup> In 1784 they signed a treaty of alliance with the Creek nation, followed by treaties with the Alabamas, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, and they continued peace negotiations with the Seminoles. This strategy towards the Indians was new to the Spanish. Where they had previously established missions in attempts to convert neophytes and assimilate them into the European population, they now recognized tribes as independent nations and attempted to build alliances based upon trade. Unlike the French and British, Spain lacked Indian agents experienced in these matters. Thus, when they reclaimed the Floridas in 1783 they chose to leave existing British Indian traders in place to double as agents and build alliances with the tribes. In the Gulf region, this meant relying on the Scottish-owned Pantón, Leslie & Co., which had a local monopoly on Indian trade. This fragile arrangement troubled Spanish officials. They could not

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<sup>21</sup> Warfare caused many Creek, Apalachee, Yamasee, and Alabama people, to move to Florida in the eighteenth century, the original Timacua inhabitants destroyed by European disease and enslavement. Although part of the Creek Confederacy, these migrants remained outside its influence. Creeks referred to them as *simanóli*, a Muskogee word meaning wild or non-domesticated. English speakers borrowed the word as Seminole. Raymond D. Fogelson, Ed., *Handbook of North American Indians: Volume 14, Southeast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 431.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans 1812-1815* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 8.

<sup>23</sup> Morris, *Becoming Southern*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 278.

entirely trust the private enterprise as they suspected, rather correctly, that the partners would place business above any loyalty to Spain.<sup>25</sup>

### *A Runaway Sanctuary*

By the time the U.S. gained independence from Great Britain, the institution of slavery had increasingly installed itself in the economy of the new nation and the lifestyles of citizens in the South. In 1790, of a U.S. population of 3.9 million, 700,000 were slaves accounting for fifteen percent. However, ninety percent of the slave population was concentrated in the states south of Pennsylvania. Within these southern states slaves made up one third of the population.<sup>26</sup>

Cash crops such as tobacco, rice, and indigo became dependent on chattel slavery for production. Exports from southern states accounted for nearly half the U.S. total export cash value in 1789-1790, and one third of the nation's export tonnage.<sup>27</sup> As a result, elites from the South had considerable political power within their state governments as well as the federal government.<sup>28</sup> The three-fifths clause of U.S. Constitution increased this political power within the House of Representatives and the Electoral College for slave owning states.<sup>29</sup>

Southern slave owners from states bordering the frontier were especially fearful of their slaves running away or rebelling. Living close to the wilderness meant

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<sup>25</sup> Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 282-284.

<sup>26</sup> Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 2-3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Article 1, Section 2, U.S. Constitution.

that runaways would most likely head that direction rather than towards other plantations and hasty capture. Runaway slaves could also seek asylum in Spanish territory. They had done so in the colonial era by fleeing Carolina and Georgia into Florida. As plantations were established in the old Southwest, runaways could seek refuge in nearby East and West Florida. Spanish colonies allowed African slaves to attain their freedom and many free people of color lived higher standards of life there, often serving in military units and prominent positions of power, much to the disapproval of southern Americans.<sup>30</sup>

Not only did plantation owners fear that their slaves would run into the hands of Indians, they further feared the two parties would work together to instigate slave uprisings in concert with Indian raids. Although these fears might have seemed well founded from the point of view of slave owners, they were largely unwarranted. African slaves often faced exploitation, social isolation, and violence at the hands of the Chickasaw, Choctaw, or Creeks. Only among the Seminole tribe in East Florida did fugitives find dependable refuge. In fact, among the Five Civilized Tribes, with the exception of the Seminoles, slaves were a prized commodity. As Indians adopted a white agrarian culture and assimilated with southern Americans, they began to grow cash crops that required slave labor. More often than not, Indians recovered runaway slaves and returned them to U.S. officials, especially if there was a reward.<sup>31</sup> The act of owning slaves raised the social status of Indians seeking to further assimilate with the whites.

The Seminoles were different in that they did not attempt to assimilate with Euro-American culture as they lived further away from white settlements. When escaped slaves ran to their lands for sanctuary, they were not enslaved, but made vassals to

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<sup>30</sup> Rothman, *Slave Country*, 100.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 59-60, 61.

Seminole chiefs. Escaped slaves proved to be excellent farmers and Seminole chiefs offered them protection in payment for crop yields.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Origin of Ambitions*

From the time the United States obtained its independence from Great Britain, southern elites dreamed of expansion into the Spanish Floridas and the Gulf Coast.<sup>33</sup> However, progress towards this goal remained slow until the presidency of Virginia planter Thomas Jefferson.

The American movement westward and into the old Southwest increased rapidly following independence. From 1790 to 1800 Kentucky's population almost tripled from 75,000 to 220,000. Tennessee, too, increased to 105,000, and Georgia, which had primarily just been settled around Savannah, doubled its population as settlers moved west to the Flint and Chattahoochee rivers, and south towards the Florida border. Early immigrants into the Southwest had initially settled along major rivers where Indian populations had been eliminated long before. But as fresh waves moved into the interior of the Mississippi Territory they encountered the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek nations with an estimated population of 40,000. Inhabiting the country between the western limits of Georgia and the Mississippi, these tribes had faced little burden from white settlement until then. In the 1790s violence between settlers and the Cherokee and Creek nations escalated. While both sides suffered, the federal government took little notice. Politicians and generals focused instead on the situation in the Ohio Valley where settlers had also

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<sup>32</sup> Jeff Guinn, *Our Land Before We Die: The Proud Story of the Seminole Negro* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2002), 14, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Rothman, *Slave Country*, 18.

begun migrating in large numbers. There a coalition of Shawnee, Miami, and Delaware contesting white settlement embarrassed the U.S. Army under General Arthur St. Clair in 1791, and continued to draw federal attention until 1795.<sup>34</sup>

In Europe, the wars of the French Revolution had begun. Spain, initially allied with Britain against France, was doing poorly on the battlefield and switched its allegiance to France in 1795. With Britain now an enemy, Spain sought to prevent a British-American alliance by agreeing to territorial concessions that led to the Treaty of San Lorenzo in 1795. This established the northern border of West Florida at the thirty-first parallel, gave the U.S. the Natchez district of the Mississippi, and granted tariff-free commerce on the Mississippi as well as three years of no customs fees in New Orleans.<sup>35</sup> This act of Spain, to acquiesce and give the U.S. all of the disputed territory, greatly improved Spanish-American border relations for the time being.<sup>36</sup>

Following the Treaty of San Lorenzo, Congress authorized the creation of the Mississippi Territory on April 7, 1798. Bound within the formerly contested region, the Mississippi Territory would be governed from Natchez on the Mississippi. The small government of this territory consisted of a governor, secretary, and three judges appointed by the president. Although making progress in the way of territorial expansion, this territory faced several challenges. While the government seat and the majority of the population were located at Natchez on the western border, the remaining population lived on the northern, eastern, and southern peripheries, completely separated from the seat of

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<sup>34</sup> Rothman, *Slave Country*, 10-12, 18.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Treaty of Friendship, Limits, and Navigation between Spain and the United States," October 27, 1795, in Hunter Miller ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*. Vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), 318-338.

<sup>36</sup> Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 276.

government by the wilderness interior populated by the Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek peoples.<sup>37</sup> While this territorial expansion pushed the border closer to the Gulf Coast, new obstacles began presenting themselves. The Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek tribes inhibited transportation across the interior and relations with Spain started to deteriorate.

As America's large maritime trade became engulfed in the wars in Europe, U.S. relations with the Britain and France became strained. During America's Quasi-War with France (1797-1800), Spain assisted its ally. Although Spain proclaimed itself neutral in this undeclared naval war, the Spanish crown allowed French privateers to bring 168 captured American prize vessels into their ports. Additionally, their privateers operating with French letters of marque accounted for over 100 captured American merchant vessels. Losses assessed at over \$5 million by the American maritime community initiated nationwide resentment towards Spain. To further the insult, U.S. diplomats went unheard as the Spanish refused any restitution payments, or to give up East Florida as a substitute.<sup>38</sup> Vice President Thomas Jefferson, writing his friend Archibald Stuart, pushed this demand on Spanish Gulf possessions: "We should take care too, not to think it for the interest of that great continent to press too soon on the Spaniards. Those countries cannot be in better hands. My fear is that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them piece by piece. The navigation of the Mississippi we must have."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Skates, *Mississippi*, 54-55.

<sup>38</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, January 25, 1786, in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: Writings, Autobiography, A Summary View of the Rights of British America, Notes on the State of Virginia, Public Paper, Addresses, Messages, and Replies, Miscellany, Letters* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1984), 844.

By 1800 events in Europe began to favor American ambitions. Spain, seeking to strengthen its ties with France, returned Louisiana to it with the Treaty of St. Ildefonso in October.<sup>40</sup> This initially posed a new threat to the United States, but the slave rebellion on Saint-Domingue convinced Napoleon by 1803 that his territory in the New World was indefensible. In deciding to remove the French presence in North America and to prevent a British-American alliance, Napoleon became interested in selling Louisiana to the U.S.<sup>41</sup>

Starting in 1803, Robert Livingston, the U.S. minister to France, in concert with François Barbé-Marbois, the French councilor of state and director of the treasury, worked on a proposed treaty to sell Louisiana to the United States. Jefferson instructed Livingston to look toward “the ceding to us the island of New Orleans and the Floridas.”<sup>42</sup> Marbois stated he would support U.S. negotiations with Spain regarding the acquisition of the Floridas but did not include them in deliberations. Jefferson also sent James Monroe as an envoy with the purpose of assisting Livingston in the proceedings in Paris first, and then continuing to Madrid to negotiate for the Floridas.<sup>43</sup> The treaty was settled by May 2, 1803, and France sold Louisiana for 68 million Francs (\$15,000,000).<sup>44</sup>

Although a successful purchase, the Americans did not entirely know the extent of their purchase as it referred to provinces with undefined borders. Article I of the treaty reiterates the Treaty of St. Ildefonso by detailing that treaty’s territory as “the Colony or Province of Louisiana with the Same extent that it now has in the hands of

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<sup>40</sup> James P. Lucier, ed., *The Political Writings of James Monroe* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2001), 366.

<sup>41</sup> Rothman, *Slave Country*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, April 18, 1802, in Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1104-1107.

<sup>43</sup> Jefferson to James Monroe, January 13, 1803, in *ibid.*, 1111.

<sup>44</sup> Journal entry April 27, 1803 in Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2001), 354-357.

Spain, & that it had when France possessed it; and Such as it Should be after the Treaties subsequently entered into between Spain and other States.” It continues by stating that France “doth hereby cede to the United States in the name of the French Republic for ever and in full Sovereignty the said territory with all its rights and appurtenances as fully and in the Same manner as they have been acquired by the French Republic in virtue of the above mentioned Treaty concluded with his Catholic Majesty.”<sup>45</sup> Thus the American consul assumed that the purchased territory included all of the original French colony in its state prior to the Seven Years War, whose eastern border extended east of the Mississippi to the Perdido River and included the towns of Biloxi and Mobile. Spain assumed otherwise.

The problem dated back to territorial disputes between Spain and France in the seventeenth century. While France claimed that Louisiana extended to the Perdido River, Spain argued that Florida extended west to the Iberville River which connected Lake Pontchartrain to the Mississippi River. Thus when Spain returned Louisiana to France in 1800, Napoleon pushed them, without results, to remove their garrisons from the territory claimed by the original French Province. Thus the American diplomats understood France’s interpretation of the territorial boundary, while Spain interpreted the purchase’s extent from their standpoint and refused to withdraw their garrisons west of the Perdido.<sup>46</sup> The American delegation discovered this discrepancy and pushed Talleyrand, Napoleon’s foreign minister, to convince Spain to respect France’s claims. But Talleyrand, no longer concerned with the territory, would not support ceding any part

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<sup>45</sup> “Treaty between the United States of America and the French Republic,” April 30, 1803, in Hunter, *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 498-505.

<sup>46</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 39-40.

of Florida to the U.S. Thus it appeared that the eastern boundary of Louisiana stopped at the Mississippi and Iberville rivers, and included no part of West Florida.

Monroe did not intend to remain long in Paris but lingered there for a month as he received an invitation to attend Napoleon's coronation as emperor. During his extended stay Monroe discovered that Livingston had concocted a scheme on his own in which the United States would loan Spain \$2 million for the cession of West Florida. This was against policy because the Jefferson administration agreed the territory west of the Iberville River already belonged to France and was therefore part of the Louisiana Purchase; America would be paying for it already claimed to own.<sup>47</sup> This unsanctioned act of diplomacy on the part of Livingston muddled any further attempts to gain French support for the U.S. claim to West Florida.

Monroe, frustrated by the failure of negotiations to gain West Florida, composed a memorandum outlining the legal justification for including West Florida in the Louisiana Purchase. Monroe sent this to both the president and the secretary of state, James Madison, outlining all of the treaties regarding the possession of Louisiana from 1763 through 1803. Monroe concluded that, "When France possessed Louisiana formerly, that is prior to the year 1762, its eastern boundary extended to the River Perdido."<sup>48</sup> Then, analyzing the three articles of the Louisiana Purchase he stated "the first stipulates that cession shall comprize Louisiana in the same extent that it actually has in the hands of Spain; 2<sup>dly</sup>. that it had when France possessed it; 3<sup>dly</sup>. as it ought to be

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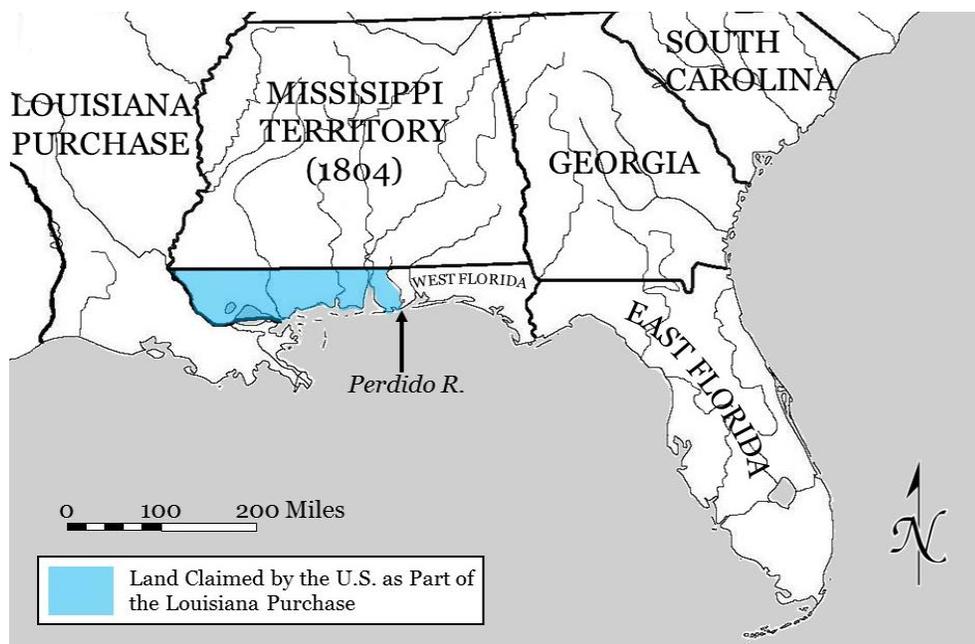
<sup>47</sup> Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe*, 342.

<sup>48</sup> Monroe misspelled Perdido. Opinion Respecting West Florida, June 19, 1803 in Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe*, 367.

after the Treaties subsequently passed between Spain & other powers.”<sup>49</sup> Thus he concluded that the territory purchased from France should include the entire former French colony of Louisiana which comprised most of the Spanish colony of West Florida (Map 3). Monroe’s memorandum did not fall on deaf ears. Both Jefferson and Madison agreed with his legal argument and it would in turn influence their political decisions.

While President Jefferson undoubtedly noticed how Louisiana seemed to become smaller each time it changed hands, he remained determined to annex the full territory as interpreted by Monroe. Writing to John C. Breckenridge, the senate floor leader, the president stated that

We have some claims, to extend on the sea coast Westwardly to the Rio Norte or Bravo, and better, to go Eastwardly to the Rio Perdido, Between Mobile & Pensacola, the antient boundary of Louisiana. These claims will be a subject of negotiation with Spain, and if, as soon as she is at war, we push them strongly with one hand, holding out a price in the other, we shall certainly obtain the Floridas, and all in good time.<sup>50</sup>



Map 3. Land Claimed by the U.S. as Part of the Louisiana Purchase. Map created by author.

<sup>49</sup> Opinion Respecting West Florida, June 19, 1803 in Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe*, 368.

<sup>50</sup> Jefferson to John C. Breckenridge, August 12, 1803, in Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1137.

Upon his arrival in Madrid in 1804, Monroe met with Charles IV and opened negotiations regarding Florida in which the Spanish immediately asked Paris for instructions. Talleyrand, of course, continued his stance that West Florida remain Spanish. The misunderstanding caused by Livingston's unsanctioned actions with France made Monroe's position hopeless. He left Madrid in July 1805 after accomplishing nothing.<sup>51</sup>

Although temporarily stymied, Jefferson was still determined to gain the Floridas in 1806. In writing to Barnabas Bidwell, a Massachusetts senator who led a campaign to purchase Florida, he stated that diplomats had just arrived in France and "if Buonaparte should prevail over his temper, the present state of things in Europe may induce him to require of Spain that she should do us justice at least. That he should require her to sell us East Florida, we have no right to insist: yet there are not wanting considerations which may induce him to wish a permanent foundation for peace laid between us."<sup>52</sup> Too busy fighting Prussia, Napoleon made no treaty for East Florida. Spain, upset at the ceding of Louisiana to the U.S., began challenging its borders. West of the Mississippi, Spanish troops occupied Bayou Pierre on the Red River, farther east than the agreed boundary. While negotiations compelled the Spanish to withdraw their troops back to the Sabine River farther west, Spain's message was clear.<sup>53</sup>

By 1807 British impressment of American sailors moved to the national forefront when, on June 22, the British warship *Leopard* fired on the American frigate

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<sup>51</sup> Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe*, 343.

<sup>52</sup> Jefferson to Barnabas Bidwell, July 5, 1806, in Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1164.

<sup>53</sup> Jefferson's Sixth Annual Message to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress Assembled, December 2, 1806, in *ibid.*, 524.

*Chesapeake*.<sup>54</sup> Calls for war erupted from both peoples. In his efforts to avert armed conflict, Jefferson decided to stop pressuring Spain for territory. Consequently, relations with Great Britain became the main issue in Washington and Florida faded into the background. Congress passed the Embargo Act in an effort to push Great Britain to peace by denying her American imports. The law prohibited American merchant vessels from departing U.S. coastal waters, but caused a national economic upheaval that sent Jefferson's popularity plummeting. Meanwhile, Britain quickly found other sources for supplanting former American commodities and the U.S. economy fell into depression.<sup>55</sup>

In 1808 things turned upside-down in Spain. Napoleon distrusted Spain's royal family and forced Charles IV to abdicate and imprisoned Ferdinand VII, the most prominent heir. Subsequently the emperor declared his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, the new king of Spain, and the country was occupied by a French army. As a result the nation plunged into anarchy, with rebellious Spaniards forming their own governments called juntas, the one at Cádiz being proclaimed senior. All of Spain's American colonies proclaimed loyalty to Cádiz and Great Britain made an alliance with the junta. This alliance posed a new threat to the U.S. as America's old enemy, Britain, previously only presenting a threat on the seas and along the Canadian border, now enjoyed the prospect of utilizing Spanish territory in Florida and Cuba to threaten the nation.<sup>56</sup>

As Jefferson's presidency came to a close in 1809 the country buzzed with the talk of war. While the Embargo Act was gladly repealed, tensions with Great Britain reached new heights regarding the impressment of American sailors. As James Madison

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<sup>54</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 18-19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

assumed the office of president, he undoubtedly had grand ideas he intended to implement. Like Jefferson, he sought to expand the nation's borders, particularly in the South. But with Spain now torn by civil war and caught between the dueling powers of France and Great Britain, the best way of obtaining the Floridas remained uncertain.

## CHAPTER II

### AGENTS OF ACQUISITION

When James Madison became the fourth president of the United States in 1809, the nation was in crisis. The wars in Europe had spawned naval blockades and privateering that severely hindered maritime shipping. The American people knew that war loomed on the horizon—but with precisely whom they did not know. In Washington, the Federalists and Democratic Republicans debated whether the U.S. should fight France or Great Britain. While both nations' privateers harassed U.S. shipping, Great Britain also impressed American sailors into the Royal Navy. As this debate attracted the national spotlight, Madison remained committed to solidifying the nation's hold on the newly acquired Louisiana Territory and expand the country's boundaries, as Jefferson had done during his presidency.

During Madison's tenure, Jefferson continued to influence U.S. policy by serving as the president's trusted advisor. Within the first month of the new administration, the former president wrote to Madison regarding the impact of French military success in Spain on Spanish colonies in the Gulf.

I suppose the conquest of Spain will soon force a delicate question on you as to the Floridas & Cuba which will offer themselves to you. Napoleon will certainly give his consent without difficulty to our receiving the Floridas, & with some difficulty possibly Cuba. And tho' he will disregard the obligation whenever he thinks he can break it with success, yet it has a great effect on the opinion of our people & the

world to have the moral right on our side, of his agreement as well as that of the people of those countries.<sup>1</sup>

Although Madison agreed with these territorial goals, he also believed in maintaining positive relations with Spanish America.<sup>2</sup> Jefferson accepted his point of view and stated that Napoleon “ought the more to conciliate our good will, as we can be such an obstacle to the new career opening on him in the Spanish colonies.” The former president added that the Floridas “are ours in the first moment of the first war, & until a war they are of no particular necessity to us.” In support of territorial expansion, Jefferson asserted “we should have such an empire for liberty as she has never surveyed since creation: & I am persuaded no constitution was ever before so well calculated as ours for extensive empire & self government.”<sup>3</sup>

Maintaining positive relations with Spanish America presented a very different problem than maintaining positive relations with Spain for Madison. The Spanish government consisted of two opposing parties, the Supreme Central Junta, which supported the imprisoned Ferdinand VII and opposed France, and Joseph Bonaparte’s regime, put in power by Napoleon. In deciding between the two, Madison chose Bonaparte’s regime regarding relations, and ignored the efforts of Spain’s Supreme Central Junta to secure official U.S. acknowledgement. In response, the Junta sent diplomats Valentín de Foronda and Luis de Onís to Washington to claim their government had the legitimate authority to negotiate border disputes between the U.S. and Spain. However, the president doubted Spanish resistance would prevail against the

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<sup>1</sup> Jefferson to Madison, April 19, 1809 in Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume I, 1 March-30 September 1809* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 123.

<sup>2</sup> Madison to Jefferson, April 24, 1809 in *ibid.*, 135-136.

<sup>3</sup> Jefferson to Madison, April 27, 1809 in *ibid.*, 139-140.

French and decided to negotiate with Joseph Bonaparte, as Madison knew he had played a prominent role in ending the Quasi War in 1800 and “has been well disposed towards us.”<sup>4</sup> The complication in choosing the French faction rested on Napoleon’s demand that the U.S. cease trade with Spanish America as those colonies maintained their allegiance to the Supreme Central Junta.<sup>5</sup>

To add weight to Madison’s negotiations with Spain, Mississippi settlers sent a petition to Congress in November of 1809, complaining about export and import duties imposed on them by the Spanish for navigating the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers through West Florida. Duties ran as high as twelve percent each way. They stated irately, “Are we Americans or Spaniards? Shall we support the Republic of the United States, or the Spanish Monarchy?”<sup>6</sup> Mississippi settlers sent more petitions on the same issue in the spring of 1810.<sup>7</sup> This pressure compelled the Federal Government to continue to seek the cession of West Florida from Spain as U.S. citizens were now more interested in the venture. But negotiations proved difficult due to the ongoing conflict in Spain.

As the war in Europe progressed, confidence that the Supreme Central Junta would remain in existence dwindled. In late 1809, the French made significant military progress in Spain, where they advanced deep into Andalusia, captured Seville, and laid siege to Cádiz. This forced the Supreme Central Junta to retreat to Isla de León in Cádiz harbor. In January 1810 the Junta relinquished its authority to a Regency Council which held a parliament to reorganize the resistance. The American ambassador

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<sup>4</sup> Madison to Jefferson May 1, 1809 in Rutland, *The Papers of James Madison*, 149.

<sup>5</sup> J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776-1821* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 50.

<sup>6</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 57.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

to Spain, George W. Erving, left in February believing Spain was lost. When news of this reached the Americas, it appeared that the fall of Spain was inevitable. In April 1810 the town council at Caracas, Venezuela, decided to repudiate the Cádiz Regency and by July 1811 it became the first Spanish-American colony to declare its independence.<sup>8</sup>

While the world watched and wondered about the fate of Spain and its colonies, discontent emerged in a small part of West Florida. Governed from Pensacola, the population of West Florida was concentrated in three separate locales separated by uninhabited wilderness. The two ports of Pensacola and Mobile had significant populations. Far to the west, between the Mississippi and Pearl Rivers, a third more recent collection of settlements that first appeared in number during the American War for Independence existed. By 1810 the population of this western region had increased to about fifteen thousand people, mostly American immigrants. Concentrated in the districts of Feliciana and Baton Rouge, but also including the St. Helena and St. Tammany districts, these settlers survived primarily on exports of slave-produced cotton and sugar.<sup>9</sup> Although residents were Spanish citizens, Governor William C.C. Claiborne of the Orleans Territory insisted that they fell under U.S. laws regarding Jefferson's Embargo of 1807 and the Non-Intercourse Law of 1809. Claiborne supported these regulations of U.S. trade with Great Britain so staunchly that he enforced them on these settlers because they were of American descent and because nearly all their commerce passed down the Mississippi River through the Orleans Territory. Governor Juan Vicente Folch y Juan of

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<sup>8</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 51; for more on the French siege of Cádiz see Gabriel H. Lovett, *Napoleon and the Birth of Modern Spain Vol. I: The Challenge of the Old Order* (New York: University Press, 1965), 355-414.

<sup>9</sup> For details of the southern frontier economy see Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 15; Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 53.

West Florida appealed to Claiborne to exempt them but he refused. This situation gave rise to increased smuggling through Spanish territory and a fear in Congress that Great Britain could gain local support for its own intervention.<sup>10</sup> Senator John Adair from Kentucky asked Madison what might happen if the British were to intervene by offering “Independence, alliance, and Commerce” to the people of West Florida? If so, he feared, it would “at once give the British interest [in West Florida] a decided ascendancy” and produce disfavor towards American authority in the Gulf region. “The proper management” of the people of West Florida now, was “all important to the Union,” Adair warned.<sup>11</sup> Governor Claiborne further noted that many of these settlers were of British or American Loyalist origins, and that should they seek “the protection of Great Britain,” it would bring London and Washington into conflict and West Florida could become a ‘seat of war.’<sup>12</sup> Fearing British intervention in the region, Madison decided to warn Great Britain against getting involved. In June 1810, he instructed the American minister in London to inform the British government that the U.S. believed the alliance between Britain and Spain was about to end. Because Spain’s destruction by the French was imminent, ties between Madrid and Spanish America would disappear. Furthermore, any British challenge to the U.S. claim to West Florida would be regarded as “unjust and unfriendly.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Folch to Claiborne, 11 February 1808, and Claiborne to Folch, 16 February 1808 in Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne 1801-1816*, Vol. IV (Jackson MS: State Department of Archives and History, 1917), 157-160.

<sup>11</sup> Adair to Madison 9 Jan, 1809, Library of Congress, *Madison Papers*, [http://www.loc.gov/resource/mjm.10\\_0922\\_0924/](http://www.loc.gov/resource/mjm.10_0922_0924/) [accessed December 26, 2015].

<sup>12</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 57-59.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

In June 1810, Madison met with Governor Claiborne in Washington. The president instructed the governor to write William Wykoff Jr., a territorial judge who resided near Baton Rouge, and tell him to organize settlers in West Florida to invite the U.S. to take possession of the territory in place of the dissolving Spanish regime. He allowed Claiborne to use his own discretion in proceeding, but warned that under no circumstances should the settlers “form for themselves an independent government.” Madison’s intent was to acquire the territory only if it reflected the wishes of the inhabitants, preferably if they did not form their own government, in which case the U.S. would appear the aggressor rather than the liberator.<sup>14</sup> If this scheme worked, Madison would acquire a portion of West Florida in a seemingly legitimate manner.

Independent of Madison’s plans, the residents near Baton Rouge had begun to act. By late May or early June 1810, prominent citizens in Feliciana and Baton Rouge had already taken action in relation to the news of events in Spain and Venezuela. Coordinating with the Spanish commandant at Baton Rouge, Carlos deHault DeLassus, they organized a convention to “restore public tranquility.” On June 23 more than five hundred people met at a prominent plantation and elected four delegates to a council that would work with the Spanish governor if a crisis transpired. Five more delegates were elected on July 14. By mid-July a draft document began circulating that stated the region would not abandon its allegiance to Spain and would never swear loyalty to “the present ruler of the French nation, or to any King, Prince, or Sovereign who may be placed by him on the throne of Spain.” It also stated that they had “a right to institute for themselves such forms of government as they may think conducive to their safety and happiness.”

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<sup>14</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 59-60; Folch to Claiborne, 11 February 1808, and Claiborne to Wykoff, 14 June 1810 in Rowland, *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne*, Vol. V, 31-35.

Although referred to as a constitution, this was more of a proclamation that laid the groundwork for future self-government. While the convention did have knowledge of Claiborne's instructions to Wykoff, it is unknown if this influenced their initial decision to convene as his letter would have taken three weeks to reach Wykoff, and would have arrived after the delegation was created.<sup>15</sup>

At this point the convention remained skeptical about declaring independence as they were unsure if the United States would aid their cause or not. Delegate William Barrow stated "We have found people disposed to involve us in a civil war by declaring Independence and calling the U. States to aid, without knowing whether they would or not."<sup>16</sup> The convention proceeded by addressing only policies regarding local militia organization, settlement, trade fees, roads, slaves, and methods to keep out French exiles from the Caribbean, but nothing regarding independence from Spain. They also sought to create a new court system. They took these actions to decrease reliance on Spain's government in peril but deflected anxiety in Pensacola by simultaneously proclaiming their loyalty to Ferdinand VII.<sup>17</sup>

Although DeLassus had allowed the formation of the convention, the delegates began creating policy that usurped his responsibilities as commandant. He played along reluctantly only because he lacked the means to oppose them. On June 6 he unsuccessfully requested additional soldiers and money from Governor Folch. Trying to avoid bloodshed, the governor did accept the convention's new ordinances subject to

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<sup>15</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 60-62.

<sup>16</sup> William Barrow to Bedford, August 5th. 1810, J.C.A. Stagg, et al, ed, *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume II, 1 October 1809-2 November 1810* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 508-510.

<sup>17</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 63.

their approval by his superior, the captain-general in Havana. Meanwhile, the interest of the U.S. government prompted Governor David Holmes of the Mississippi Territory to send an observer named Joshua Baker to ascertain whether the convention wanted the region to be annexed by the United States. Correspondence between Holmes and the convention discussed whether they should declare independence and seek U.S. aid or not. If so, the delegates insisted that it would only be done under the condition that all Spanish land titles in the region be recognized and that new settlers would continue to be granted land under the generous Spanish grant system. Holmes heard these conditions yet informed the delegation that he had instructions from Washington to take no active role in West Florida.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the fall of 1810 the delegation continued organizing the region under their new “constitution,” while maintaining a delicate relationship with commandant DeLassus. On September 20 the convention militia commander in Baton Rouge intercepted letters from DeLassus to Folch asking for military assistance to put down the “insurrection” on grounds that the self-appointed officials had usurped Spanish authority. This evidence shattered the relationship between the convention and the Spanish authorities. Within two days the delegates decided to gather their militia and seize the Spanish fort in Baton Rouge.<sup>19</sup> On September 23, in the early morning hours, a party of eighty militiamen stormed dilapidated Fort San Carlos shouting “Hurrah, Washington!”<sup>20</sup> They quickly overwhelmed the drowsy garrison. The fort’s commander and one other soldier were killed, and two others wounded, including DeLassus, who

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<sup>18</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 65-66.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 15.

attempted to lead the resistance but was knocked down “with the butt end of a musket” and put in irons. Three days later, the convention declared West Florida independent from Spain.<sup>21</sup>

Following his June meeting with Claiborne, Madison had gone to his home at Montpelier for his usual summer retreat. Confident that he had set events in the right direction he could not have predicted that circumstances would change so rapidly before his return to Washington in the winter for the reconvening of Congress. Within days of Madison’s departure for Montpelier, Governor Holmes informed him of the new citizens’ convention and the potential for “Anarchy and confusion” that could lead, according to Holmes, to a slave revolt. In response, the president authorized Holmes to mobilize his militia and prepare for action in the event of foreign intervention or chaos within the province. He also directed the State Department to inform Holmes of Wyckoff’s mission, encouraging him to support it.<sup>22</sup>

Over the next two months Madison kept up on events in West Florida but his information was always a month old because of the mail delay. As events progressed through the summer, Madison’s fear of upheaval decreased. The “anarchy” Holmes spoke of turned out to be the convention’s civil proclamations and nothing to antagonize Spanish colonial rule. Thus it appeared that Madison would not have to make any executive decisions regarding the situation before Congress reconvened in December.

Meanwhile on the international front, conflict with Great Britain appeared imminent. This threat could have an effect in the Gulf as the British could justifiably

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<sup>21</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 67; West Florida Declaration of Independence in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, Foreign Relations, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 396.

<sup>22</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 70.

occupy Spain's colonies if they became unstable. Jefferson gave his successor clear suggestions, urging that when "the moment that open war shall be apprehended from them [Britain], we should take possession of Baton rouge. If we do not, they will, and New Orleans becomes irrecoverable & the Western country blockaded during the war."<sup>23</sup> Madison intended to make a move into West Florida. He remained confident that in December, Congress would accept his request to occupy Baton Rouge based on Monroe's generally accepted 1803 legal interpretation that the Louisiana Purchase included West Florida.<sup>24</sup>

Madison's retreat was interrupted again when on October 14 he received news from his agent in Caracas that the newly independent government had made a highly advantageous reciprocal trade agreement with Great Britain. This act of British economic aggression not only showed their lack of respect for their Spanish alliance in Europe, but also raised fear about other schemes they could craft in the power vacuums created from the pending collapse of the Spanish government. To add to the president's concern, he received news on October 19 of the September 23 seizure of the Spanish fort at Baton Rouge.<sup>25</sup> What he feared most was a British intervention in West Florida similar to that in Venezuela.

On October 22, 1810 more news arrived from Holmes. Dated October 3, the letter included a copy of the West Florida Declaration of Independence and a request by the convention for U.S. protection. West Florida's Declaration of Independence stated that "we do solemnly publish and declare ... to be a *free and independent State* ... and to

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<sup>23</sup> Jefferson to Madison, August 17, 1809 in Rutland, *The Papers of James Madison*, 331.

<sup>24</sup> Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe*, 418.

<sup>25</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 71-72.

do all the acts which may of right be done by a sovereign and independent nation.”<sup>26</sup> The attached letter from the convention somewhat amended this by advising the secretary of state that “we feel it a duty to claim for our constituents an immediate admission into the Union as an independent State, or as a territory of the United States, with permission to establish our own form of Government, or to be united with one of the neighboring territories, or a part of one of them, the inhabitants of this commonwealth would prefer being annexed to the island of Orleans.”<sup>27</sup> This was good news for Madison as it further justified U.S. occupation.

But Governor Holmes also had some unfortunate news. Madison’s instructions of July 21 had not reached him until September 29, incidentally not giving him time to prepare the Mississippi militia for intervention in West Florida, nor time to inform the delegates there about the intentions of the U.S. government. Even more alarming was his mention that the citizen militias would be unable to significantly challenge a Spanish counterattack from Pensacola. As a result, “Royalists” were looking for the support of Native tribes within the Mississippi Territory, and fears of a slave revolt arose now that the local Spanish garrison was ousted. Although Holmes had mobilized his militia and requested the support of U.S. Army garrisons within the territory, his forces were dispersed to prevent a slave uprising and under orders to not cross into West Florida without explicit presidential instructions.<sup>28</sup> The time it would take to both communicate and redeploy them could be weeks.

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<sup>26</sup> West Florida Declaration of Independence in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, Foreign Relations, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 396.

<sup>27</sup> The President of the Convention of Florida to the Secretary of State, October 10, 1810 in *ibid.*, 395-396.

<sup>28</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 72-73.

This news compelled Madison to prompt action. At a three hour, closed door meeting in late October, the president and his cabinet decided to occupy West Florida immediately.<sup>29</sup> On October 27, Madison issued a proclamation that Governor Claiborne would take possession of West Florida and occupy it to the western boundary of the Perdido River. This would be done in the name of the United States and the territory temporarily administered as part of the Orleans Territory. The governor was under orders to not employ force against any Spanish resistance should it be encountered. Accordingly, he occupied the revolutionized districts on December 7 with territorial militia and U.S. Army troops. Detachments advanced as far east as the outskirts of Mobile and demanded the Spanish surrender the town to them, but the commandant refused.<sup>30</sup> Claiborne entered into negotiations with Governor Folch regarding delivery of this district. Folch would deliver nothing, which left Claiborne, in order to avoid combat with the Spanish, short of completing the entire occupation of West Florida.<sup>31</sup>

When Congress reconvened on December 5, 1810, Madison delivered his Second Annual Message to Congress, revealing to them for the first time his actions regarding West Florida. He stated,

...our attention was imperiously attracted to the change developing itself in that portion of West Florida which, though of right appertaining to the United States, had remained in the possession of Spain awaiting the result of negotiations for its actual delivery to them. The Spanish authority was subverted and a situation produced exposing the country to ulterior events which might essentially affect the rights and welfare of the Union. In such a conjecture I did not delay the interposition required for the occupancy of the territory west of the Perdido River,

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<sup>29</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 74.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Cushing to The Governor of Orleans, 8 January 1811 in *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Mississippi, Vol. V* (Washington D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1938) 167-168.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Adams. *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of James Madison* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 217-219; Proclamation by the President of the United States of America, 27 October, 1810 in James D. Richardson, ed. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Volume I* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, Inc., 1897), 465-466.

to which the title of the United States extends, and to which the laws provided for the Territory of Orleans are applicable.<sup>32</sup>

Madison had to refer to it only as an occupation for several reasons. Since the United States considered that region a part of the Louisiana Purchase, they could not recognize the independence of West Florida nor engage in any treaties with the rebels, without nullifying the claim that the region legally belonged to the United States (Map 4).<sup>33</sup>



Map 4. Environs of the West Florida Rebellion. Map created by author.

Congressional reaction to this exercise of Madison's executive powers in their absence was generally favorable. Senator John Pope of Kentucky spoke for the majority with the view that

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<sup>32</sup> Madison's Second Annual Message to Congress, December 5, 1810 in Fred F. Israel, ed. *The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents: 1790-1966. Volume I, 1790-1860* (New York: Chelsea House, 1966), 107.

<sup>33</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 75.

[Madison] did not think it proper to seize upon it by force, but to wait for the occurrence of events to throw into our hands without a struggle ... The expediency of taking possession of this territory cannot, it appears to me, admit of a doubt. If the president had refused or hesitated to meet the wishes of the people of West Florida by extending to them the protection of the American Government, and they had sought security in the arms of a foreign Power, what should we have heard? He would have been charged with imbecility, and fear of incurring responsibility. He would have been denounced as unworthy of the station his country had assigned him.<sup>34</sup>

However, there were opponents. One senator, Outerbridge Horsey of Delaware, spoke out about his skepticism regarding the West Florida situation when he stated, “If these proceedings [the formation of a revolutionary government] are not all a sham, the territory in question is now in possession of a people claiming to be sovereign and independent; and is it supposable that this people can behave so dastardly as to submit, without a struggle, to the incursion of a hostile army, whose avowed object is the conquest of the country and the subversion of its constitution and independence?”<sup>35</sup> Horsey thought it too convenient that the president’s order to occupy West Florida contained no instructions for Claiborne’s forces regarding the possibility that the revolutionaries defended their lands or if a Spanish force were to counterattack from Pensacola. His perception was that the president either acted carelessly towards a possible act of war or was withholding information from Congress.

The House deliberated for months about the fate of West Florida. Should it become part of an expanded Mississippi Territory since it controlled the outlets to rivers flowing from that region? Should it instead be added to the Orleans Territory, which currently administered it? Or should it be admitted to the Union as a separate territory

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<sup>34</sup> United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, Senate, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 40.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

with the potential for statehood? By March 1811, when Congress adjourned, no solution had been reached other than passing a bill advancing the Orleans territory to statehood. West Florida would remain in limbo, under the control of Orleans but not part of it.<sup>36</sup>

To expand American interests beyond just West Florida, Madison pushed Congress regarding the threat of foreign involvement in the Spanish colonial power vacuum. In early December 1810, Governor Folch offered to give his territory to the U.S. should a foreign nation attempt to occupy it. This opened up the possibility that other Spanish governors could potentially do the same. The following month, Madison asked Congress for a resolution

authorizing the Executive to take temporary possession of any part or parts of the said territory [Florida], in pursuance of arrangements which may be desired by the Spanish authorities... The wisdom of Congress will at the same time determine how far it may be expedient to provide for the event of a subversion of the Spanish authorities within the territory by any other foreign Power.<sup>37</sup>

In a secret, closed door session, Congress debated the resolution. During the debate Madison sent Congress an intercepted letter dated February 1810, in which the Spanish Junta's minister to the America, Luis de Onís, informed the Captain-General of Caracas that Spain saw the U.S. as potentially siding with Napoleon. Onís suggested a joint British-Spanish presence near Louisiana could break the militarily weak United States into several republics, "and, consequently, they would remain in a state of perfect nullity."<sup>38</sup> This information settled the debate and Madison's resolution, known as the

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<sup>36</sup> United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 482-486, 493-508, 517-542, 577-579, 858-860, and Senate, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 25-26, 103.

<sup>37</sup> Madison to Congress, January 3, 1811 in Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 473.

<sup>38</sup> Luis de Onís to Captain-General of the Province of Caracas, February 2, 1810 in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, Appendix, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 1273-1274.

“No Transfer Resolution,” passed on January 15 and included a bill authorizing \$100,000 for the president to employ the armed forces if necessary. Madison now had legal authority to take possession of any part of the Floridas should the local Spanish authorities allow a foreign power to occupy them.<sup>39</sup>

While the unforeseen gains in West Florida proceeded, Madison’s original plan to acquire the rest of the Floridas through other means was underway as well. Back in June 1810, a week after Claiborne sent Wykoff to ascertain the situation in West Florida, the secretary of state assigned Senator William H. Crawford of Georgia the mission of selecting an agent to enter both East and West Florida

for the purpose of diffusing the impression that the United States cherish the sincerest good will towards the people of the Floridas as neighbors, and as having in so many respects a common interest, and that in the event of a political separation from the parent Country, their incorporation into our Union would coincide with the sentiments and policy of the United States. And it will be particularly proper to draw their minds to a contemplation of the obvious and very disagreeable consequences, as well to them as to us, should the dissolution of their ties to the parent Country be followed by a connection with any of the European powers instead of the natural one suggested by their geographical and maritime relations to the United States.<sup>40</sup>

Crawford selected two men to be his agents. The first, General George Mathews, was a long-time friend of the senator. A seventy-one year old veteran of the War of Independence, Mathews spent most of his adult life in Georgia serving as a senator and twice as the state’s governor. Full of energy and known as a brawler in his younger years, Mathews still dressed in tricorne and breeches fashion of ’76.<sup>41</sup> The second agent was

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<sup>39</sup> United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House, 11<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., December, 1810, 1142-1148.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Smith to William H. Crawford, June 20, 1810 in *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Orleans, Vol. VII* (Washington D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1934) 883-885.

<sup>41</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 29; *Concise Dictionary of American Biography, Third Edition, Complete to 1960* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 650.

Colonel John McKee. He had served as the Indian agent to the Choctaw nation until 1802 after which he engaged in various enterprises often acting as the representative to the Choctaw of the John Forbes and Company (formerly Panton & Leslie Company), a Scottish owned trade company that conducted the majority of trade with the Indians in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>42</sup>

Mathews set out on a preliminary mission to assess the situation in the Floridas. Amid the events taking place in West Florida, he met with Governor Folch in 1810. No new information came of this meeting as the U.S. government was in regular communication with the governor regarding the rebellion and a filibuster attempt from a group called the Mobile Society, which unsuccessfully attempted to take the town. Folch seemed willing to bargain with the U.S. but only in the event that Britain or France made an attempt to acquire West Florida.<sup>43</sup> Mathews then proceeded to East Florida, a quite different experience. Initially he headed towards St. Augustine to meet Governor Enrique White. However, a local resident informed him that if he raised the subject of U.S. annexation he would likely “die in chains in the Moro Castle [in Havana].”<sup>44</sup> Since he could not get Governor White’s ear, Mathews talked to five prominent settlers in the region. The general consensus among them was that, based on the grim outlook for Spain in the war in Europe, they feared Ferdinand VII would never regain the Spanish throne. Thus, these settlers of East Florida would rather become part of the United States than subjects of Napoleon. Mathews prepared a report of his findings in the Floridas for the president. In it he stated, “I persued my journey to East Florida, I found the people there

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<sup>42</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 91.

<sup>43</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 30; for more on the Mobile Society see Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 82-86.

<sup>44</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 94.

in expectations of soon declaring for themselves. They appeared only to be waiting to hear the fate of Cádiz. A large majority of them are disposed to become a part of the United States.”<sup>45</sup>

The two agents met with Madison sometime in January 1811 to discuss his intentions for their mission. Mathews reported his view that negotiating with Governor White remained unlikely. The citizens’ apprehension about the fate of Spain would be the primary American advantage, but there also existed a dangerous British faction among the settlers. He determined that the key to investing East Florida would be the capture of the capital St. Augustine protected by Fort San Carlos. After meeting with the president the two men received appointments as U.S. commissioners.<sup>46</sup> They were ordered to proceed to West and East Florida to speak to the Spanish governors and attempt to gain any or all those territories. The secretary of state wrote, “you will repair to that quarter with all possible expedition, concealing from general observation the trust committed to you with that discretion which the delicacy and importance of the undertaking require.” He made available to them federal funds in the amount of \$8,000 in New Orleans and \$2,000 in Savannah, which could be used for any expenses and probably bribes.<sup>47</sup> Hence their mission was to encourage rebellion within the Floridas like the one that just occurred in Baton Rouge, allowing the U.S. to occupy those territories in rebellion in order to preserve peace and deny those regions to the French and British.

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<sup>45</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 30-31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Smith to Gen. Mathews and Col. M’Kee, January 26, 1811 in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Volume II* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, Inc., 1897), 491-492.

In conjunction with the mission of the two commissioners, the president ordered military detachments increased on the border with both East and West Florida. On January 24 Secretary of War William Eustis ordered army commanders north of Mobile to be prepared to march into West Florida should Governor Folch deliver that region to the U.S. He also ordered Colonel Thomas Smith to march his detachment in Georgia to Point Peter on the St. Mary's River, near the populated region of East Florida. The army was to put itself at the complete disposal of McKee and Mathews. The Navy even ordered vessels from New Orleans and Charleston to be available for use by the commissioners. The senior naval officer en route from Charleston would proceed to the St. Mary's River with six gunboats as well as twenty barrels of gunpowder and five-hundred pounds of lead to deliver to Point Peter.<sup>48</sup>

The commissioners headed first to East Florida, but finding no troops or supplies waiting for them at Point Peter, they trekked to West Florida to speak with Governor Folch. This trip proved fruitless; since the U.S. government's last positive communication with him in January, the Spanish captain general of Cuba had sent both aid and orders. The governor grew determined under this invigorated support to resist all attempts at U.S. expansion. Mathews and McKee tried for ten weeks to persuade him to reconsider, but it was futile. Then, in June Mathews received news that Governor Enrique White had died. Hoping the new governor of East Florida, Juan José de Estrada, might be willing to negotiate, he headed back to East Florida and left McKee with Governor Folch.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 34-35. For more on American gunboats see Howard I. Chappelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy: The Ships and their Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1949), 179-241.

<sup>49</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 37.

Upon Mathews' arrival at the St. Mary's River, the border between Georgia and East Florida, he found the harbor filled with British smuggling vessels violating the Non-Importation Act. Locals warned him that the new governor, Juan José de Estrada, was just as unfriendly as White had been. Also, recent victories in Spain by Sir Arthur Wellesley's Anglo-Portuguese Army against the French reduced the fear of a Spanish defeat and instilled patriotism back into East Florida's population.<sup>50</sup> On the bright side U.S. troops had arrived, and Georgia residents were excited about a possible incursion into Spanish territory, even inquiring about recruitment.<sup>51</sup> After spending two months assessing the situation, Mathews wrote the new Secretary of State James Monroe:

I ascertained that the quiet possession of East Florida could not be obtained by an amicable negotiation with the powers that exist there; ...that the inhabitants of the province are ripe for revolt. They are, however, incompetent to effect a thorough revolution without external aid. If two hundred stand of arms and fifty horsemen's swords were in possession, I am confident they would commence the business, and with a fair prospect of success. These could be put into their hands by consigning them to the commanding officer at this post, subject to my order. I shall use the most discreet management to prevent the United States being committed; and although I cannot vouch for the event, I think there would be but little danger.<sup>52</sup>

Mathews worked through the summer to gather his rebel leadership, a small group of prominent Georgia and Florida land owners, who decided to label their group the "Patriots." Next he needed men to fight in his rebellion. Mathews promised a fifty-acre plot of land in East Florida to any man who volunteered. By December the U.S. Navy squadron had arrived with not only gunboats, but eighteen heavy cannons, and large stores of powder and musket balls.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 292-293.

<sup>51</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 57-58.

<sup>52</sup> Mathews to Monroe, August 3, 1811 in Adams, *Administrations of James Madison*, 458.

<sup>53</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 75-77.

Time passed by as General Mathews awaited recruits to fill the Patriot ranks. Governor Estrada had about six-hundred soldiers under his command, and even through three-fifths of them were militia, the Patriots would require several hundred men to make an impression on the Spanish garrison. By March 1812, almost a year after arriving at St. Mary's, General Mathews had recruited only 125 men for the Patriot cause, and most of these were Georgians, not Florida residents as the president had anticipated.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the lack of local support, Mathews intended to attack St. Augustine by surprise. He expected the capture of the capital would make the entire territory fall. But he needed many more men to make this a reality. Colonel Smith of the U.S. regulars offered his support to bolster their numbers. However, their orders based on Congress' "No Transfer Resolution" stated they could not participate as U.S. soldiers. The solution was that two of the junior officers and seventy-five of their men would "desert" the service and meet up with the Patriots seven miles from St. Augustine. They would participate in the attack on March 16, then receive pardons and be restored within the service to their previous ranks and status. The general's plan was coming together nicely until an untimely power struggle broke out between him and the U.S. Army commander. In March Colonel Smith was away on business leaving Major Jacint Laval in command. Mutual distrust since the beginning of the enterprise led to a falling out between the two, and Laval refused to allow any of his men to join the Patriots.<sup>55</sup> Following this setback

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<sup>54</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 79-80, 83

<sup>55</sup> Laval to Eustis, March 16, 1812, in James Cooper, ed., *Secret Acts, Resolutions, and Instructions under which East Florida was Invaded by the United States Troops, Naval Forces, and Volunteers, in 1812 and 1813; Together with the Official Correspondence of the Agents and Officers of the Government* (Washington: George S. Gideon, 1860), 12-13.

Commodore Campbell, the U.S. Navy commander, told Mathews he would not send his gunboats so deep into Spanish territory.<sup>56</sup>

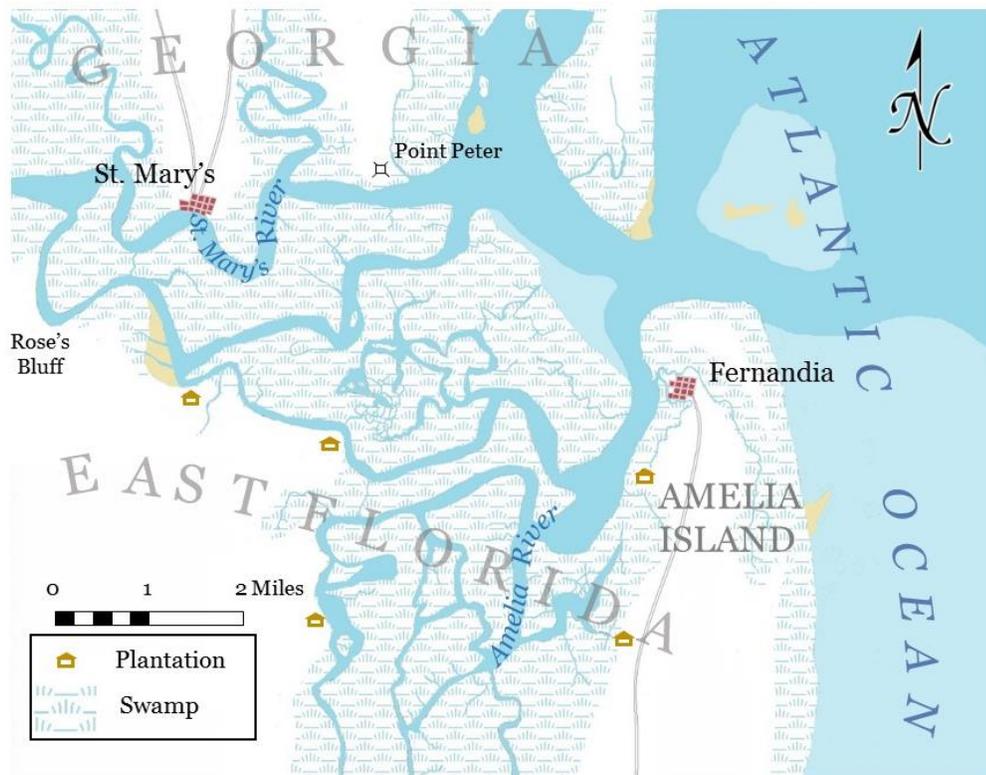
Given these setbacks, the general changed his target from St. Augustine to Amelia Island, a much weaker target. On Amelia Island, just across the St. Mary's River from Georgia, sat Fernandia, the second largest town in East Florida and home to six-hundred inhabitants, mostly English, Scottish, and Irish traders. Only a small dilapidated wooden fort manned by fewer than one hundred defended the town, and many of these were not soldiers or militia but armed civilians. The Patriots encamped at Rose's Bluff, just inside Spanish territory several miles west of Fernandia. On March 15 they began their advance on the island led by General John McIntosh, a prominent plantation owner. On the march the Patriots moved through several farms and plantations impressing locals into their small force to increase their numbers. By the time they reached Fernandia the Patriot force had grown to two hundred and fifty men, including fifty-nine Spanish subjects. Commodore Campbell did lend assistance to the attack by sending two gunboats to the mouth of the Amelia River to block traffic and provide intimidation.<sup>57</sup> Nearing the town, McIntosh sent an ultimatum to the commandant asking for surrender and warning him not to use black militia. Deploying armed blacks against Americans that close to Georgia could escalate things quickly, thus the commandant sent all his armed blacks home. As the Patriot force approached the town, Campbell ordered five of his gunboats to anchor within pistol shot of the town. These vessels had enough firepower to destroy Fernandia, and Campbell, having second thoughts, called them off. But two of the gunboat commanders refused to leave their station. The Spanish defenders, fearing the

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<sup>56</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 60, 83-89, 91-92.

<sup>57</sup> Mathews to Campbell March 15, 1812, in Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 11.

Navy's firepower, called to the gunboat captains to remain neutral. One captain replied, "If you fire on them, we will fire upon you!" As the Patriot force approached on flatboats under the protective guns of the Navy, the Spanish commandant felt he had no choice but to surrender the town or fight a battle he could not win. Around four o'clock in the afternoon he surrendered the town; by 5:00 pm the Patriots occupied the town. Fernandia had been captured without a shot fired.<sup>58</sup>



Map 5. St. Mary's Estuary during the Patriot War. Map created by author.

On March 18 Lieutenant Colonel Smith, now returned from business, sent a detachment of soldiers to secure the town and that afternoon the Patriot flag was lowered and the Stars and Stripes raised in Fernandia. It appeared that the U.S. had just annexed

<sup>58</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 92, 104, 108, 110, 113, 115-116, 119-121, 123-125.

northeastern Florida. Smith, fully invested in the Patriot endeavor, arrested Laval under charges stemming from the confrontation with Mathews. Over the next several days he reinforced Amelia Island with two hundred regular soldiers. The presence of the regulars kept the unruly Patriots from looting any private property.<sup>59</sup>

While the Patriot War had started in East Florida, the administration had received no detailed information aside from knowledge that hostilities had begun and Fernandia had been taken.<sup>60</sup> Madison could only guess as to the success of the revolution or if British troops had intervened. Mathews had been sending vague correspondence to Washington, in which he seemed rather pleased with himself, but not until they heard the complete story from Creek agent Benjamin Hawkins in April, did they become aware of Mathews' illegal actions. On top of that, the administration became aware that Mathews and McKee had plans to overthrow Spanish authority in both Mobile and Pensacola.<sup>61</sup> The administration was startled, and needed to rectify the situation immediately. On behalf of Madison, Monroe removed Mathews from his position, McKee having already been dismissed in January.<sup>62</sup> Monroe explained to Mathews "that the measures which you appear to have adopted for obtaining possession of Amelia Island ... are not authorized by the law of the United States, or the instructions founded on it." Mathews' method to take possession of East Florida violated the conditions set forth in January 1811, which were "either that the Governor or other existing local authority should be disposed to

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<sup>59</sup> Mathews to Monroe, March 21, 1812, in Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 14-15; Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 126, 128-129.

<sup>60</sup> Mathews to Monroe March 21 and 28, 1812, Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 14-17.

<sup>61</sup> Hawkins to Mathews, April 12, 1812 in Charles L. Grant, ed., *Letters, Journals, and Writings of Benjamin Hawkins, Vol. II 1802-1816* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1980), 606-607.

<sup>62</sup> Mathews to Madison, April 16, 1812 in *Madison Papers*, National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/?q=mathews&s=1111311111&sa=&r=465&sr=> [accessed December 24, 2015].

place it amicably in the hands of the United States, or that an attempt should be made to take possession of it by a foreign Power.” Neither of these conditions allowed Mathews “to wrest the Province forcibly from Spain,” an act potentially provoking war. Considering the circumstances in which the General acted, “...which differs so essentially from that contemplated and authorized by the Government,” Monroe relieved General Mathews of his duties and replaced him with Governor David B. Mitchell of Georgia.<sup>63</sup>

On this new development Madison stated, “in E. Florida, Mathews has been playing a tragic-comedy in the face of common sense, as well as his instructions. His extravagances place us in the most distressing dilemma.”<sup>64</sup> The administration’s knee-jerk reaction was to immediately order Governor Mitchell to restore Amelia Island to the Spanish.<sup>65</sup> Under normal circumstances, the return of illegally captured territory to Spain would be the obvious solution. But in the spring of 1812, Congress was leaning towards declaring war with Great Britain, an ally of Spain. Should the British use Florida to attack the U.S., or should Spain join Britain in the upcoming war, it would seem silly that the nation had returned the captured territory on the eve of the conflict, especially since the “No Transfer Resolution” passed in January 1811 would be make it legal in the eyes of Congress. Furthermore, it would be immoral to abandon the Patriots who in good faith volunteered to support what they believed to be the president’s intent. Thus, Monroe sent Mitchell on May 27 stating that “In consequence of the commitment of the United States

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<sup>63</sup> Monroe to Mathews, April 4, 1812, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House Supplemental Journal, Vol. 8, 483-484.

<sup>64</sup> Madison to Jefferson, 24 April, 1812. in J.C.A. Stagg, et al, ed., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume IV, 5 November 1811-9 July 1812* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 346.

<sup>65</sup> Monroe to Mitchell, April 10, 1812, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House Supplemental Journal, Vol. 8, 484-485.

to the inhabitants, you have been already instructed not to withdraw the troops unless you find that it may be done consistently with their safety, and to report to the Government the result of your conferences with the Spanish authorities, with your opinion, of their views, holding in the mean time the ground occupied.”<sup>66</sup> Governor Mitchell, therefore, maintained the occupation of Amelia Island as effected by Matthews, and entered into deliberations with Governor Estrada to gain amnesty for the Patriots prior to a U.S. withdrawal. The primary tactic here was to buy time until the war with Britain commenced. Curiously, Mitchell’s instructions from Monroe also stated that “It is not expected ... that you should interfere to compel the patriots to surrender the country, or any part of it, to the Spanish authorities. The United States are responsible for their own conduct only, not for the inhabitants of East Florida.”<sup>67</sup> Consequently, the Patriots “revolution” continued during Mitchell’s negotiations.

Between 1809 and 1812, President Madison’s efforts to annex the Floridas met limited success. In 1810 he had sent agents into both East and West Florida to ascertain the willingness of those residents and the local government to become part of the United States. While consistently asserting the belief that the Louisiana Purchase included most of Spanish West Florida, he pursued diplomacy towards that goal. Spanish defeats in Europe created anxiety among their American colonies which, through rapid negotiations, could have offered this region to the U.S. But poor and delayed communications kept this from becoming a reality. The rebellion in West Florida came as a serendipitous gift to the president who took the opportunity to annex a small portion of

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<sup>66</sup> Monroe to Mitchell, May 27, 1812, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House Supplemental Journal, Vol. 8, 485.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

the region without instigating conflict with Spain. Unfortunately, his effort to repeat this with an instigated version in East Florida failed in the face of rejuvenated Spanish resistance.

Despite these setbacks, the conditions were set for American movements into the Floridas. The “No Transfer Resolution” passed by Congress in January 1811 gave the president permission to occupy Spanish territory if a foreign power attempted to occupy it, so U.S. military forces gathered on the borders of Florida just in case. And U.S. forces had already assisted a filibuster into East Florida with little political repercussions. All the President needed now was a war with a Great Britain. Based on their alliance with the Cádiz government, this could guarantee a British incursion into Florida. On June 18, 1812, this became reality when Congress passed a declaration of war against Great Britain.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Bill Declaring War, June 18, 1812, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House, 12<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., November, 1811, 1679-1683.

## CHAPTER III

### ACTS OF AGGRESSION

In the summer of 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain, officially beginning the War of 1812. The causes of the war are debatable. Whether the war began to restore “Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights,” to conquer Canada and end British influence among the Indians in the Northwest, to uphold the prestige of the Republic and preserve national honor, or to forge unity within the Democratic Republican party, the war meant something different to the American Southwest.<sup>1</sup> While the above causes had some importance in the Southwest, expansionists hoped that it would expedite the struggle to oust Spain from the Floridas and bring those lands into the Republic. Spain’s colonies remained loyal to the Cádiz government. And with Great Britain and Cádiz allied in their war against Napoleon, the potential hostility of the Spanish colonies against America convinced southern politicians, and the Madison administration, to seek congressional approval to occupy the Spanish colonies of East and West Florida as a necessity of war.

In the summer of 1812 the United States could not have been less prepared for the impending conflict. Throughout the summer the War Department, under Secretary of War William Eustis, was overwhelmed by the task at hand as his staff was small, and the state of the small U.S. army dismal, most of the soldiers and leaders inexperienced, and

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<sup>1</sup> Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 1.

pay and supply problems massive. Only the Navy was somewhat prepared for the war as it had been used to fight piracy.<sup>2</sup>

As for the situation in East Florida, Madison attempted to bring the debacle known as the Patriot War to a suitable end. Ties were cut with General Mathews, instigator of the unsolicited filibuster, and Governor Mitchell of Georgia placed in charge. Fortuitously, when General Mathews discovered he had been relieved of his mission in Florida, especially on the eve of war, he grew irate that someone else would take the glory. He immediately proceeded to Washington to confront the president, however, the August heat prevented him from reaching his destination. Stricken with fever, he died unexpectedly in Augusta, Georgia, on August 30, 1812, his seventy-third birthday.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Mitchell had orders to buy time until the declaration of war might alter the situation. Monroe advised him to not withdraw U.S. troops unless the Spanish would grant amnesty to the Patriots.<sup>4</sup>

Once Mathews had been replaced, Washington seemed to forget about East Florida. Colonel Smith had received no government support since April, and was provisioning his men on personal credit. Following the capture of Fernandina, the Patriots had marched on St. Augustine.<sup>5</sup> Lacking sufficient forces to assault Fort San Marcos, they surrounded the city and attempted a limited siege. On June 11, 1812, Spanish reinforcements arrived from Cuba increasing the garrison at St. Augustine to nearly 900 men. A new governor also arrived, Sebastián Kindelán y O'Regan, a veteran of quelling

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<sup>2</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 69-73, 90.

<sup>3</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 190.

<sup>4</sup> Monroe to Mitchell, May 27, 1812, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, House Supplemental Journal, Vol. 8, 485.

<sup>5</sup> Mathews to Smith, April 8, 1812, in Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 17-18.

rebellions in Latin America. Many of the newly arrived soldiers were free blacks, the thought of which infuriated Georgians. The Spanish reinforcements also made the Patriots' goal of taking the city impossible.<sup>6</sup> Colonel Smith supported the Patriots' move to St. Augustine by establishing an encampment just over a mile north of the city.<sup>7</sup> Commodore Campbell also aided them by moving gunboats to the mouth of the St. John's River to isolate the harbor.<sup>8</sup> The implication of moving regular U.S. troops deeper into East Florida became apparent when Governor Kindelán sent Mitchell an ultimatum on June 11, threatening to attack if the U.S. troops did not withdraw from Spanish territory within eleven days.<sup>9</sup> Mitchell, knowing that Spain did not want a war with the U.S., cleverly responded that if Spanish troops attacked U.S. regulars, the two nations would be at war.<sup>10</sup>

Since the Patriots were outnumbered, and Governor Mitchell was under orders to protect the welfare of the Patriots, he asked for American volunteers to help their cause. The call was answered and by mid-June 500 Georgia and Tennessee volunteers had crossed the border into Florida.<sup>11</sup> To counter the increased Patriot numbers, Governor Kindelán persuaded the Seminole tribe to join in the war. By July Seminole war parties, supplied and armed by the Spanish, began attacking the Patriots across the Florida frontier.<sup>12</sup> Luis de Onís, the unacknowledged Spanish minister to the U.S., suggested to

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<sup>6</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>7</sup> Laval to Eustis, May 2, 1812, in Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Campbell to Hipkins, April 16, 1812, in *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Kindelán to Mitchell, June 11, 1812, in *ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>10</sup> Mitchell to Kindelán, June 16, 1812, in *ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>11</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 181; Williams to Madison, December 3, 1812, in J.C.A. Stagg, et al., ed., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume V, 10 July 1812-7 February 1813* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 477-478.

<sup>12</sup> Smith to Macomb, August 21, 1812, and Mitchell to Monroe, October 13, 1812 in Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 45, 55.

Governor Kindelán that he should grant amnesty to the Patriots if Smith withdrew the U.S. troops from East Florida. Conversely, Kindelán believed he had the forces necessary to drive the Patriots out of East Florida and make things right.<sup>13</sup> Thus the Patriot War degenerated into “a guerilla war, characterized by ambushes, raiding parties, and the destruction of livestock and property on an extended scale.” This was particularly the work of the Patriots, who, unable to take St. Augustine, lived off of looting local farms and conducted raids on Seminole towns in the interior. This continued from August through October of 1812 until Georgia legislators, fearing Indian attacks and slave uprisings in their own state, nearly decided to authorize Mitchell to invade East Florida before they regained their senses and requested permission from Washington.<sup>14</sup>

Back in Washington, the administration had not actually forgotten about East Florida. In fact, officials sought means with which to justify a complete occupation. While the lack of supplies for Colonel Smith was likely due to the strained logistical system as the nation prepared for war, the administration made repeated attempts to pass a bill in Congress that would enable the seizure of both the Floridas. On June 19, Senator George Troup of Georgia proposed a bill to sanction a U.S. occupation of both East and West Florida. The House passed the bill at the end of June but a week later the Senate defeated it.<sup>15</sup> The main concern in Congress was the war in Canada, not the southern sideshow with Spain.

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<sup>13</sup> Cusick, *The Other War of 1812*, 186.

<sup>14</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 127.

<sup>15</sup> An Act Authorizing the President to Take Possession of a Tract of Country Lying South of the Mississippi Territory and of the State of Georgia, and for Other Purposes, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., June 1812, 324-326, 1683-1694.

With the British military fully committed in Europe, their strategy in the American war began as a defensive one. This put the poorly prepared Americans on the offense, and perhaps, over ambitiously, the first campaign of the war consisted of a three-pronged invasion of Canada. Embarrassingly, the American offensive not only failed to gain any ground, but lost it when the British captured Fort Mackinac and Detroit. The Navy's success at sea remained the only positive achievement. The results of the 1812 campaign were surprising to both Britons and Americans alike. Whereas both sides expected the U.S. to march easily into Canada and be defeated at sea, the opposite occurred.<sup>16</sup>

Back in East Florida the chaotic guerrilla war had driven members of the Georgia assembly to their wits' ends. On November 21, 1812, they sent a request that Congress "adopt efficient measures to authorize the President of the United States to take immediate possession of the province of East Florida, as well as that portion of West Florida, purchased from France but still retained by Spain."<sup>17</sup> James Monroe, now the Secretary of War, championed the view of the Georgia assembly:

For Savannah and East Florida special provision must be made, whether East Florida is left in possession of Spain, or taken immediate possession of by the United States. In either case it menaces the United States with danger to their vital interests. While it is held by Spain it will be used as a British province for annoying us in every mode which may be made instrumental to that end. The ascendancy which the British government has over the Spanish Regency secures to Great Britain that advantage while the war lasts. We find that at the present the Creek [Seminole] Indians are excited against us, and an asylum afforded to the Southern slaves who seek it there. To guard the United States against the attempts of the British government in that vulnerable quarter, the province remaining in the hands of the Spanish authorities, a force of about two thousand regular troops will be

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<sup>16</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 76, 81-88, 93-99.

<sup>17</sup> Georgia Senate to U.S. Congress, November 21, 1812 in Georgia House Journal, GDA.

requisite. It will require no more to hold it should possession be taken by the United States.<sup>18</sup>

Now that the Patriot War had escalated into an affair in which the Spanish had armed and incited Indians against the United States, Madison attempted to pass Troup's resolution to occupy Florida again in December. With Louisiana officially a state, the addition of two more southern senators, who would likely vote in favor, could allow the bill to pass. On December 10, Madison submitted a resolution for the occupation of East Florida and parts of West Florida still occupied by Spain. The resolution still did not pass by the time Congress' first session adjourned in December 22. The notion remained firm that the occupation of Spanish territory would only happen under the conditions of the previously approved "No Transfer Resolution."<sup>19</sup>

To Madison, the threat of Britain utilizing Florida to attack the U.S. was real. He believed "secret articles might exist between Spain & England" which would require Spain "to make common cause" with Britain "in the war against America."<sup>20</sup> He also believed that there would be no warning if the British intended to put forces in Florida as "the intention and the act would become known at the same time." He was sure that Cádiz was ostensibly controlled by London given the circumstances of their alliance.<sup>21</sup>

When Congress reconvened in January, it took up Troup's resolution again but the clause authorizing the occupation of East Florida struck down. However, the

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<sup>18</sup> Monroe to William H. Crawford, December 3, 1812 in Lucier, *The Political Writings of James Monroe*, 450.

<sup>19</sup> An Act Authorizing the President of the United States to Take Possession of a Tract of Country Lying South of the Mississippi Territory and West of the River Perdido in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., Senate Journal, 371, 373, 375-376, Executive Journal, 335, 338, 374, and Appendix, 371-379.

<sup>20</sup> Foster to Lord Castlereagh, 24 June 1812, in Stagg, *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume IV*, 502.

<sup>21</sup> Monroe to Madison, January 14, 1813 in Stagg, *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume V*, 577-582.

clause regarding the occupation of West Florida to the Perdido River remained; this being the territory claimed by the U.S. in regards to the Louisiana Purchase as Congress had previously acknowledged with the “Mobile Act” of February, 1804. The amended bill passed on February 9, 1813, and was signed three days later by the president.<sup>22</sup>

With this bill, Congress now endorsed the president to occupy part of Spanish West Florida without meeting any of the requirements of the “No Transfer Resolution.” Although congressional approval finally allowed the president to occupy Mobile and all lands west of the Perdido River, it granted nothing in East Florida. In November, Monroe replaced Mitchell with Major General Thomas Pinckney. The general had negotiated the Treaty of San Lorenzo with the Spanish in 1795 and had ample military experience to better manage the forces in East Florida.<sup>23</sup> However, his appointment would be short because in March 1813, the Spanish agreed to the American terms that if they pardoned all of the Patriots, the U.S. would withdraw its forces.<sup>24</sup> By April 26, the remaining U.S. troops left East Florida, thus ending U.S. involvement in the Patriot War.<sup>25</sup>

Two weeks before the last American soldier left East Florida, U.S. forces moved to occupy Mobile. As General James Wilkinson landed 600 soldiers south of Mobile, while Colonel John Bowyer marched troops with five artillery pieces south from Fort Stoddert in the Mississippi Territory and Commodore John Shaw posted navy gunboats at the mouth of Mobile Bay to isolate the town. Wilkinson sent emissaries to the Spanish commandant, Cayetano Pérez, at Fort Carlota, which contained thirty cannons

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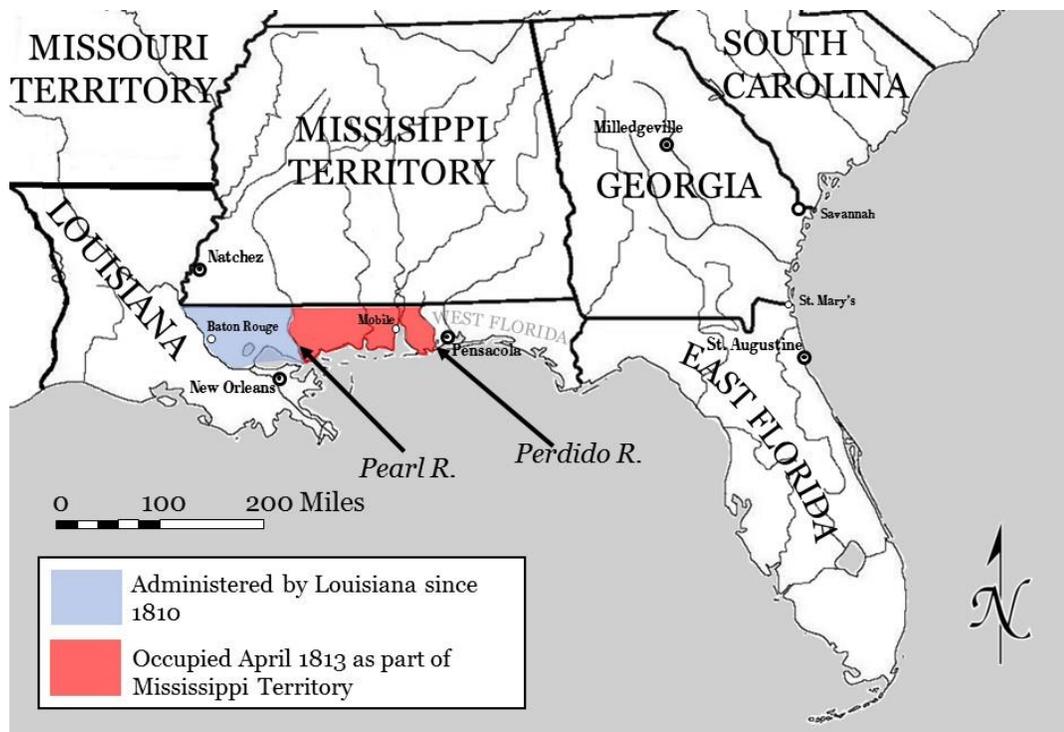
<sup>22</sup> An Act Authorizing the President of the United States to Take Possession of a Tract of Country Lying South of the Mississippi Territory and West to the River Perdido in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., December 1812-February 1813, Executive Journal, 334-344.

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell to Monroe, November 2, 1812, in Cooper, *Secret Acts*, 49-50.

<sup>24</sup> Pinckney to Kindelán, March 13, 1813, in *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>25</sup> Pinckney to Monroe, May 8, 1813, in *ibid.*, 69.

and only thirty soldiers. Wilkinson’s messenger informed Pérez that the American forces “came by order of the president, not as enemies, but to relieve his garrison from occupying a post within the ‘legitimate limits’ of the United States.” Pérez formally protested, but against orders to resist, he decided to retire beyond the Perdido River as his council of war had decided. The two commanders signed the formal surrender on April 13 and the Spanish evacuated the fort two days later, leaving all thirty cannons to the Americans (Map 6).<sup>26</sup>



Map 6. Territory Occupied by United States by April 1813. Map created by author.

<sup>26</sup> Isaac J. Cox, *The West Florida Controversy, 1798-1813: A Study in American Diplomacy* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967), 618-620; Holmes to Monroe, April 14, 1813 in *The Territorial Papers, Mississippi, Vol. VI*, 360.

## *The Creek War*

By the end of April 1813, it appeared as though there would be no more conflict with Spain over the Floridas. With the Patriot War concluded and Mobile occupied, there seemed no other reason, short of British intervention, that would induce Congress to allow the occupation of any more Spanish territory. But a new antagonist had emerged in the Southwest in 1811, and by the summer of 1813 had matured into a significant threat to southern expansion.

When the United States went to war against Great Britain in 1812, the nation had already been at war with Indian tribes in the Northwest since 1811. Agitation among numerous displaced tribes in the Indiana Territory, owing to escalating land cession treaties imposed by Governor William Henry Harrison, led to a resistance movement that intended to take the entire frontier by storm. A Shawnee spiritual leader named Tenskwatawa, commonly called the Prophet, started a new religious movement that emphasized the rejection of white culture and particularly U.S. expansion. The Prophet's brother, Tecumseh, amplified the movement into a military alliance consisting of over twenty different tribes. As the movement became more militant and war parties began to cause trouble, Governor Harrison asked Congress for troops to suppress the movement and arrest the leaders. Congress, reluctant to start an Indian war, ultimately granted Harrison his troops and, in November 1811, he marched on their gathering place called Prophetstown. On November 7, before his force had reached Prophetstown, the allied tribes, led by the Prophet, attacked Harrison in what became known as the battle of Tippecanoe. Harrison's troops gained a costly victory and burned Prophetstown. Had

Tecumseh been present, it may have worked out differently, but he was off gathering more allies for his plan to eliminate the white threat.<sup>27</sup>

In the fall of 1811, Tecumseh traveled through the South to convince the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks to join coalition. He found little support from the Choctaw and Chickasaw who submitted to U.S. encroachment by selling vast tracks of land in order to maintain peace. However, he did find support within the Creek Confederacy. White settlement and assimilation programs created division within the Creeks and agitated them to the point of potential hostilities.<sup>28</sup>

Since the turn of the century, white influence had been gradually encroaching on the Creek peoples. Along the Georgia and Tennessee frontiers whites settled increasingly on Creek lands. As a result, depredations intensified as Creeks began stealing horses and cattle from whites. Besides settlers moving west from Georgia and south from Tennessee, white settlements appeared along the Alabama River to the west boxing in the Creeks and leaving only Spanish Florida to the south open for movement. To further exacerbate tensions, the U.S. built a federal road through the middle of Creek lands to connect Georgia to the Alabama River settlements. Completed in 1810, this road increased trade but gave the Creeks the impression that their lands would soon succumb completely to white settlement. The chiefs, wanting to avoid conflict, opposed the construction of the road and feared that this increased contact with whites would lead their young men to commit more acts of depredation. Their fears were correct and before

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<sup>27</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 22-24.

<sup>28</sup> John E. Grenier, “‘We Bleed Our Enemies in Such Cases to Give Them Senses’: Americans’ Unrelenting Wars on the Indians of the Trans-Appalachian West, 1810-1814,” in Kathryn E. Holland Braund, ed., *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812* (Auburn AL: Pebble Hill Books, 2012), 175.

long young Creek men, acting on their own, were charging illegal tolls on the road to harass settlers.<sup>29</sup>

Resentment of white culture also fueled Creek agitation. There had been extensive intermarriage with Scots-Irish settlers and many Creeks had adopted white agrarian culture, encouraged by Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins' assimilation policy. Traditionalist Creeks began to direct considerable hostility towards assimilated Indians and mixed bloods rather than against white society. Thus, when Tecumseh made his visit in October 1811, brewing hostilities already existed among the Creeks.<sup>30</sup>

If Tecumseh's visit were not enough to motivate the Creeks to war, his supernatural premonitions and promises of foreign support also encouraged the hostile faction within the Creek Confederacy to commence hostilities. Prior to Tecumseh's visit to the Creeks, the British in Canada had informed him of the approach of a comet. During his speeches to the Creeks, he stated that "when the white men approach your towns the earth shall open and swallow them up. Soon shall you see my arm of fire stretched athwart the sky. You will know that I am on the war-path. I will stamp my foot and the very earth shall shake."<sup>31</sup> While he intentionally referenced the comet's approach, Tecumseh could not have known that earthquakes would shake the Southwest throughout 1811.<sup>32</sup> Surely these occurrences added weight to Tecumseh's message, and though the Creek people may have been in awe of his "supernatural" prophecies, his promises of foreign aid added the final nudge to bring them to hostilities. During his visit Tecumseh

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<sup>29</sup> Hobohoilthle Micco to Madison, May 15, 1811, J. C. A. Stagg, et al., ed., *The Papers of James Madison, Presidential Series, Vol. III, 3 November 1810–4 November 1811* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 305–307; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 9, 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> For more on Tecumseh's prophecies see Gregory Evans Dowd, "Thinking Outside the Circle: Tecumseh's 1811 Mission" in Holland, *Tohopeka*, 30-52.

promised Creek leaders that weapons and supplies could be obtained from the British at Pensacola, St. Marks, and other Florida ports.<sup>33</sup>

Although Tecumseh believed the British would support the Creeks from the sea, as they promised up North, he had no knowledge that the Spanish also were considering supporting the Creeks to counter U.S. aggression. By August 1812, rumors had reached American officials in the Southwest stating, from credible sources, that the Spanish at Pensacola intended to improve defenses, reinforce the garrison with 800 troops, and supply the Indians with arms. Reports also stated that the Spanish governor was inviting Indians down to encourage hostilities. Consequently, American militia became anxious, and despite Hawkins' efforts to prevent conflict with the Creeks, acts of violence by militia in the Mississippi Territory began to "render successful the attempts of the Spaniards to enlist the Creek nation to their service."<sup>34</sup>

Following the seizure of Mobile in April 1813, U.S. generals expected some form of Spanish retaliation. Both the British and Americans believed that the Spanish would petition the Creeks to fight and that their agents had already acted to spur the tribe to war.<sup>35</sup> Their assumptions proved correct; in fact, the Spanish governor of West Florida realized the only way he could save his province was to encourage the Creeks to go to war with the Americans, former adversaries during the War of Independence. The plan specified that they would fight the Americans in the Mississippi Territory and keep the violence away from Mobile so Spanish subjects would not be victimized. Despite the

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<sup>33</sup> Extract from Minutes of Georgia Legislature, April 9, 1813, Indian Letters, GDA, 171-172; *Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger*, November, 10, 1812.

<sup>34</sup> Toulmin to Graham, August 5, 1812, in *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Mississippi, Vol. VI.*, 306-307.

<sup>35</sup> Extract from Minutes of Georgia Legislature, April 9, 1813, Indian Letters, GDA, 171-172; *Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger*, November, 10, 1812.

wish to start an uprising, the Spanish lacked the means to arm the Creeks sufficiently. In April 1813, Governor Zúñiga invited Creek leaders to Pensacola to plan for war. The Creeks showed up assuming he held arms and ammunition for them, but Zúñiga did not possess excess supplies for them and sent them away empty handed. While the content of the meeting is not exactly known, it would seem that the Spanish did offer support, as hostilities began shortly after and the Creeks continued to return to Pensacola asking for arms and supplies.<sup>36</sup>

This spike in Spanish resistance came from news of the war in Europe. Following Napoleon's 1812 defeat in Russia, the French began pulling troops out of Spain and in 1813 the Duke of Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese Army began pushing the French back to the Pyrenees. As Joseph Napoleon's regime in Spain collapsed, it appeared the Cádiz government would survive.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the calls to war from Creek factions, Tecumseh, and the Spanish, there were advocates of peace. The majority of Creeks did not want war, and many, such as chiefs Big Warrior and Little Prince, believed that assimilation to white culture was the only way for their people to survive. Under the program of Benjamin Hawkins, a significant portion of the Creek population had adjusted to a southern agrarian lifestyle and many even owned slaves.<sup>38</sup> Even the British traders, whom Tecumseh said would supply a war, were against it. The British were the primary merchants among the Creeks, Choctaw, and Seminole, thus when war supplies were needed, the Creeks would

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<sup>36</sup> Letter to Editor, April 18, 1813, in *Niles' Weekly Register*, May 29, 1813; Deposition of David Tait, August 2, 1813, in Claiborne, Letterbook F, MDA.

<sup>37</sup> Bell, *The First Total War*, 292-293.

<sup>38</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 16-17.

obviously look to the British.<sup>39</sup> However, the traders opposed an Indian war because it would destroy their business.

The primary trade company among the Indians, and the largest on the Gulf Coast, was John Forbes & Company, a Scottish-owned enterprise. In 1813 the company had two primary stores, located at Mobile and Pensacola. Two brothers managed these stores, James Innerarity in Mobile and John Innerarity at Pensacola. Besides being the Forbes & Company's principal clients, the Creeks were substantially in debt to them. Between 1804 and 1811, they had paid off much of that debt by ceding to the company over 1,400,000 acres of land in Spanish Florida along the east bank of the Apalachicola River. Sometimes land was also sold to the U.S. government to pay debts.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the company's owners did not support a war as they feared their debtors would lose and be forced to give up large amounts of land, their only valued assets.

Following Tecumseh's visit, acts of violence escalated among the Creeks, and quickly erupted into a civil war within the confederacy. In the spring of 1812, a party of Creeks traveling from visiting up North attacked a white settlement in Tennessee. They killed a man, a woman, and five children, and also kidnapped another woman. Hawkins encouraged the Creek council to find and try the attackers. When the party returned to Creek territory they were subsequently found, tried, and put to death.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the earlier attack was followed by the murder of two white men living near Creek lands in March and May. As before, the council tried and executed the culprits.<sup>42</sup> In February

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<sup>39</sup> McKee to Hawkins, March 25, 1813, Indian Letters, GDA.

<sup>40</sup> William S. Coker, *John Forbes & Company and the War of 1812 in the Spanish Borderlands* (Pensacola: The Perdido Bay Press, 1979), 61-62.

<sup>41</sup> Doyle to Hawkins, May 3, 1813, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 843-844.

<sup>42</sup> Hawkins to Eustis, April 6, 1812 and May 25, 1812, in *ibid.*, 811.

1813 a party of Creeks, returning from a visit with Tecumseh's people, was traveling near the Ohio River and seeking to spread terror, attacked a group of whites and murdered seven families. A pregnant woman was even cut open, the child removed and impaled on a stake for all to see.<sup>43</sup> As a result, Hawkins fell under increased pressure to stop these depredations. He did not want to call the military for help as a war would commence and the Creeks would suffer. Hawkins intended to continue with the Creeks enforcing the peace, and to only bring in regular troops as a last resort, but not militia, as they tended to be unmanageable and prone to aggravating hostilities with the Indians rather than calming them.<sup>44</sup>

In June the intra-Creek violence erupted as members of the traditionalist faction began to murder assimilationists, particularly those who had personally carried out the executions of the murderers.<sup>45</sup> The traditionalists came mostly from the Upper Creeks, the faction of the Confederacy that lived farthest away from white settlements along the Tallapoosa, Coosa, and Alabama Rivers. Creeks began to refer to hostile traditionalists as the Red Sticks, a term adopted from the British which described a group on the war path.<sup>46</sup> Hawkins used the term "Prophets" to describe Red Stick leaders, as they had been trained by Tecumseh in the ways of his medicine. Meanwhile, the faction of the Creek Confederacy that supported peace, mostly assimilationists, were the Lower

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<sup>43</sup> Hawkins to Tustunnuggee Thlucco, March 29, 1813, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 839.

<sup>44</sup> Hawkins to Cornells, March 25, 1813, in *ibid.*, 839.

<sup>45</sup> Cornells to Hawkins, June 22, 1813, in *ibid.*, 845-846.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the term Red Sticks see Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Red Sticks" in Holland, *Tohopeka*, 84-104.

Creeks who lived close to the Georgia frontier along the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers.<sup>47</sup>

In July, the Red Sticks laid siege to the town of Tuckaubatchee, the home of chief Big Warrior, a prominent supporter of peace, and the location of the Creek council. Appeals to Hawkins and the Cherokee for aid went unanswered.<sup>48</sup> This started a civil war between the assimilationists, who wanted peace with the whites, and the Red Sticks, who saw the assimilationists as an obstacle to preserving their traditional way of life. Aggressive Red Stick war parties, besides murdering supporters of peace, also began destroying livestock, farms, and towns. Hawkins monitored the situation and determined 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 and ways of the white people; to put to death every man who will not join them; and, by those means, to unite the nation in aid of the British, and Indians of the lakes, against their white neighbors, as soon as their friends, the British, will be ready for them.<sup>49</sup>

Initially the Red Sticks held the advantage as they had prepared for over a year. But the Lower Creeks soon rallied their warriors and, joined by 200 Cherokee warriors, lifted the siege of Tuckaubatchee.<sup>50</sup>

As the war escalated, the Red Sticks continued to seek outside support. In July 1813, Red Stick leader Peter McQueen headed a party of nearly 300 warriors with pack horses that returned to Pensacola seeking the arms and ammunition promised by Tecumseh. The new governor, Don Mateo González Manrique, had little to give them

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<sup>47</sup> Hawkins to Armstrong, July 13, 1813 in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 848.

<sup>48</sup> Cussetah Micco to Hawkins, July 10, 1813 in *ibid.*, 849.

<sup>49</sup> Hawkins to Eustis, July 10, 1813 in *ibid.*, 849-850.

<sup>50</sup> Hawkins to Eustis, August 2, 1813 in *ibid.*, 850.

and feared that if he did not meet their demands they would become hostile. After some hesitation, Manrique gave the party 1,000 pounds of gunpowder, as well as lead, food, and blankets, but no arms. The Red Sticks fighting up north lacked firearms and ammunition, and in desperation McQueen's party grew agitated.<sup>51</sup> Disappointed by the governor, they approached John Innerarity at the Forbes store. Innerarity refused aid, and convinced them that the store held no weapons or powder. He even found it necessary to calm the Creeks with paltry gifts of blankets and sugar to prevent them from looting his stock. Unbeknownst to the Creeks, local regulations prohibited the storage of large quantities of powder within the town; the Forbes Company did possess large quantities of powder stored in nearby Fort Barrancas. Following a heated standoff with the Spanish garrison in the town square, the Red Stick party grudgingly headed off unsatisfied.<sup>52</sup>

The Red Stick visit to Pensacola did not go unnoticed by the Americans. Many of the town's residents supported the U.S. and frequently provided intelligence. Governor Claiborne kept close watch and informed Madison that the Spanish "express considerable dissatisfaction at the late occupancy of Mobile by the troops of the United States." The governor in Pensacola even defied the U.S. commander at Mobile considering "the taking of that post, as also of Baton Rouge as *Acts of aggression*" even demanding "their immediate evacuation." Claiborne further learned "that the Spanish authorities have of late been unusually attentive to the Creek & Chactaw Indians & had made them considerable presents."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Deposition of David Tait, August 2, 1813, in Claiborne, Letterbook F, MDA; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 26.

<sup>52</sup> John Innerarity to James Innerarity, July 27, 1813, Creek Letters, GDA; Forbes to Castlereagh, May 29, 1815, Forbes Papers, MPL.

<sup>53</sup> Claiborne to Madison, July 9, 1813 in Dunbar, *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne 1801-1816*, 235-239.

As soon as news of the Red Stick supply mission reached the Mississippi Territory, Governor Holmes immediately mustered the local militia.<sup>54</sup> The commander, Colonel James Caller, decided that the best course to prevent a major war would be the capture of the munitions McQueen's party just acquired in Pensacola. Caller managed to muster 180 mounted men in time to intercept the party. On the morning of July 27, Caller's men conducted a surprise attack on the pack train at Burnt Corn Creek. The Mississippians captured some of the pack train but were forced to retreat after a counterattack. Although the Red Sticks lost some of the supplies, the confidence gained by their victory over the whites far outweighed that loss, and contributed to the expansion of the war.<sup>55</sup>

Following Caller's defeat, Mississippians realized that they were now a part of the Indian war. Holmes mustered the remaining territorial militia and advised settlers to seek safety in nearby forts, friendly Creeks that could make it joined them as well. The governor deployed scouts, including allied Choctaws, to keep a watchful eye on hostile movements. Militia detachments were sent to each fort to protect the settlers and Holmes sent a request for regular army support.<sup>56</sup>

Astounded by their success at Burnt Corn Creek, the prophets believed that the time had arrived when they must start their war against the whites. The medicine they had learned from Tecumseh professed that their warriors would be invulnerable to bullets; the battle at Burnt Corn Creek seemed to prove this and gain them more followers. As a first target they selected Fort Mims on the Tombigbee River. At noon on

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<sup>54</sup> Holmes to Caller, July 21, 1813, Holmes Journal, MDA.

<sup>55</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 30-32.

<sup>56</sup> Holmes to F.L. Claiborne, August 11, 1813, Holmes Journal, MDA.

August 30, 750 Red Stick warriors, led by William Weatherford, attacked the fort occupied by 120 militiamen and nearly 200 civilians including settlers, Indians, and a few slaves. With complete surprise the warriors charged through the opened gate creating a diversion while the remainder manned the firing ports in the stockade walls from the outside, turning the interior of the fort into a killing ground. Within three hours 247 men, women, and children were dead. The Red Sticks also suffered heavily, with at least one hundred killed.<sup>57</sup>

Fear gripped the American public following the “Fort Mims Massacre.” Never before had a fort of that size fallen to Indians.<sup>58</sup> Rumors that only a European-led attack could have brought this kind of success began to spread; rumblings about slave uprisings proliferated too. Besides creating panic on the frontier, the ordeal at Fort Mims convinced Americans that a military campaign must take place to crush the Red Sticks before they could collaborate with the British.<sup>59</sup>

While the Americans scrambled to prepare for an Indian war, the Red Sticks continued to prepare as well. In September, following an invitation from Governor Manrique, a third party visited Pensacola looking for supplies. After McQueen’s meeting, Manrique had requested approval to aid the Creeks from his superior, Ruiz Apodaca, the Captain General of Cuba. Apodaca not only approved the request but ordered Manrique to give them all the arms and support he could in the future. Little is known regarding the number of weapons Manrique provided this party, but it most likely amounted to little.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> For details on the Fort Mims battle see Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2009), 116-138.

<sup>58</sup> *Augusta Chronicle*, October 1, 1813.

<sup>59</sup> Circular to Colonels of Militia from Governor Claiborne, September 8, 1813, in Rowland, *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, Vol. VI*, 265-266.

<sup>60</sup> Manrique to Creeks, September 29, 1813, Manrique to Friends and Brothers, November 13, 1813, in Claiborne, Letterbook F, MDA; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 27.

Unique to this visit was the presence of a British warship, the H.M.S. *Herald*. This ship happened to be in port for provisions when the party arrived, and the captain, Lieutenant Edward Handfield, conducted talks with the leaders and supposedly gave them some muskets and ammunition.<sup>61</sup>

In Washington, the new secretary of war, John Armstrong, appointed General Pinckney as overall commander for a campaign against the Red Sticks and called on Georgia and Tennessee to muster 1,500 men each.<sup>62</sup> The plan of attack called for four armies to enter Creek territory from four different sides and converge in the center where the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers join to form the Alabama River. Two armies would enter from Tennessee, one from West Tennessee under General Andrew Jackson and one from East Tennessee under General John Cocke. The third army would march from Georgia under the command of Major General John Floyd, and the fourth army would march north from the Mobile area under General F.L. Claiborne, brother of the Louisiana governor.<sup>63</sup>

Plagued by supply issues, the campaign faltered in the beginning. As a result, none of the armies began marching until mid-October, with Floyd's delayed until mid-November.<sup>64</sup> With each army made up of 1,200-1,400 militia, artillery, and Indian allies, they should have been more than a match for the 4,000 scattered Red Stick warriors,

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<sup>61</sup> *Niles' Weekly Register*, October 16, 1813.

<sup>62</sup> Pinckney to Jackson, November 16, 1813, in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol I* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969), 351-352.

<sup>63</sup> Pinckney to Jackson, November 16, 1813 in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol I*, 352-353. Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 43-47.

<sup>64</sup> Floyd to Mary Floyd, October 7, 1813, Floyd Letters, GDA; Floyd to Mitchell, October 7, 1813, Creek Letters, GDA.

poorly armed with mostly bows and arrows.<sup>65</sup> Throughout November and December each army progressed further into Creek territory, liberating friendly Creeks, and building forts along the way to protect their supply lines.<sup>66</sup> During the course of the war the Americans won nearly all of the engagements, which increasingly expended the Red Sticks' limited supplies of gunpowder and dissolved their belief of their immunity to bullets.<sup>67</sup>

In one battle on December 23, at Holy Ground, Claiborne's troops won a quick victory capturing an encampment of spiritual importance to the Red Stick prophets. Besides seizing substantial supplies and discovering close to 300 scalps adorning a pole in the town square, primarily from Fort Mims, Claiborne's forces found a letter from the Pensacola governor.<sup>68</sup> This letter from Manrique, dated September 29, congratulated the Red Sticks on their victory at Fort Mims but turned down an offer to assist in retaking Mobile; apparently, the governor feared the houses of Spanish citizens would not be spared.<sup>69</sup> This letter provided further evidence for the Americans belief that the Spanish helped provoke the Red Stick hostilities and that potential plans existed for the Spanish to retake Mobile.

By the end of December, the American offensive ground to a halt as short term militia enlistments began to expire. During January and February 1814, the four armies paused as they awaited reinforcement from new enlistments. Throughout this period one of the commanding generals stood out in Pinckney's eyes as the man to finish the war. Beginning in December, Andrew Jackson displayed dogged tenacity in keeping

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<sup>65</sup> Pinckney to Jackson, January 19, 1814, in Adams, *Administrations of James Madison*, 790; Raymond D. Fogelson, Ed, *Handbook of North American Indians: Volume 14, Southeast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 385.

<sup>66</sup> Big Warrior to Floyd, November 18, 1813, Creek Letters, GDA.

<sup>67</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 48-50, 52-58, 62-71

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>69</sup> Manrique to Creek Chiefs, September 29, 1813, Claiborne Letterbook F, MDA.

his militia from deserting, while maintaining constant pressure on the Red Sticks with raids. Therefore, when the campaign resumed in March, Pinckney reinforced Jackson's army as the campaign's main effort, including the addition of a regiment of regulars to enforce discipline.<sup>70</sup>

Jackson's new army set out with 3,500 militia, regulars, and Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek allies. He marched to where he knew the remaining Red Sticks had converged, an encampment within a bend in the Tallapoosa River called Tohopeka.<sup>71</sup> On March 27, 1814, after surrounding the camp, Jackson's troops conducted a vicious dawn assault and defeated most of the remaining Red Sticks. In the resulting battle, described by Ensign Sam Houston of the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry as a "desperate onslaught," nearly 900 Red Stick men, women, and children were killed, compared to fewer than 200 for the U.S. and allied Indians.<sup>72</sup> The Battle of Horseshoe Bend crushed the last significant Red Stick forces and spelled the end of the war.

Following Horseshoe Bend, the four armies finally proceeded to the head of the Alabama River, and by the end of April they converged and built Fort Jackson (Map 7). Jackson sent out scouting parties to find the remaining hostiles but found only abandoned towns and starving Indians straggling in to surrender. No sign of organized resistance remained, and the army allowed families to return to their homes and provided them food when available. During May, as increasing numbers of Red Sticks surrendered, their most skilled leader, William Weatherford, walked into Fort Jackson.

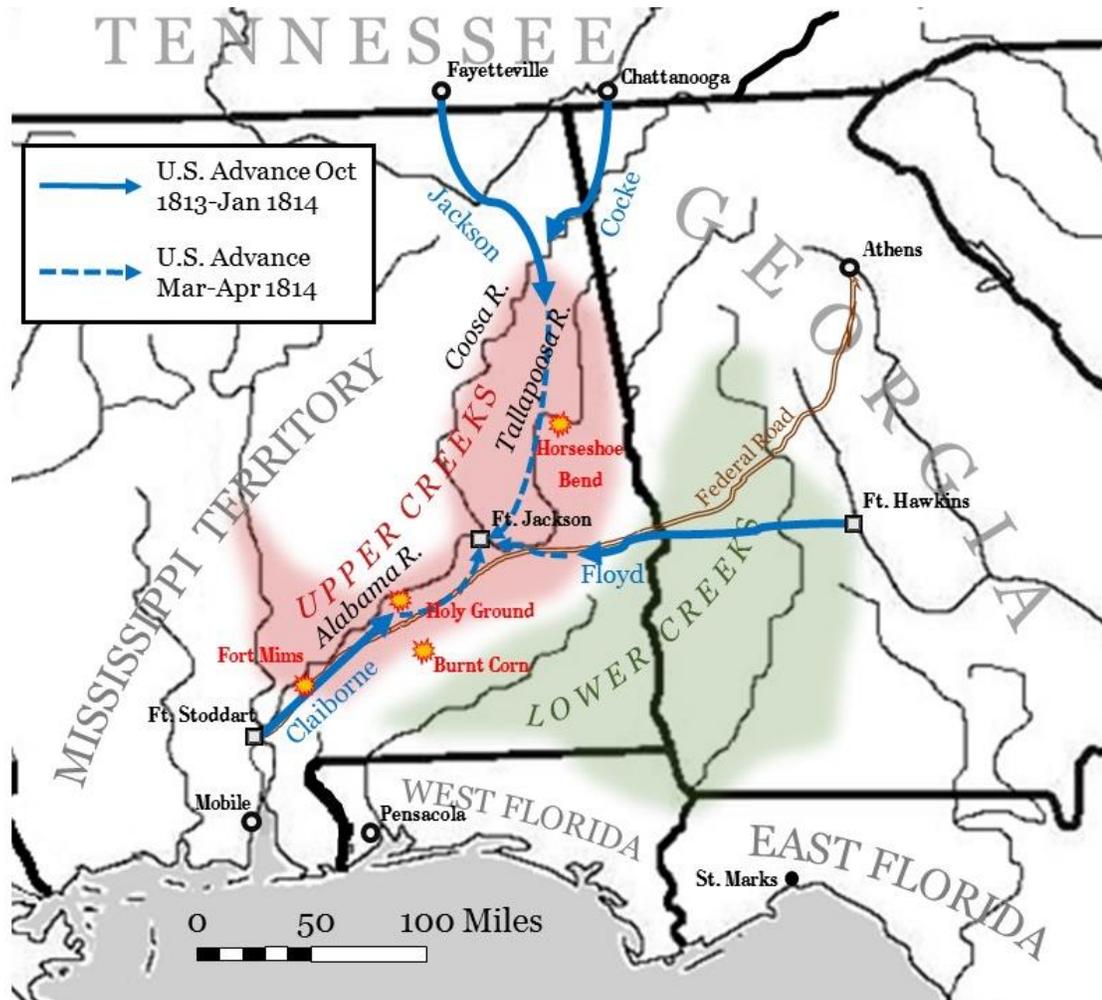
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<sup>70</sup> Pinckney to Jackson, January 9, 1814, and Jackson to Pinckney, February 5, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol I*, 438-440, 456-458; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 67-71.

<sup>71</sup> Jackson to Williams, January 7, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol I*, 438.

<sup>72</sup> Tom Kanon, "'A Slow, Laborious Slaughter': The Battle of Horseshoe Bend," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 58 (1999): 3-15; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 72, 75-76, 78-81.

The general granted him amnesty, but promised that if he ever took up arms against the U.S. again, the price would be fatal. At this time the Americans believed that the Creek War had ended.<sup>73</sup> Certainly the initial phase had, but many groups of hostile Creeks made their way south towards Pensacola.<sup>74</sup>



Map 7. The Creek War. Map created by author.

In May, Secretary of War Armstrong assigned Benjamin Hawkins and Andrew Jackson as commissioners to negotiate a peace treaty with the defeated Creeks. Jackson received a promotion from a militia general to a brigadier general in the Regular

<sup>73</sup> Griffith, Benjamin W. Jr. *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 151-155.

<sup>74</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 82-85.

army with a brevet rank of major general as a reward for his service against the Red Sticks. Armstrong also appointed Jackson as commander of the Seventh Military District, which comprised Louisiana, the Mississippi Territory, and Tennessee.<sup>75</sup>

In July, Jackson took the lead in negotiations with the Creeks.<sup>76</sup> As a firm supporter of territorial expansion and champion of frontier settlers, Jackson demanded harsh concessions from not just the hostile Red Sticks, but from the Creek Confederacy as a whole. He blamed the Creeks for allowing Tecumseh to visit their lands, when they should have killed him or captured and turned him over to U.S. authorities.<sup>77</sup> According to Jackson's friend John H. Eaton, because the U.S.-allied Creeks were so willing to kill their own people, Jackson considered them "traitors to their own country and justly deserving the severest punishment."<sup>78</sup> Following Jackson's unwavering negotiations with the Creeks, all but one of whom came from the peaceful faction, the delegates signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson on August 9, 1814. This treaty ceded 22 million acres of Creek land to the United States, nearly two-thirds of their territory. The surrendered territory came primarily from the region of the hostile Creeks in the west and south. By taking these lands, Jackson hoped to isolate the remainder of the tribe from Spanish or British influence, and to hinder communication with the Seminoles (Map 8).<sup>79</sup>

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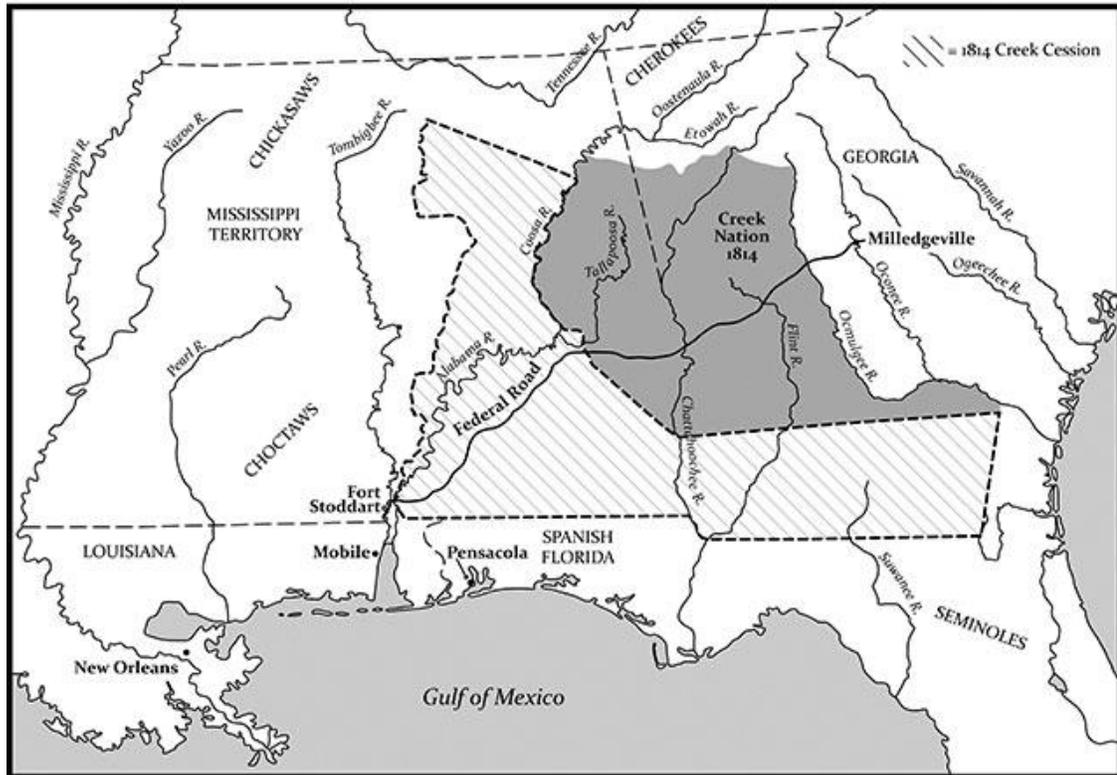
<sup>75</sup> Armstrong to Jackson, May 22, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol II*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Armstrong to Jackson, May 24, 1814, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 594.

<sup>77</sup> Jackson to Pinckney, May 18, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol II*, 1-4.

<sup>78</sup> John Reid and Eaton, John H. Eaton, *The Life of Andrew Jackson, Major General, in the Service of the United States, 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: M. Carey and Son, 1817), 172-173.

<sup>79</sup>Treaty with the Creeks: Articles of Agreement and Capitulation, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, Statutes at Large, Vol. VII, 120-122; Adams, *Administrations of James Madison*, 800-801.



Map 8. Creek Lands Ceded in the Treaty of Fort Jackson. Map by Sarah Mattics, Center for Archeological Studies, University of South Alabama, in Holland, *Tohopeka*, 164.

During the first two years of the War of 1812, Madison succeeded in making significant gains on the Gulf Coast. He relinquished association with the Patriot fiasco in East Florida, and finally occupied Mobile by utilizing the perceived British threat to gain Washington's support. Additionally, victory in the unexpected seven-month-long Creek War opened up the Southwest to further U.S. settlement and removed a buffer from the Spanish defense of the Floridas. It also put a talented, aggressive commander, with thousands of veteran volunteers, in charge of military operations in the Southwest. Furthermore, intelligence reports in the summer of 1812 indicated that British troops had landed in Pensacola to provide aid to the Red Sticks.<sup>80</sup> Regardless of the fact that only

<sup>80</sup> Hawkins to Armstrong, June 7, 1814, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 858.

scattered groups of Red Sticks remained, this event would undoubtedly trigger the “No Transfer Resolution” and allow Madison to use his congressionally-approved executive powers to send forces into Spanish Florida.

## CHAPTER IV

### WAR ON THE COAST

In the summer of 1814, the U.S. war with Great Britain continued unabated. While American offensives into Canada the previous year brought few results other than stalemate on the border, events in Europe proved positive for Great Britain and its allies.<sup>1</sup> As France crumbled under the offensives of allied armies, Joseph Bonaparte's regime left Spain permanently. With the fall of Paris on March 31, 1814, and the abdication and exile of Napoleon in April, the war in Europe seemed all but over.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, additional British forces became available for use in North America. Although the U.S. military expanded, and skilled leaders rose to manage the war, increased British reinforcements arrived to match every American advantage. At sea, U.S. naval victories occurred less frequently as ships became trapped in port because of the augmented British blockade. Nowhere did there appear a way for the United States to attain victory, and the situation continued to deteriorate as the nation found itself on the defensive.<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 1814 a small British army, composed of veterans of the Peninsular War, began operating with Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane's naval flotilla in Chesapeake Bay. This small force, under the command of Major General Robert Ross, conducted raids along the East Coast in order to draw U.S. military resources away from

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<sup>1</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 123-145, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Bell, *Total War*, 294, 300; Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 183.

<sup>3</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 151-154, 181-200, 224-228.

the Canadian front. While his unit did not cause significant damage, it demonstrated the inadequacy of U.S. coastal defenses as he raided with impunity. The situation became more serious when in August, this little command swept aside a larger American force and burned the U.S. capitol.<sup>4</sup> Ross and Cochrane's menacing raids brought every state on the coast into the war, and fueled the fear that the war might not only end in stalemate but defeat.<sup>5</sup>

To further wear down the United States, the British intended to open up additional fronts on the frontier. So far, an alliance with Tecumseh's Confederacy had extended the war into the northwestern frontier. If the Creeks and possibly other southern tribes could be brought into the conflict, U.S. forces would be stretched to their breaking point by fighting enemies on all sides. To Americans in the Mississippi Territory and Louisiana, this would mean defending their recent gains in the gulf.

The Royal Navy had been operating along the Gulf Coast since the war's beginning. As early as September 1812, the Americans received reports of British warships bringing American prizes into Pensacola.<sup>6</sup> In November of the same year, Lieutenant James Stirling of the sloop *Brazen* visited Pensacola and reported to his superiors in Halifax that West Florida's governor had been threatened by the United States. He suggested that Britain help by instigating an Indian war and threatening New Orleans. Stirling's report included detailed intelligence on all of the ports along the Gulf

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<sup>4</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 203-214.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the Chesapeake campaign see Charles Neimeyer, *War in the Chesapeake: The British Campaigns to Control the Bay, 1813-1814* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Wilkinson to Hawkins, September 16, 1812, in *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Mississippi, Vol. VI.*, 321-323.

Coast.<sup>7</sup> The plan seemed feasible as the Creeks had allied with the British in the American Revolution, and their primary trade partners, the Forbes Company, were British. However, as plans were put in motion, the Creeks began their war without Great Britain.<sup>8</sup>

Startled at the change in circumstances, the British scrambled to get supplies to the Creeks before the advantage fell to the Americans. To avoid bringing the neutral Cádiz government into the war, the British planned to use Florida's remote inlets to supply the Indians, so the Spanish could claim no knowledge it occurred.<sup>9</sup> The British assigned Captain Hugh Pigot of the frigate *Orpheus* to make contact with the Indians. On May 10, 1814, he arrived near the mouth of the Apalachicola River and met several Creek and Seminole chiefs. Here Pigot learned of the defeat at Horseshoe Bend and the plight of the remaining Red Sticks. Despite these developments, Pigot believed he could convince the remaining warriors to continue the fight. He sent Captain George Woodbine, of the Royal Marines, upriver to establish a post a half-mile from the Forbes store at a place called Prospect Bluff, a well-known Indian meeting site. He also provided the Indians with 2,000 muskets and plenty of ammunition.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, Jackson dealt with the situation in Creek country following the signing of the August 9 treaty. Over 8,200 Indians drew rations from numerous American forts in Creek country. This was a result of the destruction of precious food stores that

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<sup>7</sup> James Stirling to Charles Stirling, November 15, 1812, in Richard K. Murdock, "A British Report on West Florida and Louisiana, November, 1812," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (July, 1964): 43-51.

<sup>8</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 96.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>10</sup> Robertson to Flournoy, June 17, 1814, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 859; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 99.

were once in every Upper Creek town. To add to Jackson's troubles, several hostile groups of Red Sticks remained unaccounted for, particularly parties led by Peter McQueen, the war leader of the Tallahasseees, and Josiah Francis, a prophet of the Alabamas. These starving and defeated groups, numbering as high as 1,700, straggled south into Spanish West Florida in hope of finding food and sanctuary. In the late summer of 1814 they converged near Pensacola, meeting with Seminoles displaced by the Patriot War the previous year. The two groups collaborated and planned to continue their struggle.<sup>11</sup>

While dealing with the remaining hostile Creeks, Jackson became aware of the new British threat. In July, Secretary of War John Armstrong distributed a circular to all state governors stating that "the late pacification in Europe, offers to the enemy a large disposable force, both naval and military, and with it the means of giving to the war here a character of new and increased activity and extent," thus, states would be required to increase the size of their militias.<sup>12</sup> This came as no surprise to Jackson. In June his scouts reported the British presence at Prospect Bluff and warned him that they intended to bring in black soldiers from Jamaica. This exaggerated intelligence stated that Woodbine had distributed 12,000 muskets and commanded three-hundred marines.<sup>13</sup> The information gained weight when, on the morning of July 21, Jackson "was presented with a new British musket given to a friendly Indian by those at Apalachicola bay." The Indian

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<sup>11</sup> Gregory A. Waselkov, "Fort Jackson and the Aftermath," in Holland, *Tohopeka*, 162-163, 165.

<sup>12</sup> Circular to Governors from the Secretary of War, July 4, 1814, in Arsène Lacarrière Latour, *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15: With an Atlas* (Philadelphia: John Conrad and Co., 1816), appendix, xv-xvi.

<sup>13</sup> Robertson to Flournoy, June 17, 1814, in United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 859.

confirmed the reports and stated the British “intentions to strike a decisive blow against the lower country.”<sup>14</sup>

On August 10, Captain William H. Percy and a small squadron of four Royal Navy vessels arrived in West Florida to assume command of the mission. Captain Edward Nicolls of the Royal Marines would command the land operation with the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel of Colonial Marines. As Woodbine’s superior, Nicolls intended not only to arm and train Indians but also form a corps of former slaves.<sup>15</sup> Their mission was to create a diversion from their primary objective, New Orleans.<sup>16</sup>

Further reports indicated that the British had also landed in Pensacola.<sup>17</sup> These reports were correct as Governor Manrique, fearing an American attack, invited the British from Apalachicola to bolster the town’s defense. Nicolls arrived with 100 royal marines and took control of the town. To increase his forces, he recruited all of the local slaves against the will of their owners. Before Nicolls arrived in Florida, he was told that the Forbes Company would provide many of the supplies needed for his operation. But neither the company nor the Spanish governor offered any supplies. Finding many starving Red Sticks, Nicolls was compelled to seize food from the inhabitants and the Forbes company.<sup>18</sup> He vowed to repay them, a promise he never kept.<sup>19</sup> His actions pushed the Forbes Company from a neutral stance into one more supportive of the

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<sup>14</sup> Jackson to Claiborne, July 21, 1814, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, xvi.

<sup>15</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 98, 105.

<sup>16</sup> Nathaniel Millet, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff and Their Quest for Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 43.

<sup>17</sup> John Spencer Bassett, ed. *Major Howell Tatum's journal while acting topographical engineer (1814) to General Jackson, commanding the Seventh military district* (Northampton, MA: Department of History, Smith College, 1922), 49-50.

<sup>18</sup> Coker, *John Forbes & Company and the War of 1812*, 71-72.

<sup>19</sup> James to John Innerarity, November 20, 1814, Forbes Papers, MPL.

Americans. Seeking more allies, on September 3, Captain Percy sent a small delegation with a proposal to Jean Lafitte, leader of the Baratarian pirates who operated near New Orleans. The letter asked the pirates to stop attacking Spanish shipping, and to side with Great Britain in the impending campaign. In return, Nicolls offered him a captaincy in the British service and land grants to his men.<sup>20</sup> In a move to show his position on the matter, Lafitte placed the delegation in confinement, only releasing them the next day with a negative reply for Nicolls.<sup>21</sup> The pirate forwarded the British correspondence to Governor Claiborne and appealed to the governor for a pardon, claiming that his corsairs only preyed upon Spanish vessels under a letter of marque from the revolutionary government in Cartagena.<sup>22</sup> Among the British correspondence was a proclamation written by Nicolls intended for the inhabitants of Louisiana and Mississippi. It asked citizens “to assist in liberating from a faithless, imbecile government,” and stated that he commanded “a large body of Indians, well armed, disciplined, and commanded by British officers.”<sup>23</sup> Included in Lafitte’s letters to Claiborne was an anonymous letter from Havana for the governor. This letter contained accurate details regarding Nicolls’ mission and British plans to execute an attack on the Gulf Coast with a large army.<sup>24</sup>

Back at Fort Jackson, General Jackson began preparations to fight the British. The impossibility of defending nearly five-hundred miles of coastline left Jackson no other option than to fortify outposts and keep his main army mobile. With most of the militia’s short term enlistments expired, he would have to utilize his manpower carefully.

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<sup>20</sup> Nicolls to Lafitte, August 31, 1814, in Edward A. Parsons, “Jean Lafitte in the War of 1812: A Narrative Based on the Original Documents,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 50 (October 1940), 205-224.

<sup>21</sup> Lafitte to Lochyer, September 4, 1814, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, xi-xii.

<sup>22</sup> Lafitte to Claiborne, September 10, 1814, in *ibid.*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>23</sup> Proclamation from Edward Nicolls, August 29, 1814, in *ibid.*, vii-viii.

<sup>24</sup> Anonymous to Unknown, August 8, 1814, in *ibid.*, v-vii.

Regulars would be his best defense. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup>, and the newly arrived 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry regiments brought his total regular establishment to 3,022 by August.<sup>25</sup> Besides regulars, Jackson's veteran Tennessee volunteers, numbering nearly 3,000, still remained with him at Fort Jackson.<sup>26</sup> He also had 500 militia in the Mississippi Territory and 1,000 in Louisiana.<sup>27</sup> On August 11, Jackson began moving his headquarters and many of his forces to Mobile to prepare a defense.<sup>28</sup>

On August 22, Jackson arrived at Mobile and began immediate preparations for a British attack. A report from Havana stated the expected arrival of thirteen ships of the line and 10,000 British troops for the purpose of assaulting Mobile and Louisiana.<sup>29</sup> He decided to reoccupy Fort Bowyer, built after Wilkinson seized Mobile the previous year. He sent Major William T. Lawrence, who sailed to Mobile point with 158 soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, to improve the defenses in preparation for a naval attack. Jackson kept the remaining 200 men of the regiment in Mobile and sent requests to Tennessee for additional volunteers.<sup>30</sup>

After arriving at Mobile, Jackson also learned that Red Sticks operating from Pensacola had recently conducted several raids across the Perdido, mostly to steal cattle from locals, but in one instance, attacking a farm on the edge of Mobile where they took the owner and two slaves captive. On September 3, a merchant vessel captured by Percy's squadron ran aground near Mobile Point, and the detachment at Fort Bowyer

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<sup>25</sup> Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 4n; Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> L.N. McAlister, "Pensacola During the Second Spanish Period," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 37 Pensacola Quadracentennial Issue (January-April 1959) 3/4: 316.

<sup>27</sup> Circular to Governors from the Secretary of War, July 4, 1814, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, xv-xvi.

<sup>28</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Jackson to Blount, August 27, 1814, in *Augusta Chronicle*, October 7, 1814.

<sup>30</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 51-52.

captured the Royal Navy prize crew. The general attempted a prisoner exchange with Governor Manrique, but the governor refused.<sup>31</sup> In Pensacola, Nicolls planned to use his new force to attack Fort Bowyer. John Innerarity heard of this plan and sent a rider to inform the American garrison there. Although Nicolls attempted to stop the rider, he still arrived at the fort on September 12.<sup>32</sup> The next day Jackson sailed to inspect Fort Bowyer. Half way across the bay a boat informed him that a Royal Navy squadron was approaching the mouth of the bay. Fearing capture, he turned around and sailed back to Mobile.<sup>33</sup>

The approaching squadron belonged to Captain Percy, and supported by Nicolls' marines and Indians allies, he intended to capture the fort.<sup>34</sup> On September 12, his fleet landed seventy-five marines with a howitzer to invest the fort from the landward side. The Indians remained on the ships with Nicolls, who had contracted an illness. On the thirteenth the marines attempted to shell the fort, but Lawrence's men were ready and easily drove them off into the sand dunes. On the fifteenth the fleet moved into position, anchored, and began bombarding the fort in the afternoon. Lawrence's men, manning twenty cannon, performed admirably. The fort, hastily constructed of sand and pine logs, withstood the bombardment exceptionally well.<sup>35</sup> The fight seemed even until a U.S. shot cut the cable on the British flagship, the twenty-gun HMS *Hermes*. As a result, the ship slowly drifted closer to the fort until it grounded on the sand bar. Within pistol shot, the American guns shot *Hermes* to pieces. Percy had no choice but to burn the stricken ship

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<sup>31</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 52-55; Extracts from the journal of William Ellis, in *Niles' Weekly Register*, November 19, 1814, 166-167.

<sup>32</sup> Coker, *John Forbes & Company and the War of 1812*, 72.

<sup>33</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 55.

<sup>34</sup> Extracts from the journal of William Ellis, in *Niles' Weekly Register*, November 19, 1814, 166.

<sup>35</sup> Jackson to Monroe, September 17, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 50-51.

and retire.<sup>36</sup> The Royal Marines withdrew back to Pensacola, but not before stealing cattle from the Forbes store at Bon Secour on the way.<sup>37</sup> Nicolls had been on board the *Hermes* during the battle, and received a wound that blinded his right eye.<sup>38</sup> The first American victory against the British in the Gulf cost the British twenty-four men killed, while wounding forty-four others, compared to four killed and five wounded for Lawrence's men.<sup>39</sup> Setting an ill-fated precedent for subsequent British operations in the Gulf, both Nicolls and Percy had held the Americans in contempt and consequently conducted their attack haphazardly.

Following the attack on Fort Bowyer, Jackson concluded that he must drive the British from Pensacola. Back in July, he wrote to Governor Manrique demanding the exchange of the hostile Indians from his province and denial of West Florida as a British base. In response, Manrique claimed he did not have the means to act on either of these demands. He accused the United States of also harboring hostile factions, as they provided sanctuary in Louisiana to the Baratarians who attacked Spanish vessels.<sup>40</sup> The Spanish governor's refusal to act directly violated article 5 of the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo. This article noted

both Parties oblige themselves expressly to restrain by force all hostilities on the part of the Indian Nations living within their boundaries: so that Spain will not suffer [suffer] her Indians to attack the Citizens of the United States, nor the Indians

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<sup>36</sup> Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, 36-38.

<sup>37</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 63.

<sup>38</sup> Medical Journal of HMS *Hermes*, PRO ADM 101/104/3/2, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/record?catid=-6078693&catln=7> [accessed March 28, 2016]; David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, "Where All Behave Well," in Holland, *Tohopeka*, 187.

<sup>39</sup> Woodruff to Jackson, September 18, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/maj003585/> [accessed March 27, 2016]; General Orders from Andrew Jackson, September 17, 1814, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 860-861; Heidler, "Where All Behave Well," in Holland, *Tohopeka*, 184-193.

<sup>40</sup> Jackson to Manrique, July 12, 1814, Jackson to Armstrong, July 14, 1814, Manrique to Jackson July 26, 1814, in Harold D. Moser, et al, ed., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, 7 vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980-2007), 3:85-87, 95.

inhabiting their territory; nor will the United States permit these last mentioned Indians to commence hostilities against the Subjects of his Catholic Majesty, or his Indians in any manner whatever.<sup>41</sup>

This, and the British intervention itself, caused Jackson to believe that an immediate attack on Pensacola would be acceptable to the president. On October 3, he marched north with a large force to Fort Montgomery.<sup>42</sup> As he gathered his troops Jackson wrote to Secretary of State Monroe regarding his next move, musing that “As I act without any orders from the Government, I deem it proper to state my reasons for it... The hostility of the Governor of Pensacola resigning his post to the British Commander... his permitting them to remain there to fit out one expedition against the United States... added to his having acknowledged that he had armed the Indians, sent them into our territory... will be a sufficient [reason]... for having undertaken this expedition.”<sup>43</sup> This letter acted more as a preemptive apology as the general knew a reply would be impossible before his attack commenced. Monroe did respond on December 7, stating that the president advised against the attack as it would be unjust.<sup>44</sup>

### *Jackson Raids Pensacola*

On November 1, Jackson began his march on Pensacola with nearly 3,000 men, seven hundred of them regulars. As his army crossed the border of West Florida on the fourth, his advance scouts captured six Spanish soldiers at a guard post, which

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of State. “Treaty of Friendship, Limits, and Navigation between Spain and the United States,” October 27, 1795, in Hunter, *Treaties and Other International Acts*, 318-338.

<sup>42</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 67.

<sup>43</sup> Jackson to Monroe, October 26, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/maj003970/> [accessed March 28, 2016].

<sup>44</sup> Monroe to Jackson, December 7, 1814, *ibid.*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/maj004245/> [accessed March 31, 2016].

ensured the element of surprise. On the sixth his army approached Pensacola. After sending a party towards the town under a flag of truce, the cannon at Fort San Miguel fired several shots, forcing them to retire. With dusk approaching, Jackson marched his army to the west and established camp near Bayou Chico. After dark, Jackson sent a Spanish sergeant, captured at the border post, to deliver a letter to Governor Manrique. This message demanded capitulation and that U.S. troops be allowed to garrison the forts. Manrique rejected the demands and Jackson prepared to assault the town.<sup>45</sup>

That night Jackson contemplated his plans. Pensacola's defenses included Fort San Marcos located just north of the town on the southern slope of a hill. Perched at the top, to protect San Marcos, stood the remains of an old British redoubt, Fort San Bernardo. At the entrance to the bay, nine miles from Pensacola, sat Fort San Carlos de Barrancas, a large masonry and earth battery overlooking the mouth of the bay from high on a bluff, and below it, battery San Antonio at the water's edge. Across the mouth of the bay, on Santa Rosa Island, sat the Punta de Sigüenza battery.<sup>46</sup> Close to 500 Spanish soldiers manned these defenses, along with over 100 Royal Marines.<sup>47</sup> The British squadron remained anchored within range of the town loaded with over 1,000 sailors, marines, and Indians on board.<sup>48</sup> The town itself sat on a plain no more than twenty feet above the bay. Made almost entirely of wooden structures, the town had several blockhouses guarding the perimeter and positioned to fire down the streets. The eastern side of the town faced Bayou Texar and lacked any defenses (Map 9).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 68-73; McAlister, "Pensacola During the Second Spanish Period," 316.

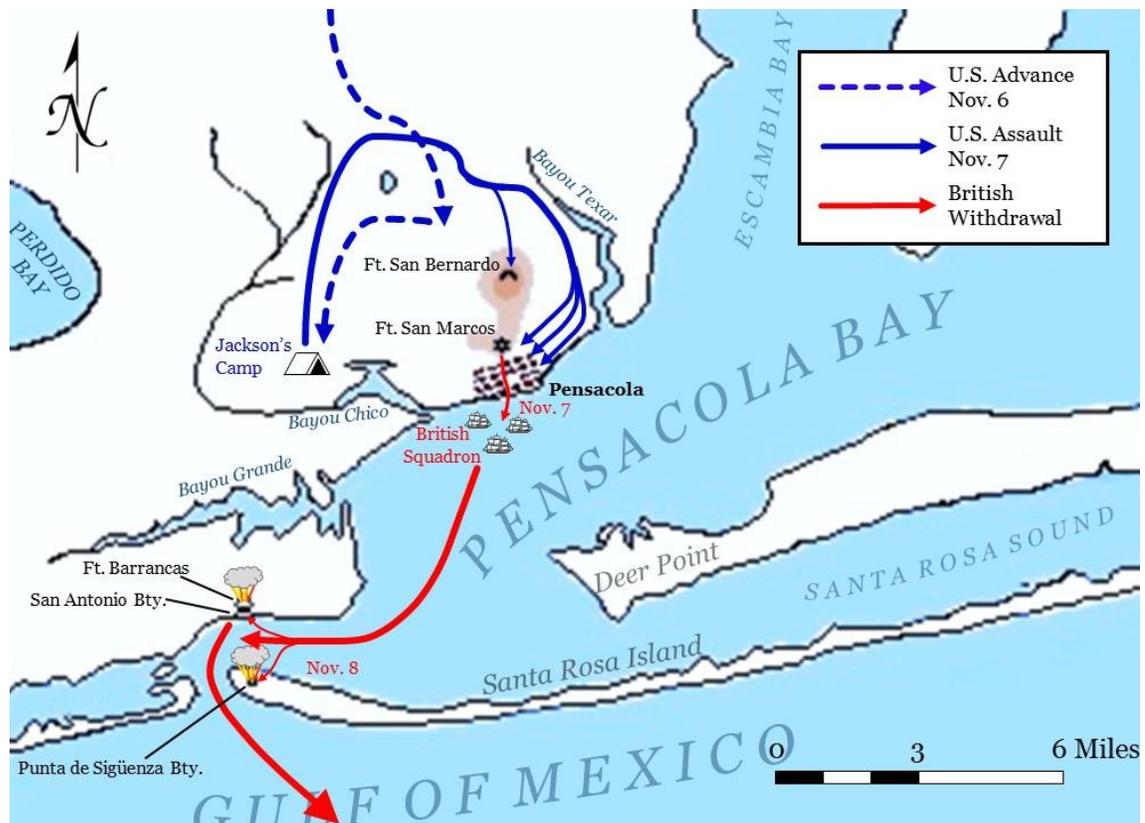
<sup>46</sup> Stanley Faye, "British and Spanish Fortifications of Pensacola, 1781-1821," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 20 (January 1942) 3:285, 287-288.

<sup>47</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 113.

<sup>48</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 72-73.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

Jackson decided to attack the exposed east side of Pensacola and use the town itself as a shield against the cannons of the fleet, stationed to the west in the harbor. At nine o'clock on the morning of November 7, Jackson's troops left camp and circled the north side of the town. Five hundred men remained near the camp as a diversion. The main army advanced in three columns with the regulars and two howitzers closest to the shore. As they marched, a company of Tennesseans broke off to secure old Fort San Bernardo to the north, while the remainder formed a line of battle and advanced on the east side of the town.<sup>50</sup>



Map 9. Jackson's Raid on Pensacola 1814. Map created by author.

<sup>50</sup> Jackson to Monroe, November 14, 1814, in *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 96-100; Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 74-75.

Approaching the town across open ground, the Americans encountered a line of Spanish infantry among the buildings and gardens supported by a battery of two small cannon. As the Spanish guns began firing on the Americans, Jackson's men quickened their pace to close the distance. A short firefight ensued, in which the Spanish quickly retired, leaving their guns to the Americans. Within minutes, the governor approached Jackson under a white flag. The two met at the intendant's office in the town center where Manrique agreed to surrender the forts and the town. However, the commander of Fort San Marcos delayed for several hours, preventing the Americans from occupying the remainder of the forts that day.<sup>51</sup>

That night, as Jackson's men occupied Pensacola, a massive explosion sounded from Santa Rosa Island. Presumably, the British had destroyed the magazine of the Punta de Sigüenza battery. The next morning, the British squadron had vanished. That afternoon several large explosions rang out from the direction of Fort Barrancas. Jackson's scouts reported on the ninth that the British had blown up the magazine at the fort and spiked the guns at Battery San Antonio. Inhabitants also told them that the British squadron had sailed east, but not before it embarked the two-hundred-man Spanish garrison from the forts as well as slaves stolen from the local populace.<sup>52</sup>

The destruction of the remaining forts and departure of the British ended Jackson's mission in Pensacola. At a cost of only five Americans killed and ten wounded, Jackson had deprived the British of their advanced base on the Gulf. The Spanish lost fourteen killed and six wounded. Although the town was now free of the unwelcome British presence, Manrique's best fortifications were now in ruins. The

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<sup>51</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 75-80.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-83; Faye, "British and Spanish Fortifications of Pensacola," 288.

Americans collected valuable intelligence in Pensacola and learned that a large British force, consolidated in Jamaica, was crossing the Gulf and intended to make a direct assault on New Orleans.<sup>53</sup> On the morning of November 10, Jackson's army began the march back to Mobile.<sup>54</sup>

As a result of Jackson's raid on Pensacola, Governor Manrique's attitude towards the Americans changed. While the Americans were present, the troops and allied Indians conducted themselves well, with no reports of looting or abuse to the inhabitants.<sup>55</sup> The British, supposedly there for their protection, could not stop Jackson's advance, nor did the British troops respect the rights of the inhabitants. This was illustrated most strongly by their decision to take nearly all the slaves from the inhabitants of the town, and to steal or destroy private property. Twenty-five of those slaves belonged to the Forbes company, as did the forty-eight barrels of gunpowder they ignited in Fort Barrancas.<sup>56</sup> These acts cost the British any chance of friendship with the people of West Florida and undoubtedly changed Manrique's perception of the Americans. As U.S. priorities changed from annexation to combating fugitive Red Sticks and the British, and the latter violated the rights and property of the governor's people, he found himself in an increasingly complex political position.

As the new threat of a major British attack on the Gulf Coast presented itself to Jackson, his defensive situation seemed all the more fragile. The enemy possessed complete mobility on the ocean and could therefore shift the location of their attack from

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<sup>53</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 118.

<sup>54</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 83.

<sup>55</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 83-85; Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, 49.

<sup>56</sup> Cochrane to Manrique, July 10, 1815, John Innerarity to James S. Pott Esqr., May 16, 1854, in "Documents Relating to Colonel Edward Nicholls and Captain George Woodbine in Pensacola, 1814," *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 10 (July 1931) 1:52.

Mobile to New Orleans easily. Jackson, on the other hand, was limited to moving his forces slowly by land. Thus, he had to guess the location of the attack correctly the first time and weigh the credibility of his intelligence. There were not enough U.S. troops to defend both at once. Furthermore, news that the peace commissioners had met in Ghent, Belgium, and begun negotiations in August pressured Jackson to prevent any substantial territorial encroachment by British troops. Should British troops occupy New Orleans, for example, the resulting treaty could be highly unfavorable to the United States.<sup>57</sup>

On November 20, Jackson began redeploying 800 militia and 200 regulars to New Orleans, some by sea, but most marching overland. Brigadier General John R. Coffee's 800-man brigade of Tennessee volunteers marched to Baton Rouge to act as a close reserve. Thousands of additional reserves mustered in Tennessee as Jackson had requested in October. These men would be able to deploy quickly down one of the many rivers to a single location on the coast, but after that, they would be just as slow as the rest of his army. To protect Mobile, Jackson left Brigadier General James Winchester with a mixed force of 800 men. To continue the war against the Red Sticks in West Florida, Jackson sent Major Uriah Blue with 1,000 volunteers on an expedition eastward toward the Apalachicola River.<sup>58</sup>

### *The Battle of New Orleans*

Jackson arrived in New Orleans on December 1. Upon his arrival he energetically began organizing his forces and preparing for the defense of the city.

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<sup>57</sup> Adams, *Administrations of James Madison*, 1191.

<sup>58</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 86-96.

Fortifications were enhanced, and scouts were posted at all the known approaches. He also met with Commodore Daniel Patterson, commander of the small U.S. naval contingent. Gunboats and other vessels were set in motion to disclose the approach of the British fleet.<sup>59</sup>

Unlike Mobile, which could be approached from almost any direction, the terrain surrounding New Orleans limited an attacker's choice of approach, shifting the advantage to the defender. Sitting at the top of the Mississippi Delta, only narrow strips of dry land extended out towards to sea. No matter how large the attacking army, only a fraction of their numbers would be able to engage the defenders, as the restrictive terrain channeled their mobility. Numerous inlets and bayous radiated out from the river presenting the attacker with many avenues to approach the city. But only small boats could navigate some of these, and they were surrounded by marshy prairies and cypress swamps, impassable to large bodies of troops. Roads did follow the levies bracketing the river. One followed a canal northward, to the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, and another, the Chef Menteur Road, followed the Plain of Gentilly eastward to the Rigolets, a narrow water passage between lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain. The Mississippi River itself provided another route into the city. However, navigating 105 miles upstream proved very slow as ships would have to wait for the wind to favor them or use the unnervingly slow technique of kedging.<sup>60</sup> The strongest fortification protecting New Orleans, Fort St.

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<sup>59</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 96; Latour, *Memoir*, 52; Hayne to Jackson, December 1, 1814, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, II*, 107-108.

<sup>60</sup> Kedging or warping, is when a ship's anchor is carried forward in a small boat, dropped, and the ship pulls on the cable to move forward. Typically used when there is no wind. Wilburt S. Brown, *The Amphibious Campaign for West Florida and Louisiana 1814-1815: A Critical Review of Strategy and Tactics at New Orleans* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1969), 64.

Philip, guarded this route, one which most of Cochrane's ships could not attempt as their drafts were too deep for the river (Map 10).<sup>61</sup>

The attack on New Orleans fell to the two commanders who had successfully raided Washington, D.C.: Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane and Major General Robert Ross. However, before they could depart the Chesapeake region, Ross was killed by an American rifleman outside Baltimore. The Admiralty replaced him with Major General Sir Edward Pakenham, the Duke of Wellington's brother-in-law.<sup>62</sup> On December 5, the British fleet left Jamaica. It consisted of over sixty ships and 8,000 troops, 3,700 whom had just sailed from the Chesapeake after burning the capitol and attempting to take Baltimore. These were reinforced in Jamaica by 4,300 more, mostly veterans of the Peninsular War.

On December 13, Patterson reported this fleet anchored off the entrance to Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain. The only obstacle to British access into the lakes was Lieutenant Thomas Jones' small flotilla of five gunboats. Since the waters of the lakes were too shallow for his ships-of-the-line, Cochrane sent 1,200 sailors and marines in longboats to attack Jones. In what became known as the Battle of Lake Borgne, the British boats overwhelmed and captured all of Jones' gunboats, granting them access to the eastern approaches to New Orleans.<sup>63</sup> Learning of this loss, Jackson immediately dispatched detachments to establish small defensive positions at every known approach to the city. On the fifteenth, he sent messages to the Tennessee troops in Baton Rouge to

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<sup>61</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 96-101; Hayne to Jackson, December 1, 1814, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, II*, 107-108.

<sup>62</sup> Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 217.

<sup>63</sup> Jones to Patterson, March 12, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, xxxiii-xxv, 55, 57-64.

begin marching to New Orleans.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, with the U.S. naval threat removed, Cochrane had gained complete freedom of movement. He immediately began disembarking his army on Isle aux Poix at the mouth of the Pearl River, roughly thirty miles to the east of New Orleans.<sup>65</sup> At this point the Americans could do nothing but wait for the next British move, and hope that their scouts identified it before it was too late.

On the morning of December 23, the vanguard of the British army arrived at the Villeré Plantation on the east bank of the Mississippi, only nine miles from New Orleans. The British commanders had decided to enter New Orleans via the Bayou Bienvenu from Lake Borgne. General John Keane commanded as the other generals had not arrived yet. He did not move directly on the city as he waited for more of his force to arrive.<sup>66</sup> That afternoon, on receiving a report of the British arrival, Jackson immediately gathered what forces he found available, over 2,000 men. Not knowing the enemy's strength, Jackson led a daring night attack on Keane's camp, which by then contained 1,800 men. In the bloody confusion that followed, the Americans lost nearly 200 men, and the British roughly the same. Jackson then withdrew to the Rodriguez Canal just south of the Chalmette Plantation, four miles from the city, and began preparing a defensive position referred to as Line Jackson.<sup>67</sup>

The results of this initial attack must not be underestimated, as it can be argued that it saved New Orleans. Although Keane held his ground, the aggressive and unexpected nature of the American attack dissolved any notions the British commanders

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<sup>64</sup> Latour, *Memoir*, 64-65.

<sup>65</sup> Cochrane to Crocker, January 18, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, clix-clxv, 75.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-88.

<sup>67</sup> Jackson to Armstrong, December 27, 1814, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol. II*, 126-127; Latour, *Memoir*, 88-112.

had regarding an easy invasion. For the next two days General Keane did not advance, allowing Jackson precious time to build defensive lines and gather reinforcements.<sup>68</sup>

On Christmas Day, General Pakenham arrived, displeased with Cochrane's progress and choice of attack route. The general had envisioned an attack along the Chef Menteur Road that entered New Orleans through the Plain of Gentilly. This route would have kept the troops closer to the fleet, and allowed the army more flexibility to maneuver. Cochrane boasted that if the army could not brush the Americans aside, his sailors and marines would.<sup>69</sup> As a diversion the admiral had dispatched a small squadron to ascend the Mississippi and attack Fort St. Philip. Unfortunately, kedging up the river took so long that the attack did not begin until January 9. This attack had little effect on the upcoming battle. After a ten-day bombardment, the fort showed no signs of capitulation and the squadron departed.<sup>70</sup>

On the twenty-eighth Pakenham conducted a limited attack to feel out the American defense line. Following the British attack, Jackson improved his defenses and built additional defenses on the west bank of the river, which allowed for flanking fire in front of Line Jackson.<sup>71</sup> The general had amassed over 4,700 men for the defense. His forces included over 1,000 regulars and marines, 100 sailors, over 1,000 Louisiana militia, nearly 1,300 Tennessee, Kentucky, and Mississippi volunteers, a few Choctaw warriors, sixteen heavy pieces of artillery, and the Baratarian pirates. Jean Lafitte had

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<sup>68</sup> Latour, *Memoir*, 104-113.

<sup>69</sup> C.R. Forrest, Extract from the Journal of the movements of the army employed in the Southern Coast of North America, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cvlvii-cxlix; Brown, *The Amphibious Campaign for West Florida and Louisiana*, 109-110.

<sup>70</sup> Overton to Jackson, January 19, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, lxix-lxxi, 190-197.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

approached Jackson personally asking for a pardon in return for his services, which Jackson respectively granted and accepted.<sup>72</sup>

Beginning on New Year's Day, 1815, Pakenham began probing the American lines.<sup>73</sup> On January 8, with 8,000 soldiers assembled, he decided to launch an assault. By this date, Jackson had fortified and transformed his line into a deep ditch surmounted by a tall wood and cotton-bale reinforced parapet. This line had its flanks secure with the cypress swamp on its left and the Mississippi River on its right. Additionally, two more defensive lines were constructed to the rear. Pakenham's plan called for a 780-man force under Colonel William Thornton to cross the river before dawn and eliminate the American batteries on the west bank. The removal of these batteries would reduce British casualties in the assault, and allow the British to place their own enfilading fire on the American defenses. The main attack would be conducted by two columns assailing both ends of the main U.S. defense line.<sup>74</sup>

Thornton's force attacking the west bank developed slowly as it encountered problems moving its boats. Thus the unit's attack came twelve hours behind schedule. Despite the delay, Pakenham did not postpone the main assault, which began well as fog covered the initial British advance. But when they came into view of the American defenses, a tremendous volume of fire erupted. As casualties rapidly mounted the advance continued. Upon reaching the parapet, it was discovered that the lead assault battalion had forgotten their ladders. Unable to scale the parapet, soldiers clumped in the

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<sup>72</sup> Latour, *Memoir*, 71-72, 126-127, 147-148; Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 105-106.

<sup>73</sup> C.R. Forrest, "Extract from the Journal of the movements of the army employed in the Southern Coast of North America," in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cvlvii-cxlix, 132-138.

<sup>74</sup> Lambert to Bathurst, January 10, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cxlix-cxliii; Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 125-130.

canal, many in the following columns threw themselves on the wet ground or were shot down by the incessant fire of muskets and grape shot. As the American artillery fire from the west bank blew holes in the column near the river, the 93<sup>rd</sup> Highland regiment was diverted to support the attack near the swamp. As they marched diagonally across the American's front, the Scotsmen were cut to pieces.<sup>75</sup>

Throughout the entire attack only a few men actually made it over the American parapet.<sup>76</sup> Within minutes it was clear that the British assault had failed, their only success occurring on the west bank. Thornton's force finally crossed the river and overwhelmed Commodore Patterson's batteries, but it occurred well after Pakenham's main assault had already been repulsed.<sup>77</sup>

Within just twenty-five minutes, Jackson had won an astoundingly one-sided victory. British losses totaled 291 killed, 1,262 wounded, and 484 captured.<sup>78</sup> The Americans paid little, with the insignificant loss of thirteen killed, thirty-nine wounded, and nineteen captured.<sup>79</sup> To add to the toll suffered by the British, Pakenham, as well as one of his division commanders, General Sir Samuel Gibbs, received fatal wounds. Command then fell to General Sir John Lambert, who ordered a withdrawal to the Villeré Plantation, that included Thornton's victorious force from the west bank.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 125-130.

<sup>76</sup> Lambert to Bathurst, January 10, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cxlix-cxliii.

<sup>77</sup> Thornton to Pakenham, January 8, 1815, in *ibid.*, clvii-clix.

<sup>78</sup> Return of casualties on the 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cliii-cliv.

<sup>79</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 130.

<sup>80</sup> Lambert to Bathurst, January 28, 1815, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, clxvi-clxix.



Map 10. Positions of the American & British Armies Near New Orleans. Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812; or, Illustrations, by Pen and Pencil, of the History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the Last War for American Independence* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1868), 1044.

### *Major Blue's Expedition*

While Jackson defended New Orleans with the bulk of his army, he still needed to contend with the defense of Mobile and the frontier. Exhibiting his typical defense by offense policy, Jackson ordered an expedition against the remaining hostile Indians in West Florida rather than disperse his limited forces across his line of defense.

In December he ordered Major Uriah Blue to take a mounted force of 1,000 Tennessee volunteers and allied Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks into Spanish territory. Blue's expedition was meant to search the region east of the Escambia River, eliminate the remaining Red Sticks, and capture or destroy their supplies and villages. Additional plans were also made for allied Creeks and Georgia militia to rendezvous with Blue's force near the Apalachicola River and raid the British base at Prospect Bluff.<sup>81</sup>

The expedition faced difficulties from the start. At Fort Montgomery, Blue waited in vain for enough supplies to sustain a long journey. Bad weather and the slow supply system prevented significant provisions from arriving. Frustrated, he set out on December 8 with twenty days of meager rations, probably not enough to complete his mission. Recent rains made the roads and trails inaccessible to wagons. To resolve this, the major brought some cattle along and dismounted many of his men to use their mounts as packhorses.<sup>82</sup>

In mid-December, as Blue's force entered West Florida, rains and frigid weather made the going difficult and slow. River crossing proved challenging as the men often had to swim through cold waters and immediately start fires to prevent hypothermia. Once across the Escambia, his men encountered several Red Stick encampments, killing several Creeks and taking many captives. They discovered a family of Spanish settlers that had been murdered and scalped. On the east shore of Escambia Bay, they attacked another hostile camp, but several Red Sticks escaped by boat across

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<sup>81</sup> General Orders, November 16, 1814, Jackson to Winchester, November 22, 1814, Jackson to Monroe, February 13, 1815, in Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II: 100-101, 104-107, 164-170.

<sup>82</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 7, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/maj004244/> [accessed March 26, 2016].

the bay to Pensacola. The major sent three officers after the band. The officers tracked the fugitives into the town and discovered ten Indians and runaway slaves hidden in a storehouse of the Forbes Company. John Innerarity attempted to protect the men but Captain Trimble cut the storehouse door down with an axe and took them captive anyway.<sup>83</sup> One of the slaves, named Joe, allegedly had provided the Red Sticks with intelligence on Fort Mims prior to the August 1813 battle. The second slave turned out to be one stolen from the same fort, after its fall. Blue sent yet another detachment to escort these prisoners to Fort Montgomery.<sup>84</sup>

After Blue's force regrouped, they set out on December 19, towards the Blackwater River to the northeast. During the march Blue's scouts, including a young Davy Crockett, gathered knowledge of a large Creek camp called Holmes' Village near the Choctawhatchee River, over sixty miles away. Running short of supplies, Blue made the village his destination as provisions could possibly be captured there. As the column marched northeast, some Chickasaw attacked another encampment on the east side of the Yellow River. Notable in the skirmish was the death of a known Red Stick leader, Alabama King.<sup>85</sup>

By Christmas Day, marching deeper into the swamps and pine barrens of West Florida, Blue's column found itself exhausted and nearly out of rations.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> There is no reference to this event in any of the Forbes Company's records, nor John Innerarity's letters.

<sup>84</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*; Thomas G. Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes in Relation to Various Expeditions Made by Capt. Blue, Col. Benton & Others in 1814, 1813," Pickett Papers, Sec. 25, ADA, 9-11; James Winchester to Jackson, December 24, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*; Crockett, *Life of David Crockett*, 110, 112-113.

<sup>85</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814, Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11.

<sup>86</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 27, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11; Crockett, *Life of David Crockett*, 115.

Nevertheless, scouts managed to find and report the precise location of Holmes' Village.<sup>87</sup> Eager to capture provisions, the Americans conducted an overnight forced march reaching the village by dawn of the next day. Blue immediately launched an attack only to find the site empty of people and provisions. The occupants had left the day prior, probably aware of the American approach. The disheartened militia burned the site and returned to their previous day's camp.<sup>88</sup>

Without food the expedition could not continue. With no sign of the reinforcements from Georgia, and the mission to Prospect Bluff now impossible, Blue decided to turn the column around and return. Desperate for food, Blue split his forces in order to allow for more successful foraging. He sent Major George Russell with five-hundred to head north towards the forts on the Tallapoosa, while the balance of the force would return along the approach route. Russell's cold, nearly starving men moved through lands ravaged by the Creek War the previous summer. Little to no food could be found.<sup>89</sup> Crockett wrote, "As the army marched, I hunted every day, and would kill every hawk, bird, and squirrel that I could find."<sup>90</sup> Russell's men eventually reached Fort Decatur and survived.<sup>91</sup>

Major Blue and the other half of his command proceeded back towards the Escambia Valley enduring hunger and the cold. Writing apologetically to Jackson, Blue stated:

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<sup>87</sup> Crockett, *Life of David Crockett*, 115; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11.

<sup>88</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 27, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11-12; Crockett, *Life of David Crockett*, 115-116.

<sup>89</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 12; Crockett, *Life of David Crockett*, 116-120.

<sup>90</sup> Crockett, *Life of David Crockett*, 116-117.

<sup>91</sup> Brian R. Rucker, "In the Shadow of Jackson: Uriah Blue's Expedition into West Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (January 1995): 325-338.

My command at this time are without provisions of any kind; the horses are unable to go any farther. I am on my return march to Fort Montgomery. I will endeavor to scout what Indians may be on the yellow water. If I had been able to procure provisions at Holmes as I had calculated on, I would have routed all the Indians in this quarter, but owing to the want of provisions I am compelled to return.<sup>92</sup>

After a difficult crossing of the Escambia, the weakened horses barely able to swim, Blue received information that 300 Red Sticks resided within the damaged walls of Fort Barrancas. In a reckless move, he allowed the bulk of his force to continue on to Fort Montgomery, while he marched south with 170 volunteers to attack the fort. Instead, the Americans found the fort abandoned, the Indians having evacuated the previous night after being warned by a local Spaniard. Miserable and exhausted, Blue returned to Fort Montgomery on January 9 (Map 11).<sup>93</sup>

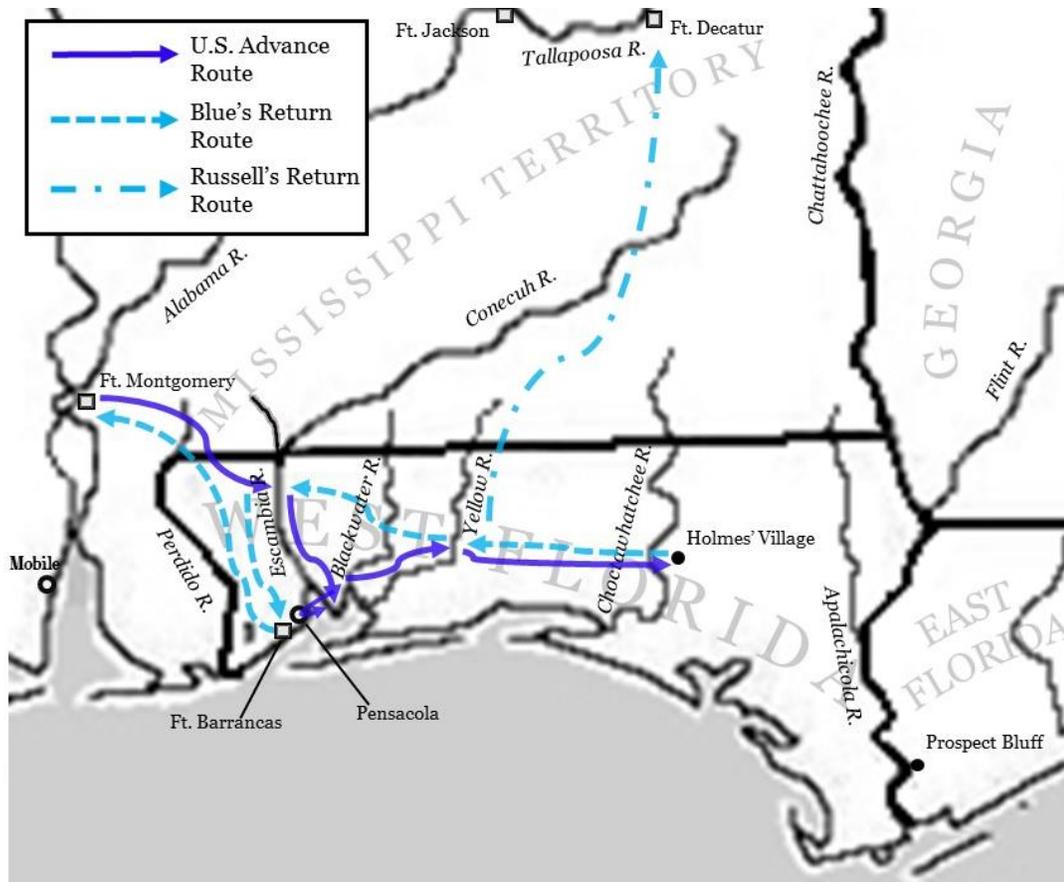
Although Major Blue's expedition killed nearly fifty hostile Indians, captured approximately two-hundred, and destroyed several hostile encampments, it failed to eliminate the remaining Red Sticks or destroy the British post at Prospect Bluff.<sup>94</sup> Despite its apparent failure, the operation set a distinct precedent. For a nearly month, a 1,000-man U.S. military force marched across hundreds of miles of Spanish territory uncontested by Spain. To top it off, small groups of this force even walked into the capital of West Florida to capture individuals and purchase supplies, and left completely unmolested. Following Jackson's attack in November, Governor Manrique seemed to have completely given up on maintaining Spanish sovereignty.

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<sup>92</sup> Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*.

<sup>93</sup> Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 12-13.

<sup>94</sup> Rucker, "In the Shadow of Jackson," 325-338.



Map 11. Major Blue's Expedition in West Florida. Map created by author.

### *The Last Battles*

By February 4, the British force at Isle aux Poix had completed embarking onto the fleet. However, Lambert and Cochrane were not finished. They believed seizing Mobile could still be accomplished, possibly followed by an overland move on New Orleans. The British commanders still acted in accordance with Pakenham's original orders "that Hostilities should not be suspended until you shall have official information

that The President has actually ratified the Treaty and a Person will be duly authorized to apprise you of this event.”<sup>95</sup>

On the Atlantic seaboard, Admiral Cockburn left the Chesapeake under orders to raid St. Mary’s, Georgia, to draw U.S. forces from operations in the Gulf. Like Cochrane’s assault on Fort St. Phillip, Cockburn’s attack did not commence until after Pakenham’s defeat, and undeniably not in time to draw forces from that theater. On January 10, he landed a large force on Cumberland Island at the mouth of the St. Mary’s River. Meeting little resistance, his marines and black West Indian troops seized the town of St. Mary’s and the fort at Point Peter. After occupying both for a week, his troops destroyed the barracks and fortifications at Point Peter and withdrew to Cumberland Island to await the war’s end.<sup>96</sup>

Back in the Gulf, Cochrane and Lambert decided to push on Mobile. Unlike the attack in September, the British now possessed more than enough combat power to take Fort Bowyer. Since New Orleans they had developed more respect for American fighting abilities and this attack would be carried out more pragmatically. Before departing to New Orleans, Jackson had increased Lawrence’s garrison to 375 men, but this would prove inadequate.<sup>97</sup> On February 8, the British fleet landed over 1,000 men east of Mobile Point. That night, the British began digging siege works under the guidance of engineer officer Lieutenant Colonel John F. Burgoyne, the son of famous

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<sup>95</sup> Bathurst to Pakenham, October 24, 1814, in John Grodzinski, “Instructions to Major-General Sir Edward Pakenham for the New Orleans Campaign,” *The War of 1812 Magazine* 16 (September 2011), [http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/Warof1812/2011/Issue16/c\\_PakenhamOrders.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/Warof1812/2011/Issue16/c_PakenhamOrders.html) [accessed April 1, 2016].

<sup>96</sup> Jane Lucas de Grummond, George S. Gaines, Richard Terrell, Alexander C. Henderson, Andrew Jackson and Alexander Cochrane. “Platter of Glory.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 3, (Autumn 1962), 4:334.

<sup>97</sup> Fred Stoven, Return of the American Garrison at Fort Boyer, which surrendered to the Force under Major-General Lambert, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1815, in *The London Gazette*, April 18, 1815, No. 17004, 729.

“Gentleman Johnny” Burgoyne. By February 11, after five days of bombardment and with siege works dug to within one hundred yards of the fort, Lawrence capitulated.<sup>98</sup>

The British continued preparations for taking Mobile but were interrupted when, on February 13, news arrived that the peace treaty had been signed back on December 24.<sup>99</sup>

The fall of Fort Bowyer thus proved to be last battle of the War of 1812.<sup>100</sup>

The Americans were lucky that the war ended when it did. Had the treaty been completed later, Mobile would certainly have fallen to Lambert’s army. Following news of the treaty, Cochrane’s fleet departed the Gulf without having made significant gains.<sup>101</sup>



Map 12. The War in the South, 1814-1815. Map created by author.

Throughout the campaign of 1814-1815, Jackson’s energetic operations not only stopped the British but also reduced the numbers of hostile Indians willing to fight

<sup>98</sup> Lambert to Bathurst, February 14, 1815, in *ibid.*, 727-728.

<sup>99</sup> Cochrane to Jackson, February 13, 1815, in Ron Chapman, *The Battle of New Orleans: “But for a Piece of Wood.”* (Bloomington IN: Xlibris, 2013), 299.

<sup>100</sup> For more on the fall of Fort Bowyer see William S. Coker, “The Last Battle of the War of 1812: New Orleans. No, Fort Bowyer!” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 42-63.

<sup>101</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 174.

the Americans (Map 12). The successful defense of Mobile in 1814 and his raid on Pensacola undoubtedly caused the British to adjust their plans and attack New Orleans directly. The pressure he placed on the operations of Lt. Col. Nicolls, kept the hostile Indians on the defensive, and certainly influenced undecided Indians against taking up arms.

Most importantly, Jackson's victory at New Orleans prevented the loss of Louisiana. Although the Treaty of Ghent declared that "all territories, places, and possessions whatsoever, taken from either party by the other, during the war, or which may be taken after the signing of this treaty, excepting only the islands [in Maine] hereinafter mentioned, shall be restored without delay," British officials did not recognize any treaties made by Bonaparte.<sup>102</sup> This meant that the Treaty of Ghent would not apply to Louisiana, and had the battle of New Orleans been a British victory, they would have returned the territory to Spain or kept it themselves.<sup>103</sup>

The treaty also required that both sides "engage to put an end, immediately after the ratification of the present treaty, to hostilities with all the tribes or nations of Indians, with whom they may be at war at the time of such ratification; and forthwith to restore to such tribes or nations, respectively, all the possessions, rights, and privileges," which were in place in 1811, given that the tribes themselves ceased hostilities as well.<sup>104</sup> This provision would become problematic in the following years, as the Americans refused to relinquish any territory taken from Spain or the Creek Confederation.

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<sup>102</sup> Article I, Treaty of Peace and Amity Between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, December 24, 1814, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cvi-cxiv.

<sup>103</sup> Chapman, *The Battle of New Orleans*, 15.

<sup>104</sup> Article IX, Treaty of Peace and Amity Between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, December 24, 1814, in Latour, *Memoir*, appendix, cxiii.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAST CAMPAIGN

After the conclusion of the War of 1812, the U.S. struggle to acquire Florida had changed. The portions of West Florida that the United States claimed were part of the Louisiana Purchase had, in fact, now been annexed, and the chances of the “No Transfer Resolution” coming into effect appeared slight. Meanwhile, the fight against the Creeks and Seminoles continued, providing the Americans with recurring justifications for violating Spanish sovereignty in East Florida and what remained of West Florida. The lack of significant military forces left diplomacy as Spain’s only defense against American incursions. Eventually Madrid admitted its inability to assert control and exercise sovereignty over the region and ceded its provinces of East and West Florida to the United States in 1819.

When news of the signing of the Treaty of Ghent reached British forces in North America, they all withdrew from the theater of war, except for Nicolls’ group at Prospect Bluff. Since he left Pensacola in November, the colonel had improved his base on the Apalachicola by constructing a large fort.<sup>1</sup> Under orders from Admiral Cochrane, Nicolls was to remain in West Florida and champion the Creeks. The admiral determined that Britain must take measures “for relieving West Florida from the usurped authority of the American Government and at the same time to afford to the Indian Nations an

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<sup>1</sup> Mark F. Boyd, “Events at Prospect Bluff on the Apalachicola River, 1808-1818.” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 16 (October, 1937) 2:71-72.

opportunity of recovering territories of which they have been so unjustly deprived by the United States.”<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Hawkins established contact with Nicolls and, in March, urged him to leave.<sup>3</sup> Nicolls’ responses show that he had no intention of departing just yet. He supported the British government’s presumption that Article IX of the late treaty “nullified the Treaty of Fort Jackson,” and several Indians at his post even signed a declaration stating that they would uphold that article, as it declared their lands would be returned to them.<sup>4</sup> Hawkins balked at Nicolls replying that “the treaties you have made for the Creek nation, with the authority created by yourself for the purpose, must be a novelty,” as Britain would not sign a treaty of this kind for tribes within the boundaries of a Spanish province.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, none of the signatories had ever been a part of the Creek council, and one was a Seminole.<sup>6</sup> This conflict arose out of confusion created by the diplomats at Ghent. Neither side had specifically considered the Treaty of Fort Jackson during negotiations and opposing assumptions came to a head in 1815. Some British and American officials assumed that Article IX of the Treaty of Ghent nullified the Treaty of Fort Jackson while others did not. Andrew Jackson remained firm that, since the Creek Confederacy had been at peace with the United States before the signing of the Ghent treaty, Creek lands were not covered under its provisions.<sup>7</sup> In July Secretary

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<sup>2</sup> Cochrane to Lambert, February 3, 1815, in Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Hawkins to Nicolls, March 19, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 549.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolls to Hawkins, April 28, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 548-549; Boyd, “Events at Prospect Bluff,” 72.

<sup>5</sup> Hawkins to Nicolls, May 28, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 550-551.

<sup>6</sup> Hawkins to Nicolls, May 24, 1815, *ibid.*, 549.

<sup>7</sup> Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 180.

of State Monroe asserted the official U.S. position on the matter, which mirrored Jackson's.<sup>8</sup>

Nicolls' lingering presence proved troublesome to the Americans, as he still held many captured slaves at his fort. For British forces operating in the South, their orders had instructed them "by no means to excite the black Population to rise against their Masters. There is nothing so calculated to unite the Inhabitants against you."<sup>9</sup> Despite these orders not to incite slave rebellions, the British still saw the defection of slaves as something that could provide the military with needed manpower and simultaneously impair the U.S. economy. Thus, in April 1814, Cochrane had ordered his commanders to issue a proclamation to the American slaves, informing them that anyone wishing to be free must reach his forces where they would either join the British military or be "sent as FREE settlers, to the British possessions in North America or the West Indies."<sup>10</sup> When Nicolls and Woodbine fled Pensacola they took as many as 300 slaves with them.<sup>11</sup> While additional runaways from American plantations joined them at Prospect Bluff, most of the slaves had been taken from Spanish citizens in Pensacola.<sup>12</sup> Governor Manrique asked Cochrane to recover them and the admiral dispatched Captain Robert C. Spencer in the gun-brig *Borer* to Apalachicola. Upon arriving at the fort, however, Spencer and his men received no cooperation from Nicolls or his men, and

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<sup>8</sup> Deborah A. Rosen, *Border Law: The First Seminole War and American Nationhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 109.

<sup>9</sup> Bathurst to Pakenham, October 24, 1814, in Grodzinski, "Instructions to Major-General Sir Edward Pakenham."

<sup>10</sup> British Proclamation, April 2, 1814, in *Niles' Weekly Register*, June 11, 1814, 242.

<sup>11</sup> Boyd, "Events at Prospect Bluff," 72.

<sup>12</sup> During the war Britain freed nearly 4,000 slaves. American diplomats pressured their return. Instead, after years of deliberations, the British agreed to pay the U.S. \$1,204,960 in compensation. For more see Arnett G. Lindsay, "Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Great Britain Bearing on the Return of Negro Slaves, 1783-1828," *The Journal of Negro History* 5 (October 1920), 4:417.

when they attempted to convince the former slaves to return voluntarily, the men threatened their lives.<sup>13</sup>

While serving in the Caribbean, Nicolls had developed a radical anti-slavery ideology. This helped shape his operations in West Florida. Although acting under Cochrane's proclamation of taking in slaves, he exceeded the decree by forcibly abducting slaves from their masters in Pensacola and from the Forbes store on the Apalachicola River. At Prospect Bluff his men not only trained the former slaves but instilled in them a strong sense of purpose. In his standing order, Nicolls promised the slaves freedom but also convinced them of the merits of fighting to "unrivet the Chains of Thousands of your Colour now lingering in Bonds."<sup>14</sup> He also convinced them that, by joining him, they would attain full British citizenship complete with all of the rights and freedoms of whites.<sup>15</sup>

Although Nicolls' initial mission was to train a force of both blacks and Indians, he found that the Creeks and Seminoles shunned European military discipline, as they preferred their own styles of warfare. However, the former slaves took quite well to Nicolls' training plan; and he even paid them for their service. As the arming and training progressed from 1814 into 1815, more runaway slaves, from Georgia, Mississippi, and even East Florida, joined Nicolls' force.<sup>16</sup> By the spring of 1815, the colonel elected to

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<sup>13</sup> Cochrane to Manrique, July 10, 1815, in "Documents Relating to Colonel Edward Nicholls and Captain George Woodbine in Pensacola, 1814," *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 10 (July 1931) 1:52; Memorandum of a gentleman of respectability at Bermuda, May 21, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 552.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolls, "Orders for the First Battalion of Royal Colonial Marines," 1814, in Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 50-54.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-27, 50-54.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63, 76-77.

stay in Florida and act as an Indian superintendent representing Great Britain, and possibly to begin his own trade business on the Forbes company property.<sup>17</sup>

This changed in March 1815, when Nicolls received orders to withdraw from West Florida. His new commander, Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm, stated:

you will do your utmost to persuade the Indian Nations to accept ... the Treaty as independent Nations—ceasing from all kinds of hostilities against the U.S. who are to restore to them all the territory of which they were in possession in 1811. You will endeavor to impress upon them the risk they will run by continuing to war with the U.S. in which they cannot be assisted by G.B.; that by Peace... and being free from war become populous so as to be able to defend themselves from the future encroachments of the U.S. You will leave them such cannon and military stores as they may require for their Fort at Apalachicola.<sup>18</sup>

By June, Nicolls had departed West Florida, and, following orders, left significant amounts of arms. A sergeant who deserted that post described the armaments as seven artillery pieces, “about three thousand stands of small arms, and near three thousand barrels of powder and ball.” He also stated that besides the Indians, Nicolls left “between three and four hundred negroes.”<sup>19</sup> American reports estimated the strength of the Indians at about 800.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Nicolls left behind the substantial fort his men had constructed. The large earthen fortification was seven acres in size with bastions on the four corners and parapets “fifteen feet high and eighteen feet thick.”<sup>21</sup>

Following Nicolls’ withdrawal, the fort at Prospect Bluff remained garrisoned with over 350 well-armed and trained free blacks. American slave owners deemed them

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<sup>17</sup> John Sugden, “The Southern Indians in the War of 1812: The Closing Phase,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 60 (January 1982) 3:306.

<sup>18</sup> Malcolm to Nicolls, March 5, 1815, in Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Deposition to Samuel Jarvis, May 9, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 551.

<sup>20</sup> Gaines to Dallas, May 22, 1815, *ibid.*, 552.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum of a gentleman of respectability at Bermuda, May 21, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 552; Boyd, “Events at Prospect Bluff,” 72.

renegades and considered them a menace to their property and their lives. William Crawford, now secretary of war, pushed for Spain to deal with the problem, and specified that “the principle of good neighborhood requires the interference of the Spanish authority, to put an end to an evil of so serious a nature. Should he [the governor of West Florida] decline this interference, it will be incumbent on the Executive to determine what course shall be adopted in relation to this banditti.”<sup>22</sup> Jackson, still commander in the South, asked the Spanish governor of West Florida to remove the threat of the “Negro Fort,” as it posed a threat to the United States. Although the governor wanted to rid the province of what he considered renegades, he lacked the military forces to do so.<sup>23</sup> Since the Spanish were unable to act, the prospect of enlisting friendly Indians for the job became a viable option. In September 1815, rather than send U.S. troops across the border, Benjamin Hawkins directed Creek chief William McIntosh to eliminate the fort with 200 warriors, but the force proved too small and was repulsed.<sup>24</sup>

As summer approached, raids across the border from Prospect Bluff escalated with the theft of cattle and the kidnapping of two soldiers.<sup>25</sup> In an attempt to contain the problem, Jackson had Fort Scott constructed near the Apalachicola River’s crossing of the U.S. border. Curiously, the only viable means to supply Fort Scott was by boat via the Gulf and the Apalachicola River. Jackson likely knew this and sought to capitalize on a golden opportunity, as it created an excuse to cause conflict with the fort at Prospect

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<sup>22</sup> Crawford to Jackson, March 15, 1816, Library of Congress, *Andrew Jackson Papers*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/maj006415/> [accessed April 23, 2016].

<sup>23</sup> Jackson to Zúñiga, April 23, 1816, Zúñiga to Jackson, May 26, 1815, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 555-557; John K. Mahon, “The First Seminole War, November 21, 1817-May 24, 1818,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 77 (Summer, 1998) 1:62-63.

<sup>24</sup> Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 216.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-220.

Bluff and potentially send an expedition to destroy it. U.S. officials informed the Spanish of this supply route, and promptly ignored the resulting protests Spain could do nothing to thwart Jackson's use of the Apalachicola.<sup>26</sup>

In June, Jackson divulged to the secretary of war his intention to destroy the fort.<sup>27</sup> In July, two gunboats escorting supply vessels arrived at the mouth of the Apalachicola River. Under the command of Sailing Master J. Loomis, they waited until confirmation that Prospect Bluff had been surrounded by Lieutenant Colonel Duncan L. Clinch who had with him over 100 regulars and a contingent of allied Creeks. On the seventeenth, Loomis discovered that one of his dispatch boats had been ambushed, with the loss of four sailors killed and one taken prisoner.<sup>28</sup> Once communications were established between the land and naval forces, Loomis slowly warped up the river. Clinch's soldiers and Creek allies attacked the Maroon fortification on July 23, but were easily driven back by well-disciplined fire.<sup>29</sup> On the morning of the twenty-seventh, the gunboats approached the fort and viewed its flagpole flying a Union Jack above a red flag of no surrender. The stronghold's occupants, under the leadership of a man named Garçon, began to fire ineffectively on the flotilla. The Americans answered, and once the sailors found the range they prepared hot shot in an attempt to start fires within the works.<sup>30</sup> The first hot shot entered the fort's magazine and touched off a violent explosion heard as far away as Pensacola. Following the blast, the allied Creeks swept into the position and dispatched the remaining survivors. A U.S. soldier wrote to his

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<sup>26</sup> Boyd, "Events at Prospect Bluff," 76.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson to Monroe, June 15, 1816, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 557.

<sup>28</sup> Boyd, "Events at Prospect Bluff," 77-79.

<sup>29</sup> Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 225-226.

<sup>30</sup> Hot shot is a cannon ball heated in a fire or kiln until "red hot." The purpose is, when fired, to ignite fires within enemy combustibles.

father, “You cannot conceive, nor I describe the horrors of the scene. In an instant, hundreds of lifeless bodies were stretched upon the plain, buried in sand and rubbish, or suspended from the tops of surrounding pines... Here lay an innocent babe, there a helpless mother: on the one side a sturdy warrior, on the other a bleeding squaw.”<sup>31</sup> Upon examining the carnage, the Americans discovered the bodies of 270 free black men, women, children, and a lesser number of Choctaw warriors. They also found several cannons, 3,000 muskets, and 500 swords. With the exception of the artillery, Clinch gave all the captured arms to the allied Creeks.<sup>32</sup> Despite the unanticipated success of the American assault, it remained a violation of Spanish sovereignty, and details of the attack were not released to the public for years. Negotiations had recently begun between Spain and the United States regarding the cession of the Floridas, and news of this attack within the boundaries of West Florida might easily scuttle them.<sup>33</sup>

Following the War of 1812, Luis de Onís had reestablished relations with the United States. By 1815, with Spain reunified under the control of Ferdinand VII and the Cádiz Cortés, Madison and Monroe finally decided to recognize Onís as the official ambassador.<sup>34</sup> As formal diplomatic relations were restored, so too were the unresolved disagreements regarding Spanish territory claimed by the United States. In December 1815, Onís contacted Monroe requesting that the borders of the Floridas be returned to their pre-1810 status, which would mean the return of all territory between the Perdido

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<sup>31</sup> Marcus Buck to his father, August 4, 1816, in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, February 25, 1836, 115-116.

<sup>32</sup> Loomis to Patterson, August 13, 1816, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 559-560.

<sup>33</sup> Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 229-230.

<sup>34</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 178-179.

and Mississippi rivers.<sup>35</sup> Monroe's response remained as it always had, that unless the United States received reparations for the "unlawful seizure and condemnation of their vessels in the ports of Spain," it would not consider returning any territory.<sup>36</sup> A month later, Onís suggested that George Erving be reinstated as U.S. ambassador to Spain, and that negotiations should continue in Madrid. Monroe agreed and Erving resumed his post in the spring of 1816. Besides pushing to annex both Floridas, Erving was also given the assignment of negotiating the western boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase that separated the United States from Mexico. Spain pressed to acquire Texas while the United States strove for both Floridas. But Madison and Monroe would be disappointed. Upon arrival in Madrid, Erving found the state of the Spanish government in disarray. Destruction from the war, along with numerous colonial rebellions, prevented the Spanish from paying him much attention. Erving's superiors suggested he leave and that Onís continue the negotiations in Washington. Thus, Madison completed his second term in March 1817 without settling any of the border disputes with Spain. On March 4, 1817, James Monroe assumed the office of president, and appointed John Quincy Adams as secretary of state. After months of further delay, Adams and Onís finally resumed negotiations in December 1817.<sup>37</sup>

Back in West Florida the situation grew more serious, and by the fall of 1817 tensions became hot near Fort Scott. Chief Neamantla, from a nearby Hitchiti settlement named Fowltown, told General Edmund P. Gaines at the fort that his men could no longer

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<sup>35</sup> Onís to Monroe, December 30, 1815, Onís to Monroe, January 2, 1816, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 422-424.

<sup>36</sup> This refers to Spain allowing French privateers to utilize their ports during the Quasi War. Monroe to Onís, January 19, 1816, *ibid.*, 424-426.

<sup>37</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 181-183, 191-193, 195.

gather wood from tribal lands. Gaines would not have this, and he ordered the chief to come to him. After receiving no response, Gaines sent 250 soldiers to capture Neamanthla. In the confusion of a skirmish on November 21, the chief escaped and the soldiers burned Fowltown.<sup>38</sup> The chief countered on November 30, when his warriors ambushed a boat full of soldiers and civilians near Fort Scott, killing thirty-four soldiers and four children, and capturing six soldiers' wives.<sup>39</sup> Thus began what history refers to as the First Seminole War.

In December, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun ordered Andrew Jackson to the region. He sent the general "with full power to conduct the war as he may think best."<sup>40</sup> On March 9, 1818, Jackson arrived at Fort Scott with 500 regulars, 1,000 militia, and 1,800 Creek warriors led by McIntosh. After accumulating enough provisions, he began his advance into the Florida Panhandle. On his march, Jackson's army destroyed every Seminole and Maroon settlement it encountered, including the large town of Miccosukee on April 1.<sup>41</sup>

As he neared St. Marks, Jackson informed the Spanish governor of his intentions. He stated that he was under orders from the president "[t]o chastise a savage foe who combined with a lawless band of Negro brigands, have for some time past been carrying on a cruel and unprovoked war against the citizens of the United States."<sup>42</sup> On

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<sup>38</sup> The Hitchiti is a tribe that migrated from west Georgia and composed part of the Seminoles. Gaines to Jackson, November 21, 1817, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, Vol II, 333-334.

<sup>39</sup> Gaines to Jackson, December 2, 1817, *ibid.*, 337.

<sup>40</sup> Calhoun to Jackson, December 26, 1817, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Military Affairs, Vol I, 439.

<sup>41</sup> Jackson to Calhoun, March 25, 1818, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Military Affairs, Vol I, 698; Jackson to Calhoun, April 9, 1818, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, Vol II, 358-359.

<sup>42</sup> Jackson to Zúñiga, April 6, 1818, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Military Affairs, Vol I, 704.

April 7, he marched into St. Marks unopposed. While there he arrested two men whom he determined had supported the enemy, Alexander Arbuthnot, a British citizen, and Hillis Haya, a Tuskegee prophet whom the whites called “Francis.” Jackson had Francis hanged immediately and held Arbuthnot for trial.<sup>43</sup>

The army then resumed its march, one hundred more miles to the Suwanee River and the site of Bowlegs Town. On April 16, after a brief fight, Jackson’s forces burned the settlement.<sup>44</sup> During the attack the Americans captured another British citizen, Robert Ambrister. Jackson held a trial for both Ambrister and Arbuthnot, each of whom was found guilty of aiding the Seminoles in their war against the United States. The two British nationals were subsequently executed on April 29.<sup>45</sup> While there was initial protest from Charles Bagot, the British foreign minister, it took a year for details of the trials to reach Parliament, and by then the British public had lost interest in the issue.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, after destroying Bowlegs Town, Jackson learned that Seminoles were congregating in Pensacola. Despite protest from Governor José Masot, he turned the army west, and after marching 240 miles entered the town for the second time on May 24.<sup>47</sup> Arriving unopposed, he found no Seminoles. As at St. Marks, Jackson asked that his men be allowed to occupy the fort. The Spanish commander of Fort Barrancas, however,

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<sup>43</sup> Jackson to Zúñiga, April 6, 1818, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Military Affairs, Vol I, 704.

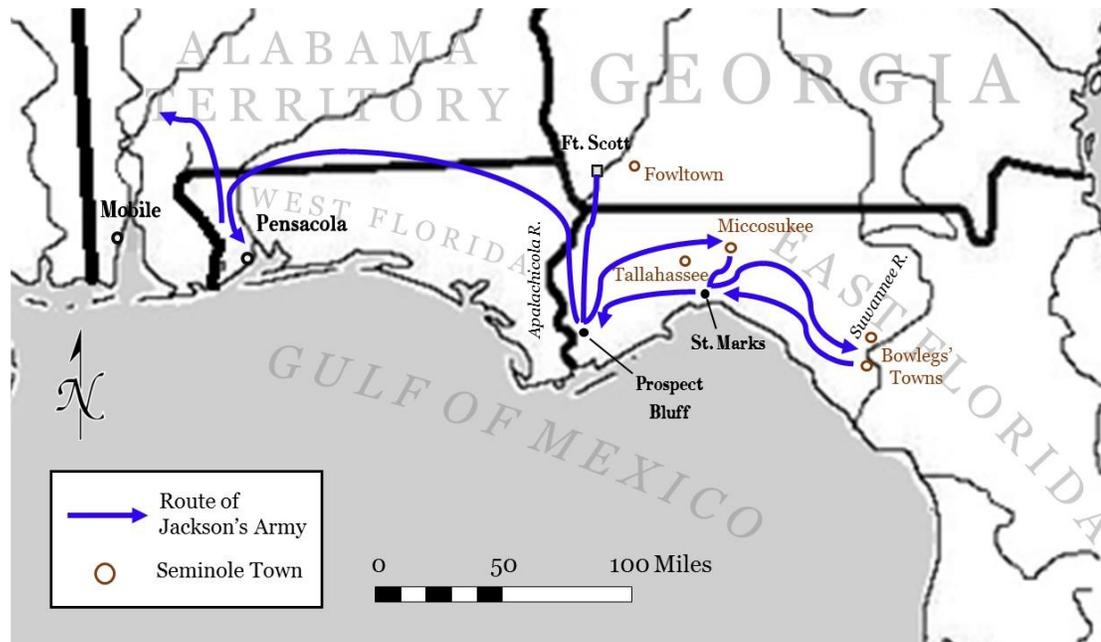
<sup>44</sup> Jackson to Calhoun, April 20, 1818, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, Vol II, 360-363.

<sup>45</sup> Mahon, John K. “The First Seminole War, November 21, 1817-May 24, 1818.” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 77 (Summer, 1998) 1:66; Sean Michael O’Brien, *In Bitterness and in Tears: Andrew Jackson’s Destruction of the Creeks and Seminoles* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 216.

<sup>46</sup> For more on these trials see Deborah A. Rosen, “Wartime Prisoners and the Rule of Law: Andrew Jackson’s Military Tribunals during the First Seminole War,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 28 (Winter, 2008), 4:559-595; David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Old Hickory’s War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire* (Mechanicsburg PA: Stackpole Books, 1996), 189-190.

<sup>47</sup> Heidler, *Old Hickory’s War*, 170-172.

refused. At this point, Jackson decided that the Spanish must be harboring the hostiles and on May 26, 1818, the Americans prepared for a formal siege. After only one day of bombardment the fort capitulated. Following this last act, Jackson marched back into the United States after leaving American garrisons behind in both Pensacola and St. Marks.<sup>48</sup> With the Seminoles scattered and most of their towns destroyed, the war was over (Map 13). Although battle casualties were light, Jackson’s campaign in Florida destroyed Seminole and Maroon power in West Florida and pushed them southward into the central Florida Peninsula. Additionally, most of the tribal leadership died during the campaign or shortly after.<sup>49</sup> Although the American army failed to capture these groups, their actions crippled the organization of these groups for over a decade.



Map 13. Jackson’s 1818 Invasion of Florida. Map created by author.

<sup>48</sup> Jackson to Monroe, June 2, 1818, Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, II*, 377-378.

<sup>49</sup> O’Brien, *In Bitterness and in Tears*, 219.

During the course of the war negotiations between Adams and Onís intensified. Onís demanded that Jackson be punished, but the president decided that this would impede boundary negotiations with Spain. Instead, Monroe described Jackson's actions as a misunderstanding, and he blamed Spain for not preventing the incursions of the Seminoles, as Article V of the 1795 treaty required. To maintain peaceful relations with Spain and also to show force, Monroe restored Pensacola and St. Marks to Spain and did not punish Jackson.<sup>50</sup> Fearful of a break in the progression of negotiations, the Spanish minister chose not to argue the point. Thus, Spain could do nothing about Jackson's occupation. The Bourbon government had become desperate as its empire in the Americas crumbled. By 1816, several independence movements, particularly in the colonies of Buenos Aires, New Grenada, Venezuela, and Chile, had secured major victories against royalist troops; Madrid began to wonder what would happen to the rest of the empire. This had a major effect on negotiations when, in July, Onís received instructions from Madrid that allowed him to cede East and West Florida in return for an established border west of the Mississippi, and a promise that the U.S. would not aid or recognize the independence movements in Latin America.<sup>51</sup> Adams reciprocated this sudden turn of generosity by agreeing to shift the western border claim from the Rio Grande east to the Red River. This gave Spain Texas, a major point of contention throughout the negotiations. Adams' decision proved decisive in coming to an agreement. The cession of the Floridas only required approval from Madrid, which since Jackson's invasion, had been responding more quickly to its minister.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*, 189-190.

<sup>51</sup> Philip C. Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands: The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), 134.

<sup>52</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 197-200.

By January 1819, the United States agreed to remove its garrisons from St. Marks and Pensacola, provided that Spain put garrisons and responsible officers in those posts. Furthermore, the Americans agreed to assume the claims for the “French spoliations” from the Quasi War, amounting to \$5 million, if Ferdinand VII did not make any land grants in East Florida that might reduce the region’s value.<sup>53</sup> Spain agreed to cede all territories east of the Mississippi, except for the land already taken by the United States west of the Perdido. Out of pride this portion would be purchased by the United States with the French spoliation debt. Both parties agreed upon these measures and signed the Adams-Onís Treaty on February 22, 1819.<sup>54</sup> The Senate ratified the contract on the twenty-fourth.<sup>55</sup>

Spain, however, failed to ratify the treaty for two years. This violated Article I, which stipulated that the treaty be ratified within six months. The Spanish delay was due in part to the fear that the United States, which would immediately gain Florida, might then reverse on its promise and assist the Latin American independence movements. Spain lacked the military might to enforce these important articles of the treaty, so it decided to hold the prize of Florida just out of American reach. Consequently, Madrid stalled until it had organized a military expeditionary force to Buenos Aires.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Adams to Onís, March 10, 1819, Onís to Adams, March 10, 1819, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 651-652.

<sup>54</sup> Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, 131-169; Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 199-200.

<sup>55</sup> Monroe to the Senate, February 13, 1821, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol. IV, 650; Treaty of Amity, Settlement, and Limits, Between the United States of America, and His Catholic Majesty, February 22, 1819; United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations Vol. V, 127-133.

<sup>56</sup> Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 203.

Monroe allowed this, as pressure from other foreign ministers confirmed that Spain *did* intend to ratify the treaty.<sup>57</sup> In Madrid, the American minister to Spain, John Forsyth, sent consistent notes to the foreign ministry urging ratification. But the Georgian's tactless diplomatic language rarely received a reply. The situation improved when, in March 1820, the outbreak of a liberal revolution forced Ferdinand VII to reinstate the Constitution created in Cádiz in 1812, bringing back the Cortés government the king had dissolved in 1814.<sup>58</sup> By October, the reinstated Cortés required the king to ratify the treaty.<sup>59</sup> The signed treaty reached Washington and was approved unanimously by the Senate on February 22, 1821.<sup>60</sup> According to the terms contained in Article VII, Spanish authorities would vacate both East and West Florida within six months and hand the provinces over to the United States.<sup>61</sup> On July 10, 1821, officials lowered the Spanish flag and raised the Stars and Stripes on the flagstaff at Fort Castillo San Marcos in St. Augustine. After over two centuries of Spanish rule Florida became part of the United States.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Monroe to Madison, November 24, December 9, 1819, Library of Congress, *The Papers of James Madison*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm018649/> [accessed April 1, 2016].

<sup>58</sup> Dionisio to Adams, to Adams, May 10, 1820, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 689.

<sup>59</sup> Castro to Forsyth, October 6, 1820, Forsyth to Adams, October 11, 1820, United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations, Vol IV, 695-697; Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> Resolution adopted by the Senate of the United States, February 19, 1821, *ibid.*, 703.

<sup>61</sup> Treaty of Amity, Settlement, and Limits, Between the United States of America, and His Catholic Majesty, February 22, 1819. United States, Congress, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, American State Papers, Foreign Relations Vol. V, 127-133.

<sup>62</sup> Heidler, *Old Hickory's War*, 228.

## *Conclusion*

From the time President Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, American settlers moved in increasing numbers into the old Southwest. To protect the borders of Georgia and the Mississippi Territory, U.S. officials desired not only the strategic Florida peninsula but the West Florida panhandle that controlled the mouths of the navigable rivers flowing south into the Gulf of Mexico. While the Spanish in that region did not pose much of a threat themselves, the region became a sanctuary for hostile Native tribes and runaway slaves as American settlers expanded their reach across the original Southwest. In this complex geopolitical environment, southern expansionists, Spanish governors, European traders, Maroons, Creeks, and Seminoles, fought for different, often opposing, goals, in a protracted and often violent contest in which the Americans ultimately triumphed.

Following the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson determined that the Gulf Coast must be annexed to provide security to the vital port of New Orleans. But assumptions, made by both the French and Americans while negotiating the treaty, left the nation with a border dispute in regarding the eastern extent of Louisiana. Madison pursued a resolution to this dispute, over that portion of West Florida located west of the Perdido River. But Madison's claim did not include the remainder of West Florida, nor any portions of East Florida. While American officials did not want to invade Spanish territory without a justifiable reason, the Napoleonic wars in Europe provided one.

Until 1810, the struggle remained diplomatic. However, as Napoleon conquered Europe, American tensions with France and Britain grew and the Bourbon

monarchy in Spain became threatened with elimination. Acting on this potential threat to the nation, President Madison and Congress sought a way to sanction an occupation of the Floridas. The West Florida Rebellion in 1810 convinced the president that these inhabitants, and possibly those of East Florida, sought safety in becoming part of the Republic. Thus, Madison sent agents into East Florida to inquire if a rebellion could be repeated there too. The plan proved faulty in 1812 when Madison's agents attempted to incite a rebellion in East Florida, which became known as the Patriot War. Instead of a rebellion of Spanish citizens, it developed into an embarrassing invasion by American expansionists.

The same year, as multiple Spanish colonies sought independence, Congress passed the "No Transfer Resolution" to counter the eventuality of any foreign occupation of the Spanish provinces on the Gulf Coast, primarily by Great Britain. When the War of 1812 began, this resolution seemed like it might come into play, but Congress concluded that reacting to the arrival of a British force would be too little too late, and subsequently authorized the occupation of Mobile in 1813.

Following Tecumseh's visit to the South in 1811, civil war erupted within the Creek Confederacy and escalated into a war with the United States. This fighting diverted U.S. forces from the war in Canada, but furthered southern expansionist goals. It revealed that neutral Spain supported the hostile Red Sticks. It also gave the United States a motive to use force against Spain for violating the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo (this despite America's violation of the treaty with the Patriot War). The Creek War brought Andrew Jackson to the forefront of southern expansionism and primed American forces in the South for the arrival of the British in 1814. The U.S. victory over the Creeks and

resulting Treaty of Fort Jackson opened up additional lands for settlement, lands “capable of producing, in great abundance, every article necessary to the sustenance of man, or beast, ... It is, in point of soil and climate, well adapted to the growth of cotton, Hemp & flax and, in many parts, would produce good Tobacco.”<sup>63</sup> The potential value of these lands drove expansionists like Jackson and John Coffee, who eagerly sought private ownership of them.<sup>64</sup>

The British offensives of 1814-1815 tested American military capabilities in defending their southern conquests. But Jackson and his Creek War veterans proved, in the final act, that the United States' hold on the region was unshakable. Furthermore, American raids into West Florida forced the Spanish governor into recognizing the futility of military resistance. The Treaty of Fort Jackson, which supposedly ended the Creek War, in fact did not. Indians and former slaves, armed and trained by the British, kept the war going in 1816 and enabled Jackson to continue a persistent campaign through 1818 against the remaining Red Sticks, Seminoles, and Maroon communities living in East and West Florida. The resulting American violations of Spanish sovereignty continually reminded the Spanish government that it could not defend its provinces with military force.

By 1819, the near collapse of Spain's colonial empire in the Americas compelled Ferdinand VII and the Cortés to finally cede both East and West Florida to the United States. America's expansionist policies in the old Southwest not only gained the nation access to the entire Gulf Coast east of the Sabine River, but they also laid the

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<sup>63</sup> Bassett, *Major Tatum's journal*, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter, Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 4-5.

groundwork for Jackson's later Indian removal policies. This further enabled white settlement in the old Southwest and the creation of America's Cotton Kingdom. Between 1811 and 1820 the population of the former Mississippi Territory increased from 40,352 to 203,349, an increase over five fold.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Mississippi Territory. Aggregate amount of each description of Persons within the Mississippi Territory, 1811, Box 19825, Series 486, MDA; Secretary of State, *Census for 1820*, Aggregate amount of each description of persons in the United States and their Territories (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1821), 18.

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