

# The Battle of Horseshoe Bend

*Essential Question: What were the causes and consequences of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend?*

Following Tennessee's admission to the Union in 1796, settlement in middle and western Tennessee increased. The increase in white settlers led to tensions with the Creeks who lived in a loose confederation of towns along the rivers of Georgia and Alabama. In 1811, the Shawnee leader, Tecumseh visited the southeastern tribes as part of his plan to build an alliance of tribes to stop the spread of white settlements. While the southern Creeks were uninterested in Tecumseh's plan, many people in the northern towns supported it. In 1812, "War Hawks" in Congress, including Tennessee representative Felix Grundy, urged Congress to declare war on Great Britain. A few warriors joined Tecumseh and the British in fighting the Americans at the beginning of the War of 1812.

The War of 1812 triggered a civil war in the Creek towns. The Creeks friendly to the United States were known as the White Stick Creeks and those hostile to the United States were known as the Red Sticks. When members of the Mississippi militia attacked the Red Stick Creeks in 1813, they retaliated by killing 250 settlers at Fort Mims, located just north of Mobile, Alabama. The Fort Mims Massacre as it was called caused the civil war to expand into a larger conflict between the Creeks and forces from Tennessee, Georgia and Mississippi.

**Andrew Jackson** was selected to lead Tennessee's **volunteer** militia. He was first ordered to New Orleans, but was stopped in Natchez. On the march back to Nashville, Jackson earned the nickname "Old Hickory" by marching alongside his men. Following the Fort Mims Massacre, Jackson took his army south into Creek territory. By December of 1813, most of Jackson's volunteer force was ready to return home. They believed that their one year enlistment would soon expire. However, Jackson's thoughts differed. The conflict eventually led to a number of men being court-martialed, but the volunteers returned home. Jackson's expedition was saved by the arrival of 900 new recruits in January of 1814.

By March, the Red Sticks had taken refuge in the **Horseshoe Bend** of the Tallapoosa River. On March 27, Jackson launched a two pronged assault. A force of American, Creek and Cherokee warriors crossed the river downstream to attack the Red Stick village from the rear. At the same time Jackson's force attacked the barricade using first artillery fire and then a frontal assault. Young **Sam Houston** took part in the charge and was seriously wounded. Red Sticks who tried to escape across the river were gunned down by the Americans on the opposite shore. Approximately, 800 Red Stick Creeks were killed and 350 women and children made prisoners of the White Sticks and Cherokee allies. Jackson's force had 49 men killed and 154 wounded. The Creek War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Fort Jackson on August 9, 1814. Jackson forced the Creeks to cede 23 million acres of land to the United States government. The White Sticks who had fought as allies of Jackson were furious that they too had their lands taken from

them. Junaluska, the Cherokee chief who saved Jackson's life during the battle later said, "If I had known that Jackson would drive us from our home, I would have killed him at the Horseshoe."

Sources: "The War of 1812 and Indian Wars." *The Volunteer State Goes to War: A Salute to Tennessee Veterans*, Tennessee State Library and Archives, n.d., Web. 26 June 2014. <<http://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/veterans/index.htm>>

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Complete the cause and effect chart below using information from the reading.

Western Expansion

## Causes

Tecumseh

Fort Mims Massacre

## Battle of Horseshoe Bend

## Effects

### Short-term

(Immediate results of battle)

### Long-term

(Permanent changes)

Many people claimed that Tennessee earned its nickname the "Volunteer State" because so many men volunteered to fight in the War of 1812.