

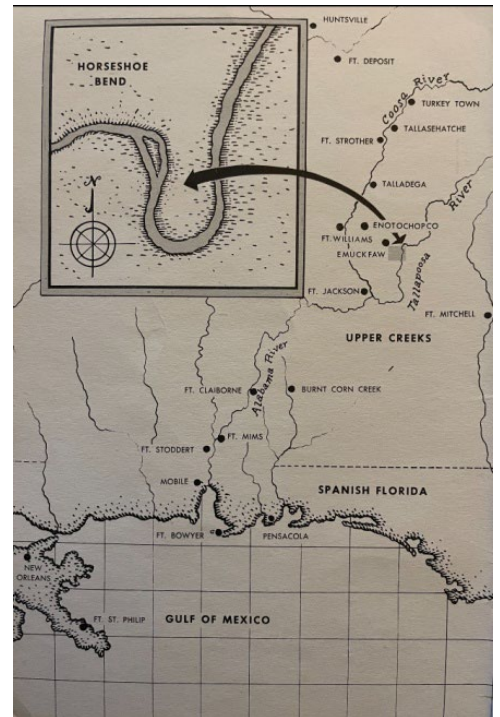
THE FORGOTTEN WAR

By: David Burleson

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park comprises 2,040 acres. It is located in east central Alabama about 30 miles north of Auburn and about 30 miles west from the Georgia state line. The Tallapoosa River meanders through the park flowing from the northeast to the southern portion of the park where the waterway forms a horseshoe shaped bend to the right and flows to the northeast before bending west and exiting the park near the northwest corner. The bend in the river forms a peninsula containing about 100 acres. At its narrowest point the peninsula is about 1,000 feet wide. General Andrew Jackson wrote, “This bend which resembles in its curvature that of a horse-shoe, includes, I conjecture, eighty or a hundred acres. The river immediately around it, is deep, and somewhat upwards of a hundred yards wide. As a situation for defense, it was selected with judgment and improved with great industry and art.”

It was here on March 27, 1814, American forces under Major General Andrew Jackson met warriors of the Creek Nation in a climactic battle which ultimately led to the cession of millions of acres of Native American land and started Jackson, by way of New Orleans, on the path to the Presidency of the United States. The battle at the “Horseshoe” is considered the most important event in Alabama history.

The Creek War, 1813-1814, is often referred to as “America’s Forgotten War.” It was a war within the War of 1812 and was fought mainly within the boundaries of what later became the State of Alabama. The American soldiers were mostly militiamen and volunteers included in units from Tennessee, Georgia, the Carolina’s and the Mississippi Territory. The war received little press at the time due to the United States conflict with Great Britain. Combatants were rarely taken prisoner. It was a fight “to the death” as viewed by both sides. This lack of knowledge is somewhat surprising considering the legendary characters who participated in the conflict. Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, a Cherokee half-blood named Sequoyah, who would later become the most famous person of his tribe, and the well-known Shawnee war chief Tecumseh all had a part to play.



Swept up in this violent conflict were several members of the Burleson family, who were living in the Mississippi Territory at the time. In all, nine Burleson men from the Territory are included in the rolls of those who served. Who were these men and what was their background? This report will discuss these nine soldiers, give some of their family history and analyze their participation in the war. Included in this narrative will be information concerning the four Burleson men and related family members from the State of Tennessee who served.

My research for this report has led me to realize how little we know about our family’s role in the Creek War. Family tradition has always concluded that at least eight Burleson men fought at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, that they were all members of Colonel Peter Perkins 7th Regiment and

were in Captain James Burleson's Company of Mississippi Territory Militia. I had bought into this old family tradition and have included the story in several reports I have written over the years. My recent research has shown how wrong I have been to take these old family stories as fact. This article is my attempt to give a more accurate description of our family's part in the war.

The Mississippi Territory was organized by the United States in 1798 with the capital located in Natchez. In 1804 the boundaries were expanded northward to the Tennessee State line. The land within the Territory included what later became the States of Mississippi and Alabama. Four Native American tribes claimed most of the land, the Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws and Choctaws. The Creeks claimed the most; about 60% of the land area that later became the State of Alabama. In the northern part of the territory, the Cherokees and the Chickasaws controlled millions of acres on either side of the Tennessee River extending north to the Tennessee line. In 1805 and 1806, the United States negotiated land cessions by the two tribes. These cessations were north of the Tennessee River to the Tennessee state line and included lands claimed by both tribes as a common hunting ground. The area covered by the two treaties formed an approximate triangle of 345,600 acres. Settlers started pouring in and by late 1808 the population was sufficient to form a county which was named Madison County for the soon to be President James Madison. When the county was formed records indicate the population was over 4,000. In 1810 the town of Twickenham was founded and became the county seat. Population of the new town was 300. The town's name was changed to Huntsville in 1811. A look at territorial maps from 1810 shows only three areas of significant white settlement, Madison County, an area around Mobile and an area around Natchez. The remaining areas in the territory were claimed by Native Americans.

It was into this vast and mostly unknown territory that three Burleson families settled in either 1807 or 1808. They came from Tennessee (by way of North Carolina and Kentucky) and included the families of Joseph Burleson, John Burleson and James Burleson. The three brothers were sons of Aaron Burleson, whose 1781 Sullivan County, North Carolina "last will and testament" has been a valuable source of family history to all who have descended from that line. (NOTE: Records show Joseph Burleson was in White County, Tennessee in 1807 where he was serving as a Captain of the 29th Regiment of the State Militia. This could indicate the three families did not move until 1808 or Joseph later followed his two brothers to the territory.) The three families settled west of Madison County on land near Limestone Creek in what is today, Limestone County. The land was still claimed by the Chickasaws. The Burleson's and about 200 other families were "intruders" on Indian lands. The three men and their families are shown on a May 1809 list of intruders prepared by government officials. By late June 1809 federal troops had forced all intruders to move off the Chickasaw lands. It appears the James and John Burleson families moved east into Madison County while the Joseph Burleson family moved to the New Madrid area of Missouri where in December 1811, they were caught up in one of the most powerful earthquakes ever to strike North America. By the summer of 1810, the James and John Burleson families had moved back onto Chickasaw lands. On September 5, 1810, a petition signed by 450 intruders was sent to President Madison. The petition, which requested the intruders be allowed to stay on Chickasaw lands, included the signatures of James Burleson, John Burleson and John's son, Jonathan Burleson. Included in the petition was a statement indicating most of the settlers had first moved into the area in 1807. But again, they were not allowed to stay as federal troops forced the families off the land and back to Madison County. By late December 1810, land records show James Burleson filing to purchase from the government a 160-acre tract of land in west Madison County. By February 1812, John Burleson purchased from the government a 160-acre tract adjoining James' tract to the east. John's son, Jonathan first shows up in Madison County records in 1812, when he was serving as a "Constable."

During this period of early settlement in Madison County, events were occurring in the United States and its territories which led to war with Great Britain and their Native American allies. What started as a trade war between England and France, eventually led to the boarding and seizure of American ships. By the middle of 1812,

President Madison issued a declaration of war against Great Britain. While the United States had its' hands full fighting the British, the Mississippi Territory settlers were more concerned with an enemy closer to home.

Ever resentful of the encroachment on their lands by white settlers, Native American tribes across the eastern part of North America had for years waged war against the intruders. In the early 1800's a Shawnee chief, Tecumseh began efforts to form an Indian alliance to turn back the tide of white migration. He was a noted speaker and considered a great prophet by the various tribes. His proposed coalition would include tribes from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. In 1810 and again in 1811 he left his home in the Great Lakes region and came to the Mississippi Territory to visit the different tribes in an effort to convince them it was time to band together and stop the white invasion once and for all. He found an attentive audience with the Creek Nation; his father and mother had years earlier lived among the Alabama Creeks. The Creek Nation became split over Tecumseh's ideas. The Lower Creeks were against war and were not opposed to white settlement, while the Upper Creeks felt their way of life was threatened by the constant flood of pioneers and were ready to go the war to stop them. The Upper Creeks became known as the "Red Sticks" due to the ends of their war clubs being painted red. Animosity between the two Creek factions worsened and a civil war began. While the conflict between the Creeks continued, the simmering anger between the United States and Great Britain erupted into the War of 1812. Soon, the two fights merged. The Red Sticks became more aggressive, encouraged by the hope Great Britain would provide them with weapons and supplies. American settlers in the Territory, fearing an Indian uprising supported by the British, began preparing to defend themselves. Expectations came to a head in July 1813, when a Red Stick trading party visited Pensacola, seeking to obtain weapons and supplies. As the party returned home, they were attacked by a group of Mississippi Territory militia. The fight occurred at Burnt Corn Creek near the Florida boundary, about 80 miles north of Pensacola. The attack enraged the Creeks as it occurred on land they claimed. Fearing retaliation, settlers across the southern part of the territory began seeking shelter in local forts. One such fort was a stockade built by settler, Samuel Mimms around his plantation home located about 40 miles north of Mobile and just east of the Alabama River. Here over 400 settlers gathered to seek shelter from an expected hostile Creek attack. Most of the settlers were women and children with only a small detachment of poorly trained militia on hand for protection. On August 30, 1813, about seven hundred Red Stick warriors attacked. When the fight was over somewhere between 250 and 300 settlers were killed. Most of those killed were women and children. It was one of the largest massacres of settlers by Native Americans in the history of the United States. News of the "Fort Mimms Massacre," as it was called, spread rapidly across the territory and the United States. Response to the attack came quickly. The governors of the Mississippi Territory and the States of Tennessee and Georgia mobilized militias and launched a full-scale campaign to defeat the Red Sticks.

In Madison County, Colonel Peter Perkins, who had organized the local militia in 1809, called for more volunteers and by late September 1813 his 7th Regiment of Mississippi Territory Militia included thirteen companies, one of which was led by Captain James Burleson. Another regiment comprised of Madison County men was the 16th Regiment which included seven companies. The regiment was commanded by Colonel Charles Burrus. Local histories differ on whether four or five of these twenty companies ever saw action in the war, however, none of the accounts list James Burleson's company as taking part in any of the approximate dozen battles fought against the hostiles. If not for personal recollections, several years later, by two Burleson soldiers, we might never know of their war deeds. More on the Burleson soldiers will be presented later in this report.

When the appeal came to Tennessee for assistance in fighting the Red Sticks, the Tennessee State Militia began preparations to head south to aid the Mississippians. Major General Andrew Jackson commanded the Tennessee Militia and though hampered by two gunshot wounds from a failed attempt on his life, he worked tirelessly to recruit and organize the troops. The Tennessee legislature convened near the end of September 1813 and authorized Governor Blount to call into immediate service 3,500 militia and voted \$300,000 for their support.

General Jackson was ordered by the governor to call out 2,000 militia and rendezvous at Fayetteville. During this call for volunteers, three Burleson men and later a fourth from West Tennessee joined militia companies. (Note: At the time of the Creek War what we now call West Tennessee still belonged to the Chickasaw tribe, and what we call Middle Tennessee was then called West Tennessee.) The four volunteers were: David Burleson Jr., William Burleson, Hilkiah Burleson and Isaac Burleson. I am assuming these were the four youngest sons of David Burleson Sr. (circa 1755-1832) a Revolutionary War veteran who had moved from North Carolina to the Murfreesboro area of West Tennessee sometime before 1810. The names of these four are included in the "Muster Rolls" of the War of 1812 service records preserved in the Tennessee State Archives in Nashville and the National Archives in Washington D C. David Burleson Jr. was a private in Captain Bird Nance's infantry company under the command of Colonel John Cocke. He enlisted in November 1813 and was discharged in May 1815. No information has been found that would place his company at Horseshoe Bend, however he could have been there in another unit and was possibly later at the Battle of New Orleans. William Burleson was a private in Captain William Mullin's infantry company commanded by Colonel William Metcalf. Records show William also serving in the infantry companies of Captain John Hill and Captain John Cunningham. (Note: In studying the military records of those who served, keep in mind, more than one muster roll for each unit was kept during the course of the war and a soldier's name might appear in one company's roster and later be included with another company. This was not uncommon as numerous soldiers served in more than one company during their total time in service. Also, soldiers in the militias of Tennessee and the Mississippi Territory generally signed up for a sixty-day term or a ninety-day period. When their service was up, the volunteers who re-enlisted often did so in other units. This practice of shifting from one company to another makes it difficult to trace a soldier's movements, particularly since not all company muster rolls have survived.) Hilkiah Burleson was a private in Captain Ota Cantrell's company of West Tennessee mounted infantry under the command of Colonel Newton Cannon. Isaac Burleson was a private in Captain Thomas Jones' company of volunteer mounted gunmen under the command of Colonel Robert Dyer. Based on information in BFA Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 2, Isaac enlisted September 1814 and served until May 1815. This would be after the Creek War ended but could place him with Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans.

About 45 miles south of Murfreesboro is the town of Winchester in Franklin County, Tennessee. Here several men with Burleson family connections volunteered for service in September and early October of 1813. George Russell, whose great aunt was Henrietta "Dolly" (Burleson) Russell, volunteered along with his friend, David Crockett, the well-known frontiersman who in 1836 would gain fame as one of the defenders of the Alamo. They joined as privates in Captain Francis Jones' company of mounted gunmen under the command of Colonel Newton Cannon. Also in Franklin County, George Russell's uncle William Russell, the nephew of "Dolly" (Burleson) Russell, became captain of a separate company of Mounted Spies that later in the war came under the command of Major General Andrew Jackson. Jackson considered Captain Russell one of his most reliable officers and as a result his Tennessee company of spies and scouts saw significant action. These Franklin County units took part in some of the earliest battles in the Creek War. They had moved south and were in Huntsville by early October 1813. By early November they had moved past Huntsville crossed the Tennessee River and were camped near the Coosa River in what is now east Alabama. In early November they fought at the Battle of Tallushatchee and less than a week later fought in the Battle of Talladega. David Crockett gave a descriptive account of each of these battles in his autobiography published in the early 1830's. Over 500 Creek warriors lost their lives in the two battles. As the war wore on, it would only get worse for the Red Sticks; they were always out manned and out gunned; only about 25 percent of the warriors had firearms.

While their Tennessee cousins were joining up, the Burleson families in the Mississippi Territory also answered the call to arms. Nine of these men eventually saw service. Fortunately, their military records for the early part of the war are preserved on microfilm in the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library. The three Burleson brothers, John, Joseph and James all served, and they each had two sons who enlisted. All served in Captain James

Burleson's company under the command of Colonel Peter Perkins. Based on correspondence of the time, it appears Colonel Perkins did not have any duties outside of Madison County. He and most of his companies stayed home to patrol and protect Madison County from possible attack. (Note: In early November 1813 an invading Creek war party killed seven settlers in Madison County.) The militia was also kept busy building stockades along the Tennessee River, handling supplies enroute to Jackson's army further south and protecting the Creek prisoners of war being sent northward to Huntsville. It is noted practically all the prisoners were women and children.

The military records of the nine who served require some explanation. The way their names are listed on the muster rolls makes it difficult to determine which Burleson family they each belonged to. Three Jonathan Burleson's are listed; one as Lieutenant Jonathan, one as Jonathan Sr. and the other as Jonathan Jr. There is a James Burleson Sr. and a James Burleson Jr. on the roster. Also listed are Joseph Burleson Sr. and Joseph Burleson Jr. Thankfully there was only one Aaron Burleson and one Edward Burleson included. A breakdown of the nine is as follows, showing their proper family affiliation and their length of service.

1. James Burleson Sr. is Captain James Burleson (1775-1836.) He enlisted September 22, 1813 and served until his enlistment in Perkins Regiment ended December 20, 1813. As a captain, his pay was \$40 per month. He later served in Captain William Russell's Spy Company. More on that later.
2. James Burleson Jr. as listed on the roster is James Burleson (1793-1868), the son of Joseph Burleson (1770-1849.) He enlisted September 22, 1813 and served as a private until his enlistment expired December 20, 1813. Pay for a private in the local militia was \$8.00 per month. He later served in Captain William Russell's Spy Company. More on that later.
3. Joseph Burleson Sr. is Joseph Burleson (1770-1849), a brother to Captain James Burleson. He enlisted September 22, 1813 and served as a private until his enlistment term expired December 20, 1813. He also served as a Commissary officer in Jackson's army. More on that later.
4. Joseph Burleson Jr. as listed on the roster is Joseph Burleson (1800-1877) the son of Captain James Burleson. He was only thirteen years old when he enlisted September 22, 1813. His rank was private, and he only served one month and thirteen days through November 4, 1813.
5. Jonathan Burleson Sr. is John Burleson (circa 1767-1824), the older brother of Captain James Burleson and Joseph Burleson. He enlisted November 14, 1813 and served as a private until his enlistment was up December 20, 1813.
6. Jonathan Burleson Jr. is John Burleson (1795-1878), the son of Joseph Burleson (1770-1849). He was born in October 1795 and married Mary "Polly" Pride in Madison County February 14, 1814. He enlisted November 14, 1813 and served as a private until his enlistment expired December 20, 1813.
7. Lieutenant Jonathan Burleson (1789-1866) is the son of John Burleson (1767-1824). He enlisted September 22, 1813 and served as an ensign until November when he was promoted to First Lieutenant. He held that rank until his enlistment was up December 20, 1813.
8. Aaron Burleson (1791-1828) was the son of John Burleson and the younger brother of Lt. Jonathan Burleson. He enlisted September 22, 1813 and served as a private until his enlistment expired December 20, 1813.
9. Edward Burleson (1798-1851) was the son of Captain James Burleson. He was born December 15, 1798. He was almost 15 years old when he enlisted September 22, 1813. He served as a private until his enlistment expired December 20, 1813. He later served in Major Russell's Battalion of mounted gunman. More on that later.

After the war, most of these Burleson men gave certain individuals their power of attorney in order for them to collect their military wages which evidently were slow to be paid. Based on these power of attorney documents it appears payment for their service in the militia was not made by the Territorial Government but by the United States Government. Some examples are as follows: On May 7, 1814, Aaron Burleson gave his power of attorney to Benjamin Patteson of Madison County. Mr. Patteson was directed to collect the funds due Aaron from the

Territorial Government or from the United States Government. Funds due included military pay, use of personal horse and subsistence reimbursement for food. On October 28, 1816, Captain James Burleson gave his power of attorney to Flemon Hodges of Madison County. Mr. Hodges, who had also served in Perkins' 7th Regiment, was at one time a Justice of the Peace. He was able to collect the money due Captain Burleson on October 30, 1820. Lieutenant Jonathan Burleson gave his power of attorney to William Donnison of Davidson County, Tennessee on October 14th, 1818. On October 29, 1818, Mr. Donnison collected the funds due from the U S Government. They included Jonathan's pay of \$20.00 per month for his time served as an ensign, \$30.00 per month for his time as a first lieutenant, 40 cents per day for use of his personal horse and 40 cents per day subsistence pay for the two daily food rations allocated. His total pay was \$111.46.

In reviewing their military records, it is noted the Burleson's did not serve continuously from September 22nd through December 20th. A gap in service occurred from November 5th through November 13th. This nine-day gap coincides with the reclassification of James Burleson's company from an Infantry company before November 5th to a company of mounted gunmen after November 13th. The pay they received for use of their own horses was only for the last one month and six days of service (Nov. 14th through Dec. 20th.) It was when he came back into service on November 14th that Jonathan Burleson was promoted from ensign to first lieutenant. Three of the Burleson's did serve during the nine-day gap however, it appears they became part of the Tennessee Volunteers during that period, but no other information is available to describe what they did or who they served with. The three were Captain James Burleson, James Burleson (son of Joseph) and Aaron Burleson. (Note: Aaron only served the last six days of the nine-day period.)

Based on their Mississippi Territory military records, it appears the Burleson family participation in the Creek War ended on December 20, 1813 and that none of our family served in 1814 and did not see action at Horseshoe Bend. Fortunately, United States military records for the War of 1812 and personal recollections of the Burleson family are available to describe their service after December 1813.





THE FORGOTTEN WAR

Part Two (Con't from Vol XXV page 1176)

By: David Burleson

To understand the Burleson family's later service, some background information on the challenges General Jackson faced while campaigning in Creek territory is necessary. When not engaged in the several battles they fought from November 1813 through March 1814, Jackson and his volunteer army spent most of their time in quarters at Fort Strother, constructed by his troops right after the Battle of Tallushatchee. The fort was built on the banks of the Coosa River. It was located about 75 miles southeast of Huntsville in the northern part of the Upper Creek nation. Jackson's main route for food and supply shipments was through Huntsville, on south to his supply depot at Fort Deposit, near present-day Guntersville, and on further south to Fort Strother. From his first day entering Creek lands, until the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Jackson and his troops constantly lacked food and at times bordered on starvation. Promised food and other supplies were either never sent or arrived in lesser quantities than promised and often much later than anticipated. After each battle Jackson's troops would strip the Creek towns and camps of their corn, potatoes and livestock. At times the troops were reduced to eating acorns and what wildlife they could kill. By the middle of November 1813 things came to a head. No provisions had arrived in camp for several days and petitions circulated urging Jackson to take the troops back to civilization to replenish their supplies and return to Creek country at a later date. With men and horses starving, Jackson yielded on November 17 and the troops begin moving back to Huntsville. Twelve miles from Fort Strother, they met a supply caravan with one hundred and fifty beeves and nine wagons of flour. When they had eaten their fill, Jackson ordered the army to return to Fort Strother. The infantry ranks formed, grumbling. At the command to march, one company moved out, but not back to the fort, but northward toward Huntsville. Other soldiers prepared to follow; the company officers appeared powerless to stop them. Jackson grabbed a rifle and spurred his horse to the front of the deserters. His left arm was in a sling which required him to rest the barrel of the rifle on his horse's neck. He swore he would shoot the first man to move a step in the wrong direction. Luckily for Jackson, his friend and top military aide, General John Coffee was nearby. He and a handful of his cavalry formed up with Jackson as did Major John Reid and some of his company. After a few tense minutes, the discontented army backed down and slowly marched back to Fort Strother. Similar scenes of the army's frustration played out in the coming days.

Problems from another quarter surfaced in December. Most of Jackson's army were militia and volunteers who had enlisted for terms of either sixty days or ninety days. Their enlistments were coming to an end by the end of the month. With limited food to eat, their horses in poor condition and without proper winter clothing, the troops had no incentive to stay. Jackson's army, which once consisted of about 3,500 men was reduced to only a few hundred by the latter part of December. Governor Willie Blount of Tennessee wrote to Jackson toward the end of December and advised him to evacuate Fort Strother and retreat to Tennessee. General Jackson was in a desperate situation but refused to retreat. Jackson later wrote, "my two biggest embarrassments of the war are the lack of supplies and men." At his darkest hour things started to improve. In early January 1814, Colonel William Carroll arrived at Fort Strother from Huntsville with about 850 Tennessee recruits. Included in his troops were about 180 recent recruits from Madison County. (NOTE: Another 60 Madison County recruits had been assigned to the contractor's service before Carroll left Huntsville.) General Coffee soon arrived from Huntsville with several hundred Tennessee mounted troops to reinforce Carroll's new men. The Madison County men were put under the command of General Coffee and dispersed among the various cavalry units. It should be noted many of the "recruits" were the very men who only a few weeks before had abandoned Jackson's army and returned home. (Could these Madison County men have included some of the nine Burleson soldiers whose enlistments had ended

December 20th?) After resting a few days, obtaining fresh horses, supplies and more suitable clothing, these men rejoined Jackson's army, but often in different units from which they originally served. George Russell and David Crockett are examples. They had left Fort Strother when their enlistment was up in December and returned home. After several days, they headed back south and rejoined Jackson's army. They joined Captain William Russell's Spy Company where they each held the rank of "sergeant." According to National Archives War of 1812 service records, also becoming part of Captain Russell's company were two Burleson men whose service in Perkins' 7th Regiment had ended in December. They were Captain James Burleson, and James Burleson, the son of Joseph Burleson. (Note: Though I refer to him as "Captain James", he would have held a lower rank in Russell's company.) Based on information in BFA Bulletin, Vol. 7, No. 2, James (the son of Joseph) served in Captain Russell's company from February 1, 1814 to April 4, 1814 which could place him at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend.

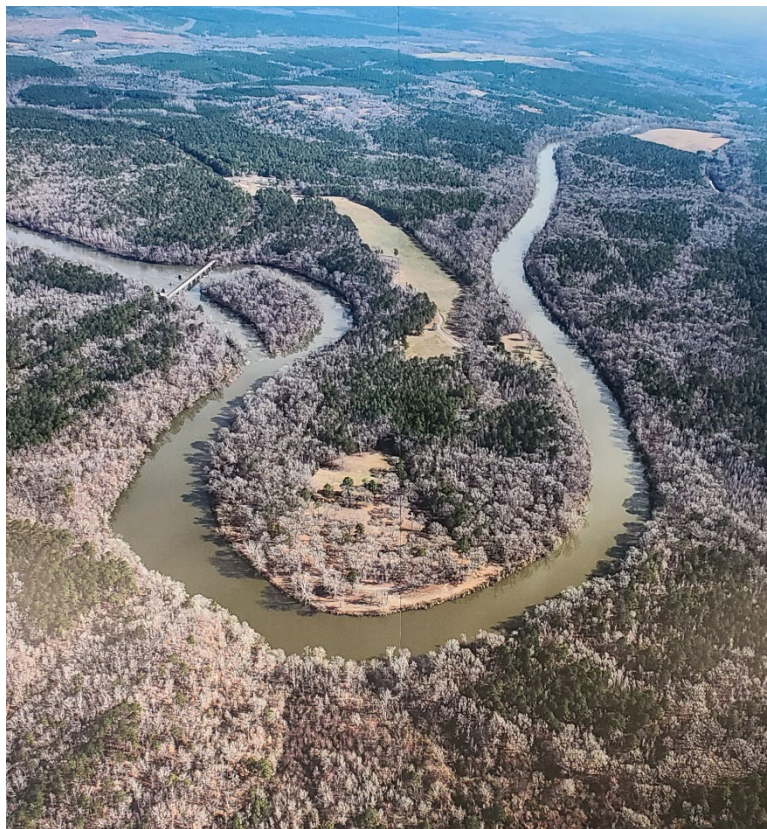
At this point, we will discuss the personal stories of Captain James Burleson and Edward Burleson that were presented in the 1889 book, "A Brief History of the Burleson Family." Also discussed are the personal recollections of Joseph Burleson as told to Anne Newport Royall in March 1819 and presented in the book "Letters from Alabama 1817-1822." The different recollections are, for the most part, consistent with each other and the events discussed are consistent with the official military reports of the period. Joseph Burleson stated he served, along with two of his sons, throughout the Creek War and had been a commissary officer in charge of providing provisions to Jackson's army. Whether he became a commissary officer before or after his enlistment with Perkin's 7th Regiment ended is unknown. He also states he was present at the November 17, 1813 confrontation of General Jackson with the group of volunteers trying to leave the army. Joseph's description of events also shows he was present on December 9th when a similar incident occurred. He later describes a soldier's execution in which his brother, James Burleson, was a member of the firing squad. Official records show the execution took place on March 14, 1814. Joseph's description of the event matches exactly with official reports. This would place Joseph and James Burleson at Fort Strother less than two weeks before the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. The stories of James and Edward Burleson support Joseph's recollections and coincide with official reports of the supply chain problem. Their story states General Jackson was desperate to find trustworthy men to handle the commissary, and it was Captain William Russell who recommended to Jackson that Joseph and James Burleson serve as commissary officers and that James took his young son, Edward along to keep the books. According to James, he and Edward and the entire commissary left the supply wagons at Horseshoe Bend and joined the fighting. More on that later.

By the middle of January other troops had arrived at Fort Strother and Jackson felt he was ready to resume his campaign. On the 15th he put his troops on the march. Included were General Coffee and a company of volunteer officers. Also included were Captain Russell and his company of mounted spies which included about thirty men. On January 22nd, Jackson and his army engaged the Creeks in what became known as the Battle of Emuckfau Creek. About fifty Red Stick warriors were killed. Two days later, as Jackson and his army were moving northward, back to Fort Strother, the Creeks attacked them at what became known as the Battle of Enitachopco Creek. Captain Russell's company played a prominent role in both battles. After retreating to the safety of Fort Strother, Jackson made no further move against the Creeks for about six weeks. During that time his army increased as several units of militia and volunteers arrived from Tennessee. Also arriving at the Fort was the 39th Infantry Regiment of U S Regulars commanded by Colonel John Williams. This regiment, made up mostly of Tennessee men, included a young sergeant named Sam Houston. Twenty- two years later, Houston would gain fame as commander of American forces during the Texas Revolution and later as President of the Republic of Texas.

Including the friendly Creeks and Cherokees, Jackson now had an army of about 5,000 men. In late March 1814, Jackson with about 3,300 men left Fort Strother. They headed south toward Horseshoe Bend. The troop was comprised of 2,000 men from the East and West Tennessee militia and the 39th Infantry Regiment. In addition, there were General Coffee's 700 cavalry and mounted gunmen, which included Captain Russell's company, 500

Cherokee allies and 100 friendly Creeks. On March 26, the army made camp six miles north of Horseshoe Bend near the old Emuckfau Creek battlefield. From their earlier expeditions and information from their scouts, the officers knew what awaited them on the Tallapoosa River peninsula. During the previous fall and winter, the Creeks had built the temporary village of Tohopeka on the toe of peninsula. It consisted of several dozen log houses which provided shelter for the Creek warriors and their families as they fortified their stronghold. North of the village, about one half mile, the Creeks had built an impressive log barrier which zigzagged across the neck of the peninsula. It was about 1,000 feet long and stretched from the riverbank on one side of the peninsula to the riverbank on the other side. This barricade sealed off the landward side of the peninsula. The breastworks were from five feet to eight feet tall and built of logs, rock and dirt. Loopholes had been cut into the logs so the Creeks could fire at their attackers without exposing themselves. The barrier was concave in the middle which would expose any attacking force to a crossfire. A few feet behind the breastworks the Creeks constructed a shorter wall to provide protection if attacked from the rear. Between the breastworks and village, almost in the center of the peninsula, was a rocky hill of rough terrain that was heavily forested. The land between the hill and the breastworks as well as the land on the approach to the peninsula had been cleared of trees, which had been used to construct the breastworks. Only the stumps remained. This gave the Creeks a clear field of fire toward any enemy forces attacking the front or the rear of their barricade. Within the peninsula were about 1,000 warriors and several hundred old men, women and children. About 900 warriors waited behind the breastworks while about 100 warriors were stationed on the south end of the peninsula to protect the village in case of an attack from across the river. In addition to the breastworks on the north side, the Creeks depended on the Tallapoosa River to provide protection for the remaining three sides. The river was about twenty feet deep, was from 100 to 120 yards wide and presented a formidable barrier to any attacking force.

Early Sunday morning, March 27, 1814, Jackson put his plan of attack in motion. As Jackson and most of his men waited on the landward side of the breastworks, General Coffee with his 700 mounted gunmen, the 600 Indian allies and Captain Russell's Spy Company crossed the river a few miles downstream, came back upstream and preceded to encircle the "horseshoe" to prevent the Creeks from retreating across the river. Branching off from Coffee's main force, which were positioned on the high ridge above the river, the Indian allies and Russell's company preceded closer to the riverbank and positioned themselves across the river from the village at the toe of the peninsula. Meanwhile, Jackson positioned his remaining troops in front of the breastworks. Jackson had brought two small cannons, a three-pounder and a six-pounder. He positioned them on a small hill, about 80 yards in front of the breastworks and on the right side of the peninsula if facing the barricade from the north.



To the left of the cannon on the far side of the peninsula, Jackson had positioned an advance guard of chosen men within gunshot of the wall. Behind this company he placed Colonel Williams and his 39th Infantry. Behind them he positioned Colonel Copeland's regiment of 660 militiamen. Behind the hill where the cannons were located, Jackson stationed General George Doherty's brigade of east Tennessee militia, and behind

Red Sticks. Seeing the smoke from the burning village and hearing the gunfire from the hill, Jackson decided it was time for a frontal assault. At 12:30 PM he ordered his men to storm the breastworks.

Jackson chose Williams' 39th Infantry of regulars and a regiment of General Doherty's militia to lead the attack. As the soldiers formed ranks about 100 yards in front of the breastworks, the Creek warriors prepared for the assault. At the signal, Jackson's forces began charging across the open ground. They had to dodge the many stumps in the field and had trouble seeing the barricade due to the heavy smoke from cannon fire and smoke from Creek muskets. As the 39th and the militia approached the breastworks, they drew the bulk of the Creek fire. Major Lemuel Montgomery, Lieutenant Michael Moulton and Lieutenant Robert Summerville, all from the 39th Infantry, were killed in the assault. As Montgomery fell, his troops fought stubbornly on and were soon up and over the barricade wall. The fighting became close and furious. With no time to reload the soldiers relied on bayonets, sabers and knives. Near where Montgomery fell, Sam Houston was one of the first to reach the top of the wall. Almost immediately he was shot in the thigh by a Creek arrow. Not to be deterred, he continued fighting for some time before pain forced him to stop and have the arrow cut out. Later in the battle he received two more wounds, one bullet to the arm and another in his shoulder. Seeing their comrades assaulting the breastworks, Captain Russell and his men plus their Indian allies entrenched on top of the hill kept up a heavy fire on the rear of the Creek forces. Caught between two American forces, the fight quickly turned against the outnumbered and outgunned Red Sticks. Their war clubs and tomahawks were no match for the bayonets affixed to the rifles of the 39th Infantry. It became utter chaos along the length of the breastworks, which was rapidly filling with Creek dead.

There was no thought of surrender; it was a fight to the death. Once the breastworks were breached the battle was pretty much over, however, the Creeks continued to fight. Some dispersed to other areas of the peninsula and fought to the end. Seeing it was hopeless, about 250 to 300 warriors attempted to escape the battlefield by swimming the Tallapoosa River to what they thought was safety on the other side. However, waiting for them on the opposite shore were General John Coffee's cavalymen. Most of the escaping Indians never made it out of the water. Over 250 Creeks were shot and killed trying to cross. Mercifully, the setting of the sun brought an end to battle. The next day, 557 dead Creek warriors were counted on the battlefield. Officers estimated another 250 had died in the attempted escape across the Tallapoosa River. Red Stick dead totaled over 800, which constituted the largest loss of life suffered by any one Native American tribe in any one battle with whites in the history of the United States. General Jackson reported 26 of his soldiers were killed and 106 wounded, some of them mortally. The largest number of dead and wounded were in the 39th Infantry. Of the friendly Cherokees and Creeks who fought, Jackson reported 18 Cherokees killed and 36 wounded while the Creeks lost 5 killed and 11 wounded. About 350 Creek women and children, who had occupied the village at the south end of the peninsula, were taken prisoner.

For all practical purposes the Battle at the "Horseshoe" ended the Creek War. The remaining Creek warriors in the region scattered with some joining the Seminoles in Spanish Florida. Two days after the battle, Jackson marched his troops further south. Finding no resistance, he burned every Creek village he came to. Reaching the site of the old French Fort Toulouse, Jackson constructed a new fort called Fort Jackson. It was located about six miles above where the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers met to form the Alabama River. By the latter part of April, Jackson and most of his army left Fort Jackson to return home. By early May, they arrived in Huntsville where they were met with a hero's welcome. A few days later Jackson returned to his home near Nashville. By the end of May, Jackson was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the regular United States Army. By the first of August he had returned to Fort Jackson to negotiate the treaty between the Creek Nation and the United States. Jackson's treaty terms were harsh. He demanded the Creek Nation cede 21 million acres of their land to the United States as a war indemnity. Of this total, about 14 million acres were located in what later became the State of Alabama. This represented over 43 percent of the total current land area of the State. The remaining 7 million acres were in

Georgia. The Creeks had no choice but to agree; their warriors had been defeated, their towns destroyed and most of their nation bordering on starvation. The Lower Creeks, who had sided with Jackson throughout the war, were astonished to find 7 million of the total 21 million acres to be ceded belonged to them. The treaty signing on August 9, 1814, was not a happy affair for the Creek Nation. Thus ended the Creek War.

Two days after signing the treaty, Jackson left for Mobile and from there began his campaign against the Spanish and the British in the Pensacola area of Florida. From there, Jackson came back to Mobile and continued to Louisiana, where on January 8, 1815, he and his army defeated the British at the Battle of New Orleans. It was near Mobile on September 28, 1814, that William Russell was promoted from Captain to Major and given command of a battalion of mounted gunmen. According to the National Archives military service records, James Burleson and his son, Edward served in this battalion. This adds support to the James Burleson account of serving with Jackson at New Orleans.

After the War of 1812, land cessions by the Cherokees and Chickasaws of about two million acres on either side of the Tennessee River occurred in 1816 and 1817. These cessions plus the Creek lands ceded caused one of the first major land rushes in United States history. Settlers by the thousands poured into the Mississippi Territory. The population increased so much that by early 1817 the Territory was divided, and the eastern portion became the Alabama Territory and the western portion admitted to the Union as the State of Mississippi. Two years later, on December 14, 1819, Alabama was admitted to the Union as the twenty-second State.

Many of the Creek War veterans became caught up in the rush to settle the former Native American lands. By 1816, Major Russell and his family settled in what later became Franklin County in northwest Alabama. Russellville, the county seat of Franklin County, was named in his honor when incorporated in 1819. Major Russell died in 1825 and is buried in the Denton Hollow Cemetery in east Franklin County. After his death his rifle was given to his friend and comrade in arms, Captain James Burleson. A photo of the rifle and the related story were included in Volume XXIV No 1 of "Recollections" the publication of the Burleson Family Research Group.

Captain James Burleson and his family moved into what later became Lawrence County, Alabama in 1816. Later they lived in Missouri and Tennessee and by the early 1830's they had moved to Texas. James and his sons became involved in the Texas Revolution for Independence from Mexico. James served briefly in the Texas Volunteers and was in the famous "Grass Fight" November 26, 1835. He became ill a few weeks after the fight and died January 3, 1836. He is buried in Bastrop County, Texas.

James' son, Edward Burleson, became a colonel in a regiment of Texas Volunteers in 1835. In 1836, he became Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Texas Volunteers and commanded that group at the Battle of San Jacinto. He later became a brigadier general in the Texas Militia and became a famous Indian fighter. In 1841 he was elected Vice President of the Texas Republic. Sam Houston was elected President. In 1846, Burleson County was formed and named in his honor. Edward died December 26, 1851, and is buried in Austin, Texas.

Edward's younger brother, Joseph, who had served briefly in Perkins' 7th Regiment, moved to Lawrence County with his father in 1816. He eventually moved to Texas where he served in the Texas Revolution. He and his wife, Mary (Polly) Warren Burleson had 14 children. Joseph died in 1877 and was buried alongside his wife, in the Joseph Burleson Cemetery in Navarro County, Texas

Joseph Burleson, the brother of Captain James, also settled in Lawrence County, Alabama and in 1818 was one of the founders of Moulton, which became the county seat in 1820. The town was named for Lt. Michael Moulton, who had died at Horseshoe Bend. While in Moulton, Joseph ran a tavern and inn and by 1819 he became acquainted with one of his guests, Anne Newport Royall. It is through her long conversations with Joseph that we

know about his service in the Creek War. Joseph and his family moved to Texas in about 1835. He died in Bastrop County August 2, 1849.

Joseph's two oldest sons, James and John Burleson, who both served in Perkins' 7th Regiment also moved to Texas after living in Lawrence County for several years. James, who also served in Captain Russell's Spy Company and could have been at Horseshoe Bend, died in December 1868 and is buried in Fayette County, Texas. John died April 13, 1878, and is buried in Lampasas County, Texas.

John Burleson, the older brother of Captain James Burleson and Joseph Burleson, moved from Madison County, south across the Tennessee River in about 1817, and settled in the western edge of what in 1818 became Cotaco County (named changed to Morgan County in 1821.) He died there in 1824. Location of his grave is unknown. Until about 1892, Somerville was the county seat of Morgan County. Though the spelling was changed, the town was named for Lt. Robert Summerville who died at Horseshoe Bend.

John's son, Lieutenant Jonathan Burleson, moved from Madison County to what later became Morgan County in 1816. He settled near Flint Creek and lived out the remainder of his life there. In 1818 he was appointed captain of the calvary in the county's first militia unit. He and his wife, Elizabeth Byrd Burleson had thirteen children, five of whom would eventually move to Texas. Jonathan Burleson died September 24, 1866 and was buried in Morgan County.

Aaron Burleson, the last of the nine Burleson's to have served in Perkins' 7th Regiment, was the younger brother of Lt. Jonathan Burleson. He moved from Madison County and was living in Lawrence County, Alabama by 1818. He and his wife and family eventually moved to Tennessee. He died in Hardeman County, Tennessee August 23, 1828.

Based on my research, I feel confident James Burleson and his son, Edward, were in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Possibly at the battle were James Burleson, as a member of Captain Russell's company, and his father, Joseph Burleson as part of the commissary. In my research, I have found no documentation placing the other five Madison County Burleson's in any of the military units after December 20, 1813, when their enlistments ended. This is not to say they couldn't have re-enlisted and were part of the Madison County men that were included in General Coffee's mounted gunmen in January 1814. Maybe they were, but I can find no evidence to support that theory. My research was limited to information available at the Morgan County Archives, the Huntsville-Madison County Public Library, information contained in various issues of the Burleson Family Association Bulletin, and from the Burleson Family Research Group. Important to note, my information from the National Archives was taken solely from BFA Bulletins particularly the November 1981 issue which reported research done by Jim Priest while in Washington DC in July 1981. A more thorough search of the service records at the National Archives should provide more information, particularly the dates served. Also, my report does not pretend to cover all aspects of the war. Troops from Georgia and North Carolina were not discussed nor the battles they fought. Volunteer military units from other areas in the Mississippi Territory and their contributions to the war were not discussed. My research concentrated solely on the Burleson men in Tennessee and Madison County, and even then, it only scratched the surface of the resource material available. Hopefully, further research can correct any errors I have made and continue to add to our knowledge of the Burleson family's contributions in the Creek War of 1813-1814.

By: David A. Burleson March 15, 2022

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1193

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