

The Battle of Horseshoe Bend and the end of the Creek War, 1814

Introduction

On May 12, 1814, Tennessee settler Isaac Stephens wrote to his uncle Henry Mackey in Virginia about the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in Alabama. In that battle on March 27, 1814, US Army and Tennessee militia troops under General Andrew Jackson defeated 1000 warriors from the Creek confederation, ending the Creek War of 1812–1814. Stephens reported that “we yesterday recieved intelgence that the Creek War is finally at an End. our troops are now Getting their discharges.” With his letter, he included a map illustrating the positions of the Indians and the US forces at Horseshoe Bend. He also anticipated the terms of the treaty:

The Creek propheits have Nearly all Come in and Surrendered themselves Gen^l. Pinknay & Colⁿ. Hawkins are autheriz^d To treat with them which treaty is dictated By congress. they preliminaries are that they Indians are to pay all the Expence of the Campaign and admit publick road through their Country &c

The Treaty of Fort Jackson between the United States and the Creeks was signed in August 1814 and required the Creeks to cede 23 million acres of land to the United States.

Transcript

Isaac Stephens to Henry Mackey, May 12, 1814

Blountville 12th May 1814

Dear Sir

myself and your friends here are well at present I recieved a Letter from my father in march which Inform^d me that three of my brothers were out with the ohio malitia at fort megs. we yesterday recieved intelgence that the Creek War is finally at an End. our troops are now Getting their discharges. The Creek propheits have Nearly all Come in and Surrendered themselves Gen^l. Pinknay & Colⁿ. Hawkins are autheriz^d To treat with them which triaty is dictated By congress. they preliminaries are that they Indians are to pay all the Expence of the Campaign and admit publick road through their Country &c I here anex you a draft of the Battle of the horse Shoe which was fought on the 27th March by the Tennessee malitia & 39 Reg^l of Regulars and the Creek Indians when The Indians were finally Defeated by the unequaled Bravery of the Tennessee malitia Commanded By Maj: Gen^l. Jackson. I wish you woud wright to me I not heard from you since I saw you I am your affectionate Nephew

Isaac Stephens

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Questions for Discussion

Read the introduction, study the transcript of the letter, and examine the images of the original letter and map. Then apply your knowledge of American history to answer the following questions:

1. Using the information from the letter and map, briefly describe the events at Horseshoe Bend.
2. What was the outcome of the battle, and how did it affect the Creeks?
3. Who led the US troops? How did his participation in this battle serve as a stepping stone for his future political career?
4. To what extent did Horseshoe Bend indicate the continuation of conflict between whites and American Indians? Please refer to the map and cite passages from the letter to support your response.

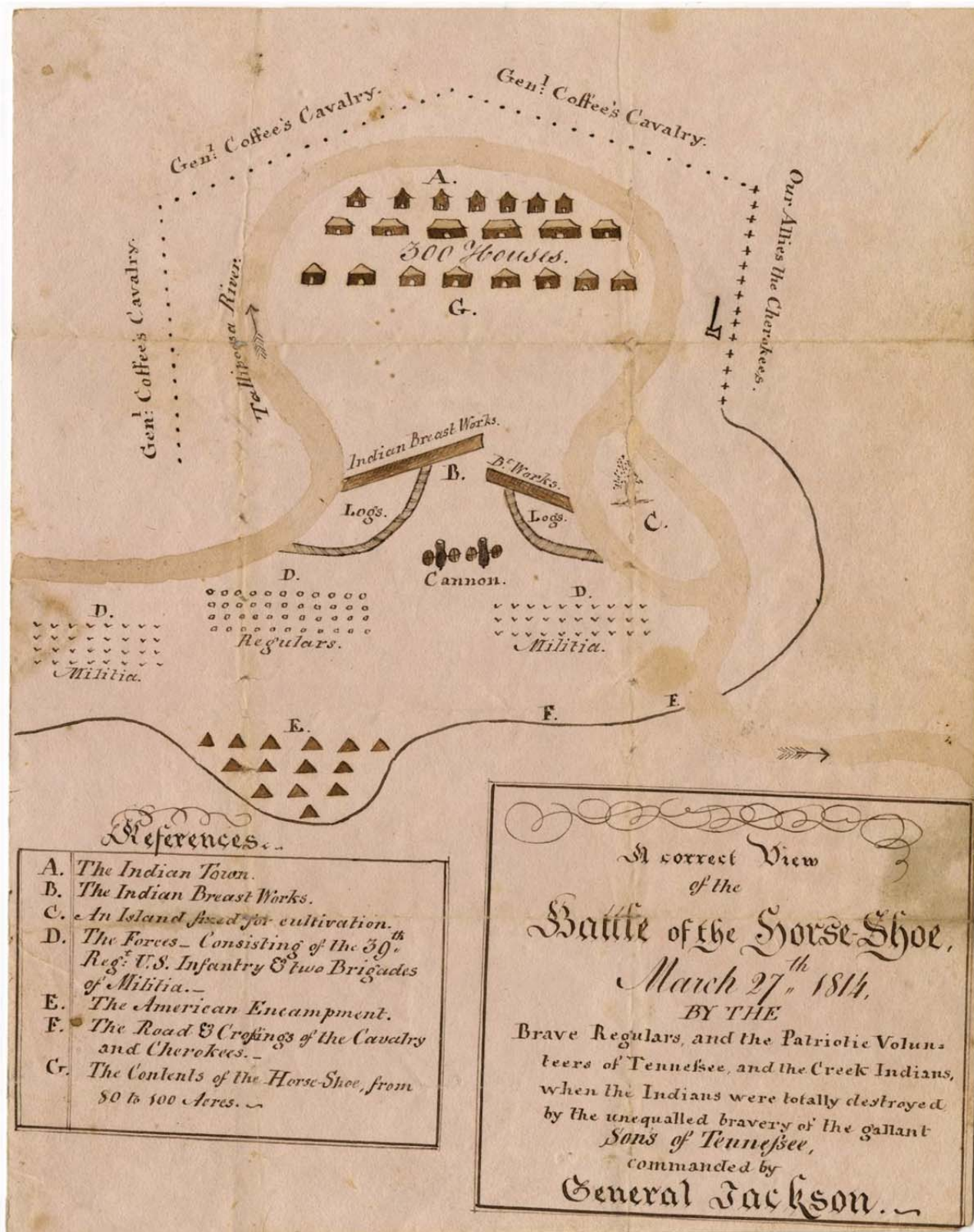
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Images

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Isaac Stephens to Henry Mackey, May 12, 1814 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06772)

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"A Correct View of the Battle of the Horse-Shoe, March 27th, 1814" (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06772)