

# BATTLE OF THE APPALACHIOLA RIVER

R. Butler, Adjutant General,  
to Brigadier-General Daniel Parker, Inspector-General

Adjutant General's Office, Fort Gasden, Appalachiola River, 3 May 1818

I have the honor to report that the army under the immediate command of Major General Andrew Jackson took up the line of march on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of March last, with eight days' rations, and lay in advance of this post about six miles on the 29<sup>th</sup>, at Okolokne river, when nineteen canoes were made, and the principal part of the army crossed by eight o'clock, PM, the residue next morning; when the march was again resumed at eleven o'clock, AM. On this evening Brevet Major Twiggs of the 7<sup>th</sup> infantry was detached with one company and about two hundred warriors, with orders to advance on an Indian village called Tallahassie, and surprise it at day-break. On his near approach, he despatched a party to ascertain its situation, who reported it evacuated some days before. On the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> he entered the village, having previously sent out parties to reconnoitre. Two of the enemy were made prisoners, one of whom made his escape from the Indians before he was brought into camp. The army passed the village about twelve o'clock, and encamped near Mickasuky, when intelligence was received of the approach of a detachment of mounted volunteers from Tennessee, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Elliott, near four hundred strong. On the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April the army formed and halted until their arrival, when they were ordered to form the advance of each flank, with Captains Russell and Evans's companies, as spies, with Captain John Gordon. The army now advanced within a mile and a half of Kinghajah's town, when a number of Indians were discovered herding cattle on the margin of a large pond. The General ordered the right and left columns to advance, with a view of cutting off their retreat, and at the same time instructed the advance light company, under Major Muhlenburg, the guard, under Major Nicks, together with the small companies composing his life guard, under Captains Dunlap and Crittenden, to advance in support of the spies, in the event of a general engagement. The spy companies commenced the attack, and a brisk running fire was kept up on both sides for some minutes, when the enemy divided, the spy companies pursuing those on the right; and Lieutenant Colonel Elliott having turned their flank, became generally engaged, and bore them over to the left column, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Mitchell, within half gunshot of each other, when they were assailed by both flanks, and would all have fallen, had not the volunteers taken up the impression, from the similarity of dress, that some of the friendly warriors had reached in pursuit of the enemy, which occasioned the firing to cease for a short time, when a number made good their retreat into the swamp. Captain Crittenden's company, being on horseback, was unable to reach the head of Lieutenant Colonel Elliott's column, when they dismounted, and operated against the enemy. Major Muhlenburg's company, the advance guard, and Captain Dunlap's company, being on foot, were not able to reach the scene of action in time. The right column of Georgia militia, on nearing the pond, filed round it; and Colonel King, with his regiment, was ordered to advance through it, to support the column of horse, should it be found necessary; which was executed by the colonel with great promptness. The conduct of the officers and soldiers engaged on this occasion was, in every respect, praiseworthy; our loss, one man of Captain Andrews's company killed, and four of Captain Evans's company of Tennessee volunteers wounded. The reports give fourteen killed and several wounded of the enemy, and four women prisoners, from whom we learned that three hundred warriors had advanced from the town to aid those engaged, and, on seeing the advance of an army, fled precipitately. The army now advanced upon the town, which was found deserted by the enemy; and, on reaching the square, discovered a red pole planted at the council-house, on which were suspended about fifty fresh scalps, taken from the heads of extreme age down to the tender infant of both sexes, and, in an adjacent house, near three hundred more, which bore the appearance of having been the barbarous trophies of settled hostility for three or four years past.

The army continued the pursuit to a large pond of water, which is eight miles in length, varying in width from six hundred to four thousand yards, and from two to five feet deep, through which the army passed, when the approach of night induced the commanding General to draw off his troops. On the succeeding morning, Brevet Major General E. P. Gaines, with a large command, was ordered to pass the lake or pond, and attack the other towns, but which he found abandoned by the enemy. The red pole was again found planted in the square of Fowltown, barbarously decorated with human scalps of both sexes, taken within the last six months from the heads of our unfortunate citizens. General McIntosh, who was with General Gaines, routed a small party of savages near Fowltown, killed one negro, and took three prisoners, on one of whom was found the coat of James Champion, of Captain Cummings's company, (4<sup>th</sup> regiment of infantry,) who was killed by the Indians on board one of our boats

descending the river to the relief of Major Muhlenburg. This coat, with nearly all Captain Cummings's company's clothing, was lost on board of Lieutenant Scott's boat, when he and his party were massacred, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November last. The pocket-book of Mr. Thomas Leigh, who was murdered at Cedar Creek on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January last, was found in Kinghajah's town, containing several letters addressed to the deceased, and one to General Glasscock. About one thousand head of cattle fell into our hands, many of which were recognised by the Georgia militia as the brands and marks of their citizens. Near three thousand bushels of corn were found, with other articles useful to the army. Upwards of three hundred houses were consumed, leaving a tract of fertile country in ruin, where these wretches might have lived in plenty, but for the infernal machinations of foreign traders, if not agents. The army remained at this point until the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, when the march was resumed for St. Marks, before which it arrived on the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup>, and, after communicating with the commanding officer, took possession of that fortress on the following morning. Captain McKeever, of the navy, having sailed for St. Marks with some vessels containing supplies for the army, was fortunate enough to entice on board his vessel, in the river, Francis, or Hillis Hadjo, and Homathlamicco, hostile chiefs of the Creek nation, and whose settled hostility has been severely felt by our citizens. The commanding General had them brought on shore, and ordered them to be hung, as an example to deter others from exciting these deluded wretches to future scenes of butchery. A man of the name of A. Arbutnot was also taken on the arrival of the army, and placed in close confinement.

The troops having again received eight days' rations, and a garrison detached for Fort St. Marks, the army marched on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, destined for Suwanee. On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, the officer of the day reported that the sentinels had heard the lowing of cattle and barking of dogs during the night; from which the General was induced to send a runner to General McIntosh, who was encamped a short distance in rear of the army, with instructions to have the country below examined. In the mean time, the army moved slowly in advance. General McIntosh despatched Major Kanard with a party, who returned to him a runner reporting the discovery of a hostile party too strong for his little band of warriors. McIntosh moved against them with his whole force. A small detachment of different companies of the Tennessee volunteers, under Colonels Dyer and Williamson, (they having joined the army on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>,) were left at our encampment to search for horses, and, on hearing the report of Major Kanard, formed themselves into a company under Captain Bell, who was with them, and moved to attack the enemy, whom they found near a large swamp, endeavoring to move off. A spirited engagement ensued, which resulted in the death of thirty-seven, and six men and ninety-eight women and children prisoners; and our loss, three killed and four wounded of the friendly Indians. The only woman out of seven whose life was spared at the massacre of Lieutenant Scott was here recaptured by Major Kanard. General McIntosh individually killed three of the enemy and captured one. The little band of Tennessee volunteers acted on this occasion as becomes their character. At the commencement of the action the army was halted, and a runner despatched to inform General McIntosh that any aid he might deem necessary would be afforded, and that the army would remain until his arrival, which was not until we encamped for the night. The enemy abandoned a number of horses, hogs, corn, and about six hundred head of cattle.

The army moved on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, and on the succeeding day our spies surprised a camp consisting of two men, a woman, and two children. One of the men was killed; the other, with a small boy, slightly wounded; and the woman, unfortunately, not being distinguished in the swamp, received a wound of which she died. At three o'clock, P. M. on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the army arrived at a large pond within six miles of Bowlegs town, on Suwany river, where a few Indians well mounted discovered our advance. An attempt was made to overtake them, but the enfeebled state of our horses rendered it impracticable. Under these circumstances, the General deemed it advisable to take the town by a forced march, not allowing the enemy time to cross the river and destroy their supplies. The manner of attack having been previously arranged, the army moved rapidly, until arriving near the large—which flanks the towns, when the troops changed position, conformably to previous orders, and moved forward. The left flank, composed of Colonel Williamson's regiment of Tennessee volunteers, at the head of which was a force of Indian warriors under Major (now Colonel) Kanard, soon came in contact, and warmly engaged the Indians and negroes; whilst the right flank, composed of Colonel Dyer's regiment of Tennessee volunteers, with a like force of warriors under General McIntosh, advanced near the river, to prevent the enemy from crossing. The centre advanced in excellent order, and under the expectation of having to combat with the strength of these towns and the fugitives from Mickasuky; but, on reaching Bowlegs town, found it abandoned. The left flank, from the nature of the ground the had to traverse, and Colonel Kanard not adhering entirely to the route designated, drove the Indians and negroes (about three hundred) into the river, before the right flank could occupy the desired position. The reports give eleven killed and three prisoners on the field, and it is believed many were killed and drowned in swimming the river, it being nearly three hundred yards wide. Colonel Kanard had thirteen wounded, but one dangerously. About twenty-seven hundred

bushels of corn were obtained in the towns and neighboring swamps, near ninety head of cattle, and a number of horses. Our sentinels, on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup>, took prisoners two white men (Ambrister and Cook) and one negro, who had just returned from Arbuthnot's vessel at the mouth of Suwany; from the latter we obtained a letter written by A. Arbuthnot to his son, in which he enumerates the army of the United States under the General's command, and requires him to inform his friend Bowlegs that resistance would be fruitless against such an overwhelming force, and to make over the river with all despatch; admonishing his son, at the same time, to remove and secrete everything which could be moved. From Cook we learned that this letter was read to the negroes and Indians, when they immediately commenced crossing their families, and had just finished as we entered their towns. Upwards of three hundred houses were here consumed, the most of which were well built and somewhat regular, extending near three miles up the river. On the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> General Gaines was ordered, with a select command, and a number of warriors under General McIntosh, to cross the Suwany river in pursuit of the enemy; but found, on advancing about six miles, that they had dispersed in every direction, from the numerous trails, and too far advanced to overtake them, his command being short of supplies. A detachment of the warriors, having advanced some distance, fell in with a small party of the enemy, killed three warriors, took some women and children and five negroes. On the same morning, Lieutenant James Gadsden, aid-de-camp to the commanding General, descended the Suwany river to its mouth, with Captain Dunlap's and a few of Captain Crittenden's companies of the life-guard, and a small detachment of regulars, and captured, without difficulty, the schooner of A. Arbuthnot, which had brought supplies of powder and lead to the Indians and negroes settled at Suwany. This vessel afforded the means of transporting our sick back to St. Marks. On the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup>, General Glasscock was ordered, at his request, to march his brigade by Mickasuky to Hartford, in Georgia, and Captain Bell ordered to muster them out of service; and the army moved about three-quarters of a mile preparatory to its return. On the 24<sup>th</sup> General McIntosh was ordered to proceed direct to Fort Scott, on Flint river, and an order furnished him to the commanding officer to muster his warriors out of service.

The army reached Fort St. Marks on the 25<sup>th</sup>, having marched twenty-eight miles on that day, and we were agreeably surprised in finding Lieutenant Gadsden had arrived safely that evening from the mouth of Suwany. On the 26<sup>th</sup> a special court was ordered for the trial of A. Arbuthnot and Robert C. Ambrister; which court, on the documents and evidence adduced, sentenced the first to be hung, and the latter to be shot. They were accordingly executed on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>. The army moved and encamped four miles from St. Marks on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup>, and arrived at Fort Gadsden on the 2d instant; the General having previously detached a garrison of two hundred men, under the command of Brevet Major Fanning, to occupy Fort St. Marks. I have only to add, that this army has borne hardships and privations to a great extent, in a manner becoming soldiers and citizens of a nation proud of their liberties. The assistant topographical engineer will furnish a topographical report of the country through which the army operated; and I refer you to the enclosed sketches for information of our order of movement, and have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

*Annals of Congress* (15<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session), 2193–2198.