


1994

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Recommended Citation

Rucker, Brian R. (1994) "In the Shadow of Jackson: Uriah Blue's Expedition into West Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 73 : No. 3 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol73/iss3/5>

IN THE SHADOW OF JACKSON: URIAH BLUE'S EXPEDITION INTO WEST FLORIDA

by BRIAN R. RUCKER

Students of Florida history are well acquainted with General Andrew Jackson's controversial invasions of Spanish Florida in 1814 and 1818. But what is not as well known is a related military expedition, that of Major Uriah Blue who led approximately 1,000 American forces into Spanish West Florida between December 1814 and January 1815. Andrew Jackson's concurrent, and famous, battle with the British at New Orleans overshadowed Blue's expedition. Yet, Blue's troops played an integral part in Jackson's overall plan. Both the expedition's successes and failures affected future American-Spanish relations, for Jackson would reinvade Florida several years later to fight the Indians that had eluded Blue in 1814-1815.

In order to understand the complex arena in which Blue's invasion occurred, it is necessary to sketch briefly the final operations of both the Creek War and the War of 1812. Andrew Jackson virtually ended the Creek War in Alabama with his decisive defeat of the Creek Indians at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814. Many of the more recalcitrant warriors—known as the Red Sticks—refused, however, to accept the harsh surrender conditions imposed by Jackson at the Treaty of Fort Jackson and fled instead southward to the supposed safety of Spanish Florida.¹ By May approximately 900 hostile Creeks took refuge in the vicinity of Pensacola, creating additional burdens for Spanish officials and

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1. James W. Covington, "Migration of the Seminoles into Florida, 1700-1820," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (April 1968), 354-55; Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815* (Gainesville, 1981), 91-93; and Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, 1971), 109-10. The Treaty of Fort Jackson required the Creeks to cede approximately two-thirds of their lands in Georgia and Alabama. Most of the fleeing Indians were identified as either Lower Creeks or Seminoles, although at this time the two terms were often used interchangeably.

providing military opportunities for British agents.² The Indians, short on food and clothing, began plundering cattle from both Spanish and American settlers along the frontier. And Spanish authorities in Pensacola, fearful of American retaliation and unable to provide the Creeks with supplies, welcomed British offers of assistance. British ships unloaded supplies at Apalachicola for the despondent Indians, thereby rejuvenating their spirits and encouraging their hostility toward the Americans.³

By the early fall of 1814 British officers were actively training hostile Creeks and slaves in Pensacola and using Spanish West Florida as a base for British military operations against the American frontier. Such a threat did not go unnoticed by the United States. The harboring and arming of hostile Indians, setting up of British forces in Pensacola, blatant disregard of neutrality by the Spanish, and threat of an impending Gulf strike by a large British force were the justifications Jackson made for his quasilegal invasion of Spanish Florida. With a force of some 4,000 troops, composed of regular army, volunteers, and friendly Indians, Jackson entered West Florida and captured Pensacola on November 7, 1814. The British hastily departed the Spanish town, and most of the Red Sticks and a number of runaway slaves fled eastward across Pensacola Bay and were encouraged to meet the British at their new base at Prospect Bluff on the Apalachicola River.⁴

While in Pensacola Jackson learned that thousands of British troops were being assembled in Jamaica for a direct assault along the Gulf coast. The information, and further intelligence that New Orleans was the British destination, set Jackson into motion. He moved his troops rapidly from Pensacola to Mobile and finally to New Orleans for his famous encounter with the British in December 1814-January 1815.⁵

Though forced to leave Pensacola quickly for New Orleans, Jackson was intent on carrying out cleanup operations on the remaining Indians in West Florida, for he realized that they represented a real threat. While his forces were engaging the British in Louisiana, the hostile Red Sticks could reorganize and inflict po-

2. Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During the War of 1812," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (October 1967), 115-16.

3. *Ibid.*, 111-17; Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "Jackson's Capture of Pensacola," *Alabama Review* 19 (July 1966), 175-76; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 92-93.

4. Owsley, "Jackson's Capture of Pensacola," 175-85.

5. *Ibid.*

tentially serious damage on undefended Mobile and the southern frontier regions of Alabama and Georgia.⁶ Jackson appointed Major Uriah Blue of the 39th Regiment to operate against the remaining Red Sticks in Spanish West Florida.⁷ Blue, a native of Virginia, had been an officer in the U.S. Regular Army since 1799.⁸ He commanded over 700 Choctaw warriors in Jackson's assault on Pensacola and was a logical choice to lead this rear guard action. Major William Russell's battalion of Tennessee Mounted Gunmen, Major John Child's battalion from Knox County, Tennessee (a substantial part of General John Coffee's brigade), and a sizable number of friendly Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks combined to form a mounted force of around 1,000 men.⁹ Several important Indian leaders, like Pushmataha of the Choctaws and the Colbert brothers of the Chickasaw nation, accompanied Blue.¹⁰

6. Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 101, 133-35, 170, 173.

7. John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC, 1926-1935), II, 100.

8. Francis B. Heitman, comp., *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, From its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1903; reprint ed., Urbana, IL, 1965), I, 226.

9. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 96-102, 105, 166; David Crockett, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett of the State of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1973), 103, 112; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 125-26, 174-75. A Captain Cummins's company from east Tennessee and a Captain Hodges's company from Madison, Mississippi Territory, were also included in this expedition. A Captain Devereux was to be sent as a guide, or "to command a Spy company."

10. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, I, 323, II, 100; Uriah Blue to Andrew Jackson, January 10, 1815, Andrew Jackson Papers, microfilm supplement, no. 4299, reel 4; Blue to Jackson, January 29, 1815, Andrew Jackson Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm, series 1, no. 199, reel 16 (hereinafter, AJP); Certification of Uriah Blue, April 23, 1824, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1881, Choctaw Agency, 1824-1831, roll 169, National Archives, Washington; Wilburt S. Brown, *The Amphibious Campaign for West Florida and Louisiana, 1814-1815: A Critical Review of Strategy and Tactics at New Orleans* (University, AL, 1969), 56; Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman, OK, 1971), 98; Benjamin W. Griffith, Jr., *McIntosh and Weatherford, Creek Indian Leaders* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 119; H. S. Halbert and T. H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814* (Montgomery, 1895), 286; 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, section 25, pp. 9-13, Special Collections, John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 42, 50; Eron Rowland, *Andrew Jackson's Campaign Against the British, or The Mississippi Territory in the War of 1812* (New York, 1926), 172, 253; and George Stiggins, *Creek Indian History: A Historical Narrative of the Genealogy, Traditions and Downfall of the Ispocoga or Creek Indian Tribe of Indians*, ed. Virginia Pounds Brown (Birmingham, 1989), 16.

The primary purpose of the expedition was to scour the countryside east of the Escambia River and destroy the remaining hostile Creeks. Any Indian supplies or villages found were to be seized or destroyed. General Jackson also requested that loyal Creek Indians recruited by Benjamin Hawkins— the noted and admired American agent for the Creeks— and troops under Major General John McIntosh be sent from Georgia to join Blue's forces in an effort to seize Prospect Bluff and perhaps raid the Indian towns, if supplies and provisions permitted.¹¹ Included in Major Blue's military campaign was frontiersman David Crockett, a Tennessee scout under Major Russell.¹² While Jackson was on his way to New Orleans, this "search and destroy" mission was left behind, in Crockett's words, to "kill up the Indians on the Scamby river."¹³

The expedition, however, was delayed and plagued by problems from the start. Major Blue's forces had to return to Fort Montgomery on the Alabama River to secure much needed and scarce provisions. Blue waited in frustration for food to arrive, which the poor weather and an abominable transportation network delayed. Refusing to wait any longer, Blue departed Fort Montgomery on December 8 with only twenty days of rations and a meager amount of cattle to drive along with his troops. Because the roads were too wet and poor for wagons, Blue dismounted a sizable segment of his mounted men and made pack animals of their horses.¹⁴

Major Blue and his forces moved into Spanish West Florida in mid-December. Unfortunately, the weather turned extremely cold, and heavy rains created muddy roads and caused the Escambia River to overflow its banks. American forces arrived at Turvin's Bluff on the Escambia, located about twenty-four miles north of Pensacola. Blue had a boat brought up from the town to assist in transporting American forces east of the river. The boat also brought a few additional supplies, such as sugar, coffee, and various

11. Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 100-02, 105; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 125,174-75.

12. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 101-04, 106; Richard Boyd Hauck, *Crockett: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT, 1982), 26-27; and James Atkins Shackford, *David Crockett: The Man and the Legend*, ed. John B. Shackford (Chapel Hill, 1956), 29-30. Crockett's company arrived in Pensacola from Tennessee after Jackson's forces had captured the town.

13. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 103.

14. Blue to Jackson, December 7, 1814, reel 14, AJP; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 106; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 9.

liquors. But crossing the cold, swollen Escambia River proved a difficult task, especially for the men forced to swim their horses over.¹⁵ The men, according to Crockett, "just put in like so many spaniels, and waded on, sometimes up to our armpits."¹⁶ After finally reaching high ground, the drenched troops were forced to light fires or to keep moving in order to avoid freezing.¹⁷

Friendly Indian scouts soon made contact with a small, hostile Creek camp on the east side of the river, and two Creek warriors were killed and decapitated. When Crockett and the other whites with him arrived at the camp, they found the friendly Indians ritually striking their war clubs upon the heads. After each Indian had performed this act, Crockett himself took one of their clubs and struck a head as the Indians had done. At this, the Indians gathered around him, patted him on the shoulder, and called him, "Warrior- warrior."¹⁸

Shortly after this, Crockett's group came across the sobering sight of a slain and scalped Spanish family. As Crockett said, "I began to feel mighty ticklish along about this time, for I knowed if there was no danger then, there had been; and I felt exactly like there still was."¹⁹ Soon after, American forces located a sizable Creek camp in a thick oak hammock. The Americans and their Indian allies surrounded the camp and ordered the hostiles to surrender. The Creeks refused, fled to their arms, but were cut down by American fire. About twenty Creek warriors were killed, and the impetuous Chickasaws scalped some of the men before the Americans could stop them. One hundred and fifty Creeks, mostly women and children, quickly surrendered and were marched back to the Escambia River where a detachment took them north to Fort Montgomery in Alabama.²⁰

The American expedition eventually reached the present-day Floridatown area, located on the northeastern end of Escambia

15. Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814, reel 14, AJP; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 106-07, 111-12; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 9-10. Turvin's Bluff is opposite Parker Island and near Chumuckla Springs. See *J. Gilbert v. J. Pendleton*, file 1821-24, Escambia County Circuit Court Records, Escambia County Courthouse, Pensacola.

16. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 107.

17. *Ibid.*; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 9.

18. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 109-10. The site of this incident was either near present-day Chumuckla Springs or Jay in Santa Rosa County.

19. *Ibid.*, 110.

20. *Ibid.*; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 9-10.

Bay. News reached them here that a group of Indians were located to the south on the Garcon Point peninsula, which separates Escambia and Blackwater bays. Major Russell, with three companies, moved south to locate this group. Around the area of Garcon Point, at the southern tip of this peninsula, a small skirmish occurred. Here, several Indians were killed and several others captured.²¹ The remainder of this band fled westward across the bay to Pensacola. Major Blue ordered Captain John Trimble, Captain William Russell (the son of Major Russell), and a Captain Boyles to follow the escaping Indians by boat. They tracked them into Pensacola and to the "skin house" of John Innerarity's tan yard. Innerarity, a business partner in the Indian trading firm of John Forbes and Company, denied knowledge of their existence and refused to allow Captain Trimble to seize the refugees. But Trimble solved the impasse by taking an axe, breaking down the door of the skin house, and capturing some ten Indians and runaway slaves.²²

One of the slaves they seized was a man named Joe. Joe formerly had lived on the plantation of Zachariah McGirth in southern Alabama and had reputedly given the Red Sticks valuable information about the condition of Fort Mims, which Creeks had overrun during an assault in August 1813. The Americans also located another slave, whom the Creeks had seized at Fort Mims.²³

21. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 112; Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 10.

22. Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 10. The "skin house" was probably a building used by Forbes and Company to store the deerskins it collected. The records of John Innerarity and the John Forbes and Company make no mention of this incident. See William S. Coker, "John Forbes and Company and the War of 1812 in the Spanish Borderlands," in *Hispanic-American Essays in Honor of Max Leon Moorhead*, ed. William S. Coker (Pensacola, 1979), 72, 74-76. Captain John Trimble was from the East Tennessee Mounted Volunteer Gunmen, and Captain William Russell, the son of Major William Russell, was from the Tennessee Mounted Gunmen. The identity of Captain Boyles is unknown. See Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 112.

23. Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 10; Albert James Pickett, *History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi, from the Earliest Period* (Charlston, 1851; reprint ed., Spartanburg, SC, 1975), 531; and James Winchester to Jackson, December 24, 1814, reel 15, AJP. A number of slaves either joined or were seized by the hostile Creeks that attacked Fort Mims in southern Alabama in August 1813. See Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "The Fort Mims Massacre," *Alabama Review* 24 (July 1971), 202; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 38. The Red Stick Creeks attacked Fort Mims on the Alabama River in August 1813, triggering the Creek War. Approximately 250-400 settlers were killed in this violent attack. Fort Mims is located in Baldwin County, Alabama, sixty-five miles from Pensacola.

The captured Indians and slaves were returned to Blue on the east side of the bay, and a small detachment then escorted them north to Fort Montgomery.²⁴

The various American companies regrouped near present-day Floridatown and on December 19 set out on a northeasterly march towards Blackwater River. Blue learned of a large Indian village on the Choctawhatchee River and made this his goal, hoping to find provisions there for his men. As the troops proceeded eastward, several Chickasaw scouts reported a large Creek encampment east of Yellow River. American forces quickly crossed the river, surrounded the camp, and a battle ensued. Thirty Creeks were reportedly killed in the skirmish and approximately seventy-five were taken prisoner and sent north to Fort Montgomery. An old, hostile chief called the Alabama King was killed during this engagement, and American forces commandeered a sizable number of sorely needed pack horses.²⁵

Christmas Day 1814 found Blue's dispirited forces deep in the wilderness of Spanish West Florida. Their rations were practically gone, and the strenuous marches were exhausting the men.²⁶ Crockett recalled the experience: "We were . . . in extreme suffer-

24. Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814. See also Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 112-13; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 10-11. There are three sources for Blue's expedition: Uriah Blue's sparse reports to General Jackson, David Crockett's personal memoirs regarding his participation in the campaign, and the recollections of Dr. Thomas G. Holmes, a surgeon with the expedition. Holmes gives the most detailed account of Blue's expedition and appears to be a highly reliable source. See Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., "Albert J. Pickett: Typical Southern Pioneer State Historian" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alabama, 1955), 184; and A. J. Pickett, "The Late Dr. Thos. G. Holmes, of Baldwin," [*Baldwin County, AL*] *Historical and Genealogical Quarterly* 2 (1989), 9-11. Part of the problem in piecing together the exact movements of the expedition is that various detachments among the 1,000 soldiers made separate forays. It was probably difficult for Blue to control and supervise the many diverse elements comprising this expedition.

25. Blue to Jackson, December 18, 1814; Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814, reel 15, AJP; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11. Blue's report mentions only ten prisoners taken in a skirmish by his Indians on Yellow River. The site of this skirmish appears to have been several miles northwest of present-day Crestview in Okaloosa County, perhaps near Gum Creek Hill. See E. W. Carswell, *Holmes Valley*, rev. ed. (Chipley, FL, 1983), 12; and University of West Florida Teacher Corps Project, *The Land Between the Rivers* (n.p., 1979), 6.

26. Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 115; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11.

ing for want of something to eat, and exhausted with our exposure and the fatigues of our journey. I remember well, that I had not myself tasted bread but twice in nineteen days. I had bought a pretty good supply of coffee from the boat that had reached us from Pensacola, on the Scamby, and on that we chiefly subsisted."²⁷

But Blue's spies did report on Christmas day that they had located the targeted Indian camp—Holmes' Village—on the Choctawhatchee. This was probably Holmes Town, an Indian site near present-day Vernon, located on Holmes Creek in Washington County.²⁸ Desperate for food and provisions, American forces began an overnight march to the village, arriving there at sunrise on December 26. Major Blue ordered a three-pronged attack on the Indian town, but after a furious charge the Americans were disappointed to find the village deserted and devoid of provisions. The Indians had learned of the American presence and had fled into the swamps. A search of the surrounding area yielded nothing but three or four unsuspecting braves returning from a hunt. Blue burned the town's houses, and the dejected American forces returned to their camp "as nearly starved as any set of poor fellows ever were in the world."²⁹

Blue's ultimate goal to push on to Prospect Bluff was now impossible without further provisions. The expedition of Georgia militia under General McIntosh and the Indians under Benjamin Hawkins also failed to reach Apalachicola and join with Blue. Some were diverted instead to other areas, and the remainder were unable to muster enough troops to launch a major attack on the British and their Indian allies at Apalachicola. Thus the British, by using the Red Sticks and some slaves they had recruited, were somewhat successful in their overall military plan. Communications remained disrupted between Mobile and the Georgia frontier, and the hostile forces diverted 1,000 troops under Major Blue

27. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 115. In his account Crockett relates that "at the start we had taken only twenty days' rations of flour, and eight days' rations of beef; and it was now thirty-four days before we reached [Holmes Village]." Crockett's figure of thirty-four days is inaccurate. They departed Fort Montgomery on December 8 and did not reach Holmes Village until December 26, making only nineteen days on the march instead of thirty-four.

28. E. W. Carswell, *Washington: Florida's Twelfth County* (Chipley, FL, 1991), 15; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 115; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11.

29. Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 115-16; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 11-12.

and some 2,500 Georgia militiamen and Indian allies from military service at Mobile, New Orleans, and the Georgia coast.³⁰

Hundreds of miles from supplies and provisions, Blue faced a desperate situation. He split his forces and ordered Major Russell and his battalion of 500 Tennessee Volunteers to proceed northward to the Fort Jackson/Fort Decatur area on the Tallapoosa River in Alabama.³¹ The cold, exposure, and fatigue severely tried Russell's men. The Creek War had decimated food supplies in this region, and the tired soldiers faced near starvation every day.³² Crockett wrote that they were so desperate that "we all began to get nearly ready to give up the ghost, and lie down and die."³³ Game was scarce, and they took what they could get. "As the army marched," wrote Crockett, "I hunted every day, and would kill every hawk, bird, and squirrel that I could find. Others did the same; and it was a rule with us, that when we stop'd at night, the hunters would throw all they killed in a pile, and then we would make a general division among all the men."³⁴ The situation became so desperate that Captain Russell prepared to shoot his own horse to feed some of the men. Eventually, though, the beleaguered troops acquired a few provisions at Fort Decatur and sites to the north.³⁵

Major Blue led the remaining half of his command back toward the Escambia River, but he was in no better condition than Russell's men. Blue realized he had overextended himself on this expedition and dispatched an apologetic letter to General Jackson: "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."³⁶

30. Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., "The Role of the South in the British Grand Strategy in the War of 1812," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1972), 33-34, and Owsley, *Struggle or the Gulf Borderlands*, 125-26, 135, 174-75.

31. Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 116; Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 12; and Shackford, *David Crockett*, 30-31.

32. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 116-20; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 82-83, 92, 99-101, 105, 175-76.

33. Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 118.

34. *Ibid.*, 11617.

35. *Ibid.*, 120; and Shackford, *David Crockett*, 31.

36. Blue to Jackson, December 27, 1814.

As the hungry troops marched westward to the Escambia, Major Blue sent an officer in advance to Pensacola to obtain provisions. Unfortunately, the officer could not secure a sufficient supply at the Spanish port. In the first days of the new year Blue's exhausted forces reached the eastern shore of the Escambia at "Marshall's Landing" and made camp. A local settler named Marshall owned seven undernourished milk cows, and Blue requisitioned five of these for his hungry troops. The next morning, however, Marshall discovered that his two remaining cows had been stolen. The butchered remains of the two animals were found near the American encampment, and Major Blue was promptly informed of this incident.³⁷

Blue was no doubt aware of the favorable impression American forces had made upon the Spanish during the capture of Pensacola two months earlier. The Americans had refrained from pillaging or looting, and Blue wanted to see that policy sustained.³⁸ Blue quickly implemented a search, and the stolen beef was located in the company of a Captain Steele. The frustrated major took disciplinary action upon the thieves. A drumhead court martial found Steele and nine of his men guilty. The men were summarily sentenced "to 15 paddles each to be applied to the bare" skin. Because Steele was found with much of the stolen beef in his possession, Major Blue ordered that he be "averted." Twenty camp kettles were tied around Steele's neck, he was forced to drag them to the river, and there he was placed in a canoe and set adrift.³⁹

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37. Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 12. The exact location of Marshall's Landing is uncertain. "Marshall's," "Marshall's Landing," "Miller's," and "Miller's Bluff," named in the sources, may refer to sites and settlements at, respectively, Chumuckla Springs, Parker Island, a ford north of Bronsaham Island, and the Floridatown area. See United State Congress, *American State Papers*, Class VIII. Public Lands, 8 vols. (Washington, DC, 1832-1861), IV, 182, 205-07, VI, 545-46; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 112; *B. Souchet v. J. Keller*; file 1823-2441, *William Barnett v. John Innerarity*, file 1825-301, Escambia County Circuit Court Records; *Pensacola Floridian*, January 28, 1822; Charles Vignoles, *Map of Florida* (Philadelphia, 1823); and Charles Vignoles, *Observations Upon the Floridas* (1823; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1977), 59.
38. Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 99; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 118.
39. Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 12. The Captain Steele referred to here was probably Captain Robert Steele. He may have been the same Captain Steele involved in earlier military supply preparations. See Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 68, VI, 431-32.

Blue's forces soon crossed the Escambia, their horses so weak that they were barely able to swim. On his way back to the border, Blue received information that some 300 Red Sticks had taken refuge at Fort Barrancas near Pensacola. Supposedly the Indians were there under Spanish authority, and the damage done to the fort's walls by the British in November had allegedly been repaired. In a surprisingly rash move, Major Blue sent the main body of his army to the American forts in Alabama and personally took a detachment of 170 volunteers to attack Fort Barrancas and drive the Indians out.⁴⁰

By a forced march, Blue's detachment reached Six Mile Spring near Pensacola sometime during the first week of January 1815. There the advanced guard surprised some thirty "merchants" who had been to Pensacola smuggling coffee and sugar and were returning to the Alabama settlements. Blue did not want them to give away the American presence and ordered the men to be taken. In response, the startled merchants fled, scattering their bags of merchandise in every direction. Blue and his men eventually captured the group and explained the American presence in the area. The smugglers were soon released and both parties went their separate ways.⁴¹

At approximately 8:00 P.M. that day the troops came to the shore of Bayou Grande, located north of the Spanish fort. Despite freezing weather, the bayou was fordable, and Blue ordered his men "to take the water which they did like spaniels." By the time they had crossed, there were strips of ice several inches long hanging from many of the men. A number of the soldiers were severely frostbitten, but they marched on, no doubt to keep from freezing. At midnight they finally came upon Barrancas and immediately set up a line of attack, waiting for daylight for the assault. But alas, Blue and his forces were disappointed once again. The light of day revealed no Indians concealed at the damaged fort. Blue learned that the Indians had evacuated Barrancas earlier that night, before

40. Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 12-13. The Spanish began repairs to the area's forts after Jackson's departure. See John Reid and John Henry Eaton, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1817; reprint ed., Tuscaloosa, 1974), 238.

41. Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 13. The exact location of Six Mile Spring is uncertain. It may have been located near the headwaters of Bayou Marcus, or Carpenters Creek, or Galvez Springs on Bayou Chico.

his approach, and had been carried on board some English ships then in Pensacola Bay. A Spaniard who had seen the advancing company the previous day warned the Indians of Blue's presence. Dejected and bitterly exhausted, Blue and his detachment returned to Fort Montgomery to rejoin his forces on January 9.⁴² Thus the great "mopping up operation" of Spanish West Florida was brought to a close.

Unfortunately, there was no respite for Major Blue. After arriving at Fort Montgomery, General James Winchester ordered Blue to come to Mobile to bolster the meager defenses of that city. By this time, however, Blue could persuade only 100 Choctaw and Chickasaw warriors to follow him.⁴³ When Blue arrived in Mobile, he learned that Jackson had defeated the British army at New Orleans, which were feared heading now for Mobile. This was true. On February 8 British forces landed near the American-held Fort Bowyer at the entrance to Mobile Bay. When word finally reached General Winchester that the American fort was under attack, he sent a large part of Mobile's defenses— about 1,000 troops— under the command of Major Blue to relieve the siege. By that time it was too late. Fort Bowyer was an untenable position, and the Americans surrendered to the British on February 11. Blue's forces arrived the next day and discovered from several captured British seamen that the fort had already fallen. Major Blue had participated in the last military action of the War of 1812, for news of the peace Treaty of Ghent reached Mobile shortly thereafter.⁴⁴

The war over, Blue wrote to General Jackson requesting a much-needed furlough. Blue explained that he had been in the

42. Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes," 13. Blue's official reports make no mention of his detour to Fort Barrancas; Dr. Thomas G. Holmes's account gives the only version of this incident. Major Blue's known whereabouts between December 27, 1814, and January 10, 1815, do allow for this episode. A search of pertinent British papers has so far yielded no further clues or information. See Blue to Jackson, January 10, 29, 1815; and Coker, "John Forbes and Company," 61-97.

43. Blue to Jackson, January 10, 29, 1815.

44. William S. Coker, *The Last Battle of the War of 1812: New Orleans. No, Fort Bowyer!* (Pensacola, 1981), 58, 61; Alexander Dickson, "Artillery Services in North America in 1814 and 1815," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 8 (April-October 1929), 227; John R. Elting, *Amateurs, To Arms! A Military History of the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 320-21; A. Lacarriere Latour, *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15* (Philadelphia, 1816; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964), appendix no. XXXIX; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 170-74.

service for twelve years and “never had a Furlough for two days at a time in my life.” He hoped to spend his free time establishing a salt works on the Black Warrior River in the Choctaw Nation. Indirectly, Jackson granted Blue’s request. The 39th Regiment was consolidated in May 1815, and Blue received an honorable discharge on June 15, 1815. He returned to the service six months later as captain of the 8th Infantry (with brevet of major), but in December 1816 he resigned from duty permanently. Blue apparently settled in Baldwin County and presumably died there in May 1836.⁴⁵

Was Major Blue’s expedition into Spanish West Florida a failure? Blue did not reach the British fort on the Apalachicola, and his men, with their supplies depleted, returned to American lines in exhausted and starving condition. One thousand valuable troops were diverted into a remote wilderness area—troops that could have been valuable to Jackson in his defense of New Orleans. The British plan of using the Red Sticks and runaway slaves to distract American forces along the southern frontier had worked. Communication between Mobile and the Georgia frontier broke down, and the bands of Red Sticks that British agents incited indeed kept Blue’s forces and American forces in Georgia distracted.

In Uriah Blue’s defense, around fifty hostile Indians were killed, some 200 were taken prisoner, and several hostile camps were destroyed during his mission.⁴⁷ Despite the lack of adequate provisions and inclement weather, Blue took a hastily assembled force of Indians and whites and penetrated 100 miles into a foreign country, engaged the enemy, took prisoners, and destroyed their resources. As far as is known, there were no American casualties. Major Blue was an experienced soldier who had previously demon-

45. Blue to Jackson, April 26, 1815, reel 18, AJP; Certification of Uriah Blue, April 23, 1824; Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York, 1986), 12-13; Marilyn Davis Hahn, *Old St. Stephen's Land Office Records & American State Papers, Public Land, Volume I, 1768-1888* (Easley, SC, 1983), 47; and Heitman, *Historical Register*, I, 135, 226.

46. Brown, *Amphibious Campaign for West Florida*, 56; Elting, *Amateurs, To Arms!*, 288; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 101, 133-35, 173-75.

47. Blue to Jackson, December 18, 27, 1814, January 10, 1815; Crockett, *Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, 106-16; Holmes, “Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. G. Holmes,” 9-13; and Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 174-75. The various sources disagree as to the exact number of killed and captured. It is likely that with so many diverse and scattered units under his command Blue was unable to keep an accurate tally.

strated leadership abilities and who Andrew Jackson trusted.⁴⁸ Blue also demonstrated a rapport with his Choctaw and Chickasaw allies, and the Indians seem to have respected him.⁴⁹ Given these circumstances, Blue performed as well as could be expected. It was an unenviable task to beat the bushes of West Florida for Indians while General Jackson journeyed on to New Orleans to engage the British. But Blue's expedition into Spanish West Florida was important. American forces possibly prevented the British from launching a rear guard action using their Red Stick allies, and they freed Jackson from a threat (real or imagined) to his flank. Blue's raid became a spoiling operation designed by Jackson to safeguard against Indian attacks upon Mobile and the Alabama-Georgia frontier. In this Blue was successful. He was also successful in demonstrating to the Spanish and Indians that the United States actively protected its borders.⁵⁰ Blue's expedition, however, did not eliminate the threat of Indian attacks from the Spanish Floridas. Three years later Andrew Jackson would return to Florida in an effort to demonstrate more clearly the nation's resolve to stabilize Florida's restless frontier.

48. Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 96-100; and Rowland, *Andrew Jackson's Campaign*, 210.

49. Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, II, 90-100, III, 185; Blue to Jackson, October 25, 1814, reel 13, AJP; Blue to Jackson, January 10, 29, April 26, 1815; Certification of Uriah Blue, April 23, 1824; and Holmes, "Notes Taken from the Lips of Dr. Thos. C. Holmes," 9-13.

50. Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands*, 101, 125-26, 133-35, 170, 173-75.