

Pushmataha was one of more than more than 2,000 Native Americans who are known to have sided with the Americans by choosing to serve in the armies of Jackson, Claiborne, Floyd and Hawkins during the War of 1812. The War of 1812 as it was fought in the Southern States of the United States came to be known as the Creek War because the armies that were formed came hither to fight Red Stick Creeks who opposed other Creeks who had acculturated themselves to white society and by changing into prosperous farmers and plantation owners whose activities encroached on the hunting lands of their more traditionalist kin. The resulting suicidal conflict fought in the Mississippi Territory , Georgia and what is today referred to the as Florida Panhandle divided the members of interrelated Indian and mixed blood and white families who lived in Georgia and the Mississippi Territory as nothing had before.

Many of the Native Americans who were organized in companies and detachments are named in company muster rolls. Almost one half of these were Choctaws; the other half consisted of Cherokees, Creeks and Chickasaws. Many more of these Native American soldiers fought, but can not be identified as individuals, although their tribal affiliation was known. Warriors often were enrolled with their chiefs. A given chief might be listed as having come with 500 warriors, but no accounting was made of who these warriors were. If the names of individual warriors are found to have been listed, few of these warriors had traditional first and last names. Instead, where lists exist, we have Indian names which were intended to be descriptive of an individual and his accomplishments translated loosely into English with confusing results. The list of Cherokees soldiers who fought for Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend contains the names of three *Man Killers* and one *Man Slayer*. Half Breeds who fought on both sides fared better. Their names are often preserved in historical accounts of the events in which they participated. Dixon Bailey, a Half Breed who commanded what Pickett described as a *Half Breed militia*, is immortalized in accounts of the Fort Mims Massacre where he is seen fighting valiantly until the end. His name is again preserved in a legal claim presented by his surviving brother, James, who filed claim to be compensated for the following:

Dixon (Dickson) Bailey Losses at the time

Two hundred & Sixty Head of Srock Cattle vallue at Six Dollars per Head. Six horses three of them worth one Hundred Dollars a Head the others wother Fiftey Dollars A Head Sixty Head of Hoges worth four Dollars A Head, three Negroes worth two of which worth five Hundred Dollars each the other worth One Hundred and fifty Dollars, the House Hold furniture worth two hundred Dollars, one waggon I had just Bought paid one Hundred and fifty Dollars for it.

Two Hundred & Sisty Head of Stock	\$1560.00
Three Horses	300.00
three Do	150.00

House Hold Furniture	200.00
one Waggon	150.00
three negroes	1150.00

(Total) \$3750.00

Sworn to by **Arthur Sizemoor** brother in law of **Dixon Bailey**, who with his wife and children was killed in **Mim's Fort**.

An examination of the claims and counterclaims made in relation to a single event such as the Fort Mims Massacre reveal the problems faced by contemporaries who reported what happened there and subsequent historians who have attempted to examine the motives of those involved and the accuracy of what was reported. Without delving further, we can stop a moment to share the joy of Zachariah McGirth who, believing that his wife Vicey and seven daughters had perished at Fort Mims fell into the deepest despair, only to find himself elevated by the news his wife and daughters had been saved by his wife’s nephew, Senota, a Red Stick warrior, who entered Fort Mims in order to kill all of those within, but, instead of killing, upon finding his aunt there with her girls, carried them away with him to safety.

With Pushmataha there was no doubt of what he felt when he heard what happened at Fort Mims .He knew a great wrong has been perpetrated against those who resided in the Tensaw region in what is now South Alabama. He spoke simply, directly:

They were our friends. They played ball with us. They sheltered us and fed us whenever we went to Pensacola. Where are they now? Their bones rot a Sam Mim’s place. The people of St. Stephens are also our friends. The Muscogees (Red Stick Creeks) intend to kill them too. They want soldiers to defend them. He continued, flourishing his sword as he spoke: *You can all do as you please. You are all freemen. I do not order you. But I shall join the St. Stephen’s people. If you decide to follow me, I will lead you to glory and victory* (quoted from Pickett’s Alabama, ii, 291)

Pushmataha in 1813 at the time of the Fort Mims Massacre was 50 years of age. Thirteen years earlier, in 1800, he has been elected Mingo (Chief) of the Choctaws. In 1811 when Tecumseh came to garner support for his British-backed plan to recover lands from United States settlers, Pushmataha had strongly resisted such a plan, pointing out that the Choctaws and their neighbors the Chickasaw lived in peace with white men, had learned valuable skills and technologies from them and received honest treatment and

fair trade. His meeting with Tecumseh ended with Pushmataha warning Tecumseh that he would fight against those who fought against the United States.

Following the Massacre at Fort Mims, Pushmataha went to Fort Stephens, Alabama with an offer of alliance which included a promise to recruit warriors. Returning to Choctaw territory, Pushmataha raised a company of 500 Choctaw warriors which he brought with him to Fort Stephens where he was in return commissioned as a Brigadier General in the United States Army.

Under General Claiborne, whom he joined in November of 1813, Pushmataha and 200 of his warriors took part in an attack on Creek forces at the Battle of the Holy Ground on December 23, 1813. In February 1814 a larger band of Choctaws under General Pushmataha joined General Jackson and aided in driving Creeks out of the territories near Pensacola.

By the time of the Battle of New Orleans, only a few Choctaw remained with the army. They were the only Native American tribe which took part in the Battle of New Orleans. What role these Choctaw played in this battle and whether Pushmataha was present has yet to be resolved. One story has Choctaw warriors at New Orleans proudly refusing to move and stack cotton bales which were used at New Orleans to form a defensive barricade. Still another has Pushmataha taking part in Major Uriah Blue's foray into Western Florida and sharing in the adventures and misadventures of this ill-fated group. Blue's small command starved for want of supplies, were plagued with arguments between Choctaws and Chickasaws, and never saw the reinforcements they were supposed to have had. Benjamin Hawkins became ill and Blackshear was ordered to Georgia's Atlantic Coast to forestall a British naval attack which obviously arrived elsewhere, in New Orleans.

As to Uriah Blue, he was successful in two respects. First, he kept the British from massing large groups of Red Sticks in Western Florida where they would be poised to attack Pensacola and Mobile. The Red Sticks fled. Second, he had an Alabama U.S.D. Daughters of 1812 chapter named in his honor. Success doesn't always consist of spectacular exploits. Being successful in many cases is just somehow managing to keep going, doing your best, and coming back alive. From this standpoint, Uriah Blue was an unmitigated success. As to Pushmataha being present with Blue and also at the Battle of New Orleans, I think this is unlikely for the simple reason no one, not even the great Pushmataha who was a medicine man in his tribe and held to have some special powers, has managed to be in two places at the same time. The Battle of New Orleans took place on January 8, 1815 and Uriah Blue returned to Fort Montgomery in South Alabama on January 9, 1815.

Pushmataha's name has been subject to a number of translations. The translation which, however, best describes him is *He who has won all of the honors of his people*. Highly regarded by all of contemporaries who knew him, Pushmataha has lain, almost forgotten for decades, in an important cemetery among important men and women. A monument proclaims his greatness. He is described *as warrior of great distinction; he was wise in counsel, eloquent in an extraordinary degree, and on all occasions and under all circumstances, the white man's friend*. Pushmataha had come to Washington as part of a delegation to negotiate a treaty. Instead, he died there from the coup on December 24, 1824 and was buried with the full military honors befitting the rank of Brigadier General which he earned. He spoke his words with the simple eloquence which was his. *I am about to die. I will not return. As you go along the paths, you will see the flowers and hear the birds sing; but Pushmataha will see and hear them no more*. William Jennings Bryan would later publish several of Pushmataha's speeches in his collection entitled Great American Speeches.

The funeral procession stretched for more than a mile. Andrew Jackson walked behind the caisson which bore Pushmataha's body and proclaimed him to be *the greatest and bravest Indian he had ever known*. John Randolph in a long eulogy given before the U.S. Senate characterized Pushmataha as *one of nature's nobility, a man who would have adorned any society*. Charles Bird King had completed Pushmataha's portrait in his resplendent blue uniform a few days before he died. Although he was estimated to be approximately sixty years of age at the time of his death, Pushmataha's hair had continued to be dark with only a few tinges of gray.