

## TOWARD A PROFESSIONAL ARMY

**T**he War of 1812 sent the Army of the young republic a decidedly mixed message of valor and glory interspersed with cowardice and blunders. The performance of both regulars and militia had been very uneven, although each improved as the conflict drew to a close. In a sort of role reversal, what glory did appear from the victories on the Niagara frontier in 1814 had gone not to the fabled citizen-soldier but to the oft-despised professional. Admittedly, the militia, when properly led as during the Battle of New Orleans, had on occasion done well; but after the war many military realists questioned the ability of the Army to employ him effectively. There were several reasons for this. It was extremely hard to obtain from state governments accurate figures on how many militiamen were available. Another critical limitation on their effectiveness was that since militiamen by their very nature were citizen-soldiers, they did not necessarily live close to where fighting would occur, especially if that were on the frontier. Moreover, the states jealously kept control of arming, disciplining, and training their militia and resisted having the men serve out of state. Though training was crucial, the War Department was limited to making recommendations and supplying training manuals. The Army could not enforce the type of rigorous training that had enabled Bvt. Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott to convert regular soldiers, some of them as raw as militiamen, into the professionals who had excited the admiration of even the British at Chippewa and Lundy's Lane.

For the thirty years after the War of 1812 to the beginning of the Mexican War, the Army of the United States would slowly and painfully evolve into a professional force with generally recognized standards of training, discipline, and doctrine. The first branch schools would open their doors. The U.S. Military Academy would turn out highly motivated professional officers, many of whom were trained engineers, to lead the Army. The new officer corps, including many experienced

veterans of the War of 1812 who had supplanted the superannuated veterans of the Revolutionary War, would gain an increased sense of identification as a corporate body of professionals. These officers, tested in countless postings on the expanding frontier and bloodied in the Creek and Seminole Wars, would serve as a skilled cadre, ready when called upon in 1846 to lead a “lightning war” of conquest against Mexico that would vastly increase the size of the United States.

## Organizing an Army

As soon as President James Madison proclaimed the peace in February 1815, the Congress, forced to meet at Blodgett’s Hotel because the Capitol lay in blackened ruins, acted promptly to create a small but efficient professional army that was thought adequate, with the addition of the militia, to guard against a repetition of the disasters of the War of 1812. Congress voted a peacetime army of 10,000 men (in addition to the Corps of Engineers), about a third of the actual wartime strength, a figure in marked contrast to the 3,220-man regular peacetime establishment under President Thomas Jefferson. Organization and leadership were also improved. The nine wartime military districts, headed generally by superannuated holdovers from the Revolution, were converted into two divisions, a northern with four territorial departments and a southern with five, commanded by officers who had made their reputations in the War of 1812: Maj. Gen. Jacob Brown, Division of the North, and Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson, Division of the South.

By midsummer 1815, for the first time in nearly a year, President Madison had a full-time Secretary of War. After the forced resignation of Secretary of War John Armstrong at the end of August 1814, mainly as a result of the burning of Washington, Secretary of State James Monroe served as Secretary of War until March 1815, when illness induced him to turn over the office to Secretary of the Treasury Alexander J. Dallas as an additional duty. In the spring of 1815 Madison appointed William H. Crawford, Minister to France, as Secretary of War. By August 1815 he had returned from Paris and was able to take up his duties.

Crawford had a record of distinguished service in the U.S. Senate. He had declined the appointment as Secretary of War later offered to Armstrong; but he had maintained a deep interest in the War Department, especially in the General Staff that Congress created in the spring of 1813. Because its purpose was mainly to conduct the housekeeping functions of the Army, it was not a general staff as the term was used a hundred years later but resembled rather the modern special staff. Under it had been placed the Quartermaster, Topographical, Adjutant General, Inspector General, Ordnance, Hospital, Purchasing, and Pay Departments; the Judge Advocates; the Chaplains; the Military Academy; and the commanding generals of the nine military districts and their logistical staffs. Furthermore, by stationing in Washington at the War Department certain officers of the General Staff—the Adjutant and Inspector General (a dual function performed by one officer) with two assistants, the Commissary General of Ordnance with three assistants, the Paymaster of the Army, and the Assistant Topographical Engineer—Congress had provided a management staff for the Secretary of War, who hitherto had only a few clerks to assist him.



*Rare Pattern 1812 Bell Crown Shako  
Manufactured ca. 1830*

Watching events from Paris in the fall of 1813, Secretary Crawford begged Albert Gallatin “For God’s sake” to “endeavor to rid the army of old women and blockheads, at least on the general staff.” The reorganization of the Army in the spring of 1815 weeded out most of the incompetents. When Crawford took office he recommended to Congress the retention of the General Staff, because the history of the early campaigns in the late war had convinced him of “the necessity of giving to the military establishment, in time of peace, the organization which it must have to render it efficient in a state of war.”

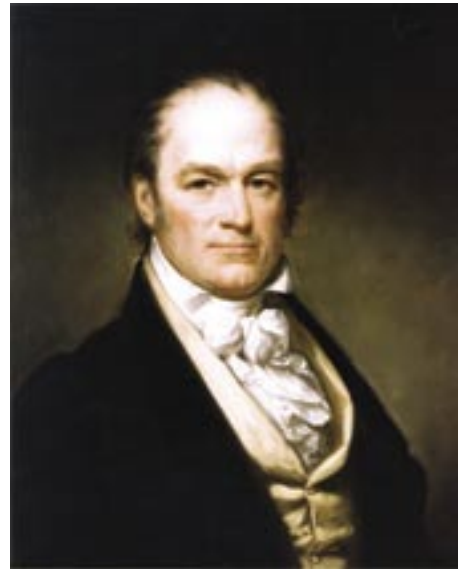
The only major change he recommended was the addition of the Quartermaster General to the management staff in Washington. He also recommended an increase in the Corps of Engineers. Crawford’s proposals went into effect by Act of Congress on April 24, 1816; and a few days later Congress authorized the President to employ a “skilful assistant” in the Corps of Engineers, thus securing the services of a brilliant military engineer, Brig. Gen. Simon Bernard, who had served under Napoleon. Congress also voted \$838,000, by today’s standards nearly \$8 million, for a major program of coastal fortification, an effort to prevent a repetition of the humiliations suffered in the War of 1812.

At the same time Congress appropriated \$115,800 for new buildings at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and \$22,171 for books, maps, and instruments. Given the small size of the federal government in the early republic, these were substantial sums to devote to the fledgling institution. With Secretary Crawford’s sponsorship, facilities and staff of the academy were expanded, the curriculum broadened, regulations for admission tightened, and provision made for a Board of Visitors. In September 1816 the cadets first received gray uniforms, honoring (according to tradition) the regulars of Chippewa and Lundy’s Lane, who wore the rough gray kersey of the New York militia because they lacked jackets of regulation federal blue.

Having fostered a peacetime professional army, Crawford might have used his considerable influence with Congress to strengthen it if he had been left in office longer, as he wished. But in the fall of 1816 President Madison asked him to resign and become Secretary of the Treasury in order to bring Henry Clay into the cabinet as Secretary of War. Clay and several others declined the appointment. For more than a year George Graham, the War Department’s chief clerk, was Acting Secretary of War. During that period, as the threat from Europe lessened, Congress began to lose interest in the peacetime army. The actual strength had fallen to about 8,200 men at the time John C. Calhoun took the oath as Secretary of War on December 8, 1817. The new Secretary was faced with proposals to cut the Army’s authorized strength, abolish the General Staff, and discontinue the Military Academy. But before Calhoun could devote his talents to staving off such proposals, he was faced with an outbreak of Indian warfare on the border between Georgia and the Spanish province of Florida.

### The War Hatchet Raised in Florida

The Indians threatening the Georgia frontier were the Lower Creeks, a faction of the Creek Nation that had fled to Florida after being defeated in 1814. Called the Red Sticks because of their red war clubs,



William Harris Crawford  
*Daniel Huntington, 1875*

they settled in the swamps and palmetto forests along with Seminole Indians. The Seminoles were an amalgam of Indian bands mixed with fugitive African American slaves who had migrated from the river valleys of Georgia and Alabama to the protective swamps and pine barrens of Florida. These Indians went unrestrained by weak Spanish officials, shut up in their enclaves at St. Augustine on the east coast, St. Marks in central northern Florida, and Pensacola on the west coast.

Poorly treated by settlers and U.S. government agents, these Indians were ripe for open resistance. The spark came from an unexpected source. The Lower Creeks and Seminoles, already suspicious and disgruntled, were encouraged to attack American settlers in Georgia by two British adventurers from the Bahamas. Lt. Col. Edward Nicholls had employed the Indians in his abortive expedition against Mobile in the summer of 1814 and had left them well armed when he sailed away to England in 1815. Another instigator was a trader, Alexander Arbuthnot. Both incited the Indians by telling them the false story that the southern part of Georgia, which the Creeks had surrendered in the treaty of 1814, had been returned to them by the Treaty of Ghent and thus Americans were settling on lands that belonged to the Indians.

By the fall of 1817 the U.S. Army was attempting to protect the settlers by reinforcing Fort Scott, a log fort built at the southwestern tip of Georgia where the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers combine to form the Apalachicola. Flowing through Florida to the Gulf, the Apalachicola provided a supply route from Mobile or New Orleans to the fort. At the end of November 1817 an Army keelboat ascending the Apalachicola in advance of supply transports was attacked from the bank by a party of Indians who killed or captured thirty-four of the forty persons aboard: soldiers and wives of soldiers.

The news of the attack, reaching Washington on December 26, 1817, brought on the conflict known as the First Seminole War. Calhoun ordered General Jackson to proceed immediately from Nashville to Fort Scott and take command and authorized him to request additional militia in case he thought the force on the scene (800 regulars and about 1,000 Georgia militia) insufficient. Jackson, who had already reported to the War Department that he was expecting trouble in Florida, “the war hatchet having been raised,” acted promptly. Calculating that the three-month Georgia militia might have gone home before he could arrive at Fort Scott, he sent out a call for 1,000 six-month volunteers from West Tennessee. Dispatching to Fort Hawkins in central Georgia an officer with \$2,000 to buy provisions and ordering further stores to come forward by ship from New Orleans, Jackson, escorted by two mounted companies, set off in advance of the troops.

Riding into Fort Hawkins on the evening of February 9, Jackson was enraged to discover that the contractor who had agreed to supply him with rations had failed to do so. For more than a thousand men, he reported to Calhoun, there was not “a barrel of flour or a bushel of corn.” Procuring locally some pigs, corn, and peanuts, he kept going, arriving at Fort Scott on March 9. There, he learned that ships loaded with provisions from Mobile had come into the mouth of the Apalachicola. To Jackson it was all important to protect these boats from Indians who might attack them from the riverbank. He set off next morning with his Georgia militiamen and 400 regulars from Fort Scott



*U.S. Model 1816 Flintlock Musket*

on a protective march down the east bank of the Apalachicola. Six days later he was at the river mouth. He halted his force and ordered Lt. James Gadsden of the Corps of Engineers to build a fort, named Fort Gadsden, for storing the supplies he was expecting from New Orleans.

Jackson's supply flotilla, delayed by a gale, did not arrive until March 25. The following day he began his campaign. His objective was a large Indian settlement on the Suwannee River, 150 miles to the east, where a force of several thousand Indians and slaves under a Seminole chief, Billy Bowlegs, was said to be preparing for battle. Because he needed a supply base nearer than Fort Gadsden, he decided to take the Spanish fort of St. Marks on the way and arranged for the supplies to be brought by ship to the bay of St. Marks.

Stopping at the Ochlockonee River to make canoes for the crossing and farther along to clean out some Indian villages, on April 7 Jackson took St. Marks, in the process capturing Arbuthnot, whom he imprisoned. In the meantime a brigade of friendly Upper Creek Indians had ridden up along with the first detachment of the Tennessee volunteers. Because of the failure in supply, the main body of Tennesseans did not catch up with Jackson until April 11, when he was well on the swampy trail to Bowlegs' Town.

The campaign was something of an anticlimax. From Bowlegs' Town the Indians and slaves had fled, having been warned by Arbuthnot. The only gains were corn and cattle to feed Jackson's troops and the capture of a third adventurer from the Bahamas, Robert C. Ambrister, who had been arming and drilling Bowlegs' men. Ambrister was taken back to St. Marks and along with Arbuthnot was tried by a military court and executed. Dismissing the Georgia militia and the Indian brigade, Jackson proceeded west with his regulars and Tennesseans. At Fort Gadsden, early in May, he learned that Indians were assembling in Pensacola. He seized Pensacola, ran up the American flag, and left a garrison there as well as at St. Marks when he returned to Nashville late in May.

Jackson's highhanded actions in the First Seminole War—his invasion of Spanish territory, capture of Spanish forts, and execution of British subjects—might have had serious diplomatic repercussions if Spain or Great Britain had chosen to make an issue of them; but neither nation did. Negotiations with Spain for the purchase of Florida were already under way, and shortly after the return of the forts to Spain, the Adams-Onís Treaty ceded Florida to the United States in February 1819.

For the Army the most significant aspect of the war had been the near total breakdown in the supply system. From the time Jackson rode out of Nashville in late January 1818 until his first encounter with the Indians early in April, he had had to devote all his energies to feeding his troops. The principal reason for this was the failure of civilian contractors. The folly of depending on civilians for so essential an item as rations had been amply demonstrated in the War of 1812, and Jackson's experience in the First Seminole War only underscored it. At Calhoun's suggestion the Congress in April 1818 required contractors to deliver rations in bulk at depots and provided a better system of Army-controlled transportation and supply methods. For the first time since the Revolutionary War, the Army had a Subsistence Department, headed by the Commissary General of Subsistence.

## John C. Calhoun and the War Department

Calhoun was convinced that the American frontier ought to be protected by regulars rather than by the militia. Calling the militia into active service, he wrote Brig. Gen. Edmund P. Gaines, was “harassing to them and exhausting to the treasury. Protection is the first object, and the second is protection by the regular force.” But providing a regular force capable of protecting the frontiers north, south, and west, as well as the seacoast, was another matter. In 1820 the Congress called upon the Secretary of War to report on a plan for the reduction of the Army to 6,000 men. Calhoun suggested that the reduction, if it had to come, could be effected by cutting the enlisted personnel of each company to half strength. In time of war the Army could be quickly expanded to a force of 19,000 officers and men. This was the start of the “expansible army” concept.

On March 2, 1821, Congress passed the Reduction Act that cut the enlisted strength of the Army by half (from 11,709 to 5,586) but cut the size of the officer corps by only a fifth (from 680 to 540). Thus, even though the Congress had cut the end strength of the Army overall, its limited reduction of the officer corps confirmed that the idea of an expansible army was beginning to achieve a measure of acceptance. Calhoun, although concerned with the drastic nature of the cuts, pronounced himself reasonably satisfied. The retention of a proportionally larger officer cadre would allow the Army to expand more rapidly upon the approach of war. This was a key milestone on the road to recognizing that the Regular Army and its officer corps was the first line of our nation’s defense rather than relying totally upon the militia or hastily raised, equipped, and trained volunteer units.

The Reduction Act also provided for 7 regiments of infantry and 4 regiments of artillery instead of the existing 8 regiments of infantry, a rifle regiment, a regiment of light artillery, and a corps of artillery comprising 8 battalions. The Ordnance Department was staffed by artillery officers; no ordnance officers were commissioned until 1832. The Northern and Southern Divisions were abolished and replaced by an Eastern and a Western Department, under the respective commands of Generals Scott and Gaines. Only one major general was provided. Because General Jackson had resigned from the Army to become Governor of Florida, the commission remained with General Brown, the hero of Sacket’s Harbor in the War of 1812.

To provide a senior line officer in the chain of command, lack of which had been a serious deficiency during the War of 1812, Calhoun brought Brown to Washington in a position that later became known as Commanding General of the Army. Brown held it until his death in 1828, when he was succeeded by Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb. When Macomb died in 1841, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott was appointed. Made a brevet lieutenant general in 1847 (the first three-star general since George Washington), Scott served as Commanding General of the Army until his retirement in 1861.

Secretary Calhoun’s administration accomplished many other important innovations in Army management. Beginning in mid-1822, recruiting depots were opened in major cities, east and west, to enlist men for the Army at large, not for specific units. Though regimental

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recruiting continued, the General Recruiting Service in its first three years of operation enlisted about 68 percent more men than did the regiments. General Scott prepared a new manual of infantry tactics for regulars and militia and, on the basis of his research in Paris in 1815, prepared the Army regulations of 1821, going minutely into every detail of the soldier's life, including the ingredients of his soup. The first commissioned Surgeon General, Joseph Lovell, whom Calhoun appointed, further improved the soldier's diet. Also, by requiring daily weather reports from all medical officers, in an attempt to find some correlation between weather and army diseases, Lovell provided basic data for the first study of weather in the United States and the most complete data of the sort in the world.

Under Calhoun, the work of seacoast fortification went steadily forward. By 1826 eighteen harbors and ports from the Penobscot River to the mouth of the Mississippi had been fortified with a total of thirty-one works, generally consisting of sloping earthworks covered with grass and backed by stone or brick walls. By 1843 the harbor defense program had been extended to thirty-five or forty coastal areas with sixty-nine fortifications either in place or under construction. By then the War Department was placing greater emphasis on heavy artillery (24- and 32-lb. guns and 8-inch howitzers) to keep pace with increasingly heavy naval armaments.

Calhoun early turned his attention to the Military Academy, where Crawford's attempts at rehabilitation had been impeded by controversy stirred up by the arbitrary actions of Superintendent Capt. Alden Partridge. After Partridge was removed and Bvt. Maj. Sylvanus Thayer was appointed Superintendent in July 1817, the academy became a vital force in maintaining a corps of professionally trained officers. The War Department had sent Thayer to Europe in 1815 as one of the first of a succession of Army officers sent abroad in the early nineteenth century to study, among other things, foreign military schools. With Calhoun's support, Thayer organized the West Point cadets into tactical units, created the Commandant of Cadets, improved the curriculum, and introduced new methods of instruction. Under his administration, West Point became the premier school for engineers in the United States. For his achievements during his sixteen-year superintendence, Thayer became known as the father of the U.S. Military Academy.

Military education was further advanced in 1824, when, as a result of Calhoun's proposal for a "school of practice" for men in service,

## **SYLVANUS THAYER (1785–1872)**

Sylvanus Thayer, "father of the Military Academy," became Superintendent of that struggling institution just nine years after graduating from it. Thayer assumed command in 1817 and instituted sweeping reforms that reflected lessons from his recent tour of European military academies. He introduced a strict code of discipline, emphasized honor and integrity, formalized and expanded the curriculum, ranked cadets within each class, improved the faculty, and confirmed West Point as the foremost engineering school in the nation. When Thayer left in 1833, the U.S. Military Academy was fully comparable to its European counterparts.

the Artillery School at Fortress Monroe was established. It was the first of the Army's specialist schools; but unlike most modern schools, it instructed not individuals but an entire unit, which was assigned there for a year's tour of duty. It was closed in 1835, when all the students were sent to Florida to meet the threat of the Second Seminole War, and it was not reopened until 1858. In 1826, the Infantry School of Practice was established at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. Both schools were major milestones in the development of a standard doctrine and common training regimen for the new professional army.

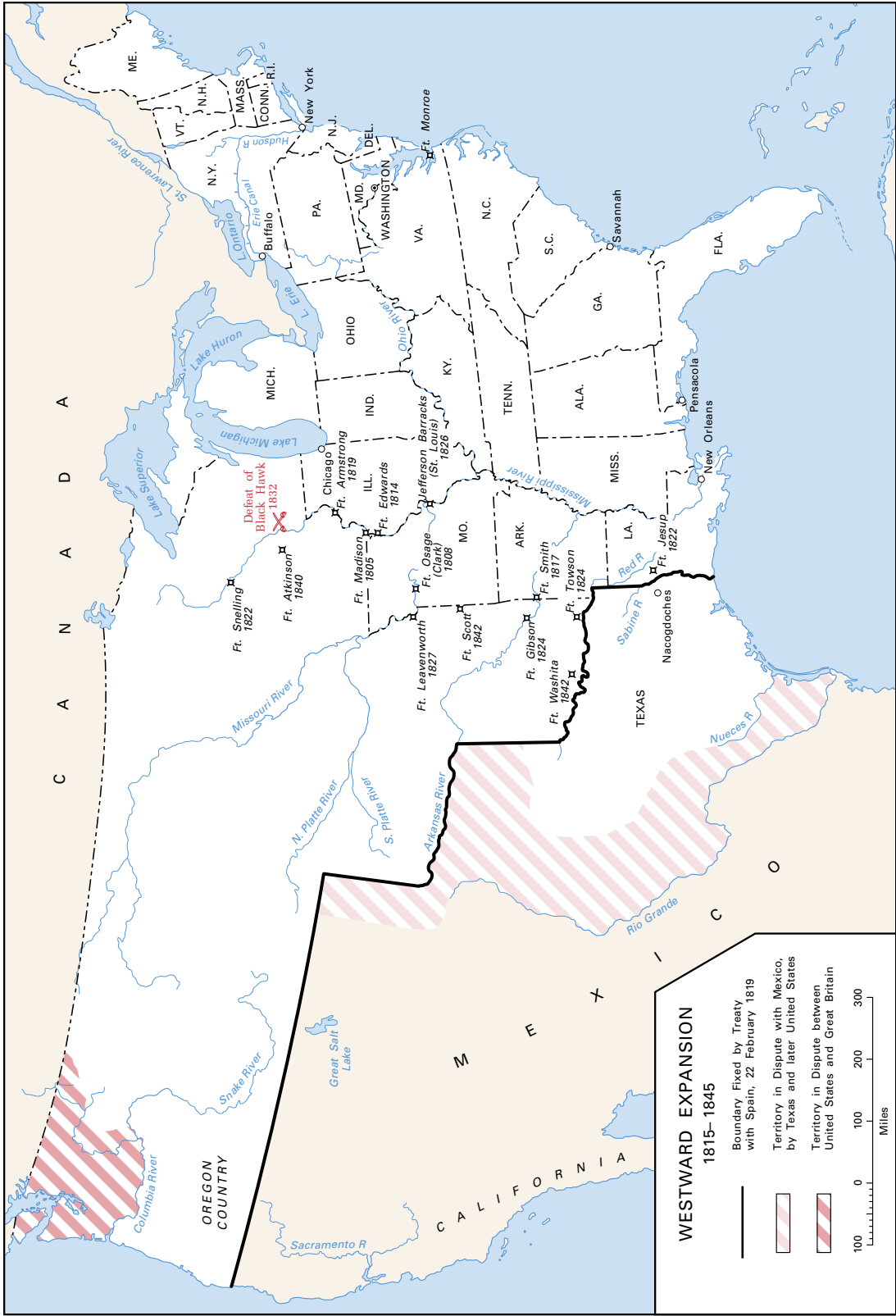
In 1818 Calhoun formed the first official and complete artillery system for the three categories of artillery (field, siege and garrison, and seacoast), following recommendations by a board of artillery and ordnance officers he had appointed to study the issue. The system was based largely on that of field carriages developed by the famous French artilleryman, General Jean Baptiste de Gribeauval. During the next twenty years growing doubts about the Gribeauval system led succeeding Boards of Ordnance to recommend a newer French system, based on that of the British, called the stock-trail because the carriage used a single trail of a solid block of wood rather than the old twin trail. It was simpler than the previous system and introduced interchangeability in carriages and parts. Approved by Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett and adopted in 1839, the stock-trail was used in the Mexican War. The same board that recommended it also endorsed the introduction of rockets and rocket units into the U.S. Army. The rocket contemplated was patterned after the famous Congreve the British used in the War of 1812.

### Pioneering in the West

In the three decades after 1815, the Army pushed westward ahead of the settlers, surveying, fortifying, and building roads. (*Map 19*) Stockades and forts built and garrisoned in Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas became the footholds of settlement in the wild frontier; just outside the walls could be found gristmills, sawmills, and blacksmith shops, all of them erected by the troops. Fort Leavenworth, established in 1827 as the first permanent fort on the western bank of the Missouri River, was the main base for Army expeditions sent out along the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. An important Army explorer in the 1830s, Capt. Benjamin L. E. Bonneville of the 7th Infantry, took a four-year leave of absence and made valuable observations concerning the Pacific coast. These early expeditions were made by infantrymen using steamboats, wagons, and oxcarts. The expert horsemanship and tactical mobility of the Indians on the Great Plains also prompted the Army in 1832 to organize its first battalion of mounted rangers. The battalion was expanded the following year into a regiment of dragoons, essentially horse-mounted infantry, the first cavalry-type units to appear in the Regular Army since 1815.

A western man became Secretary of War in 1831. Lewis Cass, former Governor of Michigan, was to be the first long-term Secretary since Calhoun. Like Calhoun, he had hardly assumed office when an Indian war broke out. By 1831 American emigrants pouring westward after the opening of the Erie Canal in 1824 were settling on Indian lands in





Map 19

western Illinois from which the Sac and Fox Indians had been pushed out to the prairies west of the Mississippi River. A band of Sac warriors under Chief Black Hawk, called the British Band because they had served with the British during the War of 1812, crossed the Mississippi in the spring of 1831 and began burning settlers' houses. General Gaines, commanding the Western Department, moved in with a large body of regulars and volunteers; and Black Hawk retired across the river. But the chief returned a year later with 500 warriors and 1,500 women and children with the intention of reestablishing his people on the east bank of the river.

Cass, who knew the importance of impressing the Indians with a show of force, ordered Col. Henry Atkinson, commanding at Jefferson Barracks, to take the field with regulars of the 6th Infantry and told General Scott to bring about 1,000 infantry and artillery from the East Coast. The Governor of Illinois called out a large force of militia. (Among them was the young Abraham Lincoln, elected captain of his company, who later became the sixteenth President of the United States.) After an inconclusive brush with the Indians, most of the Illinois volunteers returned home. On August 2, 1832, Atkinson with 500 regulars and as many volunteers as he had been able to collect caught up with the Indians in southern Wisconsin at the confluence of the Bad Axe River and the Mississippi and defeated them decisively, with the help of an Army steamboat carrying a 6-lb. gun firing canister. Five days after the battle General Scott arrived, but he had with him only a remnant of his forces. Cholera had broken out aboard his crowded transports on the Great Lakes, killing or disabling one third of the force. Many others had deserted or could not be brought forward for fear of contagion. Nevertheless, by that time Scott's men were no longer needed.

### The Second Seminole War, 1835–1842

Early in 1832, at the direction of Secretary Cass, the U.S. Indian commissioner in Florida negotiated a treaty with the Seminoles, ratified in 1834, by which the Indians would relinquish their lands in Florida and move to Arkansas. The deadline was eventually set at January 1, 1836. However, many of the Indians were determined to resist what they viewed as the theft of their lands. Long before the deadline, the Seminoles, led by a charismatic half-Indian named Osceola, demonstrated that they would not go peaceably. Numerous sugar plantations in north and central Florida were raided and burned. These outbreaks of violence led the Army to reinforce Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay and Fort King, near present-day Ocala in central Florida, about a hundred miles to the northeast. By December 1835, nine companies of artillery and two of infantry—thirty-six officers and men—were in Florida under the command of Bvt. Brig. Gen. Duncan L. Clinch.

On the afternoon of December 28, 1835, Osceola with sixty warriors hidden near Fort King killed Wiley Thompson, the agent appointed to superintend the removal, as he was taking a walk outside the fort. Also killed was his dinner companion, Lt. Constantine Smith, and several nearby settlers. The same day another party of 180 warriors attacked a slow-moving column of 110 regulars led by Bvt. Maj. Francis L. Dade, about halfway between Fort Brooke and Fort King. The



*Knapsack for Volunteer Militia, ca. 1830*

## OSCEOLA

Osceola was born to a Red Stick Creek mother and a father of Scots descent. He immigrated to Florida after General Jackson's defeat of the Red Sticks in the Creek War (1813–1814). In Florida, Osceola joined a Seminole Indian band and rose to prominence despite his non-Seminole origins. Having refused to sign the treaty forcing the Seminoles and other Florida Indians to emigrate to reservations in Arkansas, he became a leader of those who fought emigration. From 1835 to 1837, he resisted Army efforts to capture or kill him and his followers. He was legendary for his ability to use the swampy terrain, guerrilla tactics, and the fighting abilities of his followers to repel or damage larger forces. Osceola was seized in October 1837 while negotiating under a flag of truce. Suffering from several illnesses, he was transported to Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, where he died on January 30, 1838.

strung-out column, which included a 6-lb. cannon, was ambushed by carefully concealed Seminoles under war leaders Micanopy, Alligator, and Jumper. The first volley cut down Major Dade and almost half his force. The remnant retreated under fire and hastily erected a triangular log breastwork some two hundred yards from the ambush site. The defenders kept shooting as long as the ammunition held out, but gradually their fire slackened. By late in the afternoon, the defenders were helpless and the Indians rushed the breastworks, wielding their tomahawks and clubs. Only two men from the column escaped back to Fort Brooke, both severely wounded; and one died of his wounds within the next few months. The Second Seminole War had begun.

Although the Dade Massacre took place west of a line dividing the Eastern and Western Departments and was therefore in General Gaines' department, President Andrew Jackson and Secretary Cass preferred to give the command to General Scott. Gaines, who was then on an inspection trip in New Orleans, was ordered to the western frontier of Louisiana to take command of all U.S. troops in the region adjoining the boundary with Texas.

General Scott left Washington on January 21, 1836. Stopping in South Carolina and Georgia to arrange for militia and supplies and to set up a depot in Savannah, he did not arrive at his headquarters in Florida near St. Augustine until February 22. Because of logistical troubles and the difficulty of moving troops over primitive, unexplored terrain to Tampa Bay (where he had planned a three-pronged offensive to bottle up the Seminoles in a swamp nearby), it was April 5 before he could begin his campaign there. By that time the Seminoles had melted away into the Everglades. Since hot weather had set in, the militiamen, whose three-month terms of service had expired, were ready to go home. As a South Carolina militia officer summed up the campaign, "Two months were consumed in preparations and effecting nothing, and the third in marching to Tampa and back again."

Though Scott's experiences in the Second Seminole War resembled in some respects those of Jackson in the First Seminole War eighteen years before, there were two important differences. First, the logistical failure was a failure in transportation, not in supply. The depots had been adequately stocked; but wagons, roads, and Army maps were

lacking. Second, General Scott had to contend with the intrusion of a subordinate commander, General Gaines, who disregarded orders and brought a large force of Louisiana militiamen from New Orleans by ship to Tampa Bay in February. Supplying this force with rations intended for Scott's troops, Gaines fought an inconclusive battle with the Indians and returned to New Orleans in March.

During May General Scott at his headquarters near St. Augustine managed to antagonize many of the Florida settlers by accusing them of cowardice. He further alienated the volunteers by officially requesting the War Department in Washington that he be sent 3,000 "good troops (not volunteers)." Floridians burned him in effigy and cheered when he was transferred to Georgia at the end of May to put down an uprising of the Creek Nation, which was threatening to spill over from eastern Alabama into Georgia and Florida. There, the general got into trouble again with Bvt. Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, in command of operations in Alabama. Jesup had the temerity to win a battle with the Indians before Scott could put his own elaborate plans into effect, to the latter's great displeasure. In a letter to one of the President's advisers, Jesup charged Scott with unnecessary delay: "the Florida scenes enacted all over again."

The upshot of the controversy with Jesup was Scott's recall to Washington to face a court of inquiry. The court absolved him of all blame for the Florida fiasco, but he did not return to the Seminole War. Instead, he was given diplomatic missions for which he had demonstrated his ability during the South Carolina Nullification Crisis in 1833, when he managed to strengthen the federal forts around Charleston without provoking hostilities. He was also successful in resolving several conflicts that broke out between American and Canadian settlers on the northern frontier and in persuading 15,000 Cherokee Indians in Georgia to move west peaceably.

The war in Florida continued for six years. General Jesup, commanding from late 1836 to May 1838, was not able either to persuade the Indians to leave Florida or to drive them out. He did, however, manage to drive a wedge between the Seminoles and their escaped slave allies and, in a major coup, to capture the Seminole leader Osceola by luring him into a conference under a flag of truce. Despite this treachery, however, the war dragged on. Jesup assembled a large force of over 4,500 regulars and 4,000 volunteers. He divided this force into separate columns and launched them into Seminole strongholds in central and southern Florida. Colonel Zachary Taylor, in command of one of the columns, collided with a strong and dug-in Seminole force of 500 warriors near Lake Okeechobee. Attacking on Christmas Day 1837, Taylor and his column of around 1,000 men charged the Seminole positions. After several hours of intense fighting, one wing of the Seminoles broke and retreated into the safety of the swamps. The rest were then routed in one of the largest and hardest fought battles of the Second Seminole War. It cost Taylor 26 killed and 112 wounded, while the Seminoles lost fewer than 14; but it was still a victory for the army. It also earned Taylor his brevet as brigadier general.

Bvt. Brig. Gen. Zachary Taylor succeeded Jesup as overall commander in Florida in May 1839. He adopted a policy of dividing the disaffected region into small districts and searching out the Indians

**The war in Florida continued for six years. General Jesup . . . was not able either to persuade the Indians to leave Florida or to drive them out.**

with a pack of bloodhounds—a brief and unsuccessful experiment that aroused a furor in the United States. Taylor's search-and-destroy methods might have produced results, given time, but the War Department insisted on another attempt at negotiation and suspended hostilities. The raids were resumed. Taylor asked to be relieved and was followed by Bvt. Brig. Gen. Walker K. Armistead, who again tried negotiation and failed. In May 1841 Armistead was succeeded by Col. William J. Worth, who brought about a radical change. Hitherto the campaign in Florida had been suspended during the summer season when fever and dysentery were prevalent. Worth campaigned throughout the summer of 1841, preventing the Indians from raising and harvesting crops. By waging a ruthless war of extermination and by destroying food supplies and dwellings, he routed the Indians out of their swamps and hammocks and permitted the war to be officially ended in August 1842; though scattered bands held out in the Everglades for years to come.

The Second Seminole War had been guerrilla warfare of a kind the Army was not equipped to fight. The effort depleted the Regular Army so seriously that in July 1838 its authorized strength had to be increased from 7,000 to 12,500 men. About 10,000 regulars and as many as 30,000 short-term volunteers had been engaged from 1835 to 1842 in one of the longest sustained campaigns fought against the American Indian. Almost 1,600 men had lost their lives in battle or from disease, and about \$30 million had been spent to ship 3,800 half-starved Seminoles west. Many of the regular units that had fought in the war went on to Georgia and Alabama to aide in the forced removal of the Cherokees from their ancestral lands along the "Trail of Tears" to their new western reservation. This was not the last time that the Army was forced to be the instrument of a ruthless policy of dispossession directed against the American Indian.

With money and effort, the Army had bought experience, especially in transportation—the most pressing problem of the war. For example, the Quartermaster General had developed a light pontoon wagon, lined with India rubber cloth, for crossing rivers. At General Jesup's request, the Secretary of War revived the corps of artificers that had been authorized for the War of 1812. It provided mechanics and laborers to keep wagons and boats in repair. The war also taught a great deal about water transportation. Before it was over, the Army was turning away from dependence on steamboats hired from private contractors to Army-owned steamboats, more reliable and cheaper in the end. (Contractors once again had proved unreliable partners in the military effort.) The problem of navigating shallow rivers was solved by building flat-bottomed bateaux. These lessons in transportation were to be put to good use in the Mexican War; but the lesson that contractors were on the whole unreliable and corrupt had to be learned and relearned at the Army's expense on a regular basis.

## Westward Expansion and the Texas Issue

Army pioneering expeditions from Fort Leavenworth in the 1820s and 1830s had been undertaken mainly for making treaties with the Great Plains Indians and for protecting trading caravans. Beginning in the early 1840s the prime consideration was to help the American set-



On Stone, A. Koellner. This lithograph shows the full dress of an officer in the Dragoon Corps, ca. 1841.

tlers pouring westward. In 1842, 2d Lt. John C. Fremont of the Corps of Topographical Engineers led an expedition to explore and map the Platte River country for the benefit of emigrants moving over the Oregon Trail; his second expedition in 1843 reached Sacramento in Upper California.

In 1842 Fremont reported seeing emigrant parties of 64 men with 16 or 17 families. Three years later, when Col. Stephen W. Kearny marched five companies of the 1st Dragoons over the Oregon Trail primarily for the protection of the emigrants, he saw on the trail 850 men and about 475 families in long caravans followed by thousands of cattle. The trickle had begun to turn into a flood.

Some of the pioneers on the Oregon Trail settled in Upper California; but the main stream of American migration into Mexican territory flowed to Texas. Between 1825 and 1830, approximately 15,000 immigrants with several thousand African American slaves poured into Texas. In March of 1836 they proclaimed their independence from Mexico. The Mexicans, under General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, moved against the rebels and destroyed the garrison in the Alamo after a siege that lasted thirteen days. American volunteers rushed across the Sabine River to help the Texans. General Gaines, stationed on the western frontier of Louisiana to defend Louisiana and maintain American neutrality, was authorized to cross the Sabine River (generally regarded as the boundary line) but not to go beyond Nacogdoches, fifty miles west of the

Sabine, which marked the extreme limit of American claims. He was at the Sabine when Maj. Gen. Sam Houston won his victory over Santa Ana at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. Fired by wild rumors of Mexican reinforcements, Gaines crossed the Sabine with a force of regulars and in July occupied Nacogdoches, remaining there until recalled in December 1836.

For nearly ten years Texas existed as an independent nation, desiring annexation to the United States but frustrated because annexation had become tied up with the slavery controversy. Northerners saw annexation as an attempt by the South to extend slavery. During this decade Mexico, refusing to recognize Texan independence, made sporadic attempts to recover its lost province. Raids marked by the extreme ruthlessness and ferocity of both Texans and Mexicans kept the country along the border in constant turmoil.

### The Professional Officer

The exploration of the West and the Seminole and Creek Wars severely tested the fledgling U.S. Army. The Army's organization fluctuated according to the political winds of the time with only a slowly evolving sense by the nation's leaders that a standing professional Army



## STEPHEN WATTS KEARNY (1794–1848)

Kearny served in the Army from the War of 1812 through his death in 1848. He served with the 1st Dragoons from its formation in 1833 through the Mexican War. Well-liked and respected by his men, Kearny is known to some as the father of U.S. Cavalry. He protected pioneers traveling on the Santa Fe, Mormon, and Oregon Trails and gained fame for his western explorations and his heroic service during the War with Mexico.



*Stephen Watts Kearny*

was essential for national security. Problems in supply, training, equipment, and pay were only painfully sorted out under the press of circumstances. Central to solving these problems was the slow but steady evolution of a professional officer corps. This growth can in no small measure be attributed to the quality of new officers emerging from the U.S. Military Academy. Year after year young cadets were tested and trained to increasingly rigorous standards and commissioned to take their places as professional officers. Their training as professional engineers as well marked them as valuable commodities in civilian life; and whether they remained in the Army for a career or fulfilled their obligation and left the service, they contributed to the Army and to the society as a whole.

Tested in combat in the Seminole Wars, placed in charge of a small team of explorers, charged with building a road or dredging a harbor, Army officers developed a strong sense of corporate identity that bound them closer and closer together as a distinct entity within society. They developed professional codes of standards, behavior and ethics that provided a self-policing mechanism essential to any profession. As they moved, often with their families, from post to post on the expanding frontiers of the country, they turned inward to their own community to build a support structure of obedience, duty, and honor. Common opportunities for training, starting at West Point and continuing at the various branch schools, when coupled with shared experience in combat or at isolated military posts, bred an increasing identification with an officer class. The officer corps was beginning to view itself as a distinct entity within the Army and the nation. These officers soon found themselves thrown together and tested again in the fire of battle upon the outbreak of war with Mexico. The war would see West Point-trained officers clearing the path into Mexico City as the nation again called upon the Army to lead the way into new lands.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the importance of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to the Army of the early nineteenth century. In what sense did the

U.S. Army become more professional during this period? What reforms contributed to this result?

2. The wars against the Seminoles lasted for years and took thousands of troops to subdue and remove a relative handful of Indians. Why did this take so long? Which tactics worked and which did not?

3. What were the major roles and missions of the Army in the early settlement of the West from 1815 to 1845? How effective was the Army in performing these missions?

4. What was the “expansible army” policy proposed by Secretary of War Calhoun? To what degree do we have an expansible army today? What were some alternatives to this idea in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

5. What were the advantages and disadvantages of using contractors to provide military support such as rations, clothing, transportation, and other services during this period? Why was the Army so slow to develop its own internal logistics capability?

6. Compare and contrast the Army on the eve of the War of 1812 to the Army on the eve of the war with Mexico. What were the similarities and differences? What factors accounted for the changes?

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