The State Militia and US Army in the War of 1812 and How It Relates to Fort Daniel

In the November issue of the GAB I wrote about the dedication of our “Major Tandy Key” blacksmith structure (pictured right) and the role that Key played in the construction of Fort Daniel. That article began with a January 13, 1827 letter from Key to Governor George M. Troup of Georgia, wherein he wrote:

In the year 1813 orders for a classification of the militia throughout the state were issued from the executive department, which classification took place agreeably to that order—At that time the frontiers of this and some of the adjoining Counties were in very eminent danger of Indian Aggressions...

The orders to which Key referred originated from the State capital in Milledgeville on July 30, 1813—31 days before the Fort Mims Massacre—and were directed at “You,” namely, Major General John Clark, Commander of the 3rd Division of State Militia serving, through Brigadier General Edward Shackleford’s 1st Brigade, Baldwin, Putnam, and Morgan Counties; through Brigadier General Edward Beall’s 2nd Brigade, Greene, Oglethorpe, and Clark Counties; and Major General Allen Daniel, Commander of the 4th Division of the State Militia serving, through Brigadier General Jephtha O. Harris’ 1st Brigade, Wilkes, Lincoln, and Elbert Counties and through Brigadier General Frederick Beall’s 2nd Brigade, Jackson, Franklin, and Madison Counties. These two reserved divisions would constitute General John Floyd’s Georgia Militia Army. The “General Orders” were printed the same day in the Georgia Journal and read, in part:

The vowed determination of a large proportion of the Creek Indians to commence hostility on our frontier, renders it indispensable that the State take immediate steps to meet them in time and if possible to anticipate their attack. For this purpose the Commander in Chief [James Madison, Jr.] has been called upon by the Secretary of War [John Armstrong, Jr.], to turn out a certain number of Militia. You will therefore prepare the regiment of detached militia under your command, to march to such place on the frontier as will be hereafter designated…preparatory to their marching against the enemy.

The General Orders had been in immediate response to Colonel Hawkins’ letter to “the Governors” from his headquarters at the Creek agency dated July 27, 1813 warning, in part, that:

It is reduced to a certainty by the concurrent testimony of a number of respectable Indians, that the civil war which has raged for some time among the Creeks originated with the British in Canada—that as soon as the Chiefs friendly to the plan of civilization are destroyed or put to flight with their adherents, they will be ready for active hostility against the friendly Indians on Chatohoeche and the exposed parts of our frontier Settlements.

Those familiar with the story of Fort Daniel will see that this was a foreshadowing of Hawkins letter, two months later, to General John Floyd, Commander of the newly formed Georgia Militia Army, wherein he wrote that he had a reliable report that the Red Sticks were recruiting Upper Town Creeks and they were headed “east, after red and white people” and that “they planned to take the post road, enter Georgia, ravage all before [them] out round by Hog Mountain.”
Governor Mitchell’s General Orders to these “detached” divisions were his enactment of a command that went to several governors that originated with the US Commander-in-Chief, President James Madison, Jr. They point to the special circumstances during these formative years of the US armed forces, wherein the US Army needed to complement its forces with State Militia forces. The original Act of Congress that provided for this special arrangement, wherein the federal government could issue military orders to state governments, was approved on May 8, 1792.  

Robert Kerby points out that the plan provided by Congress to regulate the militia conformed to the British territorial scheme. Militia organization would be divided into regiments, battalions, and companies—each of which was “ordinarily coterminous with some existing political subdivision such as a county or a township.” In this scheme, “Eligible residents of each district composed that district’s ‘standing militia’ force.” According to custom, the individual states could “arrange local companies into regiments and brigades.”

We see the supplemental role of militia with federal army at work in the saga of Fort Daniel. The man in charge of getting the fort built was a Jackson County militiamen, Tandy Key, a Major in charge of a locally recruited regiment of men ostensibly from Jackson, though, possibly also Franklin or even Madison. His brigade was part of the Georgia Militia Army. At the same time, though now a Georgia Militia fort, Fort Daniel was also a strategic waypoint for the US Army.

Major Thomas Bourke, appointed Deputy Quartermaster of the US Army Quartermaster Corp by Secretary of War Dearborn and serving under the Commander of the US Army’s Southern theater, US Army Major General Pinckney, used Fort Daniel as a vital waypoint in his efforts to blaze out the road from Fort Daniel to Standing Peachtree and to contract with local residents to finish the road. At the same time, from his headquarters at Gibson’s Plantation near Commerce, he also oversaw the construction—and successful test run to Fort Mitchell from Standing Peachtree—of the first supply boat built at Vann’s Ferry.

During the same month (October 1813) that work began on rebuilding Fort Daniel, George Gilmer received a commission of 1st Lieutenant in 43rd Regiment of Pinckney’s US Army. He was put in charge of a detachment of US Army Regulars at Washington Barracks from where they marched to Fort Daniel and then down the new Peachtree Military Road to Standing Peachtree to build the fort and boat yard. This took place in January after construction at Fort Daniel was completed.

Gilmer’s detachment was joined by US Army Superintendent of Artificers, Sergeant James Montgomery, a Jackson resident. Montgomery had been collecting construction tools and equipment at Fort Daniel for the effort at Standing Peachtree. Therefore, the US Army and the Georgia Militia, though carrying out separate tasks, were working in concert in and around Fort Daniel. Thus, Fort Daniel was part of a strategic plan broadly conceived by the federal government—but whose details were worked out by both the US Army and the Georgia Militia Army.  ■ JJD
Endnotes

1. Telamon Cuyler Collection (MS 1170), Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, TCC505.

2. According to Robbie Ethridge, University of Mississippi, “The plan of civilization was a federal development program created in the 1790s to address the so-called "Indian problem," the much-debated question among American politicians about how to go about opening up American Indian lands to Euro-American settlement. The task of implementing the plan of civilization among the Creek Indians of present-day Alabama and Georgia went to federal Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins, who lived among the Creeks from 1796 until his death in 1816. The stated purpose of the plan of civilization was to train Indian men and women in ranching, farming, and cottage industries such as cloth making. The public face of the plan suggested that through such training Indians would become self-sufficient farmers, selling small surpluses on the market. The underlying goal of the plan, however, was to settle Indians on small farms and thus force them to give up hunting on their vast territories. Then, as American needs for land increased, the Indians in theory would be more willing to give up their holdings. The federal and state governments, so the thinking went, then could acquire peacefully Indian lands through treaty.” Encyclopedia of Alabama, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1131.


4. “Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That whenever the United States shall be invaded, or be in imminent danger of invasion from any foreign nation or Indian tribe, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States, to call forth such number of the militia of the state or states most convenient to the place of danger or scene of action as he may judge necessary to repel such invasion, and to issue his orders for that purpose, to such officer or officers of the militia as he shall think proper; and in case of an insurrection in any state, against the government thereof, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States, on application of the legislature of such state, or of the executive (when the legislature cannot be convened) to call forth such number of the militia of any other state or states, as may be applied for, or as he may judge sufficient to suppress such insurrection.” Second Congress, Session I. Chapter XXVIII, Passed May 2, 1792, providing for the authority of the President to call out the Militia.


6. By the time of the War of 1812, old Fort Washington on the Broad River in Washington Ga., was known as “Washington Barracks.” Fort Washington, named as such during the Revolutionary War, was formerly a private frontier fort erected by the Heard family in 1781. Gilmer was from Washington. As was the custom, US Army posts were often filled by locals.
Recently, Jessica S. Johnson, Museum Conservation Institute (MCI) Head of Conservation, and MCI Fellow Katharyn Hanson along with Acting Provost Richard Kurin and Cultural Heritage Preservation Officer Cori Wegener, and other colleagues returned from a successful visit to the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH) in Erbil, Iraq. As part of the visit an agreement was made with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage for the Smithsonian to support on-the-ground work by Iraqi archaeologists to document and stabilize the recently liberated ancient site of Nimrud. Iraqi cultural heritage practitioners working at Nimrud have identified areas of concern on satellite images during their meeting with Smithsonian (pictured above).

The Smithsonian has been participating in projects in Erbil throughout the past year including managing a 22-week “Fundamentals in Heritage Conservation” training program for cultural heritage professionals from across Iraq and convening a “Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Religious Minorities” workshop for representatives of persecuted groups in northern Iraq. The Smithsonian also created a training manual “Guide to Mosul Heritage” for Kurdish and Iraqi security forces on protecting cultural and religious heritage sites in and around Mosul in preparation for the liberation of the city.

The Museum Conservation Institute along with other cultural heritage partners will continue to work on-the-ground with Iraqi colleagues to help with the stabilization, rescue, and recovery of cultural heritage in Iraq. Smithsonian