

1812 Tennessee Volunteer Statue Unveiled

After the Battle of New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson said his *“chief motive will be to render justice to those brave men I have the honor to command and who have so remarkably distinguished themselves.”* Camp Blount honors those brave men.

Throughout the period of early settlement in Tennessee and the surrounding area, Indians randomly attacked settlers, maiming and killing them in their homes, fields, and mills. When about 700 Red Stick Creek massacred about 250 men, women, and children at Ft. Mims, near Mobile, on August 30, 1813, Tennesseans had had enough cruel brutality at the hands of marauding natives.

Tennessee Governor Willie (Wylie) Blount called for 3,500 volunteers to be led by two rivals, John Cocke (East Tennessee) and Andrew Jackson (Middle Tennessee). Tennessee Militia Major General Andrew Jackson reacted by inviting fighting men to muster for organization and training at a bend at the Elk River in Fayetteville, Tennessee. Their purpose during the Creek War of 1813-14 was to quell the Indian uprising and to bring peace with the warring tribes.

Jackson with about 1,500 men was also supported by a Cavalry Unit of about 1,200 men led by John Coffee. In response, several thousand men volunteered over the next few months, rotating through Camp Blount to be deployed as replacements. This enabled soldiers to rotate every 60 days, keeping the Tennessee soldiers fresh on the field of battle.

The call was sent out in late September 1813 and the first men enlisted on October 13, 1813, at what became known as Camp Blount. After being organized into units, the men trained for a few days and set out to engage the enemy. General Jackson led his militia men to victory at Talladega in the Mississippi Territory (now Alabama) on November 9, 1813, which followed General John Coffee’s victory at Tallushatchee on November 3. Ensuing battles continued until the decisive victory at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814.

Like a fog lifting, the spirit of the Tennessee Volunteers aroused the interest of community and state leaders to interpret the remnants of the old Muster Ground that lay silent along the banks of the Elk River for 200 years; they began to see a vision more clearly. As the Bicentennial of the Creek War of 1813-14 neared, the City of Fayetteville, with assistance from the State of Tennessee and the Tennessee Wars Commission, acquired the undisturbed 40 acres of Camp Blount. Incidentally, this purchase was the only acquisition of land designated for a new park commemorating the War of 1812 in the United States during the Bicentennial.

Society of the War of 1812 in the State of Tennessee President Colin Wakefield has been a key proponent of the effort as a member of the Board of Directors of the Camp Blount Historic Site Association, which is fulfilling General Jackson’s chief motive, *“to render justice to those brave men I have the honor to command and who have so remarkably distinguished themselves.”*

On October 16, 2020, a remarkable statue, The First Volunteer, was unveiled in an impressive ceremony in the heart of Camp Blount. President Wakefield was joined by 1812 President General Tim Mabee and several other state and General Society officers to observe the unveiling of the statue sculpted by renowned artisan Wayne Hyde. The statue represents Tennessee’s volunteer spirit embodied by the 1812 Tennessee Volunteer Militia Man.

— *President General Rick Hollis*