

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Natchez Trace Parkway  
Tupelo, Mississippi 38801

THE BATTLE OF ACKIA

The Battle of Ackia, 1736, is of importance in American history because it was here that the prestige of the French and their attempts to dominate the entire Mississippi Valley received a severe setback. It has been asserted that the Battle of Ackia marks the beginning of the decline of French power west of the Appalachian Mountains. Viewed in a broader perspective, this last statement seems extreme, although it is true that here the Chickasaw resoundingly defeated a French punitive expedition.

The Chickasaw generally opposed French expansion in the Mississippi Valley. They attacked French boats plying the Mississippi between the Gulf of Mexico and the Illinois settlements. Some Frenchmen suspected them of inciting the Natchez to destroy Fort Rosalie and massacre more than 200 colonists in 1729.

The French retaliated, driving the Natchez from their homes, and killing or capturing many Indians. Some of the more fortunate took refuge among the Chickasaw. Others remained in the vicinity and continued to harass the French.

Bienville demanded that the Natchez should be surrendered to the French for punishment. When this was refused, an expedition was organized to demonstrate to the Indians that they could not flaunt French power. In February 1736, troops and supplies were assembled in New Orleans, and the army proceeded a distance of approximately 400 miles via Mobile and the Tombigbee River to a point on the Choctaw-Chickasaw boundary 2.5 miles west of present-day Amory, Mississippi. Here the expedition of about 560 men was joined by approximately 600 Choctaw.

According to Bienville's plan, Pierre d'Artaguet had assembled a force of 145 French and 326 Indians at Fort Chartres (Illinois country). This column was to meet the Governor near the Chickasaw town, and the combined force was to destroy the enemy. D'Artaguet, after a journey of some 350 miles, reached the Chickasaw country in March and, due to a shortage of supplies, had to attack before Bienville's arrival. His force was defeated on or about March 25, he was killed, and most of his army were made prisoners.

Bienville, knowing nothing of this, led his army with its Choctaw allies to the vicinity of the Chickasaw villages, and because he also was short of provisions, attacked immediately. The attack on the village of Ackia, May 26, 1736, was repulsed with severe loss, after which Bienville's army returned to the Tombigbee, and eventually to Mobile and New Orleans.

Some sources, including Bienville, cite the leadership provided by English traders who lived among the Chickasaw as the main reason for the French defeat.

Historical and archeological investigations have furnished ample proof that the Indians lived on ridges south and west of present-day Tupelo, Mississippi (Chickasaw Old Fields). However, the exact location of Ackia is unknown, and unless additional evidence is uncovered, the site probably will never be identified.