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LETTERS FROM THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR

Edited by JOHN K. MAHON

THESE PAGES are built around fragments drawn from the letters and diary entries written by Joseph R. Smith.¹ They contain nothing important enough to require a reinterpretation of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842; indeed they have little significance except that they enlarge the printed record left by the people who lived at that time. This record helps us, in spite of the one hundred and thirty years lying between, to bring to life their interesting era.

Joseph R. Smith was an officer of the Regular Army, and, like a majority of his confreres, he was a graduate of the United States Military Academy.² Fourteen years before he reached Florida, he had been graduated twenty-second among thirty-five members of the not-very-distinguished class of 1823. Assigned to the 2d United States Infantry upon graduation, he had been with it ever since - and was to remain a part of it until 1851, that is eighteen years in all. Service prior to Florida had been entirely at the North. During the fourteen years since graduation he had made the slow rise characteristic of that era; had, in short, advanced only from second to first lieutenant. He had been a first lieutenant for six years upon his arrival, late in 1837, in Florida.

The conflict with the Seminoles had then been in progress for two years. Commanders had come and gone at the rate of two per year. Three ranking Regulars and one governor of the territory of Florida had thus far, as commanders of the Army of the South, failed to finish the struggle and to ship the Indians

1. The letters and diary from which these extracts have been made are in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida. The writing, spelling and grammar in them are good, indicating the education of the writer.
2. Of twenty-two officers whom Smith mentioned in his writing, eleven were West Pointers. Brief data on the officers comes from Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the U.S. . . . 1789-1903* . . . , 2 vols. (Wash., D. C., 1903). More detailed data on Smith and other graduates of the Military Academy comes from George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy . . . 1802-1890* . . . , 3 vols. (Boston, 1891), for Smith see I, 312. Cullum's work has since been brought closer to the present by other editors.

[331]

west of the Mississippi.³ Brevet Major General Thomas S. Jesup, in command since late in 1836 and still there when Smith arrived, believed he had finally put an end to it during the first six months of 1837. Under his supervision thirty Indians had been killed and five hundred rounded up for shipment. In addition some of the chiefs had avowed that the remainder at large were willing to be moved to the west.⁴ It was in this climate of optimism that Lieutenant Smith arrived at the theatre of war. That climate was not to last very long.⁵

Nov 9th [1837] Left Monroe Mich. to join my Regt. in Florida; arrived at Detroit same eve 8.

Nov 10th Remained at Detroit

Nov 11th Left for Buffalo and arrived on the night of the 13th. Remained one day. 15th Left for N. York and arrived on 20th losing a day at Utica, one at Albany. Went to Elizabethtown & found all my friends well. 23d Capt Backus⁶ brought me a letter from my brother. Daily expecting a letter from my wife. Oh the disappointment of not hearing from those we love. I leave my family with regret on an unpleasant and horrendous service. Oh Lord preserve us all and in thine own good time again unite us.

3. Brevet Brigadier General Duncan L. Clinch commanded in Florida until Brevet Major General Winfield Scott was ordered on 21 January 1836 to relieve him. Next, on 25 May 1836 Scott transferred the command to Richard Keith Call, Governor of Florida Territory. Call lasted until the end of 1836 when, on 8 December 1836, Brevet Major General Thomas S. Jesup was assigned the post. Jesup had been Quartermaster General since 1818 and was to continue in that capacity until 1860. Chagrined on account of criticism of his conduct of the campaign during the spring of 1837, he asked to be relieved, but his request was not honored for a whole year. Accordingly, Jesup was in command when Lieutenant Smith arrived in the theater. For data on these men see Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, *passim.*, and Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *The Dictionary of American Biography*, 22 vols. (New York, 1828-1944.)
4. Order No. 203, Hqs., Army of the South, 24 Oct. 1837, printed in John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York, 1848), 182.
5. In what follows, interpolations by the editor are enclosed in brackets. Entries from Smith's diary may be distinguished from extracts from letters as follows: the diary entries begin with a date; the letters bear the date and place of writing in the upper right hand corner. Unless otherwise noted, the letters are to his wife, Juliet. His salutations to her, uniformly endearing, have not been included.
6. Electus Backus, Military Academy Class of 1824, had very recently, 17 October 1837, been promoted to captain within his regiment, the 1st Infantry, Heitman, *op. cit.*, 1, 179.

New York "Noe's Old House"
Monday Nov 20th

. . . I have seen Genl. Scott; ⁷ he was hard at work at Hampton House building a *pig pen* . . . Kiss our lambs for me. Tell them to be good and not forget father. Punish them with judgment, - not in anger. Do not show temper before them. In short, correct your temper on all occasions.

[It appears here and later that Lieutenant Smith was on friendly terms with General Scott. Then as well as now - but especially at that time when the Army was small and very intimate - the personal acquaintance of the general was useful. Smith's particular reference to Scott is interesting because stately pictures and a "fuss and feathers" tradition have resulted in so elegant an impression of Scott that one can scarcely think of him building a pig pen. Smith thought the occupation incongruous for he underlined "pig pen." Smith's admonition to his wife reveals the temper of his time, a temper sharply different from ours. How many American men of the twentieth century would presume to write such instructions to their wives?]

27th Nov. Monday Having bade adieu to all my friends, - and prepared for the campaign, I sailed this day in the good ship Auburn for Savannah, and cast anchor at the quarantine ground.

28th Tuesday Early under weigh with a light wind favorable, - by night had crawled over the bar at Sandy Hook, - and met a headwind, - beating all night. 29th Wednesday Still beating, -wind dead ahead. The lady passengers deadly sick. Poor things!

6th Dec. Wednesday. What a night we passed the last. A tremendous wind under double reefed topsails. This morning the wind has moderated and we think we must be up with Tybee

7. Winfield Scott was the best known American soldier at this time. He was one of three general officers then in the Army (exclusive of brevet generals.) The Commanding General, Alexander Macomb, was the only Major General. Scott was one of the two brigadiers, and his bitter personal rival, Edmund Pendleton Gaines, was the other. At this time Gaines commanded that half of the nation known as the Western Department, while Scott commanded the Eastern Department. In 1841 Scott, upon the death of Macomb, became Commanding General. A few years later he went on to fame for his conduct of the invasion of Mexico in 1847. In 1852 he was Whig candidate for President; see Heitman, *op. cit.*, II, 586; *Dictionary of American Biography*.

light house. Just discovered a sail which we take to be a pilot boat. I hope so. Oh how did my thoughts revert to my dear wife and children during the night. To thy care and Providence, oh Gracious Father, I commit them.

7th Dec. Thursday Passed a quiet night, and about 12 o'clock M we weighed anchor on the flood tide, and stood up the river, for Savannah, distant about 20 miles, - arrived at 1/2 past 3 PM. Put up at the City Hotel. Oh what a bed of sand is this place.

9th Dec. Saturday. At two o'clock this morning we started (on a steamer *Poinsett*) and in the course of an hour or two grounded, in the fog; - and here we are, for all day, until the next high tide, this evening . . .

10th Dec. Sunday. At 1 o'clock AM we weighed anchor, to cross the bar; - passengers all asleep. We had not got half way over, before thump, thump on the bottom. We all tumbled out very soon . . . After thumping six or eight times, we crossed the bar, and we came into deep water, much to our comfort; - we then stood south . . . and at half past 4 entered the mouth of the St. Johns; - proceeded up to Jacksonville, when we came to for the night, to wood etc. Here I received the pleasing intelligence that Micanopy, Jumper, the Cloud⁸ and other indians had come in, and thus probably the war is ended.

11th Dec. Monday Left Jacksonville at 4 o'clock AM and arrived at Garey's Ferry (Fort Heileman)⁹ on Black Creek, a little after 8. Indian news confirmed. - Col. Crane commanding. -¹⁰ He ordered me to the command of 114 recruits for Tampa. I wish they understood the use of the musket as I pass over the ground where poor Dade, with about the same numbers of men were [sic.] cut off. I shall be here some 3 or 4 days.

12th Tuesday. Today is the grand council at Ft. Mellon and if Sam Jones¹¹ is not in tonight, Genl Jesup with the army will move tomorrow

8. Micanopy was acknowledged chief of the Indians in Florida; Jumper was his adviser or "sense bearer" and Cloud was one of the chiefs, Sprague, *op. cit.*, 97; also Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America with Biographical Sketches* . . . , 3 vols. (Phila., 1842-1844), II, 187-192.

9. Ft. Heileman, and other locations mentioned, may be identified on the contemporary map at the end of this article.

10. Ichabod B. Crane, lieutenant colonel of the 2d Artillery, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 335.

11. For a description of Sam Jones, a Mickasukie, see Sprague, *op. cit.*, 99.

Garey's Ferry
Thursday 14th Dec 1837

There is an immense amount of property of all kinds here, and such waste; - they pay steam boats \$5000 per month, and have five or six of them running all the time . . . ¹²

17th Sunday. At 10 o'clock this morning, having been joined by Lt. Thomas ¹³ and 15 men from Picolata, set out on the march for Tampa. Strength of party, 104 men and 5 officers. Marched out 7 miles and halted early to allow the Picolata men to cook. - This day received a letter from my wife, a joyful occurrence . . . Wolves howled terribly

21st Thursday. Made an early start passed through the 6 mile hammock an ugly place for an attack. Passed near the Orange Lake, arrived at Fort King, - (2.5 miles) just at dark. Found my old friend Galt ¹⁴ in command. Slept with him.

Fort King Fla
Friday 22d Decr 1837

We have performed 80 miles of our journey . . . I am resting one day here, and God willing, tomorrow I set out. The opinion here is that we shall see no Indians. But we are all in the hands of God. I must do what I can;-Captain Galt will send 15 mounted men to escort the wagons. [Smith was responsible for a wagon train] This will be a great relief to me in many respects. The Indians are much more afraid of mounted men than of foot soldiers . . .

[If there were any letters in the one-month interval between the letter above and that below, they have not ben preserved]

27th Wednesday. Made an early start;-the men almost worn out. About 4 past 4 met my excellent old friend the Colonel, and Genl Armistead ¹⁵ riding about a mile from Tampa, and soon after we arrived at the place of our destination . . . An

12. *The Army and Navy Chronicle*, IX (1839), 14 quoted the *Philadelphia North American* concerning a similar case. The owner of a steamer, it said, valued at \$7,000 received rent of \$72,000 for her use from the Army which in addition paid the wages of the crew.

13. George C. Thomas, second lieutenant, 4th Artillery, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 954.

14. Patrick H. Galt, captain, 4th Artillery, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 444.

15. Brevet Brigadier General Walker K. Armistead, one of the first graduates of the Military Academy. Later, Armistead became commander in Florida for the year from May 1840 to May 1841, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 169.

express from Col Taylor this night bringing intelligence of his battle. ¹⁶ Indians defeated, - but a dear victory for us. Col-Thompson ¹⁷ and several others killed and wounded

3d-4th Jany. [1838] The survivors of the 6th Infnty came in today. Poor fellows! - Some 60 or 70 wounded, broken arms, legs, and holes through all parts of the body. It was a gallant affair.

28th Sunday. Oh my God, how is this, thy holy day desecrated. Oh grant to touch the hearts of both officers and soldiers, - that they may be brought to love and serve thee evermore.

Fort Brooke Fla
20th Jany 1838

. . . Col Taylor is a thorough going men, - and if the Indians can be found he will find them, and fight them too. I proposed to the Col. just before he left that he should allow me to go out and join Major Hoffman. ¹⁸ But he told me the papers were too far behind hand, and anyhow I had better remain here where the books and papers were, - and with the Hqs. ¹⁹

I am almost tempted to think that I am a Captain of compy B. Mrs. Capt Morris of the artillery wrote to husband, who is here, that Maj. Young of the 7th Infnty has resigned. If such is the fact, it promotes Maj. Cobbs . . . and makes me Capt of Compy B. If so how would you like to recruit a year or two? Probably by the assistance of Genl. Scott we might get a pleasant station . . . You cannot tell what an enormous pair of whiskers I have cultivated; - I suppose you would like to cut them off for me. I would be willingly at home tonight and indulge you in clipping my whiskers . . . I am aware that you must submit to many privations . . . But they are nothing when compared to mine; - when compared to what we all suffer here in Florida

16. Zachary Taylor was at the time Colonel of the 6th Infantry Regiment. His career has been widely treated; the reader can get a start by means of the *Dictionary of American Biography*. Taylor was in command at the battle referred to, the Battle of Okeechobee or the Kissimmee River which was fought on Christmas Day, 1837. This was the severest action of the seven years of the war; 5 officers and 22 enlisted men were killed; 9 officers and 102 enlisted men were wounded, Sprague, *op. cit.*, 213.

17. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander R. Thompson, 6th Infantry.

18. William Hoffman who was at the time Brevet Major, 6th Infantry.

19. Smith was adjutant of the 2d Infantry Regiment and so was responsible for the regimental records and paper work.

almost eaten up by fleas, ants, cockroaches and almost all manner of vermin. Even the sand is swarming with fleas, and little flies that bite, - and then for our quarters. It rained hard the night before last, - and soon I heard tick, tick tick, - the water dropping on my papers. I was up in an instant and removed them carefully . . . I hopped out of bed to remove one thing after another . . .

[These extracts illustrate vividly why promotion of officers was so slow one hundred and twenty years ago. You had to wait for death or resignation to open a rung above you before you could advance. Company officers were promoted within the regiment, field grade officers within the branch.²⁰ Thus, if casualties were high in a regiment or a branch, officers might rise rapidly while their contemporaries remained unpromoted. The system was clearly not fair.

Concerning the hardships of soldiering in Florida, even twentieth century Americans, protected by screens and insecticides, can, if they try, get a glimpse of the miseries of early soldiers, The tiny sand flies, popularly known as "noseeums," can still bite out of all proportion to their size]

Fort Brooke Fla
Feb'y 8th 1838

. . . I went over to Sanibell [sic.] Island where are thousands of shells (not very rare) and I picked up a great many shells for my dear little children . . . I enclosed you my pay accts for Jany. - and a draft on Maj. Hessing besides for my December pay.²¹ Do not fail to inform me whether they come safely. It takes just a month to receive your letters after they are written . . . Do not keep the children in school more than an hour or an hour and a half in the forenoon and as much in the afternoon . . . The system of sticking them up on benches six hours a day, - I disapprove of . . .

20. William A. Ganoe, *History of the U.S. Army* (New York, 1928), 180.

21. Pay records for 1838 are not readily available, but for the year ending 30 September 1834 Smith, as a first lieutenant, drew \$994 pay and allowances. Since he was still a first lieutenant in 1838 his pay was doubtless nearly the same as in 1834. Figures on his earnings were drawn from, "Pay of Officers of the Army, 1833 and 1834," *H.R. Exec. Doc. Number 198*, 4 April 1836, 24th Cong., 1st session, p. 306.

Fort Brooke Fla
22d Feby 1838

. . . Genl Jesup hopes to give the Indians all south of the 28th degree of latitude, and has sent his aid to Washington to effect this arrangement.²² . . . It is thought that the campaign will close by the 10th or 15th of March. Then comes the distribution of troops for the summer. And where the lot of the 2d may be cast I know not . . . I never can think of coming South to live. This may drive me out of the army. I hope however to manage to recruit a couple of years, - before I am compelled to resign . . . 27th Feby . . . Since I commenced this letter I have had an attack of dysentery; - but am quite recovered.

Fort Brooke
5th March 1838

. . . Report says that when the Florida campaign is terminated the troops, or a portion of them, will march into the Cherokee nation to enforce the treaty with them; - or, in other words, to take their country away from them.²³ If I am not ordered on recruiting service this summer I know not what I may be tempted to do. I look farther ahead, dear Juliet, than you do. You think that we could get along by our own exertions if I were to resign; - I *know* that we cannot. Our habits are entirely foreign to economy . . . We have been brought up so that we cannot do much work. If Henry²⁴ can manage to get me an appointment

22. The twenty-eighth parallel runs east and west a few miles north of Tampa. General Jesup was not able to get this area reserved for the Indians, but General Macomb arranged a more limited area for them when he made a treaty with some of the chiefs which he thought would put an end to the war in June 1839. Macomb's line ran through Charlotte's Harbor to Pease Creek, up that stream to Big Creek, up that to its source thence east to the northernmost point of Lake Istokpoga, thence along the eastern outlet of that lake to the Kissimmee River, thence down the Kissimmee to Lake Okeechobee thence south through the lake to the Shark River, and down that to its mouth, then along the sea shore north to the starting line, Sprague, *op. cit.*, 229.

23. He refers to one of the saddest of episodes in Indian-white relation, the removal in 1838 of the Cherokees from Georgia to the area west of Arkansas known as the "Indian Territory." For a full account see Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1932), Book 4.

24. His brother, Henry, who at the time was Superintendent of Public Works at Monroe, Michigan.

in the state of Michigan that has any prospect of permanency I think I would bid adieu to Uncle Sam . . .

[It is noteworthy that Smith stayed in the service only in order to support his family. Also interesting, and not a little perplexing, is his statement, "We have been brought up so that we cannot do much work." "Work" to him apparently meant physical labor, and the outlook implied in the assertion smacks of the Old World. Returning to the need to support his family, times were hard because the depression following the Panic of 1837 was severe. Even so, Smith's spirit, as here expressed, was not equal to that of the most enterprising Americans who at that time willingly hazarded a living for the chance of big profits.]

Ft. Brooke
13 March 1838

. . . I write this from my sick room. Five days since, I was attacked with the dysentary again;-and the Dr. cannot, as yet, control the movements of my bowels. I am writing this letter, supposing it may be the last one I shall write you. For I cannot conceal from myself that I am pretty sick. I have thought much of dying lately, since my sickness. And oh my love, the pang of parting with you and our babes,-is the severest one I meet. But dear Juliet, it is but for a few years,-and then, if we live and die in the faith, that is in Christ Jesus, we shall be again united . . . Oh how I miss those kind attentions which none but the hands of a wife can ever execute,-or her affectionate thoughts invent. But it may not be. God does all things well. I am distressed at your being left dependent. But oh, trust in your God, who never forsakes those who put their trust in Him.

[This letter stops abruptly at the end of one page with three blank sheets unused after it. The handwriting is firm. Someone has pencilled the following on the back, "if anyone ever got a dirty deal from God, he did and three generations after him. The initials look like JRS which would have been his son or grandson. Their faith apparently did not stay as strong as his had been.]

Fort Brooke Fla ²⁵
[6th March 1838]

Again I am seated at my desk to write to you. My health, I think, continues to improve,-but I am sure, that with your care, and affectionate attentions, and the northern atmosphere,-and by the blessing of God, I might soon be well. Genl. Jesup has answered my application by saying that as a principal part of my regiment are serving in Florida, I must continue, and do duty with them. I have also made application to the Agt. Genl., if he decides against me, then the Colonel's answer to my letter resigning my adjutantcy;-will be received in about four or five weeks;-if he decides against me I may be compelled to resign rather than sacrifice my health here during the summer. But, oh, what a prospect for me, with a wife and four children, and no means but my present pay and profession. But I desire to put my trust and confidence in God . . . For myself, I could get along very well;-but you and our children;-it grieves me to think of it.

. . . I have just written to sister Louisa by Col. Davenport, of the army . . . I enclosed a \$50. U.S. Bank note to her. I hope the time is not very far distant when we can offer her a permanent home. If Henry could help me to anything, by which with application I could support us,-I would willingly quit a profession for which,-I think there is no longer a feeling of respect entertained by the country.

[The feeling that the military services are not accorded due respect in time of peace is here seen to be at last one hundred and twenty years old.

A letter dated 16 March has survived but nothing was extracted from it for reproduction. It is cheerful and out from under the shadow of death, and there is not even mention of the earlier doldrums. In it Smith stated that his brother, Henry, was creating a position paying \$1,200 per year, and that if it were to be permanent he would resign in a minute to get it.]

25. The date written on this letter is scratched over, but appears to be 5 or 6 March 1838; yet those dates must be in error since Smith surely wrote the letter after his illness which he reported to his wife on 13 March.

Ft. Brooke
24th March 1838

. . . I am not quite as strong as when I left home,-but am better than I have been. We hear nothing positive of the destination of the 2d for the summer; we therefore continue to live in hopes that we shall get north. I am daily expecting the Army Bill to pass which will promote me to Cobb's company.²⁶ Any where, so I get out of Florida this summer . . .

Apl 4th. My friend Penrose²⁷ arrived with a detach of recruits. My health still poor. I received an order to proceed to New Orleans and return with Coe Hadjo²⁸ an Indian chief. Apl. 7th Left Tampa in a wretched little sloop with two men for all the crew. After a long and disagreeable voyage of 7 days arrived at St. Marks.

Apl 14th Found the steam boat New Castle there; took passage Penrose and myself in her. On 15th touched at St. Joseph's and Pensacola,-passed Mobile Bay, entered Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain and arrived at New Orleans on the 18th. For several days my disease grew worse, and finally Surgeon Hawkins and Dr. Crawford said I must go north immediately if I would save my life . . . 24th Left N. Orleans in the SB Emperor a splendid boat, . . . heard of the destruction of the Mozelle near Cincinnati, - 150 persons destroyed among them Lt. Col. Fowle of the Army,²⁹ which promoted Cobbs and made me Captain of Company B.

[There are no other letters written during the spring and summer of 1838, for Smith got leave to go north to convalesce. Among the papers however are several communications from the Adjutant General, all of them in October 1838 and addressed to (now) Captain Smith at Watertown, New York. He was there on recruiting service and the Adjutant General directed

26. The Army Appropriation Act referred to became law on 6 April 1838, but all it did was appropriate lump sums for the payment of men in the service, *United States Statutes at Large*, V, 224.

27. James Penrose, first lieutenant, 2d Infantry, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 783.

28. Coe Hadjo or Coe Hajo was one of the chiefs of the Florida Indians who agreed to the removal of his tribe early in the conflict. There is some reference to him in the report of General Jesup printed in Sprague, *op. cit.*, 186ff.

29. His promotion to captain was dated 28 April 1838. This is an interesting example of the fact that advancement more often than not depended upon disaster to those above one in the hierarchy, Cullum, *op. cit.*, I, 312.

him to take his recruits to Fort Columbus where a battalion of his regiment was assembling to go to Florida. From the Adjutant General's letters it can be inferred that Smith replied he was too unwell to obey. The Adjutant General then stated that if he was well enough to recruit he could manage to deliver the recruits as directed. Once there, he continued, if Smith was not in condition to accompany the battalion to Florida he should notify the Adjutant General. Not satisfied with this, the Captain next wrote to none other than the Commanding General of the Army. The reply came from the headquarters of the army at Sackett's Harbor, New York. It said for him to get a medical certificate if he was not well enough to go to Florida, and that with this he could retire until able to do duty. Finally Smith won his point. A letter signed by Lorenzo Thomas,³⁰ Assistant Adjutant General, on 4 May 1839, directed him to repair to New York instead of reporting to his unit and accompanying it to Florida.

Throughout the interchange the high command showed a good deal of forbearance. There was of course some humanity, but also a substantial portion of expediency in its forbearance. As is apparent from Smith's correspondence, too rigid an attitude would have driven many trained officers out of the service. Smith, for his part, had no wish to retire until well because this would have meant removal from the payroll. So, as matters fell out, he found himself in New Orleans in the spring of 1839 on some sort of duty, the nature of which is not apparent from the papers examined.]

On board ship Yazoo at sea
10th May 1839

My dear children,

If you have got your atlas . . . you will see Great Abaco Island.³¹ We are now in sight of that island . . . I am quite well although I have been a little sick. I have 226 soldiers in the

30. Lorenzo Thomas was one of Smith's classmates at the Military Academy. He continued to serve as Assistant Adjutant General until he was advanced to be Adjutant General, with the rank of Brigadier General, in 1861. Later, Thomas was an actor in the drama which centered around the Tenure of Office Act and the attempt by President Andrew Johnson to remove Secretary of War Stanton from office.

31. Great Abaco Island is in the Bahamas. For some reason Smith described it to his children as forming one side of the channel, with New Providence Island the other, to New Orleans.

ship. One of them died last night;-this morning at 6 o'clock he was sewed up in his blanket,-and a canvass [sic.] covering, -and I read the burial service over him;-and we committed his corpse to the deep sea there to remain until the last trump shall call him, and every one of us, to judgment. Oh try to be good children. How often father thinks of you all,-and prays for you all! Be affectionate to your dear mother . . . and be kind to one another, and in your intercourse with those around you, be kind and upright. Never do a mean action; oh never tell a lie;-or do such an act as you think will displease God. If you love God, he will take care of you . . .

[The letter of 10 May was addressed to Elizabethtown, New Jersey whither Mrs. Smith, for some reason, had removed from Monroe, Michigan. General Scott's home, as has been seen, was in that place, and there is some evidence that the Smiths and Scott's were good friends.

Of interest is the Captain's admonition to his children. Few fathers would use such an approach in the 1950's.

Later in 1839 Captain Smith's health was so much restored that he was ordered to rejoin his regiment in Florida. That unit, the 2d Infantry, had been in the Peninsula since June 1837. This long service shows that there was no rotation of units to make the harsh duty lighter. One reason was that a large part of the whole Army was committed to the Florida War. One of the two regiments of dragoons, one of the four artillery regiments, and four of the eight infantry regiments were in that theater.³²

During nearly all of the twenty-one months while Smith had been absent from Florida Brevet Brigadier General Zachary Taylor had been in command. He was still in that position at the time of Captain Smith's return. Taylor, convinced that the country would have to be blanketed with troops, had commenced to divide Florida into districts twenty miles square with a military post in the center of each. His scheme had been interrupted 18 May 1839 when General Macomb had made a treaty by which it was supposed the war might be ended. On the contrary, with-

32. Roster of the troops in Florida at the time is shown in Sprague, *op. cit.*, 105; Heitman, *op. cit.*, II, 586-587 shows the authorized size of the Army as of July 1838; see also Francis P. Prucha, "Distribution of Regular Army Troops Before the Civil War," *Military Affairs*, XVI (Winter, 1952), 169-173.

in a month blood flowed again, and so the old round had commenced once more. It was in progress when Smith arrived very late in 1839.]

[Sometime after 10 October 1839] I now commence making preparations for Florida. 5th Nov. Bid farewell to my darling family and took charge of a detachment of recruits destined for 7th Infty in Florida . . . and on 17th assumed command of my own compy.

Picolata, E. Fla.
24th Jany 1840

. . . I trust you will hear something favorable of us;-as I have a company of nearly 60,-almost all fine fellows.³³ God grant that they may not leave their bones in this country. My next, God willing, will be written from Ft. Fanning . . . As I may not have an opportunity very soon of sending you another draft,-keep the whole of the one I sent you,-and let John Smith wait a little longer . . . I am told we are to try the blood hounds; -³⁴ if so we may have an opportunity of doing something. We have commenced our garden and had made ourselves quite comfortable when lo, - here comes this order and we are off . . .

Camp on the Wacasassa
Near Ft. Jennings, 29th Feby 1840

. . . You ask me if I have any curiosities for you. I answer yes. The most valuable is a hearty buck Indian whom I captured, gun, bow & arrows and all;-on the 25th while on a four day scout. Besides him I have a war dress of the great Tallahassee chief, Tiger Tail,³⁵ which I also captured in the same scout, - some of Mrs. Tiger Tail's dress, beads, etc - a pair of splendid bear skins, and other skins, and other little contraptions captured by myself . . . What do you think of all this? Besides which I was

33. The size of Smith's company shows clearly that only about two-thirds of the full strength of a unit could be placed in the field. The authorized number of enlisted men in an infantry company was ninety, see the chart in *The Army Lineage Book, volume II, Infantry* (Wash., D. C., 1953), 59.

34. For a sketch of the history of the bloodhounds in the Florida War see James W. Covington, "Cuban Bloodhounds and the Seminoles," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIII (Oct., 1954), 111-119; see also Sprague, *op. cit.*, 239-242.

35. There is some comment on Tiger Tail in Sprague, *op. cit.*, 99.

two days in pursuit of Tiger Tail, Lusty Hadjo ³⁶ . . . but missed them . . . But the best of all (and for which I feel thankful) in all my hard marchings, in wet and cold and heat, in sand and water,-through the hammocks, the cypress ponds, the saw grass marches, on the pine barren, eating nothing but hard bread & pork or ham,-my health continues good, my appetite ravenous. Our kind Heavenly Father preserves me from harm . . .

I have been more successful than any other troops for a long time; - and you may feel a proper pride . . . I know Henry will be tickled, although it appears no great matter to capture an Indian, still so many have failed to do so, - that it is in fact quite a feat; - and then the powder and lead I took from them;- a canister of rifle powder, - and a glass bottle of coarse powder,- with about two bushels of garden seeds I burned for them . . . a very great loss to them; one which cannot be replaced. This is the second camp I have surprised and taken property from. . . .

Camp on the Wacassassa
7th March 1840

. . . We have had nothing fresh for five or six weeks, - slab pork and ham all the time. Some potatoes at \$5.00 per barrel. We shall leave here for Ft. Fanning in a day or two . . . God willing three of our compnys will build quarters for our company at that place;-we then have about fifty miles of road to cut, - after that I hope we shall be ordered into summer quarters. It is very hard upon our men, after working as hard as they have for 6 weeks, now to be obliged to work six weeks longer in cutting roads . . .

Camp near Fort Fanning
17th March 1840

We are hard at work building quarters, - but we know not for whom . . . Could I get to Picolata, or some other pleasant station, I do think I could not live separated from you all . . . You ask me about the old soldiers. I have new ones, whom I trust to more than the old ones;- and always in scouting have two or three moving near me; and whose duty it is to keep near me.

36. I have not been able to identify this chief unless he was that one called Foke Luste Hajo in McKenney and Hall, *op. cit.*, II 179-180.

You have of course heard of my Indian prisoner, and all the plunder I captured from the red rascals . . . You ask if I have my cot with me, Certainly, - and a grand affair it is; - and my mess chest in which I carry my clothes as well as groceries . . . McKinstry³⁷ says he will send for his wife if I will mine. But you *would not like the trouble, I am afraid*. So I told him before we gave the subject a thought we must see what kind of place we could get to put our wives in . . . I have a large piece of tarpaulin spread down always in the bottom of my tent, to keep us out of the sand . . . Some of the officers around here, particularly Dragoons, pretend to say that my Indian is so old he could not run. I tell them he could outrun them, and whip them too. Others say they *guess the dogs helped* me a little. I tell them the very supposition is a falsehood. In fact each one wishes it had been him who had made the capture.

. . . I go out directly after reveille each moring in charge of the shingle party; Kingsbury³⁸ superintends laying the logs of the building; the young officers, two or three of them superintend the cutting of the timber . . . Genl. Wool³⁹ inspected and reviewed our battalion day before yesterday . . . and said we appeared better under arms, considering our hard service, - than any other troops he had inspected in the territory. He thinks there is no prospect of our going north this summer . . . If you think I am not distressed at this separation from all I hold dear in the world, -- you don't know me. But I am here to earn bread for us all. I am here to support us all respectably. Oh how delighted I should be to see you all tonight. But I am here, uncomfortable, - wretched water, - eaten up by insects in an unhealthy climate, - suffering from heat, indifferent food, - scarcely any fresh meat, - and this to support my family. I say no more.

37. Justus McKinstry, second lieutenant, 2d Infantry rose to be a brigadier general of volunteers in 1861, and, for some reason was dismissed from the service on 28 January 1863, Heitman, *op. cit.*, 1, 674.

38. Julius J. B. Kingsbury, a classmate of Smith's at West Point, and, at this time, captain, 2d Infantry, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I,

39. John E. Wool, at the time Inspector General, a post he held from 1816 to June 1841 with the rank of colonel. He had however been brevetted a brigadier general in 1826 and was made brigadier general in the regular line 25 June 1841. He had a distinguished career which continued into the Civil War, see the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

Camp Wool near Ft. Fanning
22d March 1840

My dear son

. . . Oh how much comfort I could derive from the belief that my children (particularly my boy whom I told especially to be kind and obedient, affectionate and respectful to his mother) have remembered and treasured up all the advice which I have given them. Does my dear Joseph remember it all? Is he a dutiful affectionate son and nephew obedient to his mother and Aunt Louisa? Do you always tell the truth to them . . . and to everyone else? Answer me these questions, my son; - and while you do so be sure that the eye of God is upon you . . . Seek the favor of God and value it above any thing in this life. Remember how uncertain is life. Oh my precious boy do not trifle with your soul, or your God; - and so live that you may be prepared to die . . . My own love [part of the same letter]

. . . McKinstry has a prospect of obtaining a leave for a month to go and get his wife. If you could make a good disposition of our dear little Jo and Pamelia, - I believe I should say make your arrangements to come out with him too. But my heart almost bleeds to think of leaving them behind. What could you do with them? Would Hannah come with you? How could you make out without chairs or tables or bedstead or windows in your house? . . . If you should come (but I suppose you will not) you must bring six or eight pounds of tea, - fifty of loaf or lump sugar, - such dry goods (cheap) as you may wish to make up within a year; - for everything is dear here

[Notwithstanding that Captain Smith was thirty-nine years old at the time there is a great deal of adolescence about the letters of 1840. One example is the boyish pride he displayed in his captive and loot. Another is his devious manner of wheedling his wife into doing what he wanted, that is into coming to Florida. Obviously he would have been hurt if she had refused to make the sacrifice. But she did not refuse. Although the letters do not tell the story, she arrived in Florida. Whether with or without the children is not clear. Later, however, another child was born to the Smiths while in Florida, and it died there. Its death produced the following poem by Lieutenant G. W. Pat-

ten ⁴⁰ who was surely poet laureate of the Florida War if anyone was. Pencilled on the back of one copy of the poem is the following sentence, "Mrs. Smith accompanied her husband through one campaign in the Florida Seminole Indian War but she always took the side of the Indians."]

The Burial of an Infant in Florida

A sound of wail swells on the breeze
 Out from a southern glen
 Where sunset through the dark leaved trees
 Glittered on armed men;
 Not there they came their swords of flame
 To bathe in the battle tide
 But to heap the mould on an infant cold
 The wept of a warriors bride

Stern men were they whom many a field
 Had heard in measured tread
 Whom many a horn had roused at morn
 To face the conflict red;
 And they veiled their work from the wrath of them
 Whose blood had stained their steel
 And smoothed the ground with the halbert round
 And trod it with armed heel

And they sprinkled the dust from the oak's old rind
 And scattered the palm leaf's fan
 Or friend or foe that none might find
 That grave of scarce a span
 But who art thou with the pale pale brow
 And the watcher's dim lit eye?
 And the mattock rang like a bow string's twang
 While the voice of grief swelled by

I lay thee here my sinless one
 I put thee down to rest
 But not upon thine eider bed
 Nor on thy mother's breast
 Within this little grave they've scooped
 Far in the forest wild
 I lay thee here my precious one
 I leave thee here my child

40. George W. Patten, first lieutenant, 2d Infantry. Poems by him are scattered through the *Army and Navy Chronicle* for years of the Seminole War. Indeed they found their way into gentler journals than the *Chronicle*. Three or four of them appear in the Religious *Souvenir* during the years from 1835 to 1846, a genteel periodical which was edited by Lydia Sigourney.

That thou art buried neath this spot
 They say I must not tell
 Not even to yon little bird
 Which sings so wild and well
 Nor to the rustling leaf nor stream
 Which murmurs by thy head
 Lest they should prate and forms of hate
 Defile thy hallow'd bed

The clay is prest upon thy breast
 But neither stone nor mound
 Amid the wilds where thou dost rest
 Mark out the secret ground
 It is the work of anxious love
 Yet I heave a deeper breath
 So carelessly the dust above
 Mantles the dust beneath

They've left no little sign for me
 To tell where thou art cast
 On earth there's not a trace of thee
 My dearest and my last
 The tawny foe may trail the doe
 But not thy covert wild
 I lay thee here my sinless one
 I leave thee here my child

[Since Mrs. Smith was close by there were no more letters. Rut the following report, written in Smith's hand, is worth reproducing as it throws light on de conditions of campaigning at the end of the Seminole War.]

Report by Maj. J. Plympton,⁴¹ 2d Inf, comdg det. to Lt Co B. Riley⁴² comdg 2d Infy, Palatka. [Dated at Volusia, Feby 11, 1842]

. . . As early the next morning as the guide could trail, the column was put in movement and at about 1/2, past 9 o'clock A.M. we came close upon their camp, first smelling and then seeing the smoke arising from a thick cabbage hammock. After I ordered

41. Joseph Plympton, who had been made a major in the 2d Infantry as recently as 22 September 1840, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 795.

42. Bennett Riley, lieutenant colonel commanding the 2d Infantry. He had been brevetted colonel on 2 June 1840 for gallantry in the Battle of Chokachatta, Florida fought on the day from which his brevet dated. He had a distinguished record in the War with Mexico in which he rose to be a major general by brevet, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 831; also the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

the front to halt, - and Lt. Penrose, actg Adjt to hasten the rear to close up, - we then heard the Indian signal whistle, to take their position for action. No more than 20 minutes had expired before the rear was brought up, the line formed just in front of where the head of the column halted; - Capt Smith, with B company on the right with Lt. Sully⁴³ & compny K and 8 men of Compny G on the left under 2d Lt. Martin,⁴⁴ - and Lt. Penrose actg adj in the center, in one rank with 6 feet intervals, and the word given by me to "forward" - and I never saw men move with more alacrity and finer spirits, preserving the line at the same time; this too was done when every individual man when charging the hammock knew that he was to receive the enemy's fire from his position.

Charging through the outside border of dens [*sic.*] palmettoes and vines, from one foot to ten in height of about 70 feet in depth we passed through their camp where they had left most of their comforts in great confusion.

The first fire from the enemy was on the right which was very soon silenced by Capt Smith's command; - immediately upon which the attack was made from the center to the left of the line, accompanied by loud yells of the enemy, - which was returned by the soldiers with redoubled energy.

Capt. Smith, at this time, finding that the enemy had disappeared from before him, and that the firing was very heavy upon the center and left of the line, with that military presence of mind without which no man can act in an emergency with certain effect, changed the direction of the right of his company so as to bear down and take the enemy in flank. At this time, Lt Penrose discovered in his front some fallen cypress trees, - Smith a quickness of perception, coupled with a ready military expedient of character [*sic.*], ordered the men, advancing upon this breastwork to charge it by its flank instead of the front. At this moment the enemy opened a fire and fled which was so quickly returned by the soldiers that two of the Indians, who were shot down, were brought out into the pine barren . . . After the enemy

43. Alfred Sully, just graduated from West Point in the Class of 1841, and a second lieutenant in the 2d Infantry. He rose to be a brevet major general during the Civil War, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 935.

44. John W. Martin, second lieutenant, 2d Infantry since 1 July 1839, Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 692.

had been flogged into silence and had lost himself to our view over a trackless space of deep cypress and saw grass swamp, Lieuts Martin and Sully maintained their position with firmness and coolness which are classed with the great requisites of the profession.

On this occasion I saw no man backward in his movements, but on the contrary, the report of the enemy's rifle was the signal note for each individual of the command to quicken his movement to the spot where the enemy might be found . . .

No doubt many of the enemy were wounded as the track of blood in various places was seen and followed up till they were lost in the saw grass and water. On this occasion every man was a soldier and in my opinion has a righteous or just claim upon the favorable acknowledgments of his government.

From the time the line entered the hammock in the charge till the enemy's fire was silenced was about 30 minutes; - and from the time it charged the hammock till the wounded were brought out, was about 45 minutes. From 1/4 past 10 A.M. till half past 2 P.M. the command was engaged in burying the dead and giving such surgical aid to serious wounds as cotton shirts found in the Indian camp would enable an excellent soldier (Corpl Brown) to perform. . . .

. . . If about six weeks of constant marching over the worst part of a bad country - and, on an average 2/3ds of the time in water, from ankle to waist deep; sleeping without fires at night with cheerful expressions, - and without a solitary instance of discontent, - entitles troops to the favorable notice of their superiors, then [these] are richly entitled to the reward.

[The action described occurred on 25 January 1842. It resulted in the defeat of Halleck-Tustenuggee's band, the most formidable still at large.⁴⁵ It was one of the last actions, which might be called battles, to occur, for the Seminole War was declared officially at an end during 1842.

The fight itself can be said to have been typical. Notable in it was the battle line of a single rank with the men six feet apart. Such a formation was an improvisation resulting from the war, for no such formation can be found in the official *Infantry Tactics* manuals of the time.⁴⁶ The normal combat forma-

45. Sprague, *op. cit.*, 429.

46. Winfield Scott, *Infantry Tactics*, 3 vols. (New York, 1835.)

tion was still a line of two ranks with the men much closer, side by side, than six feet.

As for Smith, this report indicates that he showed good judgment and marked valor in combat. This trait reappeared during the War with Mexico, 1846-1848, in which he was brevetted major and later lieutenant colonel for gallant and meritorious conduct. Three severe wounds received at Churubusco, coupled with a tendency toward ill health acquired in Florida, forced him to be on sick leave of absence for eleven years from 1851 to 1862. Meanwhile he was retired on 25 September 1861 for disability, but this did not keep him out of uniform. From 1862 to 1866 he served as Mustering and Disbursing Officer for the state of Michigan, and in other military capacities in that area as well. On 9 April 1865 he became a brigadier general by brevet. He continued to fill various offices in the military service in the Great Lakes region until his death, at the age of sixty-seven, in Monroe, Michigan.]⁴⁷

47. Cullum, *op. cit.*, I, 312.

