

2006

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### Recommended Citation

Percy, Matthew T. (2006) "Documents: Andrew Atkinson Humphreys' Seminole War Field Journal," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 85: No. 2, Article 6.  
Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol85/iss2/6>

## **Documents: Andrew Atkinson Humphreys' Seminole War Field Journal**

**Biographical sketch, introduction and editing by  
Matthew T. Percy**

### **Biographical Sketch**

**Andrew Atkinson Humphreys** (1810-1883) was born into a prominent Philadelphia family of Quaker origin. His grandfather, Joshua Humphreys, a distinguished naval architect later known as the "Father of the American Navy," served as chief naval constructor (1794-1801) and designed the first U.S. warships, including the *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides") and her five sister ships. Andrew's father, Samuel, also served as chief naval constructor (1826-1846) and designed and built the *U.S.S. Pennsylvania*, the largest ship in the world at the time and the most heavily armed man of war ever built. Despite his pedigree, young Andrew forsook a promising career in the navy for the hardscrabble life of a soldier. He graduated from West Point in 1831 and joined the Second Artillery Regiment at Ft. Moultrie, South Carolina, though, as a gifted draftsman and engineer, he did occasional topographical duty as well. At the outset of the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), Humphreys accompanied his regiment to Florida where he saw combat in the spring and summer of 1836. Severe illness, probably yellow fever, forced him from the army in September, and he worked intermittently as a civil engineer before returning to uniform in 1838.

Early in his second hitch, Humphreys served with the newly

[197]

organized Army Corps of Topographical Engineers on assignments in Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., conducting surveys and overseeing harbor improvements and bridge building. In 1844 at the behest of internationally renowned scientist Alexander Dallas Bache, Humphreys detailed as “assistant in charge” at the Coast Survey while Bache transformed that organization into the preeminent patron of antebellum science in the United States. Humphreys left his position in 1850 to assume responsibility for an extensive survey of the lower Mississippi River, an assignment that he embraced with characteristic vigor. The compilation of that work, the massive *Report upon the Physics and Hydraulics of the Mississippi River* (1861) co-authored with his brilliant young assistant, Henry L. Abbot, represented the most thorough analyses of the Mississippi River ever completed, won the respect of engineers around the world, and decidedly influenced the development of river engineering in America. During that same period and under the immediate supervision and close cooperation of the Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, Humphreys also directed the *Pacific Railroad Surveys* (1853-1857), an unprecedented assemblage of more than 100 soldiers, scientists, and technicians marshaled for the single purpose of identifying the most practical and economical route for the nation’s first transcontinental railroad. The enormous thirteen-volume final report on the various expeditions was a monumental scientific achievement and a virtual encyclopedia of the western experience. By the eve of the Civil War, Humphreys ranked among the upper echelon of American scientists and had earned membership in the prestigious American Philosophical Society.

While the war accelerated the traditionally slow pace of promotion in the army, Humphreys – who had not seen combat in twenty-five years – found few early opportunities for advancement. Neither a Republican nor an ardent emancipationist, he also suffered for his very public association with Confederate president Jeff Davis and, later, for his friendship with former Army of the Potomac commander, Major General George B. McClellan. More than 200 Union officers outranked him as late as August 1862, but Humphreys eventually proved his mettle in the field. He won brevet promotions for bravery at Fredericksburg, where he led a green division in a gallant charge on Marye’s Heights, and again at Gettysburg, where he and his division fought doggedly in retreat, resisting a slashing Confederate attack along Emmetsburg Road in

some of the fiercest fighting of the war. For his efforts on that most famous of Pennsylvania battlefields, he earned the moniker, "the Fighting Fool of Gettysburg." Humphreys afterwards became chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac under Major General George G. Meade during the tragic encounters at the Wilderness and Cold Harbor as well as the early siege of Petersburg. In November 1864, he took command of the celebrated II Corps and earned additional accolades at Sailor's Creek, contributing in no small part to Robert E. Lee's final surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. At war's end, Charles Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, called Humphreys "the great soldier of the Army of the Potomac."

General Ulysses S. Grant selected Humphreys as the new chief of Corps of Engineers in 1866, a position he held for thirteen years. During his long tenure, he confronted a dramatic post-war expansion of internal improvements and oversaw important surveys and explorations of the American West as well as a complete overhaul of the nation's coastal fortifications. He also established the Army's first engineer school at Willets Point in New York and served on a number of important boards and commissions, including the Washington Monument Commission, the Lighthouse Board, and the Commission to examine into Canal Routes across the Isthmus connecting North and South America. He retired at the age of 68 and is the next longest serving chief, second only to Brigadier General Joseph G. Totten. Humphreys' last years were devoted to penning two important and highly reputable histories of the Virginia campaigns. He died in Washington, D.C. on December 27, 1883.

Sources: George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point*, vol. 1 (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1891), 476-481; *American National Biography*, s.v. "Humphreys, Andrew Atkinson."





Captain Andrew A. Humphreys (c. 1848) when detailed as Assistant in Charge of the Coast Survey. *Image courtesy of the Office of History collection U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*

**Andrew A. Humphreys' Seminole War Field Journal**

His army career interrupted and his health unstable, Andrew Humphreys found little remaining use for his field journal but was not yet ready to retire it. In February 1837, he forwarded two short extracts to the *National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.) as a rebuttal to the “infamous libels” leveled at federal troops by the rival Jacksonian newspaper, *The Globe* (Washington, D.C.). In the previous year, the editor of that latter paper, the talented and irascible Francis P. Blair<sup>1</sup>, could scarcely, according to Humphreys, “find terms harsh enough to express the contempt in which he held the regular troops in Florida” and “even went so far as to say there exists among them a certain infectious disorder called ‘breastwork panic.’”<sup>2</sup> That hostile press generated “utter disgust... by all at Fort Drane and other forts,” and Humphreys even alleged that the “spirit of *The Globe’s* master could be perceived” in these attacks.<sup>3</sup> That “master,” of course, was Andrew Jackson, whom Humphreys bitterly disliked, reflecting the Whig proclivities of his father. The editor of the friendly *Intelligencer* never published Humphreys’ journal excerpts but wrote in mid-March that the “Army has done its duty with bravery and fidelity, and it deserved a better reward at the hands of the Government than

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The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has generously authorized the publication of this journal. The editor also owes a special measure of gratitude to several fellow historians who helped to decipher the sometimes difficult script of the original document, including Kenton E. Spading, Shannon L. Bauer, and Michael J. Brodhead. Their efforts have significantly improved the quality and accuracy of this transcription.

1. A feisty editor from Kentucky, Francis Preston Blair helped Andrew Jackson carry that state in 1828 and two years later came to the capital as editor of the new Washington newspaper, *The Globe*, dedicated to Jackson and his policies. Blair also served in Jackson’s “Kitchen Cabinet.”
2. For the editorial on “breastwork panic,” see *The Globe* (Washington, D.C.), June 25, 1836; Andrew A. Humphreys (AAH) to the editor of the *National Intelligencer*, February 1837 (1/39), Humphreys Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).
3. *Ibid.* For select instances of *The Globe’s* generally harsh treatment of the regular forces, see the lead editorial of March 5, 1836 (p. 3) and an anonymous editorial appearing on May 26, 1836 (p. 3). For the editor’s general preference for militia over regular forces in Indian wars particularly, see May 30, 1836 (p. 3), “It would require the army of Napoleon to keep a force ready whenever an Indian can raise a tomahawk.... The militia can at all times be called out by the Governors, and in cases of alarm, this is the usual and proper course, before measures can be directed by the General Government. Our Government would soon become a central one indeed, if all power and responsibility are taken from the State authorities.”

unfounded imputations, cold neglect, [and] grave charges."<sup>4</sup> Humphreys thereafter gave up entirely on his journal, never to return to it. The final entry reads simply, "June 14<sup>th</sup> 1837, at Pont Reading."<sup>5</sup> The leather-and-board bound document was never published or even transcribed and eventually passed to his youngest daughter Letitia, who became the chief custodian of her father's personal papers until 1912 when she donated the entire collection to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). Short selections from the field journal appeared in a 1924 biography of Humphreys (written years earlier by his eldest son Henry) but drew little attention. Then, for all practical purposes, these writings disappeared.

Preserved, protected, but utterly lost among two hundred miscellaneous boxes in the substantial Humphreys manuscript collection at the HSP, Humphreys' field journal – and, indeed, a valuable cache of wartime letters in the same collection – escaped the attention of Seminole War scholars and researchers for nearly 100 years. The unfortunate result is that Humphreys has been overlooked. Arguably the most literate, probably the most opinionated, and certainly the most prominent of the Seminole War diarists, he goes completely unmentioned in all of the major works of that war, including John K. Mahon's definitive *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (1967). Even the dependable *Florida Historical Quarterly*, for more than seventy years the preferred publication for material on the Seminole Wars, affords not a single reference in all of its back issues to Humphreys' colorful writings on the subject. In the end, a little detective work by the author and a determined investigation by Jack Gumbrecht, Assistant Director of Research Services at the HSP, led to a rediscovery of the journal in November 2005.

Historians and Seminole War enthusiasts will ultimately determine the relative importance of these writings, but something of their value can be established here. Certainly, this long-lost journal represents one of very few *in-the-field* diary accounts of the Second Seminole War.<sup>6</sup> Written by a prominent West Point graduate, Civil War general, and future longtime chief of the Army Corps of

4. *National Intelligencer*, March 21, 1837.

5. Andrew A. Humphreys Journal, July 23, 1836, Andrew A. Humphreys Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (document hereafter cited as Humphreys Journal), 20.

6. Another is the diary of Lt. Henry Prince, whose writings were recently rediscovered and published by the leading Seminole War historian, Frank Laumer. Prince, like Humphreys a West Pointer, spent the better part of three years in Florida from 1836 to 1842, and the recovery of his substantial diary was cause





the Civil War battlefields of Fredericksburg and Gettysburg but his first test of combat came many years earlier in the dread Cove of the Withlacoochee. This is his story, from his own pen.

#### April 12, 1836

##### Camp Georgia, Tampa Bay

I delight in extremes and certainly my profession leads to them – from the center of civilization to the wildest forests, I am transferred in a few days. In January luxuriating in all the delights of our capital, in February suffering from hunger, thirst and fatigue in the hammocks<sup>7</sup> of Florida. I joined General Clinch's brigade at Camp Drane, marched for the Ouithlacochee<sup>8</sup> [Withlacochee] on the 26<sup>th</sup> [of] March and without interruption arrived on its banks. The Brigade consisted of ten companies of artillery acting as infantry making 400 men; one company of dragoons as infantry = 50 men; six companies of Infantry = 250 men; Colonel [William S.] Foster<sup>9</sup> commanding one company artillery with two six pounders = 40 men; Georgia Volunteers of 300 under Major [Mark A.] Cooper<sup>10</sup>; Georgia Volunteers under Captain [Francis M.] Robertson<sup>11</sup> of 130 men; Georgia mounted

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7. A "hammock" is defined as "an elevated, well-drained tract of land rising above the general level of a marshy region." *The Random House College Dictionary: Revised Edition* (New York: Random House, 1982). Generally, this transcription retains the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of the source text, but always capitalizes the first word and places a period at the end of each sentence. Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 126.
  8. The preferred spelling is "Withlacochee," though "Outhlacochee" is also commonly used.
  9. See John and Mary Lou Missall's *The Miserable Pride of a Soldier: The Letters and Journal of Col. William S. Foster in the Second Seminole War* (Tampa Bay: University of Tampa Press, 2005). William Sewell Foster is also mentioned by Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 152.
  10. Mark A. Cooper is mentioned by Sprague, who indicates that Cooper served under Lt. Colonel James Bankhead. John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1848), 116, 118, 126. For additional information on Cooper, see Marcus J. Wright, *General Scott* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1894), 92; and Henry Prince Diary, 38, 40.
  11. Francis M. Robertson was admitted to West Point in 1822 and left in 1826 as a non-graduate. He is mentioned in Rembert W. Patrick, *Aristocrat in Uniform: General Duncan L. Clinch* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1963), 140. Rembert indicates that Robertson was "an officer who had served with Clinch" and was affiliated with the Georgia volunteers. Robertson is also mentioned (though no initials or first name given) in Henry Prince Diary, 36-37, 39; and in Wright, 112.



Volunteers under Major [John M.] Douglass<sup>12</sup> = 230 men; Louisiana Volunteer under Colonel [Persifor F.] Smith<sup>13</sup> of about 400 men – making in all about 1800 men.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March we approached the Ouithlacoochee and for three miles before arriving at it were obliged to skirt close along the edge of a thick hammock from which General [Edmund P.] Gaines<sup>14</sup> had been fired upon. For a few moments a universal silence pervaded the columns, the attention of all was directed to the dark suspicious looking spot from which the sharp pop, pop, pop of the Seminole's rifle was expected. But the sighing of the wind through the lonely pine and the long lank grass was all the sound that reached the outstretched ear. Above us, no good omen, soared the lazy vultures. Here we fully counted upon an attack but none was made. The Ouithlacoochee is a beautiful stream about 30 yards wide and from 12 to 20 feet deep with high banks, covered with thick hammocks. At the point of crossing, the river made a sudden turn [illustrated], the vertex being towards us. Six pounders were placed at it, completely enfilading the opposite banks.

At daylight or just before it on the 29<sup>th</sup> [of] March, every disposition being made, a man of Captain Robertson's company by

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12. John M. Douglass. See Wright, 112. He is also mentioned by Sprague, 119, 123. For more information on Georgia militia, see Gordon Burns Smith and Anna Habersham Wright Smith, *History of the Georgia Militia 1783-1861*, 4 vols. (Milledgeville, GA: Boyd Publishing, 2000).
  13. Persifor F. Smith. See Canter Brown, Jr., "Persifor F. Smith, the Louisiana Volunteers, and Florida's Second Seminole War," *Louisiana History* 30 (1993): 389-410; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 144, 157, 219, 222, and 233. Smith is also mentioned by Sprague, 129, 130, 148; and Wright, 112.
  14. Edmund P. Gaines, a Major General and lifelong rival of Winfield Scott, learned of the trouble in Florida on January 15, 1836, while in New Orleans. Without delay, he put together a large expedition and traveled by ship to Pensacola, Florida, and then to Tampa, where he met up with Major Leigh Read of the Florida volunteers. Together with about 980 men and one six-pounder, they set out for a poorly outfitted and largely unsuccessful campaign against the Seminoles. Gaines and his men eventually met up with a large force of Seminoles and found themselves besieged on the banks of the Withlacoochee River. Clinch later came to their relief, and Gaines quietly left the theatre on March 14 in advance of Scott's spring campaign. Gaines' expedition is also noted for locating and interring the remains of the Dade's ill-fated column. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 146-150.

the name of [Joster] Blodget<sup>15</sup> swam across the stream and made fast the rope leg which the boats (carried with the army) need to be pulled across. It was a moment of some interest, but the man was uninjured and the place is now called Blodget's Ferry. Two companies of 2<sup>d</sup> Artillery composed the advanced guard – "A" company commanded by Lt. [John B.] Grayson<sup>16</sup> and Major [John] Mo[un]tfort's<sup>17</sup> company commanded by Lieutenant [George W.] Ward<sup>18</sup>. They were ready in the flats almost as soon as the rope was made fast [and] were displayed on the opposite banks. To our astonishment, we were unmolested during the whole day. Our means of crossing the river were two flats, made at Camp Drane and fastened together after launching – the dimension of each [was] 30 feet long – 3 feet wide – 16 inches deep. The longest wagons with 1600 pounds in them were passed over with ease.

It was a beautiful night – the moon in its full and the air balmy and redolent of the perfume of the fresh budding wild flowers – the long mass waving listlessly to and fro. The Army was still crossing when the crack of a single rifle was heard – it was the signal – and yells and shots quickly followed. Then answered the heavy report of the musquet and the loud bellows of artillery. Soon again all was quiet. Our rear guard had been attacked but no one injured. On the 30<sup>th</sup> (a day of note with us, for on it Clinch fought and Gaines<sup>19</sup> also), we moved towards the town

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15. According to a contemporary source, the man was Joster Blodget of the Richmond (Georgia) Blues. *National Intelligencer*, July 28, 1836. Later accounts generally call him Foster Blodget, though the spelling of the last name varies by account (Blodgett, etc.). See, for example, William and Ellen Hartley, *Osceola: The Unconquered Indian* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1973), 181.
  16. John Breckinridge Grayson, West Point class of 1826. Sprague, 107. Wright, 99.
  17. John Mountfort. See Mark F. Boyd, "The Seminole War: Its Background and Onset" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 30 (1), 88-90, 96, 102. Also see Henry Prince Diary, 57, 60. Also spelled "Mountford." Wright, 99.
  18. George Washington Ward, West Point class of 1832. He graduated first in his class. He should not be confused with William N. Ward, who was shot and killed by his commander, Colonel Richard C. Parish, for insubordinate behavior on January 31, 1836. For the latter, see Henry Prince Diary, 6; Wright, 90.
  19. Gaines had already left the theater by this date, so Humphreys' meaning here is unclear. Humphreys is probably noting that both Clinch and Gaines fought on the Withlacoochee River near his present location on or about the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month. Clinch fought there on December 30, 1835. Gaines was besieged in that vicinity through the end of February and into March.

that General Clinch struck for three months before. It was deserted, and we burnt it – placed our baggage in charge of three hundred men and then in a quick time followed a fresh trail leading from it towards and up the river. As we passed rapidly along, Indians were seen retreating at some distance and fired at. Near sunset we entered a large prairie completely encircled with heavy hammock, round the edges of which was a wide belt of water and mire more than two feet deep – covered with fallen trees and vines and a mass of tangled undergrowth, forming a very strong position. At the extreme end of the prairie, a small party of Mickasaukies [Mikasuki or Miccosukee] were discovered making signs of peace.<sup>20</sup> Their signs being answered, a man understanding, this language was sent forward. He soon returned stating that they had said that they did not wish to fight, nor to go away — but would come to our camp in the morning and have a talk – but at the same time endeavored to surround our man, who perceiving of their intentions returned [to] us. At night approaching we returned about half a mile into the pinewoods and encamped.

31<sup>st</sup> [of March]. Again in motion on the prairie, the right wing on one side, the left on the opposite – pop – goes the signal rifle, rapidly followed by many others – the musquets answered and their yells and sniper shots and musquets [illegible] and then the grand hurrah of the white men. The right wing was attacked and the firing and yelling confirmed until we (the left wing) had crossed the prairie and formed on its left. A few shots were fired at us as we formed – but a charge into the hammock left us no one to contend with. In fact, there were but very few Indians opposite our line. The advance guard of the right wing continued driving the Seminoles until they crossed the river. We had three or four killed and several wounded, the majority of them Louisiana volunteers.

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20. While Humphreys later seems to question the sincerity of these peace offerings, the mere evidence of these signs sharply contradicts statements later made by General Scott that “not a white flag has been seen by this army and not an overture of submission or peace heard of.” Scott made this claim in challenge to statements by Gaines that his brief campaign had compelled the Seminoles to make peace in advance of Scott’s arrival to the theater. This incident lends credence to Gaines’ claims. Charles W. Elliott, *Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 306. Henry Prince corroborates the evidence of “white flags.” Henry Prince Diary, 26. Also see, Sprague, 132.



Marks of wounded or dead men having been dragged off by the Seminoles were perceived.<sup>21</sup>

Our provisions being out, we returned to the baggage camp and it being decided that we should move towards Tampa Bay (as the signal gun fired every morning at ten had not been answered for one or two days by General Eustis or Colonel Lindsay) on the following morning we marched South. At about 20 miles from Blodget's ferry a detachment of 300 men, the Georgia Volunteers under Major Cooper was left with 17 days rations.<sup>22</sup> On our route we passed along a string of beautiful little lakes sunk between gently swelling hills – dotted with miniature islands. Noble oaks shaded their banks and the Indian towns stretched along their edge. Here the foot of the white had never before disturbed the fallen leaf. The Seminole lived quietly and content. The lake gave him fish, the forest deer, and the garden corn, with this and freedom, he was satisfied. It pained me to see the lonely spots desecrated by the ruthless hand of war – for the firebrand effaced one feature of the picture.

After quitting the lake country we marched over pine barrens that had been newly burnt. There was no air stirring. The sun was scorching and the coal dust and ashes rose up in clouds as we tramped along, filling our eyes and ears, nostrils and throats. There was no water for many miles and the dead silence that pervaded the column showed that the march was anything than pleasant.

On Wednesday [April] 6<sup>th</sup>, arrived at Tampa Bay [Fort Brooke] where we have been living most indolently – eating fish and oysters, when we can get them. Here we found Gen. Eustis with his command of South Carolinians about 1200 strong – having crossed from Volusia to Pilaklakaha [Peliklakaha] and from thence to this place – I am inclined to think there was more sur-

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21. This engagement was called the Battle of Oloklikaha, and a number of biographical sketches on Humphreys identify it as his first combat encounter. See George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1900); and *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*.
  22. Humphreys is here chronicling the establishment of Fort Cooper in the heart of the Cove. Major Cooper and his men were later besieged by Indians and relieved by Clinch and his men (including Humphreys) on or about April 18, 1836, while returning to Fort Drane following Scott's failed campaign.

prise than pleasure manifested at his presence. Col. Lindsay is also here with about 1000 Alabamians – having penetrated the country 40 or 50 miles and then returned. Both have had skirmishes with the Seminoles – but nothing further. It is said that [Joseph Shelton]<sup>23</sup> of General Eustis's Brigade killed Cohanjo – one of the principal Indian chiefs.<sup>24</sup>

### April 13, 1836

Tampa Bay

Tomorrow General Clinch marches for the Ouithlacoochee. The Louisianans have gone to Charlotte's Harbor, where it is supposed that many Indian families are – part of our artillery force (4 companies) have gone to Col. Lindsay so that we have now six companies of artillery as infantry – 200 men. Six companies of Infantry, 200 under Colonel Foster. One company of dragoons 50. Roberson's command 130. Mounted men Georgia volunteers – 100. In all about 700. General Eustis moves to Pease's creek [Peace Creek] and from there to Volusia. Colonel Lindsay [moves] towards the forks of the Ouithlacoochee.

Nothing will be done this campaign – it was commenced too late and with insufficient means. The Quartermaster and Commissary departments are in a miserable condition. There are but two depots of provisions and ammunition on hand – Tampa Bay and Picolata distant apart 160 or 170 miles. The wagons are few in number and old, weak, and rickety. The horses worn out. The army is in constant danger of starving.

The principal Seminole chiefs are:

- Micanopy, the Pond Governor, King of the Nation – a fat lazy fellow.

23. Humphreys left the name blank, apparently intending to go back and fill it in. An article written by a fellow officer in the right wing offers some additional information on this point. In a long letter to the *National Intelligencer*, he writes of the "Hero of the left wing... General [Joseph] Shelton of South Carolina who distinguished himself in a combat with an Indian Chief." *National Intelligencer*, July 28, 1836.

24. For a second account of the killing of a Seminole chief, see George Walton, *Fearless and Free: The Seminole Indian War, 1835-1842* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1977), 117. Mahon spells the name, "Yahadjo." Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 157; Wright spells it "Yaha Hayo." Wright, 116; Hartley, 185.



- Jumper (brother-in-law of Micanopy) or Leaping Tiger – a balling chief
- Cooper (a half breed called the sense bearer<sup>25</sup>)
- Catsterskenuggee,<sup>26</sup> (anglicized) Chief of the Mickasaukees
  - \* His brother, Sam Jones,<sup>27</sup> their principal warrior
- Cohandjo<sup>28</sup> – and Alberto Handjo – on the Ocklawaha [Oklawaha River]
- Halatamico,<sup>29</sup> Chief of the Ocklawahas
- Big Alligator, Little Alligator
- Oseola, or the rising sun (according to Nero), Powell, a sub chief, the principle mover of the war, now of the Micksaukies whom he wields at pleasure (Aseyahola – black drink, mad tea drinker, according to Cudjo)
- Flucklustahandjo,<sup>30</sup> a subchief of influence
- Hotalka O'Mathla,<sup>31</sup> friendly chief at Fort King of the Euchees [Euchee Indians]. Billy & Charles, Charles partly educated in Charleston. Lives near the St. Johns [River]
- Abraham, the former interpreter at Camp King, a negro six feet in height is the leader of the negroes
- Nero,<sup>32</sup> a Negro, Old Primas,<sup>33</sup> etc. etc.

25. Also called a “sense keeper.” According to various sources, the “sense bearer” was a “lawyer advocate,” a “high chancellor” and a “keeper of the king’s conscience.” Jumper was identified as the “sense keeper” in Edward C. Coker and Daniel L. Schafer, eds., “A West Point Graduate in the Second Seminole War: William Warren Chapman and the View from Fort Foster,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 68 (4), 469; and also as the “sense bearer” in Mahon, ed., “Letters from the Second Seminole War,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 36 (4), 334. Abraham was identified as Micanopy’s “sense bearer” in Edwin L. Williams Jr., “Negro Slavery in Florida” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 28 (2), 103, 104. Abraham may have succeeded Jumper, as indicated in Kenneth W. Porter, “The Negro Abraham” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 25 (1), 14.

26. Halpatter Tusteneggee.

27. Also known as Arpeika, a Mikasuki chief.

28. Coa Hadjo.

29. Holata Micco – also known as Chief Billy Bowlegs.

30. Fuche Luste Hadjo.

31. Holata Emathla.

32. Nero, a Black Seminole associated with Billy Bowlegs. Porter, “Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco) in the Seminole Wars (Part I)” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 45 (3), 238, (fn. 31). For additional information, see footnote #51 of this edited journal.

33. Primus is identified as a “captured Indian negro” in Frank F. White, Jr., “Macomb’s Mission to the Seminoles: John T. Sprague’s Journal, Kept during April and May, 1839” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35 (2), 164; and as a leader of

**April 29, 1836**

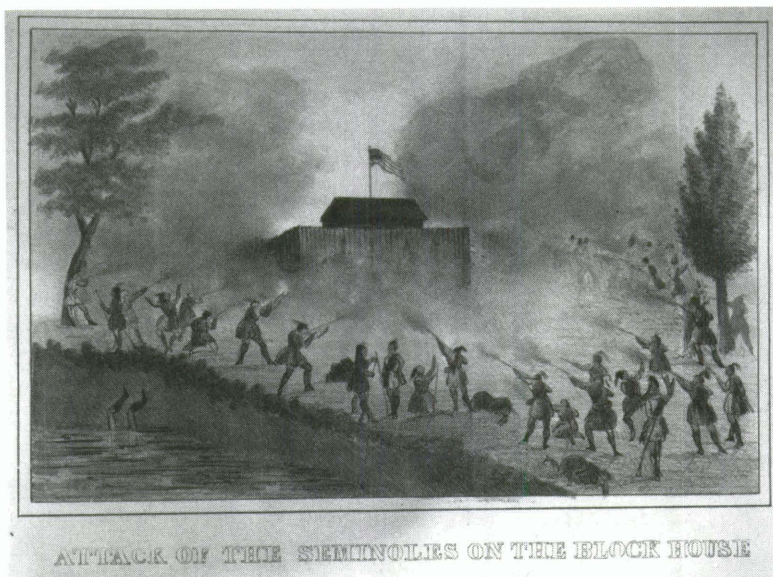
Fort Drane.

At dusk<sup>34</sup> an express came in from Governor Call stating that about [the] 2<sup>d</sup> [of] April, a depot of corn and provisions had been made on the Ouithlacochee about 12 miles from its mouth by his direction by a party of Floridians under Captain [John] McElmore<sup>35</sup> [*sic*] – a block house erected and forty men left to guard it (This depot was intended for our army under the supposition that the wings were to form a junction near the Ouithlacochee). Colonel [Leigh] Reed<sup>36</sup> [*sic*] with his three hundred Floridians was ordered to reconnoiter the mouth of the Ouithlacochee upon his return to St. Marks from Tampa Bay and if possible enter and explore the river, sketch the banks, and select a site for a block house. Upon arriving at its mouth, he found the flat boat of the block house party floating out, cut in two, apparently by an awkward hand: saw large fires along the river – all indicating the presence of a strong body of Indians besieging the blockhouse. Colonel Reed was furnished with strong boats built for that service, yet did not venture to ascend the river – but left the little garrison to its fate and sailed with all dispatch to St. Marks. Then at Tampa Bay this same Floridian militia man (I am told) begged leave to send a challenge to Powell and all his followers to meet his three hundred Floridians! Oh, Bravo!

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a "party of negroes" in "Letters of Lieutenant John W. Phelps, U. S. A., 1837-1838," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 6 (2), 78. According to Sprague, "Old Primus" became "a faithful interpreter after capture," presumably for the army. Sprague, 112. The "Negro Primus" is also mentioned in Wickman's history of Osceola. According to her account, Primus was still delivering intelligence on Osceola as late as January 1837. Wickman, *Osceola's Legacy*, 44, 90. Fellow West Pointer Henry Prince also mentions him, *Henry Prince Diary*, 29, 30, 32, and 69.

34. Humphreys here indicates that the request came at dusk on April 29, earlier in the day on which he made the entry into his journal. According to Mahon, the order did not reach General Clinch until May 1. See Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 160.
35. John McLemore. See Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 159; Tom Knotts, "History of the Blockhouse on the Withlacochee," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49 (3), 246.
36. Leigh Read of the Florida militia. A man of strong and violent prejudices and a close associate of Governor Call, Read greatly aggravated relations between regulars and citizen soldiers. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 153-54, 161. Some sources spell his last name, "Reed." See Elliott, 309.



A contemporary lithograph from a series on the Seminole War in Florida, *Issued by Gray & James, 1837 Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division.*

Governor Call upon this information instead of ordering Col. Reed back with strong reinforcements – sends an express to General Clinch requesting him to go to their relief. A council was immediately held, when it being ascertained that we had not 300 marching men (regulars and volunteers) and that more than one-third of the effective force would probably be unfit for service before arriving at the Ouithlacoochee (as all [were] worn out by the excessive fatigue of the campaign) that the horses were not fit to travel – it was resolved that the relief must go from Sawanee [Suwannee] Old Town, where there is an armed boat and a force of Floridians. The block house being on the west bank of the river added to the difficulty of relief by land, whereas the river being wide up to the depot and the boat having high bulwarks make it by no means a difficult operation by water.

Were we to go down with the small force nowhere fit to fight – the whole Indian force would be upon us and a tragedy more horrid than Dade's would mark another spot upon the Ouithlacoochee. This express gave the first information of a depot having been established on the river.



May 1, 1836

Fort Drane

This morning between two and three o'clock, the adjutant woke me up to request me to furnish a trusty man to ride down to Oaklands<sup>37</sup> for Lt. Symington's<sup>38</sup> Command. "For," said he, "Billy's wife<sup>39</sup> has returned and says that Powell and all the Seminole nation are in a swamp six miles from Fort King, which place they intend to attack on the morning of the 2<sup>d</sup> in three points and set fire to it. After destroying Fort King, Camp Drane will be their next object and then, they will go down and capture

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37. Humphreys refers to the plantation as both "Oaklands" and, after its owner, "McIntosh's." Oaklands (on rare occasion also called "Fort Oakland" or simply "Oakland") was the name of a large plantation in Alachua County located about five miles east of Fort Drane and approximately ten miles north of Fort King. The extensive plantation, perhaps the largest in Florida, occupied prime farmland on the lower end of Orange Lake and extended south near the Wetumpka Hammock. The Army later built Fort Wheelock in the immediate vicinity of Oaklands. See map in Hartley, *Osceola: The Unconquered Indian*, 2. The owner of the plantation was John Houston McIntosh, Jr. (1802-1852), who was Duncan Clinch's brother-in-law and the son and namesake of a wealthy Georgia planter and Florida "patriot." Clinch married John's sister, Eliza Bayard McIntosh, in 1819. She died tragically in April 1835 leaving Duncan with six young children. One of the very few available sources on the Oaklands plantation is House Committee on Claims, *John H. McIntosh*, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>d</sup> session, 1842, House Report. 470, 1-6. In 1839 John T. Sprague called the McIntosh plantation "once the most extensive in Florida," but the editor of his journal account mistakenly identifies Oaklands as the property of James Simmons McIntosh, John's more famous cousin who fathered two Civil War generals and died a hero in the Mexican War. While certainly James had a prominent presence in the region – he had commanded Fort Brooke for a number of years in the early 1830s – there is no evidence that he held even a small stake in Oaklands plantation. Frank F. White, Jr., "Macomb's Mission to the Seminoles: John T. Sprague's Journal Kept during April and May, 1839," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35 (2), 158-159.
38. Perhaps John Symington, West Point class of 1815. See M. L. Brown, "Notes on U.S. Arsenal, Depots, and Martial Firearms of the Second Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 61 (4), 452, (fn. 24).
39. Here Humphreys is almost certainly speaking of Billy Powell (Osceola) and his wife Che-cho-ter (the Morning Dew), who may have been of Afro-Indian descent. The historical record indicates that they were married around 1821 and hints at her presence at Ft. King in the mid-to-late 1830s. The famed artist George Catlin did a water color much later (in 1849) portraying Osceola with two wives, though, and that may make it impossible to identify "Billy's wife" with absolute confidence. Wickman, *Osceola's Legacy*, 14-15, 21, 85. Interestingly, Humphreys' account seems to contradict Mahon's contention that "this sort of treachery did not occur during the Seminole War, largely because Seminole women had little to do with white men." Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 124.

the block house on the Ouithlacoochee.” Billy’s wife was taken from Fort King a few days before we returned; she states that she was carried to the Cove (or the forks of the Ouithlacoochee), that there the whole Indian nation now is planting. That Primus (our spy, sent into the nation before our march from here to the Indian haunts) was there, tied and guarded. That she escaped from them after she had been taken to the Swamp where the Indians now are. Upon the receipt of this information, Captain [Clifton] Wharton’s<sup>40</sup> company [of] dragoons, Lieut. [Ebenezer S.] Sibley’s<sup>41</sup> [1<sup>st</sup> Artillery] company and one six pounder, four wagons of provisions were ordered to march by daylight for Camp King. Lieut. Sibley’s company to remain in garrison, the others to return after one day’s stay there.

Thus it is that the small force of regulars sustain the burden of the whole war; when a large body of militia is called into the field we starve ourselves to death to provision them and teach them their duty — then they are not willing pupils, but think they confer a great favor by coming to help us (as though it was a private quarrel of ours)! \*From the bottom of my heart I wish never to see another militia man in the field.\* For they are always homesick and “can’t eat pork and hard bread” — one of them said to me (to show me how luxuriously he had been accustomed to living and what great privation he now suffered) that upon my telling him to boil his pork and not fry it — that he had never eaten anything boiled — that they always fried what they eat in his country — this too in a somewhat contemptuous tone as though he despised anyone who could eat such trashy stuff as boiled meats. He was in his country a very respectable man too — what barbarians!

As soon as we get rid of this swarm of locusts, then the enemy show themselves in force and we with a mere handful of men — must fight the only battles that are fought. Why cannot our government send a large regular force at once into the field and terminate the war? Let every force in the seacoast be stripped of its garrisons and then there will be officers and men who can be depended upon.

40. Clifton Wharton. See Henry Prince Diary, 34, 40; Sprague, 123.

41. Ebenezer Sproat Sibley, first in his West Point class of 1827.



May 2, 1836

Fort Drane

It appears that version of Billy's wife's tale given above is not exactly the correct one. The Mickasaukies [Mikasukis] are not so near Camp King but yet remain on their river, waiting for the coming in of their young men who are now out on marauding excursions. It appears that Powell, now the head of the Mickasaukies, has sent frequent runners to Micanopy and Jumper (who have retired with all their men to Pease Creek) asking them to come help him destroy our garrisons – but that they invariably reply that they will not come. So the probability is that we shall have but about 400 Indian warriors to contend with – these are the fellows who boast that they have never been conquered by the whites. How many negroes they will be followed by, I cannot ascertain. These negroes are said to be severely treated by them – the younger children who would require care are killed. Their corn being out the slaves are constantly digging and preparing the coonty root<sup>42</sup> – and if one is absent for without reason or shows a disinclination to work, he is treated in the severest manner. If they were not so strictly guarded many would run to the whites. They are made to fight by being placed in front, where they have no choice. I doubt if the severity exercised to their slaves (all of which I have not noted) is not exaggerated to prevent the negroes here from running away.<sup>43</sup>

42. More commonly known as the “coontie root” or even “koonti root.” For a reference to the root in Florida, see James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1993), 13, 88; and Joe Knetsch, *Florida's Seminole Wars, 1817-1858* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 2.

43. Humphreys' statements here on the status of African Americans among the Seminoles contrasts sharply with modern perceptions but also with some of his contemporaries. See, for example, General Edmund P. Gaines who (in speaking of the Black man) indicates that “His life among the Indians is one, compared to that of Negroes under overseers, of luxury and ease; the demands on him are very trifling.” Charles H. Coe, *Red Patriots: the Story of the Seminoles* (Cincinnati, OH: Editor Publishing, Co., 1898), 178. For the best treatment on the history of slavery in Florida, see Larry E. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000). Rivers concludes that Black Seminoles in Florida enjoyed considerable freedom. Also see, Kenneth Porter, et. al, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996).

The Indians have made themselves quite merry at our slow marches – [illegible] we travel like gophers.<sup>44</sup> The day we entered the Cove, all these fellows could not have been but a few miles distant from us. And had we upon returning to camp, taken provisions for four or five days and then made a dash at them we should have captured their families and negroes, and then killed or taken them prisoner. There was an impression through the brigade that such was to be the course pursued – and it was with great surprise that the order to march towards Tampa Bay was received.

### May 5, 1836

#### Fort Drane

On the 2<sup>d</sup> [of] May, an express came in from [John Houston] McIntosh's<sup>45</sup> [plantation] with a note from Lt. [Charles B.] Chalmers<sup>46</sup> stating that there were many Indians constantly hovering about the plantation at night – and the overseer [named Wiley Brooks<sup>47</sup>] reported that his negroes were almost in a state of rebellion. And he suspected them of holding communication with the Seminoles. The express rider (a soldier) says that as he was galloping through the hammock about a mile from McIntosh's, at a sudden turn he came upon five or six Indians standing in the road – who gave way for him running to the right and left. They were armed and perhaps were as much surprised at the sudden addition to their numbers as the rider was at finding himself in such company. No doubt they supposed him the first of a numerous party in rear and so took to their heels before they discovered their mistake. The lucky fellow had made such good use of his spurs as to have got out of their reach.

His tracks were afterwards seen by others – so there can be no doubt of the fellow's tale, as indeed his manner before indicated. Captain W. [Wharton] returned from Fort King – all quiet. Captain [Isaac] Seymour's<sup>48</sup> Company volunteered its services and

44. Americans of this period called Florida terrapins (land turtles) “gophers,” so Humphreys is more plausibly suggesting that marches moved along at a turtle's pace. Jeff Guinn, *Our Land Before We Die: The Proud Story of the Seminole Negro* (New York: Putnam, 2002), 54.

45. John Houston McIntosh, Jr. See footnote #37 for full account.

46. Charles Bainbridge Chalmers, West Point class of 1834.

47. House Committee on Claims, *John H. McIntosh*, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>d</sup> session, 1842, House Report 470, 3.

48. Isaac Seymour, a Georgia volunteer from Macon. Wright, 96.

was sent out to scour about Orange Lake – returned without any success – saw numerous trails.

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, a man came in from Micanopy saying that five or six men had been killed near there. They had imprudently wandered off a mile or more from the settlement to a thick hammock when they were fired upon. Two mortally wounded returned to Micanopy. The others were missing. Of course, the conclusion of the tale was that the woods were filled with Indians, meaning fifteen or twenty.

It had been intended that as soon as the buildings here were completed that one company should be stationed at Micanopy. This news hastened their departure. Captain [Thomas W.] Lendrum<sup>49</sup> was ordered there.

An express from Picolata came in also. It is rumoured that General [Winfield] Scott intends trying a summer campaign. I hate to croak, but I see no reason why hundreds of men should be sacrificed to heal General Scott's wounded vanity. He can not bear that it should be said that it took him a year to subdue Powell and wishes to make use of the six summer months, that it is expected he will remain in summer quarters. It will be an active campaign with us at any rate – and if it were not for the certainly of great sickness and death, I should hope that a campaign might be attempted. If we had with us now 1000 good men in two weeks the war would be closed, that is if Billy's wife's account is a true one. The Mickasauky [Mikasuki] Tribe being the only ones we need subdue – Micanopy would then come in. It is also rumoured that positive orders were received to send to the relief of the block house.

### May 14, 1836

Fort Drane

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, General Clinch retired from the command of the Right Wing, which devolved to Colonel [James] Bankhead<sup>50</sup>. Major Cooper's Battalion marched for Black Creek, General

49. Probably Thomas W. Lendrum. West Point graduate, class of 1815. See Boyd, "The Seminole War: Its Background and Onset," 71, 72. Wright, 88.

50. James Bankhead. See Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 238; Henry Prince Diary, 21, 24, 39.

Clinch going with it. Since then the buildings have been going on quietly and lazily enough. Today news was brought in that Nero<sup>51</sup> our old negro guide had been shot and scalped near Hog Town. His life has been sought for four years. There is a mail for us at Hog Town (22 miles distant) but as the commanding officers won't send for it, we may kick our heels and learn patience until next winter. I am confident there are letters there for me. I must imagine their contents.

### May 20, 1836

Fort Drane

The mail was sent for and I got – nothing. On the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup> as Lt. Symington with five or six men was riding back to McIntosh's, he was fired upon from the hammock and three men wounded. A charge was made, but uselessly for these Indians slip through the undergrowth like snakes. For three nights the light of a large fire about five or six miles west of us has been observed, always in the same spot. Tonight may bring in a mail, so there is something to think of – to hope for.

### May 21, 1836

Fort Drane

Last night did bring in mail, and the four letters from home. They had been 2 months in getting those through. This morning an express from Black Creek arrived. Colonel Bankhead, Captain [Charles] Mellon<sup>52</sup>, Captain Wharton, Captain Lendrum, Lt. Chalmers sent orders.

Last night a body of Indians stole all Colonel [Gad] Humphreys's<sup>53</sup> negroes (29 in number) from Micanopy – they were 250 yards beyond the pickets and went off quietly. One cry for

51. Nero had led Scott's right wing during its advance into the Cove. *National Intelligencer*. July 28, 1836. For an additional account of Nero's death, see *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia) June 22, 1836.

52. Charles Mellon. He was killed on February 8, 1837, during a sharp fight with five or six hundred Seminoles at the head of Lake Monroe. See Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 199.

53. No relation to Andrew A. Humphreys. Originally from New York, Gad Humphreys ranked among the most prominent citizens of the region. He served for many years as the first Seminole Indian Agent (1822-1830) and later turned to agricultural pursuits, first in cooperation with McIntosh on his



help would have saved them, but it appears that they were not unwilling to go. Why is not a company of mounted men sent in pursuit? I blush whilst I ask the question. There is a want of energy in those who command. Broken down *bon vivants*<sup>54</sup> should never command a post in an Indian country.

### May 23, 1836

#### Fort Drane

Last night about 12 o'clock an express came in from Micanopy. It appears that Indian negroes had visited some of Col. Humphreys's two or three nights before they were stolen, told them where they were to be carried off, and tried to induce one of them, a woman, to accompany them (the Indian negroes) at once to the Indians. This she refused, and they threatened her life if she divulged the plan. The night they were carried off, she slept inside the pickets, where to the surprise of many, she was found the next morning. Then she told her story and moreover added that Jumper with between two or three hundred Indians had been in the hammock the night before. That as soon as the negroes were taken care of, he intended to attack Micanopy and at least burn all the houses if not the pickets. They managed to get the negroes in this way. From a hammock 200 yards or more distant, they commenced firing on the pickets. The garrison (30 men, 12 being about) stood to their arms with the intention of rallying out as soon as they (Indians) should leave the shelter of the hammock. This lasts perhaps twenty minutes, during which time the negroes who were in the place, walked off very quietly without being observed. This above being discovered the next morning.

Yesterday, a detachment of 60 men (30 dragoons, 30 artillery with one field piece) was sent out with wagons to deserted houses

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Oaklands Plantation and, later in 1835, on his own homestead called Pilgrimage Plantation in the immediate vicinity of Micanopy. The best source on Gad Humphreys' plantation is House Committee on Claims, *John H. McIntosh*, 27<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>d</sup> session, 1842, House Report 470, 4. Also see House Committee on Claims, *Gad Humphreys*, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 1846, House Report 203, 1-5.

54. Humphreys spells it "bon vivans." A *bon vivant* is "a person who lives luxuriously and enjoys good food and drink" or "a jovial companion." *Random House College Dictionary*.



about 6 miles distant for forage. Whilst Lt. [David E.] Hale<sup>55</sup> with a party was loading at one house, Captain [Daniel D.] Tompkins<sup>56</sup> ? mile distant at another, Lt. [Thompson B.] Wheelock<sup>57</sup> took 15 dragoons and whilst scouring around came across a trail which after following 2 miles terminated at a third house where, when about 200 or 300 yards distant, they perceived about 30 or 40 Indians, some shelling corn, others standing about. Both parties discovered each other's presence about the same time. "Charge" was the command and with a shout they galloped on. For a moment the Indians stood, then fled like deer to a heavy hammock not one hundred yards distant and in a direction directly from the dragoons. It was not deemed prudent to pursue them further as they were all armed and only ten dragoons could be dismantled for the purpose. The spoils were nine Indian ponies, upon one of which the last of them, a half witted fellow of Micanopy who has a great penchant for the dragoons, was mounted by one of his riding friends. However, Captain T. [Tompkins] soon dismounted him and much to his disappointment, as he already conceived himself half a dragoon as he rode a pony saddleless. He was not to be thwarted in his aspirations so easily, and in spite of constant watching managed to walk with the dragoons and keep an eye on the ragged pot bellied little horses that had so nearly placed him on the pinnacle of happiness – a new dragoons saddle.

### May 25, 1836

#### Fort Drane

It having been determined a week ago by a council of war to break up Fort King, which determination having been sent to General Scott and no answer received – it was again determined to abandon it at once. Accordingly, 15 wagons were sent there this morning, escorted by a company of dragoons, 2 companies of artillery and one field piece. All public property is to be brought to

55. David Emerson Hale, West Point class of 1833.

56. Daniel D. Tompkins, West Point class of 1820. Sprague, 552. His uncle, also Daniel D. Tompkins, was the Governor of New York from 1807-1817 and later served as Vice President of the United States on the ticket with James Monroe in 1816 and again in 1820.

57. Thompson B. Wheelock, West Point class of 1822. He committed suicide at Micanopy in June 1836.

this post – and the buildings left standing uninjured. The reasons for abandoning Fort King were: It affords no protection to property or persons being advanced in the Indian country and nearly 60 miles from any occupied settlement and 22 from this post, the most advanced of all settlements that have been occupied. It does not prevent the Indians passing into the settlements as the garrison cannot venture twenty paces from the pickets. We cannot provision it and from the reduced condition of the horses and from increasing sickness of our men we should not be able to send the wagon there again this summer, for want of an escort – and they are now out of provisions. It never has been useful as a depot this war and never will be used as such on any future occasion. It was not chosen with a military view, but being the residence of the agent, troops were kept here.<sup>58</sup> The inhabitants of Alachua have assembled to the amount of some hundred – a great proportion [were] women and children – at Newnansville and implored our protection.

### May 26, 1836

Fort Drane

An express from Black Creek came in a letter to Col. Bankhead, informing him that General Scott has left the territory for Washington. General Eustis now commands, and he directs that Fort King be abandoned – part of its garrison sent to Newnansville, and the remainder to Santaffee [Santa Fe] River, on Black Creek road.

### June 19, 1836

Fort Drane

Upon 28<sup>th</sup> May marched (as part of the escort to wagons) to Black Creek and upon returning arrived at Micanopy at noon on [the] 8<sup>th</sup> [of] June. An express sent to Oaklands by Major [Julius Frederick] Heileman<sup>59</sup> was fired at by a large party of Indians, negroes, hardly half a mile from the pickets at Micanopy. Upon

58. The site was at one time the residence of Gad Humphreys, Indian Agent. See Eloise R. Ott, "Fort King: A Brief History," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (1), 30.

59. Julius Frederick Heileman, West Point class of 1806. Some sources spell the last name "Heilman."

the crack of the rifles, [George H.] Talcott who was outside, set off in pursuit with about ten or twelve men – then Wheelock with about 20 dragoons and then myself with about 20 or 30 men. We ran about two miles without any success. Talcott<sup>60</sup> came upon about 15 or 20 Indians and negroes who took to their heels. Two or three parties of them were seen in different directions, but none were overtaken.

The next day about 9 o'clock, the crack of two rifles was heard at the same place that the express had been fired at – then after a minute's pause, two more – evidently a challenge or a ruse to draw out a small party and finally inveigle them into an ambush.

Our commands were formed – first Captain [Richard Bland] Lee<sup>61</sup> was ordered to move down on the right in the direction of the road to Oaklands, passing through or skirting a narrow thin hammock. He had about 20 noncoms and privates. Then Wheelock with about 23 or 24 dragoons was ordered to proceed in a direction parallel with Lee's some distance to the left. My company had been on guard the night before, and I supposed that it was not to be sent out as several minutes elapsed after Wheelock's departure without receiving any directions. I was upon the point of dismissing it when Major Heileman ordered me to follow the motions of the dragoons and support them. They had gone off in a gallop some minutes before. I marched off in a single file with about 25 noncoms and privates. About midway between the other parties when between a quarter and half a mile from the pickets I heard the firing of the dragoons and the Indian yells and rifles, apparently about 400 yards in advance – although they were hid from me by a projecting point of the thin hammock above mentioned, which I was about entering – and from my being in a hollow. After about one volley, the firing ceased, and at this moment I perceived Captain Lee about 100 yards in advance and on the opposite side of the thin hammock. I called to him "Let us understand each other's movements. Shall I bear to the left of the hammock?" His answer was, "Yes." Which doing, in 3 or 4 minutes afterwards Lee's men commenced firing and ordering my com-

60. George Henry Talcott, West Point class of 1831 (same class as Humphreys)

61. Richard Bland Lee, West Point class of 1817. Richard was the older first cousin of Robert E. Lee.



mand into line, they commenced the same work immediately. The Indians were hid in the long grass and scrubby bushes and behind the pine trees. The first intimation you have of their presence was the sharp crack and smoke of their rifles. As we advanced, which we continued to do at a rapid pace, we passed a dying horse which had been shot belonging to the dragoons and that moaned most piteously. To the aft I perceived some 7 or 8 dragoons which advanced with our line. I supposed the others were on our right. I urged the men to advance with a run – but as soon as they got within good shooting distance, they would invariably fire. If we had had but one or two more officers with the foot, we might perhaps have overtaken the Indians and come to personal conflict – But Captain Lee was severely wounded in the first firing and so I was the only officer with the artillery. A large body of Indians was then some distance in our front running off to our left, evidently with the intention of outflanking us and finally putting us between two fires. To counteract this, I ordered an extension to the left and a few men to follow a single file and at twelve paces at least apart on the left. After driving the enemy nearly a mile, we approached the great hammock which runs to Orange Lake in which those in our front took shelter. Our line was oblique to the hammock, our right being near to it and our left some distance off. The Indians on the left had not entered the hammock but seemed disposed to carry out their project of putting us between the two fires. There was a momentary pause, which I took advantage of to run to the extreme right and see how matters were going on there for from the thin hammock above mentioned I could not see distinctly that [illegible] force. I then learnt that Capt. Lee was badly wounded and pressed his company on my right. Upon returning to the left to make arrangements for driving off the enemy on the left, up came the six pounder, Lt. Talcott arming it and firing four shots. Those on the left took shelter in the hammock.

I forgot to mention that when moving off to the right, Page,<sup>62</sup> one of my company, called attention to a man of E Company about 100 yards in far front and about 20 or 30 yards from the hammock. Knowing that he could shelter himself perfectly well until the line advanced to where he was, if there should be anyone in his front. I did not order the men forward because I wished to give the [illeg-

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62. Unknown.

ible] company orders for driving off those on the left before setting the whole in motion. In a minute or two afterwards, as I was re-passing Page, I asked him if he could go out to bring in a wounded man. I immediately ordered several to advance for that purpose, and they brought in the fellow before mentioned. It appears that he was drunk and (as the men told me) kept marching up and down in bravado until some redskin put a bullet in him. He was not badly wounded.

After firing one or two shots with the six pounder, Talcott said to me "Now do you charge the hammock with the two companies?" to which I replied that I considered it useless. For if the enemy are near us, they are on the edge of the hammock, from which place, perfectly hid themselves, they may take deliberate aim as we advance and fire when about 50 or 60 yards distant, then retreat as they have done all this morning. And we shall only lose some men and perhaps not get a shot at one of the enemy. This is the well known habit of the enemy, and they are well acquainted with the one or two trails which we need to penetrate it, of which we know nothing. The hammock, Mr. [George] Center<sup>63</sup> tells me, is 15 or 20 miles in length and several in breadth. We have already driven the enemy a mile and silenced his fire. An advance into the hammock cannot result to our advantage. For if they are waiting there for us, it is only to give the first fire and then run and secrete themselves. I had endeavored to penetrate this hammock on the preceding day and had managed to get one or two hundred yards in it by dint of creping and knew that any one to get that distance into it must bestow all his attention to his own movements. If it had been a small hammock out of which we could have driven them, I should have charged at once. Talcott [illegible] said that he wanted the hammock charged because we could say then that we had done it. But I considered it the merest piece of folly to enter the hammock where there was a strong body of the enemy on the left who, if we should have succeeded in penetrating it some hundred yards, could have unperceived carried out their plan of turning our left flank.

63. George Center, a close associate of Gad Humphreys, owned and operated a large cotton gin in Micanopy in the mid-1830s. He also captained a volunteer company that defended the small community until it was garrisoned by U.S. troops and before the construction of Fort Defiance. For more information, see his petition for federal compensation. *House Report No. 204*, February 10, 1846, U.S. House of Representatives, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 1-3.

Something to the right attracted my attention, and whilst absent giving directions, they fired the six pounder and were about discharging it again when I turned to the piece. And calling to Wheelock and Talcott – who had been conversing together in my absence – asked “What determination have you come to – shall I charge or not.” Upon the firing of the field piece, they answered “No. Let us return.” A round shot was discharged and which was answered by one or two guns about a quarter mile in the hammock. Those on horseback and others who could see the enemy plainly from the rear estimated their numbers at 150. I formed no estimate of their numbers but they were numerous and well managed. A [illegible] Indian some distance in our front was seen by the horsemen directing the movements and energetically waving his arm to his right – which motive his followers understand well enough.

We returned to Micanopy in common time. For a part of the distance, I kept the men in open order, as we had advanced, and in addition the front and rear rank man halting alternately.

I was within speaking distance of Wheelock for the first time just as the six pounder came up and asked him where his men were. He replied “here are all that are left,” pointing to some 7 or 8 with him. “I do not know what has become of the rest – I expect they have been cut to pieces.” When at leisure, he afterwards told me that he had divided his command and, when about a quarter mile from pickets, giving his sergeant command of 10 men with orders to move down to the right side of the thin hammock before mentioned, whilst he galloped down the left. He dashed among the Indians hid in the long grass and bushes who opened a fire upon him, yelling like devils, when about 30 yards distant – some even closer. This fire was returned but several horses were wounded, one or two killed, 3 or four men wounded and some unhorsed, leaving him but 7 or 8 men. The detachment of 10 men under the sergeant was also fired at when close upon the Indians. The two most advanced, the sergeant and a private, cut off from the others and obliged to take the road to Oaklands. One or two horses killed – some wounded and one or two men wounded, and I believe one or two unhorsed. On the right was an immense pond (Tusawilla Lake) around which one fellow whose horse was killed and who had discharged his rifle, was pursued by three or four Indians. He escaped however and made his way to the pickets, fainting. The rest



I presume must have returned to the pickets as they did not know of the footmen who were advancing, and I saw nothing of them in the skirmishing. Several Indians were seen to fall, but were dragged off instantly and from the rapid manner in which it was done, evidently rather to save the scalp than the life of the wounded.

About two hours after our return to the pickets, an express was sent to Oaklands with orders for the commanding officer there to abandon his post and destroy everything that might be useful to the enemy. He passed safely. The preceding night an express had gone to Oaklands by way of Fort Drane and returned with exciting news. About the beginning of June, a plot had been discovered among General Clinch's negroes by which it appeared that they had held constant intercourse with the Indians and were, on the night of the day that the discovery was made, to have gone off with a party of Seminoles, who were to have made a feint upon the pickets so that it might appear that the negroes were forced off. Their bundles were already made up and they began disposing of some of their truck to the soldiers, which causing suspicion, finally led to their detection. One of the negro women in the end confessing the plot. Upon the overseer's going to the negro houses, a woman warned him away and then told him that the Indians were lying in wait not 50 yards ahead to shoot him. He returned at once to the pickets and a detachment was sent out that bought in all the negroes who were at once confined – six of them ironed.

The night before our arrival at Micanopy, 40 or 50 Indians made their appearance at the negro houses, but were immediately dislodged by Lt. [William S.] Maitland<sup>64</sup> and pursued about a mile into the great hammock near the estate. He returned about sunset and had just entered the pickets when from 2 to 3 hundred Indians showed themselves at a distance in the fields – they were dispersed by the artillery.

Owing to the weakness of the garrison, the guard had been withdrawn from the sugar house, a quarter of a mile distant from the pickets. In the night the Indians stole noiselessly to that building and setting it on fire as quietly withdrew so that when it was

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64. William Seton Maitland, West Point class of 1820. He committed suicide by drowning himself while on leave in South Carolina on August 19, 1837.

discovered in a blaze, they were safely sheltered in the hammock. On the day of this night upwards of 200 Indians made their appearance in McIntosh's fields in those parallel columns, but were a quarter to a half mile distant from the pickets and burned the sugar house, which they could do with impunity as the garrison consisted of but 27 men and there was no artillery. They afterward fired upon the pickets from an adjoining hammock without any injury to them. Upon the abandonment of the post, a quantity of sugar, cotton and corn having been left, the commanding officer at Fort Drane ordered Lt. [Robert E.] Temple<sup>65</sup> to take twenty mounted men (all that could be mustered) upon the succeeding night and destroy it. Before arriving at the pickets, you must pass through a hammock near a mile wide which almost encircling the plantation and extends for many miles. Upon leaving which you are at once upon the plantation and in a narrow lane, bounded on either side by high fences, after following which for a half a mile or better, you are before the pickets, which are on the left hand side. Upon emerging then from the hammock, Temple perceived the house and pickets in a blaze. He halted the body of his command about 3 or 400 yards from the house and proceeded towards it with four men. Upon their approach an Indian dog ran off towards the fire with a sharp yelp. Temple however went up direct to the burning pickets in the full glow of which he stood, whilst the men took brands and set fire to the houses containing the sugar and corn, which were about 30 or 40 paces nearer the lane (the houses being about 100 distant) – during the whole of which time, Indian voices were heard in eager and rapid conversation, evidently laying a plan for the destruction of the party, all of whom were visible in the light made by the blazing pile. When the store houses were well enveloped in flame, which was not until 15 or 20 minutes after the arrival of the party, Temple returned to his command, and they all set off at full speed down the lane. Just as the last man was passing into the hammock, the rush of many persons was heard, and an Indian springing upon the fence breathing hard as though he had run fast and far. A few minutes later and the ambuscade would have been laid – and the accomplishers of the most gallant enterprise that has been undertaken during the war would not have returned, as they

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65. Robert Emmet Temple. West Point class of 1828.

happily did scathless. The second day after our skirmish we arrived at Fort Drane, a strong detachment meeting us half way.

### June 23, 1836

Fort Drane

All is quietness and indolence. My only objection to this mode of life is that it will in a measure unfit me for the pursuits which I have marked out for myself upon the termination of these difficulties. Tomorrow brings a mail – Friday's the day we all look to now, instead of shunning as sailors do.

### July 23, 1836

Fort Drane

The first intimation we had of the return of the Mickasaukies from their green corn dance<sup>66</sup> was their killing and scalping Sergeant [John] Jacobus<sup>67</sup> of the Dragoons about 10 days ago, who with a companion (both on horses and without arms) was carelessly looking after melons in the corn fields about ½ mile from the pickets. His companion escaped with a wounded horse.<sup>68</sup> One or two nights after this occurrence, an Indian crept along a fence to within 10 or 12 paces of the sentinel on the blacksmith's shop and fired at him (missing his aim though) and then ran off yelping. I believe the sentinel was half asleep. The Indian decamped in such a hurry that he left his knife and [illegible] on the fence. The sentinel, too, instead of returning the fire, ran for the pickets. Why he was not punished for his disgraceful conduct, I leave it for others to say.

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66. According to John Mahon, the "Green Corn" dance or "busk" was the principal ceremony of Seminole culture. During the ceremony, which might occur any time from late April to early July, "rituals vital to the continuance of the Seminole culture went forward. It was not only a source of great pleasure to the people, but more important it helped to hold them together as a society. Here were displayed for the only time during the year the symbolic objects, given by the Great Spirit, which the Seminoles needed to carry on their collective life." Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 13.

67. John Jacobus was "killed by the enemy" on July 18, 1836. Sprague, 527.

68. John Bemrose, a talented young hospital steward who served in Florida through much of the war and later wrote of his experiences, has much to add to the story of the melon episode. John Bemrose, *Reminiscences of the Second Seminole War*, ed. John K. Mahon (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1966), 101.



Having received permission to break up this post from its excessive sickliness on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> [of July], the movement was commenced. A train of 22 four horse wagons with an escort of 80 noncoms and privates and a howitzer started for Micanopy. Officers [were] Captain [James A.] Ashby<sup>69</sup>, Dragoons, and Lieutenants Maitland and [Robert H. Kirkwood] Whitely<sup>70</sup>, artillery. When about ? mile distant from Micanopy, the train was attacked by a large body of Indians (estimated between 2 and 3 hundred) from an extensive hammock. The fire was returned with spirit and the howitzer played among them. Lieutenant Temple came up from Micanopy with 31 men and the hammock was charged and the enemy driven beyond the fire of our troops. Captain Ashby was severely wounded in the neck and Assistant Surgeon [Robert C.] Weightman<sup>71</sup> in the thigh. Five men were mortally wounded (3 since dead), 3 severely and 1 slightly. Three horses killed and several wounded. One Indian was left dead and many must have been killed and wounded, as they were exposed to a close fire from the howitzer loaded with canister. The men at this piece were marked out and I think four were wounded at it. At one time, Lt. Whitely was the only one left there. Captain Ashby refused to quit the field when wounded, until so faint from loss of blood that he could no longer resist being borne from it.<sup>72</sup>

As it will be necessary to make at least 6 trips before we can remove all our public property, we should be exposed 12 times to attack from a very superior number of the enemy. It was expedient therefore for the train to remain at Micanopy until re-enforcements could arrive either from Black Creek or Newnansville. The escort should be 200 strong – but I do not believe we shall be able to increase it to that strength.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> [of] June, Lt. Wheelock fell by his own hand at Micanopy. He had been unwell and was, I believe, insane at the

69. James A. Ashby of the Second Dragoons. Ashby later played a central role in the capture of Osceola. Mahan, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 214-215.

70. Robert H. Kirkwood Whitely, West Point class of 1830.

71. Richard C. Weightman. He died of disease on October 30, 1841, after many years of valuable service in Florida.

72. This engagement was called the Battle of Welika Pond.

time. On the 27<sup>th</sup> [of] June, Major Heileman died of jaundice, a loss which cannot be supplied. These two deaths gloom over our sickly circle. Two days before Major Heileman's death, he was brevetted Lt. Col. for his meritorious conduct on 9<sup>th</sup> June. [Daniel S.] Herring<sup>73</sup> too died about the same time at St. Augustine – poor fellow, with his talents and ambition to die so young was indeed hard. I lived in the same rooms with him at Augusta [arsenal] for several months – I knew him well – and deeply do I deplore his loss.

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73. Daniel S. Herring, West Point class of 1826