

SEMINOLE COLONIZATION IN OKLAHOMA

By Louise Welsh*

The story of Seminole removal is particularly complex and lengthy, for the tribe was uprooted and transplanted several times, with attendant complications. The most traumatic of these experiences took place in the late 1830s and early 1840s, but was neither the first nor the last removal for the Seminoles. Tribal origins stemmed from a migration, and Seminole history is filled with a tragic search for a permanent home. The determination of the Seminoles to hold a part of the Florida peninsula for that home against the efforts of the United States to move them beyond the Mississippi River culminated in an epic struggle, the Second or Great Seminole War. During much of that conflict the Seminoles fought the United States Army to a standstill, thus resisting to the bitter end removal to an alien land where they would have to live under Creek control. Finally, most of the tribe was forced to go west, but removal was not ended. The Seminoles were bitterly unhappy with their position as a minority among the Creeks, and other moves had to be made before their independent tribal status could be attained.

It is ironic to note that the Seminoles are Creek in origin. This is true, but at the same time it is an oversimplification. And it is again only partially true to say, as many have, that the Seminoles were runaways from the Creek tribe. The people whom we call Creeks actually made up a confederacy, a loose organization composed generally but not exclusively of elements belonging to the Muskogean language stock. One such component of the Muskogee Confederacy was the Hitchiti, perhaps the most important of the tribes of southern Georgia. Those belonging to this group spoke a language different from that of the Creeks, although it was Muskogean in origin. An old legend concerning the migration of the Hitchiti tells how the tribal ancestors crossed a narrow, frozen sea and traveled eastward to the Atlantic, along whose coast the whites later found them. Then the Creeks, who claimed to have emerged from the earth somewhere in the Rocky Mountains, came to the Hitchiti country. Because the newcomers were so warlike, the Hitchiti concluded that it would be wise to make friends, and from that time on they and the Creeks were one people.

Among the numerous elements making up the Hitchiti tribe were the Sawokli, Okmulgee, Oconee, Apalachicola and probably the Chiaha. The

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Oconees constituted the nucleus from which the Seminole tribe developed and thus deserve more than mere mention. When first found by the English, these people were living along the Oconee River, near Milledgeville, Georgia. However, sometime after the Yamassee War of 1715 they left that stream to join the Lower Creeks living near the Chattahoochee River. It was from this location that another move farther south was made, where, on the plains of Alachua in northern Florida, a town called Cuscowilla developed sometime after 1750. This migration was led by Secoffee. There are a number of different variations of the name of this leader; whether he was also called Cowkeeper is not completely clear. It is possible that there were two separate migrations under two different leaders. In addition, the Upper Creek towns also contributed to the migration to Florida.

The first of the Intercolonial Wars between Spain, France and England for control of North America, beginning in 1689 and lasting until 1697, ended inconclusively, but revealed very clearly Spanish weakness on the southern frontier. At the outbreak of Queen Anne's War, attacks originating in South Carolina resulted in the destruction of Florida missions with the killing of many Indians and the carrying off into slavery of possibly over a thousand others from the province of Apalache. The peace which came in 1713 was only a breathing spell, for it was soon broken by the Yamassee War, 1715-1716, caused chiefly because of the resentment felt, especially by the Creeks, against the tyrannical practices of South Carolina traders. Old Brim—sometimes known as Emperor Brim—of the Lower Creeks, who had done much to provoke the war, eventually abandoned the Yamassee when Cherokee support was not forthcoming. But for a time it seemed that all of the Southern Indians might be engaged against the English. South Carolina narrowly escaped complete destruction before the governor was able to rally his defenses and convert the Cherokees to his cause. The tide then turned, and at the end of the war the Yamassee survivors settled in Florida. Their new home was well known for its mild climate, the quantity of game, the richness of the soil and an abundance of food. The Spanish too were hospitable, being eager to induce immigrating Indians to settle the lands depopulated earlier by Creek and English raids.

The founding of Georgia as an English colony increased the number of frontier disturbances. During King George's War, Creek allies of Governor James Oglethorpe invaded Florida, found its climate inviting and much of its land vacant. Some may have stayed, according to tribal legend; others returned to the area later, among them the Oconee bands. The Apalachicola, one of the few native Florida tribes to escape almost complete extermination during this chaotic period, joined some of the more recent immigrants, among whom were the Chiaha. There were also arrivals from the Sawokli

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towns on the lower Chattahoochee River; these people became the nucleus for the Mikasuki, destined to constitute one of the most important elements, in terms of power and influence, among the Seminoles. Some Chiaha and Yamassee as well as a few Yuchi may have been associated with the Sawokli emigrants. A town called Mikasuki, noted first in the period from 1763 to 1783, was established on the west side of the lake of the same name in northern Florida. The Mikasuki, however, did not play a major role in Seminole history before the First Seminole War.

By 1762, better than half a century of conflict had dragged to an end with a British victory. It was unlikely that the results of the war, especially Spain's surrender of Florida, were viewed with much enthusiasm by many Indians, particularly the Florida Indians, some of whom were evacuated when the Spanish departed. Nevertheless, Florida was not depopulated at this time, and some of the expatriates may have returned twenty years later, when Florida once more changed hands.

It was during the twenty years of British rule in Florida that Indian Superintendent John Stuart applied the name "Seminole" to the Florida Indians. Several years later, William Bartram used the same terms in referring to the Alachua bands. During the American Revolution the Seminoles were, quite naturally, hostile to the colonists, although Spain, while not officially an ally, did render assistance to the American cause, and, as the result of successful campaigning against the British in Florida, assured Spanish repossession of that area in the Peace of Paris, 1783. By this time, the Seminole element in Florida's population had been augmented by a second wave of migration in 1778, consisting of Hitchiti and Muskogee Loyalists.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Seminoles in Florida had apparently severed all connection with the Creek Confederacy and considered themselves a distinct political unit under a chief whom they called King Payne, probably a son of Secoffee. The story is told of the latter that, when he was dying at seventy years of age, he called Payne and his other son, Bowlegs or Bolek, and charged them to complete his project of killing one hundred Spaniards; he himself had accounted for eighty-six. This may be apocraphal for most of the Florida Indians were friends of the Spanish.

The complete separation of the Seminoles from the Muskogee Confederacy came partially at least as a result of the treaties of New York signed in 1790 and Colerain, agreed to in 1794. In both agreements the Creeks agreed to surrender to the United States all citizens of that country, both white inhabitants and Negroes, who were prisoners in the Creek Nation—the Creeks professing to act for the Seminoles in Florida as well. However, the Seminoles did not recognize this action because they considered them-

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selves independent and were, of course, subjects of Spain and not of the United States.

These treaties illustrate that still another ingredient had been added to the mixture of peoples called Seminoles. One of the continuing grievances of English settlers living near the Florida border had been their Negro slaves escaping to Spanish territory, where the government and the Indians received them as free people. This prospect of freedom appealed to slaves in South Carolina and Georgia.

By the time that Spain had regained Florida in 1783, it had become too weak to exercise control over the Seminoles. Border difficulties increased with American settlers and Florida Indians each accusing the other of stealing slaves. After the importation of Negro slaves was prohibited in 1808, prices rose, and slave hunters came often to Spanish Florida. At the same time, the clamor was growing in Georgia and the Southeast generally for the acquisition of that territory from Spain.

When the War of 1812 broke out, Georgians renewed their already zealous efforts to secure Florida and thus eliminate one haven for their runaways. The Spanish government persuaded the Seminoles to retaliate; doubtless little inducement was necessary, for the Indians were well aware that they had much less to fear from the Spanish than from the Americans. British agents were not slow to discover and take advantage of the situation in Florida, and Tecumseh likewise capitalized on it in his efforts to enlist the support of the Five Civilized Tribes. He had some success with a group of Creeks known as Red Sticks; although his eloquence was not required to inflame the Seminoles as their resistance was already an accomplished fact, Tecumseh visited them also.

The Creek War became a reality with the Indian attack on Fort Mims in 1813. Major General Andrew Jackson then moved against the Creek Red Sticks in their position on the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River and defeated them there in 1814. This Creek disaster explains a third sizeable addition to the Seminole ranks in Florida. Some 1,000 defeated Creeks and their families migrated there, perhaps more than doubling the original Seminole population. Among the immigrants came the youth, Osceola, and his family.

By the end of the War of 1812, the amalgamation of the Seminole tribe was complete. Creek now became the speech of all except the Mikasukis, but, in spite of the Creek advantage in numbers, leadership continued to come from the old Oconee. Most of the tribe's components were of Muskogean stock, but there were the Yuchis, one of the few small tribes with a language stock all its own, as well as the remnants of some of the original Florida stocks. Inter-marriage with fugitive slaves added yet another

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element. There was also some infusion of Spanish blood, though probably not much, for mixed-bloods among the Seminoles were few in number. What resulted from all of these different ingredients was a mixture, volatile and explosive as it was to prove, the product of Creek expansionism and international rivalry and intrigue. The Seminole Nation was born of conflict—and conflict was to dominate its history.

Again, the end of a war did not bring peace to the frontier. During the hostilities, a British officer had built a fort fifteen miles above the mouth of the Apalachicola River; later, this place was taken over by a band of Seminole Negroes and came to be known as the Negro Fort. To counter its activities, the Americans built Fort Scott a few miles from Spanish territory on the west side of the Flint River. Because the Negroes could interfere with the movement of supplies to the American post, its defenders attacked the Negro bastion and managed to set off an explosion in the powder magazine which resulted in heavy casualties. Spain could only protest, and difficulties on the border persisted.

An attack by American soldiers on a Seminole village called Fowltown on the American side of the boundary in 1817 led to Jackson being ordered to bring the Seminoles under control—and the First Seminole War began when the Americans invaded Spanish Florida. The Seminoles fell back before Jackson's advance, with the Red Sticks going to Tampa Bay, the Mikasukis northwest to near Greenville and the Alachuans south into the Florida peninsula. Nevertheless, Jackson marched his army on Pensacola, from whence the Spanish governor fled to Cuba. Concern was felt in Washington that Jackson's actions might imperil the delicate negotiations going on between Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Spanish minister Luis de Onís with respect to the transfer of Florida to the United States, but Spain by now was so weak that she could no longer protest effectively, and in 1819 with the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty the Florida Indians found that their homeland had again changed hands—and they certainly had no reason to welcome the substitution of the United States control for the weak and distant authority of a Spanish sovereign.

With the acquisition of Florida, Georgians demanded even more vigorously that slaves claimed by them but living in Florida be returned or that the owners be compensated for their losses. Commissioners appointed to negotiate with the Creeks reminded them that the Seminoles were former tribal members and that the Creeks were thus responsible for returning the Negroes who had fled to Florida and for paying for those carried off by the British or killed by the Americans.

More slaves still continued to escape, and when their owners came to Florida to seek them, the Seminoles and Negroes simply fled into the

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Unusual patchwork costumes devised by Seminole women with fabric remnants during the time of the Seminole wars

interior. Jackson had made no treaty with the Seminoles at the end of the First Seminole War, and the Indians were in a state of uncertainty about their relationship with the government of the United States. This situation finally produced the first treaty made by the United States with these Indians—the Treaty of Camp Moultrie in 1823. Government officials had decided that the ideal solution to the Seminole problem was to remove them to the West or to merge them with the Creeks. The Seminoles opposed both proposals so vigorously that they were removed to a reservation in the interior of the Florida peninsula below Tampa Bay. No doubt federal officials found it necessary to resort to bribery of certain tribal leaders as one of the methods by which Indian acceptance of this treaty was secured. The Seminoles promised to cede land, to move to the swampy interior and to keep runaway slaves out of their territory. For such concessions they were given annuities along with livestock and farming equipment. The annuities were to continue for twenty years. To the Indians this meant that the treaty was to be in effect for twenty years, and that they would thus be secure in their possession of the Florida reservation for that length of time. By moving the Seminoles to the interior of the peninsula, far away from either coast, the government hoped to sever any intercourse between the

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Indians and Cuba, from whence came arms and ammunition in exchange, so it was said, for stolen slaves.

Two years after the treaty was made, government agents pronounced the land given the Seminoles not worth cultivating, a fact of which the Indians were well aware. Not only was the soil unsuitable for farming, but the fugitive slave problem instead of being solved had grown worse. When white owners were allowed to come into the Seminole country seeking their property, Indians and Negroes alike were mistreated, and there were cases where Negroes descended from free parents and grandparents were captured and enslaved.

Meanwhile, the Seminoles found themselves facing actual starvation as the result of a severe drought; often they were forced to choose between remaining within reservation limits and starving or leaving the reservation to steal food from the whites. Pressure for the complete removal of the Southern Indians mounted. Florida was growing in population, and even though the land held by the Seminoles was poor and not suitable for agriculture, the whites wanted the Indians out. The election of Andrew Jackson to the Presidency in 1828 added momentum to the removal project, and in 1830 Congress passed the Indian Removal Bill, which embodied Jackson's well-known views on the subject. It did not provide for forced removal, but anyone acquainted with Jackson's ideas was aware that, if necessary, force would be applied.

The Choctaws and Creeks had already yielded to government persuasion and had signed removal treaties by 1832, at which time Colonel James Gadsden was sent to induce the Seminoles to remove beyond the Mississippi River and join the Creeks in their new home between the Arkansas and the Canadian rivers. This latter feature of the proposal was particularly unacceptable, for the Seminoles remembered that whenever they had fought whites they had also fought Creeks. In addition, they were bitter over Creek slaving raids on Seminole Negroes. In order to understand this period of Seminole history one must always bear in mind the close relationship which existed between the Indian master and his slave. Certainly the slaves had every reason to fear the transfer to owners more demanding and less benevolent.

Gadsden chose Payne's Landing on the Oklawaha River as the meeting place for negotiations with the Indians because it was readily accessible; even so, three months elapsed before enough Seminoles were present to begin proceedings. Eventually eight sub-chiefs and seven chiefs signed a treaty here. Exactly what persuasion was used is uncertain. Micanopy, a descendant of Secoffee and thus a chief representing the authority of the old Oconee, insisted that he had not made his mark, although his name

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appeared on the treaty. Charley Emathla, later an advocate of removal, said they were forced to sign. Possibly the Negro Abraham misinterpreted some of the articles. Certainly one factor which facilitated the making of the treaty was that the Seminoles were starving, a condition brought on by drought, a severe freeze in February and consequent crop failures. Yet, in spite of the offer of food if the Indians would agree to removal, the Seminoles insisted on imposing a condition. Relinquishing all their Florida land and removing to the Creek Nation in the West was to depend on the report of an exploring party of chiefs who would go to examine the country. If "they" were satisfied with both the land and the attitude of the Creeks, the remainder of the treaty would be binding. The Seminoles said that "they" referred to the entire tribe; no mere delegation had the power to make such a decision for the whole nation. Other incentives were offered as well as additional annuities: because they were going to a colder climate each Seminole reaching the new home would receive a blanket and shirt. The agreement also stipulated that henceforth the government would pay annuities to the Creeks living in Indian Territory; thus, only by joining them could the Seminoles collect their money, including that which had been promised them earlier and without conditions by the Treaty of Camp Moultrie. Finally, the treaty promised that claims against the Seminoles for slaves and other property supposedly stolen by them would be liquidated up to \$7,000.

The actual removal would be accomplished in three years, beginning in 1833, with a third of the tribe leaving each year. The time limit set here caused another complication, for the Treaty of Payne's Landing was not ratified until 1834, two years after it was signed and one year after it was supposed to become effective. Because the government of the United States had not conformed to the provisions of the treaty, the Seminoles believed that they should not have been bound by them either, but they were. The government insisted on compliance from the Seminoles even though the United States had disregarded its part of the bargain.

The Seminole exploring party sent to investigate the proposed new home included Jumper, who was Micanopy's adviser or sense keeper, Charley Emathla, five other Seminoles, Abraham as interpreter and Seminole Agent John Phagan. They reached Fort Gibson in the Cherokee Nation in the fall of 1832 and found the Stokes Commission awaiting their arrival. Activities provided for the Seminoles included a buffalo hunt, during which they saw enough of the western part of Indian Territory that Jumper could call the Plains Indians there "rogues" and express his surprise that the government would consider placing the Seminoles in such an environment. Later, when the exploring party returned home, they told the

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tribe that they found the land satisfactory but did not want to be placed so close to Indians who stole horses.

It is difficult to explain how, in the face of such reluctance, the members of the Seminole party were persuaded to sign the Treaty of Fort Gibson which required the Seminoles to settle in the Creek Nation. Again, it is not clear exactly what methods were used to accomplish this result. Certainly at this time Phagan had a good deal of influence; he may even have threatened not to escort the party back to Florida. Also, some of the chiefs said later that they thought they were signing only a document indicating that they found the land to be assigned them satisfactory. A further questionable point was that the Treaty of Fort Gibson contained a significant change from the wording of the Treaty of Payne's Landing. Instead of the phrase, "should they be satisfied," the new treaty changed the pronoun to "this delegation." It is interesting to speculate by whom this change was made. If, as has been suggested, Phagan was the person responsible, it did him little good, for, although the treaty provided that the removal would be supervised by him, the agent was later removed because of financial irregularities.

It is not surprising that the Seminoles in Florida were shocked when they heard of the Treaty of Fort Gibson, and it is quite logical that they declined to accept it. They knew very well, as did the members of the exploring party, that the latter did not have the power to bind the entire Seminole Nation. According to their interpretation of the Treaty of Camp Moultrie, Seminole status would remain unchanged until 1843, and most Indians did not intend to remove until the expiration of that time limit. Neither did they want to become a part of the Creek Nation in the West. The Seminoles were well aware that the Creeks were anxious to compensate themselves for the \$250,000 which the United States government had subtracted from the money due for Creek lands ceded in 1821 in order to pay certain Georgians for runaway slaves supposedly held by the Seminoles. Remuneration might be secured if the Creeks were able to seize enough Seminole slaves.

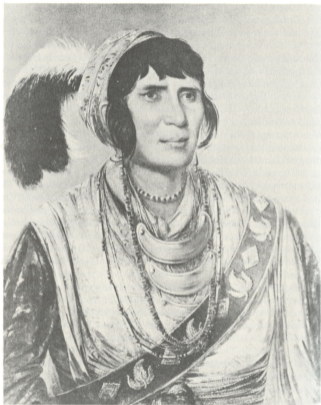
When anxious and apprehensive tribal leaders asked Phagan to call a general council to discuss the Fort Gibson treaty, he declared that the matter was out of his hands; the agreement had been signed, was binding and removal must be carried out. The Seminoles, however, maintaining that the Treaty of Fort Gibson was no treaty at all, refused to make plans for removal. However, the Apalachicola band led by John Blunt moved to the Trinity River region of Texas where Blunt's uncle had settled years before. By the time that the Seminoles had received the last annuities to be paid them in Florida, they had little trouble in deciding what to do with the money.

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It was during this uneasy period when the Seminoles were deciding about what course to pursue that Osceola came into prominence. At a meeting in October of 1834, the new agent, Wiley Thompson, tried to persuade the Indians to prepare for removal. In response, Micanopy, Jumper, Billy Bowlegs and others declared that they intended to remain in Florida; their sentiments were unchanged when another council was held in April of 1835. At this meeting, Colonel Duncan L. Clinch threatened that the United States would use force if necessary, but five particularly influential chiefs still refused, again including Micanopy and Jumper, and Thompson ousted all five from their positions. The agent, of course, had no authority for such a high-handed procedure, and his superiors, even including President Andrew Jackson, repudiated his act. It was when Thompson asked Indian leaders to sign a paper agreeing to removal, and the chiefs were hesitating about what to do that Osceola, not a chief and therefore not entitled to speak, strode to the front of the room where the meeting was being held and thrust his knife through the paper. One version of his words on this occasion has it that he exclaimed to Thompson, "That's your heart and my work!" Another less dramatic account has Osceola saying, "The land is ours, we want no agent." Then he stabbed the paper and said, "This is the way I sign!" There are variations of these stories, and it may be that all are spurious, serving merely to portray Osceola's unalterable opposition to removal and thus faithfully representing the views of the Mikasuki with whom he was closely associated. Certainly, from this time on, Osceola assumed more and more a position of leadership and came to be generally regarded as the outstanding Seminole leader.

At the same time that Osceola's influence among the Seminoles was increasing, his opposition to removal was growing. He and Thompson clashed a number of times, and on one notable occasion Osceola was so furious that he became threatening and abusive, and Thompson had him imprisoned. From then on Osceola was Thompson's implacable foe, determined on revenge, although Thompson soon released him, believing that Osceola would use his influence for removal. Once out of jail, Osceola proceeded to help organize Seminole resistance.

During 1835 the situation in Florida worsened. While Thompson was making arrangements for their removal, the Seminoles were making plans to resist. In the fall came Osceola's famous boast that he had 150 kegs of good powder and did not intend to leave Florida until it was all used up. It is evident that Thompson had waited too long in banning sales of guns and ammunition. A casualty of this disturbed period was Charley Emathla, known to favor removal, who was murdered, probably by Osceola, as an example of what might happen to collaborators. Ironically, Emathla had



Oseola, dressed in full Seminole finery for this George Catlin portrait, was a major opponent of removal to the West

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been one of those who had intervened in Osceola's behalf when the latter was imprisoned.

After Emathla's murder, many of his followers fled to Tampa for protection and to await removal; they hoped to go to Texas to live with Blunt's band. However, during this time, some of Emathla's followers fought with Colonel Clinch's soldiers against the hostile Seminoles. It was not until May of 1836 that these migrating Indians were put ashore near Fort Smith, Arkansas having been brought by boat to that point. Twenty-five had died on the way, and many others were ill, their sickness being complicated by heavy rains and poor traveling conditions. When the party reached the new home, only 320 of the original 407 survived. Such voluntary removals among the Seminoles were very rare.

By the end of 1835, the removal controversy was approaching a climax, and in December two surprise attacks heralded the beginning of the Great Seminole War. On the morning of December 28, a band of Seminoles led by Micanopy, Alligator and Jumper ambushed, at a narrow point in the trail, two companies of troops commanded by Major Francis L. Dade on their way from Fort Brooks to Fort King. The initial attack was responsible for the deaths of half of the troops. However, the survivors managed to erect a pine log shelter before the Seminoles returned to the assault; eventually all but three of the remaining soldiers were killed. The survivors saved their lives by feigning death. Although two later died of wounds, the third lived for five years. Indian casualties were light with only three killed and five wounded. Major Dade's guide, Louis Pacheco, was allowed to live, it is said, because he was a Negro. It may also have been because he was secretly allied with the Seminoles and had, in fact, informed the Indians of the route Major Dade would follow.

The second attack took place in the afternoon of the same day, at which time Thompson and a friend were ambushed and killed near Fort King. Osceola was a member of this party, and it was he who scalped Thompson. Other casualties were the fort sutler and two clerks. The Seminoles were away almost before anyone at the fort was aware of what had happened, but Osceola's presence was attested to by his shrill, terrifying war whoop. That night there was a celebration in the Wahoo Swamp, fueled in part by liquor taken with other loot from the soldiers' supplies; scalps were proudly displayed. Attacks such as these were to become a sort of pattern for the entire war—quick, hit-and-run assaults by the Indians, who then melted away almost without a trace, leaving very one-sided casualties for the army. Only infrequently did the Seminoles allow themselves to be engaged in anything resembling a conventional battle.

A third encounter with the Seminoles followed shortly. While the troops

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Reconstruction of battle site where the survivors of Major Francis L. Dade's force erected defenses against the Seminoles

of Colonel Clinch and General of Florida Volunteers Robert K. Call were attempting to cross the Withlacoochee River on December 31, they were attacked on both sides of the stream by the warriors of Osceola and Alligator, the Indians opposing very successfully a force more than double their numbers and compelling them to withdraw.

It was after this engagement, while Osceola was recuperating from a wound that he had Abraham write a letter of defiance to be passed on to Clinch: "You have guns and so do we; you have powder and lead and so do we; you have men and so have we; your men will fight, and so will ours until the last drop of the Seminoles' blood has moistened the dust of his hunting ground." He also informed the Colonel that Seminole resistance might continue for five years; his estimate proved remarkably accurate, although Osceola did not live to see his prophecy fulfilled.

A second force under Brigadier General Edmund P. Gaines later was besieged at the Withlacoochee crossing in February of 1836. Here, early in

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March, Seminole chiefs asked for a parley, Jumper acting in behalf of the Indians and Captain Ethan Allen Hitchcock for the army. Hitchcock was convinced that Jumper and Osceola were sincere when they declared that enough men had been killed; however, just as the meeting was ending, Clinch's advance guard arrived with aid for Gaines and fired on the Indians. This effectively brought peace negotiations to a halt.

As a result of a loss of confidence in either the regular army commander, Clinch, or in Call of the Florida volunteers, who had received some criticism for failure to come to the aid of the regulars at the first Withlacoochee battle, the task of pacifying Florida now fell to Brigadier General Winfield Scott. During the spring of 1836 Scott attempted to carry out a three-pronged advance into the Seminole country, hoping to drive the Indians into northern Florida where white forces could attack them more easily. The Seminoles, however, did not fight according to Scott's rules; they evaded the army and raided the countryside in its wake. The Indians were simply too vigilant and too active to allow themselves to be caught by the more slowly moving army. In two months Scott accomplished little, and when he was sent to Alabama to command against the Creeks, he was doubtless not unhappy at leaving Florida, particularly at the beginning of the long, hot summer, a season which was an ally of the Indians but always a time of misery and distress for the army. Scott was replaced by Brigadier General Thomas S. Jesup, with Call acting commander until Jesup should arrive.

Jesup, commanding 10,000 men, acted vigorously, and after an engagement near the Great Cypress Swamp in January of 1837, which was rather more costly than usual for the Seminoles in terms of supplies captured, an amnesty offer was made to the Indians. Because of mutual distrust, negotiations were painfully slow. Finally, on March 6, both parties signed an agreement to the effect that the fighting should stop, and the Seminoles would remove. They were to gather at Tampa Bay in April for that purpose. One provision of the agreement promised the Seminoles that they and their allies would be secure in their property and that their Negroes should accompany them to the West. But there was still the unsolved problem of runaway slaves joining the Seminoles after the war's beginning. At first, Jesup had refused to allow any whites to enter the Indian country, but pressure from slaveholders persuaded him to permit some slave hunters to enter the Seminole camps. Such an action was fatal to peace plans; the Indians declared that Jesup had violated his promise. First the Negroes left the site, then the Indians. Armed warriors, probably Mikasuki, virtually abducted Chiefs Micanopy, Jumper and Cloud.

Disappointed that his announcement of the war's end was thus made

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ineffective, Jesup tried another method of dealing with the Seminoles and offered to free their slaves if they would come under his protection and leave the hostile camps. During the hot Florida summer, Jesup was quite willing to let the Creeks in his service carry out most of the activity, consisting in the main of the seizure of slaves and livestock. However, Jesup soon discovered to his astonishment that he and the government were involved in the slave trade, because he found it better to pay the Creeks for the captured blacks, later sending the slaves west as Seminole property. Jesup was already on the defensive about this policy; soon an occurrence of even more controversial nature brought increased criticism from the public.

In September of 1837, troops found and captured old King Philip and some thirty of his band. Philip's son, Coa-coo-chee or Wildcat, reached St. Augustine three weeks later under a flag of truce to seek a meeting with his father. Instead, he was put in prison, but he was later allowed to make contact with other Indians to encourage them to remove. As a result, in October Osceola requested a conference and asked that General of Volunteers Joseph M. Hernandez come without a military escort to meet him for a talk. Jesup, however, insisted that Hernandez have a strong enough force to handle any contingency. Osceola, standing under a white flag, made it clear that the meeting was a truce, not a surrender. Hernandez was armed with a list of questions prepared by Jesup; if the answers which he received from Osceola were not satisfactory, Hernandez was to take Osceola and his band prisoners. Because he did not regard Osceola's response favorably, Hernandez gave the agreed signal, the ninety-five people in Osceola's party were seized before they could reach their rifles or make any other resistance, and all were taken to prison in St. Augustine.

In spite of public condemnation of his action as a violation of a flag of truce, Jesup did not abandon the practice, as will be seen. In fact, he defended such actions, justifying them because the Seminoles had repeatedly and treacherously displayed flags of truce and had deceived him by carrying off hostages left by them with the whites. A participant in Hernandez's raid argued that, while the Indians had a flag of truce, they were not told that it would prevent their being captured. In fact, they had been informed several times that the only terms on which they would be received were those of complete surrender. Osceola's real purpose, he maintained, was not to have a talk but to rescue Philip and massacre the inhabitants of St. Augustine.

During this time Cherokee Principal Chief John Ross was in Washington to discuss his own tribe's removal problems. Asked to act as mediator with the Seminoles, he did in fact send a delegation to Florida. They met some of the hostile chiefs and warriors in the swamps and succeeded in persuad-

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ing Micanopy and other leaders to go to Jesup's camp under a flag of truce to discuss surrender with the general himself. When Micanopy declared that he was ready to give up but would need time to assemble his followers, Jesup responded that he had been deceived so often that he had lost faith in such offers, and he had Micanopy and the others taken as hostages. The Cherokees were shocked and angry, and Ross protested Jesup's action in a letter to the Secretary of War.

Coa-coo-chee meanwhile had managed to escape from his prison cell and could thus carry the news of Jesup's duplicity to the Seminoles who were still at large. While there are different versions of how Wild Cat got away so successfully, there was no doubt about his ability to influence the Indians. Jesup indeed regarded him as the ablest of all the Seminole leaders. Son of King Philip and Micanopy's sister, Coa-coo-chee was handsome, an effective speaker, intelligent and courageous, with great prestige as a warrior.

By December of 1837, the army in Florida was the largest of any period of the entire conflict, and Colonel Zachary Taylor, who had reached Florida in the summer, had the opportunity to command some of its forces in the largest battle of the war, fought on December 25 near Lake Okeechobee. In contrast to the usual Seminole tactics, the Indians on this occasion decided to stand and fight, although their numbers were only about half those of the whites. This decision was made because they thought they could cause more damage than would be inflicted on them, and they were right, for army casualties were twenty-six killed and fourteen wounded. The battle is also worth mentioning as an example of warfare in Florida at its worst. To reach the Indians' hammocks, the soldiers had to cross a mile of saw grass. Men waded up to their knees or deeper in the swamp, holding their rifles above their heads. With legs and arms lacerated by saw grass, they were forced to endure the Indians' fire, some of the wounded drowning in the mud and water. When, after retreating and reforming to charge again, the troops reached the cypresses, they fought at sometimes point-blank range with a foe they could hardly see among the shadows. But, at last, the Seminoles were dislodged and left the field under pursuit.

It was early in the next year, 1838, that Osceola died in prison at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina where the other Seminole prisoners had been taken following Coa-coo-chee's escape. Osceola could also have fled with Wild Cat, but, perhaps because of illness, chose not to join him. He had apparently been in ill-health for some time; he had suffered from malaria long before his capture, and his condition had worsened during the time that George Catlin was allowed to paint his portrait, the malaria being complicated by an extremely sore throat. Knowing that he was dying, Osceola had his wives prepare him in full war dress. With his face painted,

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Coa-coo-chee or Wild Cat provided bold and resourceful leadership for the Seminole struggle following the death of Osceola

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his weapons at hand and his family beside him, he died, January 30, 1838, and was given a military funeral the next day.

The other Seminoles including Micanopy held at Fort Moultrie were taken to New Orleans, Louisiana to await transportation to Indian Territory. Jumper and his family with about 250 other Seminoles and Negroes who had surrendered to Colonel Taylor in December, 1837 were sent to New Orleans where they were held at Fort Pike. Many became ill, and Jumper died here in April. The number of prisoners continued to grow, reaching 1,160 by the middle of May. The number of sick also increased. Boats were finally found in which the Indians and their blacks might be dispatched to the West. Because ninety of the Negroes who were at Fort Pike had been taken by the Creeks serving in Florida, several claims to these individuals were made by slave traders, and the long delay at New Orleans was due in some degree to the controversy over ownership. Most of the Negroes were brought to Indian Territory, but the conflict over their status dragged on in Congress. These immigrants reached Fort Gibson in June, their numbers having been diminished by fifty-four deaths, one casualty being old King Philip, who was buried near the Arkansas River about fifty miles from Fort Gibson. He was interred with military honors which included a one hundred-gun salute.

A smaller party of 119 left New Orleans at the end of May, and by the last of June, 349 other Seminole immigrants reached Fort Gibson. Alligator and his family were among those arriving at the beginning of August, and in November the Apalachicola band appeared.

When Taylor was transferred out of Florida in 1840, Colonel Walker Keith Armistead replaced him. Several of Armistead's subordinates showed considerable ability in countering the guerrilla tactics of the Seminoles and were able to find and destroy some of the Indians' crops located in fields hidden deep in the swamps. But the wily Seminoles were still a match for the army, and another council with the Indians in 1840 resulted in Seminole leaders decamping with all the supplies when Armistead tried to bribe them.

By the fall of 1840, several Seminole chiefs who had removed earlier were induced to return to Florida to try to persuade others still fighting to come to Indian Territory, but with little result. During the spring of 1841, however, more than 200 Indian captives were sent to join Micanopy along the Deep Fork of the Canadian River. Another 200 reached the Choctaw Agency in June.

In May of 1841 Colonel William J. Worth was chosen to command in Florida. His plans were simply to conquer the Seminoles by destroying their crops, their cabins and their sources of supplies. Many Indians were able to avoid his traps, but Coa-coo-chee was seized while involved in talks

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of removal. Worth countermanded the capture but threatened to hang the leader and the other chiefs if their bands did not come in and agree to remove. Faced with such an alternative, Wild Cat induced 210 of his followers to migrate with him. They reached Indian Territory in the fall.

By February of 1842 Colonel Worth was recommending—again—that the approximately 300 Seminoles still in Florida be allowed to remain there. However, the answer was again no, and the relentless pursuit of Seminole families and bands continued. Low water during the year increased the difficulty of transporting captured Seminoles westward. Some were unloaded at Webber's Falls in the Cherokee Nation and told to walk to the Deep Fork region from there. Instead, they decided to join Alligator's band at Fort Gibson, and it took the efforts of five companies of soldiers to induce the Indians to make the Deep Fork their destination. It was also on account of low water that Second Lieutenant E. R. S. Canby's party leaving Florida in June of 1842 had to go overland from near Little Rock, Arkansas to the Creek council grounds, reaching there in September.

During August, 1842, federal officials declared the conflict terminated. It was true that there had been no real engagements for some time, but sporadic hostilities continued past this date. In November when the fighting flared up once more, it was Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock who arranged for the surrender of Pascofa and his followers; these were Creeks who had fled from Alabama to Florida in 1836. They reached Indian Territory in 1843.

Colonel Zachary Taylor, on leaving the Florida theater of operations, was sent west to command at Fort Smith, where he continued to be involved with Seminole removal. In the spring of 1842 he mentioned Seminoles under Alligator north of Fort Gibson, others under Coa-coo-chee south of the fort, Micanopy's band southwest on the Deep Fork of the Canadian, followers of Concharte Micco twenty miles south and a number headed by Black Dirt on Little River. A census taken about two years later listed the number of Seminoles in Indian Territory at 3,136.

In Florida, at the time Worth announced that the Seminole War had ended, there were still groups of Indians in the southern peninsula, though exactly how many Seminoles remained there it is impossible to determine. Billy Bowlegs, a descendant of the older Bowlegs and of Secoffee, was there with his band. Another chief still in Florida and likely to remain was old Sam Jones or Arpeika, now almost one hundred years old, who had vowed long before to die on Florida soil. Bowlegs was also determined never to leave, but a combination of circumstances coupled with a change of tactics on the part of the government made him change his mind.

In 1849 as the result of the murder of a white man named Barker by a

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Billy Bowlegs, who held out for years in Florida swamps, was the last of the important Seminole leaders to agree to remove to Indian Territory

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group of drunken Seminoles, what is sometimes called the Third Seminole War broke out. Indian depredations were much exaggerated, because of the eagerness of many Floridians to profit from a renewal of military operations. And in spite of the surrender by the Seminoles of three of the five miscreants—the hand of a fourth was produced also—the government determined to complete the removal of all of the Florida Indians and offered greater monetary inducements. Only eighty-five Indians accepted, however. In spite of this, the government continued its efforts. Aided no doubt by the separation of the Seminoles from the Creek Nation in 1856, the more attractive terms brought results, and in 1858 Bowlegs and 164 others set out for the new Seminole Nation in the West. However, old Arpeika, true to his vow, remained behind with only a handful of his faithful Mikasuki warriors to support him. In December of the same year Bowlegs was persuaded to head a small party returning to Florida to find the Boat Indians, still hiding in the depths of the swamps. As a result of his success, in February of 1859 the last Florida emigration took place. Thus the war, begun in the last days of 1835, finally had ground to its close.

It seems safe to say that no people so few in numbers ever fought with more determination and effect for a longer time against greater odds than did the Seminoles. It appears almost incredible that a tribe numbering only about 5,000 was able to carry on a war for 7 years against a nation with a population of some 13,000,000. Altogether, some 40,000 troops were engaged in fighting at one time or another; opposing them were Seminole warriors numbering perhaps 1,500; their ranks grew less as the war took its toll. How many Seminole casualties there were is not known, but there were more than 1,500 deaths among the whites. In terms of money, the war cost the United States between \$30,000,000 and \$40,000,000—the most expensive Indian war the United States ever fought.

Seminole effectiveness was due in great part to their mastery of guerrilla warfare. The Seminoles' knowledge of the terrain and their ability to survive in such surroundings gave them a great advantage. For the whites, Florida was not only an unknown land but a dangerous one. Maps of the Seminole territory were mainly blank except for a name, Everglades; roads were few and very far between. Water and mud in which the soldiers waded day after day, often seeking vainly for a dry spot on which to sleep at night, and the saw grass which tore clothing, shoes and skin increased the war's hardships. Mosquitoes, poisonous snakes, rain, night winds that chilled through wet clothing, days of burning sun with no breeze in the saw grass—all of these helped undermine the soldiers' health. Disease was a more deadly enemy even than the Seminoles, what with dysentery, malaria and yellow fever. In spite of such perils, the regular troops fought bravely against an

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enemy not always visible but usually present, watching from concealed hiding places. The army's difficulties with supply and transportation, intelligence, citizen apathy, low morale among the volunteers and lack of knowledge of Indian psychology all combined to make the troops appear ineffective.

The Seminoles too had problems. They were not completely immune to the mosquitoes. Bands and families, forced from one hammock to another, hid out deeper and deeper in the recesses of the swamp as the war dragged on. Their villages were found and destroyed by the soldiers; although there were no fixed centers, the women and children especially suffered in abandoning their homes. One wonders if it was indeed true that as reported, while in hiding, mothers sometimes killed infants and young children whose crying might have revealed the presence of the band. Food became more of a problem; it was more difficult to find fertile hammocks in the swamp's depths on which to raise crops. In spite of the game usually available and the supply of their staple, koontie flour, there were times when the Seminoles must have suffered hunger. Somehow they managed to secure adequate arms and ammunition; they had accumulated stores of powder and shot before the war, and additional supplies came from Cuba.

Seminole endurance and Seminole leadership met most challenges. And the Seminoles could count on native intelligence, shrewdness and proficiency in war of some very remarkable men. Micanopy held the position as chief, as far as anyone could be said to do so, but probably did not have either the ability or the vigorous character of some of his advisers. Contemporaries thought him fat and lazy. King Philip, Alligator, Jumper, Holatoochee, Arpeika, Abraham, John Coheia, Osceola and Wild Cat were the effective military leaders. Abraham, at one time Micanopy's slave, had as much influence as many of the Indian chiefs and virtually controlled the Seminole Negroes. Alligator, Micanopy's nephew, had a wide knowledge of the country and was evidently a good tactician, as he was in command at the Dade Massacre. Jumper, a Creek, one of the Fort Mims massacre leaders who later fled to Florida and married Micanopy's sister, was intelligent and brave, but also deceitful and overly fond of using what was described as a musical voice. Arpeika was a Mikasuki chief and also a prophet and medicine man who reputedly had the power to cast spells and incantations. Thus, it was the leadership, a terrain favorable for their type of warfare and the ability to endure that maintained the Seminoles in Florida after 1835. However, the odds against them were to prove too great; soldiers hunted down women, children and warriors and dispatched them to Indian Territory in increasing numbers. The Seminoles came as prisoners of war to their new home.

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The Seminole dwelling or *chickee* was quickly and easily built and its abandonment caused no great loss

Adjustment in the West proved difficult. Their position in the Creek Nation, their deep desire for land of their own on which to settle, their concern over the safety of their slaves and free Negroes all occasioned uneasiness and fear; there were also inadequate rations and uncertain annuities. Cherokees were patient with the Seminoles who squatted in their nation although they presented a problem because of increased whiskey traffic, general disorder and loss of grain and cattle. It was no doubt a welcome relief to the Cherokees when a new Creek-Seminole treaty was signed in 1845 which allowed the Seminoles to settle any place they chose in the Creek Nation, either individually or collectively and permitted them to make their own town laws, if they were not in conflict with those of the Creeks. Seminoles who had not yet moved to the Creek Nation were encouraged to do so at once. This agreement was a step in the right direction; most Seminoles did finally disperse to the country between the North Canadian and Little rivers, being divided into twenty-five towns or bands.

Difficulties still continued, however. A case in point was that of John Coheia, a freedman. He found his life threatened by embittered Seminoles who objected to his role in removal, and his freedom menaced by the

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Creeks. His precarious position made him a natural ally of Coa-coo-chee in the latter's project to establish a colony in Mexico. Wild Cat obviously chafed more under Creek authority than did most Seminoles and thus was carrying the Seminole search for a permanent home to a distant region, far from Creek machinations.

Efforts for the complete separation from the Creeks continued, and in 1856 a treaty between the two Indian nations and the United States ended the unhappy connection into which the Seminoles had been forced. As created by the treaty, the new Seminole Nation included the land between the North Canadian and the main stream westward from about the Ninety-seventh Meridian to the One Hundredth Meridian. The new location made necessary another move, as the earlier Seminole position had been to the east of the Ninety-seventh Meridian. But this removal the Seminoles welcomed, although they were somewhat apprehensive about Plains tribes farther west.

One must admire the persistence, resiliency and courage of a people who could suffer so much misfortune and yet survive. Today, Seminole County, Oklahoma is the home of many descendants of the Jumpers, Browns, Chupcos and others who trace their ancestry to those indomitable warriors of the Florida swamps.

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SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READINGS

In a bibliography which includes works providing helpful information for the general reader, William Bartram's description of the Seminoles must surely have a place in spite of its abundant botanical details which are not of major concern to the historian; *The Travels of William Bartram*, edited by Mark Van Doren (New York: Dover Publications, 1940) provides a very early account of the Alachua Indians, the author being one of the first observers to refer to these people as Seminoles.

Important background information and material on Seminole beginnings come from several sources including R. S. Cotterill's *The Southern Indians: The Story of the Civilized Tribes Before Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954) and Verner Crane's *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1928), both of which are obtainable in paperback. However, there is nothing else quite like the work by John R. Swanton, "Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors," *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin Number 73* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), because the author has incorporated rare materials no longer available to the ordinary reader. This source is especially good on Seminole origins but also contains something on the later history of these Indians.

A good description of the natural setting for the Florida war as well as information on the war itself is supplied in Marjorie Stoneman Douglas' book, *The Everglades: Rivers of Grass* (Westminster: Ballantine Books, 1974), which has also been issued in paperback.

There are three accounts of the Great Seminole War written by army personnel which are of considerable interest. John Bemrose was a young Englishman who came to the United States, joined the army and saw service in Florida as a hospital steward. He talked with a survivor of the Dade massacre and was present at the first Withlacoochee engagement, details of which he recounts in *Reminiscences of the Second Seminole War*, edited by John E. Mahon (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966). Jacob Rhett Motte's *Journal into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field During the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838*, edited by James F. Sunderman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953) provides valuable descriptions of the conditions under which the war was fought and defends General Thomas Jesup's seizure of Osceola. The notes are especially helpful. The third work gives a much more detailed account of the war from the point of view of one of the officers, John T. Sprague, whose *The Origins, Progress and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York: no imprint, 1848) supplements personal observations and impressions with sometimes lengthy excerpts from other sources. All three works, however, are similar in that they are surprisingly fair and objective in their treatment of the Seminoles.

A very old work on the Seminoles and their struggle which is not particularly objective was written by Joshua R. Giddings; *The Exiles of Florida* (Gainesville:

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University of Florida Press, 1964) must be used cautiously because of the author's abolitionist views. Another older book which has been reissued by the University of Florida Press as one of its Bicentennial Floridiana Facsimile Series is Charles H. Coe's invaluable *Red Patriots: The Story of the Seminoles* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1974). However, as the introduction suggests, the reader should remember that Coe "over-states" the Seminoles' case. A more recent treatment of the Seminole war and one that every student of Seminole history must read is John K. Mahon's *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1974), a well-researched, interesting and balanced account by a modern authority. One incident of this same conflict is dealt with in Frank Laumer's *Massacre!* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1968), a book which contains all of the details, gory and otherwise, of the Dade massacre.

The only work of its kind and quite indispensable is *The Seminoles* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957) by Edwin C. McReynolds. The research is good and the attitude objective. The section of this source covering the early history of the tribe and the Seminole War is particularly full and well-balanced. This book is now available in paperback.

Grant Foreman provides important material on the actual moving of the Seminoles to Oklahoma, including statistics on casualties, where settled, etc., in his unique and helpful book on *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1933).

The reader who wishes to know what Seminole warriors and chiefs were actually like should see the second volume of *The Indian Tribes of North America* (St. Clair Shores: Scholarly Press, 1972) by Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, a work supplying both portraits and biographical information.

Finally, for the younger student there are two accounts worthy of attention. William and Ellen Hartley in *Osceola: The Unconquered Indian* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973) have provided a well-researched and interesting source which might also be used with profit by the general reader. The chief objection to this book is that the authors have attempted to reproduce the exact conversations and thought of historical characters. Otherwise it is well done. Also interestingly written, but more emotional and less objective is Milton Meltzer's *Hunted Like a Wolf: The Story of the Seminole War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), published now in paperback.