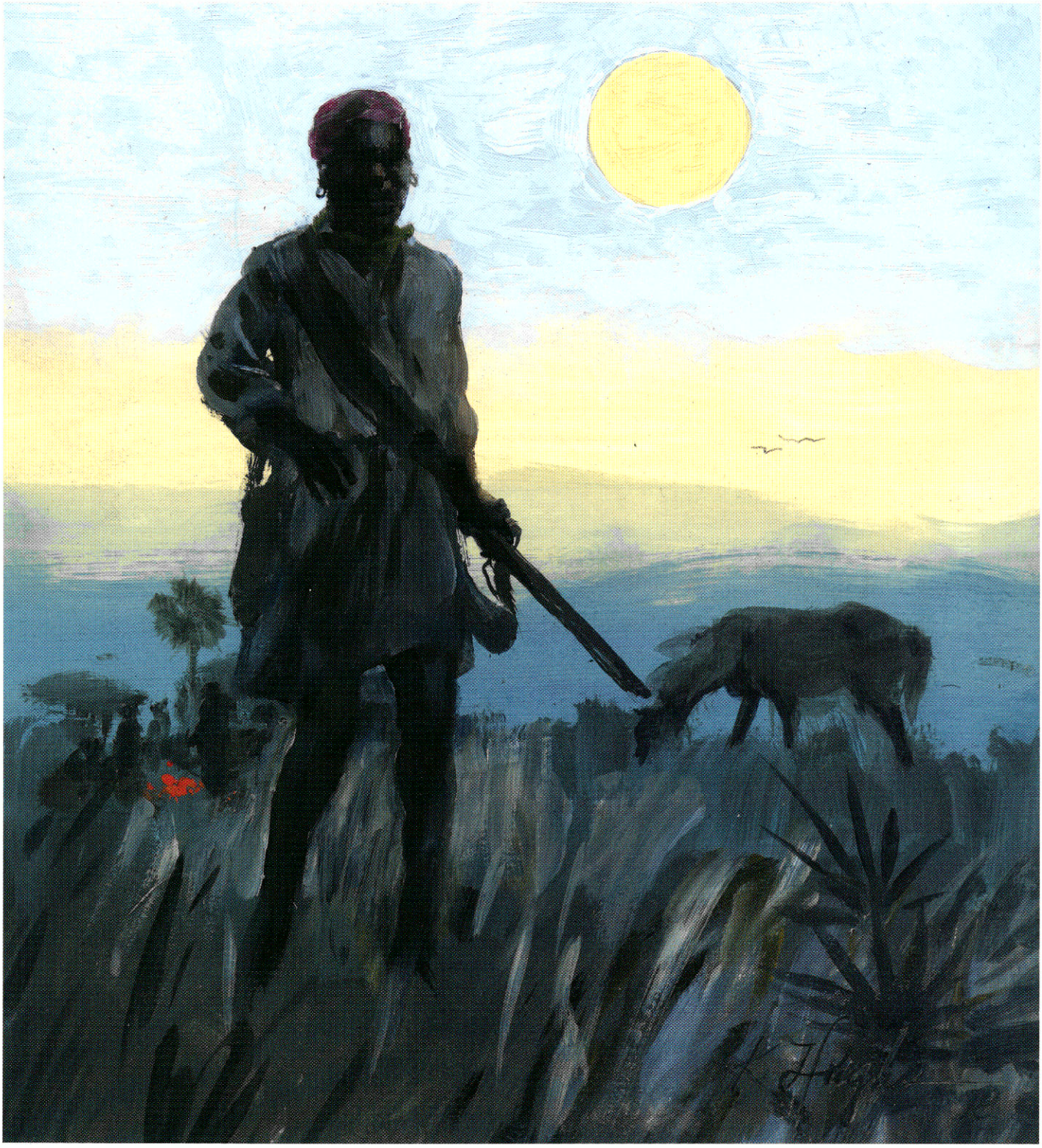
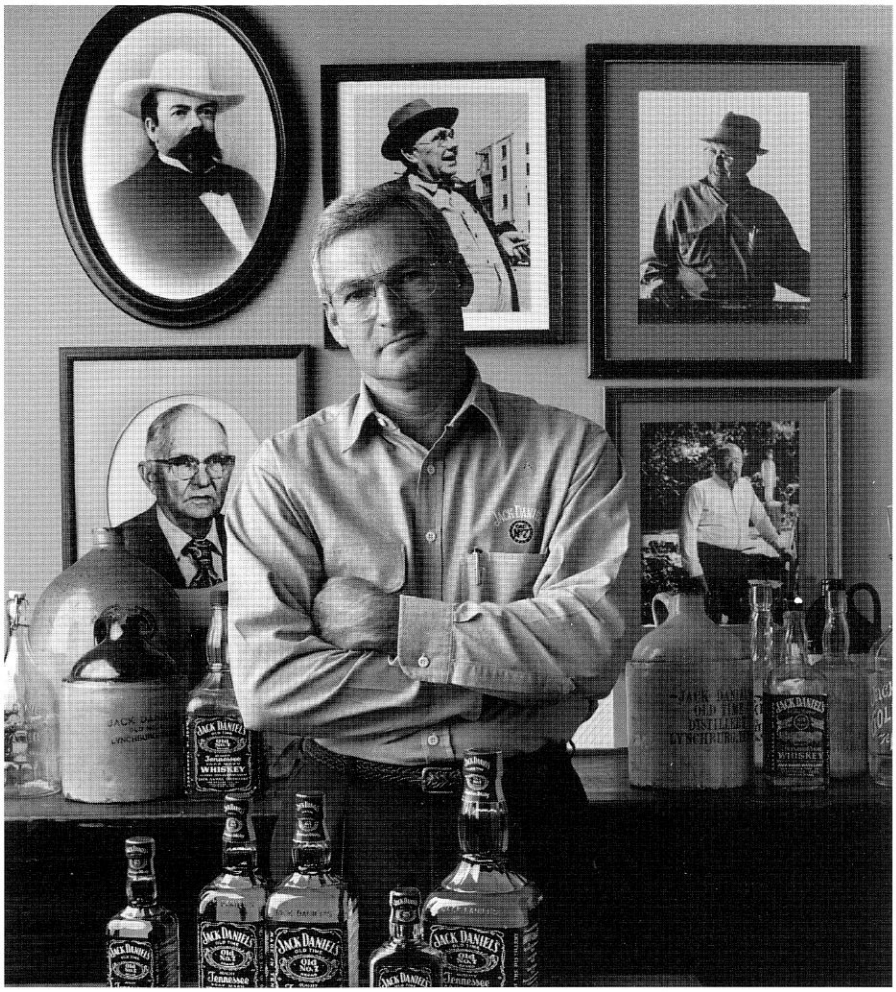
South Florida History

Volume 27 No. 1 Winter 1998-99 $2.50



THE BLACK INDIANS OF THE SEMINOLE WARS

BOCA RATON HISTORICAL SOCIETY • CLEWISTON MUSEUM • COLLIER COUNTY MUSEUM
FLORIDA HISTORY CENTER & MUSEUM • FORT MYERS HISTORICAL MUSEUM
THE HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA



Clockwise from top left, that's Jack Daniel, Jess Motlow, Lem Tolley, Frank Bobo and Jess Gamble. (Jimmy's in the middle.)

JACK DANIEL'S HEAD DISTILLER, Jimmy Bedford, has lots of folks looking over his shoulder.

Since 1866, we've had only six head distillers. (Every one a Tennessee boy, starting with Mr. Jack Daniel himself.) Like those before him, Jimmy's mindful of our traditions, such as the oldtime way we smooth our whiskey through 10 feet of hard maple charcoal. He knows Jack Daniel's drinkers will judge him with every sip. So he's not about to change a thing. The five gentlemen on his wall surely must be pleased about that.

SMOOTH SIPPIN'
TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Your friends at Jack Daniel's remind you to drink responsibly.

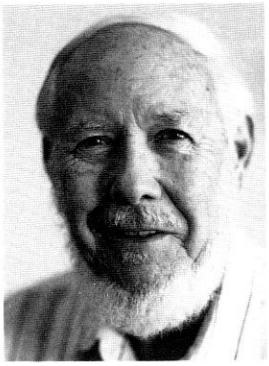
Tennessee Whiskey • 40-43% alcohol by volume (80-86 proof) • Distilled and Bottled by Jack Daniel Distillery, Lem Motlow, Proprietor, Route 1, Lynchburg (Pop 361), Tennessee 37352
Placed in the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Government.

South Florida History Volume 27 No. 1, Winter 1998-99

Cover: A Black Indian during the Seminole Wars. Oil Painting by Ken Hughs for *South Florida History.* Story on page 10.

features this issue

editor's notes



By Stuart McIver

Indian tacos. That was the lunch my wife Joan and I ordered the last time we visited the Swamp Water Cafe at the Seminoles' Big Cypress Reservation. And what converts a Mexican taco into an Indian taco? Indian fry bread. And how well does it work? Pretty darned good, I would say, especially after a hike around the one-mile boardwalk through the nature trail that winds through a large cypress head back of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. The Swamp Water Cafe, operating in a rustic lodge with views of the Glades, is just one aspect of the complex that has arisen at the reservation in the past decade.

In the 1960s, before Alligator Alley, I remember driving down from Clewiston on the only road to the reservation. We were shooting a few scenes for a documentary film on the Everglades. At Big Cypress the village amounted to little more than a collection of chikees. To find anything to eat we had to go back to Clewiston after we had finished our photography. We did scare up a few Cokes. It's a different world now.

"As you probably realize by now, the theme of this issue is the Florida Indian"

The Swamp Water Cafe can serve you a good breakfast, lunch, or dinner, provided you don't insist on dining late. You can eat a venison burger, frog legs, alligator tail, even a Philly cheese steak. Kissimmee Billie's Swamp Safari can take you on a swamp buggy ecotour into the Big Cypress. No Ritz-Carltons have arisen in the swamp but you can spend the night in cabins or camp out at campgrounds.

At the Seminole Entertainment Center visitors can watch a rodeo or listen to country music stars like Travis Tritt, or James Billie, a swamp singer and composer of note who also holds down a rather important post in the Seminole world. As chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, he is the man who has led his people from the poverty of the 1960s into the relative prosperity of the 1990s.

In addition to a modern schoolhouse, gymnasium and community center Chief Billie is particularly proud of the Tribe's new Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. "We built the museum here because this was where Abiaka lived," said James Billie.

To the world outside, Abiaka was known as Sam Jones, the Seminole who flatly refused to be conquered by the superior might of the U.S. Army in the Seminole Wars of the 19th century. His leadership kept a handful of Indians in Florida when thousands were being exiled to the Indian territory west of the Arkansas River. Appropriately, there is a statue of Abiaka in front of the museum building.

The goal of the museum is "to preserve and interpret the culture, language and customs of the Seminole Indians of Florida." An 18-minute film entitled "We Seminoles" introduces you to a fascinating combination of artifacts, photographs and mannequins which do an excellent job of spiriting you away into the world of the unconquered Seminoles. Executive director of the museum is Billy L. Cypress.

Our tour was conducted by David Blackard, who designed the displays and continues to be active with the museum. David is married to Patsy West, who is featured prominently in this issue of *South Florida History*. This is a family with a profound knowledge of Indian history and culture. With the approval of the University Press of Florida, we are excerpting a chapter from Patsy's newly published book, *The Enduring Seminoles: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism* (see page 22). In addition, we are running a review of her book on page 29.

We are particularly delighted that Patsy has produced such an informative volume on a little known aspect of Seminole history. She has been closely associated with our association for many years, functioning in the 1970s as curator for the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

As you probably realize by now, the theme of this issue is the Florida Indian. In addition to the chapter on twentieth-century Indian tourism, we are also publishing two articles about the Seminole Wars in the nineteenth century.

By the way, if you want to hear any of Chairman Billie's songs, his record label is SOAR, Sound of American Records. His CD is entitled "Alligator Tales."

In the Fall issue of *South Florida History* we ran Jamie Welch's story on "Ghosts at Anderson's Corner." We were much concerned about how to handle a ghost story in a magazine that must maintain a high standard of accuracy. After all, the ghost story has the potential for being way out on the fanciful side. Still, we did it, feeling all the while like brave adventurers into pioneer country.

Well, about the same time our magazine came out, the Florida Historical Society's September, 1998 journal carried as its lead article a story on the community of mediums at Cassadaga, written by John J. Guthrie, Jr. The article, an excellent one, will be published, hopefully next year, by the University Press of Florida in a book on the Cassadaga spiritualist community. ***-SFH***

Published Quarterly by The Historical Association of Southern Florida
Miami-Dade Cultural Center
101 W. Flagler St., Miami, FL 33130
Tel: (305) 375-1492 Fax: (305) 375-1609
e-mail: publications@historical-museum.org
Web Site: www.historical-museum.org
ISSN: 10773819

South Florida History magazine is a journal of popular regional history published quarterly by the Historical Association of Southern Florida. Receipt of South Florida History Magazine is a privilege of membership in the Historical Association, the Fort Meyers Historical Museum, the Collier County Museum, the Clewiston Museum, the Boca Raton Historical Society, the Museum of Florida's Art & Culture and the Florida History Center & Museum.

The Historical Association of Southern Florida is a non-profit cultural, educational and humanistic institution dedicated to providing information about the history of southern Florida and the Caribbean, and to the collection and preservation of material relating to that history. Association programs and publications are made possible by membership dues, gifts from private sources and grants from federal, state and local agencies.

This publication has been sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, and the Florida Arts Council; by the Miami-Dade County Commission; the Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council; and the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views and opinion of the Florida Department of State, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of State.

letters

to the editors may be edited due to space limitations

Dear Editors:

I really enjoyed your article "Who's Haunting Anderson's Corner?" in the latest issue. I happen to believe in ghosts, and I knew Will Anderson. I hope you will be pleased to have some additional information about Anderson's Corner and Mr. Anderson.

Here are a couple of anecdotes: As teenagers, Charlie Johnson and I worked one summer for Mr. Anderson in his groves. One day I came upon a large rattlesnake curled up near a citrus tree. I told Mr. Anderson that I would take the ax from the truck and lop off the snake's head. Mr. A said, "OK, but let me soften him up a bit first." He found a small log with which he killed the rattlesnake, then invited me to lop off its head. I took a mighty swing—and missed completely! He said nothing, but it was obvious that he had taught me something and I'm sure he got a chuckle out of it.

On another occasion, Charlie Johnson (a neighbor and classmate) and I were fertilizing in a different grove. That meant carrying the fertilizer by bucket and spreading it by hand, returning to the truck whenever we needed a refill. Mr. A would move the truck between the rows as needed. It was a very hot summer day and Charlie and I began to get pretty tired, but we were determined to stick with it. Finally, we agreed that neither of us could take another step, and we staggered back to the truck to tell Mr. A that we were bushed and could not continue.

Without hesitation, Mr. A said, "Ah, so the bears got you." I had never heard that expression before nor have either Charlie or I heard it since. Mr. A had no doubt been expecting our exhaustion. He told us to get on the truck and we returned home. We did continue to work for him later.

Mr. Anderson was indeed a kindly man. I never knew him to become angry or to raise his voice. I hardly remember his original store building inside, because by the time I could remember things there was a smaller store and gas pumps just to the west. Mr. A's son Bill with wife lived in a lime grove almost across the road from our home, and they ran the store then. Our road was not paved during all those years.

Keep up the good work. You do a fine job and I often brag on the quality of the SFH magazine and other HASF products. The Museum is one of the things I miss from Miami.

Yours sincerely,
Donald C. Gaby

Letters to the editors are continued on the next page...

A drawing was held to choose the winner of the Mystery Photo Contest... and... the winner is... **Sandra Thurlow** of Stuart, Florida. Congratulations Sandra, by guessing Paul Whiteman and his orchestra in the Venetian Pool, you won the grand prize. We had many responses, so thank you to everyone who tried. The following is a list of *South Florida History* readers who also guessed correctly: Scott Michael Barnett, Robert Gelberg, William M. Schiff, Rosann and Whit Sidener, Kurt Von Gonten, Donald M. Kuhn, Al Powell, Julia Gottlieb, Jackson Baldwin, Martha Stockhausen and Mike FitzGibbon.

Dear Editors:

On page 28 of the Fall 1998 issue, the term "Cash Kid" is used. I am assuming that this is a reference to the kidnapping of the Cash child in Princeton in that area and in that time period. If so, isn't that a strange way to refer to it? If not, I'm curious — who was the Cash Kid?

I enjoy the publication very much. Keep up the good work!

Regards,
Niles Schuh

Editors' Note: We apologize for the term "Cash Kid" being used in the article on Anderson's Corner in issue No. 4, Vol.26. It was used to describe a child with the last name Cash. Sorry for any misunderstanding.

Dear Editors:

As a long time member, I enjoyed reading the article in the Fall 97/Winter 98 edition of the magazine entitled "From Barbecue Shacks to the Mayfair Grill."

It brought back wonderful memories of the great local restaurants referred to in the article. I was born in Miami, at Jackson Memorial Hospital on June 5, 1940, and have remained in Miami.

My deceased parents, Ernst and Elsa Kreutzer owned Flagler Sundries, also known as "Ernie's Restaurant," at 647 W. Flagler Street from 1943 to 1961. It was a family-style restaurant that catered to "locals" and working-class people. Thank you!

Faithfully,
Franklin D. Kreutzer

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Miami-Dade Cultural Center, 101 West Flagler Street, Miami,
Phone: 305-375-1492 Fax: 305-375-1609 E-mail: www.historical-museum.org
General Information: Open Monday Through Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Thursdays until 9 p.m.; Sundays, 12 noon - 5 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Adults $5; Children 6-12 $2. Members Free.

SPECIAL EVENTS

SIXTH ANNUAL MIAMI INTERNATIONAL MAP FAIR

February 6-7, 1999. Come see what all of Europe is talking about. The only event of its kind in the Western Hemisphere brings together leading antique map dealers, collectors and experts from around the world. General admission is $5 for adults, $2 for children 6-12 and free for children under 6 and museum members. Full weekend program registration is $45, $40 for museum members, and includes lecture, workshop, panel discussion, reception and lunch.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

CORAL GABLES: THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

Opens February 19 - May 30, 1999. Learn about this fascinating and endeared city, the childhood dream of Solomon G. Merrick, and its amazing history. The exhibit, among other amazing things, will explore the unique topography of the city in ancient time, to the utopian city beautiful movement of the 1920s.

GATEWAY OF THE AMERICAS

Permanent Installation Opens Spring, 1999. See the newest multimedia addition to the museum's permanent exhibit, Tropical Dreams: A People's History of Southern Florida. Explore the last fifty years of southern Florida's development, a burst of activity which produced more changes in the area than any other time period since its settlement. Visitors can chart the region's growth and examine the myriad influences —from transportation and immigration to education and recreation — which have given southern Florida international importance.

Fort Myers Historical Museum 2300 Peck Street, Fort Myers (941) 332- 5955. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed Sundays and Mondays and most holidays. Admission is $2.50 for adults and $1 for children ages 3-12. Museum members are free.

Clewiston Museum 112 South Commercio Street, Clewiston (813) 983-2870. The Clewiston Museum, founded in 1984, is a growing museum, collecting and displaying items, large and small, important and trivial, which reflect the past of Clewiston and its surrounding area. The Clewiston Museum is open 1-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, with seasonal adjustments. No admission fee is charged; however, donations are encouraged.

Collier County Museum 3301 Tamiami Trail East, Naples (941) 774-8476. The Collier County Museum explores the people, places and everyday events that have shaped Collier County's heritage. The museum and four-acre historical park are open Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Free.

Boca Raton Historical Society Town Hall, 71 N. Federal Highway, Boca Raton (407) 395-6766. The Boca Raton Historical Society operates a museum and gift shop at the old town hall, 71 North Federal Highway, Boca Raton. Hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Florida History Center & Museum Burt Reynolds Park, 805 North U.S. Highway 1, Jupiter (407) 747-6639. The Florida History Center & Museum is open all year. Examine artifacts from early Florida inhabitants in the permanent museum collection and view the traveling exhibits. Open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. and weekends 1-5 p.m. Closed on Mondays. $4 adults; $3 seniors; $2 children. The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse is open Sunday - Wednesday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (must be 48" tall to climb.) For information: (405) 747-8380. $5. The Dubois Pioneer Home is open Sunday and Wednesday, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. $2.

Harvest Festival is a Hit

It has been a South Florida tradition for over 25 years, and this year was one of the best. The Historical Museum of Southern Florida brought history to life with the annual Harvest Festival on November 21 and 22, at the Dade County Fair and Expo Center in Tamiami Park.

"Harvest 1998 was a tremendous success," said Dr. Steve Stuempfle, coordinator of the event. "Attendance was approximately 20,000 and earnings for the Historical Museum were over $200,000. We had one of our best traditional music stages ever and a strong showing from historical reenactors, antique car owners and antique engine enthusiasts. Special thanks must be given to the hundreds of volunteers who contributed to this major fund-raiser for the Historical Museum."

The festival featured more than 300 crafts booths, historical reenactments, children's activities, continuous musical performances, quilt sale, antique engines and cars, and a variety of foods. All proceeds of the Harvest Festival benefit the education programs of the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

New at this years Harvest Festival was Carlos Carricaburu and his 9 year old son, Augustin, featured in the June 21,1998 issue of Tropic magazine, who constructed a tractor together. Also new this year was two hours of child-free shopping for those who pre-registered with the Perfect Party Place and Phany & Leen Corp., who presented the Rugrats Show on Saturday.

Entertainment abounded at the Harvest Festival. Gospel, country and a spectrum of other musical entertainers filled the stage both days of the event, reflecting South Florida's many rich cultural traditions.

The historical reenactments were another popular feature of the Harvest Festival. The men and women who participate in these reenactments — which range from 19th Century mountain men and fur traders with authentic rifles to a Union Civil War cavalry, to a Seminole Indian war encampment, complete with working cannon — were serious about bringing the heritage of Florida and the Caribbean to life.

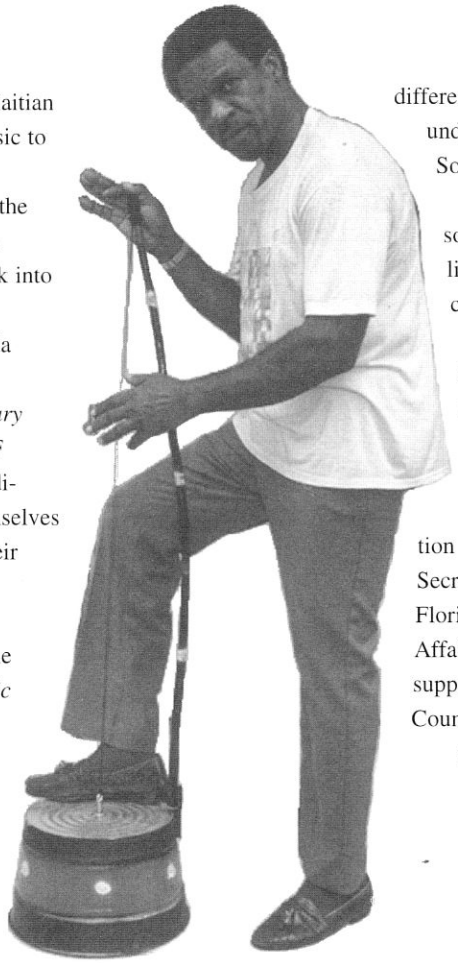
A very successful pre-opening sale was held Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., offering crowd-free shopping and a free continental breakfast to shoppers who got a head start on their holiday buying.

Special thanks must be given to the hundreds of volunteers who contributed to this major fund-raiser for the Historical Museum

Sponsors of the event were the Miami Herald, Norwegian Cruise Lines, Budweiser, Coca Cola, Big Cheese Restaurant, El Dorado Furniture, John Saxon & Son, Inc., Karen's Kreation, Norman Brothers, Paul's Carpet Company, The Perfect Party Place and Twenty Little Working Girls.

Special thanks to: Denise Paparella, Donna Mansolillo, Janet Orgaz, Trustees of the Historical Museum, Tropees, Banana Supply Company, Bill and Pat Graham, Chuck & Sheila Blanchard, Dotty Barton, FEDCO, Florida Power & Light, Ginny Wheeler, John May, Doug Loria, Isabel Dominguez, Jean Hawa, Miami High School, Hialeah High School, Judy Wiggins, Kateri Davis, Keith Mack LLP, Lillian Hartgrove, NationsBank, Palmer Academy, Sherrin Smith, SunTrust Bank, U.S. Coast Guard, Wes Coleman, Withers/Suddath Van Lines, and All of Our Harvest Volunteers!!! ***-SFH***

Folklife Exhibit Brings Florida Art & Music To Life



From Latin jazz and Haitian and African roots music to hand-crafted African musical instruments, the Historical Museum of Southern Florida (HMSF) provided a look into the folklife of various cultural communities that inhabit Florida with their *Florida Folklife: Traditional Arts in Contemporary Communities* exhibition. HMSF gave special attention to the individual artists who express themselves through the art and music of their culture with two accompanying festivals: the *South Florida Traditional Arts Festival* and the *South Florida Traditional Music Festival*.

"The festivals showcased some of the community-based art and music that don't receive much attention from the mass media," said Dr. Stephen Stuempfle, Folklife Program Coordinator at HMSF.

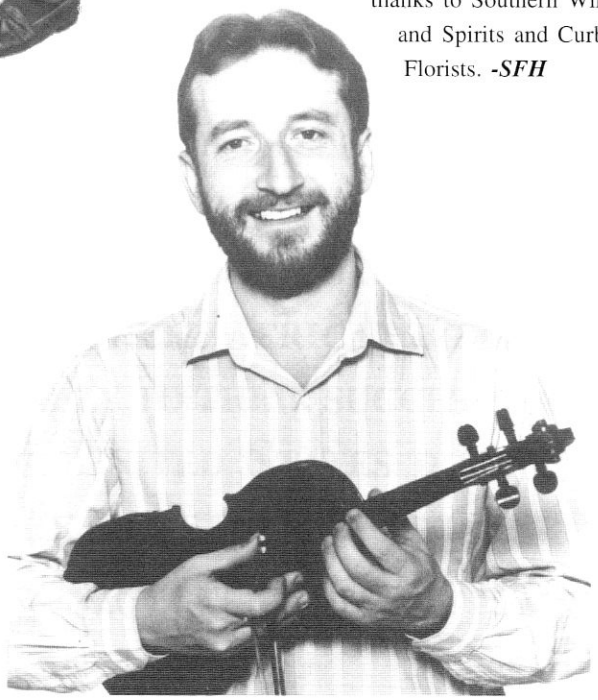
The *South Florida Traditional Arts Festival*, held September 26 at the museum, featured South Floridian artists such as a Ghanian seamstress and an African instrument maker. These artists draw from the traditions of their culture while giving their work a contemporary look.

The *South Florida Traditional Music Festival*, held October 24 at the museum, featured bluegrass, country, Latin jazz, New Orleans-style jazz, Irish instrumental music and Haitian and African roots music. It highlighted some of the music that distinguishes each cultural group from the next.

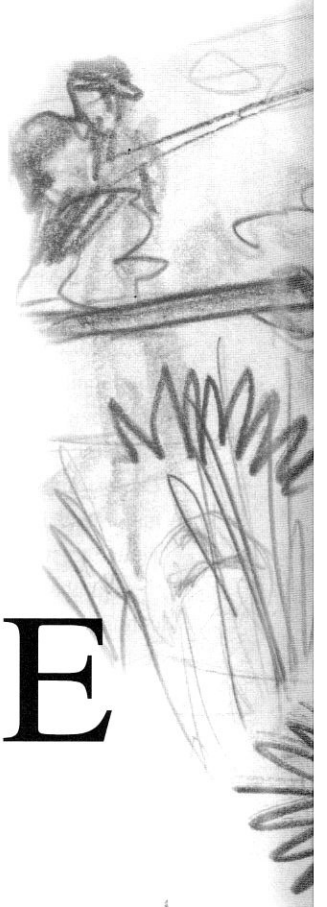
"Many cultural groups haven't been covered in the history books," said Dr. Stephen Stuempfle, "We (at HMSF) want to include everyone's history. This allows us to build relationships with different communities while providing a broader understanding of their creativity and history in the South Florida area."

More than 500 people turned out to hear the sounds offered at the music festival, which gave listeners a cross-section of the region's different cultural influences.

Florida Folklife: Traditional Arts in Contemporary Communities was produced by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, assisted by the Historic Preservation Advisory Council, Sandra B. Mortham, Secretary of State; sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, and the Florida Arts Council; and with the support of the Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and the Members of the Historical Association of Southern Florida. Local sponsorship provided by First Union. Special thanks to Southern Wine and Spirits and Curbside Florists. ***-SFH***



BLACK INDIANS *in the* SEMINOLE WARS



By Carolyn T. Gassaway

Illustrations by Ken Hughs

THE INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE FLORIDA'S SEMINOLE INDIANS RECEIVED FROM THEIR AFRICAN ALLIES CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO THEIR SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES DURING THE SEMINOLE WARS, THE MOST PROTRACTED AND EXPENSIVE IN OUR NATIONAL HISTORY.

The Seminoles fought long and hard against the U.S. government's efforts to force them onto a reservation in Florida, and finally, to remove them permanently to lands beyond the Mississippi River. A popular explanation for the success of the Seminoles against the superior military forces of the United States is that they fought a guerilla-style war on familiar terrain where sawgrass and mosquitoes, heat and humidity were severely punishing to troops unaccustomed to the Florida wilderness.

According to Jacob Rhett Matte, a surgeon with the army in Florida during the winter of 1836-37, it was no picnic. "(The work consisted of) cutting roads through dense hammocks, passing innumerable cypress swamps, interspersed with an almost impassable growth of saw-palmetto, wading in water almost up to the men's waists, many of whom were barefooted and their clothes torn off, and flesh badly lacerated by the saw-palmetto," Rhett Matte stated.

While these circumstances undeniably favored the Seminoles, another factor to be considered is the assistance from their African allies, the so-called "Black Indians."

Although relations between red and black peoples have warranted little notice by historians, we do know that the condition of slavery in this country was not unique to blacks. Both Africans and Indians were used as slaves.

As early as 1704, we have the report of Governor James Moore of South Carolina wherein he details his attack on the Apalachee people who were living in the area near Tallahassee. With the aid of 1,000 Creeks, Governor Moore and his South Carolinians destroyed four Apalachee towns, killing most of the people. The 1,300 who were taken prisoner were taken to Charleston to be sold as slaves.

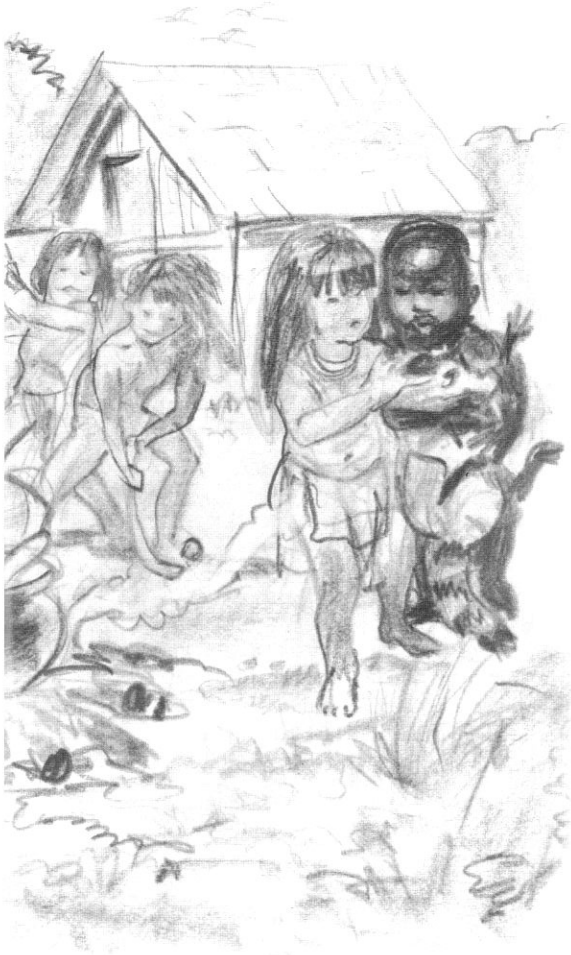
In another account, the number reported killed or taken prisoner in this raid is six or seven thousand. In *The Only Land They Knew*, J. Leitch Wright, Jr. cites the complaint of the Spanish governor in St. Augustine in 1708 that the English had "carried away" ten thousand to twelve thousand Indians in the period prior to and including 1702. These accounts illustrate the fact slavers made no distinction between southern Indians and blacks.

The common experience of slavery and exploitation by whites in North America provided the foundation for a close and natural alliance between the red and black races from their earliest contact with each other. Nowhere is the effectiveness of this alliance better demonstrated than in the cooperation between the Seminoles and the "Black Indians" during the Seminole Wars in Florida. As fighters, interpreters and advisors, the black Indians were the Seminoles secret weapon. Their support enabled the Indians to sustain a highly effective guerilla action against a larger and better equipped army for a number of years.

THE COMMON EXPERIENCE OF SLAVERY AND EXPLOITATION BY WHITES IN NORTH AMERICA PROVIDED THE FOUNDATION FOR A CLOSE AND NATURAL ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE RED AND BLACK RACES FROM THEIR EARLIEST CONTACT WITH EACH OTHER

However, the role of "Black Indians" in the Seminole Wars cannot be examined without first defining what we mean by the term. William Loren Katz defines "Black Indians" as those who have "dual ancestry or black people who have lived for some time with Native Americans." In support of this position, Kenneth W. Porter tells us that Africans among the Seminoles were frequently the wives, husbands and children of Indians.

Given the wilderness setting of battles between the U.S. Army and the Seminoles, blacks may well have been mistaken for Indians, especially since they would most likely have been dressed in a similar fashion to their



William Loren Katz defines "Black Indians" as those who have "dual ancestry or black people who have lived for some time with Native Americans."

benefactors. However, there is evidence to suggest that official reports avoided mention of blacks among the Seminoles. Therefore, their abilities as able fighters and advisors to the Indians were not generally known.

As author Jan Carew reports, it was "the usual practice" to avoid all reference to blacks. "Negro courage or initiative during the Seminole wars was carefully expunged from the records," Carew wrote. This was done primarily to keep from inciting planters in Georgia and bordering territories who feared the possibility of a slave rebellion or general uprising in which slaves and Indians would take up arms against the white man.

The "cover up" was intended to keep planters and opportunists from overreacting and taking matters into their own hands, thus exacerbating what was already being recognized as a difficult and embarrassing situation for the military.

There are those who claim that the Seminole Wars were not Indian wars but slave wars and that the presence of runaway slaves among the Indians was the real cause of military intervention. Release of information to Congress, after the fact, by Secretary of War Joel Poinsett, shed light on this aspect of the war.

"...It became obvious that the Florida war had not been exclusively an Indian one," Wrote Author Virginia Peters. "Fear of the free Negroes or maroons who lived among the Seminoles had instigated the attacks on the Indians in the first Florida war."

So, the blacks living among the Seminoles were a source of contention, and there was considerable agitation from planters in Georgia and the Territory of Mississippi to reclaim what they alleged was "stolen" property. Raids by planters and slave traders contributed significantly to continued hostilities between the Seminoles and the whites in Florida and eventually led to military intervention as a means of resolution.

References to the "Seminoles" can also be confusing as the term seems used at times to describe all Florida Indians regardless of tribal affiliation or origin. In *Indians of the Southeast: Then and Now*, the authors Jesse Burt and Robert B. Ferguson state that the Seminoles developed from Creek migrants, fugitive slaves from Georgia and remnants of other Florida tribes, particularly the Calusa.

In *Creeks and Seminoles*, J. Leitch Wright explains how the meaning of Seminole may have become blurred.

"More and more it suited United States' purposes to allege that all non-whites in Florida, except fugitive slaves, were Seminoles," the authors wrote. "The numbers of the Seminoles included Hitchiti speakers who had long resided in Florida, Spanish Indians on the Gulf Coast ranchos, Yuchis, Shawnees, Choctaws, and remnants from tribes who at an earlier time lived on the peninsula."

In her book, *The Florida Wars*, Virginia Peters provides an example of how the term "Seminole" was applied to individuals of differing tribes. She states that one of the last contingents of "Seminoles" sent west toward the end of the Seminole Wars included individuals who were identified as "Seminoles, Creeks, Tallahassees, Mikasukis and Uchees."

Even Osceola can be a considered a victim of mistaken identity. He was not a Seminole, but a refugee Creek who migrated to Florida from Alabama with his mother in the company of a band of Creeks led by her kinsman, Peter McQueen.

GIVEN THE WILDERNESS SETTING OF BATTLES BETWEEN THE U.S. ARMY AND THE SEMINOLES, BLACKS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN FOR INDIANS SINCE THEY WOULD MOST LIKELY HAVE BEEN DRESSED IN A SIMILAR FASHION TO THEIR BENEFACTORS

While the Spanish explorers were known for their cruel exploitation of native peoples during their explorations in the Caribbean, the Spaniards in Florida needed the help of Seminoles and their black allies to hold the territory for Spain.

By giving protection to former slaves and free blacks among the Seminoles, the Spanish in Florida won their support against the American patriots. This alliance with the Spanish in Florida was also in the best interest of the Africans, since a takeover by the Americans would certainly mean an end to their freedom.

Although they were called slaves, blacks enjoyed enviable status among the Seminoles and were well-treated by them. The Indians, having noted the prestige of whites who held slaves, were eager to have such for themselves and adopted the practice of slavery, at least nominally.

...such teams as Micanopy, ranking Seminole chief, and Abraham, black interpreter and negotiator, were able to work together throughout the war with a skill any diplomat might envy, Peters wrote.

Among the Seminoles, this consisted of the "slave" living as an equal for the most part, having only to provide his host/master with a modest share of his agricultural bounty as tribute. The "slave" was considered an equal in most other respects. In fact, because of their knowledge of the white man's ways and their ability to communicate with people who spoke different languages, these "slaves" were valued by their Indian masters and frequently assumed positions of influence with them.

Thus such teams as Micanopy, ranking Seminole chief, and Abraham, black interpreter and negotiator, were able to work together throughout the war with a skill any diplomat might envy, Peters wrote.

As the Seminoles themselves were refugees and relative newcomers to Florida, they probably found it advantageous to welcome as allies the fugitive slaves who began arriving in Florida at about the same time. The harsh treatment of slaves that came as a result of the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831 made the conditions of slavery even more intolerable and increased the number of runaways during this period.

However, it is known that maroon colonies already existed in Florida when the Seminoles arrived. It is reported that fugitive slaves numbered in the "tens of thousands" during the time of the Revolutionary War when slave owners were preoccupied in fighting the British.

As Florida has ever been a haven for fugitives of all kinds, it stands to reason that some of these runaways would make their way into Florida hoping to find sanctuary in the wilderness.

The Seminoles were generally more accepting of outsiders than the Miccosukees who were more traditional in their beliefs. According to Katz, the Seminoles "accepted a variety of Indian ethnic groups — Yuchi, Hichiti and Alabama," and for this reason had no difficulty in accepting Africans.

The Miccosukee, on the other hand, were not so liberal and lived in relative isolation. In an interview with author Peter Matthiessen, Buffalo Tiger, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, spoke of a traditional upbringing that prohibited contact between Indians and whites. Indian children were forbidden to play with white children, and even the use of a pencil, associated with the white man's culture, was prohibited on threat of a whipping.

The blacks who joined the Seminoles in Florida had much to recommend them to their benefactors. Many blacks were former slaves who had considerable knowledge of the white man, his language, customs and technology.

These blacks also demonstrated a facility with language that enabled them to communicate with others of different backgrounds. Some suggest that this talent may have been born out of the necessity for communication among slaves who spoke different languages, but who were required to work together on the plantations. This facility with languages, combined with their knowledge of the white man's world made them highly prized by the Seminoles as interpreters, advisors, and warriors.

Additionally, many blacks were experienced farmers and herdsmen

and were able to assist the Indians with methods for increasing food production. This was a considerable asset since the Indians were coming to depend more and more on farming as their main source of food.

Despite the fact that they were "slaves" of the Seminoles, blacks benefited from their alliance with the Indians. They were given tribal protection against white raiders who sought to capture them and sell them into slavery.

Further, this alliance with the Indians enhanced their chances of survival in a harsh and dangerous environment. Black Indians were not only free to do as they pleased, they were treated exceedingly well by the Indians.

As an example of their status among the Indians, Ben Bruno is described by John C. Gifford as "the interpreter, advisor, confidant and special favorite of Billy Bowlegs." Katz supports this privileged status of Seminole slaves in the 1837 observation of Indian agent Wiley Thompson, who affirms that the Seminole slaves had virtually the same freedom as their masters.

While we do not know the full extent to which black Indians participated in the Seminole Wars, the high regard in which they were held is demonstrated by their inclusion in an elite guard by Osceola. William Loren Katz tells us that when Osceola was held captive at Ft. Moultrie in South Carolina, he had with him a guard of some fifty-five warriors, of whom fifty-two were "Black Seminoles."

The close relationship between the Seminoles and their slaves played an important role in negotiations related to proposals for removal of the Seminoles to Indian Territory. The Indians steadfastly refused to leave their slaves behind. This is addressed by Peters when she states that the thorny question of the disposition of Africans and the determination of the federal government to relocate the Seminoles in the midst of their slave-hunting enemies, the Creeks, prevented a peaceful emigration of the Florida Indians.

A man by the name of Abraham, who is probably the best known of the black Indians, was instrumental in negotiating a satisfactory settlement of the question of disposition of the slaves. In his role as interpreter and negotiator for the Seminoles, Abraham's presence on various occasions has been more thoroughly documented than some of the other black Indians. However, Kenneth Porter emphasizes Abraham's stature by ranking him as one of the "most remarkable" blacks ever produced in this country before emancipation. He assigns Abraham this exalted position based on the fact that whether he was greatly admired or intensely despised, "his ability and influence were recognized by all."

Although he was the slave of head-chief Micanopy, Abraham operated as senior statesman for the Seminoles. He accompanied Micanopy and a delegation of Seminoles to Washington in 1825-26 as interpreters. It was through Abraham's efforts that the red and black allies were finally given permission to move together to the Indian Territory. The immigration of the Seminoles was contingent on the condition that their slaves accompany them to Indian Territory and that they (the blacks) be "secure in their persons and property," Porter wrote. Second only to being allowed to remain in Florida, this was the best possible solution for them and one that Abraham worked hard to achieve, as it was the only way that blacks could be guaranteed their freedom.

Abraham was not the only "Black Indian" to make significant contributions to the Seminole cause. Of near or equal importance was a man called John Caesar, though his contributions were those of a guerilla fighter as contrasted to Abraham's role of negotiator. He was the "slave" or dependent of the Seminole Chief, Emathla.

The relationship between the Indians and Africans was close and sympathetic from the outset. This was also true of the black Indians who moved easily between the two peoples. Porter tells us that it was common for slaves on the plantations to have Indian wives and vice-versa. John Caesar, described as a black Indian, had a wife on one of the plantations near St. Augustine, a circumstance highly favorable to his activities among the local plantation slaves. It was his role to incite these slaves to rebellion in cooperation with Seminole raids.

Characterized as "militant and uncompromising," John Horse, or Juan Cavallo, was one of the primary military leaders among the Seminoles and black Indians. He was awarded the title of war-chief by the Seminoles, a rare honor for one who was not a member of the tribe. Among his other exploits, John Horse is credited with participating in the massacre of Major Francis Dade and his troops, an event that marked the beginning of the Second Seminole War. According to Philip Thomas, John Horse became the most respected and legendary black warrior in Seminole history.

While it would be convenient to suggest that all black Indians fought on the side of the Seminoles, this was not the case. According to Porter, a few Africans served against their own people. Most notable among these was Cudjo, a runaway slave distinguished by his noticeable limp.

Described by Porter as the principal and almost the only black Seminole partisan in the early part of the Second Seminole War, he served primarily as interpreter and guide for the whites. It is thought that Cudjo and his family were eventually removed to Indian Territory in later years.

Many persons in the region of Seminole County, Oklahoma were known by the surname Cudjo.

Another individual deserving of mention in this connection is Nero, who served as Governor Keith Call's guide.

That black Indians elected to serve the whites does not necessarily reflect a desire to see the Seminoles defeated, rather, it may be that these individuals were discerning enough to anticipate the eventual outcome of the Seminole Wars.

An interesting postscript to the saga of the black Indians in the Seminole Wars is what became of them after they left Florida.

The close relationship between the black Indians and the Seminoles continued after the move West and the eventual fate of one group of exiles is a most interesting and little known chapter in our history.

When they arrived in Indian Territory, the Seminoles discovered that their land allotment was actually part of the Creek nation and under their control. This was an intolerable situation for the Seminoles and their slaves as the Creeks had long since assimilated white attitudes and practices with regard to slavery. Many of the Seminoles slaves were captured almost immediately by the Creeks and sold into slavery.

Under the leadership of Wild Cat (Coacoochee) and with the help of John Horse, a small band of Seminoles and black Indians determined to seek their freedom elsewhere and escaped to Mexico where they made a deal with the Mexican government to act as border peacekeepers in exchange for land on which to settle. Some of these men earned reputations as "the best trackers and Indian fighters ever engaged along the Mexican border," wrote Scott Thybony.

Although their descendants have since been removed to the Texas side of the border, they remain intensely proud of their heritage and identify themselves as descendants of the black Indians who fought in the Seminole Wars.

It must be noted, however, that the omission from history of the role of the black Indians in the Seminole Wars is not an isolated instance. Rather, obscurity seems a common fate shared by most black and other minority soldiers in U.S. history.

We are only now learning of the role of the "buffalo" soldiers who were instrumental in the taming of the West, earning their renown as Indian fighters rather than allies. That the "Black Indians" have been so long neglected is perhaps more understandable, though no more acceptable, when we realize that it has taken this country more than fifty years to recognize the heroism of seven black men who were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for deeds of uncommon valor in World War II.

The "Black Indians" are surely deserving of recognition as the unsung heroes of the Seminole Wars. ***-SFH***

Characterized as "militant and uncompromising," John Horse, or Juan Cavallo, was one of the primary military leaders among the Seminoles and black Indians.

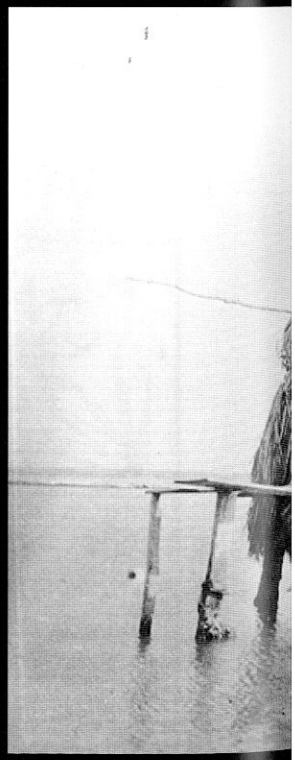
USEPPA ISLAND

& FORT CASEY IN THE SECOND & THIRD SEMINOLE WARS

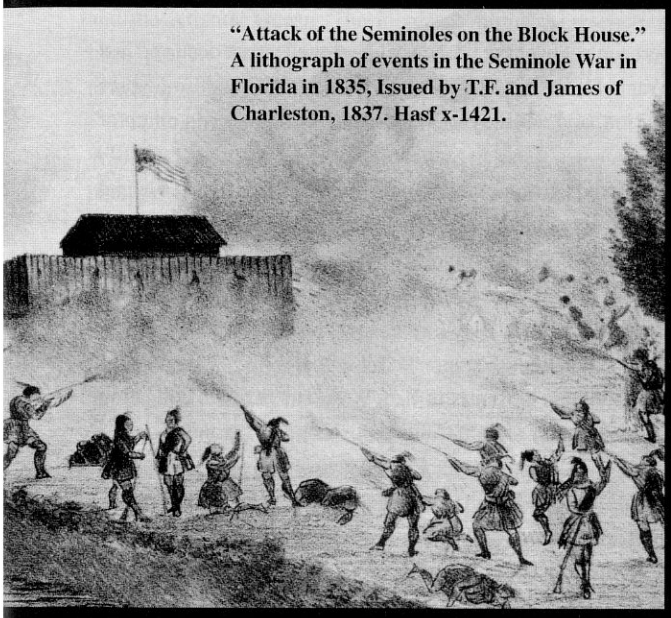
IN the mid 1800s the United States government attempted to induce the Seminole Indians to voluntarily migrate from central and south Florida into Indian Territory, present-day Oklahoma. The Second and Third Seminole Wars were fought when the Indians resisted. By 1858, all but about 150 of them were sent west by boat. The remainder stayed in the Everglades and are the forefathers of today's Florida Seminole tribe.

From 1835 to 1858, Southwest Florida was the scene of dozens of military actions and many installations, some temporary and some permanent, were constructed. Little has been written about these forts and depots that dotted Charlotte Harbor, the Caloosahatchee River, the Big Cypress Swamp, and the Everglades.

Tiny Useppa Island, located between Pine Island and Captiva in Charlotte Harbor, was the site of Army and Navy military activity during this period, including the construction and manning of a military post, Fort Casey. Named for Captain John C. Casey, a highly respected Indian Agent, the fort was an attempt to establish a military presence in close proximity to assigned Seminole areas, provide a point of communication with the Indians, and to exert "a strong moral influence on them."

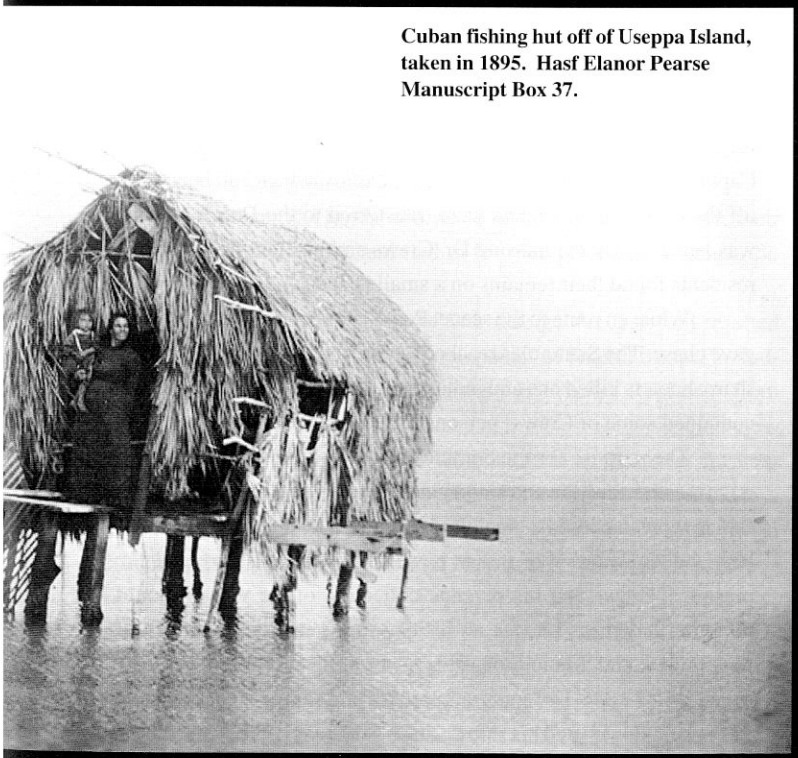


BY JAMES JENNINGS

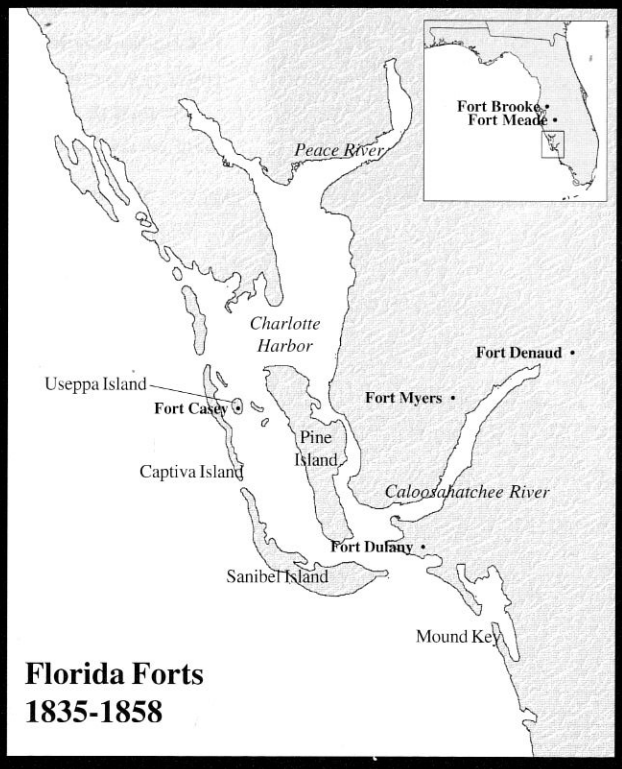


"Attack of the Seminoles on the Block House." A lithograph of events in the Seminole War in Florida in 1835, Issued by T.F. and James of Charleston, 1837. Hasf x-1421.

Is was said that Captain John C. Casey was the only U.S. Military figure that Billy Bowlegs (pictured) trusted. Hasf Smithsonian Institute 80-147-2.



Cuban fishing hut off of Useppa Island, taken in 1895. Hasf Elanor Pearse Manuscript Box 37.



Florida Forts 1835-1858

ON APRIL 1, 1836, A GROUP OF TWENTY-FIVE SEMINOLES, LED BY CHIEF WYHOKEE, ATTACKED USEPPA

Useppa Island, today the site of an exclusive resort and club, has been inhabited for many years. Ancient Calusa Indians built burial mounds on the island and by the early 1800's, it was a year-round base of operations for Spanish fishermen from Cuba. Jose Caldez managed the fishing industry in Charlotte Harbor for the Bardias House of Havana and had a permanent encampment on the southwest corner of the island, known as Caldez, Guiseppe, Joseph's, Josefa, or Toampa Island. Useppa is thought to be a variation of Guiseppe.

The relatively high elevation made the island one of the most habitable in Charlotte Harbor. Indian mounds provided an even higher foundation for homes. An 1848 reconnaissance of the island stated that there were six to seven acres of arable land above the reach of tides, an excellent natural harbor, and comparatively few mosquitoes.

Swamp gases, thought to be the cause of Florida fever, or malaria, were reported to be minimal. The natural channel that snaked through Charlotte Harbor ran to the east of Useppa, provided good access for boats.

The federal government's first effort to exert control over the islands in Charlotte Harbor occurred just before the outbreak of the Second Seminole War in December 1835. Settlers had complained of smugglers in the area trading contraband rifles, ammunition, and whiskey to the Indians for animal and alligator skins.

Dr. Henry B. Crews from Key West was appointed Customs Collector to stop the illegal trade. He and his wife set up their home on Useppa Island to monitor the activities of Caldez and the fifty other inhabitants. Crews was heavy-handed and intensely disliked.

On December 28, 1835, a Seminole ambush of Major Francis Dade and his men as they were marching northeast of Tampa initiated the Second Seminole War. Barely four months later, on April 1, 1836, a group of twenty-five Seminoles led by Chief Wyhokee attacked Useppa.

Crews was on a hunting trip on the mainland and his wife was in Key West. His revenue collection office was pillaged and burned and his personal property stolen. Caldez's fishery and camp was plundered and the inhabitants scattered. U.S. Navy Lieutenant Levin Powell was en route to Charlotte Harbor with a launch and a cutter, the USS *Vandalia*. He and his 40-man force had been directed by newly arrived Major General Winfield Scott to blockade the west coast of Florida as the Army pushed into the central part of the peninsula. The purpose of the blockade was to prevent fleeing Seminoles from reaching the Everglades by water.

Powell happened upon two pirogues of frightened refugees as he entered the harbor. Another boatload of scared fishermen and their families were rescued as the naval force sailed for Useppa. After finding no hostile raiders on the island, he dispatched Acting Sailing Master Stephen Rowan in the cutter to a Seminole camp on a nearby island.

The next morning Rowan was able to get close to the camp before he was sighted. A brief engagement ensued in which two Seminoles were killed and two captured. Powell's force was now joined by Captain Farnifold Green and the cutter *Dallas*, which had been sailing off the coast. The prisoners were transferred to the *Dallas*. A search was launched for the missing Dr. Crews and his hunting party. Local residents found their remains on a small island.

While en route to the scene, Powell noticed an Indian canoe and gave chase. The Seminoles reached land before he could intercept, but sharpshooters killed one and induced the other to surrender. The canoe contained some of Crews' personal effects.

The purpose for the Seminole attack is not fully known, but it is suspected that the intermarrying between the Spanish men and Indian women caused a great deal of anger. The attack may have also been a demonstration of Indian power in the face of increased Navy presence. Crews and his revenue collection office was no doubt a tempting target, as he was an official representative of the federal government and was unprotected.

After 1836 Useppa's natural harbor served as a shelter for Lieutenant Powell and his ship during a November 1837 northern gale.

30-foot Indian burial mound on Mound Key, near Estero, resembling the mounds found on Useppa Island. Hasf Elanor Pearse Manuscript Box 37.

The Spanish fishermen and their families were not encountered by the crew.

Captain John C. Casey had served as an Army line officer in Florida during the Second Seminole War. A West Point graduate and a classmate of Robert E. Lee, he also served in the Mexican War before requesting a reassignment to Fort Brooke, near present-day Tampa.

Casey suffered from a severe lung ailment, possibly tuberculosis, the affects of which were mitigated by the warm climate. He served as a subsistence officer and in 1849 he was given the duty of Commissioner for the Removal of the Seminole Indians from Florida. Casey had developed an excellent relationship with the Seminoles, including Billy Bowlegs, the recognized leader of the entire nation. Casey inspired trust in the Indians and he was always present at important conferences and negotiations.

Assigned the task of providing a specific plan for removal of the remaining Indians, Casey recommended that a chain of new forts and depots be established between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The increased military presence, he felt, would improve communications, prevent the Indians from obtaining illegal arms, and make the Seminoles more accustomed to having soldiers in the vicinity of their villages.

Following a tropical storm that severely damaged Fort Brooke, Casey and Brevet Majors R. Wade and W.W. Morris were appointed to a board and directed to find an alternate site for a new post. After performing a reconnaissance on the islands in Charlotte Harbor, they recommended Guiseppe, or Useppa Island. The recommendation, dated January 20, 1849, highlighted the island's central location between the Peace and Caloosahatchee Rivers, its natural harbor, and the arable land upon which crops could be grown.

Although Sanibel and Captiva Islands were larger, they had lower elevations and were often flooded by high tides and gales. Pine Island had abundant arable land and natural water sources, but was surrounded by shallow shoals that prevented boat access.

The report was approved at Fort Brooke and forwarded to the Fifth Military Department in New Orleans. Its commander, Brigadier General George M. Brooke, was against the recommendation, citing Useppa's isolated location and inconvenience. The third endorsement on the report was from Major General Edmund T. Gaines of the War Department, who wrote a pithy. "Let us make an effort to prepare these miserable Indians for their removal to the West," Gaines wrote. "The sooner the better."

Events in the summer of 1849 quickly tipped the scales in favor of Casey's plan. Five young Seminole braves conducted two attacks on trading posts. The first attack took place on July 13th at a settlement four miles north of Fort Pierce. James Barker was killed and his body badly mutilated.

Four days later at an isolated trading post on Charlo-Popka-Hatchee-Chee, or today's Payne's Creek, George S. Payne and Dempsey Whidden were murdered and William McCulloch was wounded.

Panic seized central Florida and white settlers immediately left their homes, crops, and livestock and fled to fortified positions at Tampa, St. Augustine, and Palatka.

Frantic letters sent to Secretary of War George W. Crawford resulted in the quick deployment of eighteen companies of federal troops, including five from posts near Florida and the 7th Infantry Regiment from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

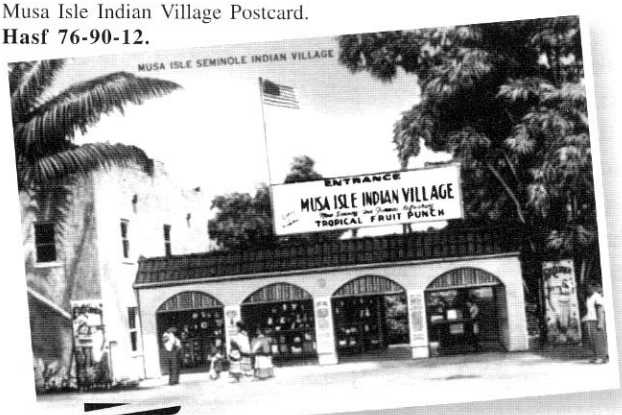
Florida governor William Mosley responded to similar cries for help by summoning into service two companies of mounted volunteers. Casey's swift and skillful diplomacy prevented any clashes between soldiers and the Indians. He and Bowlegs worked closely together to defuse the crisis.

While nearly 1,600 federal and state troops were deployed, a chain of forts was built across central Florida. The westernmost post was a blockhouse on Useppa Island named Fort Casey in honor of the Indian Agent. The post was opened on January 3, 1850. ***Please turn to p. 28.***

EVENTS IN THE SUMMER OF 1849 QUICKLY TIPPED THE SCALES IN FAVOR OF CASEYS PLAN

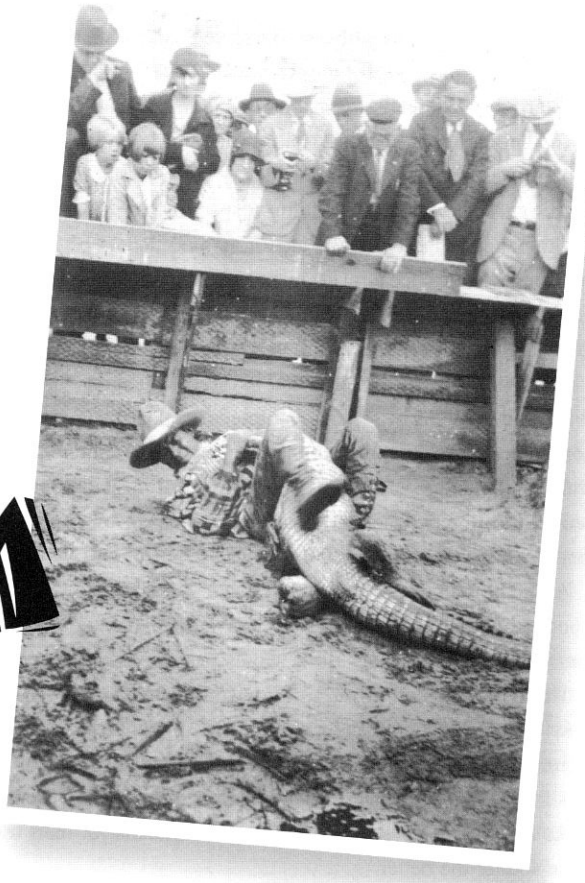
Ancient Indian shell path on Useppa Island. Hasf Elanor Pearse Manuscript Box 37.

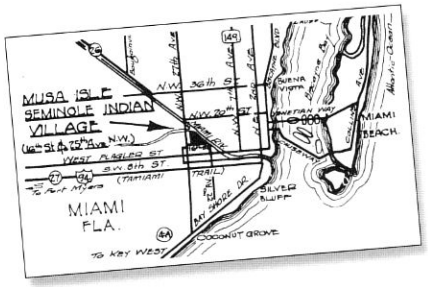
Musa Isle Indian Village Postcard.
Hasf 76-90-12.



INDIAN TOURISM

Alligator wrestling in 1930s.
Hasf photo album.





Map on back of Musa Isle Tourist Brochure. **Hasf Seminole Collection.**

BY PATSY WEST

(Excerpted from the book: *THE ENDURING SEMINOLES: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism.*)

All Florida Indians from the tip of Florida to the north of Lake Okeechobee were popularly known as Florida Seminoles. Because Miami became the major tourist mecca in southern Florida, it was the southernmost group of them, the *i:laponathli:*, who first became immersed in the tourist economy.

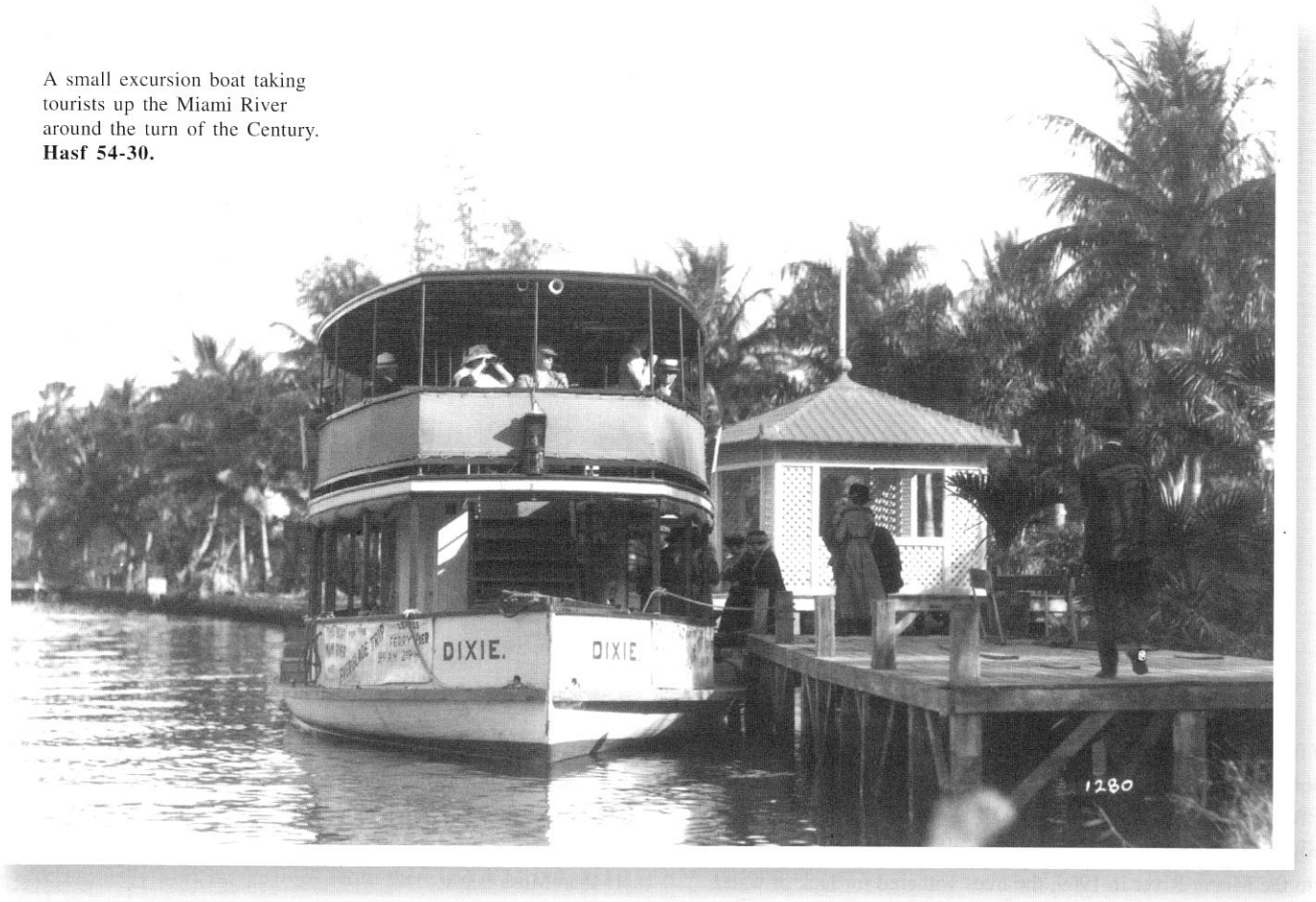
For most readers, *i:laponathli:* is a new term. With the Native voice gradually coming to be heard, it is important to acknowledge the self-identity of tribal peoples, often quickly passed over — or not even mentioned by them — in past scholastic inquiries.

They have been identified by the anthropological community as *Mikasuki* speakers, *Mikasuki*-speaking Seminoles, or *Mikasuki* Seminoles, whose antecedents established themselves in Florida as early as 1740.

The Miami River flowed only four and a half miles out of the Everglades before reaching Biscayne Bay. In the days before drainage, the Miami River Rapids fell six feet over a course of four hundred to five hundred feet. During the rainy season, the water over the falls had a velocity of fifteen miles per hour. This natural phenomena has been described as "a scene of enchantment," by author Nixon Smiley. Along this river the town of Miami was incorporated in 1896.

That year, Flagler opened the fabulous Royal Palm Hotel at the mouth the Miami River, at the terminus of his Florida East Coast Railroad. Guests from the hotel took small excursion boats such as the popular *Sallie* upriver to Richardson's Citrus Grove. The tourists disembarked amid fragrant fruit trees and strolled down sun-filled lanes, sipping fruit punch and doubtless thinking of relatives and friends back home in dreary, cold, snow-covered cities.

The grove was located on an island between the north and south forks of the river. The A.J. Richardson family had settled



A small excursion boat taking tourists up the Miami River around the turn of the Century. **Hasf 54-30.**

there in 1897. The island came to be called Musa Isle, after the botanical name for the bananas that grew there in great luxuriance. In addition to grove fruit, the Richardsons sold tropical jams, jellies, and marmalades and formally called their business Musa Isle Fruit Farm.

Another early, rather crude riverside attraction, operated by Warren Frazee, was located on Wagner Creek near downtown Miami. Frazee, popularly known as "Alligator Joe," had had exploits with the saurians that were a source of local news. Around 1910, he dammed up a natural slough on Wagner Creek and installed an attraction featuring alligators. He had made a name for himself with a similar attraction in Palm Beach in 1895 and likewise entertained early tourists in Fort Lauderdale in 1897.

His Miami venture appears to have been an instant success. The alligator farm was a bona fide tourist attraction by 1911 when it became part of the Biscayne Navigation Company's sightseeing boat tours. Joe was not a passive showman. He got into the pens with the saurians and appears to have been the first person who could be considered a "professional" alligator wrestler. The *Miami Herald* enthusiastically stated, "His manipulation of the gators and crocs is the cause of much wonder. More visitors see Joe's performances in Florida each winter than go to any other single attraction."

The *i:laponathli:* who came into Miami from the Everglades traveled down Wagner Creek, especially when conditions were such that they could not navigate the rapids. In 1911, a Seminole camp was noted "near the alligator farm." In December 1915 thirty *i:laponathli:* were camped "on the banks of the Miami River near the alligator farm." The alligator farm was owned by L. C. Rook, J. C. Twiggen, and E. E. Rhine and managed by Buck Hamilton, who is responsible for the success of Alligator Joe.

A festivity was planned at the Seminole camp on Christmas and during the following week. This rather tenuous joint "attraction" created by the alligator farm and the Indian camp about two blocks away is probably the earliest documented forerunner of the *i:laponathli:*'s long-term relationship with tourism.

The excursion boats brought tourists to these outlying river attractions, making continuous daily runs upriver as far as the rapids. A land speculation company created another attraction at this terminus: a wooden tower, 25 feet high, on the edge of the Everglades.

Tourists left the boats and took a rail cart pulled by a mule through willow and myrtle thickets to the site, then paid ten cents to climb to the top. There they could see the vast expanse of water and little islands, which they were told would soon be dry land as a result of the efforts of the Drainage Commission.

Richardson sold his interest in Musa Isle in 1907 to John A. Roop from Missouri. Roop continued the development of the grove by specializing in mail orders, but visitors were still vital to the business. Some of the grove's most distinguished patrons were the Mellons and Roosevelts, who arrived at the Musa Isle dock in their private yachts. The grove's popularity grew, and it became famous for serving Musa Isle Punch, made from five varieties

"Shadup." Henry Coppinger Jr. shows a disrespectful gator who's the boss. January, 1921. **Hasf 49-30.**

of fruit. The Royal Palm Hotel purchased it to serve in their fine dining room.

But the end was in sight for Musa Isle Grove: As the drainage programs escalated in the Miami area and the Miami Canal opened into the Miami River in 1909, the trees withered for lack of water. Meanwhile, on the south fork of the river, around the bend of the island, horticulturist and landscape designer Henry Coppinger, Sr., purchased ten acres and built a home in 1911. An immigrant from Cork, Ireland, Coppinger came to Miami from central Florida following the disastrous freezes of 1894-95. In 1897, he was in charge of landscaping the Royal Palm Hotel and Flagler's Bahamian hotels, the Colonial and the Royal Victoria in Nassau. He began to plant exotic foliage alongside the lush native vegetation in the Coppinger hammock property, which soon became known as Coppinger's Tropical Gardens.

YOUNG HENRY AMUSED HIMSELF STALKING BABY ALLIGATORS

Coppinger continued to import ornamental plants and sold them from his nursery. Many of his rare specimens are now commonplace in south Florida yards: the single and double hibiscus, the white poinsettia, the ti plant, and the *Monsteria deliciosa*. Noted botanist Dr. David Fairchild (who later established the internationally acclaimed Fairchild Tropical Garden in south Miami) was a frequent visitor, bringing his friends to see the rare vegetation Coppinger had imported.

In 1915 an aggressive newspaper and magazine advertising campaign was mounted to sell Miami as a mecca for tourists and investors, as a land of opportunity. The advertising strategy must have worked, as Miami was growing rapidly. Around 1915, a rivalry began that would continue for decades between Coppinger's Tropical Gardens and Musa Isle Grove.

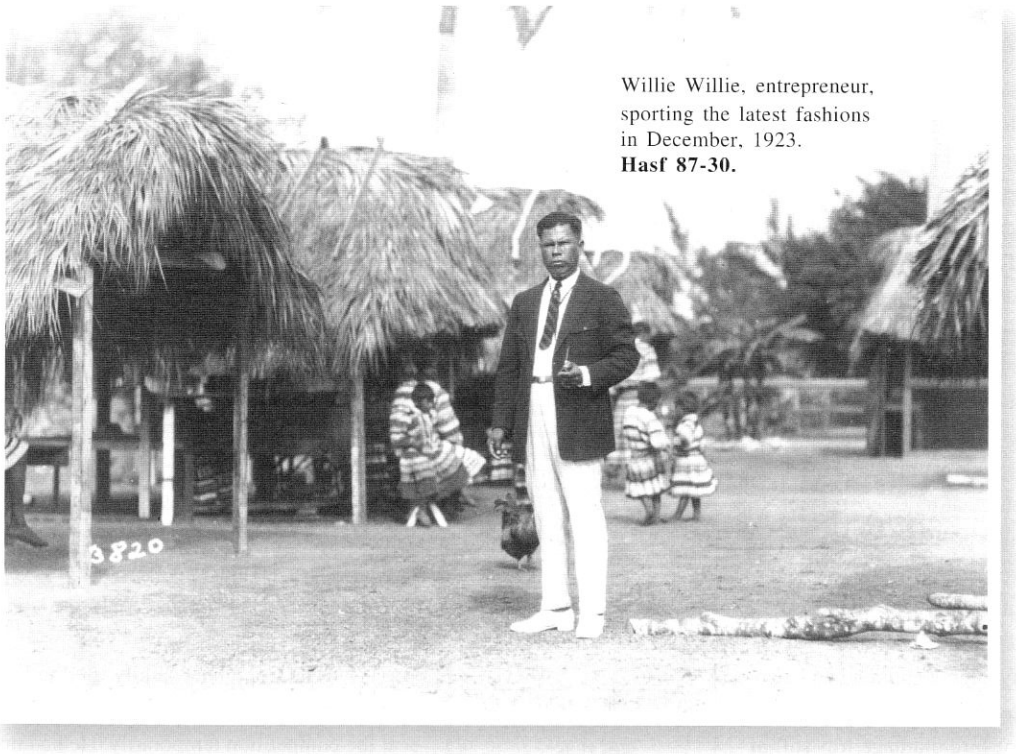
A new tour boat was forced away from the Musa Isle dock by an established rival. The concessioner looked for a place he could take his party and found it at Coppinger's landing. New in the business, he could not afford to pay the Coppingers, but he suggested that the family charge the tourists for a tour of the garden and sell fruit punch. The Coppinger family's punch contained *seven* fruits, two more than Musa Isle's.

While Alligator Joe may have premiered the alligator as an attraction feature, the person who made the term *alligator wrestling* a household word was Henry Coppinger, Jr. Born on the Miami River in 1898, young Henry had amused himself by stalking and catching baby alligators. He would stuff them inside his shirt and sell them for fifteen cents each to the Greeks who ran curio shops in town.

As he grew older, he would dive into the river to retrieve three to four footers. When the tourists began to arrive at his father's attraction, Henry caught an alligator and penned it up in a slough on the riverfront. The news traveled, and a busload of tourists arrived just to see young Henry's alligators.

As enterprising tourist attractions and investors in this burgeoning subtropical city reached toward prosperity, economic conditions worsened for the *i:laponathli:*. Their settlements and farms on the east coast were gradually confiscated by investors who gained legal title to the property. By 1917, Indian families in the Fort Lauderdale area under widowed matriarch Annie Jumper Tommie began to pick crops for white farmers, often on land that they had once farmed themselves.

Annie's mother, Mammy Jumper, was a *ci:saponi:*. Her family consisted of the handful of Creek-speakers who had resided in the postwar *i:laponathli:* enclave at the Pine Island complex. An observer wrote of them in 1918, "[These Indians] living near Fort



Willie Willie, entrepreneur, sporting the latest fashions in December, 1923. **Hasf 87-30.**

Lauderdale are somewhat more progressive than some of the others. They have been forced by circumstances to seek employment and occasionally work on the truck farms there and at Miami, and it is said that they make fairly good laborers. But most of the tribe still look upon such employment with haughty disdain."

Indeed, the *i:laponathli:* considered this family different and therefore a threat to the *i:laponathli:'s* traditional way of life.

Meanwhile, drainage programs had curtailed *i:laponathli:* trade in the Miami area. Miami's last major frontier trading post, Girtman Brothers, had closed in 1925, citing as a major reason the effects of the drainage program that cut off water routes and made it impossible for the Indians to get their peltry to the post.

Coppinger's Tropical Gardens formally opened to the public in time for the tourist season of 1917. A disastrous February freeze hit a few weeks later, and temperatures dropped to 27 degrees for two mornings in a row. According to the Weather Bureau, it was the lowest temperature ever recorded in Miami. The succulent tropical plantings in the garden were destroyed.

Henry Jr. related how the first Seminole camp was established at the gardens that year. Construction of the Tamiami Trail, the first trans-Everglades highway, had begun in Miami. The driver of a Miami tour bus located an Indian camp on the construction bed just outside the city. The tourists got out, looked over the camp, and had their photos made with the Indians.

It was great for business, but one day when he arrived the Indians were gone. The tourists demanded their money back. The guide came to the Coppinger family and suggested that if they would add a Seminole camp as a feature of the garden, he would provide busloads of tourists.

The area *i:laponathli:* were familiar with the Coppinger property, having camped there as late as 1898. Perhaps they had sought the warmth of the Miami River for their winter camp. Phil James, an employee at the attraction from 1918 to 1922, noted that it was the 1917 freeze that he believed had brought the Indians to the Coppingers' site.

THE FIRST I:LAPONI: ENTREPRENEUR WILLIEWILLIE ESTABLISHED MUSA ISLE TRADING POST

Money, rations, cloth, and warmth were incentives for the family of Jack Tiger Tail to return to Coppinger's attraction from their Everglades camp twenty-five miles west of Homestead. Jack Tiger Tail was Wind Clan, his wife Big Towns. By 1918, the Tiger Tails were residing at Coppinger's for the brief but significant tourist season.

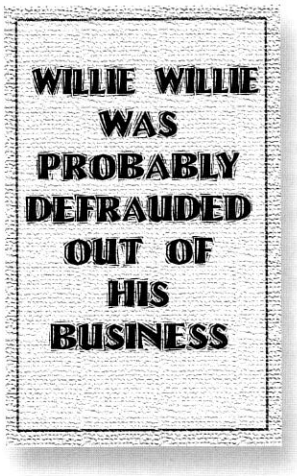
Tiger Tail was a popular figure in Miami. He spoke Vat English fairly well and probably could read and write like his brother Charlie. Tiger Tail was very visible and involved himself in local affairs. In 1917, he headed a search team looking for a lost surveying party in the Everglades.

Obviously based on the Coppingers' success, by 1919 John Roop appears to have compensated for his damaged grove by leasing a portion of the Musa Isle property west of the Roop home to the first Indian entrepreneur, Willie Willie. He established the Musa Isle Trading Post along with the Seminole Village. The post was utilized by white trappers as well, providing yet another attraction for Musa Isle's tourists: seeing the hunters come in from the Everglades with their bounty. It was estimated that by 1930 hunting still constituted two-thirds of the Seminoles' income.

I:laponathli: families who came to Trade at the post stayed three or four days and brought all of their livestock with them—dogs, chickens, and hogs. To supplement the camp's supply of commercial food, the men often went hunting and brought back fresh meat. The women periodically gathered the native starch plant *coonti*, which grew in the pinelands near the attractions. These traditional foods were processed and prepared at the attraction camps and added to the atmosphere of the frontier and the Indian experience.

Willie and his father, Charlie Willie, also had a trading establishment in the Everglades west of Miami. The Willies bought the Indians' hides at that location and shipped them in to Willie Willie's Musa Isle Post. There they sold directly to the market, eliminating the usual non-Indian middleman and making a huge profit.

Pluming had been a major source of *i:laponathli:* income in the late nineteenth century, but in 1900, through the efforts of the National Audubon Society, plume hunting had been outlawed by federal law. Yet, in the early twentieth century, bird plumage was still in great demand for ornamentation on ladies' hats. The *i:laponathli:* had made a lucrative income from the many bird rookeries in the Everglades and continued to do so—illegally—well into the twentieth century.



As author Harry Kersey noted, hunting for plumage "persisted well into the I920s because of the demands of fashion; and it was only the change in women's tastes that brought it to an end, not the Audubon Society or the law. A single egret plume could bring as much as five to ten dollars in the illicit market, or up to thirty-two dollars an ounce—roughly the plumes of four birds.

In May 1919, while at Musa Isle, Willie Willie was arrested along with a non-Indian for violating the "Migratory Bird Treaty Between Great Britain and the United States." Willie and his partner had between them $7,000 worth of bird plumage.

Willie Willie was unique in his own culture, not only as a businessman but in other acculturated ways as well. He seemed equally at home in the non-Indian community, where he dressed in the latest fashion, as a mannequin for Burdines, Miami's major department store. He was also married to a non-Indian, a practice unheard of in those days and one in disfavor with both cultures.

One insider estimated that Willie Willie's various business interests at Musa Isle cleared $5,000 annually. "[He] had more money than he could use. He married outside his tribe and burned up the highways in his high priced car." However, Alan W. Davis, a hunter who became the foreman of the Musa Isle Indian Village, and Lucien A. Spencer, the special commissioner of the Seminole Agency, identified the sale of egret plumes as the business in which Willie Willie made his real money.

During the boom years of the I920s, a large "electric" sign in the heart of New York City at Broadway and 42nd Street glowed warmly in the cold of January, proclaiming, "It's June in Miami!" A similar sign in Hot Springs, Arkansas, read, "A piece of Florida is a piece of gold." Tourists and investors flocked to Miami.

At Coppinger's, young Henry was able to aid his father's damaged gardens and recoup some of the lost tourist trade. After his success with one alligator on display, he collected fifteen more. Soon he had a hundred, from gnarled ancients to hatchlings. He created his own concession at the garden, calling it the "Alligator Farm," but it too suffered a setback because of competition with Musa Isle. The *Eagle Magazine* noted, "Just before the new farm was scheduled to open its gates, a neighbor, with more enterprise than business ethics, suddenly stocked his own place which was nearer the highway . . . with all sizes of alligators, and out front erected a big sign, 'Alligator Farm.'"

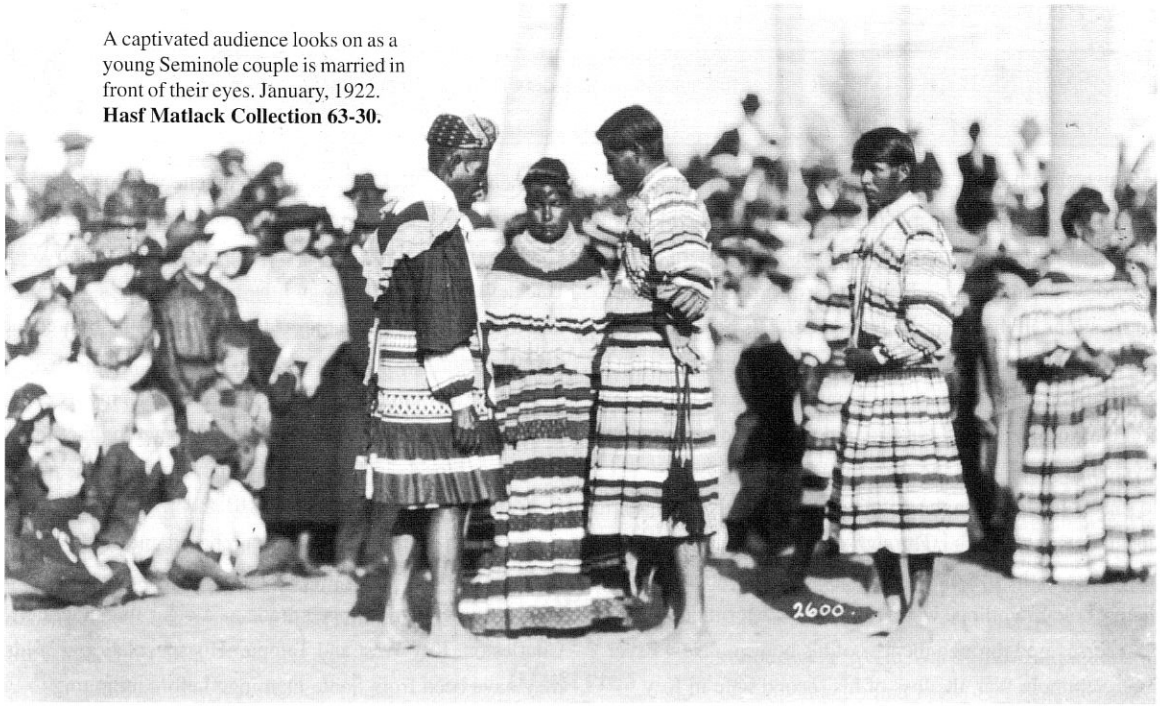
The Coppinger family tried to buy out Musa Isle's alligator interests but failed. However, Henry found a way to beat the competition temporarily. He had noted how excited the tourists became when he entered the alligator pens, and, like Alligator Joe, he began to wrestle the saurians. The results of Henry's showmanship temporarily depleted Musa Isle of tourists as they flocked to Coppinger's Alligator Farm to see Henry Coppinger, billed as "The Alligator Boy."

At a quarter a head admission to the garden and a quarter more to see Henry's alligator show, the attraction successfully recovered from the freeze, and Henry Jr. established professional alligator wrestling as an enterprise that he popularized, with shows at large pools throughout the nation.

Meanwhile, at Musa Isle, Willie Willie had become aggressive in his business dealings. He precipitated a direct conflict with Coppinger around 1922 by erecting a signboard advertising Musa Isle on one of the entrance roads to Coppinger's Tropical Gardens. Henry countered by placing a larger sign advertising Coppinger's next to it. When the Coppinger sign was demolished, Henry accused Willie Willie, who came to Coppinger's in a temper, threatening Henry with a pistol.

Early in 1922, John Roop sold his failing grove to a developer, John A. Campbell. Upon taking possession of the property and getting ready to subdivide it for home sites, however, Campbell discovered that Egbert L. (Bert) Lasher held a lease to the prime waterfront property known as Musa Isle Indian Village. Both *i:laponathli:* and white sources close to the situation were told that Willie Willie had been induced to sign away whatever claim he had to Musa Isle, delivering the property into Bert Lasher's hands.

Kersey's information supports this theory. Willie Willie died of tuberculosis in June 1929. Elizabeth Willie Willie, his white wife, was dying in a New York hospital in 1930 when she brought charges against Lasher. She claimed that Lasher had taken Willie Willie's business without compensation. Kersey wrote: "Her claim was brought to the attention of Congresswoman Ruth Bryan Owen of



A captivated audience looks on as a young Seminole couple is married in front of their eyes. January, 1922. **Hasf Matlack Collection 63-30.**

Miami, who urged Commissioner Rhodes' office to check into the matter. This move led to investigations by the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which unearthed a great deal of circumstantial evidence that Willie Willie was probably defrauded out of his business. However, since the alleged fraud had not taken place on an Indian reservation, an assistant U.S. attorney issued the opinion that it was not a federal offense and the case was closed."

While Lasher has been described by a former employee as a born "promoter" with a "dynamic" personality, his past was cloudy indeed. Prior to opening a small tourist attraction in Fort Lauderdale in 1921 and 1922 (an event in which Willie Willie also appeared as a key player), Lasher had been convicted of dealing in stolen cars and had served time in prison. Yet, while the competitive nature of Lasher's attraction business sometimes created incidents between *i:laponathli:* employees at Musa Isle and those at Coppinger's, interviews with former employees, *i:laponathli:* and non-Indian, have been positive and showed loyal support of Lasher's character. He was an alcoholic, however, and as a result his employees were sometimes inconvenienced and his business eventually failed.

But for over two decades (1922-43), he appears to have had a unique influence in *i:laponathli:* politics and in support of their sovereignty rights. His attractions (Musa Isle, Osceola's Gardens, and Osceola Indian Village, all in Miami) were often locations for press conferences. He offered a firm resolve and backed the *i:laponathli:* in their stand against the government. He was responsible for introducing them to their long-time legal council, O. B. White.

THE ADAPTABLE *I:LAPONATHLI:* INVOLVED THEMSELVES IN A NEW ECONOMY

The year 1922 was a lucrative season for both Musa Isle and Coppinger's. The latter had matured into a rare showplace of tropical vegetation. A full-page article in the *Miami Herald* featured "Coppinger's Pirate's Cove," as the attraction business was known by 1922. The landscape artistry of the senior Coppinger was praised, as were the novelties of the plant nursery and the Alligator Farm, where opportune tourists could see baby alligators hatch from eggs.

Although Musa Isle continued to be called "Willie Willie's Indian Village" during the 1922 tourist season, the attraction was by then firmly in the hands of Bert and Martha Lasher. On January 29, a crowd of over 3,000 persons witnessed a "Seminole wedding," which was to become a Lasher trademark. Not to be outdone, the Coppingers responded with weddings in their village.

The competition between Musa Isle and Coppinger's Pirate's Cove Indian Village not surprisingly caused friction between the *i:laponathli:* employees. Agent Lucien A. Spencer reported in 1925, "Rivalry between two Indian camps near Miami led the leaders of one camp to assault those of the other."

Thus with their hide economy waning, the adaptable *i:laponathli:* involved themselves in a new economy, one in which they were encouraged to practice their traditional life-style and where they were an economic asset. A future special commissioner to the Seminoles, James L. Glenn, was prompted to note, "Their own private folkways have a cash value that must be bewildering." ***-SFH***

ODET PHILIPPE: PENINSULAR PIONEER by J. Allison DeFoor, II. Safety Harbor Museum of Regional History, 1997. $20.00.

Review by Joe Knetsch, Ph.D.

J. Allison DeFoor's little volume adds much to the texture of the history of frontier Florida. Odet Philippe was a true pioneer in Southeastern and Southwestern Florida, settling on New River, in Broward County, Key West and at two locations in the greater Tampa area. His homesite in today's Safety Harbor is now a park and presents one of Florida's most beautiful vistas. He helped to introduce the manufacturing of cigars and the growing of grapefruit into early Florida. In doing so, he presaged the later notable developments of these industries in our state.

DeFoor, who makes his living in the practice of the law, is strongest in his legal and documentary research. Through diligent research he has found many new facets in the life of Philippe and other frontier notables, especially William Cooley. Philippe was a rugged and determined businessman who persevered through the loss of his home on New River during the Second Seminole War, the loss of his second wife in Key West, and his establishment of a store, billiard hall, oyster facility in Tampa and, finally, his use of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 to establish himself as a citrus grower at his "St. Helena" plantation on "Worth's Harbor" (today's Safety Harbor). DeFoor also explores Philippe's cloudy existence in Charleston and his use of trusts to hide assets and manipulate property, something historians without legal training would miss. In most of his Florida endeavors, Philippe was successful and determined to leave his mark.

Philippe also emerges as a man devoted to his family and friends. With the exception of his daughter Louise, from whom he was estranged after her marriage, he attempted to provide for every one of his children, including his adopted daughter Henrietta. His friendship with Fort Lauderdale, Homosassa and Tampa pioneer, William Cooley, lasted throughout the latters lifetime. Once his neighbor on New River, Cooley became his neighbor on Old Tampa Bay and their careers parallel each other during these turbulent times. Philippe's friendships also included Stephen C. Mallory, whose wife, Angela, was his adopted daughter's godmother, the Grillons of Pinellas County fame, John C. Casey (Indian Agent and U. S. Army Captain) and William Hackley. His friendships and the marriages of his daughters (he had four and adopted one), made him one of the best connected gentlemen on the frontier.

DeFoor's volume also addresses the various myths concerning his illustrious ancestor. He has pinned down the fact that he arrived in Florida in 1828, was born in Lyon, France and arrived in Charleston sometime between 1810 and 1818. Like most men of some wealth on the frontier, he purchased and sold slaves and may have participated in an illegal slave-trade operation. DeFoor has well documented Philippe's trade as a cigar manufacturer, in Charleston, Key West and Tampa. His speculation that his family may have been from Santo Domingo before migrating to France, may very well be correct. Philippe's relationship to the pirate, Gomez, and his alleged practice as a doctor still need additional research and may never be satisfactorily portrayed.

That such a man as Odet Philippe existed on the frontier is not strange or totally unique. However, that a historian/lawyer such as Allison DeFoor is willing to take on the daunting task of researching him is unique. DeFoor's talent for good research and documentation add greatly to the value of this short volume. His answers to those questions that have them are short, precise and documented. As a greedy historian hungry for more, I would have wanted to see more prose and even more research. However, I am satisfied that DeFoor has done justice to his topic. This volume does add greatly to our basic knowledge of the Florida frontier and its more prominent inhabitants. It should be on the shelves of everyone interested in Florida's under-rated frontier and read by those who have snubbed it for these many years. ***-SFH***

***Useppa* continued from page 21...**

Brevet Major R.C. Gatlin was the first commander and his officers included C.H. Crane, Assistant Surgeon, First Lieutenant E. Van Dorn, and Brevet Second Lieutenant E.D. Stockton. The post was garrisoned by 108 men of C and F Companies, 7th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Stockton and Van Dorn, respectively.

On April 7, Brevet Major T.H. Holmes took command. Additional notes on the post return indicate that Fort Myakka on the Peace River was being abandoned. The Indian threat was diminishing and units were being sent home. One month later the 7th Infantry left for Missouri. Sixty men from C Company, 4th Artillery under the command of Brevet Captain George W. Rains, replaced them. Assistant Surgeon Crane remained at Fort Casey and a second commissioned officer, Second Lieutenant William G. Gill, arrived with C Company. In July Brevet Major Samuel C. Ridgely of the 4th Artillery arrived from newly established Fort Myers and relieved Rains as post commander.

There are few details of any tactical operations. A common problem in the small outposts of Florida in the 1850s was mind-numbing boredom. For the sixty men on a tiny island at the end of the world, no doubt this was tedious duty. Perhaps an Indian attack would have been a welcome diversion.

By November 1850, most federal and state units had left Florida. On the 10th, Brevet Brigadier General Thomas Childs of the 1st Artillery arrived at Fort Casey and closed the post. The 4th Artillery was transferred to New York Harbor. The Indian Scare of 1849-50 was over and Fort Casey was not needed.

Useppa would be the site of a Union supply depot in the Civil War a decade later, but it would never again be the site of a fortified military garrison. ***-SFH***

book review

THE ENDURING SEMINOLES: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism. By Patsy West. University Press of Florida. $24.95.

Review by Stuart McIver

As far back as 1917 the Indians of South Florida, their lives disrupted by Everglades drainage, made their first small steps into the world of tourism. From small camps where tourists could observe their customs they moved on to high-stakes bingo, sophisticated museums and motorized ecotours of the Everglades.

In "The Enduring Seminoles" Patsy West has traced their climb up from poverty to a 1998 operating budget of $127,881,000 for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. It's a fascinating history told by an author close to the Indians and to Florida's historical community. In the early 1970s she served as curator for the Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

As director of the Seminole/Miccosukee Photographic Archive, Patsy West has worked closely with the state's Native Americans for over two decades. A fourth-generation Floridian born in Fort Lauderdale, she grew up listening to family tales of the Indians who lived in camps along South Florida rivers, particularly the New River, near her home.

"They've had to change their lifestyles through history, and yet they're still Seminoles"

Excursion boats on the Miami River gave early tourists glimpses of Miccosukees in colorful garb in camps near tke river. Henry Coppinger, a native of Cork, Ireland, decided to make an Everglades Indian camp one of the attractions at Coppinger's Tropical Gardens, probably sometime in 1917. Two years later the Musa Isle Seminole Camp, a similar tourist attraction, opened on the north fork of the river, also featuring Indian families going about their every day lives in sight of tourists. To the Indians these attractions offered significant job opportunities.

Some, particularly in government, contended the Indians were being exploited. West presents convincing evidence that the Florida Indians were effective in guarding against sacrificing their tribal customs to the pressures of public exhibition.

"Look at what the Seminoles have done," she told John Barry for a story he wrote for the Miami Herald. "They've had to change their lifestyles through history and yet they're still Seminoles. They haven't lost a lot. They've kept their culture."

After the Tamiami Trail was cut through the Everglades between Miami and Naples, Miccosukees began to open small family attractions which became a colorful feature of the trip across the Glades. So strong was the presence of the Trail Indians that tourism attractions have now become "a significant part of their cultural heritage," contends West.

Following World War II more attractions modeled on Coppinger's and Musa Isle began to appear, many of them in Broward County, such as the Jungle Queen Seminole Village on New River.

Tourism sustained Florida's Indians through hard times. Then came high-stakes bingo and more than subsistence money for the Tribe.

"Ten years ago, we wrestled alligators, made a few dolls and sang songs for the tourists," said Max Osceola, a tribal councilman and entrepreneur. "We've come from the wheel age to the jet age in ten years."

In her first book Patsy West makes good use of the many photographs she has acquired for the Seminole/Miccosukee Photographic Archive. Thirty pictures offer readers views of people and places involved in an activity which has served them well.

"The Enduring Seminoles" is a valuable addition to Florida's literature on the contribution of the Indians to the continuing history of the Sunshine State. Fortunately, for us, West has more books on the Seminoles already in the works. ***-SFH***

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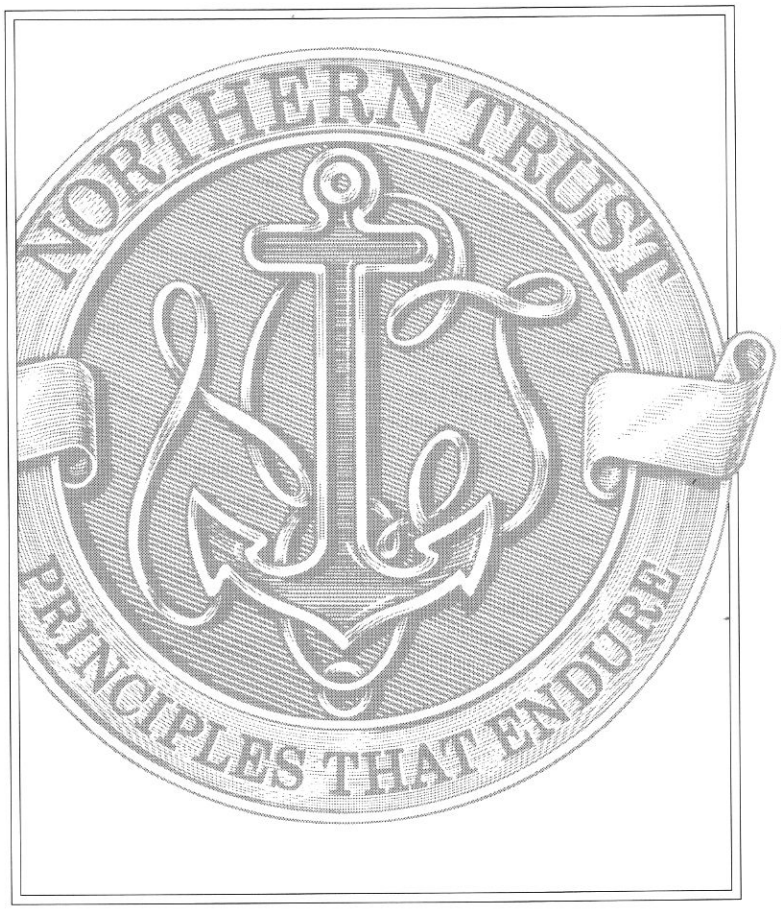

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