

# The Foundation Report

Seminole Wars Historic Foundation, Inc.

Winter 2007



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## Dade Battle, 2006

The twenty-sixth annual re-enactment of the Dade Battle took place on December 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> at the Dade Battlefield State Historic Park in Bushnell. The weather was unseasonably warm, which was wonderful for the visitors, though a bit rough on many of the re-enactors, who were dressed in heavy woolen uniforms. Nearly 2,000 spectators were on hand for the Saturday event, with a slightly smaller turnout on Sunday.

As usual, the Seminole Wars Historic Foundation had a table set up, and sales of our publications, including the new "Short History of the Seminole Wars", were brisk.

The re-enactment is held annually to commemorate the battle that took place on December 28, 1835, at that very location. Maj. Francis L. Dade was in command of 107 officers and men who had been dispatched from Fort Brooke at Tampa Bay to relieve the garrison at Fort King in what is now the city of Ocala. Of those 108 men, only two, Privates Ransom Clark and Thomas Sprague, survived to reach the safety of Fort Brooke. Taking place at the end of a year that had seen growing tensions between the Seminole Nation and the United States, the battle marks the beginning of the long and deadly Second Seminole War.

New for the Foundation this year were talks given at noon each day at the breastwork located in front of the park's museum. On Saturday, Henry Sheldon gave a talk to about fifty people, telling them the history of the Battlefield Park. On Sunday, John Missall spoke to around thirty people, relating the general history of all the Seminole Wars. John also participated in the memorial held on Saturday night, where a candle is extinguished for each of the 108 soldiers who fought that day. At the end of the ceremony, John read a very moving passage about the funeral of the men, taken from a letter by Col. William S. Foster that is contained in the Foundation publication "This Miserable Pride of a Soldier."



*Steve Abolt, who portrays Lt. William Basinger, leads the doomed defenders.*



*Narrator Kent Low, as the ghost of Private Ransom Clark, watches as the victorious Seminoles inspect the dead.*

## Member Event at Fort King

Our spring 2007 member's meeting will be on Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 10:00 am, at Fort King in Ocala. We will meet on the exact site of the Fort, which is owned by the City of Ocala. The city has made the 37-acre site available to us for our meeting. This is one of the most important sites of the Second Seminole War and your foundation has had an important part in saving it.

## **(Member's Event, cont.)**

It was at Fort King on October 21, 1834, that Osceola became known to the whites for the first time when he refused to sign the order to emigrate. Here Wiley Thompson threw Osceola into the stockade and it was here that Osceola shot and killed Thompson on Dec. 28, 1835. In July 1836, at the height of their success, Osceola and the Seminoles burned the abandoned fort to the ground. Here stood the Generals (Clinch, Scott, Gaines, Jesup, Macomb, etc.). Here stood Sprague, Hitchcock, Humphreys, Prince, Bemrose, and Clark. Reconstructed in April 1837, it was established in 1840 under General Armistead as the HQ's of the Army of the South.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows, beginning at 10:00 am:

President Jim Cusick will welcome the members and guests.

Henry Sheldon will narrate the history of Fort King.

Gary Ellis will tell us of the archeological work done at the site.

Henry Sheldon will inform us of past and future preservation work at the site.

Participants will take a walking tour of the Fort King site and the surrounding grounds.

The meeting will then move to the nearby Silver River State Park, where the Foundation will provide lunch. After lunch we will be given a tour of the Silver River Museum, which contains many Fort King artifacts.

Meeting will adjourn around 3:00 pm

Optional: After the meeting adjourns, participants are invited to tour the nearby Marion County Museum of History.

Please make every effort to attend this interesting and informative meeting. Since the acquisition of the site by the city, preservation work has been derailed by damage to the site from the hurricanes of 2004 and a pine beetle infestation. A good turnout at this meeting will help the city officials re-focus their efforts on making the site a place where the public can enjoy themselves and learn about the important history that took place there.

**Directions, from I-75:** Go east on SR-40 (Silver Springs Blvd.) approximately 5 miles to 25<sup>th</sup> Ave. Bear right onto SE Ft. King Rd. Go a little over a mile and the entrance to the site will be on the left.

**Please RSVP to President Jim Cusick via e-mail at [jgcusick@ufl.edu](mailto:jgcusick@ufl.edu)  
or by phone at 352-392-9075 ext. 306**

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## Foundation to Host Session at Florida Historical Society Meeting

The Seminole Wars Historic Foundation will host a session at this year's annual Florida Historical Society meeting to be held at the Belleview Biltmore in Clearwater on May 24-26, 2007. The title of the session is "Military Lives: Officers' Experiences in the Second Seminole War" and will be held from 9:00 to 10:30 am on Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>. The following Foundation members will participate in the talks:

Chair: Dr. Joe Knetsch, Division of State Lands, Department of Environmental Protection and Board Member, Seminole Wars Historic Foundation

"The Seminole Wars' Paintings of Jackson Walker: A Chat" Jackson Walker, Florida Museum of Art, Deland, and Board Member, Seminole Wars Historic Foundation

"Colonel William S. Foster: Fighting the System While Fighting the Indians" John and Mary Lou Missall, Board Members, Seminole Wars Historic Foundation

"Code of Honor: Captain John C. Casey and the Seminoles" Lt. Col. Greg Moore, Command Historian, Florida National Guard

"The Difficulty in This Quarter: The Life and Death of Captain Joseph van Swearingen in the Second Seminole War" James Cusick, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Foundation President.

Discussant: Henry Sheldon, Board Member, Seminole Wars Historic Foundation

Foundation members wishing to attend must register for the Florida Historical Society meeting. More information can be found at the Society's website, [www.florida-historical-society.org](http://www.florida-historical-society.org). Conference-Rate rooms at the Belleview Biltmore can be booked by calling 727-373-3000 and asking for the Reservation Department. The conference room rate is \$120 per night. The deadline for booking at this rate is May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

## Progress at the Fort Dade Site

The Board of Directors has received and approved a proposal from member and archeologist Gary Ellis of Gulf Archeological Research Institute for excavations to be done at the Fort Dade site, on property owned by your Foundation on the north bank of the Withlacoochee River.

The Foundation hopes to open the dig on some Saturday this spring for members who would like to see what's happening. Date and information will be sent by postcard.

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## Wholesale Pricing on “A Short History of the Seminole Wars”

The new Foundation publication “A Short History of the Seminole Wars” has proved very popular at events such as the Dade Battle Re-enactment, the Fort Foster Rendezvous, and the Big Cypress Shootout. The booklet normally sells for \$3 a copy at such events.

One of the intentions for publishing the booklet was the hope that it might be used for sale in museum stores and gift shops and be used by schools to introduce the history of the wars to students. In order to further that goal, the Board has instituted the following quantity pricing for the booklet: For orders of 10 or more copies, the price will be \$2 per booklet, plus shipping. If any of our members belong to or know of any organization or school that would be interested in purchasing quantities of “A Short History of the Seminole Wars, please contact our office at 352-583-2974.

## President's Message

Dear Members:

Rather than embark on a message this issue, I would simply like to encourage everyone to participate in our upcoming events in the busy month of May!

### Membership Event at Ft. King, Sat. May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007

We will be gathering at the site of Fort King in Ocala on Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. This is a rare opportunity to tour an historic place that was central to the Second Seminole War. Best of all, we get to walk the grounds in the company of colleagues who know its history well. Henry Sheldon, our treasurer, has worked energetically to put together a great day's program and we invite everyone to attend. Please RSVP to us so that we can plan for lunch. You will be receiving reminders of this event by email and by postcard.

**Florida Historical Society Annual Meeting (Bellevue Biltmore, Clearwater, May 24-26, 2007)** For those of you who are members of the Florida Historical Society, we certainly hope to see you at our session “Military Lives: Officers' Experiences in the Second Seminole War,” May 26<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

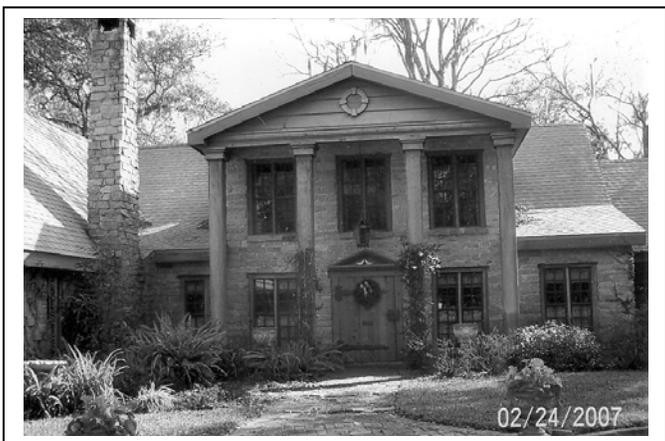
### Excavations at Fort Dade

Finally, a note of thanks to all our members, to Gary Ellis of Gulf Archaeology Research Institute, and to the Donner Foundation, for supporting our ongoing documentation of the Fort Dade site. Let's hope life at Fort Dade is easier for our archaeologists than it was for the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry in 1837. Captain Joseph van Swearingen, had the following to tell his sister Maria: “Out of 140 men there were but three or four that was not sick, and out of the officers myself and one other.... Had we been compelled to remain during the summer months, but few would have survived.” So, Gary, finish up your dig before the summer.

*Jim Cusick*

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## Our Home, Your Headquarters (A message from Frank and Dale Laumer)



Dale and I and our four older children began building our home in 1972 on the north bank of the Withlacoochee River in the heart of what was once the Seminole Nation. Our nine acres lie half a mile west of the Ft. King Road. Major Dade and his command passed a few hundred feet east of here on the afternoon of December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1835. Ft. Dade was built at the Ft. King Rd. crossing in 1837 and on January 11<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Henry Prince and 150 mounted Georgia volunteers passed just across the river.

We have been building, remodeling and adding on for thirty-five years. Our materials are granite curb stones, railroad ties and power poles. They are all large, heavy, and crude, but we have made a comfortable home together. By the early eighties, our two youngest children were old enough to fetch and carry, mix mud, and paint. We have four bedrooms, three and a half baths, a barn and outbuildings. The Foundation's library includes some 4,000 volumes on American history, and 500-600 on Florida, of which 200 deal with the Seminole Wars. In addition, there are several thousand letters, documents, pamphlets, maps, pictures and artifacts.

While Dale and I and our children will retain right of occupancy for the remainder of our lifetimes, our home and grounds are in our trust to be deeded, debt-free, to the Seminole Wars Historic Foundation. For some ten years this has been the headquarters of the Foundation and available to all members for Seminole War related activities. It is YOUR headquarters - use it. To arrange a visit, call 352-583-2711 or email [fdlaumer@earthlink.net](mailto:fdlaumer@earthlink.net)

# Micanopy Comes Home



On August 17, 2006, The Seminole Tribe of Florida held an unveiling of their newly acquired portrait of famed leader Micanopy, painted by Henry Inman in 1832. Inman had been commissioned by former Superintendent of Indian Affairs Thomas McKenney to make oil copies of Native American leaders originally painted by Charles Bird King. It was a wise move, because nearly all of King's 143 paintings were lost in a fire at the Smithsonian Institution in 1865. If not for Inman's accurate copies, the likenesses of many native leaders would have been forever lost.

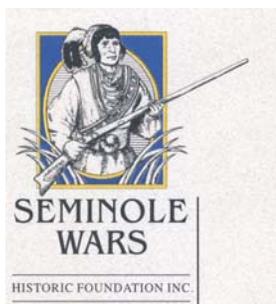
The portrait is more revealing in detail and much more life-like than the most familiar image, which is an inferior copy taken from the McKenney-Hall Collection. In that version, the background is white, which renders the chief's collar almost invisible, leaving the impression of an unnaturally narrow neck. It is also interesting to compare this portrait to the one painted by George Catlin a few years later, in which Micanopy appears more broad-shouldered and slightly rotund.

Micanopy was leader of the Seminoles at the beginning of the Second Seminole War and participated in many of the war's early battles. Captured under a white flag in late 1837, he continued as chief of the Seminoles after the forced migration of the tribe to the Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. Micanopy died in 1849.

## Editorial Box

The Foundation report is published quarterly for members of the Seminole Wars Historic Foundation, Inc. Anyone wishing to submit articles should contact Managing Editor John Missall at 11155 Rabun Gap Dr., Ft. Myers, FL 33917; 239-543-8831; missall@comcast.net.

The Seminole Wars Historic Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1992. Its mission is to work toward the preservation of sites important to Florida's three Seminole wars and to promote publishing and education about this time period. The main office of the Foundation is at 35247 Reynolds Ave., Dade City, FL 33523. Phone: 352-583-2974. FAX: 352-583-3486. Web address: <http://www.swhfoundation.org>.



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