

IN THEIR OWN WORDS
SELECTED SEMINOLE "TALKS"
1817-1842

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SEMINOLE WARS FOUNDATION, INC.
Founded 1992

Pamphlet Series
Vol. I, No. 5
2009

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Introduction

One of the most frequent comments we hear when talking about the Seminole Wars is, “What is the Seminole side of the story?” It’s a valid question. For every conflict there are at least two perspectives. For the Seminole Wars, there are many points of view to consider beyond the obvious “white” and “Indian” sides. There were, of course, the many blacks who lived among the Seminoles. Within the Seminole nation there were the different bands, each with their own outlooks on life. On the white side there were the settlers, soldiers, politicians, and even the taxpayers, who were forced to pay for a long and costly war. Every person who was connected to the wars in any way had an opinion or a story.

Still, the oft-repeated line, “History is written by the winner” certainly applies to the Seminole Wars. One of the problems facing any Seminole Wars historian is that Florida’s Native Americans had no written language. Oral history is a wonderful and important thing, but it presents myriad problems to the historian, who feels that he or she must verify and document every line they’ve written. If the story seems one-sided, it’s because that is usually all we have to work with. To be impartial we have to focus on the commonality of human experience. We all know how it feels to be lied to, cheated, and snubbed. We can imagine what it would be like to be denied justice, forced from our homes, and “hunted like a wolf.” Strong emotions and painful memories are something we all understand.

This booklet tries, in a very limited way, to give voice to the Seminole side of the conflict. We have intentionally kept background information to a minimum. We felt that providing anything beyond the basic situation was simply repeating the past pattern of history being written by someone other than the person creating those words. We have also kept editing to a minimum for the same reason. If you would like more information, there is a reading list on the Foundation website, or you can obtain a copy of the companion booklet “A Short History of the Seminole Wars.” This is by no means a complete compilation of Seminole “talks.” Basically, it was what we had “on the shelf.” There are no doubt many more talks buried in officer’s letters and reports, in the minutes of treaty negotiations, and other official correspondence. Perhaps some ambitious researcher will look them up one day.

When reading these talks there are a host of caveats that must be kept in mind. The most obvious one is that they were recorded by whites, usually military officers, who may have had their own agendas to protect or promote. We must also keep in mind that the vast majority of these words are translations. Florida’s Seminoles speak two distinct dialects, and few of the people quoted here spoke English. How well these words reflect the true intent of the speaker will depend largely on the skill of the interpreter. Such skills could vary widely, from that of a runaway slave with limited command of the Seminole tongues and proper English, to an educated white who had lived among the Indians for years. We must also remember that there was no one standing there with a tape recorder or taking shorthand. Consider the following examples of the same talk: “We all came from the same Mother, and were suckled at the same breast.” (Cohen, 57) and “We all came from one woman, sucked one bubby.” (Potter, 56) Finally, it is important to re-

member that most of these talks were given during some sort of negotiation, and that negotiators choose their words carefully and with an end result in mind.

Yet for all these concerns, the eloquence, emotion, and intelligence of these Seminole leaders shines through. Some of that eloquence may have been added by the romantic literary endeavors of a nineteenth century transcriber, but when we consider the challenges faced by the Seminoles we have no reason to doubt the underlying sincerity of feeling. We can only lament the fact that no one seemed to be listening.

Finally, we would like to thank Frank Laumer, Joe Knetsch, Jim Cusick, and Mike Denham for their editorial comments and contributions, and Jean McNary for the impetus to get it done. We hope you find these words both informative and inspiring.

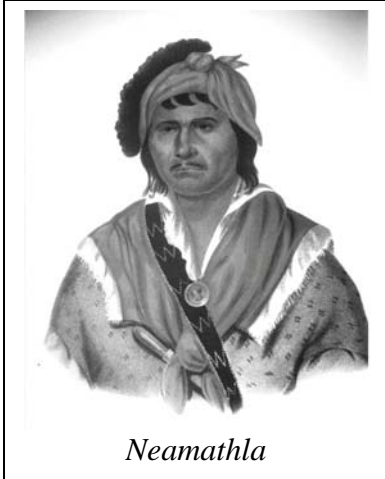
John and Mary Lou Missall

In Their Own Words

September 11, 1817: The Seminoles respond to a demand from General Edmund Gaines that the murderers of several whites be surrendered. (American State Papers: Indian Affairs, 2:159)

Since the last war, after you sent word we must quit the war, we, the red people, have come over on this side. The white people have carried all the red people's cattle off. After the war, I sent to all my people to let white people alone and stay on this side of the river; and they did so; but the white people still continue to carry off their cattle. Barnard's son was here, and I inquired of him what was to be done; and he said we must go to the head man of the white people, and complain. I did so, and there was no white head man, and there was no law in this case. The whites first begun, and there is nothing said about that, but great complaint made about what the Indians do. This is now three years, since the white people killed three Indians. Since that, they have killed three other Indians, and taken their horses, and what they had; and this summer they killed three more; and very lately they killed one more. We sent word to the white people, that these murders were done, and the answer was, that they were people that were outlaws, and we ought to go and kill them. The white people killed our people first; the Indians then took satisfaction. There are yet three men that the red people have never taken satisfaction for. You have wrote that there were houses burnt; but we know of no such thing being done; the truth, in such cases, ought to be told; but this appears otherwise. On that side of the river, the white people have killed five Indians; but there is nothing said about that; and all that the Indians have done is brought up. All the mischief the white people have done ought to be told to their head man. When there is any thing done you write to us; but never write to your head man what the white people do. When the red people send talks, or write, they always send the truth. You have sent to us for your horses, and we sent all that we could find; but there were some dead; it appears that all the mischief is laid on this town; but all the mischief that has been done by this town, is two horses; one of them is dead, and the other was sent back. The cattle that we are accused of taking, were cattle that the white people took from us; our young men went and brought them back, with the same marks and brands. There were some of our young men out hunting, and they were killed; others went to take satisfaction, and the kettle of one of the men that was killed was found in the house where the woman and two children were killed; and they supposed it had been her husband who had killed the Indians, and took their satisfaction there. We are accused of killing up Americans, and so on; but since the word was sent to us that peace was made, we stay steady at home, and meddle with no person. You have sent to us respecting the black people on the Suwany river; we have nothing to do with them. They were put there by the English, and to them you ought to apply for any thing about them. We do not wish our country desolated by an army passing through it, for the concern of other people. The Indians have slaves there also, a great many of them. When we have an opportunity, we shall apply to the English for them; but we cannot get them now. This is what we have to say at present.

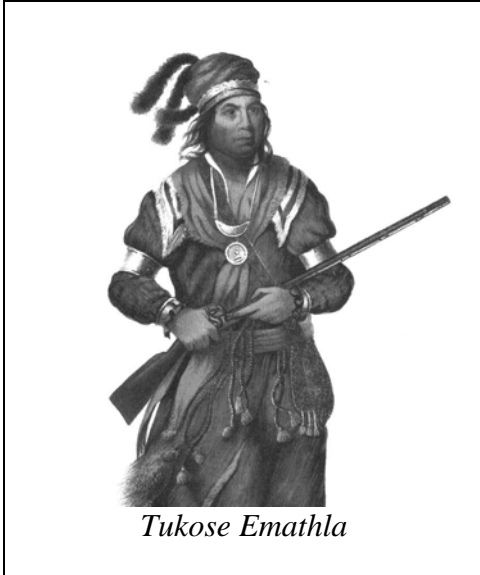
September 11, 1823: The Seminoles have gathered to negotiate the Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Headman Neamathla speaks to the commissioners. (American State Papers: Indian Affairs, 2: 438)



We are poor and needy; we do not come here to murmur or complain; we want advice and assistance; we rely upon your justice and humanity; we hope that you will not send us south, to a country where neither the hickory nut, the acorn, nor the persimmon grows; we depend much upon these productions of the forest for food: in the south they are not to be found. For me, I am old and poor; too poor to move from my village to the south. My cabins have been built with my own hands; my fields cultivated by only myself. I am attached to the spot improved by my own labor, and cannot believe that my friends will drive me from it.

May 17, 1826: A delegation of chiefs has been brought to Washington to meet with President John Q. Adams. The following is a reply by Tukose Emathla (John Hicks) to a "talk" by Secretary of War James Barbour. (Carter, 23:548-551)

Brother: We have heard the talk you sent us by our Agent—You say our Great Father gives us permission to occupy the land we ask for (the Big Swamp) until he may want to send us from it—This does not please us—The land we occupy, we expect will be considered our own property, to remain as such for ever, unless we may think proper to part with it—If this is refused us, we can not be happy, for we do not like the thoughts of being put to the trouble of moving again—The hardship we suffered from our first removal, gave us pain enough—We do not wish to feel it again, and we have such confidence in the justice of our Great Father, that we do not believe he will force it upon us, but will comply with our demands and give us more land—This was promised us by the Treaty of St. Augustine—We only ask that this promise should be complied with—It is necessary to make us comfortable—The tract of land embraced in the present limits of our Territory, is small & very poor—We cannot live on it—Many have been obliged to Settle in the Big Swamp where some good land has been found—Give that to us also—We shall then be able to make bread for our wives & children and shall be satisfied—When we left the good land about Tallahassee and Mickasuky which is now covered by the White Skins, we stopped at the Big Swamp because we knew we could not live further South, and because we were told by Governor Duval, that we might do so; and that we should have the land—We now claim the fulfillment of his promise, and of that in the Treaty.—We were often deceived by the Spaniards—They made promises which they never kept—But we were told, the Americans are a straight people—We believed it—We hope we shall never have cause to change our minds.—



Tukose Emathla

You say our Great Father, sent help to our people, who have been hungry because they could make no corn last year—We feel thankful for this and will not forget it.—

You tell us at the same time, that our Great Father says we must in future rely upon ourselves & by our industry, provide for our own support—We do not complain of this, but we expect he will not deny us such lands as will enable us to do so—You say too, our Great Father does not wish to oppress his red children—We believe it and that he will keep the treaty & give us more land.—We ask that the north line of our territory may be removed so as to embrace a small swamp called Wectooxy.—This will enable us to live and make us contented.—

Brother, you tell us that our Great Father owns a great country over the Big River towards the setting sun and that he is willing to give us a part of it if we will go there and he advises us to send some of our chiefs with the Muscogees when they go, to look at it, and bring us back word what sort of Country it is—We have already said we do not intend to move again—If the Muscogees have a disposition to go further towards the setting sun, we are perfectly willing they should go; but we will not go with them—We have no friends there, the people of that country are strangers to us—The Muscogees invited us to go with them, but it was only to make their party stronger—We will not involve ourselves in the troubles of the Muscogees—We are a separate people and have nothing to do with them—We came brother not to see the Muscogees, but to hold a talk with our Great Father on our own affairs and to claim of him more land in our own Country—Most of us were born on the land we now inhabit & that which we claim to be surrendered to us.—here our navel strings were first cut & the blood from them sunk into the earth, & made the country dear to us.—We have heard that the Spaniards sold this Country to the Americans—This they had no right to do, the land was not theirs, but belonged to the Seminoles—Brother, we have come here, where we should find Spanish, English, French and Americans; to talk with our Great Father about this matter & have it put right—We have not yet seen our Great Father, we have come many days travel to see him and do not wish to return without shaking hands with him—

You tell us brother, that our Great Father has heard that we have runaway Slaves in our Country and that many of our people hide them from their owners—It is true that some slaves who run away from the whites have come into our Country—Most of them however were given up, before we left home: we think that by this time, the rest of them are with their owners—We left orders with some of our chiefs to have them taken and brought to the agency.

We do not like the story that our people hide the runaway negroes from their masters. It is not a true talk—Our people have not done this—We do not consider ourselves bound by the Treaty, to take up any runaway slaves, but those who have entered our country

since the making of the Treaty—But we have never prevented the whites from coming into our country and taking their slaves wherever they could find them & we will not hereafter oppose their doing so, but will give them all the assistance we can.—

Brother, we are glad to hear our negroes held by the whites, are to be claimed for us. This is right, and we hope that our Great Father will put it in the power of our Agent to see justice done us in this matter—We do not know if the white people will mind his talks when he demands our property, for they are not always willing to do right when they can avoid it—The laws of our nation are strong & oblige a man having the property of another in his possession, to give it up to the right owner.—The laws of the whites, who have so much better sense than the red men, ought not to be less powerful and just.—

Brother—You say that some of our young men are not always good and that they go among the whites and kill their stock—A few of them we know have done this and we have punished them for it, and we have lately made such laws as we think will prevent their going so any more—It is not our wish to disturb our white neighbours but to live in friendship with them.

Brother—You tell us that our Great Father wishes to place a school in our nation to teach our children to read & write—We do not wish one at all—We do not believe the Great Spirit intended we should know how to read & write; for if he had intended this, he would have given us the knowledge as early as he gave it to the white people. Now it is too late; the white people have gained an advantage, we can never recover and it is better for us to remain as we are, red men & live in our own way.—Brother, among our people it is thought that at the time when there were but two kinds of people, the red and the white, on the earth, a book was placed by the Great Spirit in the hands of an old man, blind, and with a long beard, who told the red and the white man, that he who killed the first Deer, should receive the book as his reward & be learnt to read it—Both went out to hunt different ways—The white man after going a little way, found a sheep, which being not so wild as the Deer, he easily killed—

He took this sheep to the blind man & told him it was a Deer—The old man believed him and gave him the book and learnt him how to read it—The red man soon after brought in a deer, but he was too late—the white man had got the book. If this cheat had not been practiced, the red man would have been now as the white man is & he as the red man—

Brother—If the Great Spirit had intended that the red man should know how to read, he would not have allowed the white man to take this advantage of us.

Brother—The business we have come here upon, is very important to our nation—We wish to have it settled soon that we may return to our homes & make the hearts of our people glad by telling them what we have done.

Brother, We send you this talk & take the hand you offer us & will hold it ‘till we get your answer.

Tuckasee Mothla or X Hicks, Head Chief

Micko X Nopy

Fokee X Lustee Hajo

Holata X Mico

Nea X Mathla

Tulcee X Mathla

Itcho X Tustenuggy

April 17, 1828: Agent Gad Humphreys has called a group of Seminole leaders together to discuss demands that the Seminoles return runaway slaves they are supposedly harboring. (Sprague, 50)

Agent — I understand you have come to have a talk with me: if so, proceed; I am ready to hear you.

Mico Nopy — We are told there is a white man come into our country after certain negroes. I want to know what right he has to come after them; we have been told that white people should not come into our country: besides, these negroes are ours, and the whites have no right to them.

Agent — This man has an order from the secretary of war to get the negroes, and I am directed to give them up to him, on his giving bonds, in the same way that Mrs. Cook got the negroes she claimed from Nelly Factor. Should the white woman who calls for these negroes not prove her claim, the negroes will be returned to you. If you do not give them up, I shall have to send and take them by force.

Jumper — This negro woman, who is now wanted from us, belonged formerly to a white man, who 'tis now said (by those who wish to get her and her children away from us) gave her to his daughter. May-be this is true, may-be not; but if he did give her to his daughter, for some reason, he took her away again and brought her and sold her to the Indians, who honestly paid for her, and are therefore the fair owners of her. It seems that the white people will not rest, or suffer us to do so, till they have got all the property belonging to us, and made us poor. The laws of the whites appear to be made altogether for their own benefit, and against the Indians, who can never under them get back any of their property; if it once gets, no matter how, into the white people's hands, we fear their laws will leave to us nothing. If we could see them work so as to restore the property that has been stolen, and otherwise unfairly taken from us, and not so as to rob us of the little we have left, we should have more reason to believe them just, but as it is, the benefit to be had from them goes all to the white people's side.

It is well known that a great deal of our property, negroes, horses, cattle, &c. is now in the hands of the whites, and yet their laws give us no satisfaction, and will not make them give this property up to us. The property which this white man is after, we know to belong to our people, and we cannot therefore consent to give it up. If you send and take it from us by force, as you say you must, we cannot help ourselves, but shall think it very hard in the government to force from us that which we have purchased and fairly paid for, when it will not use the same means to make the whites return to us property of ours which they have dishonestly got in their possession. We were promised justice, and we want to see it! These negroes are ours, and we will not consent to surrender them, or say we are willing to have them taken. If they are forced out of our hands, we may not resist because we have not the power; but we must insist that the government does not show in this business that justice which has been so often and liberally promised to us. We have submitted to one demand after another of this kind, in the hope that they would cease, but

it seems that there will be no end to them, as long as we have any thing left that the white people may want, and we have become tired and discouraged.

Agent — You act wisely in not attempting to resist by force the orders of the government, which, you may rest assured will, as far as practicable, do you justice in this and every other matter. You must not suppose, because you are called upon to give up these negroes, that it is the wish or intention of the government to deprive you of anything which of right belongs to you or your people. This course is taken in order that the dispute between you and the white claimant, which has been so long annoying both you and the government, may be settled and for ever put at rest. And I repeat, that should the white woman fail to prove her title to the property, it will be returned to you.

Jumper — We heard the same talk about the negroes which were taken from Nelly Factor, twelve moons since, but the negroes have not come back. We know you tell us what you think, and wish and hope that your words may prove true— but it is discouraging, and makes our hearts sad, to have the white people coming, every few days, to wrong us out of our honest property, when we can never get out of their hands that which they stole from us many years ago. The negroes this man is after are ours, and the white people know it is so; and if you take it from us, we shall think hard of it, and feel that the justice of the government is for the whites and not for us.

I have nothing more to say.

August 15, 1828: Chief John Hicks (Tukose Emathla) has been called before Agent Humphreys to explain why the Seminoles have not yet turned over runaway slaves they are supposedly holding. (Sprague, 57)

Brother, we have thought upon what you said last night, about the claim Mrs. ----- has set up against our nation on account of her negro. We don't like the talk sent from the Big House at Washington, because we think it unjust, and we cannot consent to have the money promised us for our annuity—which is at best little sum to be divided among so many people—taken from us in the way threatened, when our nation has received nothing for it. We find that some of the whites are determined not to let us rest, as long as we have anything that they want; and if every one who asks is allowed to take, we should soon be without money or any thing else worth possessing, and have nothing left but our nakedness and poverty; the right to which will not be disputed with us. We appeal to our Great Father, who has so often promised us protection and friendship, to shield us from the wrongs his white children seem determined to inflict upon us.

We know that the talk you gave us yesterday from him, which the government sent, was sent because of lies which have been told to him about us. We have been a long time trying to catch the negro that the talk is about: once we took him, and delivered him at the agency; this you know, and we wish you to speak for us. We did not bring this negro in because we thought ourselves bound to do it, but because you advised us to do it. He is

not a runaway, but was raised in the nation, out of which he has never been. He was bought from the brother of the Indian with whom he was living at the time our people caught him. We know that Ferrard pretended to purchase him, but we also know that the trade was not a fair one, and that the negro was never properly paid for; but you told us that Mrs. ----- was willing to pay what was due, if she could get the negro; and advised us to take him, if we could, and give him up; and it was this advice which made us strive as we did to catch him. We think it very strange, after all this, that we should be told that we must pay Mrs. -----, when it is clear she owes money to us; and we will not agree that she shall be permitted to wrong us out of the money which is our due from our Great Father; and which he has said should be punctually paid to us; and if it is taken from us for her benefit, or to satisfy any claim like hers, the thing must be done without our consent. We cannot believe our Great Father, when he hears the truth, will permit our rights to be thus taken from us.

We are sensible his power is great, and that he can do with us as he chooses; but we hope that his justice is as great as his power; and believe he will place it between us and those who wish to do us wrong; and we will endeavor, therefore, to keep our minds easy until we hear again from him. If we can take the negro we will do it. Some of our people have been in search for him ever since his escape. We beg our Great Father not to condemn us unheard, or open his ears too readily to the talks of his white children; some of whom we know, from a lying heart and with a forked tongue.

John Hicks, Chief, his X mark.

January 14, 1829: The Seminole leaders have called for a meeting with Agent Humphreys to demand that the protection promised by the government be delivered. (Sprague, 65)

Coahajo, one of the principal Seminole chiefs, spoke as follows:

This house was built for us, so that when we had any difficulty, we might come here and settle it. Many of our people have gone out a hunting, so that we could not bring them all to this talk, but what we could get in, are here. We have come now for the purpose of settling business by sending a talk to our big father. We understand that all the words of the Seminoles have been received by our father as they ought to be—as no jests. This is what we always expect. We wish that the head-chief should give our big father the talk for us.

John Hicks, the principal chief, then spoke as follows:

Our great Father at Washington is our friend—he is our brother. I wish to send a few words to him from my people. At Washington I shook hands with him, and eat and drank with him. What he there told me I have not crooked from, and I expect that he will be straight-forward with me. I took the trouble to perform a long and tedious journey to see him, and what he told me I do not forget, nor have I departed from it. After having the big

talk with him, I thought that all our troubles were at an end; but it seems as if the white people would never let us rest, and therefore have we come to this council house to have our words written down, that our big father may see them. When I left Washington, the vessel I was in sprung a leak, and we were three days up to our middle in water. We are all Seminoles here together. We want no long talk; we wish to have it short and good. We are Indians, and the whites think we have no sense; but what our minds are, we wish to have our big father know. When I returned from Washington, all my warriors were scattered. Say to my father and brother at Washington, that I believe he is my friend, and knows my feelings. When I returned from Washington, in attempting to gather my people, I had to spill blood midway in my path. I had supposed that the Micanopy people had done all the mischief, and I went with my warriors to meet the governor with two. When I met the governor at Suwamea [Suwannee], he seemed to be afraid; I shook hands with him. I gathered all my people and found that none was missing, and that the mischief had been done by others. The governor had them put in prison. I was told that if one man kills another, we must not kill any other man in his place, but find the person who committed the murder and kill him. I wish my big father to give me an answer when he sees this paper—they are my words. One of my people was killed, and his bones are now white at Tallahassee.

Another one that had done us mischief was killed at Alpaha. A black man living among the whites has killed one of my people, and I wish to know who is to give me redress: will my big father answer? When our own law is allowed to operate, we are quick; but they say the black man is subject to the laws of the white people: now I want to see if the white people do as they say!

When I returned home, I told all my people what our great father had said, to which they agreed, and scattered. We wish our big father to say whether he will have the black man tried for the murder of one of our people. If he will give him up to us, the sun shall not move before he has justice done to him: we work for justice as well as the white people do. I wish my friend and father to answer. In answer, we may receive a story, for men going backwards and forwards have not carried straight talks. I agreed to send away all the black people who had no masters, and I have done it; but still they are sending to me for negroes. When I had the big talk, I thought that nothing was left behind. When an Indian has bought a black man, they come and take him away again, so that we have no money and negroes too. A white man sells us a negro, and then turns around and claims him again, and our big father orders us to give him up. My big father is living, and has not forgotten the talk we had, but I have to make the talk over again.

There is a negro girl at Charleston, that belongs to my daughter—her name is Patience. I want her restored to me. She has a husband here: she has a child about a year old, and I suppose that by this time she has two children. I want my big father to cause them to be sent to me, to do as he compels me to do, when I have just claims. If my father is a true friend, he will send me my property by our agent, who has gone to Washington. The mistress of the black girl is Sincothka. I have been told by the governor that all runaway negroes must be given up, but that all those taken in war, were good property to us; but they have taken away those taken in war, and those we have raised from children. My father told me that he had heard of my name a long time; that now he saw me. He told me

that if ever I sent a talk to him, he would listen to it. Will he listen now to the voice of his children? He told me that we were to receive two thousand dollars' worth of corn—where is it? We have received scarcely any, not even half, according to our judgment, of what was intended for us. If the governor and the white people have done justly in this, we wish our big father to let us know. We were promised presents for twenty-one years; we have received nothing but a few promises. It seems that they have disappeared before they reached us—or that our big father did not intend to give them to us. We were promised money, but we have not received a cent for this year. What has become of it? We wish our big father to ask the governor. The white people say that we owe them, which is not true. We did take some goods of an Indian trader, Mr. Marsh, to whom the governor had promised part of our money. We took the goods because we were afraid we should never get what was ours, in any other way; they amounted to \$1,500.

We understand Mr. Bellamy has received from the governor \$1,600; what is it for? the Indians do not owe him any thing,—he has lost no property by us,—we have taken none of his cattle. If a tiger has killed one, it is charged to the Indians. If they stray away, and are lost for a time, it is charged to the Indians. He has lost nothing by us; but my people have suffered loss from him. He has taken all the Indians' hogs that he could lay his hands on. Some of the people from who he has taken hogs, are present now. He has taken hogs—one hundred head—from one man. We cannot think of giving away \$1,600 for nothing. According to the white people's laws, if a man takes that which does not belong to him, he has to return it, and pay for the damages. Will our great father see that this man restores to him what he has unjustly taken from us? for we look to our big father to fulfill his promises; and give to us the presents and money that is due to us. We understand that Col. Piles has received some of the money that is due to us; he is a good man; when we were perishing with hunger, he gave us to eat and drink. He is entitled to what he has received. It appears that the Seminoles, who have done no mischief, have to suffer, as well as the few that have been guilty—this does not appear to be right to us. By stopping our money, the governor has prevented our paying just debts, the debts we owe to the licensed Indian traders, who have trusted us, under the expectation that we would pay them when we received our money.

Our father has put two agents to look over us; our agent, Col. Humphreys, has not seen any of the money or presents that belong to us. It seems that the two agents have differences; we know not the cause, we are sorry for it, but cannot help it. We look to our agent to do his duty by us, and to see that we have our just rights.

I am getting to be very old, and I wish my bones to be here. I do not wish to remove to any other land, according to what I told my great father. When great men say any thing to each other, they should have good memories. Why does Col. White plague me so much about going over the Mississippi? We hurt nothing on this land. I have told him so before.

John Hicks, his X mark.

Coahajo, his X mark.

Tuskenaha, his X mark.

October 23, 1834: Agent Wiley Thompson has demanded that the Seminoles begin to gather for emigration, as called for in the 1832 Treaty of Payne's Landing. The principal leaders meet among themselves to discuss how they will respond. (Potter, 53)



Osceola

Osceola — My Brothers! The white people got some of our chiefs to sign a paper to give our lands to them, but our chiefs did not do as we told them to do; they done wrong; we must do right. The agent tells us we must go away from the lands which we live on—our homes, and the graves of our Fathers, and go over the big river among the bad Indians. When the agent tells me to go from my home, I hate him, because I love my home, and will not go from it.

My Brothers! When the great spirit tells me to go with the white man, I go: but he tells me not to go— The white man says I shall go, and he will send people to make me go; but I have a rifle, and I have some powder and some lead. I say, we must not leave our homes and lands. If any of our people want to go west we won't let them; and I tell them they are our enemies, and we will treat them so, for the great spirit will protect us.

Holata Emathla — My Brothers and Friends! You want to hear my talk. When we made a treaty at Payne's, some of us said if the land was good for us, we would go across the great Mississippi. We were told, it would be better for the red people and the red people could be happy there; that if we staid here the bad white men would wrong us; so we went to see the land our great father said we must have, and it was good land. We told the agents, whom our father sent with us, that we would do as our father bade us. My Brothers! I don't want to talk like a foolish child. My talk is good for my people; and I say we must act honest and do as our great father at Washington tells us.

Jumper — My Brothers! You have listened to the talk of our brothers; now hear mine. I do not make talks to-day to break them to-morrow. I told the agent I was glad to see the lands which our great father said we must have, and I told him that I and my people would go, and now we have no excuse. If we don't go, our father will send his men to make us go, and we will lose many of our tribe, because the wrath of the great spirit will come upon us.

My Brothers! You heard what the agent tells us—Our father at Washington says we must act like good and honest chiefs, and go without any trouble. Let us show our father that his red children are honest.

The following day the leaders deliver their response to Thompson. (Cohen, 57)

Holati-Mico [Holata Emathla] — We come to make our Talk to-day. We were all made by the same great father, and are all alike his children. We all came from the same Mother, and were suckled at the same breast. Therefore we are brothers, and as brothers, should treat together in an amicable way, and should not quarrel and let our blood rise up against each other. If the blood of one of us, by each other's blow, should fall on the lap of the earth, it would stain it, and cry aloud for vengeance, from the land wherein it had sunk, and call down the frown and the thunder of the Great Spirit.

Jumper — At the treaty of Moultrie, it was engaged that we should rest in peace upon the land allotted to us for twenty years. All difficulties were buried, and we were assured that if we died, it should not be by the violence of the white man, but in the course of nature. The lightning should not rive and blast the tree, but the cold of old age should dry up the sap, and the leaves should wither and fall, and the branches drop, and the trunk decay and die. The deputation stipulated at the talk of Payne's Landing, to be sent on the part of the nation, was only authorized to examine the country to which it was proposed to remove us, and report to the nation. We went according to agreement, and saw the land. It is no doubt good, and the fruit of the soil may smell sweet and taste good, and be healthy, but it is surrounded with bad and hostile neighbors, and the fruit of bad neighborhood is blood, that spoils the land, and fire that dries up the brook. When in the West, I told the Agent, "you say our people are rogues, but you would bring us among worse rogues, to destroy us." Even of the horses we carried with us, some were stolen, and their riders obliged to return with their packs on their back. The Government would send us among Tribes with which we could never be at rest. When we saw the land, we said nothing: but the agents of the United States made us sign our hands to a paper, which you say signified our consent to remove; but we considered we did no more than say we liked the land, and when we returned, the nation would decide. We had not authority to do more. Your talk is a good one, but my people cannot say they will go. We are not willing to do so. If their tongues say yes, their hearts cry no, and call them liars.

Charles O. Mathla — Our old speaker was [John] Hicks. He has died, and left us as a father his children; but we have not forgotten his counsels. I was not at the treaty of Moultrie, but it was not made by children. Great men were the actors in it. That treaty is sacred. It stipulated that we should receive the annuity for twenty years, and enjoy the land defined to us. The time has not expired—when it does, then we can make a new bargain. There may be some slight causes of complaint between the white man and red, but they are not enemies. The whites complain of depredations. We have a law to punish offenders, which I have always endeavored to enforce against the people of my own town. As to the subject of removal, my understanding was, that we were not to go till the end of the seven years remaining of the ten agreed upon at Moultrie. Then we may be ready. I am a full blood Indian, and never alter my mind. I adhere to my engagements, and will comply with them according to my understanding. When a man has a country in which he was born, and has there his house and home, where his children have always played

about his yard, it becomes sacred to his heart, and it is hard to leave it. Our Father, the President, has repeatedly said, he views and regards us as his children—and doesn't he know that when a man is settled, with his little stock around him, he has some assurance of support for his little ones? But break him up and remove him, and they must be exposed to suffer! I won't complain of the Agent's talk as a bad talk. I was not dissatisfied with it, but my people are around me, and they feel that while they remain here, they can be happy with each other. They are not hungry for other lands, why should they go and hunt them? The country is very distant. It was with difficulty we, with firm health, reached it. How then would it be with the sickly and infirm? If the sound tree is uprooted by the spirit of the storm, can the decayed branches stand upright? When we went there, Major Phagan was the Agent. He was a man of violent passion. We often quarreled on the way, and that has caused much of the difficulty. If I know myself, I have a good heart. My feelings are kind to all. I view you (the Agent) as a friend, but if we differ in opinion, I am a man, and have a right to express my sentiments. I feel gratified that you are our Agent. I am pleased with our first acquaintance, and hope there will be mutual satisfaction. I am done. We will meet in council to-night, and to-morrow we will talk again. May the Great Spirit smile, and the sun shine on us.

The talks continue for yet another day.

Holati-Mico — As I said yesterday, we are children of the same Father. We are brothers, and should not quarrel, and say hard things. I am sick and unable to express myself as I would wish, but others will give the Talk of my people. I am not excited. Our way of doing business is to proceed coolly and deliberately, and in a friendly manner. We have to represent in our Talk a great many people, for which reason we must proceed with care and thoughtfulness. The people differ in their opinions, and they must be indulged with time to reflect. Time makes out of many little branching creeks that run different ways, one large river, the waters of which then flow smoothly all in one direction.



Micanopy

Micanopa — The Talk of yester-day is still the Talk of to-day. Our sentiments are unaltered. When the twenty years from the date of the treaty of Moultrie are ended, we may consent to remove. Now we cannot do so. If suddenly we tear our hearts from the homes round which they are twined, our heart-strings will snap. By time, we may unbind the chords of affection—we cannot pluck them off, and they not break.

Jumper — Those of us who went to the West, consented; but the rest of the nation do not. The popular sentiment rejects it. We were called up to visit and view the land set apart for us. We went. The country is good, but the distance is great. Our

present habitation is poor, but still we prefer it. We are used to it, and habit has made it dear to us. It was our home when the game was plenty, and the corn high. If the deer have departed, and the corn tassels not, it is still our home, and therefore we love, we prefer it.

Charles O. Mathla — My talk remains the same. Our Agent told us yesterday, we had not answered his talk, and what we gave as a reply, could not be received. If we intended to go, then it would be proper the points be proposed to us should be decided upon. But why quarrel about dividing the hind quarter, when we are not going to hunt. Why strain the water, when you are not thirsty. At Moultrie, I was not. At Payne's Landing, I was. The treaty there, was one of the white people's making. I agreed to go and see the country. I went. I got on board a strange vessel, where I had never been before. It made me sick, till my heart turned in me. I endured it, because my nation might be benefited by the result of the expedition; but how will not the women and children suffer in such a passage? When the men, the grown men and warriors, sunk, and their legs were as broken reeds. There were but few of us in the deputation. We were ill used by the Agent. We were abandoned when sick on the road. We were sometimes made to walk on foot. If the few on that expedition were exposed to such hardships and ill-usage on their journey, how much more suffering must there be, when the whole nation is moving in a body? If the heart is not big enough for tens, how can it contain hundreds? You have just come among us. You meet us in council now for the first time. Remain here with us, and be as a father to us, and let us be as your children. The relation of parent and child to each other, is peace—it is soft and sweet as arrow-root and honey. The disorderly among us may have committed some depredations, but we have spilled no blood. Our hands are not stained with red, and need no water to wash them pure. At Moultrie, my head men and yours agreed that all ill feeling should be buried, and a lasting peace take place between us. The tomahawk was to be under ground, and the smoke of the calumet was to rest forever above it. We agreed that if we met with a brother's blood on the road, or even found his dead body, we should not believe it was by human violence, but that he had snagged his foot, or that a tree had fallen upon him—that if blood was spilled by either, the blood of the offender should answer it. That we were always to meet as friends and brothers, without distinction of rank; and that if one was hungry, the other should share his bread with him. When a man calls another his friend, let him be poor or mean as he may, he ought to yield to him his rights, and not say that he will judge for that other, and compel him to do as he pleases. Yet while you say you are our friend, you tell us we shall go to the West. The half breed read and write, but what we know, is from nature. We drink in our knowledge from her, as our red lip grows white from a mother's milk. When our Headmen visited Washington, the President and Secretary assured us we should not be disturbed in the enjoyment of the territory marked out to us, while we observed the stipulations of our treaty. We have done so!

I love my white brothers, and feel no disposition to displease them. I am done! I am an Indian, and do not make long talks.

Powell [Osceola] — The sentiments of the nation have been expressed. There is little more to be said! The People in Council have agreed; by their Chiefs they have uttered: it

is well, it is truth, and must not be broken. When I make up my mind, I act. If I speak, what I say, I will do. Speak or no speak, what I resolve, that I execute. The nation have consulted, have declared, they should perform—what should be, shall be! There remains nothing worth words! If the hail rattles, let the flowers be crushed—the stately oak of the forest will lift its head to the sky and the storm, towering and unscathed.

Spring, 1835: Agent Thompson has stopped the sale of gunpowder and lead to the Seminoles. Osceola reacts angrily, pointing out that only slaves are prohibited from carrying weapons. (Sprague, 86)

Am I a negro, a slave? My skin is dark, but not black. I am an Indian—a Seminole. The white man shall not make me black. I will make the white man red with blood; and then blacken him in the sun and rain, where the wolf shall smell of his bones, and the buzzard live upon his flesh.

December 28, 1835: Alligator (Halpatter-Tustennuggee) gives his account of the Dade Battle. (Sprague, 90)

We had, been preparing for this more than a year. Though promises had been made to assemble on the 1st of January, it was not to leave the country, but to fight for it. In council, it was determined to strike a decided blow about this time. Our agent at Fort King had put irons on our men, and said we must go. Osceola said he was his friend, he would see to him. It was determined that he should attack Fort King, in order to reach General Thompson, then return to the Wahoo Swamp, and participate in the assault meditated upon the soldiers coming from Fort Brooke, as the negroes there had reported that two companies were preparing to march. He was detained longer than we anticipated. The troops were three days on their march, and approaching the Swamp. Here we thought it best to assail them; and should we be defeated the Swamp would be a safe place of retreat. Our scouts were out from the time the soldiers left the post, and reported each night their place of encampment. It was our intention to attack them on the third night, but the absence of Osceola and Micanopy prevented it. On the arrival of the latter it was agreed not to wait for Osceola, as the favorable moment would pass. Micanopy was timid, and urged delay. Jumper earnestly opposed it, and reproached the old chief for his indecision. He addressed the Indians, and requested those who had faint hearts to remain behind; he was going, when Micanopy said he was ready. Just as day was breaking we moved out of the swamp into the pine-barren. I counted, by direction of Jumper, one hundred and eighty warriors. Upon approaching the road, each man chose his position on the west side; opposite, on the east side, there was a pond. Every warrior was protected by a tree, or secreted in the high palmettos. About nine o'clock in the morning the command approached. In advance, some distance, was an officer on a horse, who, Micanopy said, was

the captain; he knew him personally; had been his friend at Tampa. So soon as all the soldiers were opposite, between us and the pond, perhaps twenty yards off, Jumper gave the whoop, Micanopy fired the first rifle, the signal agreed upon, when every Indian arose and fired, which laid upon the ground, dead, more than half the white men. The cannon was discharged several times, but the men who loaded it were shot down as soon as the smoke cleared away; the balls passed far over our heads. The soldiers shouted and whooped, and the officers shook their swords and swore. There was a little man, a great brave, who shook his sword at the soldiers and said, "God-damn!" No rifle-ball could hit him. As we were returning to the swamp, supposing all were dead, an Indian came up and said the white men were building a fort of logs. Jumper and myself, with ten warriors, returned. As we approached, we saw six men behind two logs placed one above another, with the cannon a short distance off. This they discharged at us several times, but we avoided it by dodging behind the trees just as they applied the fire. We soon came near, as the balls went over us. They had guns, but no powder; we looked in the boxes afterwards and found they were empty. When I got inside the log-pen, there were three white men alive, whom the negroes put to death, after a conversation in English. There was a brave man in the pen; he would not give up; he seized an Indian, Jumper's cousin, took away his rifle, and with one blow with it beat out his brains, then ran some distance up the road; but two Indians on horseback overtook him, who, afraid to approach, stood at a distance and shot him down. The firing had ceased, and all was quiet when we returned to the swamp about noon. We left many negroes upon the ground looking at the dead men. Three warriors were killed and five wounded.

Winter, 1835: Osceola reportedly sends a letter to General Clinch, telling him the Seminoles are prepared to fight a long and bloody war. (Cohen, 126)

You have guns, and so have we—you have powder and lead, and so have we—your men will fight, and so will ours, till the last drop of the Seminole's blood has moistened the dust of his hunting ground.

November 29, 1837: Coacoochee (Wild Cat) tells how he escaped from the prison at Ft. Marion (Castillo de San Marco) in St. Augustine after being taken captive while negotiating under a flag of truce. (Sprague, 325)

We had been growing sickly from day to day, and we resolved to make our escape, or die in the attempt. We were in a small room, eighteen or twenty feet square. All the light admitted, was through a hole (embrasure) about eighteen feet from the floor. Through this we must effect our escape, or remain and die with sickness. A sentinel was constantly posted at the door. As we looked at it from our bed, we thought it small, but believed that, could we get our heads through, we should have no further or serious diffi-

culty. To reach the hole was the first object. In order to effect this, we from time to time cut up the forage-bags allowed us to sleep on, and made them into ropes. The hole I could not reach when upon the shoulder of my companion; but while standing upon his shoulder, I worked a knife into a crevice of the stonework, as far up as I could reach, and upon this I raised myself to the aperture, when I found, that with some reduction of person, I could get through. In order to reduce ourselves as much as possible, we took medicine five days. Under the pretext of being very sick, we were permitted to obtain the roots we required. For some weeks we watched the moon, in order that the night of our attempt it should be as dark as possible. At the proper time we commenced the medicine, calculating upon the entire disappearance of the moon. The keeper of this prison, on the night determined upon to make the effort, annoyed us by frequently coming into the room, and talking and singing. At first we thought of tying him and putting his head in a bag; so that, should he call for assistance, he could not be heard. We first, however, tried the experiment of pretending to be asleep, and when he returned to pay no regard to him. This accomplished our object. He came in, and went immediately out; and we could hear him snore in the immediate vicinity of the door. I then took the rope, which we had secreted under our bed, and mounting upon the shoulder of my comrade, raised myself upon the knife worked into the crevices of the stone, and succeeded in reaching the embrasure. Here I made fast the rope, that my friend might follow me. I then passed through the hole a sufficient length of it to reach the ground upon the outside (about fifty feet) in the ditch. I had calculated the distance when going for roots. With much difficulty I succeeded in getting my head through; for the sharp stones took the skin off my breast and back. Putting my head through first, I was obliged to go down head-foremost, until my feet were through, fearing every moment the rope would break. At last, safely on the ground, I awaited with anxiety the arrival of my comrade. I had passed another rope through the hole, which, in the event of discovery, Talmus Hadjo was to pull, as a signal to me upon the outside, that he was discovered, and could not come. As soon as I struck the ground, I took hold of the signal, for intelligence from my friend. The night was very dark. Two men passed near me, talking earnestly, and I could see them distinctly. Soon I heard the struggle of my companion far above me. He had succeeded in getting his head through, but his body would come no farther. In the lowest tone of voice, I urged him to throw out his breath, and then try; soon after, he came tumbling down the whole distance. For a few moments I thought him dead. I dragged him to some water close by, which restored him; but his leg was so lame, he was unable to walk. I took him upon my shoulder to a scrub near the town. Daylight was just breaking; it was evident we must move rapidly. I caught a mule in the adjoining field, and making a bridle out of my sash, mounted my companion and started for the St. John's river. The mule we used one day, but fearing the whites would track us, we felt more secure on foot in the hammock, though moving very slow. Thus we continued our journey five days, subsisting upon roots and berries, when I joined my band, then assembled on the head waters of the Tomoka river, near the Atlantic coast. I gave my warriors the history of my capture and escape, and assured them that they should be satisfied that my capture was no trick of my own, and that I would not deceive them. When I came in to St. Augustine, to see my father, I took the word of friends; they said I should return, but they cheated me. When I was taken prisoner, my band was

inclined to leave the country, but upon my return, they said, let us all die in Florida. This caused great suffering among our women and children. I was in hopes I should be killed in battle, but a bullet would never touch me. I had rather be killed by a white man in Florida, than die in Arkansas. The whites are too strong for us; they make powder, we cannot. I could live like a wolf, but our women and children suffered when driven from swamp to swamp. My father, King Philip, told me I was made of the sands of Florida, and that when I was placed in the ground, the Seminoles would dance and sing around my grave. The old Indians have told me, that the white men first came from the foam of the ocean, thrown up upon the beach. After laying for a time, subjected to the heat of the sun, they assumed the human form, and walked forth into the interior of the country. The first white man, my father told me, that was seen in Florida, was a Spaniard. His tracks were found on the shore of Lake Okeechobee. The print of his shoe, and the length of his stride, attracted the attention of an Indian hunting party, who followed his trail two days. On the night of the second day, they came upon him while asleep. He arose, much alarmed, and extended to them his hand, which they received, and treated him with kindness. They endeavored to ascertain from whence he came, and from what he said, concluded he came out of the ocean. He had a gun, the first the Indians had ever seen, which he discharged, showing the effect of shot and ball. They took him to their camp, and after resting two days, he went towards the setting sun; no more was seen of him; but it was said the Mickasukies put him to death.

Coacoochee then relates a story of the spirit world. (Sprague, 328)



Coacoochee

The day and manner of my death is given out, so that whatever I may encounter I fear nothing. If death is to come, I will die like a man; if not, I shall go safely through. In going from Florida, I leave behind me the spirits of the Seminoles, with which I have had many interviews. Their spirits have taken care of me all my life. And the spirit of my twin-sister I leave behind. She died many years ago. When I am laid in the earth, I shall go to and live with her. She died suddenly. I was out on a bear-hunt, and when seated by my camp-fire alone, I heard a strange noise—it was something like a voice, which told me to go to her. The camp was some distance, but I took my rifle and started. The night was dark and gloomy; the wolves howled about me as I went from hammock to hammock; sounds came often to my ear—I thought she was speaking to me. At day-light I reached her camp—she was dead. When hunting some time after

with my brother Otulke, I sat alone beside a large oak. In the moss hanging over me, I heard strange sounds; I tried to sleep, but could not. I felt myself moving, and thought I went far above to a new country, where all was bright and happy. I saw clear water-

ponds, rivers, and prairies, on which the sun never sets. All was green; the grass grew high, and the deer stood in the midst of it, looking at me. I then saw a small white cloud approaching; and when just before me, out of it came my twin-sister, dressed in white, and covered with bright silver ornaments. Her long black hair, which I had often braided, hung down her back. She clasped me around the neck, and said: "Coacoochee! Coacoochee!" I shook with fear, I knew her voice, but could not speak. With one hand, she gave me a string of white beads; in the other, she held a cup sparkling with pure water, which she said came from the spring of the Great Spirit: and if I would drink from it, I should return and live with her for ever. As I drank, she sang the peace song of the Seminoles, and danced around me. She had silver bells on her feet, which made a loud noise. Taking from her bosom something, I do not know what; she laid it before me, when a bright blaze streamed far above us. She then took me by the hand, and said: "All is peace here." I wanted to ask for others, but she shook her head, waved her hand, stepped into the cloud, and was gone. The fire she had made, had gone out—all was silent. I was sorry that I could not have said more to her. I felt myself sinking until I came to the earth, when I met my brother Otulke. He had been seeking me, and was alarmed at my absence, having found my rifle where he last saw me asleep. I told him where I had been, and showed him the beads. These beads were stolen from me, when in prison at St. Augustine. At certain periods of the moon, when I had these beads, I could see the spirit of my sister. I may be buried in the earth, or sunk in the water, but I shall go to her, and live with her. Game is abundant there; and there the white man is never seen.

March 5, 1841: Coacoochee has come in for a parley with Colonel William J. Worth. The chief is greeted by his daughter, who had been captured by the army months earlier. The girl gives her father a present, gunpowder and lead she had scavenged from around the fort. (Sprague, 259)

The whites dealt unjustly by me. I came to them, they deceived me; the land I was upon I loved, my body is made of its sands; the Great Spirit gave me legs to walk over it; hands to aid myself; eyes to see its ponds, rivers, forests, and game; then a head with which I think. The sun, which is warm and bright as my feelings are now, shines to warm us and bring forth our crops, and the moon brings back the spirits of our warriors, our fathers, wives, and children. The white man comes; he grows pale and sick, why cannot we live here in peace? I have said I am the enemy to the white man. I could live in peace with him, but they first steal our cattle and horses, cheat us, and take our lands. The white men are as thick as the leaves in the hammock; they come upon us thicker every year. They may shoot us, drive our women and children night and day; they may chain our hands and feet, but the red man's heart will be always free. I have come here in peace, and have taken you all by the hand; I will sleep in your camp though your soldiers stand around me like the pines. I am done; when we know each other's faces better I will say more.

July 4, 1841: Coacoochee has been captured and is in chains aboard ship in Tampa Bay. Colonel Worth has informed him that if he does not cooperate to bring in his followers, he will be executed. The chief addresses the gathered whites. (Sprague, 288)

I was once a boy, then I saw the white man afar off. I hunted in these woods, first with a bow and arrow; then with a rifle. I saw the white man, and was told he was my enemy. I could not shoot him as I would a wolf or a bear; yet like these he came upon me; horses, cattle, and fields, he took from me. He said he was my friend; he abused our women and children, and told us to go from the land. Still he gave me his hand in friendship; we took it; whilst taking it, he had a snake in the other; his tongue was forked; he lied, and stung us. I asked but for a small piece of these lands, enough to plant and to live upon, far south, a spot where I could place the ashes of my kindred, a spot only sufficient upon which I could lay my wife and child. This was not granted me. I was put in prison; I escaped. I have been again taken; you have brought me back; I am here; I feel the irons in my heart. I have listened to your talk; you and your officers have taken us by the hand in friendship. I thank you for bringing me back; I can now see my warriors, my women and children; the Great Spirit thanks you; the heart of the poor Indian thanks you. We know but little; we have no books which tell all things; but we have the Great Spirit, moon, and stars; these told me, last night, you would be our friend. I give you my word; it is the word of a warrior, a chief, a brave, it is the word of Coacoochee. It is true I have fought like a man, so have my warriors; but the whites are too strong for us. I wish now to have my band around me and go to Arkansas. You say I must end the war! Look at these irons! Can I go to my warriors? Coacoochee chained! No; do not ask me to see them. I never wish to tread upon my land unless I am free. If I can go to them unchained, they will follow me in; but I fear they will not obey me when I talk to them in irons. They will say my heart is weak, I am afraid. Could I go free, they will surrender and emigrate.

Realizing that Colonel Worth is serious, Coacoochee speaks to the warriors who will carry the message to his people. (Sprague, 290)

Has not Coacoochee, sat with you by the council-fire at midnight, when the wolf and white man were around us? Have I not led the war-dance, and sung the song of the Seminole? Did not the spirits of our mothers, our wives, and our children stand around us? Has not my scalping-knife been red with blood, and the scalps of our enemy been drying in our camps? Have I not made the war-path red with blood, and has not the Seminole always found a home in my camp? Then, will the warriors of Coacoochee desert him? No! If your hearts are bad, let me see them now; take them in your hands, and let me know they are dark with bad blood; but do not, like a dog, bite me, so soon as you turn your backs. If Coacoochee is to die, he can die like a man. It is not my heart that shakes; no, it never trembles; but I feel for those now in the woods, pursued night and day by the soldiers; for those who fought with us, until we were weak. The sun shines bright to-day, the day is clear; so let your hearts be: the Great Spirit will guide you. At night, when you camp, take these pipes and tobacco, build a fire when the moon is up and bright, dance around it, then let the fire go out, and just before the break of day, when the deer sleeps,

and the moon whispers to the dead, you will hear the voices of those who have gone to the Great Spirit; they will give you strong hearts and heads to carry the talk of Coacoochee. Say to my band that my feet are chained. I cannot walk, yet I send them my word as true from the heart, as if I was on the war-path or in the deer-hunt. I am not a boy; Coacoochee can die, not with a shivering hand, but as when grasping the rifle with my warriors around me.

My feet are chained, but the head and heart of Coacoochee reaches you. The great white chief will be kind to us. He says, when my band comes in I shall again walk my land free, with my band around me. He has given you forty days to do this business in; if you want more, say so; I will ask for more; if not, be true to the time. Take these sticks; here are thirty-nine, one for each day; this, much larger than the rest, with blood upon it, is the fortieth. When the others are thrown away, and this only remains, say to my people, that with the setting sun Coacoochee hangs like a dog, with none but white men to hear his last words. Come then; come by the stars, as I have led you to battle! Come, for the voice of Coacoochee speaks to you!

Weeks later, most of Coacoochee's band has come in, with the notable exception of his brother, Otulke. Colonel Worth agrees to send a messenger (a younger brother of Otulke and Coacoochee) to Otulke. (Sprague, 297)

Capt. Sprague tells the story: An officer was dispatched with an Indian woman, who, in junction with this messenger, was to take a talk to Arpeika (Sam Jones) and Holatter-Micco (Billy Bowlegs). On the way out of port, the steamer stopped alongside of the transport, to take on board the young messenger. It was past twelve, midnight. The moon threw a gloomy shadow over the prison-ship, as the dark, naked forms of the prisoners appeared one by one on the deck of the vessel. The clanking of their irons broke the silence of the night. The bearer of the message was liberated, when Coacoochee, in the presence of all, gave, in a brief and feeling manner, his last word to his brother Otulke: "Tell him this is my last word; it is the word of his brother with his warriors in chains, who will continue so until he comes. We are sick and lame; if he feels for his red brothers he must throw away his rifle, and take the word of the white men. I have been as brave a warrior as he; I have fought as long as he; I have carried in the war-dance as many scalps as he; why then should he make our hearts sorrowful, when Coacoochee sends his heart to him? Ask him to come; if he says no, tell him I know his hunting-grounds and fields, and with my warriors will find him, and let him feel the chains which now make our hearts sad." A pause here ensued; all were silent; a strong feeling depressed and embarrassed the speaker, which deprived him of utterance; and to break the silence, and hide the overflowings of a proud and haughty spirit, he arose and walked the deck: "Here, take this (giving his pipe), it is my pipe; there is tobacco; and say to him I have turned my back and closed my eyes upon our land and the graves of the Seminoles. The whites are too strong; they go by land and in boats: why should our women and children suffer? I can live like a wolf, a dog; why make others suffer? The feet and hands of my warriors are chained; those who stood by us in battle. I am free, but my men are chained; soon I hope they will be free. I have no more to say; if he comes, he must come soon.

Coacoochee is sick at heart.” The Indian woman, who sat an unobtrusive listener in the midst of the number, asked the chief if he had any thing for her to say. “No!” said he, “I never counsel with women, nor send my words by women; what I say are the words of a man, but when put upon the tongue of a woman, it is a woman’s talk; women may listen to women, but my brother will not. You had better stay at home and cook; women lie and talk, you can do no good.” Coacoochee rose, almost overcome with feeling, and with a convulsive grasp bade his brother farewell, and just as he was stepping from the side of the vessel, called him back: “Here,” said he, pulling off his shirt, “take this, and tell Otulke, I send him the sweat of my body; tell him to wear it, if he is my brother.”

November 15, 1841: A group of chiefs has been brought from the Indian Territory in hopes they can persuade the remaining Seminoles to surrender and emigrate. The group is led by Alligator (Halpatter Tustennuggee). (Sprague, 352)

Alligator, Neathlock-E-mathla, Tiger-Tail, Cochus-Tustenugge, and Thlocklo-Hadjo, send this talk to Waxey-Hadjo and Bowlegs.

Alligator has come a great distance to see his red brethren; he followed their old chief Holatoochee, but could not overtake him until now; he has come at last. When Alligator was in Arkansas, he heard that his red brethren here wanted to see him, and he has taken great pains to come to them, to give them the good word, and he now wants them all to make up their minds to go back with him. His namesake, old Alligator, has gone down to see Waxey-Hadjo and Bowlegs, and he hopes they will open their ears to his talk, and receive his words and come in. Alligator is with Neathlock-E-mathla and Tiger-Tail, who have come in with all their brothers and their people; they all want Waxey-Hadjo and Bowlegs to come in with their people and join them. Alligator has come a long way; he heard his red brethren wanted to see him, and he listened to their voice; he now tells them they must not be afraid to come in to their white brethren, who have their hands open to receive them as friends. If they cannot all come at once, let them who are ready come, and let the rest follow me. Their white brethren will receive them as friends, give them plenty to eat and drink, and clothe and treat them well. Alligator has come for his children, like a hen that is looking for her chickens; he wants to gather them all together, and take them with him to his new home, where he will take good care of them, and make them happy and comfortable; he therefore sends out his word to them to come in at once, before the time arrives when they will not be able to find him. Waxey-Hadjo is Alligator’s sub-chief, and they both came from the same parents, he must therefore not delay to come in, and must remember that all his friends in the west want to see him badly. Alligator sends a present to Waxey-Hadjo and Billy Bowlegs, which they must receive the same as if he was with them to give it to them. He cannot come himself because he has some business to attend to here. Alligator now sends his last words. The Prophet has passed for a great man, and you listen to his talk, but you must also hear what Alligator has to say. Are you willing that all your women and children should be killed for the sake of the Prophet? Do you love him more than you do your women and children? Alligator

calls for his children, and will they not hear his voice? You say you don't want to leave this country, because you want your bones to rotten in this land; but this is not right, you must go with Alligator to a better land, where your friends are awaiting to receive you, and where you will live happy. You must not listen to the word of the Prophet, because he will certainly bring you to trouble; come therefore, and come quickly.

Tiger-Tail, Neathlock-Emathla, Cochocus-Tustenuggee, and Thlocko-Hadjo, join in this talk to Waxy-Hadjo and Billy Bowlegs, whom they want to see very much, with the rest of their brethren.

Pasaco-Mico sends word that he has come in, with his people, and has joined Alligator, and that he is treated well by his white brethren.

Alligator, his X mark.
Neathlock- X Emathla.
Tiger- X Tail
Pasuc Mico X
Tustennuggee X Maha.

April 10, 1842: A group of Seminole emigrants board ship at Tampa Bay, bound for the Indian Territory. Among them is Neathlock Emathla. (Sprague, 453)

I was opposed to open hostilities, and, to avoid collision, moved with my band from one secluded place to another. My last town was in the Annutiliga hammock; I thought it secure, but the troops closed in upon us from year to year, depriving us of crops, and subjecting our women and children to sickness and want. To hunt, fish, or plant, led to the discovery of our hiding-places. In the summer of 1838 I assembled my band at Fort Brooke, determined to emigrate; but through the means of the negroes, interpreters, and Spaniards, who supplied powder, dissatisfaction was created among the young men, who, concerting with the Creeks, caused them to enter the camp at night, removing forcibly our baggage, women, and children, and threatening us with instant death if we declined following them, or gave the alarm. This placed us again in a hostile attitude, and as the young men had obtained sufficient powder and lead, they disregarded my solicitations for peace. Our crops last summer were entirely destroyed, which never occurred before, and the approach of troops from all quarters scattered our people, separating husbands and wives, parents and children, for safety. From moon to moon we thought the soldiers would retire, but they continuing their destruction as fast as we could plant, there was no alternative left but to improve the first opportunity to surrender. Coacoochee I knew when a boy; with his father Philip I had sat in council. The story he told us I felt assured was true. With us he had fought, until compelled to surrender. We took his word, and with him, as the moon was growing pale in the light of day, we smoked the pipe of peace, and sent to the white chief the words of our hearts. We came—surrendered. We have been treated well, and now leave our land forever.

April 29, 1842: Halleck Tustennuggee, the last openly hostile leader, has come in for a parley with Col. Worth. (Sprague, 463)

Colonel Worth — Say to the chief, I am glad to meet him; and now take him by the hand in friendship. We have long been fighting against each other, but now the rifle and hatchet are buried deep in the ground. Ask the chief what he wants for himself and his people; tell him to speak out the true words of his heart—we have met like brothers, now let us talk like brothers, disguise nothing, but talk with a true heart and one tongue. Let him tell me what he wants, then as a true friend and brother I will give him my advice, what I think is best for the happiness and contentment of the red man.

Halleck — I will talk to you like a brother; you sent me the five fingers (white flag, with the white and red man's hand clasped, in token of friendship), we have met and taken each other by the hand: the road is now clear and white—the strings of our hearts are white, even our eyebrows—all is white; and the road is clear, so that the red and white man can shake hands in friendship. I will talk to you like a brother—I will tell you the truth—from my heart I will tell you, I have held out a long time for my country—I have fought hard for it. I had always lived here, and when a boy traveled over the country with my bow and arrow: here my father was buried, and I thought I might as well die here as to go to another country and die.

Colonel — The chief has spoken like a brave and true man—a warrior; I honor him for it. I know he loves his country, and has fought hard for it; but would he not be happier and his people better off, where he will not be molested by the whites? They are coming all around him. Your old fields are occupied by whites; and my fears are, that though you and your people may be disposed to peace, the bad white men, which you know we have, will crowd in upon you, and make war. There are not many of you—your head men have gone, your old friends and relatives are also gone—why remain here alone?

Chief — I know there are but few of us left—we are almost alone. Large trees have grown up around me, they have decayed and fallen. A sapling may grow up—as it grows the root strikes still deeper in the ground—as it increases to a large tree the top may bend, even break in the wind; but after awhile the roots will rot, it stands alone, and must fall. The white people are coming in all around us. I know it is difficult for the white and red man to live together; we have bad men among us, as you have—they will do mischief. I am now the head man of all the Indians out. Octiarche I can bring in, and can quiet the whole country. My people are wild, and start at the cracking of a bush; they live in the swamps, and will always live there as long as your troops pursue them. I want the word of peace sent to them, when I can get them all around me, and talk to them like men. I do not say we will not go to the new country: when we come together we shall find our friends and relatives gone; our fields taken up, planted by the white men,—give me time to get these people together when they can listen to your talk and mine; when, I have no doubt, there are many who will say—we have no place to live, no fields to plant, no friends and relatives to talk with, our wives and children are gone—let us go with them.

If I send my word now to come in, and go to Arkansas, they will laugh at me—say it is my scheme to make money; but if I tell them there is peace, they will come here and listen to my talk, to your words, and the words of our friends from the new country. I will send runners to Sam Jones and Octiarche; I know they will come when I tell them, and join us in making peace which no red man shall break. I have said before, there should be peace, but the bad Indians broke it: now there are few, I am the head of the whole, they will do as I tell them. Let the road be clear—the sun to-day is bright and clear, and what I tell you is from my heart; I have given you my hand, and now my heart, in friendship, and what I have said shall be done.

July 14, 1842: Halleck Tustennuggee boards ship, bound for the Indian Territory. (Sprague, 483)

I have been hunted like a wolf, and now I am to be sent away like a dog.

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The Seminole Wars Foundation

The Seminole Wars Foundation was founded in 1992 with the goal of preserving sites significant to the Seminole Wars, establishing educational programs to disseminate information about the wars, and to publish books and other matter pertaining to these important but little understood conflicts.

To that end, the Foundation has published seven books, several pamphlets, and its members have given numerous talks throughout the state. The Foundation has also preserved the site of Fort Dade, and been instrumental in the preservation of the sites of Camp Izard and Fort King.