

1924

Reminiscences of the Indian Uprising Near Fort Gatlin, Florida

Martha Tyler

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REMINISCENCES OF THE INDIAN UPRISING NEAR FORT GATLIN, FLORIDA

The Florida Historical Society is greatly indebted to Mrs. Martha Tyler (nee Miss Martha Jernigan), of Orlando, Florida, for the following interesting reminiscences of the Indian uprisings near Fort Gatlin. The letters of this remarkable woman, born in the year 1839, are replete with interesting and humorous detail.

March 27th,
1924

Mrs. Martha Tyler,
Orlando, Florida.

Dear Madam :

I was very much interested in reading in this morning's "Times Union" an account of the marking of the site of Fort Gatlin, near Orlando, by the Daughters of the American Revolution of that city. The account states that you, then Martha Jernigan, were in the stockade during the trouble with the Indians.

The reading of the article recalled to my mind an incident told me many years ago by my father, Marcellus A. Williams, who was for years a Government Surveyor in Florida. During one of the Indian uprisings, he was visiting the home of Mr. Jernigan. A day or two before his arrival, Mr. Jernigan and others had captured an Indian Chief named Enihaw, his wife, a baby, and Enihaw's mother. While marching the captives to the Jernigan home, Enihaw, while passing through a dense swamp, suddenly picked up his wife and made good his escape. The baby and Enihaw's mother were left in the hands of Mr. Jernigan. During the night my father spent in the Jernigan home, the mother of Enihaw hanged herself under the table in the "smoke house" where she was confined.

The above is my recollection of the incident as told me by my father. If you are the daughter of the above mentioned Mr. Jernigan and remember the incident, I would appreciate it greatly if you would write an account

of it for the Florida Historical Society for publication in our quarterly magazine. Such an article from you would be of very great interest and would be very greatly appreciated by the members of the Society and the citizens of Florida generally. Won't you please do this for us?

Very respectfully,

ARTHUR T. WILLIAMS,

President, Florida Historical Society.

Orlando, Florida,

April 7th, 1924.

MR. ARTHUR T. WILLIAMS,

Jacksonville, Florida.

Dear Mr. Williams :

Your letter received a few days ago, and in reply will say:

The Indians were fussing and killing people around Tampa and Pease Creek, so father thought it best to build a fort. When it was finished everybody went into it - altogether about 80 people besides the negroes. We all stayed there about a year. The regular soldiers were forted about a mile west of us, altogether about three hundred of them. They left before we went home from the fort.

Living was difficult in those days and not very safe. Father planted corn on the Tohopakaliga Island and when he gathered it he had to bring it five miles across the water in a boat. This boat was made out of a cypress tree, 4 feet wide and 30 feet long. After it was brought across the water he had to haul the corn 15 miles in a wagon. One day uncle Wright Patrick had a load of corn and a large pumpkin on it. He met an Indian who asked him if he could have the pumpkin. He told him "yes." He said afterwards he would have given him the pony and cart if he had asked for it. A year or so before that, Uncle Isaac Jernigan was at Tohopakaliga Lake late one evening between sunset and dark, when the Indians began shooting at him. They

shot four times. He said to himself, "It won't do for me to be made a target out of," so he took after them and said, "D-, I will have one of you." They ran and he after them. After a bit he ran into a hammock nearby, where he could hear them yelling across the creek. It sounded like about five hundred of them about a mile away. When he went to look for his pony she was gone. (He hasn't found her yet). He took a bee-line for home through the woods, because he was afraid to go by the road for fear the Indians would waylay him. He didn't get home till about daylight the next morning. He had lost his shoes off his feet, and they were scratched and cut up with briars. He could hardly walk for a week. Father went out and hunted the Indians, but could not find them.

A year or two afterwards he captured Enihaw, his wife, mother, and baby, and left them with Tat Kendrick. They were looking for others when Enihaw picked his wife up and made his escape, leaving his mother and the baby. We kept them two or three weeks, when she hung herself, as stated in your letter.

On one occasion when father was hunting his cattle he met an Indian and asked him if he had seen any cows. He told him "yes, about 8 miles east of here." He went as directed and found one of his choicest heifers cut in pieces and thrown in an alligator hole.

Your father was a good friend of ours. We were always glad to have him with us. I remember him quite well. He had a watch - gold, like himself - and we children would all gather around him like blackbirds to look at it and hear him talk.

I have not been able to write since I fell and broke my right arm about two years ago, but I can furnish you with any information you ask for, and will be glad to do so.

I am Aaron Jernigan's daughter.

Your friend,
MARTHA TYLER.

Orlando, Florida,
May 1st, 1924.

MR. ARTHUR T. WILLIAMS,
Jacksonville, Florida.

Dear Friend :

I have thought of a few more things which might be interesting to you.

Father let your father have his boat to go across Tohopakaliga Lake, as it was six or eight miles nearer to cross the lake that way. Your father left one man to carry the mules, and when he got in sight of the rest of the crew they commenced waving at him, and he, thinking they were Indians, turned and went back to father, which was about 25 or 30 miles, and reported seeing Indians. One of the men (Sherman), took the boat and went back - had to walk 15 miles, but got there a few hours after Ohery did. The name of the boat was "Black Hawk." It was 30 feet long and 4 feet wide with two sets of oarlocks to it.

Your sincere friend,
MARTHA TYLER.

Orlando, Florida,
May 11th, 1924.

MR. ARTHUR T. WILLIAMS,
Jacksonville, Florida.

Dear Friend:

Your letter of the 9th received. You are welcome to publish my letters.

My father's name was Aaron Jernigan and my mother's maiden name was Mary Hogans. My father first came to this country in 1843, and brought his cattle, five or six hundred head of them, and left them here. Then in about a year he moved mother and us children here in January, 1844. I was five years old the 14th day

of February, 1844. It took us four days and nights to come from Jacksonville to Melonville on the boat. They were expecting the boiler to burst all the way down here.

This was a fine country in those days. Father could kill four or five deer almost any time he wished to within a mile or so of the house, and I have seen turkeys so fat that they would burst when they fell to the ground after being shot. I knew father to kill a bear that rendered out 8 gallons of oil. We could kill all the squirrels that we wanted ; also tigers. I remember they killed one tiger that measured nine feet long from the end of his nose to the end of his tail. The beef was fat and nice, the tallow was soft like lard and about 7 or 8 gallons to the beef. Fish was also very plentiful.

Father's father was named Aaron and his mother was named Martha. Her maiden name was Deas. My mother's father was James Hogan and her mother, Frances. That's as far back as I can remember. I have great grand-children married who have children.

If there is any more information I can give you, I will be pleased to do so.

Your sincere friend,
MARTHA TYLER.