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ASI-YAHOLO OR OSCEOLA

by MARK F. BOYD

Of the numerous Indian leaders who have attracted the attention, the interest, or the sympathy of the people of the whole United States, albeit they never derived any practical advantage therefrom, the notoriety attained by the Seminole leader known as Powell or Osceola, probably drew to that individual more attention than has been given to any other Indian before or since. This fame arose from his resolute opposition to enforced emigration from Florida. His motives were regarded as patriotic, and real or fancied romantic episodes of his career have become a part of our folk-lore. Although seizure and deportation thwarted him, a handful of his people, imbued with his determination, succeeded in attaining their common objective.

A biographical sketch of any Indian offers nearly unsurmountable difficulties. Owing to the absence of written Indian records and his own unlettered condition, we are not able to view Osceola directly, but are compelled to observe him as reflected in the eyes of those who were generally his opponents. These images, though usually sympathetic, are nonetheless distorted, and a clear picture is thus unobtainable. Its very dimness has encouraged most writers to give a romantic embellishment to his portrait. While flesh on the bones of such a study as this is often provided by contemporaneous anecdotes, we come to the conclusion that in the case of Osceola, most of these appear apocryphal. Should he have possessed any knowledge of English this was carefully concealed, and all communication with him was through interpreters. It is noted that all the purported utterances of Osceola encountered are expressed in faultless English, disregarding that most if not all of these translations came

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from the lips of some unlettered Negro. In effect these underwent still further translation when rendered into polished English. It is likely the latter affords the explanation for the different versions of some of his purported utterances which have been recorded. As a Creek, Muskogee must have been his mother-tongue, while from his intimate association with the Mikasukies, he must certainly have acquired familiarity with the related Hitchiti language.

The Anglicized version of the Muskogee name of our subject has become orthographically standardized as Osceola, although the variants Asseola,¹ Assiola,² Oceola,³ Oseola,⁴ and still others are contemporaneously encountered. These are elisions on the one hand, of Usso (or Ussa) Yaholo,⁵ or on the other hand, of Hassee Ola,⁶ As-sin Yaholo,⁷ Ossen Yaholah,⁸ Os-cin-ye-hola,⁹ As-see-a-hala,¹⁰ Assyn-ya-hola,¹¹ Yose-ya-hola,¹² and As-se-se-he-ho-lar,¹³ as well as others. McKinney¹⁴ stated that while *Osceola*

1. McKenney, Thomas L., and Hall, James (1934). *The Indian Tribes of North America*, etc. New edition. Edited by F. W. Hodge and D. J. Bushnell. 3 vols. Edinburgh. II: 363.
2. [Potter, Woodburne] A Late Staff Officer (1836). *The War in Florida*: etc. Baltimore. 9.
3. Motte, Jacob Rhett (1953). *Journey into Wilderness*. Edited by James F. Sunderman. Univ. of Fla. Press. 136. McCall, Major General George A. (1868). *Letters from the Frontiers*. Philadelphia. 329.
4. Hitchcock, Capt. A. E., testimony of. *Court of Inquiry-Operations in Florida*. House Doc. 78, 25th Cong. 2d Ses. Jan. 8, 1838. 622.
5. Woodward, Thomas S. (1859). *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek or Muscogee Indians*, etc. Montgomery. 9.
6. [Smith, W. W.] A Lieutenant of the Left Wing (1836). *Sketch of the Seminole War*. Charleston. 5.
7. Williams, John Lee (1837). *The Territory of Florida*, etc. New York 273.
8. Undated report of Lieut. Col. Harney to Gen. Jesup. *Army and Navy Chronicle*. IV, 329, 1837. (Hereafter cited as the "Chronicle")
9. Jarvis, Capt. N. S. (1906). "An Army Surgeon's Notes on Frontier Service." *Journal of the Military Service Institution*. Part 2. XXXIX (5): 278.
10. Westcott, James D., to E. Herring, Nov. 5, 1833. *Causes of the Seminole Hostilities*, etc. House Doc. 271, 24th Cong. 1st Ses. (June 3, 1836) 97.
11. Motte, *op. cit.* 138.
12. Anon. letter from St. Augustine, n.d. *Niles' National Register*, LIII, 165.
13. Sprague, John T. (1848). *The Origin, Progress and Conclusion of the Florida War*; etc. New York. 100.
14. McKenney and Hall, 1934. II: 363. Cohen, M. M. (1836). *Notices of Florida and the Campaigns*. Charleston and New York. 234.

would be correctly rendered as *Rising Sun*, this is an erroneous orthographical adaptation, and that the form *Asseola* more nearly approximates the Indian speech, as the name is derived from *Asse* = Black Drink, and *ola* = water-fall, inferring that the name implied a great capacity for this ceremonial beverage. Others, including Moore-Willson¹⁵ give the roots the significance of *Asse* = sun, and *Ola* or *he-ho-lar* = rising, *i.e.*, Rising Sun. Explanation for this confusion is afforded by Woodward,¹⁶ who related that among the Red Stick refugees in Florida was a well-known half-breed chief named *Hossa Yoholo* or Singing Sun, with whom the then little-known *Ussa Yoholo*, our subject, became confused, shortly after the rise of the latter to prominence. According to a most competent Muskogee scholar,¹⁷ the correct orthography is *Asi-Yaholo*, from *Asi* = Black Drink, and *Yaholo* = Singer, referring to the long drawn-out cry sung by the serving attendant while each man at the busk is, in his turn, quaffing the Black Drink. It thus is a busk title rather than a name. It is unfortunate that the orthography has become standardized as *Osceola* rather than as *Asseola*.

In view of its implication, it is evident that the title *Asi-yaholo* was conferred after the attainment of manhood, as was also the later mentioned "Talcy" or Talassee Tustenuggee, his probable ceremonial name. In view of his youth when brought to Florida, it is certain that these titles were bestowed subsequent to arrival. The former is indicative that he discharged the duty corresponding in the annual feast of the busk or green-corn festival. Should this assumption be correct, it emphasizes our ignorance of his Indian childhood names. At the time when he was an adolescent in 1818, Woodward¹⁸ spoke of him

15. Moore-Willson, Minnie (1896). *The Seminoles of Florida*. Philadelphia. 20.

16. Woodward, *op. cit.*, 44.

17. Thomas, Cyrus. Article *Osceola*. In Hodge, F. W., Editor (1912). *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. 2 vols. Bull. 30, Bur. Am. Ethnology, Smithsonian Inst., Washington, D. C. II: 159.

18. Woodward, 44

as Billy Powell, which is reminiscent of his reputed father or step-father, William Powell. Even after he became prominently known to the whites as an adult, he was commonly referred to as Powell. In this study we shall employ that name when discussing his early life, and Osceola when referring to him in his manhood.

Birth and Parentage

No writers have alleged that he was derived from either the original Seminole stock, *i.e.*, the Alachua Indians, or the very early Creek immigrants to Florida. The opinion is unanimous that he and his immediate relatives were immigrant Red Stick Creeks, arriving in Florida subsequent to the Battle of Tohopeka. Accepting this as likely, wide divergence nevertheless exists in the statements relating to the place of his birth and his parentage. However it is our opinion that from critical examination of many scattered, apparently unrelated, and even seemingly contradictory facts, a pattern emerges which gives a clearer picture of his probable origin.

The year of his birth is not known. Statements that he was born in the period between 1800 and 1806, or specifically in 1804, are apparently derived from estimates of his age after he attained prominence. It would appear certain that at the time of his death he had attained early middle age.

Osceola himself is stated to have declared that he was a Creek of pure blood,¹⁹ and Catlin²⁰ expressed the opinion that his general appearance and actions were those of a full-blooded and wild Indian, although adding that he was generally supposed to be a half-breed. His mother was generally acknowledged to have been a Creek woman, full-blooded or otherwise, but the greatest contradiction arose in connection with his pa-

19. Coe, Charles H. (1898). *Red Patriots: The Story of the Seminoles*. Cincinnati, 28.

20. Catlin, George (1926). *North American Indians*, etc. 2 vols. Edinburgh. II: 247.

ternity. It is generally admitted that his mother was married at one time to a white trader of English birth named Powell. Benjamin Hawkins²¹ spoke of a William Powell as a trader at Tallassee in the Upper Nation, at that time a man of little property and apparently unambitious. Hawkins further²² related a visit paid to a William "Pound" at Tallassee in 1796, who had resided four years in the Nation, had a pretty little Indian woman, and one child. Since Hawkins nowhere else mentioned a man of this surname as resident either in Tallassee or elsewhere in the Nation,²³ the name "Pound" is likely an error for Powell. Could this child have been the later Osceola? The criterion of age appears to exclude this possibility.

Several accounts allege that Osceola's mother had had a previous Indian husband who was the father of Osceola, prior to her marriage with Powell. These state that this husband was a half-breed, son of a Creek woman by a Scot.²⁴ The statement of Woodward at least merits serious consideration, and in our opinion credibility, as Woodward had an unparalleled acquaintance with contemporary Creeks. He declared that his mother was Polly Copinger, and his father the little Englishman, William Powell. He traced the ancestry of Billy Powell or *Ussa Yoholo* back through three generations to James McQueen, a Scotchman who lived among the Creeks from 1716 to 1811, dying at the extraordinary age of 128 years. Woodward said he was the first white man he heard of as permanently residing among the Creeks. He married a Tallassee woman, and among their children, two, a son Peter, and a daughter Ann, require our attention. Peter McQueen (Talmuches Hadjo) became prominent, at least in the eyes of General Jackson, as a "notorious Red Stick" and a Florida refugee, his party being

21. Hawkins, Col. Benjamin (1916). *Letters of, 1796-1806*. Collections Georgia Historical Society. IX: 168.

22. Hawkins, 5. 23. Hawkins, 195.

24. Cohen, 234; McKenney and Hall, 1934: II: 360.

25. Woodward, 9. 26. Hawkins, 195.. 27. Cohen, 235; Smith, 5.

assailed by McIntosh's warriors on the Econfina river in Jackson's campaign of 1818. The daughter Ann married one Copinger, probably the trader mentioned by Hawkins²⁶ as stationed at Ecnuhutkee, a town on the west side of the Tallapoosa below Tallassee. From his surname it is inferred he was either white or half-breed, and probably of Spanish origin as well. Ann had one daughter, Polly, who as related, married William Powell, with at least one son, Billy, as issue.

The uncertainties of his geneology will never permit an accurate appraisal of the degree of his white heritage, but be this as it may, it was observed that his complexion was lighter than that of Indians generally, as mentioned by Cohen²⁷ and by Smith.²⁷ Since in our opinion the facts we adduce are confirmatory of Woodward, we give his account credence though Coe and some others are skeptical of the correctness of Woodward's statements.²⁸ Osceola's mother and her husband are stated to have separated because of Indian feuds,²⁹ some alleging this occurred as early as 1808 at the time of the second Creek cession,³⁰ at which time two daughters are said to have remained with the husband, while the boy accompanied his mother.³¹ It must be admitted that such a division of children is not to be expected of a family having an Indian mother. Powell pere is reputed to have remained among the Lower Creeks, and emigrated with them in 1836.³² The wife and son are alleged to have left the Nation, going first to the vicinity of the Okefenoke swamp, and later to Florida, near Peas creek.³³ Red Stick fanaticism disrupted many Indian families, and it is more likely that the disruption of the alliance of Polly Copinger and William Powell occurred as a result of Red Stick dissent in 1814, rather than in 1808.

28. Coe, Charles H. "The Parentage and Birthplace of Osceola." *Florida Historical Quarterly*. XVII: 310.

29. Sprague, 100. 30. Sprague, 100. 31. *Ibid.* 100. 32. *Ibid.*, 100. 33. *Ibid.*, 100; McKenney and Hall, II; 367. 34. Sprague, 100.

While statements regarding Billy Powell's birthplace are all consistent with the idea that he by origin was a Creek, they differ as to its location. Among those given are the vicinity of the Chattahoochee river in Georgia;³⁴ a location adjacent to the Tallapoosa river in Alabama;³⁵ while a site in Macon County, Alabama was minutely described by Woodward,³⁶ which would essentially corroborate the Tallapoosa localization. Woodward stated that Billy Powell was born in a cabin located in an old field situated between Uphapee (Nufaupha, Ufapee) creek and a tributary known as Catsa Bogah, which discharges just below the railroad crossing (Western Railway of Alabama) on the west (or Montgomery) side of the Uphapee. He declared that the later railroad ran close to if not over the site.

From the data in the two preceding paragraphs, the conclusion that Osceola, had he remained in Alabama, would have been regarded as a Tallassee Indian appears certain. Only on the basis of this conclusion can we understand the remark of Cohen,³⁷ "our hero is of the Talcly [*sic, i.e., Tallassee*] tribe, and has charge of them." These probably represented survivors or descendants of Peter McQueen's band.

Boyhood and Flight to Florida

The terms of the treaty of Fort Jackson at the end of the Creek War bore hard even on the friendly faction, and the irreconcilable Red Sticks, to escape its restrictions, left the Nation and slowly made their way south to the Spanish frontier. According to Woodward³⁸ these included the bands of Savannah Jack, Francis or Hillis Hadjo, the Otissee chief (Homathlemico), Hossa Yoholo, and Peter McQueen, totalling about a thousand warriors with their women and children. The boy Billy Powell accompanied his grand-uncle, Peter McQueen.

35. Croffut, W. A., Editor (1909). *Fifty Years in Camp and Field. Diary of Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock*. New York and London. 82.

36. Woodward, 9. 37. Cohen, 234. 38. Woodward, 44.

These halted on the Yellow (Water) river, and had about decided to establish themselves on the Choctawhatchee river, when they received an invitation from Colonel Edward Nicolls of the British Colonial Marines, to join him at the post he had established on the Apalachicola river in the fall of 1814. With the exception of the band of Savannah Jack, all made their way eastward to the vicinity of the Apalachicola, where the material aid afforded them by Nicolls must have appeared providential. They likely remained at the British post at least until the departure of Nicolls with the British garrison late in the spring of 1815. In this interval Francis and McQueen enthusiastically promoted Nicolls's designs, and were reported by Hawkins³⁹ to have been seen in British uniform at the outpost near the confluence. When Nicolls finally withdrew, he invited Francis to accompany him to England, where the latter remained several years. Although Nicolls delivered the richly stocked British post into the hands of the Indian and Negroes, it is not evident that the wandering Red Sticks continued here long after Nicolls' departure, as no allusion to their presence at the "Negro Fort" was made at the time of its destruction in 1816. Some, at least, became established in a hammock on the west side of the Wakulla river, in the vicinity of the Spanish post of St. Marks, where they likely remained until early in 1818. It is not known whether McQueen's band was accommodated at this settlement. They did, however, actively collaborate with the Indians of Fowl Town and Mikasuky in the hostile acts which kept the Georgia frontier in a turmoil until Jackson's campaign of 1818.

On this campaign, Jackson was accompanied by a large force of Indian auxiliaries. T. S. Woodward,⁴⁰ then a militia

39. Hawkins, Col. Benjamin (1815). *Letters of June 14, 1814 and February 20, 1815, to Governor Early*. Telemon Cuyler Collection, University of Georgia, Athens.

40. Woodward, 44. 41. Not the Aucilla river as stated by Woodward.

major, accompanied the army as commander of these. He had raised the small party of Chehaws himself, but it is probable that his relationship to the large force of Lower Creeks under McIntosh was no more than nominal, if at all recognized by McIntosh. Be that as it may, he closely accompanied the Indians. During the march of the army from St. Marks to the Suwanee on April 12, an Indian encampment was surprised on the Econfina or Natural Bridge River ⁴¹ and attacked by the Indians under McIntosh and Woodward. This turned out to be the band of Peter McQueen and his refugee partisans. In Jackson's report of this affair ⁴² he related that 37 enemy warriors were killed, and there were captured six men and 97 women and children. McQueen and an unknown number of warriors escaped. There was also discovered with them, and released, the Mrs. Stuart who had been an Indian captive since the occasion of the surprise attack on Lieut. Scott's party on the Apalachicola river. After this affair Jackson was sought out by an old woman among these prisoners, who plausibly could have been Billy's grandmother, Ann Copinger, whom he told that if McQueen was secured and carried to the commandant at St. Marks, her people would be received in peace and taken to the Upper Nation. He said the old woman was much pleased, and was given a letter to this effect addressed to the officer at St. Marks, and set at liberty, an act presumably including the other captives exclusive of the men. Later, writing from the Suwanee on April 20, Jackson said that having heard nothing further from McQueen, he believed that the old woman had complied with her part of the obligation, making a rather ambiguous statement. It is dubious that the old woman either knew of or could infer McQueen's whereabouts, and her pleasure, if not dissimulation, was expressive of the prospect

42. *Jackson to Calhoun, April 20, 1818.* 700. American State Papers. Military Affairs. I (1832) Washington, D. C. 43. Woodward 44.

for release. The importance of this episode to us, lies in the statement of Woodward that, Billy Powell, "then but a lad", was one of the captives. Presumably he was released with the other prisoners by the old woman's capitulation. His reference to Billy Powell as a lad at this time, suggests that he then was an adolescent of perhaps 12 to 14 years of age, rather than of 18, which possibility exists from the spread of years in the estimates previously given. Furthermore, had he been in the neighborhood of 18, presumably of fighting age, it is hardly probable that Jackson would have released him with the others.

On his flight from the scene of this disastrous surprise, Peter McQueen with an unknown number of warriors eluded Jackson and sought safety in distance. Neamathla later mentioned his having established a village somewhere below Tampa Bay by 1821.⁴⁴ From this it may be inferred that in some manner he was joined by the old woman and her band of parolled women and children. We have no idea how long this establishment endured, as Woodward stated that Peter died not long after Jackson's campaign, on an island on the Atlantic side near Cape Florida. Lacking precise information, we regard it as not unlikely that Billy Powell and his mother finally found their way to this settlement. The allusion to an early Florida residence on Peas creek⁴⁶ suggests that this actually occurred. It is plausible that at her release, the old woman desired to keep out of Jackson's way, and likely led her refugees into the present Madison county and established contact with the disorganized Mikasukies, who were then attempting to reestablish their economy in that area after Jackson dislodged them from the vicinity of the lake. That she actually did so, is suggested by the statement that Billy Powell's mother first removed to the vicinity

44. *Talk with three chiefs of Florida Indians*: 10. Letter from Secretary of War *Indians of Florida*. House Doc. 51, 17th Cong. 2d Sess. Jan 30, 1823.

45. Woodward, 44. 46. McKenney and Hall, II. 367. 47. Sprague, 100.

of the Okefenoke Swamp, then regarded as having a much greater extension than is actually the case, and remained with the Mikasukies until she learned of McQueen's survival and the site of his establishment, whereupon they all moved down to Peas creek. Although this settlement may have broken up on McQueen's death, this seems unlikely in view of the later mentioned facts in relation to Holata Mico. On the dissolution of this tie, or Billy's mother having acquired a new husband among the Mikasukies, they may have removed to the north end of the reservation to be among their former companions in adversity, the Mikasukies.

One would infer that Billy was the only filial companion of his mother during their hegira to Florida. The statement is made ⁴⁷ however, that after arrival in Florida, she secured another husband, who might, as suggested have been a Mikasuky. No direct statement concerning issue of this marriage has been encountered. However, in an account of the surrender of Osceola's two wives at Fort Mellon late in 1837, it is mentioned that they were accompanied by his sister. ⁴⁸ Forry ⁴⁹ mentions Yohahadjo as Osceola's brother-in-law. We have no means of ascertaining whether these allusions pertain to one, or to two different women. The Florida residence and remarriage of Osceola's mother by that date could have been of sufficient duration to have produced at least one nubile daughter.

Dr. Welch ⁵⁰ makes several unsubstantiable allegations which should be noted to show their preposterous character. Among them is the tale of a liaison between a Lieutenant or Captain John Graham of the U. S. Army, stationed in Florida prior to the outbreak of the war, with an orphan niece of Osceola,

48. Quotation from *Savannah Georgian* of Dec. 8: *Chronicle* V, 394.

49. Forry, Samuel (1928). Letters of, Surgeon, U. S. Army, 1837-38. *Florida Historical Quarterly*, VI: 206.

50. [Welch, Dr. Andrew] Written by his *Guardian* (1841). *A Narrative of the Early Days and Remembrances of Oceola Nikkanochee, Prince of Econhatti*, etc. London. 49.

by whom he had three children, later abandoning his family. Although no other notice of this episode has been encountered, it is worthy of mention that Heitman's Register⁵¹ lists an officer of this name belonging to a unit assigned to Florida at this period. Contemporary tales of uncertain authenticity allege Osceola manifested a friendly attitude toward this officer even after the outbreak of hostilities. Graham may have developed an intimacy with Osceola while stationed at Fort King, and exhibited a friendly attitude toward the latter's little daughter.⁵² Welch further alleged that his own Indian "ward", whom he called Osceola Nikkanoochee, was the son of a sister of Osceola, who, he stated, had been married to Econchatimico, living on the Chattahoochee river. He further declared that Econchatimico was an active participant in the hostilities on the Alachua frontier in 1836. There is no reason to believe that Econchatimico was ever in this region subsequent to his transit of it to attend the Moultrie Creek Council of 1823, and although subjected to white molestation, lived peacefully on his Chattahoochee reservation until his removal west in 1838, and even contributed the services of a number of his band to aid the Army in the campaigns of 1836. Although Catlin observed Welch's ward later in England and made his portrait, Welch's work must be regarded as a fabrication of fiction rather than a presentation of fact.

An interesting allusion to relatives of Osceola is afforded by the reports of the conference between the Cherokee delegation, and Osceola and the other chiefs and warriors confined in Fort Marion, during November 1837. In the course of their conversations, one of the Cherokees was said to have found a first cousin in Osceola.⁵³ In the first of these tales, the individual

51. Heitman, Francis B. (1903). *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, etc. 2 vols. Washington, D. C. I:467, 468.

52. Storrow, Thomas W. (1844). "Osceola, the Seminole War Chief." *Knickerbocker Magazine* XXIV. 440.

53. *Augusta Constitutionalist*, n. d.:364. *Chronicle* V, Dec. 7, 1837. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, n.d.: 394. *Chronicle* V, Dec. 21, 1837.

is said to have been the Cherokee interpreter, in the second, the orator. It is unlikely that either one or the other could have been Osceola's cousin in the English sense of that word, and we assume that the statement implies mutual recognition of membership in the same clan.⁵⁴ Unfortunately the anecdote does not disclose the clan affiliation of either.

Tallassee vs. Tallahassee

The preceding paragraphs bring into relief the meagerness of data bearing on the origin and adolescence of Billy Powell or Osceola. Despite this deficiency, they do, when correlated with contemporary events, permit a certain degree of interpretation. But when we approach the period of his early manhood, covering approximately the final decade or more of his life, the absolute poverty of information makes the previous deficiency appear as relative richness. Evidently Osceola was not the only Tallassee to mingle with the Mikasukies in the northern part of the reservation. These, although small in numbers (seven according to Potter⁵⁵), appear to have become his earliest followers, and he their recognized leader. Thus he was referred to as the Talcly (*i.e.* Tallassee) Tustenuggee before attaining prominence.⁵⁶ Possession of the title of *Tustenuggee* would be an acknowledgment of a capacity for leadership, and the exhibition of qualities recognized as superior to those expected of the ordinary warrior or *Tassikaya*. Probably as an expression of this recognition, he is said to have often been employed in police work by the Agent and chiefs,⁵⁷ principally in apprehending Indians who strayed beyond the limits of the reservation. This duty must have made him well-known to the successive Agents, to Humphreys, Phagan, and Thompson. As

54. Swanton, John R. (1928). *Social Organization and Social Usages of the Indians of the Creek Confederacy*. *42d An. Rep. Bur. Am. Ethnology*, Smithsonian Inst., 1924-25. Washington, D. C. 114-118.

55. Potter, 1836: 11. 56. Cohen, 1836: 234.

57. *Ibid.*, 235; McKenney and Hall, 1934, II: 373. 58. Cohen, 234.

an agent of Mico-an-opa, it is said he was also occupied in bringing the obstreperous Mikasukies to subjection, a responsibility which he discharged so as not to acquire their permanent enmity, but their respect and subordination. As relations worsened, these Tallassees were recognized as aligned with the Mikasukies, and as their leader, Osceola was regarded as subordinate to Holata Mico (Blue King).⁵⁸ Although Holata Mico was said to have been war chief of the Mikasukies, he actually seems to have been leader of the Peas creek band of Tallassees. For reasons now unknown, Thompson is said to have made him a present of an expensive rifle, especially purchased in New York.⁵⁹

English orthography has resulted in two variants of a Muskogee word meaning "old town", namely *Tallassee* and *Tallahassee*. Several places in the old Creek territory bear the name Tallassee, although better known as applied to an important town of the Upper Creek Nation, where, as has been shown, old James McQueen resided. It is inferred that Peter McQueen's refugee Red Sticks were largely if not exclusively composed of Indians from Tallassee. Billy Powell himself was rated as a Tallassee. The only Indian town known whose orthography is as Tallahassee (Talofa) was that in Middle Florida, more or less on the site of the present state capital. This was established on or adjacent to the site of the Spanish post of San Luis in the middle of the 18th century by one Tonaby, who claimed to be a native of Coweta. The strength of the band appeared to decline after Tonaby's death, as in 1818 the Tallahassee band headed by Okiakhija, is said to have numbered only 15, and when lead by Chefixico in 1824, was of small consequence and does not appear to have played any conspicuous part in the troubles we discuss. As the war progressed, a tendency appears for writers to use the form *Tallahassee*, when it appears obvious

59. *Ibid.*, 68; Smith, 1836, 5; Welch, 1844, 32. 60. Forry, 144.

they meant *Tallassee*. The substitution was natural, owing to an almost identical pronunciation, a similar significance, and an increasing familiarity with the spelling of the name of the territorial capital. We have become inclined during the course of this study, to suspect that where certain Indians, associated with the Mikasukies, are referred to as Tallahasseees, it is not a reference to Chefixico's tiny band, but to be taken as Tallassees, alluding to the survivors and descendants of Peter McQueen's band of fugitive Red Sticks. Thus Forry⁶⁰ in 1837 wrote of "that part of the Mikasuky tribe that originally constituted the Tallahasseees, etc." Jesup⁶¹ in the same year, wrote of Holata Mico, as principal chief of the Peas creek Tallassees and chief of the band of which Osceola is sub-chief. The number of Tallassees in the northern part of the reservation likely became considerable, as a Tallassee village and pond are shown on the 1836 map of the seat of war in the Games's section of Document 78. In 1880 MacCauley⁶² found the Seminoles living in five widely separated settlements. Shortly after this date, the Muskogee speaking Cat Fish Lake and Fish Eating Creek settlements consolidated with that at Cow Creek, thus constituting the present Cow Creek band. According to Spoehr⁶³ these are now largely concentrated on the Brighton reservation, with a few scattered camps west of Fort Pierce. In 1941 they numbered about 175 persons, constituting approximately one-fourth of the then existing Seminole population. According to MacCauley, the Cat Fish Lake and Cow Creek Indians called themselves "Talahassee Indians" in 1880. More recently Spoehr⁶⁴ found that the Cow Creek band was divided into five matri-

61. Jesup to Poinsett, Nov. 4, 1837: 887, Mil. Aff. (1861) VII.

62. MacCauley, Clay (1887). "The Seminole Indians of Florida." *5th An. Rep. Bur. Am. Ethnology*, Smithsonian Inst. 1883-84, Washington, D. C. 508.

63. Spoehr, Alexander (1941). *Camp, Clan and Kin among the Cow Creek Seminole*. *Anthropological Series* Vol. 33 (1), Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. 9.

64. *Ibid*, 14.

lineal exogamous clans, four of whom, Panther, Bird, Deer, and Snake, were totemic, while the fifth, known as "Talahasee", was non-totemic. According to Spoehr's informants, these formerly all lived at Cat Fish Lake. While it might appear that currently the designation "Talahasee" is used in a more limited sense than formerly, it is not unlikely that limitations of time and unfamiliarity with the speech prevented MacCauley from securing a comprehensive insight into the scope of this word, as he did not detect that the Florida Indians comprised two language groups. From the foregoing considerations we entertain the tentative opinion that those Muskogee speaking Seminoles of South Florida, commonly known as "Tallahassee", are probably not descendants of Chefixico's band, but are derived from Peter McQueen's band of refugee Red Sticks from Tallassee.

Osceola on reaching manhood contracted matrimony, but our information on this is meager. It is conclusively known⁶⁵ that at the time of his captivity he was served by two wives who were reputedly sisters. They were reported as young and comely, and although they prepared but one "table", they occupied separate lodges. Whether or not in earlier years he observed monogamy is uncertain. It was alleged that he had a wife who was daughter of a Negro woman, and that she, as the descendant of an escaped slave, was seized and taken from Osceola on the occasion of a visit to the trading post near Fort King, and remanded into slavery. As Porter⁶⁶ has shown, this tale appears to be derived from an untrustworthy source⁶⁷, and is devoid of contemporary substantiation. This was alleged as the reason why Osceola became so bitterly hostile to the Agent, General Thompson. Sprague⁶⁸ claimed

65. Cohen, 237; McKenney and Hall, II-389, Storrow, 443.

66. Porter, Kenneth W. (1858). "The Episode of Osceola's Wife, Fact or Fiction?" *Florida Historical Quarterly* XXVI. 92.

67. Giddings, Joshua R. (1858). "The Exiles of Florida." Columbus, Ohio. 98.

that Osceola's wife was a Creek woman named Che-cho-ter (Morning Dew), by whom he had four children. Be these tales as they may, it is certain that after Osceola's capture, two wives with two children voluntarily surrendered at Fort Mellon, and were permitted to join him in confinement at Fort Marion.

Personal Characteristics

In physique, Osceola was described as being middle sized or below common height, well proportioned but of slight build, and slightly hump-backed (presumably meaning round-shouldered), with hands and feet effeminately small. His hair was black, but not as coarse as that of a full-blood, his eyes deep and restless, with a continuous expression of thought and cunning. His voice was said to be clear and shrill.⁶⁹ He was reputed to possess great physical endurance, a characteristic which doubtless contributed to his reputation as a hunter and ball-player.⁷⁰ Potter⁷¹ gives the least favorable account of his personality, alleging that he did not possess the nobler Indian characteristics, but was perverse and obstinate, exhibiting a low and sordid spirit which produced difficulties in intercourse, that his talents were not above a mediocre level. Smith⁷² on the other hand, declared that he combined the gallantry, cool courage and sagacity of the white, with the ferocity, savage daring, and subtlety of the Indian. By Motte⁷³ he was said to exert an autocratic influence over his followers by superior sagacity and shrewdness, and from his adherents exacted the homage due from vassals and dependants. He had the reputation of being averse to the killing of women, children, and prisoners. Motte declared that if half of what was said about him was true, he was a most remarkable man. Jarvis,⁷⁴ who observed Osceola at the time of his capture, stated that from his looks he could have designated Osceola as the principal

68. Sprague, 1848: 100. 69. Cohen, 234; Smith, 5; Motte, 141.

70. Cohen, 235. 71. Potter, 11. 72. Smith, 6. 73. Motte, 140.

74. Jarvis, 277-278.

Indian present, that his countenance was expressive of mildness and benevolence, devoid of any suggestion of fierceness or determination. In all respects his personality exhibited the most marked contrast to that of another prominent Seminole leader, Coacoochee, who although fine looking had a countenance indicative of ferocity and daring, openly boasted of his exploits in braining children, and was credited with the scalping of Mrs. Jane Johns.

Residence

Three years after the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, the Agent, Colonel Gad Humphreys, established the Agency (in 1826) in the Big Swamp, in an area beyond the northern part of the reservation, to which the Indians were granted temporary occupancy. The following year a military post, Fort King, was constructed a short distance to the eastward.⁸² Captain Drane, in testifying⁸³ at General Gaines Court of Inquiry, stated that the Mikasuky tribe inhabited the country north of the Withlacoochee river in the direction of Fort King, their range extending southwestwardly (*sic.* clearly in error for northwestwardly) from Fort King, known as the Wetumpka country. In the period before the beginning of hostilities, Osceola resided in the Big Swamp⁸⁴ or Ouithlocko.⁸⁵ When the area was surveyed in 1843, the site of his former residence apparently fell in Section 12, T.16 S, R.21 E.⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that after Jesup began his winter campaign of 1837-38, when Osceola's days in captivity were running short, Jesup dated a letter⁸⁷ to the Secretary of War on January 2, 1838, from "Fort Christmas, *Powell's Camp*", a situation approximately 25 miles southeast of Fort

82. Boyd, Mark F. (1951). *The Seminole War: Its Background and Onset. Florida Historical Quarterly*. XXX (1). Reprinted with title "Florida Aflame" by the Florida Board of Parks and Historic Memorials.

83. Drane, Capt. G. S., testimony of, *Court of Inquiry-Operations in Florida*. House Doc. 78, 25th Cong. 2d Ses. Jan. 8, 1838. p. 657.

84. Smith, 42; McKenney and Hall, II: 367.

85. Potter, 9. 86. Boyd, 1951: 53.

87. Jesup to Poinsett, Jan. 2, 1838: 894. *Mil. Aff.* (1861) VII.

Mellon. This evidently was his last place of residence before capture. It is likely that the occupation of the most northerly Indian lands by the Mikasukies, is attributable to their proximity to their old territory in Middle Florida.

Beginning Tension

In the nine year interval between negotiation of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823 and that of Payne's Landing in 1832, Billy Powell was attaining maturity without attracting the recorded attention of officials at either the Agency or the neighboring military post. Limitations of space prevent consideration of the background against which his talents were finally revealed. Some degree of orientation may be secured from the writer's paper, "The Seminole War: Its Background and Onset", published in this *Quarterly*, XXX, 3-115.⁸⁸ (Florida Aflame).

Cohen⁸⁹ related that at the Payne's Landing council in May 1832, Osceola, with a band of from 30 to 40 warriors, posted himself in a position closer to the camp of Colonel Gadsden than that occupied by any of the other Indian bands. He is alleged to have justified himself for this action by naively declaring that he was more like the white man than they. Whatever may have been his motive, it may have reflected a friendly attitude, perhaps a desire to protect the Colonel and his suite from rowdy Indians, Mikasukies in particular. It is not known whether this was done at his own initiative, or on the suggestion of the Agent or of Mico-an-opa. His alleged declaration suggests that he was fully conscious of his white heritage, and sought to give it expression through propinquity with other whites. Other than the possible exercise of uncertain police duties, Osceola's then humble status made his presence at this council inconsequential. He was not asked to express his opinions,

88. Boyd, 1951: 23-58. 89. Cohen, 235.

90. Minutes of Council of Oct. 23-24, 1834: *Indian Hostilities in Florida*. Sen. Doc. 152, 24th Cong. 1st Ses. 16-28. Feb. 10, 1836. (See also Mil. Aff. (1861) VI: 56-80)

neither did he venture to assert them, at least in open council, nor was he sufficiently influential to be invited to the table to affix his mark to the treaty.

The terms of the treaty of 1832 stipulated that the Indians living in the Big Swamp and vicinity, who were chiefly Mikasukies, were to remove in 1833. While the Indians were in a state of stupefaction over the magnitude of the diplomatic disaster resulting from this treaty and its Fort Gibson sequel of 1833, it is likely, had the government been prepared to move swiftly in 1833, the entire emigration project could have been realized in that year with the sullen compliance of the Indians. The government, however, took no steps to this end until after the belated ratification in 1834. In anticipation of early removal, the Indians of the Big Swamp had not planted during the season of 1834. The crops of 1833 had been short, and that of those who did plant in 1834 was scanty. The provision shortage in the Big Swamp became acute, and though the government finally authorized distribution of a limited amount of corn, hunger compelled many Indians to indulge in pillage, both within and without the reservation. Frustration and hunger aroused their resentment, in particular that of the Mikasukies. Osceola likely not only entertained his full share of this resentment, but probably actively encouraged and stimulated this attitude in others.

A Revealed Leader

Late in 1834 the government was ready to insist on compliance with the treaty. The Agent, then General Thompson, called a council in the fall, when the annuity was available for distribution. Before the assembled Indians, on October 23, he announced that they were expected to remove by the following spring, and propounded four questions relating to arrangements for their emigration, to which he desired their opinions. The Indians countered with a request to hold a pri-

vate session to frame their replies. Thompson arranged to receive a secret report on their discussion. He learned that on convening, Osceola had promptly, and without invitation, addressed the assembly, urging a united opposition to emigration, and resistance to any efforts to effect this end. They then sought Holata Amathla's opinion, and in substance his remarks urged compliance without resistance. When the council reassembled on the following day, the Agent expressed his desire to learn of their wishes, expecting their tenor would reflect Holata Amathla's views. To his surprise, none of the speakers, Mico-an-opa, Jumper, Holata Amathla, or Charley Amathla, proffered the desired information, but instead, conveyed their belief that the Treaty of Moultrie Creek had seven more years to run. Osceola's remarks in the private session appear to have completely influenced the sentiments of the Indians. After expressing his surprise that their remarks disregarded the treaty, the Agent had them again retire for further deliberation. At the adjourned meeting on the following day, the Agent was still denied his replies. The chiefs reiterated the view that the Moultrie Creek treaty was valid for 20 years; that their assent to that of Payne's Landing had been obtained by fraud, and expressed general objections to removal. Mico-an-opa denied that the mark purporting to be his on the Payne's Landing document was genuine, but in rebuttal the Agent asserted it was, declaring that Mico-an-opa had actually touched the pen. The exasperated Agent then drew a gloomy picture of their future, particularly that of Mico-an-opa, should they continue to remain in Florida. At this point, Osceola, who was seated by Mico-an-opa, was observed to speak to him. The Agent then announced that no further annuity payments would be made in Florida, to which Osceola replied that he did not care whether any more was ever paid. In closing, the Agent expressed the hope that on mature reflection they would act like honest men,

and not compel him to report them as faithless to their engagements. Osceola, then surprisingly acting as spokesman, stated that the decision of the chiefs was given, and that they had no intention of giving any other, while Mico-an-opa declared that he did not intend to move. The Agent declared it to be his conviction that they were wilfully disposed to be dishonest. In a letter to the Indian Commissioner, Thompson referred to Osceola as a "bold and dashing young chief. . . , vehemently opposed to removal," and stated that when he was observed to speak to Mico-an-opa, he, according to the interpreter, urged him to be firm.⁹⁰

Insofar as we are aware, Osceola's appearance at the council of October 1834, apparently in the capacity of a full participant, is noteworthy as marking the first occasion he attracted public attention of the whites. His expressions at that time, although limited, struck a more defiant note than those of the other chiefs. It is interesting to speculate as to whether these represent the self-assertions of a hot-head ambitious for prestige and power among his tribesmen, or the considered expressions of a selfless individual convinced that firm opposition afforded the surest defense of Indian interests. Both views have had their proponents. Be this as it may, this episode marked the beginning of his career as we know it.

While probably all of the Seminoles were averse to removal, a minority, disgusted with the tribulations they experienced, manifested a reluctant inclination to comply with the wishes of the government. Prominent among these were two brothers, Holata Amathla and Charley (Chalo = trout) Amathla, who had been members of the western delegation. Associated with them in this attitude was another ex-delegate, Fuke-luste Hadjo (Black Dirt). Their bands comprised several hundred individuals. In opposition to them was a hard core of Mikasukies, including Sam Jones, and the Tallassee, Holata Mico, with

whom Osceola was associated, who were vehemently opposed to emigration, and sought to increase the number of their partisans through intimidation. Following the October council, both Holata Amathla and Fuke-luste Hadjo informed the Agent that their lives had been threatened, and they feared for their safety.⁹¹ Thompson, probably realizing that he could not afford them effective protection, permitted them to withdraw from the reservation with their bands.

When Secretary of War Cass read the report of the October council, he directed the Agent to call another meeting to present a talk from him. At that time the Indians were largely dispersed on their hunts, but the few who could be reached assembled at the Agency on December 26 and 27, 1834. The Secretary's talk was read and explained, and the Indians were told that if they would not remove willingly, they would be compelled to do so by force. On conclusion of this phase of the conference, the remainder of the meeting consisted of a heated interchange between the Agent and others, principally Osceola. The Agent finally adopted a conciliatory attitude, and succeeded in eliciting from Osceola the acknowledgment, "I know you are my friend and friend to my people," from which he concluded that the meeting closed in good feeling.⁹²

Further reports from Florida indicated that neither the arguments or the threats of Thompson or of Cass had convinced the Indians that the recent treaties had obligated them to remove. President Jackson felt obliged to intervene personally, and prepared and transmitted a forceful and admonitory message covering much the same ground as the others.⁹³ Advantage was taken of a previously scheduled conference at the Agency

91. Thompson to Herring, Oct. 28, 1835 (*sic*, 1834). *Ibid*; 17.

92. Minutes of Council of December 27, 1834. *Ibid*; 29-32.

93. A. Jackson to the Seminoles, February 16, 1835: 163-164. *Supplemental Report on the Causes of Indian Hostilities*. House Doc. 271, 24th Cong. 1st Ses. June 3, 1836. (See also Mil. Aff. (1861) VI:

late in March 1835 to present Jackson's talk to the chiefs. In reply, Jumper pointed out that many chiefs were still absent, and asked that they be reconvened on April 20 in order to have a full council.⁹⁴ They assembled on April 22, in the presence of Generals Thompson and Clinch, with a very large representation of chiefs. The treaty, as well as the President's talk were reread, and the Indians asked for their decision. As spokesman for the chiefs, Jumper reiterated Indian opposition to removal, yet indicated an aversion to hostile resistance should the government employ force to oblige them to go. His expressions were supported by others. To silence the discussion, which seemed interminable, Clinch declared that he had been sent to enforce the treaty, and had warriors enough to do it, the only question being whether they would go of their own accord or by force. The absence of Mico-an-opa was conspicuous when the council reconvened on the following day. Thompson, knowing that Mico-an-opa's opinions influenced a number of the leaders, asked Jumper whether Mico-an-opa intended to abide by the treaty. Jumper reluctantly admitted that he did not. On this admission, the Agent injudiciously declared that the names of five chiefs, the principal leaders of the opposition, including Mico-an-opa, Jumper, Holata Mico, Arpeika or Sam Jones, and one other, were stricken from the roll of chiefs, and stated that they would no longer be recognized as councillors. A document acknowledging adherence to the treaties of Payne's Landing and Fort Gibson was prepared and submitted on the following day to the Indians remaining in the council after this purge. Sixteen chiefs reluctantly affixed their marks to this in token of submission. Although acquiescing in removal, they expressed unwillingness to be incorporated with the Creeks in the West. It was further agreed that these would assemble at Tampa Bay for embarkation by January 15,

94. Minutes of Council of March 29, 1835 Doc. 152: 35-36.

1835, a date selected in order to permit the gathering of their crops, the utilization of the fall round-up for the collection of their cattle, and to permit of their arrival on their new lands in time for spring planting.⁹⁵ Circumstances indicate that the mark of Osceola was not attached to this document.

Did He Knife the Treaty

Perhaps the most romantic of the many and widely diffused anecdotes concerning Osceola, describes how, on being invited to approach the table and affix his mark to a "treaty", he, instead of picking up the pen, drew his knife, which with a flourish he plunged through the document before him, pinning it to the table, at the same time exclaiming in anger: "The only treaty I will execute is with this",⁹⁶ or "This is my mark, and I will make no other".⁹⁷ Since allusion to such an episode is made by Cohen,⁹⁸ the tale must have been current at an early date, a circumstance contributing to plausibility. It is strange that Thompson's reports of the successive councils make no allusion to this, since he had already identified Osceola as one authors who allude to it, of the council at which it may have occurred. Thus Brevard⁹⁹ in one place ascribed it to an improbable council in the spring of 1834, and in another place to the October 1834 council, in the latter of which both Storrow¹⁰⁰ and Sprague¹⁰¹ concur. Both Cohen¹⁰² and Coe¹⁰³ attribute it to the April 1835 council. Welch¹⁰⁴ places it at an impossible council of December 1835. Surprisingly, the National Archives attaches a note to the copy of the Treaty of Fort Gibson which they preserve, calling attention to a lateral crack or tear from

95. Minutes of Council of April 22-23, 1835. Doc. 152: 37-41.

96. Sprague, 80. 97. Storrow, 430. 98. Cohen, 56.

99. Brevard, Caroline M. (1924). *A History of Florida from the Treaty of 1763 to our own Times*. Ed. by James A. Robertson. Florida State Historical Society, DeLand, Florida. I: 118, 167.

100. Storrow, 430. 101. Sprague, 80. 102. Cohen, 234.

103. Coe, 50. 104. Welch, 29. 105. Sprague, 80. 106. Cohen, 234.

the center fold, which, in an attached memorandum, is identified on the authority of Sprague,¹⁰⁵ as the mark of Osceola's knife! Should this anecdote represent an authentic episode, it is our belief, from the circumstances related, that the council of April 23, 1835, is the only meeting at which the requisite conditions prevailed. Support for this view is afforded by Cohen,¹⁰⁶ who related that Osceola declared Holata Mico's disapproval of the document was his reason for not signing it. Confirmation as later described, is provided by Osceola's subsequent promise to affix his mark *publicly* to it, as the price he paid for his release from irons. This implies the occurrence of an earlier and equally public refusal, with or without the flourish of a knife.

Public Humiliation

A serious episode occurred in the latter part of May 1835 which involved both Osceola and General Thompson. The latter related¹⁰⁷ under date of June 3, that "a few days before, Osceola, one of the most bold, daring and intrepid chiefs in this nation. . . more hostile to emigration, and who has thrown more embarrassments in my way than any other, came to my office and insulted me by some insolent remarks. He had done so before. . . and when apprized of the consequences should he do so again, he apologized and I forgave. On this occasion I confined him in irons. . ." Truly a colorless and matter of fact statement of a act which had consequences the Agent could not foresee. He made no allusion to the subject which incited Osceola's remarks. A host of allegations of the cause of Osceola's anger have been made by various writers. Among them: (a) from seizure of his part-negro wife as a slave;¹⁰⁸ (b) from seizure of Osceola's private liquor;¹⁰⁹ (c) remonstrance over maltreatment of certain Indians;¹¹⁰ (d) indignation over Agent's withdrawal of powder and lead from sale;¹¹¹ (e) occurrences

107. Doc. 271: 197. 108 Giddings, 98. 109. Potter, 76.

110. Potter, 86. 111. Sprague, 86.

at the April council.¹¹² In our opinion, the last is the most plausible reason, a view supported by the terms which lead to his release. Be this as it may, it is said that after this outburst, the Agent asked Lieut. Col. Fanning of Fort King to place Osceola under arrest. A detail of four soldiers was sent to apprehend him, and, after a hard scuffle, he was secured about 200 yards from the fort, while uttering bitter imprecations addressed to the Agent.¹¹³ He was placed in irons and confined in the fort, where for hours he remained in a state of frenzy. Thompson related that on the next day, Osceola sent word to him that he was willing to sign the acknowledgment of April 23 if he were released. Osceola was informed that unless he could provide satisfactory security for his good behaviour, his confinement must continue. Osceola sent for some of the amenable chiefs (including Charley Amathla)¹¹⁴ and solicited their intercession, which they made. Thompson then informed him that his profession would be put to test, that he would be released on his promise to return in five days, and, in the presence of these chiefs in council, sign the acknowledgment. Professing repentance, he promised to do so, and asserted he would bring others with him for this purpose. Thompson related that on the day he wrote, Osceola reappeared with 79 of his people, men, women, and children, and redeemed his word. Thompson believed he had won a convert, and for a short period Osceola's deportment supported this belief. The expensive rifle Thompson presented to Osceola is said to have been given with the object of effecting reconciliation. However Osceola probably could not have been subjected to any indignity which could have afforded greater humiliation, and in his lasting resentment, must have longed for an opportunity to effect adequate retaliation.

Mention should be made of the last council, held, at the

112. Storrow, 432; Coe, 50; Drake, Samuel G. (1845). *The Book of the Indians*; etc. 9th Ed. Boston. Book IV: 73.

113. Potter, 86. 114. Smith, 8. 115. Doc. 271: 104-106.

request of certain of the chiefs, between the army officers stationed at Fort King, and 10 principal and 17 sub-chiefs on August 19, 1835. The latter group included six of those who signed the acknowledgment of April 23. It is of interest to note that among those present was Assiola or Powell, whose name is listed among those of the principal chiefs, rather than among the sub-chiefs. If he was involved in the episode attributed to April 23, this may indicate that he was ranked as a principal chief at that time. At this council, Holata Amathla was the sole speaker. His speech, while indicating acquiescence in emigration, was a plea for an Agent assigned exclusively to the Seminoles after their removal, with the request that General Thompson be continued in that post. The army officers were properly non-committal, and the proceedings were submitted to the War Department through General Clinch, who in transmittal, favorably endorsed the petition. The government returned a harsh and peremptory refusal to this plea. Indian reaction to this attitude was the likely cause of the defection of most of the 16 chiefs who had promised to remove.¹¹⁵

Mikasuky Policy Dominated the Seminoles

We cannot concern ourselves with minor instances of friction between Indians and settlers which occurred in the closing months of 1835 in which Osceola is not known to have been involved. During October it became rumored that a secret council had been held in the Big Swamp, at which time the attitude previously exhibited by the recalcitrant Mikasukies, appears to have been adopted as the policy of the Nation. Allegedly this imposed a sentence of death on any Indian who undertook to dispose of his livestock, or made other preparations for emigration. When news of this action reached Holata Amathla, he, with certain of his co-chiefs and their bands fled to Fort Brooke for protection, where they arrived on Novem-

ber 9. Another of the chiefs who intended to emigrate, Charley Amathla, remained at his village in the Wetumpka area.¹¹⁶

General Thompson and the War Department were confident that in compliance with the acknowledgment of April 23, a substantial number of Indians would assemble at Tampa Bay in January 1836 for removal west, and preparations for their accommodation went on apace. The Indian signatories of that document were advised to bring their cattle to the Agency for disposal, and Thompson advertised a sale of these to begin on December 1. On November 30 Thompson reported¹¹⁷ the murder of Charley Amathla by Osceola, as having occurred on the 26th, but did not relate the circumstances. Whatever details the whites ever learned of this affair must have been secured from Indian or Negro informants who had garbled versions. This probably explains why the accounts given by Potter, Cohen, Smith, and others vary substantially, and we doubt that a reliable account of the place and circumstances can be given. It is alleged that on this date a party of 400 Indians lead by Holata Mico, Abraham, and Osceola surrounded the dwelling of Charley Amathla, and demanded that he become an opponent of emigration, to which he gave a refusal, and was thereupon told that he must either join the opposition or die. Osceola was in the act of leveling his gun to fire at him, when Abraham intervened, and proposed that all in the party withdraw for a council, which was done. This deliberation evidently left execution of the mission to Osceola. Undaunted by this demonstration, Charley Amathla meanwhile proceeded to the Agency to further preparations for his departure for Tampa. At the Agency he expressed the opinion that he might be killed. While on his way homeward with two daughters and a Negro, he was surprised a short distance from the Agency by Osceola and 12 companions, who lay in ambush. Although he charged

116. Boyd, 1951: 55-56. 117. Doc. 271; 241.

his attackers, Charley Amathla fell, pierced by 11 balls. It is not known whether those with him were also attacked. Thereafter a few of his band fled to Fort King, but most joined the hostiles.¹¹⁸ Long after his remains were buried by a party of soldiers.

Thompson related¹¹⁹ that immediately following this affair, the Indians in the vicinity of the Agency abandoned their settlements and congregated at the towns called the Big Swamp and Long Swamp, but by December 6 they had disappeared from these situations. Their destinations were the subject of conjecture, with the Cove (the labyrinth of Lake Tsala Apopka) of the Withlacoochee river deemed the most likely area.¹²⁰

Having consolidated their position through expulsion and murder of those chiefs who had agreed to emigration, it was now clear that the opponents of removal had determined on armed resistance. The government officials in the territory, as later evident, had consistently underestimated the number of the Indians, but these, conscious of their numerical superiority to the then feeble garrisons of the Florida posts, apparently concluded the troops could be readily handled. Parties of roaming Indians were observed with increasing frequency across the entire frontier, and the alarmed Alachua settlers abandoned their homes and congregated for safety in or near emergency stockades (Fort Crum, northeast of Alachua prairie; Fort Defiance at Micanopy; Fort Gilleland at Newnansville) which they erected. General Clinch had troops erect a stockade about the buildings on a speculative sugar plantation (Auld Lang Syne) which he was developing south of Micanopy, to which was given the name of Fort Drane. To this post was withdrawn half of the garrison at Fort King. In realization that their move to increase the military force in Florida could not be achieved in time to deal with the critical situation, the War

118. Potter, 94; McKenney and Hall; II-380. 119. Doc. 271: 243.

Department, on December 9, authorized the Governor of Florida to place at the disposal of General Clinch such a militia force as he might require. In anticipation of this action, General Hernandez, commander of the East Florida militia brigade, alerted his force on his own initiative, and sent several companies of militia under Colonel Warren to Fort Crum. General Call also raised a similar force from the Tallahassee area which he lead to Alachua.

Osceola and Early Hostilities

On December 17, plantations near Micanopy and Wacahouta were raided by one or more parties of Indians. On the next day General Clinch sent a militia force under Colonel Warren to scout in the raided area. Their wagon train with an escort was surprised south of Alachua prairie near Black Point by about 80 Indians said to have been lead by Osceola. When attacked, the escort fled to Micanopy. While the Indians were plundering the wagons, Captain McLemore's company of Warren's force, of about 30 men, arrived upon the scene. The captain ordered a charge to which order only about twelve of his men responded. He consequently was obliged to retreat with the heavy loss of eight killed and six wounded. Meanwhile Call effected a junction with Warren on the 12th, their combined force amounting to about 500 men. On the 20th this force returned to the scene of the skirmish and recovered some of the baggage. Call pushed on toward Micanopy, and in the vicinity of that place had a brush with the Indians, in the course of which he had four men wounded, while four dead Indians were discovered. Call with the territorial militia then reported to General Clinch at Fort Drane on the 24th.¹²¹ By the 26th Clinch had withdrawn all except one company from Fort King to Fort Drane, with the idea of striking a blow with

120. Potter, 9. 121. Boyd, 1951; 57. 122. *Ibid*, 69. 123. Sprague, 89.

the combined regulars and militia at the Indians believed to be concealed in the Cove of the Withlacoochee.

Vengeance

Osceola evidently now considered the time propitious to settle with General Thompson for the humiliation he had undergone at the Agent's order. With a number of companions, believed to have numbered from 40-60 Mikasukies, he may have lurked about Fort King for several days before the opportunity arose. On the afternoon of December 28, General Wiley Thompson with Lieut. Constantine Smith, was strolling a few hundred yards beyond the Agency office when they were fired upon from ambush by the unsuspected Indian party. Both fell, the former pierced by 14 balls, the latter by two. The Indians immediately proceeded to the sutler's house nearby, where Rogers the sutler, a clerk, and a boy were killed. A few escaped from the house. Although the Indians penetrated into the store-room of the house, they secured no plunder, as Rogers' stock had been removed to the fort. Rogers' cook, hiding in the vacant store-room, identified Osceola on his entrance to the room, while a few friendly Indians at the fort recognized his peculiar and shrill war yell.¹²² The large party with Osceola, would substantiate Alligator's later statement to Sprague¹²³ that they had expected it would be necessary to attack Fort King to get at Thompson. After this affair, the officers at that post became apprehensive for the safety of the force proceeding from Fort Brooke, which had been expected for a week.

Organized Hostilities

Major Dade's little force, en route to Fort King from Fort Brooke, marched into a prepared ambush on December 28. During the subsequent hot engagement which lasted several hours, the entire force, with the exception of three men, was wiped out. According to the account later given by Alligator

(Halpater Tustenuggee) to Sprague,¹²⁴ there were 280 Indians engaged, their leaders being Mico-an-opy, Jumper, and Alligator. Sprague was told that earlier opportunities for attack had been neglected because of the absence of Osceola and Mico-an-opa. Osceola as related, was detained at Fort King. With the arrival of Mico-an-opa, and the belief that the last favorable opportunity for an ambush would soon be lost, attack in this particular situation was determined upon, despite the absence of Osceola. Alligator said that the Indian losses were three killed and five wounded. Three badly wounded soldiers bearing news of the disaster, incredibly reached Fort Brooke individually and successively on December 29, 31, and January 1. However Clinch did not learn of Dade's fate until about January 20, when the news reached him by a circuitous route.¹²⁵

The forces of Jumper and Alligator returned to their camp in the Wahoo Swamp the day of the ambush, east of and adjacent to the Withlacoochee river, and were soon joined by Osceola. All must have been highly elated by their successful exploits, and likely celebrated them as adequately as their resources permitted. These rejoicings must have been interrupted by the arrival of scouts relating that a column of troops from Fort Drane was proceeding toward a ford on the Withlacoochee.¹²⁶ This force under Clinch included about 280 regulars of six companies and about 500 militia under Call and Warren. Clinch's objective was the Indian camps believed to be situated in the Cove. He was misled by his guides, and reached the river about two and one-half miles below the ford. The army began to cross early on the 31st. About half the force had crossed when the Indians, who had been awaiting them at the ford, learned of their situation and moved down and began to attack those on the south side. A sharp engagement lasting about an hour resulted. Osceola, dressed in an army

124. *Ibid*, 90. 125. Boyd, 84-105. 126. Sprague, 92.

uniform coat, the significance of which was not then appreciated, was observed on the field, actively directing Indian operations. The retirement of the Indians was later said to have been occasioned by the wounding of Osceola in the arm. Clinch's force suffered the loss of four killed and 59 wounded, and Alligator later admitted that three Indians were killed. Thus checked in his attempted passage of the river, and faced with immediate loss of militia support from expiration of enlistments, Clinch withdrew with the regulars to Fort Drane. The Indians appeared to have withdrawn voluntarily from the engagement, with the conviction that they had checked Clinch's movement against their camps. Following this affair, there was contemporary circulation of the tale that Osceola had peremptorily ordered his warriors to spare the life of Lieut. John Graham, an individual previously mentioned.¹²⁷

The month of January 1836 was a period of inaction for the small forces in the three frontier army posts. The only report of activity in the Alachua area at this time, was a raid conducted by a militia party of 200 men under Colonel Parish, who had a skirmish with a large Indian force at an unspecified location, from which the Indians withdrew during the night. The losses on either side are not recorded. Parish is said to have continued his course to Osceola's town, presumably that of the Big Swamp, which he destroyed. Undoubtedly it had been abandoned.¹²⁸

Major General E. P. Gaines, commander of the western military department, was in New Orleans when he received news of Dade's defeat, and hastily raised a force consisting of the 4th Infantry with about 700 Louisiana volunteers, who were embarked for Tampa Bay on February 4, 1836, which they reached on the 8th, 9th and 10th. Here at Fort Brooke, Gaines found a further company of the 4th, and four companies of the 2d Artillery. With this force of 980 men, Gaines left

127. Boyd, 1951: 73-84. 128. Smith, 66.

Tampa on the 13th, proceeding north on the military road toward Fort King, where he arrived on the 20th, without having encountered any hostile Indians. In conference with Clinch at that place, it was concluded impractical for the force to remain at Fort King, and that a return to Fort Brooke should be made by a route west of the Withlacoochee, the river to be crossed at the site of Clinch's recent engagement. This place was reached on the 27th, but Indian opposition to a crossing being experienced, the army moved to a position lower down on the next day. Encountering further opposition, Gaines fortified his camp (Camp IZARD), within which his force was closely invested by the Indians, and subjected to sporadic attacks. Expresses were sent to Clinch, the first of which asked for provisions and a diversionary operation by Clinch, the second that a relieving force come directly to Camp IZARD. Meanwhile the administration had, on January 21, entrusted the Florida operations to Major General Winfield Scott.

Our interest in Gaines's situation at Camp IZARD arises from the circumstance that on the night of March 5th the camp was hailed by a stentorian voice, the owner of which was generally identified as a Negro, and more specifically as Abraham, although also alleged to have been that of Caesar. This asked for an interview on the following day, to which proposal assent was given. On the morning of the 6th the enemy was observed defiling to the rear of the camp under a white flag. Major Barrows with Hagan the interpreter were sent to meet them, also under a white flag. Abraham and Jumper advanced from the former. Barrows was shortly joined by Doctor Harrell and Captain Marks, and the Indians further contributed Osceola and Coahadjo. Barrows asked what they had to communicate. Jumper replied through Abraham, as Barrows later reported to Gaines, that the Indians did not want to fight any more and wished Gaines to go away. On learning this, Gaines ordered

Captain Hitchcock to continue the parley. Hitchcock asked Barrows and Harrell to accompany him as witnesses, and Hagan as well to eavesdrop on the Indians' remarks among themselves. They were met by Jumper, Osceola, and Alligator, with an unnamed interpreter. Jumper said they had lost many, did not wish to lose more, and wished for peace. Hitchcock replied that Gaines had been sent to enforce a peace, but not to investigate the causes of the war. He further expressed a presumption that they had satisfied their wrongs, alluding to the destruction of Dade. This evoked from Osceola his only remark during the parley, which was translated as "I am satisfied." The conference adjourned to the afternoon, and Gaines instructed Hitchcock to tell them that he lacked authority to make terms, but that if they desired peace, they should refrain from further acts of hostility, go back south of the river, and await summons to a council with a chief (General Scott) soon expected. At this point the parley was interrupted by the arrival of Clinch's relieving force, and the Indians scattered. In the main we have followed the account of Hitchcock,¹²⁹ and of Potter.¹³⁰ However the latter included many anecdotes, which since he was not in attendance at the parley although present in the camp, are under suspicion as apocryphal. However he does categorically deny the tale that Osceola solicitously inquired after the welfare of Lieut. John Graham.

There has been much argument as to whether the Indians at this time were sincere in their expressed desire for peace. Hitchcock¹³¹ believed, and we think on good grounds, that they were, since from the time of the withdrawal of the troops from the river until the beginning of Scott's campaign, that is from March 5th to 26th, there was a cessation of hostilities.

Gaines was now informed of Scott's presence in Florida, and of his plan for a campaign against the hostiles. Consequently

129. Croffut, 1909: 94; Doc. 78: 622-623; McCall, 1868: 329.

130. Potter: 156-159. 131. Doc. 78: 631. 132. *Ibid* 662.

on March 9 he delivered command of the army to Clinch, which was withdrawn to Fort Drane, where it arrived on the 11th.

Since our subject is Osceola rather than an account of the first two years of the Seminole war, consideration of Scott's campaign is omitted, because we have not found mention of Osceola as identified as opposing any of the components of the army in any of the encounters, all minor, of the campaign, although it would seem incredible that he was absent from the field. This elaborately planned campaign failed either to reveal the Indians' hiding places or bring about any decisive action. The progress of the large columns was probably closely followed by the Indians, who likely concluded the force was too large to afford the Indians any advantage. They slipped between the columns as readily as grains of dry sand pass between the fingers.

The only allusion to Osceola encountered in this interval was offered by Captain G. S. Drane,¹³² who related that during the absence of Clinch's command with the right wing, the wife of (Indian) Billy Amathla, one of the army's guides, was carried off by the hostiles from the vicinity of Fort King. Shortly after the return of the army to Fort Drane, she made her escape and rejoined her husband at that place, where the captain had several conversations with her through an interpreter. She related that Osceola had urged her to quit her husband and join the Mikasukies. He told her that his men had whipped the whites and driven them out of the country, and that it was their intention to drive the whites from Fort King and Fort Drane where they would get a supply of ammunition and then drive all the *Alachuas* (i.e. volunteers) as far as the Suwanee, when they would have all of the country southward to themselves. She stated she had heard Osceola repeatedly declare that he would never make peace with the whites.

In the rear of Scott's marching columns, hostilities continued along the Alachua frontier. The most audacious exploit was

an attack on Fort Drane on the night of April 20, which was repulsed by the garrison of ineffectives under Captain Landrum, the only loss being the theft of 17 army horses from the pasture.¹³³ Such incidents coupled with the discharge of the volunteers at the close of Scott's campaign, produced a state of panic among the settlers, who again left their homes to congregate at Newnansville. On learning of this situation, Governor Call ordered Colonel Sanchez of Alachua to call out the full strength of his regiment, which, with reinforcements from Duval County, were placed under the command of Colonel Warren. In this uneasy situation, General Scott was unexpectedly relieved in Florida, and transferred to direct operations against the hostile Creeks in Alabama.

Command of the army in Florida was tendered to General Clinch, but he, uninfluenced by the implied honor, insisted on resigning from the Army, and departed from Fort Drane about the middle of May. On acceptance of Clinch's resignation, the command was then given to the Governor of Florida, R. K. Call, who was a brigadier general of the militia. Call had actively solicited the appointment from his patron, President Andrew Jackson, and expressed hopes of conducting a summer campaign, then regarded as a hazardous venture, a project which however, he did not realize.

At the close of Scott's campaign, one of the units of his regular force was stationed at Fort Defiance, Micanopy. On June 9 a large Indian party was discovered close to this post. Major Heileman sent out three detachments, totalling about 70 men under Captain R. B. Lee, to attack them. The Indians were encountered near Tuscawilla Lake, and driven off with loss to the force of seven wounded.¹³⁴

133. Report from Darien, April 12: 141. *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 30, 1836, L.

134. Heileman to Call: 57; Lee to Call: 62. Message from the President *** *Correspondence between the War Department and Governor Call* ***. Sen. Doc. 278, 26th Cong. 1st Ses. March 12, 1840.

Flood and Ebb

Major Heileman assumed command of Fort Drane, the principal post manned by regulars, on June 11. Fevers, undoubtedly malarial, were prevalent among the garrison, and upwards of one-third of the command was ill. Heileman quickly contracted the infection, and died on June 27. On orders from General Call to evacuate that unhealthy post, Captain Merchant withdrew the troops on July 19 to Fort Defiance. While on their march, this force was attacked at Wilika Pond within one mile of Fort Defiance, and again when only a quarter mile distant, by an Indian party with an estimated strength of 250. These were repulsed with the aid of a sortie from the fort.¹³⁵

Recalling Osceola's boast to the wife of Billy Amathla, it is likely that he recognized the abandonment of Fort Drane as his long awaited opportunity to occupy that post without bloodshed. The military, without doubt, were soon aware of this Indian movement, and plans were made for their dislodgement, which received the approval of Major B. K. Pierce upon his arrival at Fort Defiance on August 21. Assuming command, Pierce left Micanopy early on the same morning with 110 men and a field piece. Fort Drane, 10 miles distant, was reached about sunrise, and immediately attacked. The occupants were found to be a force of about 300 Mikasukies, with women and children, commanded by Osceola, who was both seen and heard. After a vigorous engagement, lasting about an hour, the Indians were driven out and into a nearby hammock, which could not be penetrated by Pierce's exhausted and inferior force. Pierce lost one killed and 16 wounded, while ten dead Indians were counted. The troops were withdrawn to Fort Defiance.¹³⁶ From Hollingsworth's account,¹³⁷ it does not appear that the Indians

135. Maitland to Call. Doc. 278: 66. 136. Pierce to Crane. Doc 278: 75.
137. Hollingsworth, Henry (1942-44). Diary of, "Tennessee Volunteers in the Seminole War." Ed. by Stanley F. Horn. *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* I (3,4); II (1,2,3). 1-356.

reoccupied Fort Drane prior to the arrival of the Tennessee volunteers on October 1. As we will later show, this occupation of Fort Drane shortly after its abandonment as unhealthy by the army, likely initiated the subsequent decline in Osceola's fortunes.

General Call with a small force of Florida militia and Tennessee Mounted Volunteers arrived near Fort Drane on October 1,¹³⁷ and surprised a small party of Indians, all of whom it was believed were killed. On the supposition that this indicated that the Indians near the fort were unaware of the approach of the army, the remaining distance was covered at a forced march. No evidence of recent Indian occupation of the fort was discovered, but a large smoke was seen to the eastward, investigation of which was negligently deferred to the following day. A detachment of 200 men was sent to reconnoiter this area on the 2d, which discovered, at the distance of about one mile from the fort, an Indian encampment of about 150 huts, with accommodations estimated as sufficient for from 500 to 1000 Indians. It gave the appearance of having been precipitately abandoned the day before. It was evident that the arrival of the army had been discovered, despite the precaution taken. Call believed this to have been an encampment of Mikasukies lead by Osceola.¹³⁸ Another report¹³⁹ said the trail of the fleeing Indians was directed toward the Withlacoochee. At a later date, Hollingsworth declared that on the arrival of the army on October 1, Osceola was lying ill at the Indian camp.

Space does not permit consideration of Call's two campaigns. As a consequence of provision shortage, the first was of brief duration and futile, which diminished his prestige to the extent that early in December he was superseded in command of the army by Major General T. S. Jesup. Before this occurred, how-

138. *Ibid*: I-355; Call to Sec. War. Doc. 278: 86.

139. Correspondence from St. Augustine, Oct. 15: 286. *Chronicle* Nov. 3, 1836; III.

ever, he completed his second campaign, during which his force scouted the Cove and other swamps adjacent to the Withlacoochee. He did succeed in bringing on two sharp engagements in and near the Wahoo Swamp, as a consequence of which the hostiles were ejected and scattered. Osceola's apparent non-participation in these affairs is doubtless attributable to his illness.

Jesup's Armistice

With the army's supplies replenished, it departed from Volusia on December 12 under its new commander. Jesup's immediate plans were vague, but he concluded that operations along the Withlacoochee while en route to Fort Brooke would most profitably utilize the limited remaining time of the Tennessee Volunteers, and possibly result in an encounter with Osceola. Several new posts were established on the march, including Fort Armstrong on the site of Dade's battle, and Camp (Fort) Dade where the military road crossed the Big Withlacoochee. Early in January Jesup returned to Fort Armstrong and sent out several detachments to scour the countryside. He reported on January 10, 1837, that one such party had surprised a Negro camp, securing 16 Negro prisoners who were of Osceola's band. By these, and particularly by Primus, a Negro who had been among the Indians since Gaines's blockade at Camp Izard, he was told that Osceola had been flushed from a hiding place in a Negro camp in Panasoffke Swamp on the Withlacoochee, and that though he was sick, he escaped with his family and three warriors. He was credited with ability to raise a following of 100 warriors. Although Jesup moved his command down the river as far as Fort Clinch near its mouth, the number of prisoners secured was so small that he became convinced that there were no more than small parties of fleeing Indians along the river. By his most recent captives he was told that Osceola had gone to the Ocklawaha. After sending

Major McClintock with 80 regulars to reoccupy Fort Drane and drive away the small bands infesting that area, Jesup returned to Fort Armstrong on the 19th. Having learned that a large body of Indians headed by Mico-an-opa, Jumper, and Alligator, were located about the headwaters of the Ocklawaha, Jesup, disregarding for the time being his interest in Osceola, set off with the 2d brigade under Colonel A. Henderson from Fort Armstrong on the 22d for Lake Ahapopka. From a prisoner secured during a skirmish at this place, it was learned that the main body of the Indians had retreated in a southeastwardly direction. These were found on the 27th in and near the Great Cypress Swamp, and were promptly attacked. After a sharp engagement the Indians dispersed, and the army camped on Lake Tohopekaliga. On the 28th a prisoner was sent to Jumper and the other hostile chiefs, offering peace on fulfillment of the treaty terms. The prisoner returned on the 29th with pacific messages from Alligator and Abraham. Jesup was visited on the 31st by Abraham, who returned on February 3 with Jumper, Alligator, and others. With these he concluded an agreement for all the chiefs to meet with him at Fort Dade on February 18, pending which event hostilities were to cease. The army left the field on its return march on the 4th, and covered the 70 miles to Fort Armstrong by the 7th. Jesup was highly elated over the prospects.¹⁴⁰

Some anxiety developed from failure of the Indians to arrive at Fort Dade on the 18th. However Alligator came in on the 25th, accompanied by Ho-la-ah Toochee (or Davy), nephew of Mico-an-opa, and reported that the Indians were so widely scattered they could not assemble by the 18th. The latter reported the Indians were all desirous of peace, but he would not express their attitude on emigration. Jesup told him that peace was contingent on emigration, and that the presence of

140. Operations under Maj. Gen. Jesup: 827-829. Mil. Aff. (1861) VII

Mico-an-opa was indispensable for negotiations. They agreed on a full council for March 4, and on departure left 12 hostages with Jesup.¹⁴¹

Mico-an-opa disregarded Jesup and did not appear at Fort Dade. However on March 6, Jumper, Ho-la-ah Toochee, and Yahooloochee (Cloud), empowered by Mico-an-opa, signed at that place what Jesup called a capitulation. They agreed to the immediate cessation of hostilities, to immediate emigration west, immediate withdrawal to the south side of the Hillsborough river, and assemblage by April 10 of all of the chiefs and warriors in a camp at a site near Tampa Bay to be designated by Jesup, where they would be subsisted by government pending emigration. The Seminole were assured of security in their lives and property, and that Negroes, their bona fide property, should accompany them, and as guarantee for their faithful performance of these promises, hostages, of whom Mico-an-opa was to be one, were to be placed in Jesup's custody. On the 15th Jesup reported to the Secretary of War that the Indians were beginning to assemble, and while he had no doubt of the good faith of the chiefs, he was doubtful of the effectiveness of their control over the young warriors.¹⁴²

On March 26 Jesup reported that Yahooloochee with 200 of his people were at Tampa, and that he had been assured by the Indians on the St. Johns that they would observe Mico-an-opa's order to emigrate. He believed the war ended, but feared the effect of indiscrete acts committed by settlers. An unofficial account from Tampa on April 16, said that all the chiefs except Osceola and Philip had come in by that date.¹⁴³ At Tampa the Indians were lodged in two camps, the farthest 12 miles distant. The Indians were not under restraint, but came and went as they pleased. On the 23d, Jesup reported that while Jumper, Mico-an-opa, and other principal chiefs were

141. *Ibid*: 833, 865. 142. *Ibid*: 834, 886.

143. *Savannah Georgian* April 24: 282. *Chronicle* May 4, 1837, IV.

there with him, their people came in slowly. Many Indians became alarmed over reports spread by mischievous whites that they were to be executed, and thereupon fled. Others were reported to be fearful of the measles, which had spread to the Indian camp from the army, in which it had been prevalent. The presence of slave hunters in Tampa furthermore alarmed the Indian Negroes, and most of these left. On May 8, Jesup reported that all of the chiefs had declared their readiness to obey Mico-an-opa's order for emigration, and expressed his own belief that all would embark in the course of the summer.¹⁴⁴

However the Indians along the St. Johns did not come into Tampa, but congregated at Fort Mellon. An officer writing from that post in May, related that Osceola had arrived there on the 3d, in company of all of the Mikasukies and Sam Jones. Other arrivals at that place included Coahadjo, Tuskeneha, Philip, and Coacoochee. It was reported that Ho-la-ah Toochee, nephew of Mico-an-opa, was nearby with the main body of the Nation. Indian encampments were scattered over a radius of 20 miles around the post. Estimates of the number congregated varied from a total of 2500 including women and children, to 2500 warriors alone. The large assembly at Fort Mellon, which appears to have greatly exceeded the number congregated at Tampa, was doubtless determined by convenience, and indicates the extent of Indian dislodgment from the Withlacoochee area. Those at Tampa were probably the so-called "hostages" with their immediate bands. Lieut. Col. Harney, the commanding officer of this post, reported that Osceola enjoyed the hospitality of his tent on the night of the 3d-4th Expressive of the cordial feeling which prevailed, was the arrangement by Osceola, of a ball-play for the entertainment of the garrison. In appearance, Osceola was described as "care-worn", or "gloomy and thin." The opinion was entertained that the Indians would depart for

144. Jesup to War Department: 837-867. Mil. Aff. (1861) VII.

Tampa about the 9th.¹⁴⁵ An officer who left Fort Mellon on the 16th related in Savannah that on permission granted by an undisclosed credulous officer, the Indians had been permitted to go to their towns, on promise to return in three to four days. Not returning by that time, a messenger sent after them returned with Coahadjo, who declared that they would leave for Tampa about the 20th.¹⁴⁶ There is no indication that any one in authority suspected that this withdrawal might forecast a reversal in the outlook for immediate emigration, or that the Indian coup to be described was already planned.

Osceola's Coup Frustrates Jesup

On June 7 Jesup reported that the principal Creek chief (probably Nocese Yaholo) had informed him on the 1st that in a few days an attempt would be made by a party of Mikasukies to kill or abduct the chiefs Mico-an-opa, Jumper, and Cloud, whose camp was about eight miles from Tampa. On receipt of this news, he ordered Major Graham, who was stationed with a mounted company and 120 Creek warriors about four miles from Mico-an-opa's camp, to send out spies at night to observe the movements of the Indians. Two spies were sent into the camp on the night of the 1st, and again on the night of the 2d, but they either disobeyed or failed to report. Jesup held the mounted men at the fort, as well as those at Major Graham's camp, ready to move at a moment's notice. It was not until the morning of the 3d that their absence was discovered, when they already had a 12 hour start, and pursuit would be useless.¹⁴⁷ From unofficial accounts it appeared that on the night of the 2d, 200 Mikasukies lead by Sam Jones and Osceola surrounded the camp of these chiefs and forced them

145. *Charleston Courier* May 12: 313. *Chronicle*, May 18; Report from Jesup: 329. *Chronicle*, May 25; *St. Augustine Herald*: May 18: 347. *Chronicle* June 1, 1837, IV.

146. *Savannah Republican* May 22: 348. *Chronicle* June 1, 1837, IV.

147. Jesup to Poinsett: 871. *Mil. Aff.* (1861) VII.

to leave. Mico-an-opa was reported as having refused to go, saying that he had signed a treaty and proposed to abide by it. He was told that if he did not go his blood would be spilt, to which he replied saying kill him there and quickly. The abductors ignored his objections, and Mico-an-opa was forced on a horse and carried off, while Jumper, having sold his mount was forced to walk.¹⁴⁸ These chiefs had been in council with Jesup on the 1st, when Jesup already was aware of the scheme, and could have siezed them, and captured their camp, but he desisted from such a course as an infraction of the capitulation. In his opinion the affair was an act of abduction rather than an absconding, a point of view which relieved the lost hostages of blame. The number departing was set as high as 700, and afterwards not more than 130 were said to remain near the fort, Abraham being among the latter. The hopes of an early peace were dashed, and Jesup in his disappointment, asked to be relieved of the Florida command. On reconsideration of his action, he withdrew his request.

Hostilities were not renewed in the months following the scattering of the Indians, probably because the army did not take the initiative, as the summer months were regarded as unhealthy. On the evacuation of Fort Foster, one "Bowlegs", brother of Alligator, was brought unwillingly to Tampa. He related that Mico-an-opa and Jumper with their people were on the Casseeme (Kissimmee) creek, three days march from Tampa. He stated that Osceola and his party were in the neighborhood of Volusia, and was quoted as having said that the Indians would remain quiet until they saw what the whites intended to do.¹⁴⁹

Guile Against Guile

Our attention will now be focused on events along the St. Johns river. Early on the morning of September 9, General

148. *Globe* n. d.: 393. *Chronicle* June 22, 1937. IV.

149. Miller to Jesup: 840. Mil. Aff. (1861) VII.

Hernandez succeeded in capturing Philip and his band by a surprise night attack on his camp, located in the vicinity of Dunlawton Plantation. This was effected without bloodshed on either side. On the following morning he similarly surrounded and surprised the camp of Uchee Billy at a point not far from Philip's camp. The entire Indian party was captured, although one was killed on either side. Hernandez brought his captives into St. Augustine, where they were confined in Fort Marion (Fort San Marcos).¹⁵⁰

At the solicitation of Philip, Hernandez permitted one of the recent captives, Tomoka John, to depart with a message from Philip to his family, requesting them to come in and share in his captivity. Tomoka John returned to the camp of the detachment which awaited him on the 26th, accompanied by Philip's son Coacoochee, and three other Indians under a white flag. The detachment immediately returned to the city, however permitting Coacoochee to dress in his finery before entering. He announced that in consideration of having come in voluntarily, he expected to be permitted to return without hindrance, and promised to use his influence to bring in his people, with stolen Negroes and cattle.¹⁵¹

Coacoochee was permitted to depart on October 2, having promised to return in 14 days. As good as his word, he returned on the 17th with Philip's brother and his own youngest brother, and further brought the highly interesting news that Osceola, with some other chiefs and about 100 Indians, was a day's journey in his rear, desirous of coming in for a conference.¹⁵²

On the 18th two Indians sought an interview with Hernandez. The spokesman professed to represent Mico-an-opa, Ho-la-ah Toochee, and Jumper, and to be the bearer of a message from Osceola, who announced his intention to be in for a talk, and

150. Motte, 116-123. 151. *Ibid*: 131, 134.

152. *Ibid*: 136. 153. *Ibid*: 137.

expressed regrets for past errors, together with a desire for peace. Jesup meanwhile had arrived in St. Augustine. On October 20 Osceola and his party encamped near Fort Peyton, and sent an invitation by John Cavallo to Hernandez, asking the latter to visit him without an escort. Jesup, suspecting some treachery, forbade Hernandez from going without a strong escort. Jesup also sent orders to Lieut. Peyton, commanding at Fort Peyton, to seize Osceola and his party should they all come into the fort. Jesup supplied Hernandez with an interrogatory of seven questions to be put to the Indians, with orders that if the replies to them were not satisfactory, the Indians were to be seized.¹⁵³

Hernandez, after instructing Major Ashby, commander of the escort of about 200 mounted men in the procedure to be followed, preceded the escort to Osceola's camp, about one mile from Fort Peyton. Jarvis, who accompanied Hernandez's staff, related that the camp could be discerned at some distance by the white flag flying. Osceola received them standing under the white flag. Osceola with his principal companions greeted Hernandez and the officers of his staff with hand-clasps, a ring was formed, and the talk began. The Indians stated they had come on the invitation of Philip, transmitted by Coacoochee. They denied intention to give themselves up, but said they wanted to make peace. The interrogatory dealt mainly with topics touched on at Jesup's previous conference with Coahadjo at Fort King. The Indians said the council promised at that time was called, but only a few chiefs appeared so that nothing was done. The Indians stated that Mico-an-opa, Jumper, and Cloud all got the measles and could not attend, but had sent word that when stronger, they would come to see Hernandez. Hernandez then told them that the officers had been deceived enough, and that it was necessary for them to come with him, to which he received the reply, "We will see about it."

Hernandez then gave the signal and the conferees were surrounded and taken prisoners.

Jarvis related that when the troops approached the Indians showed no surprise, and that when the signal to close in was given, several arose from curiosity to observe the maneuver, but none exhibited fear or terror. Although each Indian had his rifle, loaded and primed nearby, none of them had opportunity to raise one. It was reported that during the conference Osceola exhibited uneasiness, but became calm when he found himself a prisoner. The name of the respondent to the interrogatory is not known, but was likely Coahadjo. In addition to Osceola and Coahadjo, 12 other chiefs were secured, with 71 warriors, who were said to be nearly all Mikasukies, six women, and four negroes, with 47 rifles. After the Indian arms and baggage were collected, mounts were provided for Osceola, Coahadjo, and one other, and with the others afoot, were marched to St. Augustine between a double file of soldiers and confined in Fort Marion. Jarvis rode beside Osceola the whole distance. We observed that while Osceola was obviously unwell, he was in no manner downcast. It was later believed Osceola's motive in coming was to contrive the release of Philip, either by stratagem or assault. The entire absence of children, and the meager number of women with the party, was not indicative of a peaceful mission devoid of guile.¹⁵⁴

The seizure of Osceola provoked the expression of a great deal of sympathy for him in the press, with a corresponding criticism of Jesup. It would be difficult to understand how, given the opportunity, Jesup could have done otherwise than to seize Osceola and the other Indians, and not have been derelict to his duty. Jesup furthermore was thoroughly disillusioned by the June coup.

154. Motte, 138; Forry, (VII-1): 90; Jarvis, (XXXIX-5): 278. Reports of Hernandez and Gibbs: 5-8. House Doc. 327, 25th Cong. 2d. April 11, 1838. Jesup to Poinsett: 886. Mil. Aff. (1861) VII. Jesup, Nov. 17, 1837: 262-263. *Niles' National Register* Dec 23, 1837. Jesup, LIII.

Captivity

About the middle of November the delegation of five Cherokees selected on the invitation of the administration by John Ross, the principal chief of that Nation, arrived in St. Augustine. Their mission was to persuade the Indians to cease hostilities. Probably so they could later assure the hostiles that they had seen the prisoners and describe their treatment, they were invited by the officers in that city to meet the prisoners in the fort. A highly elaborate interview was staged, the participants wearing all their finery. Free conversation was permitted, and Osceola was quoted in the reports as saying that he was tired of fighting, and that when he saw his Great Father would tell him so, and then set out for his new home toward the setting sun, but was too sick to say more.¹⁵⁵ Previous allusion has been made to this interview. From St. Augustine a runner bearing pipes and tobacco was sent to announce the presence and purpose of the mediators to Mico-an-opa and Sam Jones.

Vanquished by Malaria

An army surgeon, Dr. Forry,¹⁵⁶ saw the captives professionally while they were confined in Fort Marion. He believed the Indians, Osceola included, did not regret capture, their only anxiety was reunion with their families. He stated Osceola then labored under an intermittent fever (probably tertian malaria). This, we believe to be a most significant statement. It will be recalled that Osceola and his band occupied the post of Fort Drane a short time after its garrison was evacuated in the summer of 1836 because of the unhealthfulness of that post. The rampant illness could hardly have been anything else than malaria, and the intensity of the epidemic must have permitted the infection of a large proportion of the anopheline mosquitoes thereabout, which were certainly abundant. These

155. *Augusta Constitutionalist* n. d.: 364. *Chronicle* Dec. 7, 1837, V.

156. Forry, (VII-1): 95. 157. Jarvis (XXXIX-5): 286.

must have been still abundant when Osceola and his band occupied the fort. During this exploit Osceola and probably many of his followers must have acquired the infection. It is noteworthy that most observers who subsequently commented on Osceola's appearance, stress an aspect which one would expect to observe in a sufferer from chronic malaria. It is likely that at the period when Osceola was described as a fugitive attended only by his family and three warriors, he was acutely ill. * Call himself was a victim of malaria during his campaign. Certainly after Call's force drove him away from the vicinity of Fort Drane, excepting only his part in the abduction of Mico-an-opa from Tampa, Osceola evidently was inactive. We conclude that at the time of his capture he was an enfeebled, ill, and tired man, perhaps not overly averse to the prospect of capture.

Coacoochee's detention in Fort Marion, after the other chiefs had come in through persuasion, undoubtedly rankled, as he at any rate had not exhibited any desire to give up his freedom. The commanding officer of Fort Marion must have been amazed when Osceola, on the morning of November 30, informed him that Coacoochee had escaped from the fort. Osceola sent word to Jesup that he as well as his people could have left in the same manner, but scorned to do so.¹⁵⁷ When roll was called it was found that 19 other Seminoles, including two women, had accompanied Coacoochee. As Porter¹⁵⁸ pointed out, this break released the one man capable of assuming the

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* Since the foregoing was written, the Editor has called attention to the following item which appeared in the Tallahassee *Floridian* of December 16, 1837:

"A gentleman lately from St. Augustine states that Powel[l] during the last year has suffered severely from chills and fever, which, with the injury he received by a shot through the hand at the Withlacochee, has prevented him from taking much part in the war."

This confirmation also establishes contemporary recognition that Osceola's inaction was ascribable to the poor state of his health.

158. Porter, Kenneth. "Seminole Flight from Fort Marion." *Florida Historical Quarterly* XXII 113-133.

leadership of a significant number of Seminoles and reviving the spirits of the other chiefs. The break came too late for the news of the escape to reach Mico-an-opa and his close associates and deter them from coming into Fort Mellon. Coacoochee shortly established contact with Alligator and Sam Jones, the only other important chiefs remaining at large. Under their joint leadership, the rallied Indians fought Colonel Zachary Taylor in the battle of Okeechobee on December 25, 1837, the hottest battle of the entire war. It does not seem unreasonable to believe that but for this incident, the war might have been brought to a close in 1837.

Meanwhile the Cherokee negotiators had proceeded to Fort Mellon in the company of Coahadjo, where they arrived on November 26. Although Jesup was skeptical of the possible value of their services, he nevertheless approved the terms of their contemplated talk, prepared by John Ross,¹⁵⁹ which proposed negotiation of a treaty with Presidential approval, and amnesty to "Osceola Powell" and the principal actors. News of their coming had reached Mico-an-opa, and on the 27th runners arrived from him with the message that he would meet them at a creek 40 miles from the fort in two days. The Cherokees departed for the rendezvous at Chickasawhatchee creek (the present Taylor creek entering the St. Johns just below the outlet of Lake Poinsett), where after smoking a preliminary pipe, they held a council with the Seminoles on November 30 and December 1, and presented their proposals. Mico-an-opa and 12 chiefs agreed to return with them to Fort Mellon.¹⁶⁰

On November 30 a small party of Indians, including the runner sent from St. Augustine, and Negroes came into Fort

159. *Memorial of the Cherokee Mediators*: 7. House Doc. 285, 25th Cong. 2d.

160. Savannah dispatch, n.d.: 382. *Chronicle* Dec. 14; *Commercial Advertiser*, and *New York American*, n.d.: 394. *Chronicle*, Dec. 21, 1837, V. Jarvis, 1906, (XXXIX-5): 285-286. Various letters, Jesup to Poinsett: 886-891. Mil. Aff., VII.

Mellon and surrendered; their numbers variously reported, as from 4-5 warriors, 10-13 women, and 11 children. They were stated to be Osceola's people. Among the women were "two wives of Osceola and his sister", or "two of Osceola's wives", as well as two children. They were accompanied by from 30-40 Negroes in wretched condition. Their arrival was said to represent a flight from the hostiles, and was probably motivated by a desire for reunion. Jesup promptly sent them to St. Augustine.¹⁶¹

On December 3 the Cherokee delegation with Coahadjo, accompanied by Mico-an-opa, Cloud, Tuskegee, Sam Jones's nephew, and Nocose Yahala, came into Fort Mellon. The absence of Sam Jones was attributed to a fear that Jesup would make good his threat to dress him like a woman if he ever got him into his power. According to Jesup they surrendered, but by the Cherokees were declared to have entered under a white flag. Jesup admitted that the course reported as followed by the Cherokees met with his approval. On the 5th a council was held with these Indians. Jesup inquired as to their expectations in coming into camp, to which Mico-an-opa replied that he desired peace and would fulfill the treaty. Jesup then demanded the immediate surrender of the families of the prisoners at St. Augustine, the surrender of Sam Jones with his people (Mikasukies), and of all others camped within a four days march. This was assented to, and seven days allowed for Jones' people, and ten days for those of Mico-an-opa and Cloud to come in. Messengers were dispatched with these orders from the chiefs, and the wait began. Jesup was not hopeful of the outcome, but held the beforementioned as hostages. Sam Jones's nephew evidently concluded he could not assure his uncle that Jesup would accord him the same treat-

161. Jesup to Poinsett: 890. Mil. Aff. VII. Jarvis, (XXXIX-5) 285. *Savannah Republican*, n.d. and *Savannah Georgian* Dec. 8: 394 *Chronicle* Dec. 21, 1837, V.

ment given the other chiefs, and made a precipitate departure. Likely by this time Coacoochee had established communication with Sam Jones, which led to a prompt change in the latter's mind. The Cherokee delegation had accompanied the messengers, and returned on the 14th without bringing in any further Indians. Jesup now considered the mission of the Cherokees a failure, and thereupon seized all of the Indians near the fort, including the before-mentioned chiefs, totalling 78. These as well as the protesting Cherokees, who were denied communication with the prisoners, were placed on board a steamer bound for St. Augustine.¹⁶² Jesup justified the seizure of Mico-an-opa and Cloud on the ground they were fugitive hostages, and he was now convinced that the war could only be settled by battle.

A Forecast of the Final Solution of the Seminole Problem

On arrival at St. Augustine, the Cherokees sought and were granted an interview with the captive chiefs in the fort, as they desired to clear themselves of any charge of treachery, but the captives denied that they entertained any such suspicions. According to John Ross, Colonel Sherburne, professedly acting on the suggestion of Jesup, inquired of the captives in the presence of the Cherokees, whether, if the government would assign them the country south of a line drawn from Tampa Bay to the East Coast, they would guard that frontier against foreign invasion, deliver runaway Negroes, and end the war in friendship and good faith. The chiefs were astounded, and said they only waged war to gain these ends. Sherburne then asked whether, in the event such a plan were sanctioned, any of those chiefs would visit Washington to ratify such a treaty. The chiefs were polled, all expressed themselves as willing except Philip, who said he would only when convinced that the word of the United States would not be broken. Osceola plucked a white feather from his turban, and gave it with a scarf, to

162. Jesup to Poinsett: 890-891. Mil. Aff. VII. Doc. 327: 9; Doc. 285: 11

Sherburne, saying "Present these to our white father in token Osceola will do as you have said."¹⁶³

The *Army and Navy Chronicle* quoted a St. Augustine paper of December 23, which stated that it was understood that orders had been received from Jesup for the removal of all the Indians in Fort Marion to Charleston. When this news was communicated to them, it was said they received it with very bad grace. Coacoochee's escape had convinced Jesup that the old fort was an insecure cage for important prisoners. About the last of December the whole group of Indians, including Mico-an-opa, Osceola, Philip, Coahadjo, and Cloud, with 116 warriors, and 82 women and children, were embarked on the *SS Poinsett* for Charleston, where they arrived on January 1, 1838, and were transferred to Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island. Their deportment on the journey was reported to have been good. After arrival, Osceola was allowed the freedom of the enclosure, and to receive visitors in his room. On the 6th, he and the other chiefs were induced to attend a performance of the play "Honey-moon" at the Charleston theater. The celebrity of the prisoners attracted many visitors; and the artist Catlin came to Charleston to paint the portraits of the Seminole chiefs. They were loquacious with Catlin, frequenting his room until late at night, and related through an interpreter their version of the war and of their capture, of which they complained bitterly.¹⁶⁴

Death of Osceola

Catlin was informed by Dr. Weedon, surgeon of the post, that Osceola would not live many weeks, and the artist observed a rapid decline in his face and flesh during the sittings. Before completion of his portrait, Osceola developed an acute attack

163. Doc. 285: 17.

164. *St. Augustine Herald*, Dec. 23: 42. *Chronicle* Jan. 18, 1838, VI; Coe, 102, 109; Catlin, 247.

of quinsy or putrid sore throat, a topical diagnosis which has several etiological implications, but which could not have been related to his chronic malaria infection, which however, had probably lowered his vitality. Osceola refused the ministrations of Dr. Weedon, preferring to be treated by an Indian physician. On the night of the 27th, Catlin and the officers sat up with Osceola, as he was believed to be dying. He rallied, and at the time of Catlin's departure on the 29th, hope of recovery was entertained. Instead he grew rapidly worse, and died on the 30th, with his wives, "his two fine little children", and others in attendance. He evidently realized that his end was approaching, and insisted on being clad in his finery. Dr. Weedon furnished Catlin with a minute description of his last moments.¹⁶⁵

Osceola was buried near the main entrance of Fort Moultrie, his obsequies being attended by all Indians in the fort, citizens, and a military escort, which fired a salute over the grave. The grave was later enclosed by a paling, and a Charleston resident, a Mr. Patton, provided a marble headstone inscribed:

O C E O L A
Patriot and Warrior
Died at Fort Moultrie
January 30th, 1838

A photograph of the grave as it was over 50 years ago was reproduced by Coe.¹⁶⁶ It soon became known that the corpse had been decapitated.

Dr. Forry¹⁶⁷ wrote a friend from St. Augustine on March 25, 1838, that: "Old Dr. Weedon is about publishing the life of Osceola. Powell has quizzed [*i.e.* mislead] him most sublimely. The Doctor has Osceola's head here in his possession."

Soon afterwards the remaining prisoners were sent West.

165. Catlin, 251. 166. Coe, 112. 167. Forry, (VII-1): 101.

Philip died en route below Fort Gibson. It is presumed that Osceola's wives and children went with the party, but Coe¹⁶⁹ was unable to trace their after movements.

The decapitated remains of Osceola are probably the only remains of an Indian partisan of that war which lie in a known and identifiable grave. There, far from his homeland, and except for the early desecration, they have remained for more than a century in the tranquility which was denied him during his life in Florida.

The best contemporary appraisal of Osceola we have encountered is provided by the writer of an anonymous letter dated Charleston, January 31:¹⁶⁸

We shall not write his epitaph or his funeral oration, yet there is something in his character not unworthy of the respect of the world. From a vagabond child he became the master spirit of a long and desperate war. He made himself - no man owed less to accident. Bold and decisive in action, deadly but consistent in hatred, dark in revenge, cool, subtle, and sagacious in council, he established gradually and surely a resistless ascendancy over his adoptive tribe, by the daring of his deeds, and the consistency of his hostility to the whites, and the profound craft, of his policy. In council he spoke little - he made the other chiefs his instruments, and what they delivered in public, was the secret suggestion of the invisible master. Such was Osceola, who will be long remembered as the man that with the feeblest means produced the most terrible effects.

168. Anonymous letter: 353. *Niles' National Register*, Feb. 2, 1838. LIII.

169. Coe, 1898: 119.