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ABNER DOUBLEDAY AND THE THIRD SEMINOLE WAR

edited by DAVID RAMSEY *

ABNER DOUBLEDAY, the grandson of a veteran of the American Revolution, was born June 26, 1819, at Ballston Spa, New York, twenty miles north of Albany. Abner attended school in Auburn and later Cooperstown, New York, before entering the United States Military Academy in 1838. Graduating in 1842, he stood number twenty-four academically in a class of fifty-six.

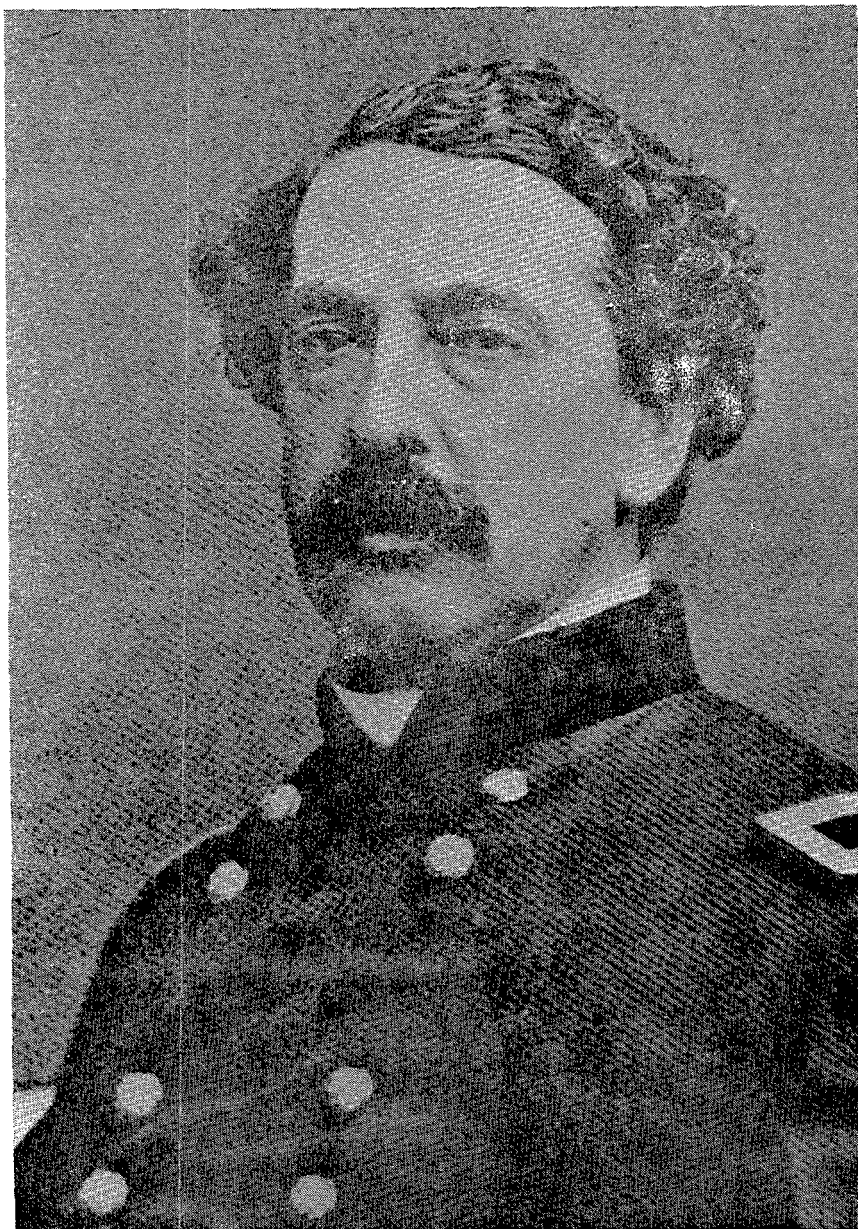
In the years following his graduation from West Point, Doubleday was on routine army duty at various posts throughout the United States. He served in the Mexican War from 1846 to 1848, and was a member of a select Senate committee in 1852 and 1853 because of his knowledge of Spanish.

Promoted captain of the United States First Artillery on March 3, 1855, Doubleday was transferred to command Company E at Fort Monroe, Point Comfort, Virginia. This assignment lasted one year and a half. His company was then ordered on October 25, 1856, to Fort Dallas in south Florida on the present site of Miami, to engage the Indians in the Third Seminole War.¹

This final Seminole conflict, the last Indian wars east of the Mississippi River, began December 20, 1855, when a small group of Seminoles attacked an eleven-man army scouting party which had destroyed some prized banana plants in the garden of the Seminole chief, Billy Bowlegs. Four of the soldiers were killed and four were wounded. The state of Florida immediately

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1. Abner Doubleday Papers, 1846-1858, New York-Historical Society, New York (hereinafter cited as NY Doubleday Papers), 61, 62; New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg, Chattanooga, and Antietam, *In Memoriam, Abner Doubleday, 1819-1893 and John Cleveland Robinson, 1817-1897* (New York, 1918), 40, 61, 62; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., From its Establishment, in 1802- to 1890, with the Early History of the United States Military Academy*, 6 vols. (Boston, 1891) II, 132-33.



Abner Doubleday

mobilized 660 volunteer troops, and Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, anticipating an outbreak of hostilities by the estimated 100 Seminole warriors living in the Everglades, detached 800 federal troops to south Florida.²

Company E, under Doubleday's command, was part of the force sent to Florida. The federal soldiers scattered throughout the state were under the command of Brevet Brigadier General William S. Harney. Doubleday's new post, Fort Dallas, had no military fortifications, only buildings for a garrison.³

Soon after arriving at his new station, Doubleday and Captain John M. Brannan, in command of Company B of the First Artillery, were directed to build a road from Arch Creek, about five miles north of Fort Dallas, north to New River, a distance of fifteen miles. Scouting parties could not operate effectively without a usable road. Doubleday liked drawing maps, and he did a sketch of the area around the proposed road. Preliminary surveys were made in January 1857, and the road was completed the following month. It was built on a ridge, and later the Florida East Coast Railroad used the same route for the railroad from Fort Lauderdale to Miami.⁴

Several scouting forays were made by Doubleday and the troops stationed at Fort Dallas. He led an expedition to the Florida keys, February 18 to March 4, 1857, in search of the Seminoles. Although the soldiers did not locate any Indians, Doubleday used the opportunity to draw a map of the area. A few weeks later, he journeyed ninety-five miles north to Fort McRae on the east side of Lake Okeechobee, looking for Indians. He prepared another map of the route the soldiers followed. The troops at Fort Dallas also searched for Seminoles in the islands in Biscayne Bay, but the elusive Indians were nowhere to be found.⁵

2. Kenneth W. Porter, "Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco) in the Seminole Wars" (part I), *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (January 1967), 236-37; James W. Covington, "An Episode in the Third Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (July 1966), 48-50.

3. Covington, "An Episode in the Third Seminole War," 50; NY Doubleday Papers, 57.

4. NY Doubleday Papers, 55; *Miami Herald*, June 5, 1955.

5. *Miami Herald*, June 5, 1955; NY Doubleday Papers, 44-46, 53-54; Abner Doubleday Papers, Library of the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, New York. (The Doubleday collection, hereinafter cited as BHF Doubleday Papers, is located in Cooperstown. It includes correspondence, newspaper clippings, and assorted memorabilia. The material is not catalogued.)

Doubleday and about sixty troops from Fort Dallas moved into the Everglades, a search that lasted from September 15 to September 26. Entering the Glades by way of the Miami River, Doubleday planned to "scout the country to the south of Fort Dallas as far as practical."⁶ He found an Indian campsite but no warriors. Meanwhile Doubleday mapped the route his soldiers took. Apparently they went by Bear Island, between the present towns of Kendall and Perrine, and then moved southwest of Perrine to the Indian village. Returning, they passed Crane Island, near later-day Richmond. Doubleday's precise maps of south Florida were possibly the first made of the area by an American.⁷ They provided valuable information that hitherto had not been available.

After their arduous activity at Fort Dallas, the two companies were glad to receive a transfer. On October 13, 1857, they were ordered to Fort Capron, Florida, on the Indian River. First Lieutenant Truman Seymour's Company H of the First Artillery at Fort Capron replaced them. Doubleday thought this was only fair, Seymour's men had an easy time at Fort Capron, while his company had worked hard at Fort Dallas.⁸

By March 1858, Billy Bowlegs had agreed to surrender, and he and 125 followers were quickly shipped out to the Indian reservation in the West. Four days after Bowlegs' departure, on May 8, Company E was ordered to Fort Brooke on the present site of Tampa. On June 14, the company was again transferred, this time to Fort Moultrie at Charleston.⁹

Doubleday remained in Charleston, as second in command at the post until the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861. He served in the Union army during the Civil War, participating in the major battles in the East until 1863, when he was transferred to Washington. Doubleday remained in the army until his retirement in 1873. He wrote several books on the Civil War and articles on various subjects. He died at his home in Mendham, New Jersey, in 1893.¹⁰

6. *Miami Herald*, June 5, 1955.

7. *Ibid.*, NY Doubleday Papers, 47-49.

8. NY Doubleday Papers, 43, 44; BHF Doubleday Papers.

9. Porter, "Billy Bowlegs in the Seminole Wars," 239; NY Doubleday Papers, 41.

10. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 133-34.

Following the Civil War, Doubleday apparently intended to publish an autobiography. In 1869 he wrote approximately 600 pages of manuscript about his life from 1846 to 1858. This material is now in the New-York Historical Society's collection. Included in the manuscript are eighteen pages concerning Doubleday's service against the Seminoles from 1856 to 1858, while stationed at Fort Dallas. The following are the pages from Doubleday's diary exactly as he wrote them. Punctuation, spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, quotation marks, and other grammatical marks have in no way been changed,

* * * * *

The new President ¹¹ was hardly inaugurated before his Secy of War Mr Floyd ¹² of Va began to take action with a view to assist the secessionists when the moment came for them to act. He at once ordered our two companies ¹³ to leave Old Point ¹⁴ for Florida where there had been some recent outbreaks of the Seminoles but not to any great extent. ¹⁵ I think they had murdered 2 or three settlers. This was sufficient excuse for Floy [*sic*] to order the garrison of Old Point away and leave it this large & important post merely in charge of an ordnance sargeant.

We Brannans Co & mine left Old Point in a steamer chartered for the occasion and were soon off the coast of Florida. Col Justin Dimick was our Comg Officer a resolute and experienced officer who was determined to put down the Indian outbreak if it could be done and who neither spared himself nor his officers where duty was in question. When we came opposite our destination which was Key Biscayne Bay where Fort Dallas is situated we had the misfortune to run aground. We were in a perilous situation for the bow of the boat was fast in the sand while the stern was free. Had any wind come up the thumping on the

11. James Buchanan was inaugurated March 1857.
 12. John Buchanan Floyd resigned this post in December 1860 and joined the Confederate Army. Mark Mayo Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York, 1959), 286.
 13. Captain Abner Doubleday's Company E of the First Artillery and Captain John M. Brannan's Company B.
 14. Point Comfort, Virginia, was the location of Fort Monroe.
 15. Doubleday is expressing some anti-Floyd sentiment as his company was transferred to Florida before Buchanan and Floyd took office in March 1857. In October 1856, when he was sent to Fort Dallas, Franklin Pierce was president and Jefferson Davis was secretary of war.

bottom caused by the action of the waves would have soon brought the engines through the bottom of the vessel. We got out our life preservers and as there was a light-house some three miles off we made all the signals we could think of to attract attention and get a pilot. I fired volleys of musketry from the deck but it was a dark night and we were neither seen nor heard. The idea of the vessel going to pieces on that shore was not an agreeable [*sic*] one for the sea is swarming with sharks. Fortunately the wind went down and there was almost a dead calm. When morning came the captain succeeded in getting the vessel out We proceeded joyfully on our way and were soon at our destination. The place had been held as a military post and all the requisite buildings were there to make us comfortable There were no fortifications of any kind but it seems to be customary to call every spot in Florida or Texas occupied by a garrison a Fort. Fort Dallas was located on the west side of Key Biscayne Bay the harbor bay some 3 miles wide. surrounded with pine woods with occasional patches of what are called Indian hammocks which are dense thickets difficult to penetrate. There are several of them in the immediate vicinity of the post. A stream large enough to be called a river ¹⁶ bounded one side of the post which was an outlet to the Everglades about 10 miles distant.

One morning soon after our arrival just before breakfast I was standing near the stables when Col Dimick made his appearance in a soldiers overcoat and said to me 'Do you ride; I replied in the affirmative and he said Get a horse from the Qr Mrs dept and let us ride out a little ways. I complied with his request & we rode out. It gave me a taste of his quality as an Indian campaigner. We scoured the country for a long distance were gone all day and did not return until night. I was very much fatigued & glad to break my long fast. The Indians might easily have cut us off for we took no precautions. We soon found that Dimick was addicted to these long excursions and whenever we saw him put on that overcoat we knew what we had to expect.

I am afraid if the statistics of the money spent in Florida were made out it could easily be shown that it cost more than \$100,000 to capture or kill one Indian. I believe it would have been much cheaper to let the matter out by contract. In saying

16. Miami River.

this I do not mean to disparage the skill or gallantry of the officers of the Army for they were actuated by a strong sense of duty & did all in their power. but the material furnished us was not suitable for the business. The German and Irish emigrants who enlisted at that time composed the bulk of our forces and were almost necessarily ignorant of anything like woodcraft. How could a soldier loaded down with his musket & cartridge box his canteen & haversack succeed in catching Indians wholly unencumbered who knew every path stream & covert and who was not encumbered with any Armament. They managed to find food enough wherever they were. The arrow root of which covered country the inner bark of certain trees wild plums & the cabbage palmetto were always available. The rivers swarmed with fish & the woods with game.

In order to send out scouting parties intelgenty [*sic*] Brannan and myself were direced [*sic*] to make a road north to New River ¹⁷ some 30 miles distant and I set myself to make a map of the surrounding country for I was fond of that kind of business & always liked to have all the localities around me on paper.

We did not see or hear anything of the Seminoles for some time and as their trail was frequently found fresh at a crossing about 3 miles up the river I was sent there to try to open communication with them. I put up a pole bent it towards the sun at 3 P.M. made 7 notches on it and hung some tobacco & other presents then called wampum. I then put up a white flag & returned. All this meant that in a week from that day I would like to meet them then under a white flag. They looked at the arrangement and took the present but did not meet us.

They knew that they could outrun us & easily escape pursuit & they therefore were not at all afraid of us. One day one of them actually came to the edge of a thicket & was seen by some camp women looking on at evening parades. The women screamed the occurence was reported the long roll was beaten & I put out with my Co after that Indian. I deployed my men in open order and went into a hammock were [*sic*] the Indian had taken refuge. I soon found myself in difficulty. Some of the men went forward in open spaces and made rapid progress others were detained by

17. New River was located in what later became the city of Fort Lauderdale. The road was built in January and February 1857.

obstacles while several including myself were tied up in the wild vines and had great difficulty in moving at all. The indians under such circumstances lay down & worm themselves like snakes through the thickets for they have no impediments or haversacs [*sic*] or canteens or cartridge boxes to bother them. I saw that my Co was rapidly becoming dispersed and at last gave up the attempt in despair to catch this particular indian. The bugles were blown a long time before I could reassemble the men

Col Dimick now organised [*sic*] and kept up a set of scouting expeditions. He usually left one Co to guard the post and went out with the other. He would keep along the road Brannan & myself had cut and we would examine the country east of the Everglades. We would tramp all day through the woods wading in the edge of the everglades and return at night worn out with fatigue. Then we would cut a few palmetto leaves as a bed and lie down in our blankets heedless of snakes which were abundant or alligators which came around at night We found plenty of these animals but no indians.

An expedition was formed to go up to Lake Okechobee [*sic*] and look there for them.¹⁸ On the way there I saw a long morass which runs parallel to the coast and is about 200 yards wide. On the other side there was a beautiful rolling country and as it had not been inspected I thought I would try and make my way over there. It proved an awful undertaking The sand was very soft and deep and had it not been for the trees which were frequent we would not have got across it. Panting breathles [*sic*] & worn out we held on the branches of these trees to prevent ourselves from going under. I was amused at the wit of 2 Irish soldiers who were floundering through the deepest part. One of them covered with mud said Davis I think Ill stop here and open shop. And what will you sell said Davis. *Artificial flowers!* When I got over I found a beautiful country with plenty of game but no signs of Indians and it was not at all agreeable [*sic*] to return but we succeeded in getting over at a narrow & less difficult place. On this expedition I was struck with the different degrees of memory of localities in the soldiers. I trusted them with my pocket compass. Some would lose their way before they had gone 200 yards others seemed to have an almost magical power of

18. This expedition covered the period March 25 to April 1, 1857.

direction: they never varied in their course and if awakened in the darkest night would start off unerringly on the proper route. And this reminds me of an incident which occurred on this expedition. We were on the way back from the Lake and had made several days journeys. Although we saw no traces of Indians Dimick kept up the scouting parties so zealously that he put one of my Lieuts on a mule gave him ten men on other mules who we [*sic*] disabled and unable to march and directed him to make a scout but to return to the command at night. The Lieut said to one of his friends. This is all nonsense It is merely to look well on the recap of our exploration which is to be sent to Genl Harney.¹⁹ We scouted this country before & we know there are no indians here. I am not going to kill myself & the men for nothing Our march is North East. Very well I shall take my men out of sight of you all then take the North East course & follow you into camp & get in early. Night came but the mule party did not make its appearance. Ten o'clock came and still there were no signs of them. We made huge fires to attract their attention & Dimick began to grumble. If I send my young men out as scouts I want them to be reasonable about it. They are altogether too zealous to keep their men out so late as this. About 2 o'clock that night the mule party made its appearance. The Lieut had kept going all day and as evening came he thought he would join us. He had no sense of locality whatever and relied entirely on his compass. but there was a bugler with him who had the faculty very largely developed and who watched his proceedings with a sorrowful eye. At last the Lieut said I think I will go over to that rising ground; the bugler forgot the restraints of dicipline [*sic*] and said Oh dont Lieut! "Dont" said the Lieut & why not I think our men are in bivouac over there. Oh no lieut we have been going away from them all day. We have got back to Lake Okeechobee again. If you go over there you will see the lake. Why bless me how is this said the Lieut. Great Heavens I have been going N.W. all day instead of N.E.

Genl Harney who commanded the Dept now organised [*sic*] a large expedition to cross Florida from Tampa Bay making a considerable circuit to join us at Fort Dallas. This force was

19. The federal troops in Florida were under the command of Brevet Brigadier General William S. Harney.

under command of Capt Pemberton ²⁰ who had distinguished himself on Worths ²¹ staff in the Mexican War. He subsequently became the celebrated General who defended Vicksburg against Grant. ²² A certain number of wagons were to be sent him to carry his provisions & tents but he could not wait for them and started without them. The consequence was that each soldier was loaded down with 10 days provisions The weather was hot the marches fatiguing & the soldiers wasted or lost their provisions so that when five days had elapsed they still had a long distance to go and they were out of food. They were obliged to eat one of the officers horses and the tail of an alligator and they had a few palmetto cabbages. There was hardly any game in the vicinity at the time so that they were half starved & became very weak as they approached New River some 30 miles from Fort Dallas if I remember rightly Brannan & myself had made a good road that far and had bridged all the streams but New River was wide & Pembertons command had no way of crossing it. One officer Lt Lee a relative of Robert E Lee ²³ swam over & finding a good road on the other side kept on until he reached Fort Dallas and told us the plight Pemberton was in. Provisions were at once sent out and the men were so eager that they ate the meat raw. Lee who was excessively hungry & who arrived at dawn of day went to the sutlers store and ate crackers & cheese there until breakfast was cooked. He ate a very hearty breakfast & then went back to the sutlers store and ate whatever he could find there until dinner. He then ate a hearty dinner & it was said went back again to the sutlers store and kept on eating until supper time. A dangerous experiment but it did not seem to injure him in the present instance.

Before the expedition started our company was filled up with recruits from Governors Island. ²⁴ To teach them to fire I put up a picture of an Indian on canvass leaned it against a tree & made them practice at it. They were mostly Irish and not used to firing

20. Captain John C. Pemberton.

21. Major General William J. Worth.

22. Major General Ulysses S. Grant.

23. Doubleday was mistaken about the man. The soldier was First Lieutenant Stephen Dill Lee of Charleston, South Carolina. He was not related to Robert E. Lee of Virginia.

24. Governor's Island is located in New York harbor and was the location of Fort Columbus. Many expeditions left from there.

and it was amusing to see their gratification when they hit it. I heard one of them sing "If that was wild Billy Bowlegs himself its little he'd trouble the country after this." The tree against which proved to be an india rubber tree the first I had ever seen.

We reached Okeechobee at last but saw no signs to indicate that our foemen was residing in that vicinity. The scenery was flat & [illegible] but the broad sheet of water was a pleasant sight after so much journey through pine forests.

After this expedition Pembertons force returned to the east side of Florida and we settled down to our usual drills parades & scouting.

Dimick who was afraid of nothing else had a great antipathy to snakes. The sight of one would make him sick and they are very abundant in Florida. It was not at all an uncommon circumstance to see them projecting their heads from holes under the roofs of the houses. We made preparations one day to go on a scout and as the youngsters thought they would have a better time and more freedom without the Comg Officer than with him they got up a conspiracy to scare him with snake stories They asked me what I was going to do with that *reata* (long rope made of horse hair which I had brought from Texas). I answered that I put it around my sleeping place at night to keep snakes off for they were never known to crawl over this kind of rope probably mistaking for a snake of another kind. My answer opened the way and they told some terrible snake stories apropos of the place we were going to Dimick shuddered but did not give up the expedition. After all they were not so far wrong for while he was out he got caught in a narrow path with a huge rattlesnake on each side of him and escaped by giving some prodigious leaps.

We had no success in the Indian question whatever. How could we have. They kept out of our way and let us wander around. There were only 150 warriors in the whole vast peninsula and it was impossible to surprise them with the material we had principally as I stated German or Irish emigrants who finding themselves penniless in our large cities had enlisted to get bread. These men were wholly ignorant of wood craft and consequently were no match for the savages. The sensible thing to do would have been to organise [*sic*] some bands of Western indians

dicipline [*sic*] & feed them and they would have soon routed the Seminoles out of their nests.

However at last Dimick had a gleam of hope. He received information that Billy Bowlegs & his warriors about 120 men were congregated on a large island in the Everglades so he directed me to take about 60 men and attack him. We were furnished with a supply of boats for that purpose. The island we were to seek was said to be marked with a large tree which rose from the the top of the hill in such a way as to be a land mark & overlook the whole country.

The everglades is a curious fresh water swamp. Streams and rivers-lakes every where interspersed with islands. For several days I searched these islands as we penetrated the center of this inland sea but we found no signs of an enemy. At last we reached the central part I saw a large island which seemed to answer the description which had been given of the stronghold of the savages and prepared to attack it. There was a high place on it and a large tree there which overlooked the surrounding country. I waited at a small island for all my boats to come up so that I could organise [*sic*] a strong attack. Unfortunately I did not examine the small island where we were organising [*sic*] for the attack, for I had examined all the others in vain and my attention was fixed on the large island. There was a dense thicket in this small island, Behind this thicket a party of Seminoles were in ambush. We did not know it at the time but ascertained it when we came back there. As soon as all was ready we started for the main island. As we approached it we saw plenty of indian signs. The officers drew out their revolvers and we jumped into the water waist deep struggled through the high grass and charged up the slope but the Indians had left a day or two previously. They had made quite a residence of the place but probably their scouts had notified them of our coming. In order to ascend the large tree in the center I made a carpenter belonging to my company cut some short sticks and nail each one into the trunk of the tree so that we could go up this impromptu ladder. Every nail driven in brought out a milk white fluid which proved to be india rubber. We ascended to the top & had a fine view of the Everglades but saw no enemy. We then went back to the little island I have mentioned and there found very recent signs of

them. Part of a deer had been cooked arrow root was lying about on the ground and a number of small stakes showed the indians had become civilised [*sic*] enough to use mosquito bars.

We found bear and alligator very abundant in this vast swamp. As we lay down at night the latter would come grunting around our boats and one of the crews said that one of these large creatures made an attempt to enter. At night as we lay down the uproar around us was fearful. Birds of all kinds were making night hideous with disordent [*sic*] sounds The alligators were grunting and occasionally the prolonged wail of a panther would be heard. We returned without having captured any indians

In a scouting party that took place up the country soon after that I was amused at the strong desire manifested by a German boy who had joined the Band to go with us. The fatigue and discomfort of these expeditions were so great that all the men got off whenever they could but this boy was very desirous of seeing the interior of the country. He had formed an idea that it was full of strange birds & beasts. He had just arrived and was ignorant of the requirements of military dicipline [*sic*]. The 3d day out I saw him aiming his gun at a moccasin snake and as I had hopes of finding indians & did not wish to alarm them by firing guns I said to him 'Dont shoot that snake!' He very coolly answered me Oh I muss! I muss! he great big fellar!' and in spite of my protestations he blazed away. His greenness saved him from a severe punishment.

I had in my command an old soldier named Pratt. He was a powerful hand at weilding [*sic*] an axe and was the best teamster we had. There was no enjoyment to him like the management of a six mule team. For some time after our arrival he was employed in ordinary company duty. He had been making cynical observations about the teamsters and their lack of skill so I said Pratt is dissatisfied he is an old soldier & I must humor him so I sent for him and told him I had had him detailed as teamster. He looked sad and depressed and did not manifest any pleasure. Nevertheless he took the team and attended to the duties. One day an accident occurred. He was thrown out of the wagon against a sharp stump and very much injured. He then said to me You know Capt when you wanted me to take that team "*something 'peared to be telling me I better not,*" and I did'nt

[sic] want it. I put this anecdote in for the benefit of my materialistic friends who dont believ *[sic]* in any thing that they cant measure and weigh with their instruments.

As the Indians had frequented the islands in Florida Bay in the days of the old Florida war ²⁵ Genl Harney thought as they were not found on the main land that they might have taken refuge there. So I was directed to take my company in boats and examine these islands which were very numerous. To aid me in the quest a Seminole woman an outcast from her tribe was given me as a guide. She and her husband had been employed for some time in that capacity. One day he was shot. The story ran that their tribe and kindred having anathematised *[sic]* them as enemies and spies for the white men they became tired of life & agreed each to commit suicide. She let him shoot himself but did not carry out her part of the agreement. Another and more probable story was that she quarreled with him and killed him. She received good pay from the government and this tempted a low Spaniard to marry her. I do not believe she ever found any indians for us or intended to find them She kept out of their way & did what she could to prevent our troops from meeting them On the present occasion she presented quite a picturesque appearance straddling the bow of my boat with one foot on each side occasionaly *[sic]* dipping in the water. There were irreverant jokes about Polly & myself on the part of my lieutenants as we started out but young men will be foolish sometimes.

At first the islands were pleasant camping places and fresh water could be found but when we reached the middle of the large bay nothing but salt water could be obtained. Col Dimick therefore came down in a sloop to join us with the requisite supplies I was sent to make a circuit in boats of about 30 or 40 miles to examine all the islands and was in constant fear that I would lose my connection with head quarters. If I failed to get back there we would all perish for lack of water and at last when we were several miles away it required great attention not to lose the point we came for in the distant horizon which was almost indistinguishable. Frequently several islands would intervene & hide it from view. We found no indians and no signs of there

25. Doubleday is referring to the Second Seminole War which ended in 1842. In the early part of that war, the Seminoles were led by Osceola.

having been any in Bay for a long time. We were inside the reef and the water was calm and clear as crystal We were floating in air a vast tropical aquarium full of fish of every kind and we could look down in the clear water & see them at a great depth running around in all directions. The calm water & June ²⁶ skies were exhilarating & a gentle breeze came over us like the breath of a benediction. I have always longed to go back there and float once more free from lifes cares on those tranquil waters. Afar off we heard the roar of the angry surf as it beat in vain against the barrier of the coral reef but this added to the enjoyment of the contrast of the wild waves [illegible] sea and the calm waters inside. Once however we were caught in the widest part of the Bay which is some 20 miles wide. A violent storm came up and we barely excaped [*sic*] being swamped. being obliged to row in the teeth of the wind to get to shore. We rigged up some impromptu sails and finally succeeded in reaching the land

We at last returned to Fort Dallas our expedition having proved wholly fruitless.

I do not know that I ought to refer to a sad domestic tragedy; a womans scream. I heard the scream while taking a siesta; in the P.M. sprang to my feet rushed out half dressed & found two men in deadly conflict. One unarmed the other the seducer armed with a large revolver with which he was trying to kill the wronged husband.²⁷ At the earnest call of the latter for help I sprang to his assistance & with the aid of the guard who came up soon after succeeded in securing the criminal. The latter escaped the immediate penalty of his crime but died early in the war shot through the head at Fair Oaks.²⁸

26. If Doubleday is using June as the literal month for this expedition, the journey must have been in June 1857.

27. This event occurred in late May 1857. The unarmed husband was Captain Brannan, the man with the revolver was First Lieutenant P. T. Wyman who resigned from the United States Army, July 13, 1860. Abner Doubleday Papers, 1846-1852, New-York Historical Society, New York (the pages of Doubleday's manuscript are not numbered); William L. Haskin, comp., *The History of the First Regiment of Artillery, From Its Organization in 1821, to January 1st, 1876; To Which is Added a Series of Communications from Officers, Now or Formerly of the Regiment, Giving Their Personal Reminiscences of Service with It* (Portland, 1879), 621.

28. Fair Oaks was a battle of the Peninsula campaign fought on May 31 and June 1, 1862. Doubleday continually tries to demonstrate in his writing that the guilty eventually pay for their misdeeds.

My Company had done a great deal of scouting & hard work & Seymours²⁹ men at Fort Capron³⁰ 120 miles north of it had had comparatively a pleasant time. An order came from Col Loomis³¹ who had succeeded to the command of the Dept in place of Genl Harney for me to march my Co to Fort Capron across Fla and exchange with Seymour who was directed to report to Fort Dallas.³²

The first 25 miles were easy travelling for Brannan & myself had made a good road but after that my ingenuity was taxed to the utmost for I had to make my way with a train of 12 wagons across large rivers great swamps and areas of the sea. The first obstacle I encountered was at New River some 30 miles from the post. The problem was to cross a wide stream with a train of twelve wagons & about 80 animals without a boat of any kind. I sent a man to swim over with a small cord tied to his waist the other end being fastened to a larger rope. The alligators were pretty thick but I have never known them to attack a man while swimming & the soldier was not afraid of them When he was on the other side he pulled the large rope & fastened one end to the trunk of a tree the other end was tied to a tree on our side. I then took a wagon body covered it with a canvass tent and thus made it nearly water tight. Having done this I used my improvised boat to take my wife & her maid over. Next the mules were unharnessed & the harness sent over. Then I drove the mules into the water but instead of swimming across where men were waiting to take charge of them they swam up and down stream in every direction. After a great deal of trouble I collected them again on the shore. Knowing the habit of imitation animals have I tied a rope to my horses neck strap & passed it to the men on the opposite side. I then thrust him into the water & the

29. First Lieutenant (Brevet Captain) Truman Seymour commanded Company H of the First Artillery. Haskin, *First Regiment of Artillery*, 618.

30. Fort Capron was located on the Indian River. While stationed at Fort Monroe, Doubleday was sent to sit on a court martial at Fort Capron in 1856, NY Doubleday Papers, 61-69.

31. Colonel Gustavus Loomis replaced Harney, April 27, 1857, as commander of the Department of Florida. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846* (New York, 1969), 304.

32. Doubleday received the welcome order on October 13, 1857. BHF Doubleday Papers.

men pulled him straight across and he was obliged to swim. When the mules saw him swimming over one after another went into the water & followed him across. Now I had every thing over but the empty wagons. I had ropes tied to the tongue and the rear of each wagon in its turn. The men on the opposite side pulled on the tongue while the men at the starting point steadied it by means of the rope behind. The wagon sunk gradually down to the bottom of the river but as there was no obstruction it rolled along on the bottom & came up on the other side. Knowing there was a more serious obstacle ahead in the shape of an inundation which had overflowed the country and that the water was rising I pushed on without waiting a moment longer than was necessary. I soon came to a place covered with water which was about 300 yards wide and drove straight through it without the least hesitation. Fortunately the mules did not have to swim the water not being very deep but once or twice they were taken off their feet for short intervals. I was much relieved in mind when I had passed these obstacles and found myself in the endless pine forest once more.

In a few days we reached a place called Fort Jupiter³³ where troops were stationed in the old Florida war. There were still some remains of houses there.

What is called Indian River terminals at Jupiter. It is a kind of inner lagoon parallel to the sea coast very long and varying in width from a hundred yards to several miles. To pass a train of wagons and mules over it to attain the sea beach the only practicable road was a difficult operation. I found some old boards at Jupiter and the carpenters sat up all night making a boat and making pitch from the pines to caulk the seams. It was finished by daylight. By means of this the animals & wagons were passed over to the main beach. I also saw an old decayed flat boat lying at the bottom of the water. This was raised caulked; blanket sails put up and While the teams made their way down the beach a small detachment sailed pleasantly down the river. We reached Fort Capron about ten o'clock at night. Seymour was very much astonished when I landed for he knew there were no roads to the south of him and he had not expected

33. Located at the site of the present city of Jupiter on Florida's east coast.

to be relieved. In a few days he went south by the same route I had taken.

There were only 3 or 4 people living at Fort Country [sic] so we found it to be a very quiet post

about this time six vol cos of state troops ³⁴ were called out and ordered to report to me at Fort Capron for the purpose of driving the Seminoles out of the country They did not however have any better success One co however with a very earnest & energetic young officer was indefgalible [sic] and captured several indians. He came one day on the trail of an indian family & at last caught up with them I think there was one indian his squaw & two children As the troops came suddenly on them they all held up their right hands as a token of surrender The Indian said to the officer when he drew near How you do? The latter answered Thank you My health is pretty good How are you? How would you like to go to Arkansas (where all the Indians were sent to a reservation)? Arkansas cold too much! was the reply.

At last the welcome order came for us to leave the solitudes of Fla for the refinement of Charleston S.C. ³⁵ We were directed to go to Fort Moultrie and a steamer anchored to take us off. ³⁶

34. With the opening of hostilities in 1855, the state of Florida raised several volunteer companies, some of which Secretary of War Davis accepted for federal service. Others remained under state control.

35. On May 8, 1858, Doubleday's Company E was transferred from Fort Capron to Fort Brooke at Tampa Bay. On June 14, 1858, the company was transferred to Fort Moultrie in Charleston harbor. Copy of Special Orders-29, Headquarters, Department of Florida, May 8, 1858, BHF Doubleday Papers; Haskin, *First Regiment of Artillery*, 586.

36. Preceding material taken from NY Doubleday Papers, 1846-1858, 58-41. (He wrote these pages from the back forward because he was writing on the back of the pages.)