

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 73
Number 4 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Volume
73, Number 4*

Article 4

1994

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Recommended Citation

Brown, Jr., Canter (1994) "The Florida Crisis of 1826-1827 and the Second Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 73: No. 4, Article 4.

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THE FLORIDA CRISIS OF 1826-1827 AND THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR

by CANTER BROWN, JR.

The Second Seminole War comprised the single most significant event of Florida's territorial period. Lasting from December 1835 to August 1842, the contest produced results and influences that reverberated through generations. Among other considerations, its violence reached into the fabric of society to exacerbate racial, ethnic, and regional divisions and to mark patterns of behavior and race relations. The struggle provided context for the clashes that characterized the drive toward statehood. It witnessed the birth and evolution of area Democratic and Whig parties. Additionally, the war brought to Florida a bounty of federal government expenditures and internal improvements, while dictating the manner and timing of development within much of its territory.¹

Scholars and the public have given considerable attention to the Second Seminole War, but numerous questions remain as to the significance of and motivations for key events occurring during the contest. The Dade Massacre of December 28, 1835, and the related murder at Fort King of Indian Agent Wiley Thompson provide examples. Historians often have cited the Tallahassee Creek leader Osceola's personal animosities toward Thompson. But do such personal motivations help to explain other incidents? The

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1. The principal works on the Second Seminole War are John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842* (Gainesville, 1967); John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York, 1848; reprint ed., Gainesville, 1964); and Virginia Bergman Peters, *The Florida Wars* (Hamden, CT, 1979). As to the war's influences on Florida affairs, see also Canter Brown, Jr., "Race Relations in Territorial Florida, 1821-1845," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 73 (January 1995), 287-307; Sidney Walter Martin, *Florida During the Territorial Days* (Athens, GA, 1944); Herbert J. Doherty, *The Whigs of Florida, 1845-1854* (Gainesville, 1959); Herbert J. Doherty, *Richard Keith Call, Southern Unionist* (Gainesville, 1961); and Dorothy Dodd, *Florida Becomes a State* (Tallahassee, 1945).

massacre's location, the manner and timing of Dade's murder, and the magnitude of violence unleashed upon his men number among interesting possibilities. The roles played in that day's events by black leaders, especially interpreter Louis Fatio Pacheco and the counselor Abraham, offer further grounds for examination.²

These inquiries reflect only a small portion of the war's enigmas, ironies, and unexplained occurrences. Policy and strategy questions raise challenges, as well. The experience of Thlocklo Tus-tenuggee (Tiger Tail) illustrates the point. Prior to the war, Floridians knew the Creek chief best as a friend of Leon County's Gamble family, as an accustomed and friendly sight in the territorial capital, and as a salesman of venison to its residents. A son of Governor William Pope DuVal recalled him as "the 'professor' who taught me 'wood craft.'"³ How then did Tiger Tail become one of Florida's fiercest and most recalcitrant chiefs, noted for his orders to kill all whites? Would a knowledge of personal circumstances again permit insight? Similarly, why did Indian warriors subject certain locations, remote from the main centers of fighting, to repeated but seemingly arbitrary attacks? Planter James Gadsden of the Aucilla River area of present-day Jefferson County knew firsthand the terror. "For three years," he wrote in January 1838, "have we of this neighborhood had annual visits from a small party of savages, burning the out settlements, murdering the inhabitants, executing general alarm, and retreating amid the confusion in triumph."⁴ What circumstances prompted such actions?

Examination of a series of events that unfolded nearly a decade prior to the Second Seminole War's beginning helps to answer these and related questions. In 1826 and 1827 Florida experienced another crisis involving the territory's Indian population and associated free blacks. Many of the Second Seminole War's major actors participated. Amid circumstances of brutal repression and suffering, wrongs kindled anger and hardened determinations of

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2. On the Dade Massacre and related events, see Frank Laumer, *Massacre!* (Gainesville, 1968); and Laumer's recent, expanded work, *Dade's Last Command* (Gainesville, 1995).
 3. Sprague, *Florida War*, 99, 502-04; Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, September 3, 1892.
 4. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 263,284; Peters, *Florida Wars*, 251,253; James Gadsden to J. R. Poinsett, January 17, 1838, Joel Roberts Poinsett Papers, vol. 10, fol. 1, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

resistance. Eventually, a desire for revenge provided one important foundation for later tragedies.

The steps leading directly to the threat of war in 1826 began after the early 1821 ratification of the Adams-Onís Treaty but before the summertime Spanish transfer of Florida to the United States. Provisional Governor Andrew Jackson, based upon information provided to him by protege James Gadsden, requested on April 2, 1821, permission from his superiors to attack concentrations of Red Stick Creeks and free blacks in the area of the peninsula's Peace and Manatee rivers. After denial of the request, Jackson's Creek allies William McIntosh and William Weatherford directed a war party to Florida to accomplish the same task. The Red Stick settlements at Peace River, headed by Jackson's long-time adversary Peter McQueen, escaped unharmed, and there McQueen's nephew Osceola found refuge. The black enclave at Manatee and Spanish fishing ranchos along the Gulf coast, however, met with disaster. The destruction touched, as well, important Creek and Seminole communities in modern Alachua, Marion, Sumter, Hernando, and Hillsborough counties.⁵

The dislocations resulting from the Creek raid presaged further suffering, as United States authorities acted quickly to open up Florida lands for white settlement by confining Indians and their black vassals to a reservation in the peninsula's interior. Gadsden oversaw the September 1823 negotiations and drafted the subsequent Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Its provisions called for relocation of several thousand men, women, and children, many from the area between the Apalachicola and Suwannee rivers that soon would be called Middle Florida. The pact authorized issuance of rations of meat, corn, and salt for up to one year for Indians required to move. Gadsden thereafter personally surveyed the reservation's bounds, careful to exclude Indians and blacks from access to trading possibilities along the coast. Given prevailing agricultural practices, the reservation lands promised little hope of self sufficiency for their occupants. After Indian Agent Gad Humphreys and Lieutenant Jeremiah Yancey toured the area in 1824,

5. "The Defenses of the Floridas: A Report of Captain James Gadsden, Aide-de-Camp to General Andrew Jackson," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 15 (April 1937), 242-48; Canter Brown, Jr., "The 'Sarrazota, or Runaway Negro Plantations': Tampa Bay's First Black Community, 1812-1821," *Tampa Bay History* 12 (Fall/Winter 1990), 5-19; Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Orlando, 1991), 10-27.

Yancey reported, "In our whole route . . . I can safely say that I did not see *five hundred acres* of good land."⁶

With Gadsden's assistance, federal authorities initiated efforts to contain the Indians and blacks within the reservation's limits and to oversee their lives. In January 1824 Colonel George M. Brooke arrived at Tampa Bay with four companies of the Fourth Infantry. At the Hillsborough River's mouth he erected Fort Brooke and prepared to demonstrate "the strength and power of the United States."⁷ Late in the year Gad Humphreys selected a site for his Indian agency near the reservation's northern extreme, not far from the Silver Springs and present-day Ocala. Captain Isaac Clark quickly laid out a military road between Fort Brooke and the agency, permitting the movement of supplies, military support, and communications.⁸

The well-laid official plans soon went awry. By the time of Brooke's arrival, problems already had surfaced. "The Indians appear to me, to be more and more displeased at the treaty," he reported in April 1824, "and still more at the running of the line." He added, "I am not unapprehensive of some difficulty."⁹ As of July 1,500 individuals required rations, and the numbers mounted. Drought parched the peninsula in 1825. Desperate Indians and blacks then raided white settlements for beef and other supplies, provoking outrage among pioneers along the frontier that stretched between today's Alachua and Volusia counties. When troops marched into Indian lands to quell disturbances, they found

6. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 39-49; Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1904), II, 203-05; Clarence E. Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 28 vols., (Washington, DC, 1934-1969), *Florida Territory*, XXII; 850-51, 905-07, 968-71 (hereinafter, *Territorial Papers*); St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, March 20, 1824: "Lieut. Yancey's Notes," June 30, 1854, Letters Received, Office of Indian Affairs, Florida Superintendency, 1824-1853, M-234, roll 286, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereinafter, NA).

7. Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida*, ed. D. B. McKay (St. Petersburg, 1950), 56-57; James W. Covington, ed., "The Establishment of Fort Brooke: The Beginning of Tampa. From Letters of Col. George M. Brooke," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 31 (April 1953), 273-75.

8. St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, December 18, 1824; *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 153-55.

9. Covington, "Establishment of Fort Brooke," 276.

residents “all in the woods prepared for war.”¹⁰ After October, food supplies were withheld when the treaty’s authorization of rations expired. “I can assure you that they are in a most miserable situation,” Brooke alerted superiors in December. He continued: “Unless the government assists them, many of them must starve, and others will deplete on the property of the whites, in the Alachua and St. John’s [River] settlement. It is impossible for me, or any other officer who possesses the smallest feelings of humanity, to resist affording some relief to men, women, and children, who are actually dying for the want of something to eat.”¹¹

The hardships derived partly from the venality of government contractors. Under treaty terms, for instance, the dispossessed Indians merited compensation up to \$4,500 for lands and improvements abandoned as a result of relocation. John Bellamy, a Jacksonville town founder and an 1823 member of the territorial council, received the commission to assess appropriate payments. He failed to enter upon his duties until September 9, 1824, and then rushed to complete them, leaving dissatisfaction in his wake. Bellamy’s urgency related to a lucrative contract in which Governor William P. DuVal had arranged for him to build a federally subsidized road from the panhandle’s Ochlockonee River to St. Augustine. Perhaps because he was distracted by vengeful Indians who repeatedly raided his properties while the contractor supervised road building, Bellamy’s construction accomplishments provoked bitter complaints. One commentator described the Bellamy Road, which became the principal artery of travel through Middle Florida, as “a sorry job at best.”¹²

10. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 51; Sprague, *Florida War*, 26-27; Peters, *Florida Wars*, 72-73; Isaac Clark to Thomas S. Jesup, July 15, 1825, Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence Pile, 1794-1915, RG 92, entry 225, box 109, file “Isaac Clark,” NA.

11. St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, March 28, 1826; *Niles’ Weekly Register*, March 18, 1826; *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1832-1834), II, 633 (hereinafter, *ASPIA*).

12. *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 101-03, 685; Bertram H. Groene, *Ante-Bellum Tallahassee* (Tallahassee, 1971), 70-71; Martin, *Florida During the Territorial Days*, 126-27; Bellamy family biographical materials, Florida Collection, State Library of Florida, Tallahassee; Jerrell H. Shofner, *History of Jefferson County* (Tallahassee, 1976), 18-19. For more on the Bellamy Road, see Mark F. Boyd, “The First American Road in Florida: Papers Related to the Survey and Construction of the Pensacola-St. Augustine Highway,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 14 (October 1935), 73-106, and (January 1936), 139-92.

The performance of a second government contractor, who happened to be a close friend of Bellamy, added to the discontent. Benjamin Chaires also had served as a Jacksonville founder and during 1823-1824 enjoyed appointment through Governor DuVal's courtesy as a Duval County judge. Appreciative of the rewards of government contracting, Chaires secured through DuVal the concession for supplying rations to the Indians, apparently by bribing a rival bidder. When the details of Chaires's peculations came to public attention in early 1826, the hardships they had provoked already had been borne by Indians and blacks for over two years.¹³

The hard cash gained through government contracting, when combined with other personal resources, afforded Bellamy and Chaires opportunities for engaging in land speculation and plantation development in rich Middle Florida. In that endeavor, they were far from alone. Richard Keith Call, another Jackson protégé, used his influential contacts to build an affluent life in the area. In 1823 he and Bellamy joined in the territorial council to mandate location of the capital in Middle Florida. Later, as congressional delegate, Call sought to attract attention to the region by arranging a large grant of land there for the Marquis de Lafayette. He also promoted federal funding of the Bellamy Road and its extension to Pensacola. Further, Call encouraged the immigration of wealthy and influential planters. The prince Achille Murat probably ranked as the most famous of them, lured to Florida by his friendship with Call and a plantation partnership with Gadsden.¹⁴

The cooperative efforts of Call, Gadsden, Murat, Bellamy, Chaires, and others led to financial rewards and creation of Florida's first political machine, "the Nucleus." At first, though, emphasis fell on gaining control of government-owned real estate. Beginning in early 1825 Call left the Congress to become receiver of public monies at Tallahassee's government land office. In that capacity he aided in the selection and purchase of choice lands for

13. T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville, Florida, and Vicinity, 1513 to 1924* (Jacksonville, 1925; reprint ed., Jacksonville, 1990), 54, 65; Chaires family biographical materials, Florida Collection, State Library of Florida; *ASPIA*, II, 687-88; Edwin C. McReynolds, *The Seminoles* (Norman, OK, 1957), 110-12.

14. Doherty, *Richard Keith Call*; 24-45; Martin, *Florida During the Territorial Days*, 36; A. J. Hanna, *A Prince in Their Midst: The Adventurous Life of Achille Murat on the American Frontier* (Norman, OK, 1946), 103-04, 108.

his friends which, in turn, prompted charges of corruption, "abuses," and "temptations to fraud."¹⁵ Bellamy established himself on Lake Miccosukee, northeast of Tallahassee, but the others developed a series of plantations slightly to the south, along or near the Bellamy Road that ran from the capital thirty-or-so miles eastward to the Aucilla River. The Murat-Gadsden partnership anchored the settlements on the east between the Aucilla and its tributary, the Wacissa.¹⁶

The advent of plantation agriculture in Middle Florida and the location there of the territorial capital necessitated removal of the region's Indian population. As opposed to the somewhat more-pacific Seminoles of East Florida, fierce Mikasukis and Red Stick Creeks— some of whom also were called Tallahassee Creeks— had claimed the rolling lands and lakes at and around the new capital. These bands had fought Andrew Jackson and his allies, including Gadsden and Call, during the Creek Civil War of 1812-1814 and the First Seminole War of 1817-1818. They mostly had been forced eastward by mid-1824 to the Aucilla and Suwannee rivers where they had awaited John Bellamy's decisions as to compensation for lost property. Under the chief Chefixico Hadjo and his heir apparent Tiger Tail, many of them had ventured in October 1824 to Fort Brooke for resettlement under the terms of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, but, disgusted to discover that the issuance of rations had been suspended, they angrily returned to the Aucilla. An official described them at the time as "destitute," while Gadsden, Murat, and other planters saw in them a direct threat to personal security and the success of their land speculations.¹⁷

In late 1825 and early 1826, then, several interrelated circumstances threatened to intensify an already difficult situation and demanded the immediate attention of governmental officials. Starvation beset Indians and blacks within the reservation and on the Suwannee and Aucilla rivers; desperate raiders confronted white frontier settlers; government contracting scandals were coming to light; the Bellamy Road's construction was opening new

15. Doherty, *Richard Keith Call*, 41, 48-50.

16. Shofner, *Jefferson County*, 18-21; Groene, *Ante-Bellum Tallahassee*, 41-44; sketch map of Middle Florida from Tallahassee to Old Town, accompanying Gadsden to Poinsett, January 17, 1838.

17. Peters, *Florida Wars*, 47-59; Groene, *Ante-Bellum Tallahassee*, 14-16; Brown, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*; 7-11, 22-25; *ASPIA*, II, 638-40; Joseph M. White to secretary of war, March 3, 1827, Office of Indian Affairs, M-234, roll 287, NA.

lands to settlement, which exacerbated pressures for removal of Indians to the reservation; and powerful planter and political interests demanded protection for their families and investments.

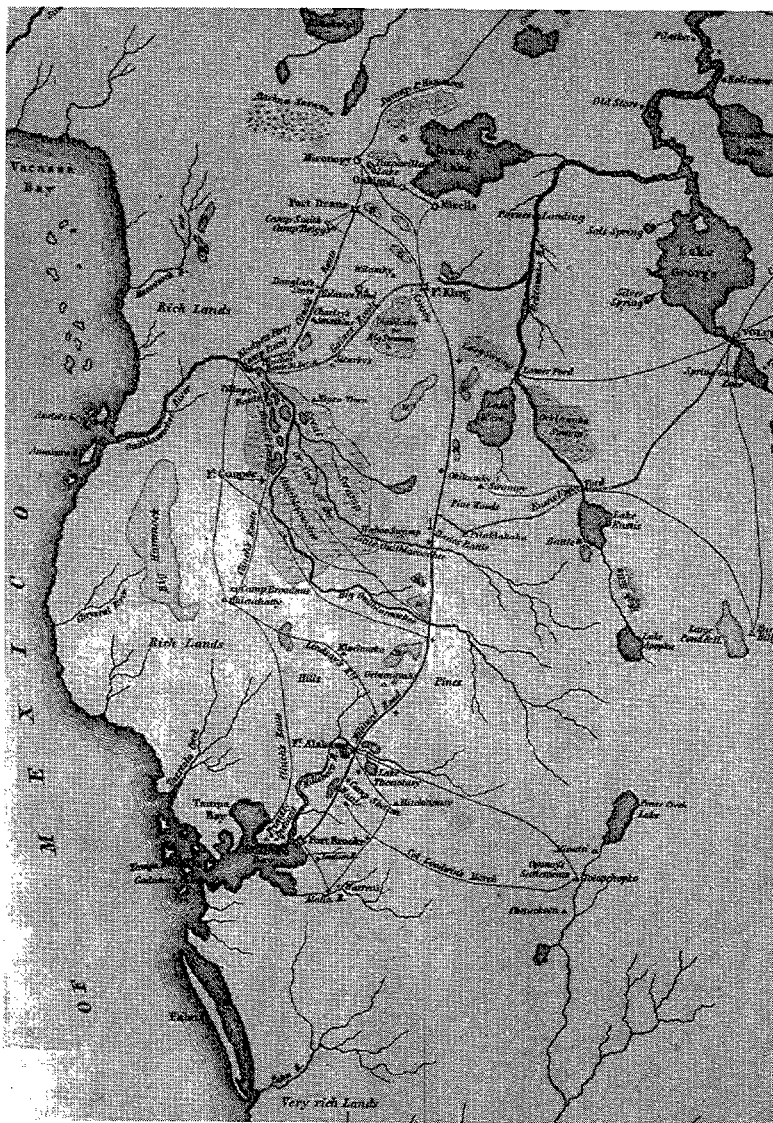
Most Floridians looked to Governor DuVal for solutions to the problems, but his efforts to provide them added fuel to the fires. DuVal could not simply act upon his own initiative, and circumstances compelled him to make every effort to accommodate Call, Gadsden, and their friends. Temperamental and often absent from the territory, DuVal did not enjoy especial popularity, and he needed their support. They required his, as well. Murat appropriately described the governor as “the button on which all things are hung.”¹⁸ On the other hand, DuVal felt a degree of responsibility for Indians. He held the title of superintendent of Indian affairs, urged their cause, and occasionally bought food and supplies for them with his personal funds. His concerns did not extend, however, to runaway slaves and other blacks within the reservation. As one historian noted, “DuVal, himself a slave owner, could not resist the importunities of his fellow citizens.”¹⁹ Ohio Congressman Joshua Giddings’s views reflected a harsher perspective. “He, and many other officers,” Giddings wrote, “appear to have supposed the first important duty on them, consisted in lending an efficient support to those claims for slaves which were constantly pressed upon them by unprincipled white men.”²⁰

DuVal’s persistent, often-threatening, and sometimes punitive demands upon the Indians to hand over blacks within their lands evidenced a lack of sensitivity to an important dynamic at play within the Indian community. Particularly among Seminoles and Red Stick Creeks, blacks had begun to emerge as powerful advisers to chiefs and other leaders. “The Seminole Negroes, for the most part, live separately from their masters, and manage their stocks and crops as they please, giving such share of the produce to their masters as they like,” recorded John Lee Williams in 1837. He continued: “Being thus supplied, the Indians become . . . absolutely de-

18. Martin, *Florida During the Territorial Days*, 54-57; Hanna, *Prince in Their Midst*, 114.

19. McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 106-07; Frank L. Snyder, “William Pope DuVal: An Extraordinary Folklorist,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 69 (October 1990), 209-20; Peters, *Florida Wars*, 73.

20. Joshua R. Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida; or, the Crimes Committed by Our Government Against the Maroons, Who Flew From South Carolina and Other Slave States, Seeking Protection Under Spanish Laws* (Columbus, OH, 1858; reprint ed., Gainesville, 1964), 75-76.



Excerpt from Map of the Seat of War in Florida, 1836, from Woodburne Potter, *The War in Florida* (Baltimore, 1836). This map illustrates the proximity of the Dade Massacre site to the intersection of the Fort Brooke-Fort King military road and the road to the black village of Peliklakaha, or Abraham's Town. Map courtesy Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives.

pendent upon their slaves. No one will suppose that negroes, thus situated, would be transferred to the sugar and cotton fields of the white planters, without exerting their influence with their nominal masters to oppose it."²¹

None of the black advisers reached greater influence than did Abraham. Born about 1790 and a one-time slave at Pensacola, the runaway apparently joined British Colonel Edward Nicolls's forces during the War of 1812. In so doing he associated himself with Peter McQueen and the Red Stick Creeks who had retreated into Florida after Andrew Jackson's victory over them at the 1814 Battle of Horseshoe Bend, Alabama. Abraham escaped the death of many of his friends on July 27, 1816, when United States forces destroyed the British-built Negro Fort on the Apalachicola River. He fought Jackson's men in the Mikasuki lands of Middle Florida and during the black warriors' defense of their families at the Battle of the Suwannee River in April 1818. Even if he was not present to witness the violence, he doubtlessly lost more friends to Jackson's allies during the 1821 raid on the Manatee River free-black settlement.²²

Abraham's influence stemmed from his relationship with the leading Seminole chief, Micanopy. "This negro, Abraham," remembered Captain George A. McCall, "exercised a wonderful influence over his master; he was a very shrewd fellow, quick and intelligent, but crafty and artful in the extreme."²³ Under Micanopy's authority Abraham headed the black settlement at Peliklahaha, known to some whites as "Abrahamtown" or "Abram's Town."²⁴ It lay a few miles east of the Fort Brooke-Indian Agency military road, north of the Withlacoochee River crossing and eastward from the Wahoo Swamp. Only slightly to the north stood Mi-

21. Peters, *Florida Wars*, 32-34; John Lee Williams, *The Territory of Florida; or, Sketches of the Topography, Civil and Natural History, of the Country, the Climate, and the Indian Tribes from the First Discovery to the Present Time, with a Map, Views, etc.* (New York, 1837; reprint ed., Gainesville, 1962), 240.

22. Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "The Negro Abraham," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 25 (July 1946), 1-10. On the destruction of the Negro Fort, see James W. Covington, "The Negro Fort," *Gulf Coast Historical Society Review* 5 (Spring 1990), 79-91.

23. George A. McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers* (Philadelphia, 1868; reprint ed., Gainesville, 1974), 302.

24. Jacksonville *Evening Telegram*, August 3, 1893; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, February 16, 1895; McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 160.



Reproduced from James D. Horan, *The McKenney-Hall Portrait Gallery of American Indians* (New York, 1972).

canopy's main town of Okihumpy. From his home at Peliklakaha, a determined Abraham urged resistance upon Micanopy.²⁵

Within the context of these events and circumstances, the crisis of 1826-1827 unfolded. Pressured by complaints from frontier settlers, DuVal on January 23, 1826, urged upon federal authorities the creation of a military outpost "on the south frontier of Alachua." Pointing out the "gloomy picture of the distress now prevailing for want of food," he insisted that the proposed fort was "as essential to the protection of the Indians as of the citizens."²⁶ Thereafter, the governor addressed the immediate concerns of Belamy Road planters by "collecting and ordering the Indians who were west of the Suwannee river into their boundaries."²⁷ Believing that he had obtained from the Mikasukis and Creeks at the Aucilla and Suwannee villages a promise to relocate in return for an emergency supply of rations, DuVal then entered the reservation. Conditions there shocked him. "I visited every spot where any lands were spoken of as being good," he reported to Washington, "and I can say, with truth, I have not seen three hundred acres of good land in my whole route, after leaving the agency."²⁸ In the face of heated opposition from James Gadsden and many frontier families, he urgently requested President John Quincy Adams to extend the reservation's northern limits to include the Big Swamp, an area close to the line of white settlement in Alachua.²⁹

Continuing his attempt to resolve Florida's dilemma, DuVal called a council to be held at the Indian agency. On that occasion he notified those present of his intention to extend their northern boundary. Having offered a carrot, he then brandished the stick. The governor sternly warned the Indians to "turn from your evil ways" and to stay away from white settlements. He demanded the return of runaway slaves within the reservation and admonished his listeners, "You are not to mind what the negroes say; they will lie, and lead you astray, in the hope to escape from their right owners, and that you will give them refuge and hide them; do your

25. "A Map of the Seat of War in Florida, 1836," in House Document no. 78, 25th Congress, 2nd sess.; McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 148; Porter, "Negro Abraham," 17.

26. *ASPIA*, II, 686.

27. *Ibid.*, 689.

28. *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 501; *ASPIA*, II, 688-89.

29. *ASPIA*, II, 688-89; *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 545-47; Tallahassee *Floridian*, April 3, 1832.

duty, and give them up.” He concluded, “They care nothing for you, further than to make use of you to keep out of the hand of their masters.” In response, the chiefs appealed to higher authority and “earnestly importuned” DuVal to permit them a “visit [with] the President of the United States.” The governor agreed to allow John Hicks, DuVal’s designee as head of all the territory’s Indians, to journey to Washington with five “other distinguished chiefs.”³⁰ The Indian leaders scheduled to make the Washington trip included Hicks’s deposed predecessor Neamathla, Micanopy, Peter McQueen’s successor Holata Micco, Itcho Tustenuggee, Tulce Emathla, and Fuche Luste Hadjo. Abraham accompanied them as interpreter.³¹

If DuVal believed in the complacency of the chiefs selected to visit Washington, the trip’s results surely disappointed him. Against a backdrop of renewed raiding by inhabitants of the Aucilla and Suwannee villages, the party departed St. Augustine in mid-April. With time out for sightseeing and theater in Charleston and New York, the Indian leaders arrived in the nation’s capital in time for May 17 meetings with Secretary of War James Barbour and President Adams. After enduring demands from Barbour that runaway slaves be surrendered and that the Florida Indians remove to the West, the chiefs bluntly declined to accommodate his wishes. Particularly, they informed the secretary, “We have already said we do not intend to move again.”³² Hicks recalled further details of the meeting. “I was told in Washington we were not to have any provisions,” he explained. “I [also] understand that if our horses or cattle go across the line we must not go and get them.” The chief concluded, “This is not the way to make us friendly.”³³

Barbour’s conditions notwithstanding, the Indians’ intransigence produced positive results. The meeting with President Adams proceeded smoothly. The chiefs reiterated their refusal to emigrate and requested an extension of the northern limits of the

30. *ASPIA*, II, 689-90.

31. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 62; St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, June 13, 1826; Brown, *Florida’s Peace River Frontier*, 38-40.

32. *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 500-01, 548-51; *Charleston [SC] Mercury*, April 19, 1826; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, April 24, May 11, 1826; *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, June 29, 1827.

33. *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*; June 29, 1827; Gad Humphreys to Owen Marsh, May 5, 1827, Office of Indian Affairs, Seminole Agency Emigration, 1827-1846, M-234, roll 806, NA.

reservation to include the Big Swamp. Adams and Barbour, seemingly touched by descriptions of suffering, agreed to the change "until [the Big Swamp] is wanted."³⁴ Formal documents to that effect were issued on May 22, the same day that Congress appropriated long-delayed funding for relief of Florida's Indians. Pleased with the final results, the chiefs departed through Baltimore for Charleston and St. Augustine where they arrived in late June. Soon, Micanopy freed Abraham "in consequence of his many and faithful services and great merits."³⁵

The situation that greeted the chiefs upon their return to Florida differed little from conditions at the time of their departure. "Within the last two months," reported the *St. Augustine East Florida Herald* on July 11, "the Indians have roamed about in the forests, and through the plantations of the whites, to the great terror of the inhabitants."³⁶ DuVal responded by quickly calling a council to be held at the Indian agency in late July. This time, however, he and Indian Agent Humphreys decided upon the necessity of a show of force in order to compel the assembly to recognize the governor's appointee, John Hicks, as supreme chief of the Seminoles, Mikasukis, and Creeks. Accordingly, two companies of the Fourth Infantry were dispatched from Fort Brooke. Colonel Brooke named senior Captain Francis Langhorne Dade as the detachment's commander.³⁷

The choice of Dade to command troops at the agency likely reassured planters and public officials jittery at Brooke's expressed concerns for the Indians. Born in 1792, the product of an aristocratic Virginia family, Dade had linked his fortunes by 1821 with those of Andrew Jackson and Jackson's Florida protégés. In that year at Pensacola, the captain had involved himself, pursuant to Jackson's order, in the arrest of former Spanish governor Jose Calava, an action that provoked an international furor but which well served Jackson's purposes. Richard Keith Call's daughter Ellen remembered Dade as a man "known for his prudence and gallantry." As such, and given his background and contacts, the captain en-

34. *St. Augustine East Florida Herald*, June 13, July 4, 1826; *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, June 29, 1827.

35. *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 545-47, 557; *Charleston [SC] Mercury*, April 19, 1826; *Baltimore American*, June 5, 1826; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, June 19, 1826; *St. Augustine East Florida Herald*, July 4, 1826; Porter, "Negro Abraham," 11.

36. *St. Augustine East Florida Herald*, July 11, 1826.

37. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 62-63; McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 147.

joyed easy entry into and acceptance by Middle Florida planter society.³⁸

Dade's two companies took five days to travel the roughly 100 miles of military road from Fort Brooke to the Indian agency. The experience proved similar to that of the detail that had entered the reservation in 1825 and discovered residents prepared for war. Dade's soldiers declined to visit Abraham's Peliklakaha, but, upon reaching Micanopy's town of Okihumpky, they found the settlement deserted. A black man, who emerged from the woods, "informed the commanding officer that the inhabitants, on hearing of our approach, had taken to the swamp, and would fight if followed." Rather than provoking an incident, the soldiers continued to the agency.³⁹

The hostility displayed by the Okihumpky villagers found its counterpart in Micanopy's opposition to Hicks's election as supreme chief. DuVal's favored candidate, wary of the potential for conflict, brought "one hundred picked warriors . . . all arrayed in their war-paint and their best apparel." As events evidenced, Hicks's concerns proved needless. The election passed off quietly to his satisfaction. "No disturbance had occurred anywhere," recorded Captain George W. McCall. "Micanopy, governed by the advice of the Agent and the presence of the troops, having wisely yielded to circumstances he could not control." Still, Micanopy and Abraham left the agency unreconciled to Hicks's leadership and with memories of the intimidating presence of Dade and his men.⁴⁰

In the election's aftermath, Dade continued his involvement with the Indians and blacks. Once back at Tampa Bay in mid-September, he received orders to transfer his company to Cantonment Clinch at Pensacola. There instructions awaited him to establish a military post on the frontier. Although DuVal and Humphreys had insisted on a site near the Indian agency, others had influenced army officialdom to designate a location on the Suwannee River, which would offer more-immediate protection for Aucilla River

38. Harriet Stiger Liles, "A Gallant Soldier," *The Historical Association of Southern Florida Update* 13 (February 1986), 3-4, 14; William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Pantón, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola, 1986), 333-41; Ellen Call Long, *Florida Breezes; or, Florida, New and Old* (Jacksonville, 1883; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1962), 175.

39. McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 147-48.

40. *Ibid.*, 152-54; Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 62-64.

and other Middle Florida plantations. At the Suwannee's mouth in late October, low water prevented the entry of Dade's force. The captain then traveled to Tallahassee, by way of St. Marks, to confer with the governor. Remaining at the capital until November 17, Dade held lengthy discussions with DuVal about the need to clear the Mikasukis and Creeks from the Aucilla and Suwannee areas. The immediacy of the need resulted from an upcoming major land auction scheduled for January 1827 and the announcement of land sales connected with the Lafayette grant. To accomplish the desired result the two men concluded, as Dade noted in a letter to the governor dated November 29, that "absolute force will be necessary to drive them within their limits."⁴¹

The use of force awaited only a pretext. It arose on November 15 when a small party of Creeks murdered two men in Thomas County, Georgia. Word took a few days to reach Tallahassee, and, when it did, the governor thought little of the matter. "I do not apprehend further mischief," he informed the general superintendent of Indian affairs.⁴² Nonetheless, DuVal acted. "His Excellency the Governor has sent an express to Suwannee to give notice to Capt. Dade," declared a Pensacola newspaper, "and, in the mean time, has despatched Capt. Blount, an Indian chief, with a party of Indians to quiet disturbances."⁴³ At his new outpost, Fort DuVal, Dade recognized the governor's message for what it was. At month's end he responded that he soon would "make some excursions . . . in pursuit of the straggling Indians."⁴⁴

Dade's excursions illustrated the officer's capabilities for brutal efficiency. During the following month he destroyed settlements and compelled their residents to remove to the reservation. Fearful of further contact with whites, the refugees secretly made

41. McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 160; *Pensacola Gazette*, October 27, 1826; *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 690, 833; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, November 17, 1826; F. L. Dade to W. P. DuVal, November 29, 1826, M-234, roll 286, NA.

42. DuVal to Thomas L. McKenney, November 22, 1826, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Florida Superintendency, M-234, roll 286, NA, J. E. Hays, *Indian Letters, 1782-1839: Copied, Indexed and Bound with Authority of John B. Wilson, Secretary of State* (Atlanta, 1940), 92-93; W. Irwin MacIntyre, comp., *History of Thomas County Georgia: From the Time of De Soto to the Civil War* (Thomasville, 1923), 5.

43. *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, December 1, 1826.

44. Dade located Fort DuVal near the ferry crossing of the Suwannee River. It consisted of "a square breastwork of logs 140 by 130 feet, six feet high with port holes for defence" and "temporary sheds of Boards to secure our tents from bad weather." Dade to DuVal, November 29, 1826.

their way south. When one group fell into the hands of an Indian agency detachment, their condition roused the sympathy of an agency official. “[The soldiers} have taken about eighty men women & children, who have been driven from the Suwannee river by Capt Dade, and were making their way slowly (say leisurely) into the nation,” Owen Marsh informed DuVal. He added, “They are the most perfect picture of distress I ever witnessed.”⁴⁵ The governor reacted by praising the captain’s “vigilance and activity,” while mentioning that Dade’s conduct merited the chief executive’s “entire Approbation.” DuVal added, “As an Officer and a Gentleman he is entitled to the confidence of the Government and adds honor to the commission he holds.”⁴⁶

The governor’s enthusiasm for Dade’s actions derived from a chain of events prompted by the captain’s initial excursions. One group of the Aucilla Indians apparently decided not to be forced out of Middle Florida without exacting some revenge. “A cruel and cold-blooded murder of a man and four infant children has recently been committed near the Ocilla river, about twenty miles from this place,” related a Tallahassee newspaper on December 8, “by a party of indians, presumed to belong to the Creek tribe.”⁴⁷ The incident provoked fears of a general uprising. DuVal pleaded for military assistance from Fort Brooke and Cantonment Clinch. Notified of the murders by DuVal, Georgia Governor George M. Troup dispatched volunteers to patrol his state’s border with Florida.⁴⁸

Governor DuVal’s preparations extended further. He called out Middle and East Florida militia and volunteer forces to range south and east into the reservation, looking for perpetrators. Under Richard Keith Call’s command, the Floridians embarked on a “party of pleasure,” using dogs to ferret out the Indians.⁴⁹ Exulted one volunteer, “The people are aroused, and I feel every assurance, that the Indians will now be driven into the confines marked out

45. Owen Marsh to DuVal, January 10, 1827, M-234, roll 287, NA.

46. *Ibid.*, DuVal to James Barbour, January 29, 1827.

47. Tallahassee *Florida Intelligencer*, December 8, 1826.

48. DuVal to George M. Brooke, December 7, 1826, Office of the Governor, Correspondence of Territorial Governors, RG 101, ser. 177, box 1, fol. 6, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee; *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, December 28, 1826; J. E. Hays, *Georgia Military Affairs: Vol. 5, 1820-1829, Copied, Indexed and Bound With Authority of John B. Wilson, Secretary of State* (Atlanta, 1940), 234-42; Savannah *Daily Georgian*, December 22, 1826, January 1, 1827.

49. Hanna, *Prince in Their Midst*, 127.

for them by the treaty of 1823.⁵⁰ Gadsden and Murat joined Call in the endeavor. Murat noted: "Few periods of my life have left me more agreeable recollections. I went out as . . . aide-de-camp, forming myself the whole staff of the army; I returned colonel of a regiment." Despite finding some Indian signs, the force returned from "this pretty parody of war" without success, other than to afford individuals such as Murat military titles they could use for the remainder of their lives.⁵¹

Captain Dade appeared to succeed where Call had failed. DuVal had ordered him to the Aucilla River where the officer soon discovered "8 or 9 painted Indians, evidencing hostile intentions."⁵² According to the governor, "Circumstances of the strongest character justify the belief that the party of Indians . . . arrested by Capt. Dade (after some threats to resist him) at the time were on the way to destroy the family of John Bellamy Esq."⁵³ During the next four months Dade's force scoured the Aucilla and Suwannee areas and the adjacent Gulf coast, although the captain found time on occasion to enjoy the comforts of Middle Florida society. Ellen Call Long reminisced about Dade's arrival at one area plantation. "He was covered with dirt from head to foot, and his beard had not been shaven for several days," she recorded, "though he was accompanied by two young ladies, Miss Marcia DuVal and Miss Theresa Bellamy."⁵⁴

By April 1827 Dade had accomplished the tasks assigned to him. Operating out of a new post on the Aucilla River, he surprised a group of Creeks "on an Island near the Sea coast" and captured "fifteen or twenty" Indians believed to have taken part in the Thomas County and Aucilla River incidents. He turned the prisoners over to DuVal for disposition. In June Colonel Duncan L. Clinch directed abandonment of the Aucilla and Suwannee forts and the establishment of a post, to be named Fort King, near the reservation's Indian agency. Despite vigorous protests from James

50. *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, December 28, 1826, January 5, 1827.

51. Hanna, *Prince in Their Midst*, 125-28; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, December 27, 1826.

52. Tallahassee *Florida Intelligencer*, quoted in *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, December 22, 1826.

53. DuVal to Barbour, January 29, 1827.

54. Long, *Florida Breezes*, 175-76.

Gadsden, Clinch's superiors supported the colonel and Dade withdrew from the Aucilla to Pensacola.⁵⁵

Dade and the Indian leaders had learned lessons about one another. From his 1826-1827 experiences, the captain had reason to believe that the Indians, although armed and hostile, would not fight a regular-army force and that, accordingly, a show of force would forestall war. Leaders such as Micanopy, Holata Micco, and Abraham, on the other hand, gained knowledge of Dade's persistence and brutality in the face of accommodation. They carried away, as well, enhanced resentments of the Bellamy Road and Aucilla planters who had hunted men with dogs and condemned numerous others to desperation and starvation.

Ensuing events hardened the bitterness. Governor DuVal in June 1827 turned four prisoners over to Thomas County authorities. One escaped, but three others were hung to death on June 27 at Thomasville. The youngest, an overweight boy, begged for his life after breaking the rope twice during attempts to hang him. His pleas to be kept as a slave notwithstanding, "the poor boy's appeal was refused."⁵⁶ In the meantime, the other prisoners had been released to the custody of Indian Agent Humphreys and returned to the reservation. In September, DuVal demanded that two of them— including Tiger Tail's brother— be turned over for a Tallahassee trial for the Aucilla murders. Fearing a "corrupt trial," Humphreys asserted to the United States attorney that "I most confidently believe in the entire innocence of the accused [of the murders]."⁵⁷ A jury acquitted them in October for lack of evidence. They then escaped while being escorted back to the reservation but were apprehended by a party of whites intent upon enforcing a territorial law that permitted them to arrest and whip Indians under certain circumstances. Tiger Tail's brother resisted and was shot and killed. Judge Thomas Randall thereafter released the white

55. *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 822-23, 852-58; *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, June 29, 1827; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, July 14, 1827.

56. J. E. Hays, *Indian Letters*, 115; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, July 7, 1827; MacIntyre, *History of Thomas County*, 5-6, William Warren Rogers, *Ante-Bellum Thomas County, 1825-1861* (Tallahassee, 1963), 34-35. Among the Thomas County grand jurors who indicted the Indian defendants for murder was John Carlton. In 1852 Carlton relocated his family to Florida, first in Madison County and then in present-day Marion, Polk, and Hardee counties. His great-great-grandson, Doyle Elam Carlton, served during 1929-1933 as governor of Florida. See Spessard Stone, *Lineage of John Carlton* (Wauchula, FL, 1991), 1-2, 43-44.

57. Sprague, *Florida War*, 44.

men from prosecution because the death was “beyond the design of the perpetrators.”⁵⁸ Middle Florida residents were left wondering if, and when, Tiger Tail would avenge the killing.⁵⁹

The two years’ occurrences held additional implications. For one thing, the influence of black advisors with leaders such as Micanopy and Holata Micco increased as respect for white Indian agents diminished. In September 1827 Humphreys remarked upon “the great influence the Slaves possess over their masters, which is uniformly exercised in exciting their jealousy of the whites.”⁶⁰ While John Hicks served as supreme chief, the importance of the fact remained less significant. Upon Micanopy’s succession to the position in the early 1830s however, the power of Abraham and other black leaders rose accordingly. Micanopy, with Abraham’s advice, already had rejected emigration in councils held in 1827. “Here my navel string was cut,” he had declared, “the earth drank the blood, which makes me love it. I was raised in th[is] country, and if it is a poor one, I love it, and do not wish to leave it.”⁶¹

In the first years of the following decade, James Gadsden and other whites endeavored repeatedly to compel removal of Florida’s Indians to the West. By 1834 Tallahassee Creeks under Holata Micco were planning armed resistance from the headwaters of the Peace River. Cooperating with them were black warriors under the chief Harry. At the Indian agency and at Fort King, Holata Micco’s relative and subordinate Osceola represented the chief’s interests. Through 1835 Harry and his men engaged in raids from Fort Brooke to the Alachua frontier, while Abraham and his allies filtered among the slaves of area cotton and sugar plantations to prepare them for war. On December 18 Osceola successfully attacked a militia baggage train of General Richard Keith Call’s command at Black Point near Micanopy’s former estates at Alachua.⁶²

58. Savannah *Daily Georgian*, November 10, 1827; Sprague, *Florida War*, 45; Shofner, *Jefferson County*, 66-67.

59. Shofner, *Jefferson County*, 66.

60. *Territorial Papers* XXIII, 911.

61. Charles H. Coe, *Red Patriots: The Story of the Seminoles* (Cincinnati, 1898; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1974), 25; *Pensacola Gazette & West Florida Advertiser*, June 29, 1827.

62. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 68-103; Brown, *Florida’s Peace River Frontier*, 34-43; Porter, “Negro Abraham,” 17-18; John K. Mahon, “Black Point, First Battle of the Second Seminole War,” *Florida Living* (July 1988), 22-25.



Louis Pacheco at age ninety-two. *Jacksonville Times-Union*, 1896. In Frank Laumer, *Dade's Last Command* (Gainesville, 1995).

The Dade Massacre and the Second Seminole War soon followed, and in them could be felt and heard echoes of the earlier Florida crisis. First, General Duncan L. Clinch ordered a relief force to march north from Fort Brooke to Fort King. Captain

George Washington Gardiner received the command. The captain's wife lay seriously ill, however, and, with "chivalry and dash," Major Francis L. Dade offered to relieve Gardiner. The force of about 100 men and officers departed on December 23 up the military road. Then, a little later, the fort's senior officer sent Colonel Brooke's former slave Louis Fatio Pacheco to join the party as an interpreter.⁶³

Chroniclers of the Florida war have disputed Pacheco's role in subsequent events. Stories persisted after the massacre that Louis betrayed Dade's column to the Indians, but the slave later insisted that he did not. What he perhaps did do, though, was to notify them that the well-remembered Dade was in command. Pacheco certainly was familiar with black leaders within the reservation. In 1824 he had escaped from his original St. Johns County owner into the Indian lands where a brother and sister lived. He remained long enough to learn the language before he was captured and brought to Fort Brooke as the colonel's bondsman. Apparently Dade suspected some connection between Pacheco and Abraham. The morning before the massacre the major refused to send Louis into Abraham's town. "Lewis, I have concluded not to send you to Pilathlacaha this morning," Pacheco recalled Dade telling him, "but I will send you ahead into Fort King tomorrow."⁶⁴ Noted the Seminole leader Alligator, "The Negroes [at Fort Brooke] had reported that two companies prepared to march."⁶⁵

Whatever the source of the news, word of Dade's approach made its way into the reservation, and, George A. McCall insisted, some of its residents began shadowing the column, sometimes "whooping and occasionally firing their rifles, evincing in every way a highly exasperated state of feeling."⁶⁶ The major sensed the danger but directed his column further into the nation. "I believe that Major Dade knew that the Indians were hostile," Pacheco recorded, "for I was sent on to explore every bad place."⁶⁷ On the last

63. Laumer, *Massacre!*, 1-7, 29-32, 35.

64. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, October 30, 1892; Austin [TX] *Commercial Journal*, c. August 1861, quoted in Donald B. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, 3 vols. (Tampa, 1959), II, 480-81. McKay apparently erred in attributing Pacheco's statement to 1861; rather, he should have attributed it to 1881. See Gainesville *Sun and Bee*, September, 8, 1881.

65. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, II, 482.

66. McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 303.

67. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, October 30, 1892.

day or two, the slave added, Dade loosed packs of dogs into the woods, an act reminiscent of the 1826-1827 volunteer initiative. Meanwhile, runners summoned Indians and blacks to meet at the spot where the military road branched off to Okihumpky. "Abraham responded with quite a number of warriors," recalled one Indian leader.⁶⁸ The combined forces then moved southward to a point just south of where the path to Peliklakaha crossed the military road. There they awaited Dade.⁶⁹

The drama swiftly moved to its climax. Neither Abraham nor his allies could know if Dade intended to detour to Peliklakaha or to Okihumpky where he had brought troops in 1826. They were well aware from his earlier conduct that they could expect the brutal use of force if he did. Still, Micanopy wavered in committing his men to battle, while Abraham and others strove to stiffen his resolve. When the column appeared in the distance, the supreme chief recognized Dade sitting astride his horse, and the sight seems to have made a difference with Micanopy. All waited patiently until Dade neared the chief, who rose, fired, and killed the major. The massacre ensued, after which "Abraham and his band" finished the deadly work.⁷⁰ "Taking up the fallen axes of the work crew and drawing the assorted knives they carried," wrote battle historian Frank Laumer, "they scrambled into the pen, cutting and hacking their way from man to man. Every throat that moaned was cut, and every heart that beat was stabbed."⁷¹ Louis Fatio Pacheco was taken away with the attackers unhurt.⁷²

Historian John K. Mahon and others ably have recounted the seven years' aftermath of the Dade Massacre. Suffice it to mention that three days later the joy felt by Indians and blacks at Dade's death grew when they decisively repulsed a combined force of regulars under Duncan Clinch and volunteers under Richard Keith Call. The volunteer general subsequently withdrew his men from the scene of conflict in order to protect Middle Florida plantations,

68. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1895.

69. McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 303; "Map of the Seat of War in Florida, 1836."

70. McCall, *Letters From the Frontiers*, 303; McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, II, 482; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, February 16, 1895; Jacksonville *Evening Telegram*, August 3, 1893.

71. Laumer, *Massacre!*, 149-50.

72. *Ibid.*, 169.

an action that, in turn, exacerbated political divisions within the territory.⁷³

As noted earlier, Call's protective stance failed to stop vengeful raids into Middle Florida. "My home is at this time a garrison for the alarmed Ladies of my neighborhood," James Gadsden asserted of conditions in the Aucilla River area in 1838, "and a hospital for the wounded."⁷⁴ Benjamin Chaires's death on October 4 of that year saved him from further fear, but his son Green Chaires paid for past wrongs the following summer with the lives of his wife and child. As late as the conflict's closing months in 1842, Tiger Tail and his men remained at an encampment not far from where Dade had taken the Tallahassee Creek's brother in 1827. Around that time a St. Augustine correspondent reflected upon the war and its causes. "The Indians were called upon to comply with the treaty [of Moultrie Creek]," he wrote. "They were all to live beyond a line drawn across the peninsula. To this district called the 'nation' most of them retired, but some were always found straggling outside. They were found as far west as Tallahassee— they hunted from thence to the mouth of the Suwannee, *as they do now*. Major Dade, about the year 1827, was employed in restricting them." The correspondent concluded, "Perhaps the savage enmity which resulted in his death was then first excited."⁷⁵

73. Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 107-327; *Jacksonville Courier*, January 14, 1836; Brown, "Race Relations," 304-07.

74. Gadsden to Poinsett, January 17, 1838.

75. Tallahassee *Floridian*, October 6, 1838; "Chaires Massacre," in Chaires family biographical file; Peters, *Florida Wars.*, 253; *Savannah Daily Georgian*, March 8, 1842.