



Florida Studies Weekly

State History



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The Seminole Wars

Welcome to another terrific issue of Florida Studies Weekly! We've had many high adventures while learning about Spanish, French and American history in Florida, as well as some of the history of the American Indians. So strap on your battle gear and get ready to enter the "war zone!"

War again? It seems that Florida was always somehow involved in whatever war was going on between big nations like Spain, England and even the United States. But this time, the trouble was right in Florida, Georgia and Alabama.

Wars sometimes start when people get angry about other people and customs (long-established practices) they don't understand. That spells "trouble" with a capital "T," and the wars in this issue are no exception.


Have you ever heard of the Seminole Indians? Well, in Florida's early days as an American colony, there were all kinds of hard feelings between them and the American colonists. The Seminole came here first to get away from the Americans. Then the Americans came along and settled any and all of the land they pleased. Do you see the problem? Well, because of this problem, three big wars happened. But, of course, the wars never solved very much. You could figure that out for yourself.

So are you ready? We're going right smack dab into the middle of Florida's Seminole Wars!



Connections

Who Were the Black Seminole?



In 1836, the fire set by the U.S. Army during the Second Seminole War turned Abraham's Town, also called Peliklikaha, into an inferno! Branches laced with fiery necklaces of burning moss crashed to the ground. Homes went up in smoke. Luckily, no one was hurt because the

Black Seminole who lived there abandoned it before the U.S. Army arrived.

To understand what was happening, we have to back up a bit. Chief Micanopy had agreed to the part of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that would leave Black Seminole behind to become slaves. So, if

the chief agreed, why would the Army burn the town? Wasn't that what the government wanted?

The Black Seminole were African Americans who escaped slavery and came to Florida to join the Seminole nation. Osceola, who later became

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Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: SS.4.A.1.1: Analyze primary and secondary resources to identify significant individuals and events throughout Florida history. SS.4.A.1.2: Synthesize information related to Florida history through print and electronic media. SS.4.A.3.2: Describe causes and effects of European colonization on the Native American tribes of Florida. SS.4.A.3.8: Explain how the Seminole tribe formed and the purpose for their migration. SS.4.A.3.10: Identify the causes and effects of the Seminole Wars. SS.4.A.4.2: Describe pioneer life in Florida. SS.4.A.6.1: Describe the economic development of Florida's major industries. SS.4.A.6.3: Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida. SS.4.A.9.1: Utilize timelines to sequence key events in Florida history. SS.4.G.1.1: Identify physical features of Florida. SS.4.G.1.2: Locate and label cultural features on a Florida map. SS.4.G.1.4: Interpret political and physical maps using map elements (title, compass rose, cardinal directions, intermediate directions, symbols, legend, scale, longitude, latitude).



The Seminole Wars

The Seminole Wars cost the United States more money than any other war with the American Indians.

Go West? No Way!

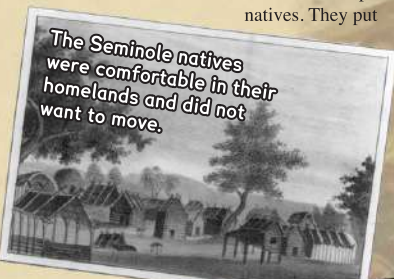
During Florida's first decade as an American territory, the government tried to get the Seminole Indians to agree to move to lands farther west, mostly to make room for more European Americans to farm Florida. How would you like to be moved from land you and your family had lived on since you were born? That sounds pretty lousy, doesn't it? The Seminole thought so, too. An American Indian named Osceola led them in a war against the government that lasted almost seven years.

Trouble, Trouble, Trouble!

In the early 1800s, there were many reasons why feelings between the American colonists and the American Indians were pretty tense. First, colonists were jealous of the Seminole lands. It was terrific farmland, and they wanted to get their hands on it. Also, Florida Seminoles allowed runaway African slaves to live among them in freedom. That seems pretty nice of them, doesn't it? Well, it drove the Georgia and Alabama slave owners absolutely bonkers! So when the War of 1812 came along, the settlers looked for any excuse to punish their American Indian neighbors. This was just the beginning of many crazy things to come. Just as the War of 1812 ended, war between the colonists and the Seminole began.

The First Seminole War

Feelings between the Seminole Indians and the American colonists were tense in southern Georgia. In 1817, it looked like those bitter feelings were about to turn into a bitter war. "We will not tolerate (allow) trespassing on our hunting grounds!" cried Seminole Chief Neamathla. His voice rang out as he warned American soldiers to stay away. The soldiers must have thought, "But this is our land! We settled it, and we'll do as we please!" A group of soldiers attacked and tried to capture the natives. They put

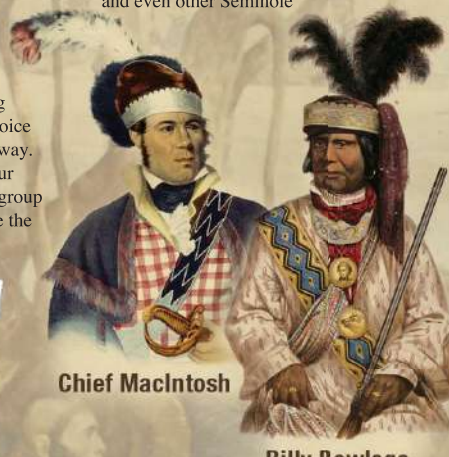


The Seminole natives were comfortable in their homelands and did not want to move.

together an army and prepared to capture the natives. The natives fought back, attacking a boat full of soldiers and their families. They carried a couple of American store clerks into the woods as prisoners. War had begun, and it lasted more than six months. The general sent to deal with this conflict was none other than the future U.S. President Andrew Jackson. The U.S. Army had many regular soldiers in it, but it also included more than 1,500 Creek Indians under the command of their leader, Chief MacIntosh. They burned Seminole towns, took Seminole animals and crops and killed any Seminole people who stood in their way.

The Second Seminole War

"The present location of the American Indians is in the pathway of our settlers and has seriously impeded (slowed the progress of) the settlement of the fairest part of Florida," said the Florida Legislative Council (a group who makes laws) in 1829. They wanted the natives to move out of Florida, so they treated six Seminole chiefs to a luxury trip to visit Arkansas, a stop on the way to Oklahoma, where they wanted the American Indians to move. They ate fancy food and stayed in the best places. While they were there, the chiefs agreed to move their people out of Florida. Everything seemed settled, until a young war leader named Osceola refused to leave Florida. Osceola had many followers, and they began to fight for their lands. They killed American soldiers and even other Seminole



Chief MacIntosh

Billy Bowlegs



ATTACK OF THE SEMINOLES ON THE BLOCK HOUSE

who opposed them. The fighting lasted nearly eight years, and Osceola was eventually captured. With their leader gone, the rest of the Seminole withdrew into the Everglades, where the Americans didn't dare follow!

The Third Seminole War

The Third Seminole War also started with a fancy trip for a native chief. In 1839, Billy Bowlegs, the main Seminole leader, was taken by steamboat, stagecoach and train to Washington, D.C., where he stayed in the finest hotels and met famous people. The government went to all this trouble hoping the chief could be convinced to take the Seminole farther west. After all their efforts, Chief Bowlegs still didn't see any reason to move from Florida.

The government didn't want another war on their hands, so they called in a "removal specialist." They offered him \$800 for each warrior and \$450 for each woman or child he could get to move to the West. It may have worked, but not long after this, a group of government workers found a huge Seminole garden. They helped themselves to beans, corn, pumpkins and bananas, and then they burned the rest of the crops. How do you think the Seminole felt about that? Whoops...war again! This war lasted until about 1858. Do you know what? The Seminole's great-great-grandchildren still live in Florida today.

Perseverance

It could be said that perseverance is the father of all other character traits. If you fail at courage, try again; if you forget to be just or fair, try again; if you lose your temper, keep trying to do better; if all other character traits are not complete in your character, but you never give up in your effort to improve them, then you have perseverance. You've probably heard the old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." That's perseverance.

Here's a poem about a common boy who became a millionaire because he had the character trait of perseverance:

Bill Brown Made a Million—Bill Brown, Think of That!

A boy, you remember, as poor as a rat;
He hoed for the neighbors, did jobs by the day,
But Bill made a million, or near it, they say.
You can't understand it? Well, neither could I,
And then I remembered and now I know why:
The bell might be ringing, the dinner horn blow,
But Bill always hoed to the end of the row.

Bill worked for my father, you maybe recall;
He wasn't a wonder—not that, not at all;
He couldn't out-hoe me, or cover more ground,
Or hoe any cleaner, or beat me around.
In fact, I was better in one way that

I know:
One toot from the kitchen and home I would go;
But Bill always hoed to the end of the row.

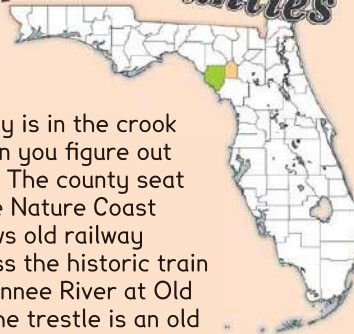
We used to get hungry out there in the corn.
When you talk about music, what equals a horn?
A horn yellin' dinner, tomatoes and beans,
And pork and potatoes and gravy and greens?

I ain't blamin' no one for quittin' on time,
To stop with the whistle, that ain't a crime.
But as for the million—well, this much I know:
That Bill always hoed to the end of the row.

American Character

Dixie and Gilchrist Counties

Florida Counties



Dixie County: This county is in the crook of Florida's elbow. Can you figure out where that would be? The county seat is Cross City. Hike the Nature Coast State Trail that follows old railway paths. Be sure to cross the historic train trestle over the Suwannee River at Old Town. Just south of the trestle is an old steamboat named City of Hawkinsville.

Swim around it and imagine what life was like in the olden days.

Gilchrist County: The county seat of Gilchrist is Trenton.

In this county, you can swim, canoe, kayak and snorkel at several springs. If you're really adventurous, take a buddy and scuba dive through the underwater caves at Ginnie Springs. While on land, you'll be amazed at the variety of wildlife here. Deer, snakes, owls, hawks and gopher tortoises abound.



Osceola, Famous Seminole

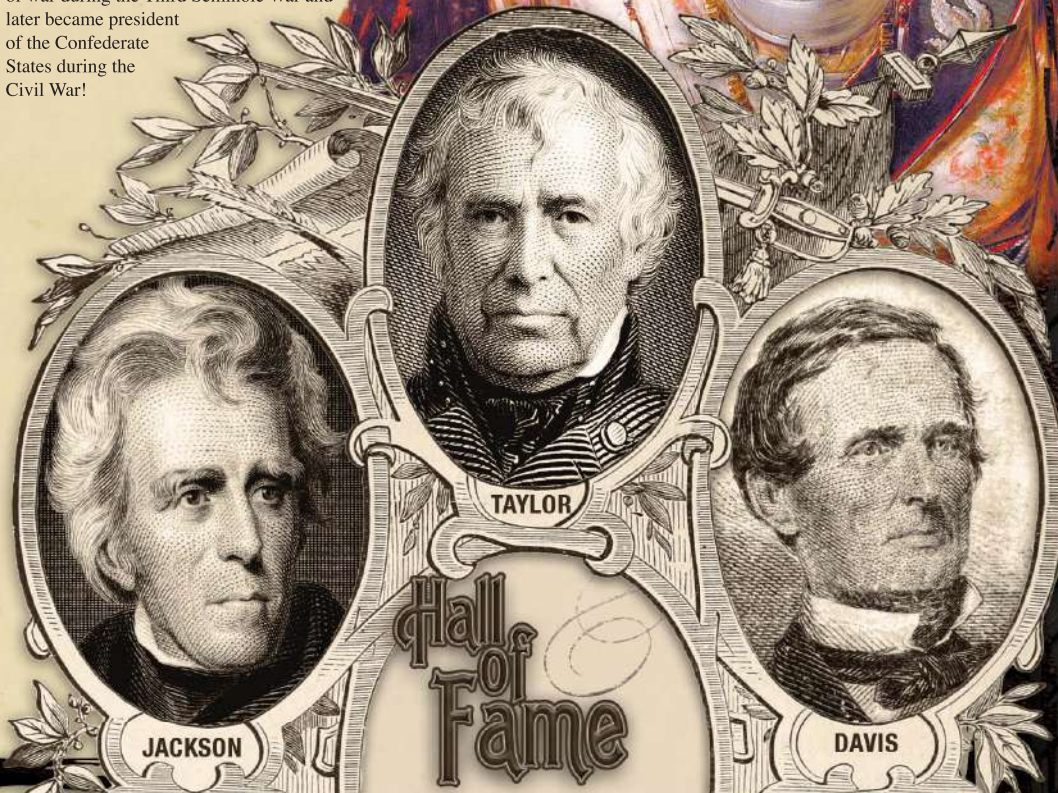
Osceola was one of the most famous Seminole Indians. Not much is known about his childhood. Osceola's mother was a Creek Indian named Polly Copinger. Historians aren't sure who his father was, but it may have been an Englishman named William Powell.

Even though Osceola was not born a chief, he became well known for fighting against American troops. He won several battles during the Seminole Wars. He was also known to fight against any Indian that was willing to work with American leaders. He was very good at sports. Maybe you are, too!

Hall of Fame

Many people fought the American Indians during the Seminole Wars. Some of them went on to become famous American leaders. You know about Andrew Jackson from the Battle of New Orleans, but there are plenty of others, as well. How about Zachary Taylor? He fought the Seminole on the banks of Lake Okeechobee and later became president of the United States. What about Jefferson Davis? He was the secretary of war during the Third Seminole War and later became president of the Confederate States during the Civil War!

Osceola



TIMELINE

First Seminole War,
1817-1818



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Spain gives Florida to the U.S.,
1821



Second Seminole War,
1835-1842



Florida becomes a state,
1845

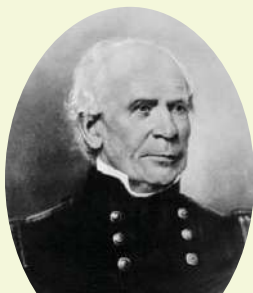
Third Seminole War,
1855-1858



Could the Seminole Wars have been avoided?

This Week's Question

During the 1800s, the United States fought three wars against the Seminole Indians. The wars lasted from 1817 until 1858, although there were times of peace between each one. Each war had a different cause. The first war started when U.S. soldiers tried to arrest Chief Neamathla. The second war started when Osceola refused to leave the area with his people. He was captured when the U.S. Army pretended to surrender. The third war began when American workers fought over Seminole land. Which of these wars do you think could most easily have been avoided? Explain why you chose the one you did.



Thomas Jesup upset a lot of people when he tricked Osceola into being captured.

The Florida Panther

Florida Wildlife

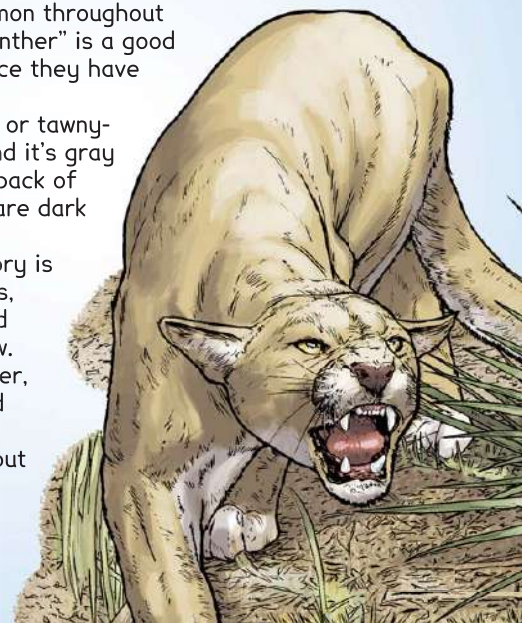
In 1982, students throughout our state got to choose whether the panther, manatee, alligator or key deer should be our state animal. They democat'ically chose the Florida panther. It's a good thing, too, because this cat can use all the help it can get. It's an endangered species, and there are only about 30 to 50 of them left.

Though they used to be common throughout the South, the name "Florida panther" is a good one because this is the only place they have survived.

The Florida panther is cream or tawny-cinnamon colored on its back, and it's gray underneath. The tip of the tail, back of the ears and sides of the nose are dark brown or black.

The panther's roaming territory is naturally up to 450 square miles, but human expansion has caused the area to be much smaller now.

For breakfast, lunch and dinner, the panther prefers white-tailed deer, but it's known to get by on hogs, rabbit, raccoon or just about anything, including occasional children who get lost in the woods (just joking)!



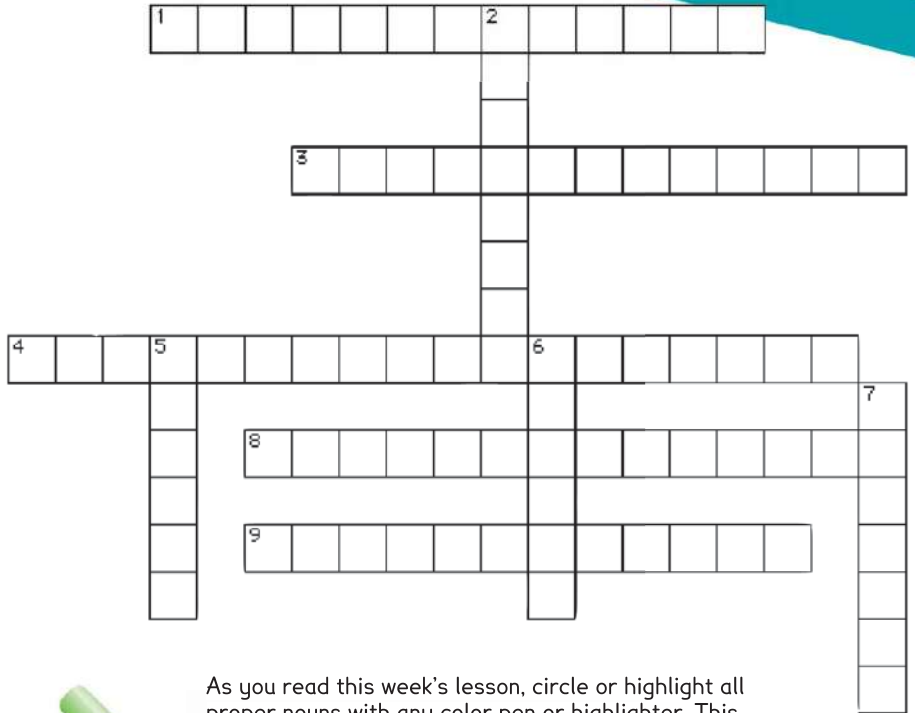
Name _____

ACROSS

- 1. served in the Seminole Wars and later became president of the United States
- 3. a successful general at the Battle of New Orleans who later became president of the United States
- 4. a group who made laws to govern a certain people
- 8. served in the Seminole Wars and later became president of the Confederate States
- 9. the Seminole chief of the Third Seminole War

DOWN

- 2. another word for "allow"
- 5. to slow the progress of
- 6. long-established practice of a certain people or area
- 7. a Seminole leader who advanced his cause in the Second Seminole War



As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

There were three Seminole Indian Wars. You were selected to write a letter to the government to represent the Seminole Indians. What would you say to the government?

Let's Write

Before you begin to write, imagine what you would say to the government if you were the Seminole representative. What Seminole needs should be addressed? Using evidence from the text, write to explain what you would say to the government.

- 1. When did the Seminole Wars begin?
- 2. Why were the colonists upset with the Seminole Indians?
- 3. Who was the Seminole leader during the First Seminole War?
- 4. Who was the Seminole leader during the Second Seminole War?
- 5. Who was the main Seminole leader during the Third Seminole War?
- 6. Who was the secretary of war during the Third Seminole War?
- 7. Who was Chief Billy Bowlegs?
- 8. Name two famous American leaders who fought in the Seminole Wars.
- 9. What Florida state animal is on the endangered species list?
- 10. How long did the Seminole Indian Wars last?

Think & Review

Who Were the Black Seminole?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

chief of the Seminole, stood up for the Black Seminole. He said his tribe would take in any runaway slave in America. This brought many more runaways to the freedom of Florida. The Black Seminole, led by Chief Abraham, fought with Osceola's tribe against the U.S. Army. (Abraham's Town was named after Chief Abraham.) So, when Abraham and the Black Seminole fought back, the Army burned their town, even though Chief Micanopy had agreed to let the Black Seminole become slaves again.

Although their town had been destroyed, the Black Seminole stayed in Florida and became full members of the Seminole tribe. Black Seminole were known for trading alligator meat and egret feathers at Ft. Lauderdale and Chokoloskee.

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