

Campaigning in the Everglades



The Seminole Wars were a new type of warfare for the United States military, and operating in the swamps of South Florida proved extremely difficult. Patrols could last for weeks, and the heat, dampness, and disease all added to the soldiers' misery. Colonel St. George-Rogers lamented, "The troops are very much weakened by sickness." He believed only those acclimated to the climate were able to tolerate the duty.

"One single scout of seven days will disable men of any other character, (even if able to accomplish one) for a long time." Dr. Jacob Motte wrote, "The saw palmetto proved very effective in tearing our horses legs, and reducing our garments to tatters."

It was also extremely frustrating duty. Soldiers scouting the Everglades would often find deserted villages and fields, but no Seminole to fight or capture. As Colonel St. George-Rogers reported, "I found no indications of the presence of Indians in that country except in small hunting parties." He also complained about the unexplored terrain with few landmarks. "The maps in my possession are reported so inaccurate as to render it doubtful as the name of the stream."

It was the type of warfare that required unorthodox tactics. In December 1840, Colonial William Harney led an expedition into the Everglades to hunt for the Spanish Indian Chakaika, who had attacked Harney's soldiers on the Caloosahatchee and raided the town of Indian Key. The soldiers traveled in dugout canoes wearing Seminole clothing,



By Christopher Kimball

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something forbidden by the rules of “polite” warfare. The ruse worked, and Harney was successful in his mission.—Article by Christopher Kimball.

Palm Beach County, Jupiter

Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and Museum

500 Captain Armour’s Way

561-747-8380

Jupiterlighthouse.org

Although devoted primarily to the Lighthouse, the museum features a small exhibit on the Seminole Wars.

Loxahatchee Battlefield Park

9060 Indiantown Rd.

561-741-1359

loxahatcheebattlefield.com

Site of two important battles of the Second Seminole War, the site is now a county park with numerous hiking and biking trails. Events pertaining to the wars are held often. Markers for the battles are at the park entrance.

Military Trail Marker

At the intersection of Military Trail and Indiantown Rd (SR#706), under the clock tower. Marks the northern terminus of a 63 mile road from Fort Jupiter to Fort Dallas (Miami) cut through the wilderness in 1838 by Major William Lauderdale and the Tennessee Volunteers.

St. Lucie County, Fort Pierce.

Fort Capron Monument

Stone monument at water’s edge, N. Indian River Drive and Chamberlain Boulevard. Site of Third Seminole War fort that replaced Fort Pierce from the Second Seminole War. Forts were often moved short distances because of disease or to obtain better water.

Old Fort Pierce Park

975 S. Indian River Dr.

Site of the original Fort Pierce, the small park has a stone monument and the remains of a pre-contact Indian mound.

St. Lucie County Regional History Center

414 Seaway Drive



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772-462-1795

stlucieco.gov

Exhibits on local history, with an excellent exhibit on Fort Pierce, the Seminole Wars, and Seminole culture.