

OSCEOLA

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ordered to invade this territory with United States troops and to destroy the fort.

For miles up and down the Appalachicola River the land was cultivated by the Indians. When they heard about the approach of the soldiers they went to the fort for protection. Over three hundred men, women and children were crowded into the fort. The troops attacked them by land and water. The roar of the cannon threw them into a panic.

"The women and children shrieked and wrung their hands. The men did not know what to do; they rent the air with fearful yells, but made little attempt at resistance. What would they not have given to exchange the fort walls for an open boat and the endless waterways of the forest?" They were not left to fear and dread long. A hot ball reached the powder stored in the fort. Two hundred and seventy were instantly killed by the explosion. At every camp fire this story was told and how the wounded were carried away in boats by the white men!

The Indians knew that peace was best for them, but Indian blood had been shed and peace was impossible. They bought arms and powder from the Spaniards and English. They practiced shooting. They found hiding places that were hard to get at. They raised and harvested their crops. A year passed before their first stroke of vengeance fell.

The Indians surprised a boat carrying supplies to W. Scott and killed its crew, passengers and military escort. This was the cause of the trouble in 1818. General Jackson with a force of white States troops and Creek Indians went to punish the Seminoles. He repulsed them on the Appalachicola. He pushed on to St. Marks, then to the valley of the Suwanee. The Indians harrassed the troops, making frequent attacks, and then vanished in the wilderness. The Indians made a stand at Old Town. Jackson's forces were victorious. They retreated far to the south, pursued by a detachment of Jackson's men. Jackson felt that the Indians were defeated and withdrew from Florida.

The boy, Osceola, strong and straight, and with much spirit had played a man's part in the war. In 1821 Florida was bought from Spain. The Seminoles had built their villages and were living in peace and prosperity. The Seminoles claimed the land they lived on. Misunderstandings about the Seminoles going back to Georgia and living with the Creeks caused much trouble. Rumors were spread that Jackson was coming. These troubles increased until a council was called at Fort Moultrie in 1823.

The terms of the treaty were that the Indians were

to give up their land north of the Withlacooche River, except for a few tracts reserved for chiefs. The Indians agreed to stay on the land assigned them and if found off of it without a pass they were to be given thirty-nine lashes on the bare back, and give up their fire-arms. The United States promised "to take the Florida Indians under their care," to protect them against all persons, and to "restrain and prevent all white persons from hunting, settling or otherwise intruding upon said lands" and for twenty years to give an annuity of five thousand dollars.

The results of the treaty were neither beneficial or lasting. The annual money payment discouraged their formerly prosperous habits. Their inactiveness made them dissatisfied. They (not entirely at fault) did not get along with their white neighbors. Osceola did his utmost to preserve peace. He was now grown, married to Morning-Dew, the daughter of a chief, and lived near Fort King. He was liked by the Indians, and because of his eagerness to keep the Indians in order, he was greatly liked and admired at Fort King. He wanted his people to do right and did his best to make them do so.

The Indians were urged to leave Florida and go west of the Mississippi. At a council to discuss this question Osceola drew his knife and drove it through the documents and table saying, "The only treaty I will execute is this." A long series of trying and almost uncalled-for incidents followed, until the battle of Withlacooche was fought. Osceola later, with a band of picked warriors, went to treat with General Jesup. Osceola was taken prisoner of war and sent to Charleston, South Carolina.

Osceola showed himself a brave and cautious leader and possessed of noble traits of character. He told his warriors to save women and children. "It is not upon them," said he, "that we make war and draw the scalping knife, it is upon the men; let us act like men."

At Moultrie Osceola was well treated. Public sympathy had been excited by reports of Osceola's failing health. He was once taken to a theatre to see a noted actress. The theatre was crowded with people more anxious to see Osceola than the actress. "The papers of the day recorded in prose and poetry the strange scene of the captive Osceola at the play."

George Catlin painted two portraits of Osceola which are now in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. After the second picture was completed he became so ill that he was thought to be dying. He rallied, however, but later grew worse and died Jan. 13, 1838.

He seemed to realize he was dying and dressed himself in his full Indian dress and with most pleasing smiles shook hands with all the officers, chiefs and relatives in dead silence. He signaled to be lowered to the bed. He then drew his scalping knife from his war belt, laid it across his other hand on his breast, "and in a moment smiled his last breath away without a struggle or a groan."

All the officers at Fort King attended his funeral and a military salute was fired over his grave. He was buried just outside the principal gateway of the Fort where a monument has been erected.