 Warriors from the Sea

THE SEMINOLE WAR NAVY AND THEIR EXPLOITS IN SOUTHEAST FLORIDA

— PART II —

by KENNETH J. HUGHES

From the beginning of the Second Seminole War, the United States Navy patrolled the Florida Reefs and reconnoitered coastal rivers while assisting the land forces in their endeavors to bring an end to the conflict. The inland boat patrols led by navy Lieutenant Levin Powell ultimately provided the knowledge that south Florida's estuaries could indeed serve as avenues to the haunts of the United States' adversaries. However, the overland campaigns of a series of Florida military commanders — Generals Duncan Clinch, Edmund P. Gaines, Winfield Scott and Richard K. Call — were ineffective in pressuring the Seminoles to accept emigration to a western reservation. These commanders' efforts, from 1835 to 1837, did little more than scatter the concentrated Indian forces and guarantee a long and costly war. Major General Thomas S. Jesup was the first Florida commander to move a large force southward successfully and attempt to establish a barrier between the Seminoles and the settlements. Despite his limited success, Jesup's methods of dealing with the Indians during times of truce became a target of great public criticism. He resigned in June 1838, and Brigadier General Zachary Taylor became the new commander of the Florida theater.

Taylor's campaign strategy was similar to that of his predecessor, except that it placed the majority of his smaller force closer to the north Florida settlements. Taylor planned to drive all Indians below an imaginary line between St. Augustine and Garey's Ferry, thereby keeping them "away from every portion of Florida worth protecting." Numerous engagements occurred throughout the northern part of the peninsula in consequence of these military operations.

As part of his defensive strategy, Taylor also drafted plans to divide north Florida into eighteen to twenty square-mile sections. Each section was to be garrisoned by twenty soldiers, in hopes that a constant military presence would choke the Seminoles' mobility. Furthermore, the commander contemplated launching a campaign into south Florida, but abandoned this plan out of fear of exposing his troops to tropical diseases. Nevertheless, he made every effort to discourage trade between the Seminoles and Spanish fishermen, especially since unconfirmed reports indicated that Indians were gathering along the south Florida coast only weeks after Jesup's troops evacuated that region.

As Taylor mapped out overall plans for conducting the war with the limited resources at his disposal, the secretary of war again requested the cooperation of the navy to patrol the Florida coast. In June Secretary of the Navy Mahlon Dickerson authorized Lieutenant John McLaughlin to purchase a schooner for this purpose and assigned him to Commodore Alexander Dallas's West Indies Fleet with forty seamen and officers. Then, in July, the new navy secretary, James K. Paulding, directed

In Part II of "Warriors From the Sea," Kenneth J. Hughes traces the contributions of the United States Navy and Revenue Marines to the Second Seminole War in south Florida from the elevation of Zachary Taylor to the command of the military forces in the territory until the end of the conflict. He details the significant events of that period, including Macomb's Truce and the Indian Key massacre, as well as the numerous reconnaissances into the Everglades and Big Cypress regions conducted by both army and navy personnel. These amphibious expeditions, often characterized as "riverine warfare," constituted some of the earliest exploration of parts of the south Florida interior.

To accompany this article, author Hughes has prepared a comprehensive list of naval vessels, revenue cutters, and contracted army vessels stationed in Florida during the Second Seminole War. A bibliography, from which this valuable research source was compiled, is included.

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the revenue cutter Campbell to cruise off the east coast of Florida and in the vicinity of Indian Key. McLoughlin did not arrive in southeast Florida aboard his schooner, the Flirt, until early September, owing to severe Atlantic gales, but once in the region he immediately set out to examine every inlet and bay. To accomplish this goal, he placed seamen in the barges Emmett and Schooco and directed them to begin their patrols among the Keys. They completed this survey in April 1839. In a letter to Navy Secretary Paulding, McLoughlin remarked that the crew of the purchased yacht Wave had also rendered important service by determining accurate navigational marks along an otherwise uncertain coastline in a little more than eight months. During this period, McLoughlin’s men saw no suspicious vessels inside of the Florida Keys.

The same series of storms which had delayed McLoughlin’s arrival continued well into September, causing numerous shipwrecks between Jupiter Inlet and Key West. On the beaches of present-day Broward County, American shipwreck survivors were killed by the Seminoles, while French sailors from a nearby wreck were spared. When word of these wrecks reached the Keys, Lieutenant McLaughlin with the Wave and Second Lieutenant John Faunce of the revenue marines led a group of barges up the coast to the scene of the depredations. On September 18, 1838, they surprised a small band of Indians in the process of salvaging the brigantine Alna. A skirmish between the revenue marines and the Indians followed, the latter retreating inland with casualties. An unidentified brig was also reported to be disabled sixty-five miles north of Cape Florida and was assisted by the cutter Madison.

Both Commodore Dallas and General Taylor were reluctant to weaken the coastal patrols, especially since they received continuous reports of Indian activity in southern Florida. In addition to the Seminoles salvaging the Alna, Sam Jones was said to be at Jupiter Inlet, and revenue marine Lieutenant Napoleon Coste, who was now assigned to McLoughlin’s small boat patrols, saw a large number of Indians at the mouth of the Miami River in November. Greatly outnumbered, Coste’s small party avoided an encounter.

With such reports increasing in frequency as autumn progressed, the war department requested the navy to increase coastal patrols along the southern peninsula. Accordingly, Lieutenant McLaughlin chartered the sloop Panther, and one month later, exchanged her for the schooner Carolina, which he renamed Otsego. The blockade of the peninsula now consisted of three lines of surveillance. Barges reconnoitered the bays and inlets; the Wave, the Otsego, and the cutter Campbell guarded the offshore reefs; and the sloops-of-war Boston and Ontario patrolled farther out to sea. The “Mosquito Fleet,” as the Seminole War navy was now being called, consisted of seven ships, crewed by 622 officers and men.

The recent shipwrecks undoubtedly accounted for the concentration of Seminoles along the coast. Jesup’s 1837–1838 winter campaign had kept the Indians in motion so that they could not plant gardens or harvest crops. As a result, many had become destitute, with women and children suffering the most. Consequently, wrecked vessels provided the Indians with a seemingly miraculous source of much-needed supplies.

In November, the Seminoles continued to receive blessings from Providence in the form of gales which cast two vessels upon the coast near Jupiter Inlet. Lieutenant Edmund T. Shubrick of the Panther sailed to the aid of one, identified as the steamboat Wilmington, rescuing the sixteen-man crew. On his return southward, Shubrick assisted navy Lieutenant Charles B. Howard in the rescue of all crew members and thirty slaves from the second wrecked vessel, an unidentified Spanish brigantine. After transporting the survivors to a safe harbor, Lieutenant Shubrick returned to the brigantine and took off a quantity of lead under the watchful eyes of the Indians.

The arrival of the new year of 1839 brought a change of command in the West Indies Fleet. Commodore William T. Shubrick was appointed to direct the squadron operating in the Indies and the Gulf of Mexico. Commodore Dallas remained in command of Florida naval operations until mid-March. The army also experienced a change in the Florida theater after General Taylor received approval from Washington to instigate his new plan of “section” defense in February of 1839. All active campaigning was thus discontinued, except in West Florida, the Okefenokee region, and south Florida.

Because of recent depredations against shipwreck survivors, United States troops were ordered to reoccupy New River. A temporary post was established there on February 14, about one and one-half miles east of

Sketch of Zachary Taylor, former army commander in Florida and future president of the United States, at the Battle of Palo Alto in the Mexican War (courtesy of U.S. Army Military History Institute).
Major Lauderdale's old blockhouse. From this new station, Lieutenant William B. Davidson's sixty-five men of Company K, Third United States Artillery, could see the distant camps of the enemy, and when visiting the original fort they discovered that it had been destroyed by fire. Therefore, as a means of maintaining security against a greater force of Seminoles, the garrison was strengthened to 117 officers and men by the addition of the Third Artillery's Company A. In the spring, the army began construction of a third Fort Lauderdale on the beach north of New River Inlet, a location better facilitated for communications and supplies. Most of Davidson's command moved to this new defensive position between May and September of 1839.

In May, General Alexander Macomb, commanding general of the United States Army, concluded two months of negotiations with Seminole leaders by arranging a conference at Fort King. In preparation for these talks, a ceasefire was declared and all aggressive operations were discontinued. Nevertheless, both the war and navy departments ascertained that a guard should be continued along the south Florida coast. In consequence, the U.S. steamer Poinsett, commanded by Captain Isaac Mayo, was ordered to cooperate with the land forces, and, during the next six months, both Mayo's and McLaughlin's coastal operations were directed by the war department.

Lieutenant Colonel William Selby Harney also returned to south Florida, notifying the Fort Lauderdale garrison of the Fort King negotiations and ceasefire upon his arrival on May 3, 1839. Sam Jones and several other south Florida Seminole leaders were also informed of the recent events at Fort King.

Thus, comfortable relations were maintained between the Seminoles and soldiers at New River throughout most of the summer. The soldiers and Indians visited each other's camps, as had been the case during Jesup's ceasefire at Fort Jupiter the previous year. Yet, Sam Jones remained cautious, and did not initiate contact into Fort Lauderdale until mid-June.

Except for a few isolated depredations committed by small bands of Indians in north Florida, the frontier remained relatively calm during June and most of July. The army took measures not to incite the Seminoles, and posts on both the Atlantic and the Gulf were maintained to prevent Cuban-Seminoles trade. In fact, the only notable activity in south Florida involved the opening of a trading house, near the proposed southwest Florida reservation.

Then, unexpectedly, on July 23, a band of Indians attacked this trading establishment and the nearby camp of Lieutenant Colonel Harney's dragoons, killing two soldiers and eleven officers. Following this incident, Sam Jones would no longer come to Fort Lauderdale from the Everglades, although he sent a messenger denying any involvement. Harney, who had barely escaped death, identified the perpetrators as Chekika's "Spanish" (Seminole) Indians from southwest Florida and a band of Seminoles under Hospetarke (Billy Bowlegs). Shortly after the attack on the trading post, Harney sailed for Key Biscayne to prepare for a retaliatory strike should Macomb's treaty falter. General Taylor made similar arrangements for the navy, dispatching Pohat a small vessel cruise between the Suwannee and the St. Marks rivers, to prevent illegal trade from reaching the Tallahassee Seminoles, and authorizing continued naval operations on the south Florida coast.

Soon afterwards, while patrolling on Biscayne Bay, Captain Mayo of the Poinsett seized a band of eighteen to twenty Indians under the leadership of Mad Tiger. These Indians used every exertion to escape, managing both sail and paddles with a great deal of skill. However, Lieutenant Sloan of the revenue marines and Lieutenant John Davis, USN, in canoes, and the captain in a fast-sailing gig, eventually overtook them. Harney also succeeded in capturing Chief Tutteneggee and seven warriors soon after arriving on Key Biscayne. And, farther to the north, a party of fifty-one Indians camping near Fort Mellon was seized by that post's garrison.

As these scattered incidents made the prospects for peace more and more unlikely, the soldiers at Fort Lauderdale noticed the increasingly suspicious behavior of the Seminoles. By August, the Indians were no longer visiting the garrison, and a subsequent reconnaissance of Pine Island failed to discover their whereabouts. In consequence, Captain Mayo with a gun barge and a command of sailors and marines was ordered to reinforce the weak New River post. Mayo stayed at Fort Lauderdale for thirteen days, then returned to the forts on August 17, leaving navy Lieutenant Davis and marine Lieutenant Sloan with thirty-two men at New River. They were instructed to afford protection to the fort, and to sail the nearby coast, keeping watch for "illicit traders and vessels cast on shore." Their presence at Fort Lauderdale, according to Assistant Surgeon Ellis Hughes, made the officers' mess a livelier place. In the meantime, the small navy squadron patrolled the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of south Florida, stopping at Key West, Key Vaca and Indian Key.

Despite the added protection on New River, depredations continued throughout the summer in September 1839. Two soldiers and a black interpreter were ambushed within two miles of Fort Lauderdale, and Acting Lieutenant Levin Handy promptly set out for that post from Key Biscayne with a barge and more reinforcements. Lieutenant Colonel Harney, upon hearing news of this attack, considered the Macomb truce at an end.

Upon the renewal of hostilities, a fort was reestablished by the navy at the mouth of the Miami River. The Florida naval patrol was also transferred from General Taylor's command back to the navy department. Furthermore, the schooner Flirt was added to the fleet late in November, and Lieutenant McLaughlin was transferred to her command. General Walker Keith Armistead believed the Flirt and a few other vessels that McLaughlin had authorized for construction were unsuitable for service in Florida, since each had excessive draught below the waterline. Nevertheless, the navy needed these vessels as the Wave was delayed at Pensacola for repairs, and the Poinsett had suffered boiler and engine damage, resulting in her being sent north in early December.

Also in December, Navy Secretary Paulding ordered Lieutenant McLaughlin to make additional surveys of the southern Florida coast. Besides cooperating with the military officers, McLaughlin was advised to provide the usual coastal protection and to induce "every annoyance to the indians." The latter instruction developed from the navy lieutenant's suggestion that he enter the Everglades. And to this suggestion the navy department offered their support in hopes that McLaughlin could "penetrate the everglades further than has yet been done by white men, surprise and capture the Indian women and children, and thus end a war which has cost so many millions." In consequence, McLaughlin left the territory to procure flat-bottomed boats and long plantation canoes. In the meantime, Captain Mayo placed Lieutenant John Davis in command of the navy and marine detachments along the southern coast. Davis's group commandeered several barges for the duration of their patrol.

Lieutenant McLaughlin returned south with the Flirt late in January of 1840, bringing the necessary vessels
and supplies to enter the glades, as well as to scour the coast. He established his headquarters at Tea Table Key, where he drilled his sailors in the use of small arms, boats, and canoes. At this time, Lieutenant Davis turned down an offer to retain his command under McLaughlin, thereby leaving the entire responsibility for coastal operations upon the latter. Before Davis's departure, though, McLaughlin arranged for him to place a light on the Fort Lauderdale flagstaff in an effort to guide shipping along the coast.

During the first months of 1840, energetic naval operations provoked the Seminoles into committing additional hostilities. McLaughlin's barges, now under the immediate command of Passed Midshipman Lewis, patrolled Florida Bay between Cape Sable and the Keys. The Otoseg sailed from the cape up the west coast, while the Wave and the Flirt reconnoitered the Atlantic shore. On April 16, more than fifty Indians attacked a party of twenty-four sailors and revenue marines from the Otoseg who were attempting to land at Cape Sable. The ensuing skirmish lasted two and one-half hours before the Seminoles retired with casualties.

Meanwhile, in north Florida, a U.S. Army attempt to introduce Cuban bloodhounds for reconnaissance operations caused a tremendous public outcry. The dogs failed to track the Seminoles effectively, and the constant haranguing of the public over this and other war issues convinced General Taylor to resign in May 1840. He was succeeded by General Armistead. Unfortunately the change in command did not bring the end of the conflict any nearer. The land forces continued their policing operations around the north Florida settlements, while the navy continued to patrol the southern coast without any apprehension of large-scale hostilities. Depredations did occur once more near Fort Lauderdale, causing some concern among the Seminole officers in south Florida. Yet nothing was more disturbing than the daring attack on and capture of the Indian Key settlement by the Seminole on August 7, 1840. This attack resulted in the deaths of the noted naturalist Dr. Henry Perrine and twelve other settlers, some of whom had possibly resided along New River before the war.

The Indian Key attack occurred at a time when the "Mosquito Fleet" was on a reconnaissance and the Otoseg was in the process of being overhauled at Key West. A few navy personnel from Tea Table Key attempted to dislodge the Seminoles from Indian Key, using a cannon mounted in the bow of a small boat. However, they were forced to retreat from the island when this weapon jumped from its fastenings and fell overboard. Lieutenant McLaughlin returned to the upper Keys a few days after this abortive attempt to recapture the settlement, and transported some of the survivors of the Indian attack to Cape Florida. Many other former inhabitants of Indian Key sought refugee in Key West, causing McLaughlin to place a garrison on that island, under the command of Lieutenant Christopher R. P. Rodgers.

The Indian Key incident clearly demonstrated to the war department both the vulnerability and the strategic importance of the southern tip of Florida. Therefore, General Armistead did not hesitate to comply with the wishes of Key West's inhabitants when they petitioned for 100 muskets and 10,000 cartridges. Armistead also established new regions of command within the Florida theater, placing south Florida within the Atlantic District.

As part of the new military build-up in south Florida following the Indian Key attack, 200 soldiers were ordered to reinforce the coastal forts in November. Lieutenant George H. Thomas, Company D, Third U.S. Artillery, was stationed at Fort Lauderdale, and the regiment's other companies were scattered along the Atlantic coast from St. Augustine to Key Biscayne. William T. Sherman and Stewart Van Vliet, both of Company A, were stationed at Fort Pierce, as was Lieutenant Braxton Bragg, who was temporarily detached to Key Biscayne.

The presence of additional troops in south Florida finally enabled the U.S. forces to pursue the Seminoles into the Everglades. During the first week in December, Lieutenant Colonel Harney's Everglades expedition set out from Fort Dallas with Lieutenant McLaughlin and ninety men, with a Seminole prisoner as a guide, to avenge the attack on the trading post near Charlotte Harbor. This was the first effort to penetrate the Pai-hai-okee since Lieutenant Powell's expeditions in 1838. All members of the expedition disguised themselves as Seminole warriors and adopted guerrilla warfare tactics. In consequence, they surprised and dispatched several warriors, including Chekika, who was responsible for the Gulf coast outrages.

On December 31, a second Everglades expedition set out from Fort Dallas. This force consisted of ninety seamen, sixty revenue marines, twenty dragoons, and seventy artillerymen. They searched the region between Little River and Middle River, including Chitto's Island, southwest of Fort Lauderdale. During the fifth and sixth day of the expedition, they captured the Indian leader Chia, his family, and five warriors, and suffered two casualties in the process.

Having failed to locate Sam Jones, Lieutenant Colonel Harney turned his Indian guides over to Lieutenant McLaughlin and left the southern peninsula. The young navy commander then proceeded westward, visiting several Everglades islands and the Big Cypress Swamp. His expedition reached the west coast of Florida on January 19, 1841, becoming the first American military reconnaissance to cross the extremity of south Florida through the Everglades. Following this success, McLaughlin made several trips to the North, seeking recruits and shipping out sick, disabled, and discharged servicemen. He also visited Washington and presented his superiors with a map of the Everglades, explaining that with sufficient men and guides, he could go anywhere in the Pai-hai-okee to bring war to the Seminole nation. Soon after his return,
Lieutenant John McLaughlin presented this map of south Florida to navy authorities in 1841, shortly after leading the first expedition to cross the territory's lower extremity (courtesy of Kenneth J. Hughes).

navy Lieutenant Rodgers led a few additional expeditions along the southeast Florida coast, assisted by McLaughlin's patrol.

McLaughlin conducted his first reconnaissance for March in the wilderness between the Harney and Marco rivers, fifteen miles south of the Caloosahatchee. Indian prisoners Chia and his wife accompanied this expedition as guides. McLaughlin led a second expedition to this same area in June, as part of a coordinated military operation against the Seminoles throughout Florida. In central Florida, navy Midshipman John Rodgers accompanied Lieutenants Collison R. Gates and John Sprague, both of the Eighth Infantry Regiment, and sixty volunteers on a canoe expedition from the mouth of the Withlacoochee River to Camp Izzard. United States troops also pursued Seminoles and renegade Creeks in west Florida and southern Georgia.

In 1841, the structure of field operations in Florida experienced further changes. All of Florida's citizen soldiers were discharged from service at the end of March. To compensate for this loss, the number of regulars was increased to 5,076, the largest concentration of regular troops to assemble during the war. Despite this increase, the number of soldiers and sailors stationed in south Florida did not exceed that of Jesup's 1838 campaign. A change in the presidency also brought changes to the war and navy departments. John Bell of Tennessee replaced War Secretary Poinsett, but served only a few months before and immediately following the death of President William Henry Harrison. In October 1841, after President John Tyler took office, he appointed John C. Spencer to the post. At approximately the same time, Secretary Pausing resigned from the navy department, and was replaced by Abel P. Upshur. With these changes in the highest levels of command, it was not surprising when the United States government decided to seek a new field commander for the Florida War.

In the spring of 1841, brisk fighting in Middle Florida convinced General Armistead that victory was on the horizon. Like Jesup and Macomb before him, he initiated conferences with the Seminoles and suspended hostile operations in critical regions. Like the earlier truces, Armistead's negotiations were unsuccessful. Subsequently, many soldiers and civilians voiced strong complaints that the Seminoles had only used the ceasefire as a means to replenish their dwindling supplies. When criticism of the truce grew increasingly political, General Armistead resigned. In May 1841, Colonel William Jenkins Worth became the new Florida commander.

Colonel Worth was enthusiastic about pursuing the war in southern Florida. Encouraged by Worth's interest, Lieutenant McLaughlin sent the commander an outline of future plans in the region, and, as a result, the war and navy departments decided to enlarge the Mosquito Fleet. In August, the navy lieutenant received command of the revenue cutters Madison, Jefferson, and Van Buren, in addition to the schooner Phoenix.

United States forces returned to the Everglades in the fall of 1841. Captain Martin Burke of the Third Artillery led the first reconnaissance with fifty-four men in the region of Chekika's Island and Shark River late in September. There, his command discovered five or
six islands, recently cultivated with corn, but found no recent signs of Indians. McLaughlin, however, had received intelligence that Sam Jones, the most feared and hunted Seminole leader in the lower peninsula, was in the Big Cypress with fifty-seven warriors. He set out for that desolate region from Indian Key on October 9, with a party of detached seamen and revenue marines. On the tenth, Captains Burke and sixty-four men set out from Fort Dallas to rendezvous with McLaughlin at Chekiaka's Island. From this point, the combined forces proceeded to Prophet's Landing, then southwest towards the mangroves lining the lower Gulf coast.

The Third Artillery captain described the route as winding through lagoons, lakes, and apparent rivers. They arrived in the "hard everglades" on December 19, with the navy force in advance. Here, the sailors and revenue marines searched for two warriors in a canoe and pursued them to a cabbage hammock and pumpkin field. From six to twelve Indians were camped on this island, and all barely escaped, leaving their canoe behind. Further scouting in the flooded pine lands revealed another abandoned canoe, but the only apparent "back trails" seemed to bear in the direction of the Big Cypress. The navy's boating expedition therefore proceeded to Fort Brooke, where McLaughlin conferred with Colonel Worth. The plan of operations they devised called for a major three-prong assault to flush the Seminoles out of the Everglades and Big Cypress. To accomplish this, Major Thomas Childs, commanding the Third Artillery companies in the South Atlantic District, was directed to move his headquarters from Fort Pierce to Fort Lauderdale. Lieutenant McLaughlin then recrossed the peninsula from the Gulf, by way of the Caloosahatchee River and Lake Okeechobee, where an upset boat sent a number of army provisions overboard. Moving through the glades, McLaughlin touched first at Pine Island, then followed the Rio Ratones to Fort Dallas.

While this major Everglades expedition was being set in motion, army patrols met with relative success while searching for Indians in other parts of southeast Florida. From Fort Lauderdale, Captain Robert Wade of the Third Artillery, with sixty-three men in twelve canoes, reconnoitered the country between New River and Jupiter Inlet. They encountered Indian bands on November 6 and again on the eighth, each time surprising the Seminoles in their camps. In these two encounters, Wade's men killed a total of eight Indians and captured another fifty-five, seized thirteen rifles and destroyed twenty canoes.

While Wade's expedition struck the scattered coastal bands, McLaughlin and Childs directed their efforts in the Big Cypress and the Everglades against the elusive Sam Jones. During late November and early December, soldiers, sailors and revenue marines penetrated the interior from all military posts along the east coast, as well as from the Caloosahatchee River. Canoe expeditions and foot patrols searched out such noted Indian strongholds as Prophet's Landing, Bowlegs or Waxy Hadjoe's Landing, and the Council Grounds. McLaughlin extended his operations as far north as Lake Okeechobee. Despite thorough searching, these extensive patrols found only abandoned fields, villages and trails.

Stopping at Indian Key for provisions on November 25, 1841, McLaughlin forwarded a report to Navy Secretary Upshur, declaring that he had at last gained information about "an extensive country which never heretofore had been explored." He sailed to Key Biscayne two days later to prepare for another major assault, then set out for Prophet's Landing the following morning. Major Childs's artillerymen accomplished a similar deployment from Fort Lauderdale, with instructions to station themselves at Bowlegs Landing, while Major William G. Belknap moved his troops into the Big Cypress from the Caloosahatchee River, centering them at Fort Keais. Colonel Worth hoped that these operations would prevent the Indians from escaping northward, and force them into the mangroves of southwest Florida. For the most part, however, this deployment proved only that tropical disease was a greater threat to the armed forces than the Seminoles were. Three canoes with invalids returned to the east coast on December 15, bringing news that Midshipman Hezekiah Niles had died of yellow fever at Fort Simons on the Caloosahatchee.

The failure to locate Indians in the Pai-hai-okee convinced the United States forces that the Prophet had fled to the mangroves near Key Biscayne, and that Sam Jones had also returned to the east coast, finding shelter on the Loxahatchee River near Fort Jupiter or at Lake Okeechobee. Subsequently, the navy pursued the former without success, while Major Childs was ordered to examine the country north of the Everglades.

When Childs's efforts to discover the hiding place of Sam Jones failed, Lieutenant McLaughlin was ordered to conduct another search. On December 23, 1841, McLaughlin explained to Navy Secretary Upshur that his whole command accepted their instructions enthusiastically, although most of the men had been in their canoes without intermission since October 9. From Biscayne Bay, McLaughlin's men retraced their route across the Everglades and moved northward, arriving at the headwaters of the Loxahatchee on December 15. The lieutenant described the reconnaissance as "one continuous portage over stumps and cypress knees." A combined patrol of sailors and marines scouted the swamps for six days, finding only three abandoned canoes, three deserted Indian camps, and the evidence of a one-day-old trail, presumably traveled by only one individual.

As a result of his findings, McLaughlin directed his attention to Lake Okeechobee and the Alapaticoe Swamp region near the St. Lucie River. He therefore requested one month's sustenance to be transported in the expedition's boats and another to be deposited at Fort Center on Lake Okeechobee. The marines, presently garrisoning the region's posts, were also in need of equipage, and many had been ejected from the barracks by the sick. In fact, many of McLaughlin's men were so worn out that they were condemned by a board of surgeons as unfit for service. Five of the command died during December, fifty were sent to northern hospitals, and another 100 became ill with a "regular cave-in of the constitution." The weapons used by McLaughlin's command also suffered from unlimited exposure to the elements. "Five out of thirty Colt Rifles have bursted after being loaded for ten days," the lieutenant complained, "causing serious injury to anyone nearby." He added that his men were compelled to revert to use of muskets.

On December 19, 1841, about the same time that the navy patrol arrived in the Loxahatchee region, Captain Wade led a second expedition northwest from Fort Lauderdale. Nine days of diligent field operations between the New River fort and Jupiter Inlet failed to locate any Indians, but Wade's force reached Lake Worth in canoes and there destroyed numerous vegetable gardens belonging to the Seminoles.

During the early days of 1842, another expedition set out from Fort Lauderdale to Fort Pierce. Proceeding north, Captain John R. Vinton, Third Artillery, directed companies A and F to reconnoiter the Alapaticoe region in canoes and to probe as far north as the region between the St. Johns and Kissimmee rivers on horseback.
Colonel Worth also directed Lieutenant McLaughlin to ascend the Kissimmee River to Fort Gardiner and into Lake Tohopekaliga, as soon as he completed the approaching Okeechobee reconnaissance.

Further south, in the Everglades, the United States Army mounted another major offensive against the Seminoles. Numerous reconnaissance patrols scoured all parts of that region from December until February. This offensive proved to be a parting shot. On January 3, the troops at Fort Lauderdale received instructions to prepare for a move from the east coast, and Major Childs at Fort Pierce was requested to notify McLaughlin of the withdrawal. The abandonment of army posts in southeastern Florida had been planned since October of 1841, but had been postponed by the fall campaigns in the Everglades. Now Colonel Worth informed navy "Captain McLaughlin" of his wishes to reduce the number of garrisons on the Atlantic frontier. The colonel suggested that Fort Dallas and Key Biscayne be retained as auxiliary naval stations, perhaps for use as hospitals or for affording an entrance into the interior.

On January 7, 1842, Major Childs informed Worth of the results of his reconnaissances between Forts Lauderdale and Pierce. At present, he indicated, no Indians were residing in the Loxahatchee country, or in the region between Cape Canaveral and Jupiter. A few weeks later, the Third Artillery began pulling out of the region, destined for Gulf coast stations. In addition, the steamboat Cincinnati was ordered down from the St. Johns River to collect all Indian prisoners for transportation to the western reservation. Soldiers still patrolling the south Florida interior from posts on the Caloosahatchee were rewarded with the knowledge that, despite repeated rumors to the contrary, the Prophet and his band were still in the Big Cypress. After a brief skirmish, they were last seen retreating towards the southwest coast.

Apprised of this encounter, Lieutenant McLaughlin again shifted his attention southward, and selected February 1 as the date to begin his next Everglades campaign. He planned for two forces to enter opposite sides of the territory "to drive from the southern extremities of the peninsula, through the Cypress, Locha-hatchee and Halpatiokee Swamp on the east side; and through the Mangroves, Cypress and fields at the headwaters of the Caloosahatchee on the west side into the Okeechobee." As the first step in this campaign, Lieutenant John B. Mar-

Fort Dallas to the navy became official on February 1, 1842, per Special Order No. 16 issued by Colonel Worth. At the same time, the soldiers in southwest Florida also withdrew from that region, leaving the entire Everglades and Big Cypress regions to the U.S. Navy patrols. Lieutenant Collison R. Gates of the Eighth Infantry summed up the army's impact in the Big Cypress, "[We] drove the indians out, broke them up, and taught them that we could go where they could... soldiers and officers worn down... Hard times... trust they are soon to end."

Locations of numerous forts, Indian villages, natural features, and other sites pertaining to the naval war in south Florida, 1835-42 (map by Kenneth J. Hughes).
As the army withdrew, Lieutenant John Rodgers of the Jefferson entered the Everglades with instructions to hunt the enemy and use any measures of severity against any prisoners he should capture in order to learn the haunts of Sam Jones. In addition to the crew members of his vessel, Rodgers was also assisted by Lieutenant William L. Herndon of the Madison and Lieutenants Thomas T. Sloan and Robert D. Taylor of the marines. This expedition entered the Everglades from Key Biscayne and explored the islands northward to Lake Okeechobee, then proceeded up the Kissimmee River to Lake Tohokalia.

Eight days later, Lieutenant Marchand set out from Fort Dallas on another canoe expedition in the lower extremities of the Florida peninsula. His force consisted of detachments from the Van Buren, the Otsego, and the Wave. Marchand searched a vast area of the Everglades between Shark River and Long Key, including Coconut Island, the Pine Keys, and Mangrove Keys. On one isolated island, he found and destroyed several articles carefully preserved and concealed by the Seminoles, and in the vicinity of Long Key, his command destroyed an acre of corn and several cultivated fields.

During their forty days of reconnaissance, Marchand's command encountered no Seminoles, and the fewest signs they found were not less than four days old. The lieutenant therefore concluded that the Seminoles were sequestered somewhere between Coconut Island and Cape Sable. His men returned to the east coast in late March in a state of exhaustion brought on by great hardships and prolonged exposure to the wilderness.

Reasoning that Lieutenant Marchand's command was completely prostrated, Lieutenant McLaughlin informed Colonel Worth that his men would not be recuperated for further service until April 20. In the meantime, Lieutenant James S. Biddle, USN, and seventy-five men were sent to scour the mangroves of southwest Florida. Further to the north, Lieutenant John Rodgers continued to pursue the Seminoles along Fish-eating Creek and the Kissimmee River. However, his men were successful only in discovering deserted Indian towns and camps, as well as abandoned and uncultivated fields. They returned to Key Biscayne on April 11, leaving eight men at Fort Center to guard the remaining provisions.

After the return of Rodgers' expedition from Okeechobee, Lieutenant Sloan of the revenue marines was employed in searching the cootgrounds between the Miami and New rivers. Lieutenant William Herndon returned to Lake Okeechobee by way of the Caloosahatchee, where he had embarked the navy detachment from Fish-eating Creek. By the end of April, Rodgers and Marchand, whose sailors had apparently recovered from their March ordeal, were directed to search for a small party of Indians along the rivers of extreme southwest Florida, and McLaughlin sailed the Flirt to a site on the east coast above Hillsboro Inlet, at Latitude 26°26' north, where it was reported that the Indians had salvaged and concealed several bags and barrels of flour.

Lieutenants McLaughlin and Sloan had greater success in discovering the whereabouts of the Seminoles than did Lieutenant Rodgers, but not without great exertions. First, McLaughlin took the Flirt and the Wave to the shipwreck where the Indians had last been seen. He and several men from those vessels lay in ambush for ten days without success. Then, presuming the Indians had been dispersed by patrols from Fort Pierce, the seamen destroyed 167 barrels of flour and prepared to set sail for Key Biscayne. Shortly before they were to depart, guides discovered the trail of two Indians at the mouth of the Hillsboro River. McLaughlin's command pursued them to the Seminoles overland for two days, ending their journey in an Everglades hammock at the head of Snake Creek. There, many large fields had recently been cleared, and bananas, sugar cane, corn, and vegetables of every description were growing. McLaughlin returned to his headquarters at Key Biscayne while Lieutenant John C. Henry of the Wave and a group of seamen were left in seclusion on the site for several days. This party arrived in Indian Key on May 25 after successfully destroying many fields, but finding no Indians.

Lieutenant Sloan's marines encountered similar results in patrols between the Miami and New rivers. They discovered "five distinct settlements" of Indians along the coast, one located between Little River and Arch Creek, less than five miles from Fort Dallas. Although the Indians scattered as Sloan's men approached, the marines succeeded in destroying eight fields and a large quantity of corn.

Now that spring of 1842 had arrived, the water in the Everglades became too low for boat travel. Despite the dry conditions, Lieutenants Taylor's marines and Rodgers' and Marchand's navy patrols attempted a joint expedition into the Pai-hai-okee. Forced to drag their crafts on skids made from the boats' seats, the command suffered great fatigue, and one private died from sheer exhaustion. These unbearable conditions compelled Lieutenant Taylor to return abruptly to the coast. Marchand and Rodgers followed on May 20, bringing word that the Indians had abandoned the southern extremities of the peninsula.

Since General Macomb's attempt to end the war in 1839, the Seminoles had remained relatively quiet, engaging in hostilities primarily to defend themselves and to procure cargoes from wrecked vessels. Sam Jones and the Prophet had supposedly gone somewhere in the Big Cypress, far out of reach of white settlements. Small bands of Upper Creeks were also reported to be roaming west of Tallahassee. Colonel Worth therefore deemed all settlers between Tallahassee and the Caloosa- hatchee safe from depredations. As summer approached, the United States government called for a suspension of hostilities in Florida, as Congress hammered out the specifics of the Armed Occupation Act, designed to grant 160-acre homesteads to frontier settlers and create a buffer between the remaining Seminole bands and established settlements.

On May 23, 1842, Colonel Worth instructed Lieutenant McLaughlin to make preliminary arrangements with the secretary of the navy to withdraw the Mosquito Fleet from Florida. By mid-June, surplus stores were transferred to the army forces in the territory, and all vessels but the Flirt, the Wave, and the Phoenix sailed for Norfolk, Virginia. Then, on June 20, McLaughlin received an official communication from Navy Secretary Upshur directing him to withdraw the remainder of his force from Florida. To accommodate Colonel Worth's wishes to maintain coastal protection, Lieutenant John Henry was ordered to keep one vessel on each coast for general protection, to aid and assist wrecked or distressed vessels, and to guard against trade between the Indians and Cuban fishermen. Even though hostilities were ending, Henry was warned to "be on the alert for treachery and to be prepared to resist it." His vessels operated from the rendezvous point and hospital at Indian Key until their dismissal on September 24, 1842.

Now that hostilities had diminished, the federal government and the Florida legislature pointed the territory in the direction of statehood. The Armed Occupation Act was enacted into law in August. Also, the few remaining Seminoles, numbering about 360, agreed to move onto a southwest Florida reservation. In consequence of these positive developments, the small navy flotilla serving in the Florida War
was formally dissolved on August 3, 1842, and Colonel William J. Worth officially announced an end to the war on the fourteenth.

The Second Seminole War was a costly action. Between $30,000,000 and $40,000,000 was poured into the six-and-a-half year conflict, and an estimated 1,600 military personnel and volunteers lost their lives. More than two-thirds of these fatalities occurred as a result of disease and accidents. The United States Navy lost twenty-three officers and seamen, and the revenue marines lost seventeen. The Seminole Indians suffered even more so. It cannot be determined how many Indians were killed in battle or died of consequences relating to the war. However, by April 1843, almost ninety percent of the survivors — some 3,824 Indians — had migrated to the western reservation.

The conflict also had a lasting effect on the economics and development of the Florida Territory. Recuperation within the settlements was a slow and tedious process. Moreover, the citizens remained skeptical of those Indians still residing in the peninsula, thus avoiding homesteading too near the reservation. If any positive attribute can be salvaged from such a war, it must be the knowledge obtained by United States forces about a previously unexplored region. In fact, military reconnaissances in south Florida provided valuable data concerning the Everglades, both during and after the war. In 1848, when St. Augustine resident Buckingham Smith compiled an engineering report for the United States government, outlining the advantages of draining the Everglades for agricultural use, navy Commander Levin Powell wrote to Florida's United States Senator J. D. Westcott expressing his "entire conviction of its practicability." Powell wrote that a canal or cut from one of the rivers on south Florida's eastern side would connect Lake Okeechobee with the Atlantic, would open navigation to the interior, and would effect the desired Everglades drainage. Expounding upon such attributes as the rich soil and tropical climate of the region, Powell expressed his opinion that the results of such a work as this were beyond mere speculation. In conclusion, he stated, the Everglades "would be reclaimed to the use and enjoyment of man." In effect, the Florida War opened new regions for southern expansion, and the subsequent slow but steady increase in population led to statehood in 1845. This goal was reached, in part, by the presence of the United States Navy in south Florida during the war.

SEMINOLE WAR NAVY & ARMY VESSELS

Compiled by KENNETH J. HUGHES

Throughout the Second Seminole War, United States forces found a demand for both large and small vessels. These were needed for duties ranging from coastal protection to transporting troops and supplies, in addition to providing access into shallow bays, rivers, and especially into the Everglades. The first selected waterborne group was one under the direction of the U.S. Treasury Department, which commanded a fleet of vessels to patrol the United States' coastline to prevent illegal commerce. When the Florida conflict became imminent, the Treasury Department's U.S. Revenue Marines were ordered to blockade the peninsula to prevent trade between Spanish fishermen from Havana and the Seminole Indians. Besides participating in these duties, they, too, were eventually detached from their vessels and attached to the Everglades expeditionary patrols.

The United States Navy joined the Florida forces early in 1836. This occurred when the orders for the revenue marines crossed the desk of Navy Secretary Mahlon Dickerson and he altered them to include one naval vessel for coastal patrols in Florida. His foresight opened the door to naval participation in the Florida War. However, during these early months of the conflict, the commander of the West Indies Fleet, Alexander J. Dallas, could not provide any vessels from his inadequate squadron, and could barely muster enough sailors to man army contracted steamboats.

Manpower shortages also forced the U.S. government to hire private contractors and agents to purchase supplies and forage. Private transports were contracted to deliver this sustenance to the U.S. forces, and private laborers and teams were hired to ascertain that all goods safely reached their destinations. Spoilage was one of Major General Thomas Sidney Jesup's many concerns as he marched his troops into south Florida in 1837 and 1838. His correspondence often reflected associated problems such as the lack of coffee and the condition of beans that were utterly unfit for human consumption. In fact, troops were employed to construct adequate storage sheds to avoid such aggravations. Jesup also complained about inexperienced laborers and teamsters, whose various blunders created delays in the shipment of provisions, which, in turn, delayed the campaign. Frequent winter gales also hampered delivery schedules. Thus, the responsibility of maintaining supply lines