Full dress costumes for the Artillery, Infantry and Dragoons: 1835 - 1850.

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The Second Seminole Indian War of Florida (1835 - 1842) was about to enter its third year of existence when Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup initiated his 1837-38 campaign. Col. Persifor Smith’s Louisiana Volunteers travelled up the Caloosahatchee River in southwest Florida while Col. Zachary Taylor led his own campaign from Tampa down the Kissimmee River to Lake Okeechobee. In conjunction, Jesup directed a primary army wing along the eastern coast to receive any Seminoles pushed at them by the other forces. The campaign was designed to drive the Seminoles southward, away from northern Florida settlements, in order to capture them for shipment to the Arkansas territory. Because some Seminoles were expected to escape northward across the military lines, volunteers from Georgia and Florida were directed to patrol these northern regions.

On December 25, 1837, the Seminoles skirmished with Colonel Taylor’s forces near Lake Okeechobee. Although Taylor’s victory was decisive, his army suffered heavy losses. Retreating southward, the Seminoles scattered. As the war moved into southern Florida, the need evolved for a field headquarters to direct operations. Thus, Fort Jupiter was established. Despite its temporary existence for only four months, the establishment of the post fulfilled an important purpose when Fort Jupiter became the early military crossroads to southeast Florida. From here, General Jesup directed the military activities of his subordinates along the Atlantic coast.

United States Navy Lt. Levin M. Powell led an expedition composed of army and navy personnel down the Indian River. They hunted the enemy and searched for adequate sites for future depots. On January 15, 1838, the command left their boats at the headwaters of the Loxahatchee River and travelled inland. A captured squaw informed them that her people were in the vicinity. Thus, after a five mile march, 50 to 60 Seminoles were confronted in a cypress swamp.

Powell’s command pushed the Seminoles back 800 yards into a lower cypress swamp; yet, they were unable to route the enemy. With the men catching musket balls and dusk setting, Powell called a retreat. The less experienced sailors hastened back to the boats in confusion while the Indians attempted to counter-attack. Lt. W.H. Fowler and the Artillery, however, prevented them from overtaking the sailors. After Fowler was shot, Lt. Joseph E. Johnston, acting adjutant to the command, assumed leadership and was the last to retreat from the battlefield. Although seven musket balls tore through his clothing, he sustained no wounds.

Powell’s defeat was caused by a lack of organization. As soon as the fighting began, his command formed three divisions. The shooting of division leaders, Midshipmen H.N. Harrison and Lt. P. McArthur, precipitated the disorganization of those divisions. Dr. Frederick Leitner, a surgeon and naturalist who befriended the Seminole Indians prior to the war, was critically wounded. Moreover, Leitner’s hospital steward was fatally shot while attempting to aid him. During the retreat to the boats, Leitner refused assistance and claimed he was mortally wounded and would soon expire. In their great haste to leave, Powell’s command made a costly error when they abandoned a boat carrying powder and supplies. Returning north, the command arrived at Fort Pierce with 22 casualties. Five had not returned.

Receiving news of Powell’s defeat as he marched southward along the St. Johns River, Major General Jesup ordered the main wing to march for the Loxahatchee River. As the column proceeded southward, its numbers were increased by ten companies of the Third and Fourth Artillery under Brigadier Gen. Abram Eustis and 35 Delaware Indians from Col. Taylor’s forces. Jesup’s army of 1,500 men, 100 horses and mules, and 70 wagons had to traverse extensive sawgrass plains and cypress swamps. For many nights, the only apparent dry areas for encampments were Indian mounds. During this exceedingly strenuous march, mules dropped dead in their harnesses and wagons transported fatigued soldiers.

On January 24, 1838, Capt. William M. Fulton’s Dragoons received Seminole fire when preparing to enter the north side of a hammock which was situated on the banks of the Loxahatchee River. The main column, four miles
Site of Fort Jupiter (National Archives)
to the rear, was notified and orders were issued to advance with all possible speed. An incapacitating slough, which defined the perimeter of the hammock, forced the Dragoons and other soldiers to dismount.

One line charged the Indian stronghold. The Tennessee Volunteers under Maj. William Lauderdale held the left, the Dragoons the right, and the Artillery the center. Some of the Tennessee Volunteers quickly retreated after receiving the brunt of the first volley. Jesup’s attempt to rally the Volunteers ended in retreat after he was wounded just below his left eye. Because parts of the hammock were very dense, soldiers could not see their enemy. The Artillery cleared those areas with a howitzer, a six-pounder cannon, and some Congreve rockets. Many fought their way to the center and happened upon the 35 foot wide Loxahatchee River. Under heavy fire from the Seminoles on the opposite bank, the soldiers forded the stream. Because the stream was much deeper than it appeared, however, the gun powder became wet and rendered the weapons useless. Fortunately, though, the enemy retreated. The remaining army did continue to fire for one hour after the last Indian had been sighted.

Jesup’s casualties numbered nine dead and 29 wounded. Of these, the Tennesseans suffered the heaviest loss with seven dead and 23 wounded. Many victims had been shot by their own men. The remaining casualties were artillerymen. In addition, one dead Seminole was found on the battlefield.

Jesup’s army exited from the south side of the hammock, directly into an abandoned Seminole camp. Nautical books from Powell’s command lay scattered about and one of his casualties was found nearby. Because the Major General was certain that they were in Powell’s battlefield, the soldiers recrossed the river and encamped on their battlefield. Congreve rockets were fired that night to notify the depot, which had been ordered from the St. Lucie to the Loxahatchee River, of their arrival. The dead were buried, the wounded were treated by surgeons, and orders were issued to construct a bridge across the Loxahatchee. After its completion on the following afternoon, the command resumed its march.

After a five mile march, the army encamped on the north branch of the Jupiter River, known today as the northwest fork of the Loxahatchee. Col. William S. Harney’s Dragoons were ordered to patrol a hammock three miles to the north and ascertain if the enemy were present. A Seminole, wounded in Powell’s battle and near death, was found in an abandoned camp but was left to his fate. A captain of the Tennesseans arrived from the depot at St. Lucie River with a report that the supplies would arrive on the following day. Soldiers from St. Lucie visited Loxahatchee River on the day of the battle; however, they failed to establish a depot. A great number of Seminoles, perhaps in retreat, were on both sides of the inlet.

On January 26, 1838, the force marched two miles down the river, near the south branch of the Loxahatchee River, in the vicinity of the area where Lt. Powell had disembarked on his pursuit. Maj. Reynold M. Kirby and Lt. Powell arrived in the evening with several boats and 10,000 rations.

On January 27, the soldiers began construction of a picket fort, to be used as a depot, on the south bank of Jupiter River, about three miles from the inlet. Situated on a point of land formed by Jupiter River and Jones Creek, there was good visibility up the Jupiter and down the Loxahatchee rivers. The stockade was completed on January 28, 1838, and designated as Fort Jupiter. On the same day, wounded and sick soldiers were transported to the United States government hospital in St. Augustine via Fort Pierce.

Dragoons, scouts, Delaware Indians and all mounted soldiers were sent to the vicinity, which encompassed Fort Jupiter, to patrol for signs of Seminole Indians. Maj. Lauderdale’s Tennessee Volunteers were sent north to the Alpatioca swamps to reach Col. Taylor, who was in transit from Lake Okeechobee. Due to a lack of shoes and clothing, foot soldiers remained at the fort. During the march into the area, sawgrass tore their clothing almost beyond repair. Many uniforms were patched with old corn bags. Consequently, it was estimated that 500 soldiers required new garb.

While the Dragoons brought back 30 ponies and 20 cattle, two scouts returned with a report that Seminoles were encamped in a cypress swamp 28 miles south of the fort. In addition, the Delaware Indians returned with a scalp after they had encountered a small party of Seminoles. During these patrols, some casualties from Powell’s force were found and buried. Some Delaware Indians were sent to the Loxahatchee battleground after scouts reported that Seminoles had returned to that site. Their orders were to ascertain whether or not the enemy had disinterred the dead soldiers in order to obtain their scalps.

Jesup attempted to move his campaign into southeastern Florida on January 27 when he ordered Lt. Powell further southward to Rio Ratones for the purpose of seeking a suitable depot location. The army also was to continue its march south. Both orders were countermanded, however, because the construction of the Fort Jupiter stockade had not been completed and because the foot soldiers required shoes and clothing. Therefore, Lt. Powell was directed to Fort Pierce for the purpose of obtaining supplies.

Due to the shallowness of the Loxahatchee River, supplies had to be delivered in small, shallow draft boats. A large supply of rations and forage were required to feed 400 artillery soldiers, 600 Dragoons, 500 Tennesseans, 60 Delaware Indians, and 1,000 horses and mules. Small convoys of boats sometimes would arrive daily from Fort Pierce. On a daily basis, Army Surgeon Nathan S. Jarvis made entries in his diary of events.

"Feb. 1st... Maj'r. Kirby arri'd this morning with 15 boats & Supplies from Fort Pierce
On February 5, Maj. Gen. Jesup's command marched south in search of Seminoles who had been detected by the scouting parties. After a three day march of 25 miles, the Seminoles were found well concealed in a hammock. Upon their approach, the soldiers were met with a flag of truce. Tribal leaders Tuskegee and Halleck Hadjo asserted that they were tired of fighting and would settle for the smallest piece of Florida land. Thus, the soldiers camped in anticipation of the conference which was set for the following day.

The Major General's advisors, Gen. Abram Eustis and Col. David E. Twiggs convinced Jesup that the Seminoles could not be subjugated in the swamps where there was an abundance of fish and game, as well as natural shelter for concealment. Earlier, these Seminoles had participated in the Battle of Loxahatchee and had contributed to Powell's defeat. At the scheduled conference, Jesup did agree to notify Washington of his proposal for a south Florida reservation. While awaiting a reply, a truce was called and the Seminoles agreed to camp near Fort Jupiter. Lt. Thomas B. Linnard departed for Washington with Jesup's proposal on February 12, one day after the soldiers had returned to the fort.

As planned, 400 Seminoles and many blacks, who lived with the Seminoles, arrived near Fort Jupiter and camped about one mile from the stockade. Seminole families occasionally visited the soldiers' camps. The men begged for tobacco; the women gathered kernels of corn that dropped from the horses' mouths. The corn was ground into sofka. This type of flour was considered a major staple in the Seminole diet. It was not uncommon to observe men, women and children walking around the camps smoking pipes and cigars. The Seminoles chose sides and hit a ball along the ground with sticks. Some officers donated a large quantity of tobacco to the winning team.

On February 17, a convoy of supplies, the paymaster, Mr. Andrews, and a settler arrived from Fort Pierce. With them, however, travelled the news of the death in South Carolina of the imprisoned Osceola. The soldiers feared that the local Seminoles would receive the news and believe that Osceola had been put to death. On the next day, the Alabama Volunteers departed for Tampa Bay. Their time...
of service was approaching expiration. The commander pushed his army into southeast Florida when Lt. Powell was ordered to Key Biscayne. On February 21, a tender from the lightship off Carysford Reef arrived with dispatches from Key Biscayne. Although Cpt. Lucian B. Webster and Lt. Powell established a post on the key, no traces of Seminoles could be found in the vicinity. Powell then established Fort Dallas on the Miami River. On the 25th, Col. Taylor, Cpt. Thomas Barker, the First Infantry, Lt. Hill, and Lt. Collinson Reed Gates arrived at Fort Jupiter from Fort Bassinger in order to attend the negotiations. Meanwhile, Marine Lt. McLean was ordered to Fort Dallas in the Revenue Cutter, "Campbell."

The conference resumed on February 27th. Once more, the Seminoles stated they were tired of fighting. "... Their women and children were worn out by fatigue and they had buried the hatchet and now hoped there would be peace between the Red and White man." On February 28, 140 blacks were marched towards Tampa Bay for their westward migration in order to rejoin their Seminole masters who had migrated earlier in the war. Lt. W.G. Freeman, the officer in charge of the Indians' camp, wrote Indian Commissioner C.A. Harris in Washington and stated that they had 527 Seminoles. Fort Jupiter was so overflowing with Seminoles that another 100 had to be sent to Fort McRae on Lake Okeechobee. The Major General became concerned about the reports of Seminole activity along the Coontehatchee, which is now called the New River. Therefore, on March 2, he ordered Maj. Lauderdale's two companies of Tennessee Volunteers and one company of the Third Artillery, commanded by Lt. Robert Anderson, to establish a fort at that location. It later was named Fort Lauderdale.

General Eustis and Lt. Col. James Bankhead were ordered northward to the Suwanee River to assume command. However, due to Lt. Col. Benjamin K. Pierce's illness, Bankhead's order was countermanded and, on March 11, he was sent to Key Biscayne. With assistance from Lt. Powell, Bankhead conveyed barges from Fort Lauderdale up New River in order to hunt the enemy. Upon the relocation of General Eustis and Lt. Col. Bankhead, Col. David E. Twiggs assumed command of the brigade and Lt. Col. Gates assumed command of the Artillery.

Samuel Colt visited Fort Jupiter in March and brought his famous invention, the repeating rifle. On March 3, Jesup selected a board of officers to test the weapon. Some doubted the rifle's ability because it often jammed. Claiming that the rifle was "great medicine," the Seminoles avoided areas of the camp where Dragoons had the weapon.

The boats which conveyed supplies from Fort Pierce to Fort Jupiter seldom returned empty. On March 9, two companies of Fourth Artillery, under the commands of Lts. Ross and Jones, were ordered to Fort Pierce to await further orders. Concurrently, a company of the Third Artillery was detailed to man the boats and relieve the First Infantry of that duty. Because the 30 foot wide Jupiter Inlet had closed during a severe gale on March 14, all Loxahatchee-bound tenders, sailing from the south, were forced to journey first to Fort Pierce and then down the Indian River to Jupiter.

Lt. Frederick Searles arrived on a cutter tender from Key Biscayne via Fort Pierce. He brought reports that three men were attacked by the Seminoles at New River. The unfortunate party consisted of a captain from a small sloop which had sailed down with supplies, the engineer of a steamboat, and a black. Although severely wounded, the black escaped in a boat to the opposite bank of the river. Maj. Lauderdale's Volunteers, Lt. Anderson's Artillery soldiers, and Lt. Powell's Navy pursued the enemy but were unsuccessful in their attempts to overtake them.

Writing from Fort Jupiter to the adjutant general on March 11, 1838, Maj. Gen. Jesup described the recent troop movements in southern Florida and the Seminole activity around Jupiter:

"More than a hundred of the Indians now in the vicinity of this camp had for more than a month been between Col. Taylor's force and mine, so entirely concealed by the swamps, that no trace of them could be discovered.

In the same letter, while expounding on a problem which had plagued them since the establishment of Fort Jupiter, Jesup offered the only solution...

The difficulty of obtaining supplies at this post, (they have to be brought in small boats more than half the distance from Indian River Inlet), will probably compel me to abandon it, and either go down to New River, or fall back to Fort Pierce. I will endeavor to hold on, however, until all the Indians south of this point and north of New River be brought in.

Jesup received an answer on March 20 from Washington which rejected the proposal for the establishment of a south Florida reservation. Jesup then was ordered to destroy the Seminoles if they did not surrender for migration. Thus, during the night, soldiers surrounded the Seminoles' camp and moved in at first light. More than 500 Seminoles, including Halleck Hadjo, Tuskegee and 151 warriors, were captured without bloodshed. All prisoners were contained in the center of the Dragoons' camp where guards were posted. On March 22 many Seminoles were shipped to St. Augustine via Fort Pierce for their removal to the western territories. Five Seminoles, including Halleck Hadjo, were released and sent to convince chiefs Arpeika, known as Sam Jones, and Coacoochee "the Wildcat" to surrender.

Jesup detained Hadjo's family at the fort as a measure of assurance that Sam Jones and Coacoochee would receive word. Two messengers returned with the report that the chiefs still had not been located. For some time, the Major General anticipated a positive message from Hadjo. His hopes of a conference were diminished, however, upon receiving news that Hadjo and the remaining messen-
General Service button from an 1838 Dragoon’s encampment.

Oarlock found at site where Navy Lt. Levin Powell disembarked for his skirmish, five miles to the west, with the Seminoles. In their retreat, one boat was left behind and ransacked by the Indians.

Trigger guard for a musket of European origin.

An engraved silver patch box cover from the stock of a musket. Found along the house foundation at the former site of the 1838 Dragoon encampment.

Cartridge box plate, 1857 - 1858, found 30 to 40 years ago near the Dragoon’s encampment, at the south bend of the northwest fork of the Loxahatchee River.

All photographs on this page are courtesy of Shirley Floyd.
ggers, who had located Sam Jones at the south fork of the New River, were put to death after being accused as traitors. On the 24th, Tuskegee, his family, and the Seminoles’ blacks were marched to Tampa Bay for westward emigration. On the following day, the remaining Seminoles were shipped to Fort Pierce under the direction of Lt. Searles.

An express from Lt. Col. Bankhead arrived on March 28 and reported that they had encountered Seminoles at Pine Island, west of Fort Lauderdale. Bankhead and Cpt. Powell followed the New River until it disappeared into sawgrass plains, mud and water. After pushing deeper into these plains, they encountered the Seminoles. Leaving behind many possessions, the Seminoles quickly retreated after shots were fired. Reporting on the expedition’s success at the Pine Island skirmish, Surgeon Jarvis stated that: 

“They found cooking utensils, packs, signal flags, lead, powder, and many articles apparently taken from wrecks.”

Col. Harney and a detachment of Second Dragoons were ordered south on March 30 to relieve Lt. Col. Bankhead. Harney selected 50 Dragoons who possessed the new Colt rifle and 50 musket-bearing soldiers of the Third Artillery. Bankhead and his two campanies of Fourth Artillery were ordered to proceed northward in the direction of Black Creek while the First Artillery would remain at Cape Florida.

The remaining Third Artillery, under Lt. Col. Gates, received orders to scout the country between Fort Jupiter and Lake Okeechobee as far north as the Alapaticoa swamps. They departed Fort Jupiter on the same day as Col. Harney but returned two days later after failing to penetrate the swamps. Upon their return they reported that:

“... Horses and pack mules were sinking in the mud and water to their bellies.”

On March 30, Lt. John Graham of the Dragoons also proceeded toward Tampa Bay. He was ordered to relocate the remaining Dragoons from Tampa to Fort Mellon.

Rumors circulated among the soldiers at Fort Jupiter that early movement might occur, perhaps to Tampa. Many excused the talk as hearsay, but the need to continue operations of Fort Jupiter was diminishing. Other than minor disturbances in the northern part of the state, the war definitely had moved into southern Florida. To add fuel to the fire, news was received on April 5 that Seminole Chief Alligator and his people had agreed to migration and had surrendered at Fort Bassinger north of Lake Okeechobee. Coacoochee was rumored to be nearby and many believed that, if he surrendered, the war would be near an end. Maj. Lauderdale’s Tennessee Volunteers arrived at Fort Jupiter on April 6 after they had completed their duties on New River. There they had been relieved by Col. Harney’s command.

Small bands of Seminoles, scattered between the Loxahatchee River and Lake Okeechobee, were beginning to gather at Fort Jupiter for migration. On April 6, between 30 and 40 Seminoles surrendered. They remained at the Dragoon camps and participated in ball games with the other Seminoles who belonged to Halleck Hadjo’s family.

As the winter campaign came to an end, the number of troops stationed at Fort Jupiter quickly declined. On April 7, Cpt. John M. Washington and the only remaining company of Fourth Artillery were ordered to escort the last group of blacks to Tampa. Because their time of service was nearly expired, Lauderdale’s Tennessee Volunteers marched for Tampa Bay on the eighth. Lt. Linnard left on the same day for Black Creek, by way of St. Augustine. Linnard’s orders were to transport the Major General’s baggage to Tampa. On April 9, Jesup and his staff left Fort Jupiter for Tampa Bay. They were escorted by Cpt. Daniel D. Tompkins’s company of Dragoons, who also were ordered to Tampa.

A message, which ordered their return to Fort Jupiter, was sent to Col. Harney’s Dragoons at New River. Escorting 30 to 40 Seminoles who had surrendered in their vicinity, the Dragoons arrived at Fort Jupiter on April 11. After following those orders, the Dragoons then returned to south Florida and patrolled that region until the May 7 abandonment of Fort Lauderdale.

Lt. Christopher Q. Tompkins left Fort Jupiter for St. Augustine and Black Creek on April 13 in order to collect the regimental baggage and await further orders. The soldiers who remained at Fort Jupiter received dispatches on April 14 which ordered four companies of the Third Artillery, commanded by Lt. Col. Gates, to march for Fort King. Recent Seminole disturbances in that part of north Florida had necessitated the addition of reinforcements to protect that area. Maj. William L. McClintock was left in command of Fort Jupiter to assure that the remaining Seminoles were shipped northward. Upon the evacuation of Fort Jupiter in early May 1838, the stockade suffered the same fate as many other posts. It was put to the torch.

Fort Jupiter was a stepping stone during the four months of the 1837-38 winter campaign. Its use as a headquarters to direct southern operations proved effective, although costly. Seventeen soldiers were buried beneath the Loxahatchee soil. The Loxahatchee wilderness evolved into a home away from home for a maximum of 1500 soldiers and served as a gateway to the war in southern Florida. Many soldiers who had been stationed at Fort Jupiter believed that their survival in the wilderness and during the campaign was an apex in their lives. Stories and tales about their accomplishments in a wilderness unfit for humans would be written in diaries and journals and related to their families and progenies. In the eyes of Maj. Gen. Jesup, a man who sometimes stood alone in his desire to end the war peacefully, Fort Jupiter was the military crossroad to southeast Florida.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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*Sprague's book lists seven soldiers who died at or near Fort Jupiter. Private William Smither, 2nd Dragoons, Company B, died of dysentery at their camp on April 19, 1838. Three other privates from the first regiment were lost at Jupiter. Of these, A.W. Fullerton and Jacob Kepler of Company I were shot by Seminoles during Powell's battle on January 15, 1838, and M.L. Humphrey died from inflammation of the brain on the day preceding this battle.

In addition, three soldiers from the 3rd Artillery died at Jupiter. Corporal Parker Bowen, Company A, and Artificer Edward Burke, Company H, died during the battle of the Loxahatchee on January 24, 1838. Private Elias C. Kent, Company I, died of fever at the fort on February 6, 1838.

THIRD ARTILLERY
SOLDIERS WHO DIED AT FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA,
DURING THE 1839-1842 SECOND SEMINOLE INDIAN WAR

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<th>Name</th>
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*Captain Davidson, Commanding Officer of the Third Artillery, Company K, died at Indian Key.