

# BILLY BOWLEGS III

## SEMINOLE HISTORIAN



Born in 1862 on the east bank of Arbuckle Creek, Billy Bowlegs III (Snake Clan) came into the world while his family was in the midst of a bear hunt. He grew up on what is now the Brighton Reservation, at his family camp and with the wildlife of Florida. With a sharp mind, he learned everything he could about the native lands and animals, as well as the stories and history of his Tribe.

He chose the name Billy Bowlegs III. When asked why "the third", he stated the first was Bowlek, who led the Alachua Seminole at the start of the War, and Americans called Bowlegs. The second was Billy Bowlegs, who led the Tribe at the end of the Seminole War. All three men were Snake Clan.

He was often hired by hunters throughout Florida to help them navigate the harsh landscape. Along the way while traveling with them he learned English, which allowed him to forge relationships with many hunters, travelers, and a strong friendship with fellow Florida historian Albert DeVane.

Billy Bowlegs III collected stories of Seminole history and culture, and shared many of them with visitors. He was a fixture at local folk and historical festivals, and numerous photos of him and his regalia exist, as well as recordings of him singing. All across Florida non-natives were able to learn the story of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, not from books, but from a Seminole historian.

If you're interested in more Seminole History, The STOF Tribal Historic Preservation Office are creating a new site with more stories, historic resources, and more to come soon!

