

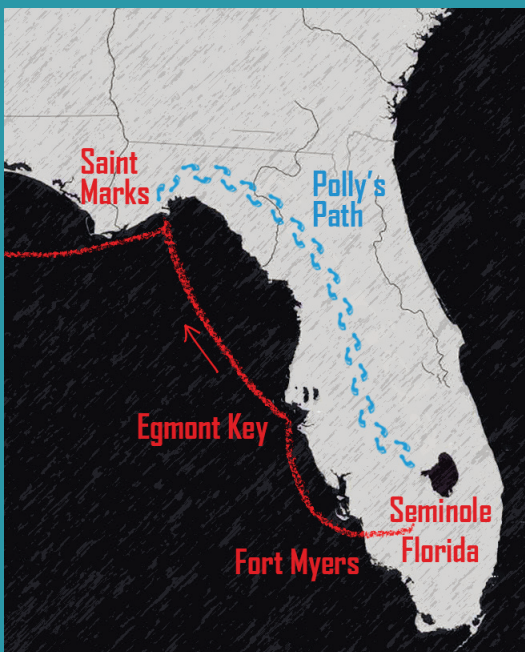
POLLY PARKER'S GREAT ESCAPE



The one existing picture of Polly Parker (Bird Clan) comes from 1913 and was made into a Florida postcard. It notes her as "Aunt Polly Parker, the Oldest Seminole Indian in the State of Florida." What the photographer didn't know was, not only had she had a long and storied life, but that she had one point led one of the greatest escapes in Florida.

During the last stage of the Seminole War in 1857, Polly was captured by American forces as part of their attacks on Seminole camps. she was taken to the concentration camp at Egmont Key, along with many other women, children, and elders, to be used as hostages to convince Seminole warriors to abandon fighting.

The captured Seminole were taken on the 'Gray Cloud', a steamship, to be taken to New Orleans and then Oklahoma on what would be the final march of the Trail of Tears. On the way the ship docked at St. Marks, near Tallahassee, for fuel and supplies. During the ship, a number of those onboard had come down with a fever. Polly convinced the ship's crew to allow her and a group of Seminole women to go ashore to gather traditional medicine. They were taken under guard to a field, but on Polly's signal, the Seminole women scattered into the trees! Polly and half a dozen other women managed to escape, and on foot they made their way through American occupied territory, crossing over 400 miles, to return to the Tribe near Lake Okeechobee.



After being nearly annihilated by disease and the Seminole wars, Polly's heroic guidance in the escape helped the Seminole Tribe to thrive. When her photo was taken she had become the matriarch of the Bird Clan, and today many of her descendants continue the fight for tribal sovereignty.

For more on Polly Parker and Egmont Key
visit: (egmontkeysite)
For Seminole History Stories and more
visit: www.stofthpo.com

