

TOM TIGER STARTS THE SEMINOLE TOURIST TRADE



A Camp of Seminoles.

Captain Tom Tiger has opened a camp in the south fork of the Miami river and on Monday evening will entertain the visiting tourists with

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In March of 1904 the first Seminole Tourist camp opened on the South Fork of the Miami River, with notices sent out in the Miami newspapers to invite one and all to come see traditional crafts, canoe-making, and Seminole dance. This first of its kind camp, built nearly three decades before Florida tourism became the driving force of the Sunshine State, was established by the Seminole leader Thlocklo Tustenuggee. But most visitors knew him as "Captain" Tom Tiger.

Tom Tiger was a veteran of the Seminole War who had become a leader among the Cow Creek band of Seminole people. He was one of the first to make cautiously open contact with the American settlers around Okeechobee, and helped the Tribe to secure regular trade without ever giving up their location. He became a prominent figure in Florida, speaking for his people and their concerns to the growing city councils, taking a white man to court for stealing his horse, and meeting and smoking a cigar with President Chester A. Arthur when he visited Florida.

Tom Tiger's Tourist Camp was a community affair, and a successful one. He received a merchant's license from the local judge for the Tribe to sell goods, and the local newspaper noted a number of Tribal Members who helped to run the camp. Tom Tiger, along with Frank Jumper, John Osceola, Sam Huff, Jackson Charlie, Willie Jumper, Jim Truitt, Young Ingraham, Clyde Tiger-Tail, Little Tiger, and Cypress Tiger, along with the many women who weren't named, kickstarted both Seminole and Florida Tourism.

Right: Photo of "Captain" Tom Tiger
Photonegative of a postcard by H.&W.B. Drew, Jacksonville

Captain Tom Tiger was no stranger to making the news. He famously was the first Seminole to take an American to court (a man who had stolen his horse), as well as the first to meet with an American president (Chester Arthur) in Florida.

