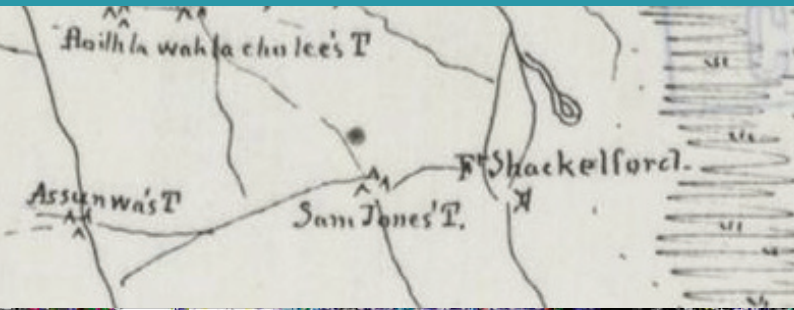


THE ELUSIVE FORT SHACKLEFORD



Built in April of 1855 by the US Army as part of their pressure campaign against the Seminole, Fort Shackleford stood for barely three months before it was abandoned in the summer. Almost immediately after the Seminole burnt it to the ground. However, during its short life, it was included on the map of Florida forts used by the US army. This map became the most thorough map of the region for decades, being used as references for maps into the 1900s, showing a rough location of Fort Shackleford.



In 1947 D. Graham Copeland created a detailed map of Collier County. Working with the historic maps, Copeland identified the location of Fort Shackleford, out in the middle of the Big Cypress Reservation. He commissioned a marker for the site and with the aid of Tribal members the small cement pyramid was placed. These markers drew outside interest however, and before long looters and treasure hunters were seeking out the location, convinced they could find valuable artifacts or even a buried Seminole War pay chest.

The Seminole did not want the site disturbed, however in the early 20th Century little could be done to keep the looters away. Josie Billie found a solution to this problem, the Seminole had placed the marker, and they could move it. The next time outsiders came to dig up the lost fort, Josie let them know that the Tribe had moved the marker over a mile away from the original location. The treasure hunters still tried to find the site, but every attempt ended in failure.



Years later the Tribal Archaeology Section of the THPO decided to take on the search for Fort Shackleford. After research, metal detection, and excavation the remnants were finally located... almost exactly where the marker stood! The marker had never been moved, Josie Billie had simply told the treasure hunters the story that it had, and let them search everywhere else. The fort had been hidden in plain sight.

To see more Seminole History Stories, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com

Top: Military map by George Hartsuff, 1847
Middle: Josie Billie at his camp, 1942
Bottom: The Fort Shackleford Marker, 2018

