

SEMINOLE WAR: INVASION

While there can be debate over what is the start of the Seminole War, when the United States invaded Florida in March of 1818 the war was undeniable. The army was made up of regular military and local civilian militias under the command of Andrew Jackson, as well as American-allied Lower Creek led by William McIntosh. Ostensibly Jackson had been given authority to "pacify" the Seminole threat, but not to enter Spanish-claimed territory.

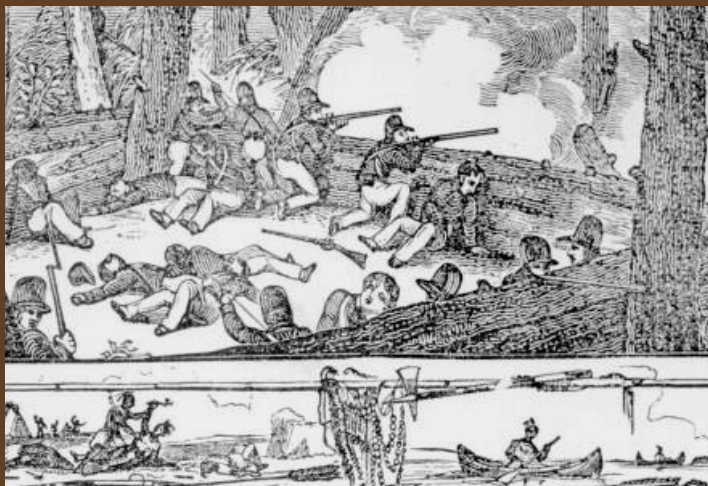
The invaders first targeted prosperous Seminole towns in the Florida panhandle. The towns of Anhaika, also known as Tallahassee, and Miccosukee Town were home to thousands, and the center of large farm and ranching communities. Both were sacked and razed to the ground by the American forces. The army then captured San Marcos de Apalache (Saint Marks), a Spanish Fort, before moving to occupy Pensacola. From there, they proceeded to the Suwanee River, leading to large battles against the residents of Bowleg's Town and Nero's Town, one of the largest free African settlements in Florida.

How much of Jackson's invasion was sanctioned by Washington is unclear. Jackson claimed he had been given the authority, but the attacks on Spanish settlements and his executions of British citizens in Florida surprised Washington D.C. and created multiple international incidents. Jackson was accused of starting a war for his own profit, both in land and recognition, charges that followed him into his presidential campaign.

For the people of Florida, Indigenous, free African, and Spanish, the invasion was the end of an era. The Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819 would give possession of the territory to the United States of America. What had been prosperous Seminole land was claimed by officers in the American army and other connected Americans as the new colonization of Florida began.



An illustration of the capture of Hillis Hadjo, artist unknown, also known as The Prophet. He was captured by American forces at San Marco, shortly after he returned from a diplomatic mission to England to try and secure their aid against the USA. He had been tricked onto an American ship falsely flying the British flag. He was hung without trial soon after.



Part of an illustration depicting Army Soldiers in combat with Seminole in the first part of the Seminole War, drawn in 1848. Illustration from John Frost's "Life of Jackson." Courtesy Florida State Library and Archives.

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

Visit the Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at stofthpo.com or use the QR code on the right for more Seminole history resources

