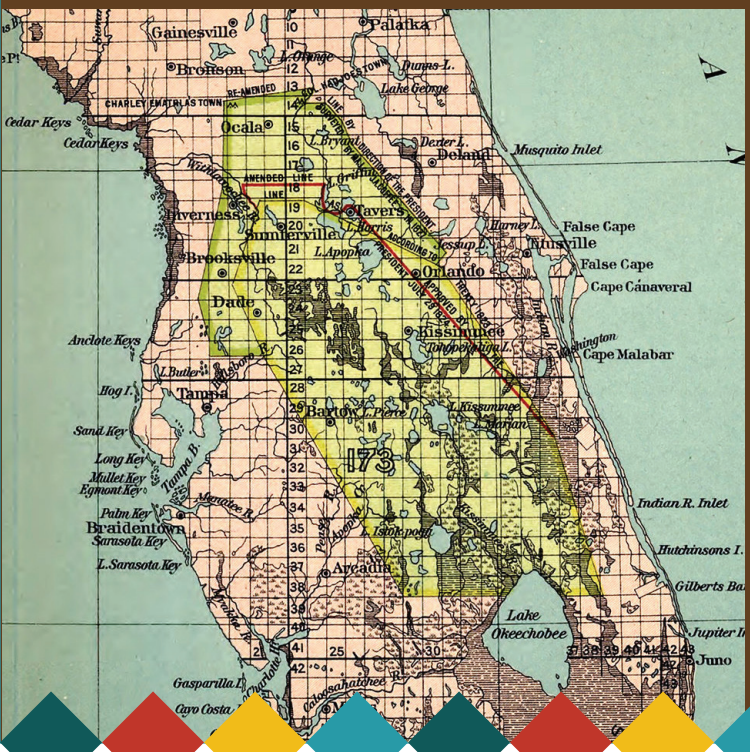
THE SEMINOLE WAR: MOULTRIE CREEK



In the late Summer of 1823, in a field along a creek south of Saint Augustine, delegates from the United States met with Indigenous leaders to discuss terms of peace. The Americans were represented by William Duvall, future governor of Florida, and James Gadsen. Neamathla, the leader of Fowltown, was recognized as the Seminole leader, though he was one of many who were present. This included the clan matriarchs, who while not part of the direct negotiations, could provide council from the camps.

The Treaty of Moultrie Creek sought to end the hostilities by moving the Seminole to a designated reservation in Central Florida. There the towns in turn would receive payments in resources and labor, including teachers and blacksmiths, from the U.S. The borders were drawn to keep the Seminoles at least fifteen miles from any coastline, cutting them off from any allies outside Florida, and demanded the towns not give shelter to anyone escaping American enslavement.

The Treaty was never completely fulfilled. Most Tribal members would move to the reservation land over the next nine years, but bands who weren't represented at Moultrie Creek saw no reason to abide by a treaty they hadn't agreed to. Those who moved found the land far less sustainable than what they had left behind. Most also refused to comply with U.S. slave catchers. The agreed payments from the USA were normally far behind schedule, and often not fulfilled at all. Meanwhile American settlers were already starting to move into the reservation lands.

Seemingly outside these problems however, Neamathla and five other leaders had negotiated to keep their lands in North Florida even as the rest of the Seminole were forced to leave. This would backfire on them within the decade, as they were the first in Florida to be forced out under the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

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

Top picture: Historical marker for the signing of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek - St. Johns County, Florida, 1950 (circa).
Below: The borders of the Moultrie Creek reservation (in green), included modern day Orlando, Okeechobee, and Ocala. (Map by Bureau of American Ethnology, 1896)

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