

THE SEMINOLE WAR: “BILLY BOWLEG’S WAR”



Hollata Micco, who the Americans knew as “Billy Bowlegs,” was a veteran of the war, the head of a prominent town, and a respected leader who helped keep the Seminole Tribe together after the United States declared the “Florida War” over. He spent the following decade working to ease relations and find a place for the tribe in the new Florida. He found common cause with the American Indian Agent, Captain John C. Casey. The two agreed that it was possible for the Seminole to remain in Florida and made these arguments to the federal government.

Despite this, Indian Removal remained the position in Washington. One of the strongest proponents was Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, who would be the president of the Confederate States of America six years later. Davis directed the Army to pressure the Seminole, looking to either convince them to leave, or spark an incident that could be used to justify war.

The pressure campaign proved to be a success. In December of 1855, an Army patrol deep in Seminole territory vandalized and looted a Seminole camp. They woke up later that week to a Seminole attack. Only three of the American soldiers survived. In response, the United States declared the third Seminole War.

The military had learned the lesson of the Florida War, and was for combat in the wetlands environment. With less than a thousand Seminole still in Florida, and new American tactics, the war would only last three years.

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Above: Billy Bowlegs, (Ca. 1850)

