

The Seminoles

The Seminole Indians who lived in Florida just prior to removal had mixed origins, including a severed branch of Lower Creeks from the Chattahoochee River and runaway black slaves from the nearby plantations of white settlers. The Florida Indians and the Spanish government received the slaves as free people and, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Seminoles had broken all connection with the Creeks (Foreman 1932; Welsh 1976). The word “seminole” actually means “separatist” or “runaway” (Foreman 1932).

When the War of 1812 broke out, white Georgians revitalized efforts to reclaim Florida from Spain in order to eliminate it as a possible haven for runaway slaves. The First Seminole War began in 1817, and in 1819 Florida fell to the United States (Welsh 1976). The Treaty of Camp Moultrie, signed September 6, 1823, moved the Seminoles to a reservation in the interior of Florida below Tampa Bay. The region lacked abundant game and its soils were too sandy and marshy for agriculture. Severe droughts created widespread hunger amongst the Seminoles, which played a large role in their decision to move to Indian Territory (Foreman 1932; Garbarino 1989; Welsh 1976).

After the passing of the Indian Removal Bill in 1830, the Seminole Indians fought perhaps harder than any other tribe to defend their lands. The Seminoles’ homes and settlements were destroyed and the inhabitants were driven into the nearby swamps where they were hunted for six years. Those who were captured were carried away as prisoners to Indian Territory (Foreman 1934).

The Treaty of Payne’s Landing, signed May 9, 1832, surrendered the remaining Seminole lands in Florida. A provision of the treaty allowed for the Seminole chiefs to tour Indian Territory for their approval of the proposed relocation grounds. The exploration party reached Fort Gibson in the fall of 1832. The Seminoles were not pleased to see that they would be living next to the Creeks. Nevertheless, the Seminole leaders were forced to sign the Treaty of Fort Gibson, which required the Seminoles to settle in the Creek Nation (Welsh 1976).

The struggle of the Seminoles against the United States Government to hold on to their land resulted in the Second or Great Seminole War. In January 1837, 10,000 American soldiers were sent to Florida. The Seminoles were defeated; more than 250 Seminoles and Black Seminoles, as well as Seminole prisoners being held at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, were marched to New Orleans and held at Fort Pike to await transportation to Indian Territory. The prisoners were loaded onto boats that arrived at Fort Gibson in June of 1838 (Welsh 1976).

1832

The exploration party provided by the 1832 Treaty of Payne’s Landing left for Indian Territory late that same year. Seven Seminole leaders, including John Blunt, Charley Emathla, Hohahte Emathla, Jumper, and the interpreter Abraham, traveled under the leadership of Colonel James Gadsden. While in Indian Territory they signed the Treaty of Fort Gibson, which was a further agreement to Seminole removal. The treaty was signed even though these seven leaders did not have authority to act on behalf of the entire Seminole tribe (Foreman 1932; Garbarin 1989).

The party traveled across the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans and then ascended the Mississippi River on the steamer *Little Rock* (Covington 1993; Foreman 1932).

- Ascend the Mississippi River and the Arkansas River on the *Little Rock* (b).
- Arrive at Little Rock (b) (c) November 3, 1832 (c).
- Depart overland, riding horses, from Little Rock (b) (c).
- Arrive at Fort Gibson (b) (d) a few weeks later (c).
- Sign the Treaty of Fort Gibson March 28, 1833 (b).

1836

During the fall of 1835, a Seminole favoring removal was murdered, and his followers fled to Tampa Bay for protection and to await removal (Welsh 1976). They were members of Emathla's "friendly Indians" including Fukeluste Hadjo, who was also known as Black Dirt (Foreman 1932). Paige et al. (2003) refer to this group as Holata Imata's pro-removal Indians.

They left for New Orleans by steamer on April 11 or 12, 1836 (Covington 1993; Foreman 1832; Paige et al. 2003), conducted by Lieutenant Joseph W. Harris (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003). The party arrived at New Orleans on April 23. There they boarded the steamer *Compromise* with a keelboat in tow (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003).

Twenty-five passengers died along the way, and many were sick upon arrival due to heavy rains and poor traveling conditions. Upon reaching their new home, only 320 of the original 407 had survived (Paige et al. 2003; Welsh 1976).

- Ascend the Mississippi River on the *Compromise* (b) (c) (d).
- Arrive at Montgomery's Point and ascend the Arkansas River (c) (d).
- Arrive at Little Rock (b) (c) (d); Harris is ill and stays at Little Rock (d); Captain Jacob Brown takes charge; he stations the group one-quarter mile below Little Rock to wait for the water level to rise (c) May 5, 1836 (b) (c) (d).
- Ascend the Arkansas River under Lieutenant George G. Meade May 7, 1832 (c) (d).
- Disembark at McLean's Bottom below Fort Smith due to low water levels May 9, 1836 (d).
- Lieutenant Jefferson Van Horne arrives at the camp and takes charge May 13, 1836 (d).
- Depart McLean's Bottom, traveling overland on bad roads (d).
- Travel 4 miles May 14, 1836 (d).
- Travel 6 miles May 15, 1836 (d).
- Travel 10 miles; enter a prairie May 18, 1836 (d).
- Travel 10 miles; reach the Vache Grasse Creek (15 miles southeast of Fort Smith) May 20, 1836 (d).
- Travel 5 miles; stop at Barlins' May 21, 1836 (d).
- Arrive at Fort Smith May, 1836 (d).
- Travel 10 miles; reach the Poteau River and go across (d) May 22, 1836 (c).
- Arrive at Fort Gibson (d) (b) May 23, 1836 (d).

A small Seminole family of eight passed Little Rock on June 1, 1836. They were led by Mr. Sheffield, who was acting superintendent for the removal of the Seminoles. The family was originally assigned to Holata Imathla's party (above) but had missed the boat at Tampa Bay while they were out fishing (Paige et al. 2003). In the summer of 1836, a group of Seminoles that had agreed to leave Florida voluntarily began arriving in Indian Territory (Agnew 1980). Ninety Black Seminoles were taken by Jesup's command during the winter of 1836–1837. They were shipped to New Orleans on June 2, 1837 (Covington 1993).

1838

Two years after the 1836 emigration the next group of Seminoles arrived in Indian Territory (Agnew 1980). In 1838 many Seminoles were captured by the United States Military and were transported by water to New Orleans. Here they were held in the barracks at Fort Pike to await transportation to the West. By May 1, 1838, 1000 Seminoles, one-third of whom were Black Seminoles, had arrived. On May 14, 1838, Lieutenant John G. Reynolds reached New Orleans with about 160 more people.

A dispute arose between the Indians and the whites as to the ownership of the Black Seminoles. The Seminole Indians were forced to sail from New Orleans, leaving the Black Seminoles behind. The dispute was finally settled in the Seminoles' favor, and Nathaniel Collins brought them up the Mississippi River by boat following the rest of the Seminoles. Collins' party arrived at Little Rock on June 9, 1838 and reached Fort Gibson on June 12, 1838 (Agnew 1980; Foreman 1932).

The Seminole Indians left New Orleans on the *Renown*, which departed May 19 (Foreman 1932; Littlefield, Jr. 1977), and the *South Alabama*, which departed May 22 (Foreman 1932). The *Renown* carried 453 passengers and was conducted by G. Y. Adde with the assistance of Dr. S. S. Simmons. The *South*

Alabama held 674 passengers, including 249 slaves and chiefs Micanopy, Coa Hadjo, and Philip; Reynolds was the conductor and had the assistance of Lieutenant Terret and Dr. James Simmons (Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003).

- Ascend the Mississippi River May 19–22, 1838 (d) (i).

South Alabama party:

- *South Alabama* reaches Vicksburg May 26, 1838 (c).
- Enter the Arkansas River (f).
- *South Alabama* arrives at Little Rock; passengers transfer to lighter craft, the *Liverpool* and the *Itasca* (d) (i) June 1, 1838 (i).
- Depart Little Rock June 4, 1838 (i).
- Arrive at Fort Gibson without incident (c) (i).

Renown party:

- *Renown* arrives at Little Rock (c) (f) (i) May 26, 1838 (c) (i).
- *Renown* arrives at Ft. Gibson (f) (i) June 12, 1838 (f).

A party of 117 Seminoles and two Black Seminoles (Foreman 1932; Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003) departed Charleston, Florida and arrived at New Orleans on May 28, 1838 (Foreman 1832; Paige et al. 2003). The group's interpreter was named Samuel (Littlefield, Jr. 1977). They departed New Orleans on the steamer *Ozark* and ascended the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003).

- Capsize on the Arkansas River just below Pine Bluff; transfer to the steamer *Mt. Pleasant* (c) (i).
- Continue to ascend the Arkansas River (c) (i).
- Arrive at Little Rock June 11, 1838 (c) (i).
- Transfer to the steamer *Fox* and depart Little Rock (c) (i) June 13, 1838 (i).
- Arrive at Fort Gibson (f) (i) June 19, 1838 (f).

Another party of Black Seminoles, numbering 33, had been detained in New Orleans due to the attempt of some white people to claim them as slaves. The Black Seminoles were finally allowed to leave. They departed up the Mississippi River and were conducted by J. B. Benjamin (Paige et al. 2003).

- Ascend the Mississippi River from New Orleans and enter the Arkansas River (i).
- Arrive at Little Rock somewhere between July 7 and July 10, 1838 (i); board the steamer *Tecumseh* with Whiteley's party of Cherokees (i).
- Continue to ascend the Arkansas River (i).
- Arrive at Lewisburg and become stranded due to low water (i); remain until July 18, 1838 (i).
- Continue overland to Fort Gibson (i).

On July 11, 1838, 66–67 Seminoles, including Alligator and his family and one Black Seminole, departed New Orleans (Foreman 1932; Littlefield, Jr. 1977). They were conducted by Lieutenant John G. Reynolds (Foreman 1932; Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003). A slave was brought along as an interpreter (Littlefield, Jr. 1977). Paige et al. (2003) refer to this group as Halpata Hadjo's (Alligator's) Party.

- Depart New Orleans by boat (c) (f) (i); travel aboard the *Itasca* (i) July 11, 1838 (c) (f) (i).
- Enter the Arkansas River (c) (f).
- Arrive at Little Rock (c) (f) (i); delay temporarily due to low water levels; cannot find overland transportation (i) July 19, 1838 (f) (i).
- Resume journey up the Arkansas River (c) (f) (i) July 22, 1838 (c).
- Reach Clarksville; pick up some Black Seminoles who had been forced to abandon their boat due to low water levels (c) (i).
- Continue to ascend the Arkansas River (i).
- Disembark at a point 2 miles below Fort Coffee (c) (f) (i) due to low water (f); disembark on the north side of the Arkansas River (f) July 27, 1838 (i); July 29, 1838 (c).
- Continue the journey overland (f) (i).
- Arrive at Fort Gibson (c) (f) (i) August 5, 1838 (f); August 6, 1838 (i).

A party of 250 Seminoles departed Pensacola, Florida on November 29, 1838. The group consisted of the

few remaining members of the Apalachicola Tribe and 34 Muscogees from Dog Island (Paige et al. 2003). They were conducted by Major Daniel Boyd (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003). The group left Florida on the steamers *Vesper* and *Octavia* and arrived at New Orleans November 2, 1838. Here they transferred to the *Rodney* and started up the Mississippi River (Foreman 1932).

- Ascend the Mississippi River on the *Rodney* (c) (i).
- Arrive at Montgomery's Point on the White River (c); wait here for the water level to rise on the Arkansas River (c).
- Arrive at Little Rock (c) (i) November 22, 1838 (c); transfer to the steamer *North St. Louis* (c) (i).
- Depart Little Rock (c) (i) December 23, 1838 (i).
- Run aground below Cadron (i); run aground 50 miles up the Arkansas River (c).
- Leave overland for Indian Territory from Cadron (c) (i).

Many other Seminole parties left New Orleans in 1838. A party consisting of 305 Seminoles and 30 Black Seminoles moved to Indian Territory under charge of Captain Pitcairn Morrison. They arrived at New Orleans on June, 14, 1838 where they boarded the *Livingston* and ascended the Mississippi River. They passed Little Rock June 23, 1838 and arrived at Fort Gibson June 28, 1838 (Foreman 1932; Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003). On October 28, 1838, the entire group of Apalachicola Seminoles and a small number of Creeks departed Florida for the West on one steamer and two schooners (Covington 1993). Thirty-one Seminoles and two slaves left Florida in November 1838 and arrived in Fort Gibson February 13, 1839 (Lemke 1957).

1839

General Taylor conducted 96 Seminoles to Tampa Bay on February 25, 1839. They were then brought west by Captain Pitcairn Morrison. The party ascended the Mississippi River, stopping at Fort Jackson, Louisiana to switch to the *Buckeye* (Paige et al. 2003). They passed Natchez on March 28, 1839, where a boiler on the steamer exploded and killed a number of passengers (Foreman 1932). The party arrived at Little Rock on April 2, 1839 (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003), where they were delayed by low water levels (Foreman 1932). They arrived at Fort Gibson April 13, 1839 (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003).

Another 1839 removal party consisting of 48 Seminoles departed St. Augustine aboard a schooner conducted by Lieutenant B. Board. They reached New Orleans on November 28, 1839. Here they boarded the steamer *Orleans*. They passed Little Rock in mid-December. Because the Arkansas River was so low, the boat could go no higher than Fort Smith. Here Lieutenant Board put the Seminoles in the charge of Arnold Harris. The water levels rose a few days later, and they continued upriver and arrived at Fort Gibson December 23, 1839 (Paige et al. 2003).

1840

Several more Seminole parties left Florida for Indian Territory in 1840. On March 21, 220 captive Tallahassee Indians embarked from Tampa Bay and reached New Orleans on April 4. They ascended the Mississippi River on the steamer *President* under charge of Major William B. Belknap. On April 19 they landed on the Arkansas River opposite the mouth of the Grand River in Indian Territory (Foreman 1942).

On April 13, 1840, a party of 205 Seminoles, including several Black Seminoles, left Florida. The group's interpreter was named Abraham (Littlefield, Jr. 1977). Another party, conducted by disbursing agent L. E. Capers, left Florida on May 7, 1840 and reached New Orleans six days later. They departed May 16 on the *John Jay* under charge of Captain H. McKavett and arrived at the Choctaw Agency June 13, 1840 (Foreman 1832).

A delegation of 14 Seminoles, who had already arrived in Indian Territory, returned to Florida to convince more Seminoles to remove. They traveled under Captain John Page and took two interpreters (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003). Two of the Seminoles were chiefs Hohahtochee and Nocoseohola (Foreman 1932). The party left Fort Gibson on October 1, 1840 and descended the Arkansas and

Mississippi rivers to New Orleans. From there they traveled to Tampa Bay, arriving on November 7, 1840 (Foreman 1932; Paige et al. 2003).

1841

In late March, 1841 a party of 221 Tallahassee Indians left Tampa Bay, arriving at New Orleans on March 29. Here they boarded the steamer *President* and departed up the Mississippi River on April 4. They were under charge of Major William G. Belknap, Lieutenant John T. Sprague, and Dr. Barnes. The group included the band of Echo Imathla and his subchiefs. They passed Little Rock April 10 or 11 and reached Fort Gibson on April 19, 1841 (Paige et al. 2003).

Also in late March a group of 205 Seminoles and seven Black Seminoles left Florida conducted by LeGrande G. Capers. They landed at Fort Gibson on June 13, 1841 (Littlefield, Jr. 1977).

In early June, 1841 Wildcat and his men traveled by boat to New Orleans. They were sent back to Florida to help induce other Seminoles to surrender. On October 11, about 200 Seminoles, including Wildcat, left Florida (Covington 1993; Paige et al. 2003). The party rode on the steamer *Laurence Copeland* to New Orleans, where they switched to the *Little Rock* and ascended the Mississippi River. They passed Little Rock in early November, 1841 and arrived at Fort Gibson November 12 (Paige et al. 2003).

A party of 206 Seminoles departed Tampa Bay and arrived at New Orleans May 13, 1841 (Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003). Here they boarded the *John Jay* and descended the Mississippi River under charge of Captain Henry McKavett. They passed Little Rock June 1, 1841 (Paige et al. 2003) and arrived in Indian Territory on June 13 (Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003).

In October, 1841 a party of 200 left Tampa Bay and arrived at Fort Gibson in November 1841. The party included 15 Black Seminoles and Billy Factor the interpreter (Littlefield, Jr. 1977). In early November, 1841, 207 Seminoles passed Little Rock on the steamer *Little Rock*. They reached Fort Gibson two months later. They had been detained at Little Rock due to low water levels on the Arkansas River (Foreman 1932).

1842

In the fall and winter of 1841, about 300 Seminoles and their slaves were rounded up and gathered at Tampa Bay. Here they boarded the steamer *Laurence Copeland* and traveled to New Orleans in the spring of 1842. At New Orleans they boarded the steamer *President* and ascended the Mississippi River under the charge of Captain T. L. Alexander (McReynolds 1957).

- Ascend the Mississippi River, Spring 1842 (g).
- Enter the Arkansas River (g).
- Land at a point 60 miles below Little Rock to wait for the water level to rise (g).
- Arrive at Webber's Falls in Indian Territory June 1, 1842 (g).

More Seminoles were captured during 1842. In April, a party of 102 left Tampa Bay under the charge of Second Lieutenant E. R. S. Canby. They left New Orleans on July 21/22, 1842 on the steamer *J. B. Swan* (AHPP, SRBM 2003c; Foreman 1932, 1934; Paige et al. 2003; Welsh 1976). Gopher John (John Coheia) was with this group (Littlefield, Jr. 1977; Paige et al. 2003).

- Ascend the Mississippi River on the *J. B. Swan* July 22, 1842 (c) (d) (f) (g) (i).
- Enter the Arkansas River; water is very low (c) (d) (f) (g) (i).
- Run aground 6 miles below Little Rock and disembark (c) (d) (f) (g) (i); ground at La Fourche Bar; are delayed here for a week (d); ground at the Barraque's Bar (d).
- Arrive at Little Rock (d) (i) early August, 1842 (i).
- Depart overland (d) (f) (g) (i); travel overland from Little Rock by way of Fort Smith (c) (d) (g) (i); follow the military road from Little Rock to Fort Smith (d).
- Arrive at Fort Smith (d) (g) August 25, 1842 (d).
- Cross the Arkansas River by ferry at Norristown (g).

- Reach Indian Territory (c) (d) (f) (i) September 6, 1842 (c) (d) (f) (i); August 26, 1842 (g).

In February, 1842, under the charge of Capt. T. L. Alexander, 220 Seminoles were escorted to Indian Territory. They went by boat from Tampa Bay to New Orleans. In New Orleans, they camped for nine weeks while waiting for additional Seminole emigrants to arrive (Foreman 1934; Paige et al. 2003). They were joined by a group of 94 Seminoles who had left Tampa Bay April 10, 1842 (Paige et al. 2003).

From New Orleans, they all set sail aboard the steamer *President*. They traveled up the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers. Due to very low water on the Arkansas River, they were stranded about 60 miles above Little Rock. After camping here for several weeks, the water finally rose and they went on to Webbers Falls, arriving June 1 (Foreman 1934).

1843

Pascofa and his followers, who were Creeks that had fled from Alabama to Florida in 1836, surrendered in November, 1842 (Welsh 1976). In January or February (Foreman 1932, 1934) of 1843, Pascofa's band of 350 embarked from Tampa Bay on the steamer *William Gaston* under the charge of Lieutenant Henry McKavett. They arrived in New Orleans in February and left on March 4, 1843 (Foreman 1932, 1934; Paige et al. 2003). They took the steamer *Lucy Walker* and were conducted by Captain H. M. McKavett (Paige et al. 2003).

- Travel up the Mississippi and Arkansas rivers by boat (c) (d) (i).
- Arrive at Little Rock (c) (d) (i); delay here due to low water (c) (d) March 11, 1843 (c) (d) (i).
- Continue to ascend the Arkansas River (c) (d) (i); encamp on the riverbank 20 miles below Fort Smith one month later (i).
- Land on the south bank of the Arkansas River opposite the mouth of the Illinois River (c) (d); remain at nearby Webber's Falls while awaiting transportation; travel the rest of the way by wagon April 26, 1843 (d).

1856-1857

According to Foreman (1932), 165 "hostiles" sailed from Fort Myers, Florida to New Orleans in 1856. From there they ascended the Mississippi River aboard the steamer *Quapaw*. Foreman later wrote (1948) about a delegation of 40 Seminoles and six Creeks who traveled in the winter of 1856 from Indian Territory to Florida to locate more Seminoles. After spending weeks looking for them, 156 Seminoles were gathered and convinced to move. The party left Fort Myers on May 4, 1857 for New Orleans (Foreman 1948). Foreman might possibly have been referring to the same group in both places, as evidenced by the dates below being exactly one year apart and the number of Seminoles seemingly transposed.

- Ascend the Mississippi River by boat (c) (e).
- Ascend the Arkansas River by boat (c) (e).
- Arrive at Fort Smith (c) (e) May 28, 1856 (c); May 28, 1857 (e).
- Proceed overland from Fort Smith in charge of Rutherford (c).
- Arrive at the Seminole Agency June 16, 1856 (c); June 16, 1857 (e).

1858

In 1858, Billy Bowlegs and about 160 of his people agreed to move West (Garbarino 1989; Paige et al. 2003). They left Florida on the steamer *Grey Cloud* and arrived in New Orleans where they spent a week. They transferred to the *Quapaw* and arrived at Fort Smith May 28, 1858 (Paige et al. 2003). In December 1858, Billy Bowlegs returned to Florida and persuaded 75 more Seminoles to move. They departed for New Orleans February 15, 1859, and arrived in Indian Territory by early March, 1859. This was the last removal from Florida under the provisions of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek (Paige et al. 2003).

Seminole: Keyed Sources

(AHPP = Arkansas Historic Preservation Program)

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