

Precarious lives

Black Seminoles
and other
freedom
seekers in
Florida before
the US civil war

A. A. Morgan



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I gratefully acknowledge the insightful and constructive feedback received from Cheryl Nicchitta and Donna Stokes. All remaining mistakes and infelicities are my own.

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Dedication

Sandy Perryman

? – 1839

warrior, diplomat, linguist

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Introduction

Florida was once a place where people in bondage came to be free. For generations, fugitives from the slave plantations of Alabama, the Carolinas, and Georgia crossed the border into Spanish Florida, where they sought official sanctuary or disappeared into the peninsula's uncharted forests, swamps, and savannas. There, many of them fell in with American Indians, also relatively new to the region, who would become known as Seminoles.

Their relationships with the Indians took many forms and have been described over the years in many ways — from slavery (similar to the Euro-American version but less brutal), to a form of vassalage in which they owed an annual tribute but were otherwise left to their own devices, to alliances between equals in which they served as trusted advisors, interpreters, and military allies. Both groups were reinventing themselves — enslaved people taking back their freedom, and Seminoles dissolving their ties with the Creeks to the north. The two groups often lived in separate villages but practiced a similar mix of hunting and farming.

Florida's potential as a place of refuge was a perennial thorn in the side of American slaveholders, and their demands for federal help with this problem largely drove the 19th century Seminole wars. In four decades of nearly continuous insecurity and turmoil, black and Indian families and warriors were driven farther and farther down the peninsula, until most of the survivors consented to removal to the west.

Life was not only difficult and dangerous; it was also marked by endless dizzying change. Alliances shifted, priorities meshed and diverged again, promises were made and broken, treaties undermined, homes made and uprooted and made again. Facing these challenges required not only courage and endurance but also extraordinary agility.

By 1842, most historians agree, all but a few Black Seminoles had been relocated to the US west. There they would face new challenges and threats that would continue to demand their courage and agility. Those years have been well described elsewhere.¹ This story focuses on a few highlights of the Florida journeys of the men and women who risked everything to leave slavery behind and take their freedom into their own hands.

It is not a comprehensive history of that era. Wars, independence movements, economic ups and downs, epidemics, diplomatic maneuvers, and US westward expansion all helped to define the turbulent times during which these stories played out, in ways that are not addressed here. Rather, this is the story of how a few people — most survivors of US-style chattel slavery, some still reeling from their violent relocation from Africa — faced down a seemingly monolithic power,

overcame an almost endless series of setbacks, and, through their skill, courage, and perseverance, created a legacy that even their most powerful enemies were unable to erase.

This Florida saga was part of a larger story of flight toward freedom, which is as old as slavery itself. The section that follows briefly explores that movement, drawing on examples from four centuries across the Americas. The next section provides a rough sketch of the Florida to which these freedom-seekers were drawn, and the people — diverse and evolving native communities, as well as colonists under the Spanish, British, and US flags — who inhabited it. Finally, the focus narrows to the Black Seminoles and other free black people of Florida, the lives they built, the battles they fought to protect those lives, and the outcomes — some victorious, some tragic, and some lost to history — of those battles.

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A note on names and terms: Many of the words needed to tell this story risk sounding more precise than they really are. The two native groups that were most active in Florida during this era, the Seminoles and Creeks, had complicated identities and histories; they defined themselves, and were defined by others, in different ways at different times. Inland Florida and its inhabitants were a mystery to most of the colonial officials who sought to control the peninsula — and who created most of the historical record. The roles played by black people in this complicated world were similarly complex and varied, in terms of both their level of freedom and the closeness of their ties to different Indian and white actors and to each other.

It may be impossible to describe these men and women in words that are at once simple, precise, and accurate. The terms Seminole, Creek, and American Indian/ Native American are not mutually exclusive. (They were also created by outsiders.) Not all escaped slaves in Florida were Black Seminoles, and not all Black Seminoles were fugitives from slavery. Much about all of their lives and relations remains unknown.

Thus, the terms used here to refer to groups of people can give only a fleeting and imperfect glimpse of who those people were. These terms are not hard-and-fast labels; they are meant to convey respect for the people and for the mystery they left behind.

Any person mentioned here by a single name was described thus in the available records.



“Un nègre fugitif” from P. T. Benoit’s *Voyage a Surinam*, 1839.

Seeking freedom in the Americas

As long as there has been slavery in the Americas, some enslaved people have tried to escape — undeterred by their lack of resources, the unfamiliar landscape, or the brutal consequences they faced if caught. Out of this courageous minority, an even smaller minority succeeded.²

“A fugitive slave had everything against him,” former fugitive Isaac D. Williams remembered in 1885,

big rewards offered for his capture, and no knowledge of the country he was to pass through. He had no compass to guide him ... and was forced to shun every human face ... Every man’s hand was against him, and there were very few good Samaritans to help the unfortunate on his way until he got further north. Where he might have met kindness and encouragement of a practical nature, he would fear and tremble to ask it. So often did hypocrisy clothe itself in the garments of benevolence, and self-interest be the governing motive, that he would find too late that his confidence had been treacherously betrayed. I mention these few facts so my readers will understand the difficulties of our situation and the many unknown perils we would have to face.³

As slavery survivor Anthony Dawson told an interviewer in the 1930s, there were “devils and good people walking in de road at de same time, and nobody could tell one from t’other.”⁴

Some had help, including from the anti-slavery network that came to be known as the Underground Railroad, while others escaped on their own. They left on foot, by ship (as stowaways or mutineers), in disguise, and in plain sight with counterfeit papers. Some fought off bloodhounds; others tried to throw dogs off the scent using everything from onions to graveyard dust. Some disappeared into the anonymity of the city or headed north to the free states or Canada (or in the latter years of slavery, south to Mexico). Others traveled deep into inhospitable swamps and jungles. Still others hid out just past the edge of the plantation and returned stealthily to visit loved ones and get supplies — or left for short periods and returned after winning concessions from a master or finding themselves unable to survive in the wild.⁶

Most people escaping from slavery in the United States were men and, regardless of gender, young — not surprising, given the extreme difficulty that an escape attempt entailed. Women were more likely to be caring for children and were often less familiar with the world outside the plantation, less skilled in hunting and fishing, and more conspicuous on the road. Nonetheless, some women did run away, with or without children, including while pregnant.⁷

Sometimes entire families escaped together — like George and Lettue and their five children, whose escape was reported in Tallahassee, Florida, in 1839. Children as young as eight ran away on their own, often searching for their parents.⁸

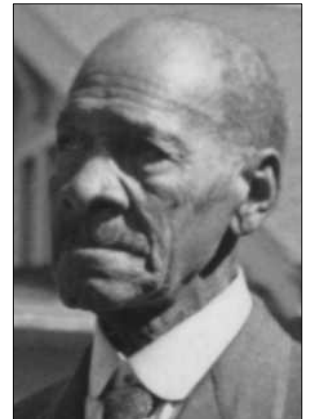
Perhaps the most difficult task was for an entire family — husband, wife, children, grandparents, grandchildren — to try to escape together. Collecting food, clothing, and other necessities before leaving, coordinating the time and place for the getaway, and traveling in a group without being detected were only a few of the obstacles entire families faced ... Parents had to assist youngsters, remain calm, and convey a mood of confidence. It was necessary to remain positive and encouraging despite the constant dangers. Nevertheless, families did leave together, and while they rarely made it to freedom, some were able to find refuge for extended periods.⁹

Three survivors of slavery, whose names were recorded as Aunt Kitty, Uncle Ben, and Isaac Jones, told an interviewer in Alabama in 1910 about a woman who hid in the woods with her children for several years:

At dusk you sometimes caught a glimpse of a wild, naked, little figure moving in and out among the trees: that was one of the woman's children. It was not wise to go near the place, but one might drop a piece of food at the wood's edge confident that it would reach a little hungry stomach.¹⁰

“Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us.”

“We took advantage of every opportunity to educate ourselves. The greater part of the plantation owners were very harsh if we were caught trying to learn or write ... We were never allowed to go to town ... Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us. We knew we could run away, but what then?”



— John W. Fields, Lafayette, Indiana, 1937⁵

A number of fugitive families sheltered in the Great Dismal Swamp, which spans the border between Virginia and North Carolina. An enslaved man named Joseph met a journalist there in 1853 and told him that “children were born, bred, lived, and died here There were people in the swamps still, he thought, that were the children of the runaways, and who had been runaways themselves all their lives.”¹¹ An escaped slave named Charlie who spent some time there before reaching Canada told an interviewer that couples had fled to the swamp and raised families there without ever seeing a white man.¹²

Recent studies have highlighted some audacious and successful family bids for freedom. Heather Andrea Williams, in *Help Me to Find My People*, tells the story, first published by the Canadian abolitionist newspaper *Voice of the Fugitive* in 1851, of the Murdock family, enslaved on two different plantations in Arkansas and torn apart, like many families, when some members were sold to a Kentucky-based slaveholder. But Mrs. Murdock and her children escaped en route to their new location and made it safely to Canada. Once there, she wrote to her former master, and the news of that letter made its way to Mr. Murdock, who escaped and eventually managed to reunite with his family in Ontario.¹⁴

Sylviane Diouf’s book *Slavery’s Exiles* recounts the story of William, who escaped from slavery in Georgia, built a home in the woods behind his plantation, and went back for his wife and children; the family remained hidden until they emerged as free people in 1865. But other escape attempts ended in tragedy, such as the death of a three-year-old shot during an 1820s raid on the camp of the South Carolina bandit Forest, an escaped slave, three days after Forest’s own death. It is not clear what happened to the child’s parents; most members of the band were eventually killed or captured.¹⁵

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People who escaped on their own, singly or in groups, and made a life in the wilderness (rather than, say, fleeing to an urban area or a free state) are often referred to as maroons. Marronage began almost as soon as slavery itself — by 1503, Spanish officials on Hispaniola were complaining about escapees and their influence on native people. It lasted, in North America, until the last fugitives walked out of wilderness hideaways after the US civil war.¹⁶

Well-known maroon societies include Palmares in Brazil, which harbored several thousand fugitives who successfully defended their freedom for almost the entire 17th century. In Suriname, maroon communities won their freedom in the 18th century. In the mountains of Jamaica, maroons established a network of thriving



Jane Johnson escaped from slavery in 1855 with two young sons. Confined in a hotel in an unfamiliar city (Philadelphia) and only briefly left unsupervised, she managed to get word to local members of the Underground Railroad, who staged a dramatic dock-side rescue. Pennsylvania at the time was a free state but subject to the Fugitive Slave Law. When Johnson’s rescuers were put on trial, she made a surprise appearance to testify on their behalf, leaving the courthouse only after a tense stand-off between federal officials determined to detain her and state officials equally determined to ensure her escape.¹³

settlements, fought two wars against the British, and eventually signed peace treaties with a slaveholder government that was unable to defeat them.¹⁷

In the swamps south and east of New Orleans, a band of maroons led by the charismatic Juan St. Maló held sway for over a decade in the late 18th century. Other slaves fled across the border into Spanish Florida, and their experiences are described in more detail below.

Maroon communities remained perpetually under threat, from both outside and within; many eventually met a violent end. As one recent summary expressed it, “Escaped slaves were a part of everyday reality of the slave systems of the Americas, [but] permanent escapes — grand marronage — did not account for a very large portion of total escapes.”¹⁸

Maroon life

For maroons, escape was only the first in a long line of challenges. They had to cross forests, swamps, and mountains to find a hiding place, build homes, feed and clothe themselves without attracting unwanted attention, keep a lookout for enemy forces, and be ready to defend themselves or flee, sometimes at a moment’s notice. The rough and dangerous terrain that discouraged their pursuers was equally hard on them; they just had to be more determined and skillful.

As time went on and the crisis of escape turned into the routine of daily living, they had to organize themselves and choose leaders, create and maintain a security system, and reach a modus vivendi with the people they encountered — whether other maroon bands, Indian communities, or members of the slaveholder society from which they had fled. They had to find safe ways to incorporate newcomers into their community. And in this uncertain environment, they had to establish families and raise children. Some maroon communities survived for generations; others were cut short much sooner.

Relations between maroons and enslaved people ranged from support and cooperation to conflict and betrayal. A study of marronage in Suriname found “an absolutely staggering amount” of contact between maroons and slaves there. And a recent history of colonial-era Louisiana described slaves meeting with fellow slaves from other plantations as well as with maroons and legally free people, in the cypress swamps behind the plantations and at parties in the slave quarters.²⁰

Information found its way along the “grapevine telegraph,” which crossed plantation boundaries and sometimes stretched hundreds of miles. One plantation owner warned that “no overseer, or Planter should speak on such subjects even before a small house boy, or girl, as they communicate all that they hear to others, who convey it to the spies of the runaways.”²¹

An early maroon sanctuary

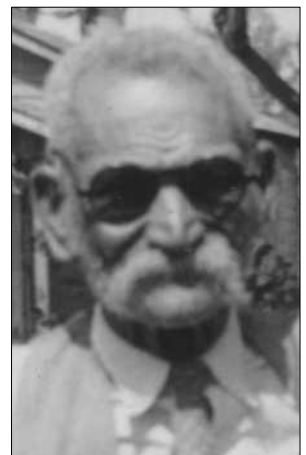
Describing an island off the northeast coast of what is now the Dominican Republic, a 16th century French explorer wrote:

“There is an island inhabited by wild Negroes who fled to avoid serving the Spanish. These savages have become accustomed to this island, along with their wives and children, who have multiplied and continue to multiply, and all go naked as beasts except for a small cloth over their private parts. They defend themselves with bows and arrows, so that the Spaniards cannot enter, and make their homes among the trees.”¹⁹

In spite of the obvious dangers, people who remained enslaved often helped the fugitives. One man told Fisk University sociologist Ophelia Settle Egypt, who interviewed former slaves in Tennessee and Kentucky in 1929 and 1930, “I’ve known my mother to help them [runaways] the best she could; they would stay in the thick woods and come in at night, and mother would give them something to eat.” In his memoir *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit*, William H. Robinson described his escape as a teenager from a North Carolina plantation and his search for a maroon band that he knew was nearby: “I went to an old mother — we were taught to call each old woman mother, and they called us son or daughter ... She gave me a chunk of fat meat and half of a corn dodger and directed me the way to a hiding place. Then with her hand upon my head she prayed.”²²

But relations could turn bad as well. Throughout the Americas, black soldiers sometimes fought on the slaveholders’ side, and maroons sometimes signed treaties promising to turn in slaves who sought refuge with them later. Maroons who turned to banditry sometimes preyed on people of color; some maroon allies were pressured or tempted into betrayal.²³ A slavery survivor named Green Cumby told an interviewer in Texas in the 1930s, “To see de runaway slaves in de woods scared me to death. They’d try to snatch you and hold you, so you couldn’t go tell.”²⁴

Countries in South America with powerful maroon histories include Brazil and Suriname. Colonial governments in both countries left a substantial written record; the descendants of the Suriname maroons have also maintained a robust oral tradition of their escape and fight for freedom. Some highlights of their history are outlined below.



Green Cumby

Brazil

In northeastern Brazil, a maroon enclave known as Palmares survived for most of the 17th century, fighting off both Dutch and Portuguese colonial forces until its fall in 1694. Historians have referred to Palmares as an African state and compared it to Haiti in terms of its challenge to white slaveholder society.²⁵

Palmares was made up of nine settlements stretching for 100 miles across a mountainous area a few dozen miles from the coast; it was home to as many as 20,000 maroons. Colonial officials who saw Palmares were impressed with its sophistication, one noting that it had “all the trappings of any Republic.” They saw towns — one with 220 houses, another with 800, and another with 1,500 — with cisterns, a parade ground, and a palace, council house, and church (Palmaristas practiced Christianity but also polygamy).

The maroon stronghold had well-developed agriculture, metal foundries, and “all sorts of craftsmen.” One observer admired the “well-kept lands ... beautifully irrigated with streamlets.” The maroons traded food crops for products they couldn’t produce themselves, such as weapons and salt.²⁶

The scattered settlements adopted African-influenced forms of governance; all owed allegiance to a supreme ruler with the title Ganga Zumba (Great Lord) and supported a centralized army. A network of spies infiltrating nearby towns and plantations often forewarned the maroons of attacks and enabled them to evade capture. At least one town had a defensive perimeter made up of two strong fences with the ground in between lined with spikes. It is likely that some maroons, in Palmares and elsewhere, had military skills learned before they were captured in Africa.²⁷

Over time, Palmares continued to take in people who escaped slavery on their own, and to capture slaves in raids on plantations. Slaves captured in raids remained enslaved, but they could gain their freedom by joining another raid and bringing back a captive to take their place. People who escaped the plantation and made their own way to Palmares were free immediately.²⁸ Leaving Palmares again may not have been an option — a Dutch observer reported in 1645 that “their king ruled them with severe justice ... and when some blacks would flee, he would send [*crioulos* or native blacks] on their trail, and when they were caught, they would be killed, such that fear reigned among them.” This harsh response was likely due to fear that the people leaving Palmares would betray the kingdom to the colonial authorities.²⁹

Relations between Palmares and nearby white settlements were a mix of peaceful trade and violent aggression. The violence included raids by government forces and private militias against the maroons, and by the maroons against the plantations. In the lulls between raids, maroons and settlers engaged in an illegal but flourishing clandestine trade. The Palmaristas’ main products included farm produce, meat, handicrafts, and sometimes items seized during plantation raids. The settlers offered firearms, farm tools, other manufactured goods — and, for a steep price, advance warning of military raids.

Brazil’s colonial settlers had mixed opinions of the rebel kingdom: Those who profited from the clandestine trade preferred a live-and-let-live approach or even a formal peace treaty, while others feared maroon violence or resented the kingdom’s attraction for slaves contemplating escape. Meanwhile, the maroons embraced trade opportunities but pushed back against settlers’ attempts to encroach on their land.

Tensions rose as colonial settlements expanded closer to Palmares; during much of the final decades of its existence, raids and reprisals occurred yearly or even more often. Palmaristas, like most maroons, had to remain agile to adjust to ever-shifting threats and opportunities.³⁰

Relations with local Indians were also mixed. Indians numbered among Palmares’s defenders as well as its attackers, and Palmaristas may have sometimes raided Indian settlements; but escaped slaves and Indians also made common

cause against their colonial overlords. Some historians estimate that Indians made up a fifth of the Palmares population (a few white people may also have been present).³¹

Little is known about family life in Palmares. A Dutch observer estimated in 1645 that women and children made up two-thirds of the population; in a 1677 battle, several children and grandchildren of the ruler were captured, along with many women. Contemporary accounts describe women joining maroon settlements in Brazil of their own free will and others captured during raids on plantations and markets; some men had multiple wives.³²

Ganga Zumba eventually negotiated a peace treaty, under which Palmares residents would have to relocate and turn over many escaped slaves to the Portuguese. A faction led by his nephew Zumbi rejected the treaty terms.³³ Ganga Zumba was poisoned, possibly by Zumbi or his allies, and Zumbi led a shrinking and increasingly desperate resistance until his defeat and death in 1695. He is celebrated in Brazil today as an anti-slavery hero; Brazil's National Black Consciousness Day is on November 20, the anniversary of his death,³⁴ and is also called Zumbi Day.³⁵

Suriname

When Dutch Guiana (now Suriname), on the northeastern coast of South America, was attacked by French privateers in 1712, coastal plantation owners sought to protect their wealth by hiding their slaves in or near the rainforest; several hundred enslaved people took that opportunity to make a break for freedom. In smaller numbers, others had been doing so for years. Some remained close to the plantations, but most moved upriver deep into the rainforest, navigating swamps and rapids and fending off parasites and predators.³⁶

They moved frequently, especially in the early years, pushing deeper into the forest, evading the slave-state authorities and sometimes competing with each other for prime locations. Like maroons elsewhere, they had to find ways to cope with terrain that was rough and remote enough to discourage their pursuers. They brought many skills with them but had to learn others on the spot; for example, their first canoes were said to be fairly crude. They raised poultry and goats and kept large gardens, practicing shifting cultivation, raising a variety of food crops as well as cotton. Some gardens were camouflaged, difficult to access, and far away from the residences, so they survived even if the village was destroyed. They hunted and fished, sharing what they caught with the whole community, and raided the plantations to get supplies they couldn't make or grow themselves.³⁷



"March thro' a swamp or marsh in terra firma" by William Blake shows troops of the slaveholder regime pursuing maroons in 18th century Suriname, led by an enslaved guide.

Once free, maroons who may not have had much in common except their hatred of slavery had to find a way to live and work together.

In a way, those who ran away and banded together in the Guianese forest were forced to start from scratch. They came from a wide variety of different African backgrounds, and ... found themselves in a largely unfamiliar environment without a preexisting social structure, fully shared culture, or sense of collective identity. These they were forced to construct anew, while struggling to survive in the forest.³⁸

Leaders emerged because of their military skills and spiritual presence, traits they had sometimes developed before they were kidnapped from Africa.³⁹

Most maroons started out in small groups, often made up of people from the same plantation. These groups sometimes cooperated on plantation raids and formed other loose and shifting alliances; sometimes, severe losses during

government raids forced the surviving bands to unite. Communication between villages took place by drum as well as by individual messengers.⁴⁰

Raids and counter-raids were a fact of maroon life, and maroons had to be constantly on the lookout for attacks. Settlements were repeatedly relocated to evade government troops. Some were protected by palisades with watchtowers, others with booby-traps that sent boulders or logs crashing down on attackers. A hiding place could always be betrayed by a deserter, and desertion could be punished by death.⁴¹ New recruits were sometimes brought to the maroon settlements “by way of numerous detours and without going on any real paths, so that once they are there, they cannot find their way back.”⁴²

The arrival of new runaways was a dangerous time for both the community and the newcomer — especially for lone men, who were often killed out of fear that they might be spies or guides for a white military expedition. Oral histories describe some escapees lurking on the outskirts of a village, stealing what they needed to survive, until they could make contact with someone they knew who could vouch for them; relationships established on the plantation could be a lifesaver.⁴³

In spite of the dangers, communities accepted many newcomers and helped them get established. Sometimes newcomers were run off by several villages before they found one that would accept them. Some lone newcomers are remembered as bringing valuable gifts to their new home in the form of *óbia*, which could be translated as anything from medicine to magic. One such gift, for healing broken bones and gunshot injuries, was said to be so effective that it remained in use long after western medical treatments became available.⁴⁴

Other forms of *óbia* are said to have helped enslaved people escape, navigate dangerous terrain, and evade or overcome their pursuers. Leaders, who sometimes possessed strong *óbia* skills themselves, were often advised by *óbiama*, some of whom were Indian shamans.⁴⁵

As was true elsewhere, early maroon communities in Suriname had disproportionately few women, and maroons sometimes raided plantations specifically to capture women. For both women and men, the line between kidnap and rescue is not always clear in accounts of these raids. Some were clearly rescue missions; at other times, raiders killed enslaved people who refused to go with them. Raids were also a chance to get revenge — and to get supplies, like iron pots and axes and salt, they couldn’t produce themselves.⁴⁶

Suriname maroons had mixed relations with local Indians. Some had served together on the plantations. Some Indians helped maroons escape or sheltered them after they escaped; others worked as bounty hunters returning maroons to captivity and as guides to military expeditions. Maroons kidnapped Indian women for wives and others as a reprisal for the bounty hunting, but also gave

refuge to Indians fleeing war; even the captives eventually became assimilated. Indians, mostly women, taught maroons survival skills.⁴⁷

Relations with plantation slaves also varied. The enmity evoked when slaves were killed in a maroon raid was not quickly forgotten. One Suriname slave — known in colonial records as Graman Quacy and in maroon oral histories as Kwasímukámba — gained his freedom and high standing in the colony by serving the anti-maroon forces as a guide, spy, and bounty hunter. (He also became internationally known as an herbalist and had a plant, *Quassia amara*, named after him.)

In spite of the potential for violence and betrayal, slaves and maroons often found ways to cooperate, for example in helping more slaves escape. Even during routine plantation operations, enslaved people spent time in the forest, where they might meet maroons who encouraged them to escape. As one historian described it, slave-maroon relations “were always a matter of great delicacy, danger, and unpredictability.”⁴⁸

In spite of their shared hatred of slavery, different maroon bands did not always get along. The strongest bonds existed between people who had escaped from the same plantation, and when tensions arose between maroons who did not share that bond, they could lead to armed conflict. Different bands made peace with the colonial government at different times, and conflict arose between pacified and non-pacified bands. At other times, different bands got along fine, or competed in less violent ways over land or in ritual performances.⁴⁹

Unlike the maroons of Palmares, most maroon bands in Suriname eventually entered into peace treaties with the government, and many of their communities have survived into present times. Peace came at different times for different groups, spread over almost a century, in one case only three years before slavery was abolished altogether. Treaties were not always fully observed. For example, they usually included a promise by the maroons not to take in any more escaped slaves, a promise that was sometimes broken.⁵⁰

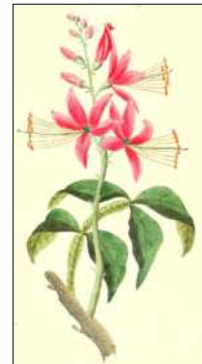
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An 18th century account of the Dutch colonial war on the maroons of Suriname described both cordial and hostile relations between maroons and slaves. One slave uprising started in 1757 and ended with a peace treaty in 1761. During treaty negotiations, the maroons had this to say on behalf of their enslaved comrades:

We desire you to tell your Governor and your court, that in case they want to raise no new gangs of rebels, they ought to take care that the planters keep a more watchful eye over their own property, and not to trust them so frequently in the hands of drunken managers and overseers, who by wrongfully and severely chastising the negroes, debauching their wives and children, neglecting the sick, &c. are the



Graman Quacy, anti-maroon spy and bounty hunter, was also an herbalist; the plant *Quassia amara* (bitterwood) was named in his honor.



ruin of the colony, and wilfully drive to the woods such numbers of stout active people, who by their sweat earn your subsistence, without whose hands your colony must drop to nothing.⁵¹

The author himself participated in a 1775 night battle with blacks fighting on both sides: maroon “rebels” and colonial “rangers” (enslaved men who had been promised freedom in exchange for fighting the maroons). After the initial attack, he wrote,

we lay prostrate on our arms until sun-rise, during which time a most abusive dialogue was carried on between the rebels and the rangers, each party cursing and menacing the other ... the former reproaching the rangers as poltrons [cowards] and traitors to their countrymen, and challenging them next day to single combat; swearing they only wished to lave [wash] their hands in the blood of such scoundrels, who had been the principal agents in destroying their flourishing settlement. The rangers d--'d the rebels for a parcel of pitiful skulking rascals, whom they would fight one to two in the open field, if they dared but to shew their ugly faces; swearing they had only deserted their masters because they were too lazy to work. After this they insulted each other by a kind of war-whoop ... [until] the firing commenced once more from the rebel negroes.

The rebels were even more scornful of the white colonial troops, he reported: “They told us that we were to be pitied more than they, that we were white slaves, hired to be shot at and starved for fourpence a day; that they scorned to expend much more of their powder upon such scarecrows.” Eventually, “the rebels disbursed with the rising sun.”⁵²

Bandits and pirates

Escaping from a violent system like plantation slavery inevitably entailed the risk of more violence. Was a particular fugitive a criminal? a freedom fighter? simply on the run from personal catastrophe? Trying to draw a clear line between these categories (and our 21st-century understanding of them) would be a futile exercise, not helped by the fact that slaveholders often used indiscriminately harsh language, including “bandit,” to refer to escapees.⁵³

That said, some maroons embraced violence more than others. Some joined mixed-race gangs; occasionally, whites joined primarily black gangs. Maroons committed (or were accused of committing) horse theft, cattle and hog rustling, highway robbery, burglary, and sometimes rape and murder.⁵⁴

Outlaw bands rarely survived for long, but while they did they could wreak havoc. Escaped slaves who had fought for the British during the American revolution fought on in the backcountry in the southern states, in the name of the king or their own survival, into the 1790s.⁵⁵ A gang in one North Carolina county frightened local residents into fleeing their homes in summer 1821 until a 200-man militia chased them down through the coastal swamps and forests. In 1856

in the same state, bounty hunters with dogs refused to hunt another outlaw gang without backup — they considered it too dangerous.⁵⁶ Bandits

hid out in densely forested, swampy areas that were virtually inaccessible to anyone unfamiliar with the terrain. Even whites who knew these areas feared entering them. Even when few in number, gangs of outlyers struck fear into the hearts of white inhabitants.⁵⁷

Bandits found allies in slave quarters who passed on critical information, and others in white communities who fenced their stolen goods and sold them arms.⁵⁸

Some bandit leaders' colorful personalities and stirring reputations are described in Diouf's book *Slavery's Exiles* — including the General of the Swamps, the stylish Billy James, a man named Bob whose band made a daring attack on a slave “coffle” that freed two allies, and a man who gained the nickname Forest for his woodsman's skills. Forest led a band that included women and children and roamed over an area of more than 5,000 square miles in South Carolina, ranging from the edge of the plantation to the deep swamp and forest.

Most bandit leaders met a violent end. Forest, betrayed by a slave, was decapitated and his head placed on a pole as a grim warning to others. But a few survived (or at least, evaded further notice by the newspapers and courts).⁵⁹

Fugitive slaves sometimes turned to piracy as well. Black men joined pirate crews either of their own initiative or when their ship was captured; several sailed with the famous pirate Blackbeard. Some were part of a remarkable episode in the early 18th century when for five years, pirates made the Bahamas island of New Providence their home base, turning the island into a magnet for the dispossessed and desperate from New England to the Caribbean — “unemployed seamen, indentured servants, criminals on the run, even a few escaped slaves from Cuba, Hispaniola, and beyond ... prostitutes, smugglers, and arms dealers.” Escaped slaves could make up a quarter or more of a pirate crew. But many other blacks, both would-be pirates and captured slaves, were sold back into slavery, enslaved on shipboard, or murdered.⁶⁰

Blurred boundaries at the edge of the law

Many maroons disappeared into rugged and remote terrain, used military skills to defend themselves, and met at least part of their survival needs through theft and raiding. But many (as described above for Palmares in Brazil) also developed trade and labor relationships with free and enslaved members of mainstream society who were willing to turn a blind eye to their outlaw status, out of altruism or for profit or convenience.

In 18th century Peru in the Carabaylo Valley, maroons helped local landowners clear forests. In Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, the Barba Negra maroons worked on nearby ranches, and warnings from local people helped them to survive several

raids. Maroons in Louisiana delivered cypress logs to sawmill owners, sold handicrafts and agricultural surplus, and traded meat and hides for guns and ammunition, in networks that included slaves, free blacks, and whites.⁶¹

Enslaved people who escaped into the city rather than the wilderness often tried to pass themselves off as free or as having permission to hire out their time (a not uncommon arrangement); sometimes they traded in handicrafts, stolen goods, and other merchandise.⁶²

They worked as laborers, dockhands, domestics, laundresses, gardeners, brick layers, stone masons, waiters, cooks, barbers ... Although prohibited by law, self-hire was widespread and if runaways could convince a potential employer that they had been sent by their owner to find work they could be hired with few questions asked.⁶³

The slave economy had its loopholes and grey areas. Fishermen — whose work required both skill and physical endurance, often in remote locations, under ever-changing natural conditions — often had substantial autonomy, even if they were enslaved. Slave lumbermen, too, often worked far from the plantation. Even in a system as brutally constrained as plantation slavery, some people were able to work a few hours for themselves, keep a garden, hunt, or earn money for “overwork”; sometimes they used that money to pay maroons to help them with their work.⁶⁴

Ellen and William Craft’s 1838 escape from slavery in Georgia required disguises, parts of which had to be bought from local white merchants. This was a risky process but one with good odds; as William Craft wrote in a memoir of their escape:

It is unlawful in Georgia for a white man to trade with slaves without the master’s consent. But, notwithstanding this, many persons will sell a slave any article that he can get the money to buy. Not that they sympathize with the slave, but merely because his testimony is not admitted in court against a free white person.⁶⁵

Maroons sometimes worked for lumbermen deep in the Great Dismal Swamp, in exchange for necessities and a little cash. It was a rough and dangerous existence. A writer who visited the swamp in the early 1850s met a slave there named Joseph who told him that it was easy to recognize a maroon: “Dey looks strange ... Skeared like, you know, sir, and kind o’ strange, cause dey hasn’t much to eat, and ain’t decent [decently clothed], like we is.”⁶⁶ When it was time to be paid, maroons were sometimes betrayed to the slave-hunters instead.⁶⁷

Another mid-19th-century visitor to the Great Dismal Swamp observed how the profit motive outweighed the law and gave maroons a chance to earn a living. Shingle makers, he reported,

often return greater quantities of work than could by any possibility have been produced by their own labor, and draw for two or three times the amount of provisions necessary for their own subsistence. But the provisions are furnished, the work paid for, and no questions are asked.⁶⁸

One historian has described “conspicuous silences” in otherwise meticulous recordkeeping by the Dismal Swamp Land Company, which could hint at under-the-table payments to maroons.⁶⁹

As industry reached deeper into the swamp, it created both dangers and opportunities for escaped slaves. The writer who interviewed Joseph believed that most swamp maroons had been hunted down by the time he made his trip. But others believed that whole families continued to survive deep in the swamp beyond the reach of either industry or slave-hunters, and some are known to have survived there until after slavery was abolished.⁷⁰

Escape routes opened by great-power rivalry

Sometimes conflicts between colonial powers worked to the advantage of enslaved people who sought freedom, and sometimes those colonial powers leaned heavily on the help of escaped slaves.

European powers depended on black and indigenous allies to do much of their fighting. This dependency gave both Indians and blacks a certain leverage, but persons of African descent moved between worlds more often and more easily than did indigenous peoples. The enslaved, of necessity, became adept at “reading” political events and manipulated them, when possible, to achieve freedom.⁷¹

In the 16th century, maroons in Panama rescued the British explorer and privateer Francis Drake, who had been wounded and his crew devastated during an attack on the port city Nombre de Dios. The maroons nursed the survivors back to health and helped them attack a Spanish treasure caravan. A century later, in the battle for colonial control of Jamaica, maroons fought on both sides — first for the Spanish and later for the British.⁷²

In the late 17th century, Spanish colonial Florida began to offer sanctuary to slaves escaping from British plantations in Georgia and the Carolinas (see the section “Spanish sanctuary” below). While the policy was couched in religious terms, it was also a way for Spain to harass, and bolster its defenses against, a bitter colonial rival.⁷³

Britain used a similar tactic against the United States during the American revolution and the war of 1812, promising freedom to slaves who fought on the British side. French agents tried in a similar way to destabilize late-18th-century Spanish Louisiana.⁷⁴

A revolutionary age

Enslaved people were well aware of the radical ideas sweeping the Atlantic world in the 18th and 19th centuries, embodied in the American, French, and Haitian revolutions and the abolitionist movement.⁷⁵ Historians have argued that they well understood both the philosophical meaning of this revolutionary wave and the tactical advantages they might gain from it. Knowledge of the Haitian revolution, for example, “spread like wildfire throughout slave communities across the Western Hemisphere [and] led to a major upsurge in resistance that lasted well into the nineteenth century.”⁷⁶

As American revolutionaries gathered to denounce British oppression and plot their way to freedom, enslaved people were waiting on them — and listening. After an evening talking with fellow revolutionaries worried about enslaved people deserting to the British, US founding father John Adams noted of American slaves that they “have a wonderful art of communicating intelligence amongst themselves; it will run several hundreds of miles in a week or fortnight.”⁷⁷

The American revolution

During the American revolution, Virginia’s royal governor promised freedom to American slaves who escaped to fight on the British side, and thousands took up the challenge, forming a unit the British called the Ethiopian Regiment. They ran enormous risks to do so: Slave patrols were intensified and punishments were severe in what one historian has referred to as a reign of terror. Others took advantage of the wartime chaos to escape on their own initiative — sometimes after being abandoned by fleeing slaveholders — and headed for maroon enclaves in the swamps and woods, inland Indian communities, or port cities.⁷⁸

The slaves who managed to reach the British did not all find the freedom they were seeking. The British turned some of them over to soldiers as rewards and some to Loyalist planters as compensation for their wartime losses. While promising freedom to black volunteers, they also promised captured slaves as booty to Indian allies. Many who answered the British call died of smallpox.⁷⁹

The treaty that ended the war contained a last-minute amendment prohibiting the British from taking their black recruits with them (“carrying away any Negroes or other Property of the American inhabitants”). During the British evacuation, George Washington pushed hard to enforce this provision. The British pushed back and were able to take many black soldiers and their families with them to freedom; but between the Americans’ intransigence and their own lack of transportation, they also left many behind.⁸⁰

“The postsurrender environment,” one historian concluded, “was savage.” Especially vulnerable to re-enslavement were orphaned children who were too

young to have made a decision to join the British themselves but too old to have been born behind British lines; sometimes families were split when a husband or parent was cleared to depart but a wife or child was not. Those who did leave with the British scattered across the globe — to Nova Scotia, the Caribbean, and Central America in the western hemisphere as well as to England, Germany, Sierra Leone, and Australia.⁸¹

Florida — a precarious haven

In Florida, escaping slaves found two routes to freedom — under the legal protection of the Spanish colonial government, and in remote areas beyond the government’s control. During the decades that at least one of these routes was open (from the late 17th century to the mid 19th century), Florida itself was also undergoing dramatic changes. By the mid 18th century, most or all of its original indigenous communities had disappeared — kidnapped into slavery, killed in colonial or intertribal wars, or dying of diseases introduced from Europe. The last survivors probably left Florida with their Spanish protectors when the peninsula passed to British control in 1763.⁸² (The Spanish would return 20 years later, and would cede Florida to the United States in 1821.)

The entry of new indigenous groups into Florida after 1700 probably overlapped with the death and exile of those earlier peoples. This process may never be fully understood, given the limited grasp contemporary writers had of Florida geography and of Indian identities and alliances. Those alliances were themselves in flux; one recent history described a “near-constant fissioning and realignment” during this era.

Many of the newcomers were members of the Creek confederacy, a loose affiliation of southeastern Indians. Some came to fight, either on their own account or as allies of the British, or to raid for slaves. Some of the raiders pushed far down the peninsula, driving the surviving remnants of earlier peoples into the Keys and then to Cuba. Others settled peacefully at the invitation of the Spanish colonial government; after the colony changed hands in 1763, British-allied Creeks did the same.⁸³

The peaceful settlers were drawn to Florida’s fertile land and rich natural resources; many were also dissidents seeking to distance themselves from Creek control. Over the 18th century, many of these settlements loosened their ties with the Creek heartland. After the Red Stick (loosely speaking, more traditionalist and anti-US) faction was defeated in the Creek war of 1813–1814, many of its members also fled into Florida.

These Seminole or proto-Seminole groups, spread throughout northern Florida, maintained their independence from each other and from the Creeks. Only after

the United States became a military threat did they attempt to present a unified front, and that unity was slow to develop and fragile.⁸⁴

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Well into the 19th century, much of Florida remained terra incognita to its would-be European colonists, who settled in St. Augustine (on the Atlantic coast), Pensacola (on the northern edge of the Gulf of Mexico), and a handful of other coastal locations. The Spanish presence on the east coast ended at the St. Johns River, the west bank of which was sometimes referred to as the Indian shore.

As late as the onset of the second Seminole war in December 1835, the interior of Florida, by then a US territory, remained a mystery to the Americans, and military maps were vague and unreliable. One officer lamented, “we are ‘strangers in a’ *very* ‘strange land’”; another wrote, “we have, perhaps, as little knowledge of the interior of Florida as of the interior of China.”⁸⁵

Inland Florida was much better known to Indians, though: Hunters made regular winter trips down the peninsula, sometimes connecting with fishermen from Cuba who worked the waters off Florida’s southwestern coast.⁸⁶

Florida from European contact to statehood

1500s: exploration

1565: Spanish colony

1763: British colony

1783: Spanish colony

1821: US territory

1845: US state

Seeking freedom in Florida

The first known fugitives from British slave plantations to ask for sanctuary in Spanish Florida arrived in 1687. For the next century, there was a route to legally recognized free status in Florida for escapees from slavery north of the border. (At the same time, slavery remained legal in Florida.)

Other fugitives made their way to the Florida backcountry, where black/Indian alliances probably emerged in the last half of the 18th century. Most surviving Black Seminoles had left Florida by the end of 1838, though a few remained to fight alongside Billy Bowlegs until his surrender in 1858 at the end of the third Seminole war. Thus, for a century and a half, Florida was the site of an intense and multifaceted quest for freedom.

Escape into Florida

1687: Florida governor initiates sanctuary policy.

mid to late 1700s: Fugitive slaves begin to join native communities.

1790: Florida’s sanctuary policy ends.

1858: The last known Black Seminoles relocate to the west.

Spanish sanctuary

The earliest known beneficiaries of the Spanish sanctuary policy were eight men, two women, and an infant from Carolina who arrived in St. Augustine by canoe in 1687, asking for instruction in the Catholic faith. The fugitives were assigned to wage labor in St. Augustine — most of the men on the construction of St. Augustine’s fort, the Castillo de San Marcos, and the women as servants in the governor’s household. When a British messenger arrived the following year to

demand their return, the Spanish refused. The Florida governor's sanctuary policy was backed in 1693 by a royal decree, and enslaved men and women continued to escape into Florida.⁸⁷

Sanctuary did not mean full and immediate freedom or complete equality. The newcomers had to convert to Catholicism and serve a four-year indenture. They were required to labor (for pay) on public works projects, had earlier curfews than white residents, and were not allowed to carry knives or to cultivate land without white supervision. They could not always choose where to live. Nor was the move completely without risk. Slavery itself was still legal in Spanish Florida; and despite a royal prohibition, some of the fugitives were re-enslaved, albeit under less brutal conditions than they had experienced before.⁸⁸

Men served in a militia that repeatedly fended off attacks by British colonists. After reaching safety in Florida, escaped slaves were also encouraged to return to their old plantations, stealthily or in open raids, and help others escape. As word of the Florida sanctuary spread, more slaves risked flight; participants in the 1739 Stono (South Carolina) Rebellion were trying to reach sanctuary in Florida.⁸⁹

Free blacks in Florida also served as emissaries from the Spanish colonial government to the Seminoles, carrying out diplomacy and trade and coordinating military efforts.⁹⁰

Fort Mosé

The short-lived outpost at Fort Mosé (1738–1740 and 1752–1763), about two miles north of St. Augustine, is considered the first free black settlement with formal legal standing in what is now the United States. It was intended to serve not only as a home for black freedmen and women but also as a defensive buffer between the city and British invaders from the north. In a 1738 letter to the king of Spain, the freedmen promised to be the “most cruel enemies of the English” (*los mas crueles enemigos de los yngleses*) and to shed their “last drop of blood” (*hasta derramar la ultima gota de sangre*) to defend the Spanish crown and the Roman Catholic faith. The settlement's full name was Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mosé, and the fort was garrisoned by a free black militia.⁹¹

Shortly after Mosé was established, tensions between Spain and Britain erupted into the oddly named “war of Jenkins' ear” (1739–1748), fought for complicated reasons that included disputes over the border between Spanish Florida and British Georgia. In 1740, British forces captured Fort Mosé. While all the residents of the settlement escaped, and the fort was recaptured a few months later, it was badly damaged and had to be abandoned. Members of the Mosé community remained in St. Augustine. Some earned a living selling groceries, baked goods, or honey or working as blacksmiths, carpenters, or musicians; others became privateers.⁹²

After a couple of attempts by the colonial government, the fort and settlement were rebuilt in 1752, not far from the original location — next to a salt creek, now called Robinson Creek, which feeds into the Tolomato River just north of St. Augustine, in a varied landscape of forest, grassland, and marsh. The new fort, which had six cannons, was a three-sided structure, about 70 yards to a side, with the creek forming the fourth side. The walls were made of packed earth covered in clay, topped with prickly-pear cactus, and surrounded by a dry moat that may also have been filled with cactus. Inside the fort was a wooden church, with living quarters for the priest.⁹³

Most people lived outside the fort, among their farm fields, in thatched huts similar to the homes in nearby Indian villages. A 1759 census listed 20 households with 67 residents — 37 men, 15 women, and 15 children. In many cases, both husband and wife had escaped from slavery farther north, but some of the men were married to Indian women or to enslaved black women in St. Augustine.⁹⁴

It was a diverse community. Residents came from different parts of western and central Africa and had spent time in the Americas with English or Spanish colonists or with Indians. They had close ties to nearby Indian villages, where residents also came from a mix of tribal backgrounds, and with the vibrantly multicultural city of St. Augustine. They had their own church, but they also celebrated major life milestones at the parish church in St. Augustine.⁹⁵

Residents farmed, fished, and hunted, much like their Indian neighbors, but never became fully self-sufficient and received government supplies of meat, corn, and rice as well.⁹⁶

Moving to Mosé was mandatory, at least at the start, although many residents may have preferred to remain in St. Augustine, with its greater amenities and variety, rather than serve as the city's first line of defense against Indian and British attacks. Resisting the move to Mosé in 1752, they emphasized the security issues; the governor disparaged these concerns and threatened them with unspecified punishments, but he also agreed to strengthen the fortifications and assign mounted troops to supplement the Mosé militia.⁹⁷

Just a few years later, however, the security situation became untenable. By the late 1750s, Spanish Florida was in decline — impoverished, mismanaged, and increasingly under Indian attack. When Fort Mosé militiamen ran low on ammunition, the governor advised them to defend themselves with wooden clubs. By 1759, most residents had gotten permission to return to St. Augustine, with only a small military force spending nights at the fort and an even smaller group staying there full time.⁹⁸

Even after leaving Mosé, the militia continued to play a key role in Spanish Florida's defense. But in 1763, as part of the settlement at the end of the French

and Indian war, Spain ceded Florida to Britain. Most Spanish colonists, along with Fort Mosé veterans and other free black residents, moved to Cuba.⁹⁹

The end of sanctuary

Sanctuary ended when the British took over Florida in 1763. After the Spanish returned in 1783, the policy resumed, but it ended permanently in 1790 after diplomatic pressure from the newly independent United States.

In spite of the policy change, the Spanish may not have put a lot of effort into helping the Americans recover their “property.” The American heading up the effort to recapture US slaves, a customs official based just across the border in Georgia, found Spanish cooperation less than enthusiastic. One of his own slaves, a man named Will, escaped from him twice, apparently with the help of allies on a Florida plantation. In spite of an official complaint to Florida authorities, Will’s second attempt appears to have been successful.¹⁰⁰

And even after the sanctuary policy ended, inland Florida, largely out of reach of government control, remained a potential haven.

Refuge in the backcountry

By the time the Black Seminoles emerged in the last half of the 18th century, cooperation between black and Indian people had a long history in the Americas — dating back at least to 1526, when African slaves and Guale Indians forced Spanish colonists to abandon a settlement at San Miguel de Gualdape, on what is now the southeast US coast. Since then, other black people had joined other native groups — as slave or free, living separately or together with the Indians, influencing and being influenced by Indian cultures. Cooperation between the two groups sometimes started when both were enslaved and escaped together.¹⁰¹

White fear of black–Indian cooperation was also well entrenched and led to bans (apparently largely ignored) on traders taking black slaves into Indian country — as well as attempts to create enmity between the two groups by, for example, using black soldiers to fight Indians and offering Indians a bounty for capturing or killing escaped slaves.¹⁰²

The people who would become Seminoles probably first settled in northern Florida around 1740. Black people probably began to join them — as fugitives, free Spanish subjects, and slaves — about a generation later. In addition to the Seminoles, maroons in Florida often had close ties to people enslaved on Florida plantations, and they crossed paths with Anglo, Cuban, and Bahamian neighbors.¹⁰³

Maroons and Seminoles

Interactions between maroons and Seminoles were complex and varied. Black men and women came to the Seminoles under a variety of circumstances, which were described in various ways by contemporary authors, whose work has been interpreted variously by scholars since then. Little enough is known about the most active and influential Black Seminoles, and even less about the rank and file. It's unlikely that we can fully understand them from this vantage point in time, but a few tentative glimpses are possible.

The most well-known way that black people joined the Seminoles was as fugitives from US, British, or Spanish slavery. Others were bought as slaves, received as gifts from white slaveholders, inherited, or (at least according to contemporary descriptions) captured in battle; it's not clear whether those newcomers were treated differently from people who joined on their own initiative.¹⁰⁴

Free black people joined the Seminoles as well. Some, from Spanish Florida, participated in a short-lived maroon/Indian community on the Apalachicola River in 1815–1816 (see the section “A brief postwar experiment in freedom” below), and may have been among the survivors who joined the Seminoles after that community was destroyed. And when Florida became a US territory, some joined the Seminoles rather than evacuating to Cuba with the Spanish or trusting their luck under American rule.¹⁰⁵

Contemporary writers often referred to black people living with the Seminoles as slaves, but these writers' perceptions may have been colored by the assumptions and expectations they brought with them as members of a slave society.¹⁰⁶ Speaking more generally of Creeks and Seminoles in the southeastern United States, one historian wrote in 1986, “The legal status of black Muscogulges almost defies comprehension. Whether a particular Negro was slave or free or who was his master often depended on whom one asked.”¹⁰⁷

Most observers described the Black Seminoles as living in separate villages under their own leaders with substantial autonomy.¹⁰⁸ An American traveling in Florida in 1822 reported:

The Negroes uniformly testify to the kind treatment they receive from their Indian masters, who are indulgent, and require but little labour from them ... [They] dwell in towns apart from the Indians, and are the finest looking people I have ever seen. They dress and live pretty much like the Indians, each having a gun, and hunting a portion of his time. Like the Indians, they plant in common, and form an Indian field apart, which they attend together.¹⁰⁹

A US Indian agent described them in 1835 as living

in villages separate, and, in many cases, remote from their owners, and enjoying equal liberty with their owners, with the single exception that the slave supplied his owner annually, from the product of his little field, with corn, in proportion to the amount of the crop.¹¹⁰

The amount and content of the tribute varied and could include livestock. Similar tribute arrangements existed among other southeastern native peoples.¹¹¹

Some maroons gained substantial influence with the Seminoles, which was a source of frustration for US officials. In 1826 the governor of Florida complained that the blacks had “unbounded influence” with the Seminoles and “have by their art and Cunning the entire Controul over their Masters.” Time and again, Indian agents, territorial officials, and military officers described the relationship in terms ranging from “influence” to “control.”¹¹²

One asset that maroons brought to the Indian communities they joined was a deeper understanding of white society and an ability to move with agility between the different worlds of the triracial, slaveholding southeast. They tended to be more fluent in English, French, and/or Spanish than their Seminole hosts.¹¹³

A visitor to East Florida’s slave quarters during the American Revolution might have heard English, French, Mandingo, Fulani, Hausa, and Mende, among other languages. In the Indian country there were black Hitchiti and Muskogee speakers. A pidgin, such as Gullah, was emerging and presumably was spoken with varying degrees of proficiency by a majority of East Florida blacks.¹¹⁴

Black men and women served as interpreters, and their geopolitical and cultural knowledge made them valuable advisors. “Because the black fugitives were better acquainted with the language, religion, and other ways of whites ... [they] served as cultural go-betweens for Native Americans and whites.”¹¹⁵



Black Seminole leader Abraham (center rear) with Seminole chiefs in New York in 1852, between the second and third Seminole wars.

They also brought military skills (often admired by their US adversaries) to their alliance with the Seminoles, sometimes fighting separately under black leaders and sometimes in mixed black/Indian forces. In the second Seminole war (discussed in more detail below), many of the warriors in Osceola’s band were black, and at least a few Indians fought under the Black Seminole warrior John

Caesar, whose raids unsettled the St. Augustine area until his death in 1837. As spies, they could also more easily infiltrate white towns and military camps, and they were indispensable in organizing the east coast plantation attacks that helped launch the second Seminole war.¹¹⁶

While day-to-day black/Seminole relations were clearly more humane and flexible than relations under US- or British-style chattel slavery, some Seminoles do seem to have seen their black associates as slaves — referring to them as property and demanding financial compensation if they were lost to fraud or kidnap.¹¹⁷ A writer early in the US era reported that troublemakers from St. Augustine,

for the purpose of alarming the Indians, and inducing them to sell their slaves for almost nothing ... went into the nation and spread reports that two thousand American troops ... were coming down to expel them from their lands and carry away their slaves and cattle. The Indians upon this abandoned their crops and sold many of their slaves, by which the avarice of the speculators was gratified.¹¹⁸

And the Seminole chief Jumper argued in 1828, in a dispute over slave ownership, “he ... sold her to the Indians, who honestly paid for her, and are therefore the fair owners of her,” and went on to complain more broadly: “It is well known that a great deal of our property, negroes, horses, cattle, &c. is now in the hands of the whites, and yet their laws give us no satisfaction, and will not make them give this property up to us.”¹¹⁹

It may seem difficult, from a 21st-century perspective, to reconcile these different approaches. Were Black Seminoles “vassals and allies,” as a US general described them during the Seminole wars,¹²⁰ living under a very light yoke if not entirely free — or chattel slaves? The answer may be “both.” Conditions, status, and identity might have varied depending on how people first entered the Seminole community (for example, on their own as runaways or purchased as slaves) or how long they had been there.¹²¹ And the wording Seminoles used when engaging with the US legal system may not reflect the way they would have spoken amongst themselves about their daily lives.

Some historians have also suggested that Seminoles may have been ready to claim ownership of their black protégés simply to protect them from a white intruder’s attempt to claim them. And “captured” may have been a euphemism for “escaped to the Seminole side during battle.”¹²²

Who knows to what extent written records — generated at the interface between two very different societies, often under intense stress — accurately reflect day-to-day life in 19th century Seminole country? Seminole society itself was diverse and rapidly evolving,¹²³ so conditions are also unlikely to have been uniform across all of Florida or throughout their time on the peninsula.

Maroons and plantation slaves

In Florida, like elsewhere in the Americas, maroons maintained ties with friends and family members who were still enslaved. Many Black Seminoles kept in touch with wives and other loved ones on the plantations.¹²⁴ Florida slaves, maroons, and Indians also mingled at “frolics” or dances.¹²⁵ According to one 1986 study:

Slave and free Negroes resided in Indian villages scattered throughout Florida, on Indian plantations on the Apalachicola River, and with whites in Saint Augustine and Pensacola ... A continuous and easy intercourse existed between black [Seminoles and Creeks] in Indian settlements and Negroes serving in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia as field hands or in Saint Augustine and other cities as domestics, artisans, and fishermen.¹²⁶

Maroons and the outside world

Like their counterparts across the Americas, maroons in Florida sometimes sought safety in remote places or behind fortress walls. But at other times and places, they welcomed (or at least tolerated) visitors from nearby slaveholder communities, and did business with transients and part-year Florida residents from Cuba and the Bahamas.

In the years between the first and second Seminole wars, several white American visitors described peaceful, apparently routine interactions with Florida maroons. The 1822 travel writer quoted earlier described staying overnight in a black village where, although he got lost and didn’t arrive until 11 p.m., he was offered a “bunk by the fire-side” in the home of a man named Cudjoe. (Other people in the room talked late into the night, so he didn’t get much sleep.) In a second black village, he was put up in a public dance house (possibly alone, since he reported sleeping better). On his travels, he got help from at least two guides (about whom he said little, but they appear to have known the villages reasonably well).¹²⁷

A white Floridian who traveled through Florida on behalf of the territorial government in 1823 spent time in the black village of Pilaklikaha, where he “procur[ed] a guide, interpreter, and horses” for his trip. He visited another settlement of Black Seminoles to whom he had given some sugarcane cuttings a few months previously, found the plants growing well, and made another rest stop in Pilaklikaha on his way home. He described these interactions — doing business in black villages as a representative of US slaveholding society — as routine and non-adversarial. If interracial relations in the world he was traveling through seemed different to him from those in his home world, he didn’t remark on it.¹²⁸

An army officer who camped near Pilaklikaha in 1826 was impressed by the village, whose residents he realized were runaway slaves. He met the village

headmen and described them approvingly.¹²⁹ Thus, there seem to have been some circumstances under which Florida maroons could interact in a fairly routine, businesslike way with representatives of a society that was committed to their enslavement.

In addition to hosting white visitors, black and Indian villages had extensive contacts with each other and with the world outside Florida. Overland trails led across the panhandle, south at least as far as Tampa Bay, and east to the St. Johns River. Maroons also had connections by sea to the Bahamas and Cuba, especially from the southwest coast, sometimes via their own vessels and sometimes through Cuban fishermen or Bahamian “wreckers” (ship salvagers) and possibly pirates.¹³⁰

A fragile freedom

Florida maroons took advantage of even short-lived opportunities to build homes and communities. Many farmed communally and raised horses, cows, and pigs. Maroons may have gained their agricultural know-how in Africa or on the plantations before they escaped; some contemporary observers considered them better at farming than the Indians. Crops included corn, rice, potatoes, melons, peas, beans, peppers, and cotton. They hunted and fished, and some were sailors. Other skills they may have brought from slavery included nursing, carpentry, shipbuilding, lumbering, turpentine extraction, basketmaking, and barrel making.¹³¹

Black Seminoles built their homes in much the same style as the Seminoles — with boards and shingles lashed (rather than nailed) to a frame and a palmetto thatch roof. An Army engineer who served during the first Seminole war said of the maroon homes on the Suwannee River: “Their cabbins were large and better constructed than those of the Indians and many of them had neat gardens enclosed by paling and affording good fruit and vegetables.” They dressed much like the Seminoles.¹³²

With all its hardship and danger, life still offered opportunities to socialize and celebrate. Little is known about the Black Seminoles’ leisure activities, but a passage from a US army officer’s diary provides a rare glimpse into that side of life. On New Year’s Day 1839, as the second Seminole war dragged on, he visited a black encampment near his military post “to witness their dancing,” which, he said, “was extremely amusing.” The women were dressed “with considerable taste,” some all in white, and the men “cut up all imaginable capers ... to music play’d on a crack’d fiddle & tin pan. Roasted pigs, softki [a corn-based soup or porridge], sweet potatoes & hominy constituted the bill of fare.”¹³³

There are a few clues to the presence of black families among Florida Indians. Among the people captured (or liberated) by Seminoles in 1801 from Francis Fatio's plantation on the St. Johns River (near present-day Jacksonville) were several families. At least one of those families spanned three generations, from the matriarch Artemisia to the infant Cuffee. The raiders also took Old Harry and his wife, Old Peggy, both over 60 years of age. Some children were also carried off without their parents. Of their lives after the raid, nothing is known.¹³⁴

Although women often had a harder time escaping slavery than men did (see the section "Seeking freedom in the Americas" above), a traveler in the early 1820s seemed unsurprised to find women in the Florida maroon settlements, and several Black Seminole settlements are known to have included children. A woman named Molly escaped from a Georgia slaveholder, joined the Seminoles, and sold cattle to an agent of the Spanish government around 1808. Frank Berry, a slavery survivor interviewed in the 1930s, said that his grandmother (not named in the interview record), a nurse enslaved in the Tampa area, had been captured by Indians during the Seminole wars, married a chief, and was later recaptured by slaveholders — according to Berry, not an unusual series of events.¹³⁵

But often, the only traces of families in Florida's maroon communities are the records of their members' death, capture, or displacement. These include women and children who were killed in 1816 during a US attack on a maroon outpost on the Apalachicola River, sent across the Suwannee River to safety in 1818 while warriors tried to fend off the US attack on their settlements, and captured in 1836 from otherwise mostly abandoned settlements on the Withlacoochee River (see the "War" section below).¹³⁶ Attacking "gallantly" in 1837 on Hatcheelustee Creek, US forces captured "twenty-five Indians and negroes, principally women and children; the men having all fled into the swamp."¹³⁷ Women and children, including a surprisingly high proportion of children and teenagers, appear on military lists of black people who surrendered during the second Seminole war for removal to the west.¹³⁸

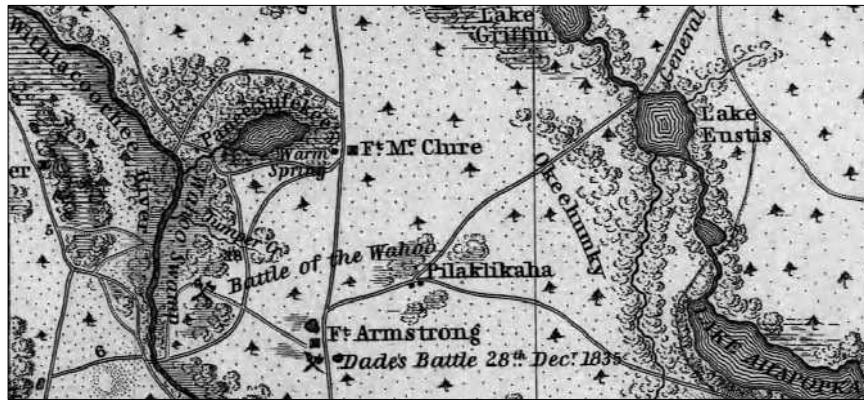
Whenever maroons achieved a modicum of safety and stability, they began to rebuild family life. As one Black Seminole wrote in 1838, "We do not live for our selves only, but for our wives & children who are as dear to us as those of any other men."¹³⁹

Pilaklikaha: a Black Seminole village

The village of Pilaklikaha, home mostly to Black Seminoles, flourished for about a generation before the second Seminole war. Built on seasonally flooded prairie-and-hammock land just east of present-day Bushnell, its name probably reflected that geography, meaning "many ponds" or "scattered hammocks" in a Native American language. Most surviving eyewitness descriptions were written by

visitors in the 1820s, shortly after Florida became a US territory, or by soldiers during the second Seminole war.¹⁴⁰

An 1823 visitor described the town's setting: "Like Islands, the Hammocks are very numerous, & contain from 20 to 300 Acres each, all of which are surrounded by Savannahs." Thirteen years later, a member of the US military force that came to destroy it described "a most beautiful open savannah country interspersed with clumps of trees ... The whole region swarmed with cattle and ponies ... Considerable ground had been cultivated and the Indians must have lived a happy life."¹⁴¹ (He appears not to have realized that it was a black village.)



Pilaklikaha shown on a map from the second Seminole war.

Contemporary population estimates for the settlement ranged from 75 to 160. Most residents were black, but some Indians lived there as well. The Seminole chief Micanopy was a part-time resident, and at least one visitor believed that the residents belonged to him.¹⁴²

Visitors described Pilaklikaha as large and prosperous, possibly more prosperous than nearby Seminole settlements. A member of the military unit that destroyed the town estimated it had contained 30 to 40 houses, some quite large; another noted a large orange tree in full bloom outside one of the larger houses, possibly the one that belonged to Micanopy.¹⁴³

Visitors admired the settlement's farm fields and cattle herds. An 1820s visitor saw

large fields of the finest land, producing large crops of corn, beans, melons, pumpkins, and other esculent vegetables ... I saw, while riding along the borders of the ponds, fine rice growing; and in the village large corn-cribs well filled, while the houses were larger and more comfortable than those of the Indians themselves.¹⁴⁴

Another commented: "The rice, indeed everything planted here, is equal to any I have ever seen in Florida."¹⁴⁵ The overseer of the Pilgrimage plantation, located well to the north, bought cattle from Pilaklikaha and paid villagers to help round up stray cattle.¹⁴⁶

The village was abandoned during the second Seminole war ahead of an American attack. Among the belongings villagers left behind, a US officer reported, were “a ball stick, an Indian flute, and small gopher shells, or box-turtle, with rattling Indian shot, or palmetto seed: the music of their dance.”¹⁴⁷ Even as fugitives, they had clearly found ways to enjoy life.

Pilaklikaha was also known as Abraham’s Old Town, after its headman, a Black Seminole warrior and diplomat. Abraham, who had a long history with the Seminoles, was an advisor to Micanopy and an influential figure in his own right in both the black and Indian communities. One of the tribe’s most trusted interpreters, he played a key role in negotiations both before and after the outbreak of the second Seminole war, traveling as far as Washington, DC, and Fort Gibson in the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma).



Abraham

An American army officer who met him in 1837 described him like this: “He always smiles, and his words flow like oil. His conversation is soft and low, but very distinct, with a most genteel emphasis.” Another called him “a perfect Talleyrand of the Savage Court.” But he was also a senior military leader during the first 14 months of the war. And in the runup to the war, he served as one of the tribe’s clandestine envoys to the slaves on the east coast plantations, organizing support for the attacks that launched the war. He also reached out to free black St. Augustine residents, and to Spanish fishermen who still operated in Florida waters, setting up an ammunition supply chain at least part of which continued to function more than a year into the war.¹⁴⁸

One visitor reported that there were two “principal men” at Pilaklikaha in addition to Abraham, named July and August; he described all three as “shrewd, intelligent fellows, and to the highest degree obsequious.”¹⁴⁹

Pilaklikaha and the predominantly Indian town of Okahumpka 12 miles to the northeast were linked through their affiliation with Micanopy. Both were probably founded by survivors of American attacks on settlements farther north in 1813 and 1818. A military officer described the black residents of Pilaklikaha in 1826 as “chiefly runaway slaves from Georgia, who have put themselves under the protection of Micanopy, or some other chief, whom they call master” and described the same kind of tribute relationship noted by other observers. Aside from that, he noted, “they are free to go and come at pleasure, and in some cases are elevated to the position of equality with their masters.”¹⁵⁰

This officer and another 1820s observer (a civilian traveling on behalf of the territorial government in 1823) appear to have been perfectly comfortable staying overnight with people they believed to be escaped slaves. (The comfort level of their hosts went unrecorded.) Both men were pursuing other tasks and apparently sought in Pilaklikaha only a convenient place to overnight. Both

served, in different capacities, a firmly pro-slavery government (the civilian's mission even included "bring[ing] in all the run away slaves that you can obtain"), but they seem to have been willing to overlook this consideration when it suited them.¹⁵¹

Pilalikaha met its end three months after the start of the second Seminole war. It was already abandoned when US troops burned it to the ground on March 31, 1836.¹⁵² The same attacker who wrote "The whole region swarmed with cattle and ponies ... the Indians must have lived a happy life" (without, apparently, understanding that most residents had been Black Seminoles) also reported: "We burned every house and hovel ... Our men killed great numbers of calves, all seemed tame and gentle ... Not an Indian was to be seen. All had fled at our approach."¹⁵³

The sack of Pilalikaha had been part of an elaborate three-pronged attack intended to drive the Seminoles into a smaller and more manageable area. But soon after that campaign ended, one US officer concluded that it had been

a complete failure. The enemy had not been found in sufficient numbers to induce anything like a general engagement; and when met and defeated, he had always succeeded in effecting his escape. All was conjecture as to what had become of him.¹⁵⁴

Frequent moves

Pilalikaha's emergence and destruction were part of a larger pattern of loss and dislocation that played out repeatedly across the peninsula. The threat to the Black Seminoles intensified after Florida became a US territory in 1821. Even in peacetime, kidnappers crossed into Seminole country, and business deals and legal maneuvers that were often suspect even by slavery-era standards carried men, women, and children into bondage.

From their first known affiliation with the Seminoles (about the time of the American revolution) until the United States started taking a strong interest in Florida (about the time of the war of 1812), Black Seminoles appear to have lived peaceful and productive lives based on farming and hunting, as described above. After that, they faced repeated, often traumatic, displacement by US-led or -affiliated military forces, fleeing in tandem with the Seminoles but often continuing to maintain separate settlements. As the American attacks (which started before Florida became a US territory) intensified, previously unaffiliated black people — escaped slaves and a few people with Spanish free papers — also joined the Black Seminoles.¹⁵⁵

Their forced migration followed a complicated path, broadly trending south and inland, during the so-called Patriot war (1812–14), in the aftermath of the war of 1812 (1812–15), and during the 1821 Coweta Creek raids on the southwest coast and the first (1817–18) and second (1835–42) Seminole wars.¹⁵⁶ Very little of

what they had to say about their displacement has been preserved, but some hints about the experience can be gleaned from the words of the people who pursued them. A few examples follow.

The Alachua savanna, 1813

From 1812 to 1814, Americans — a complicated mix of private-sector adventurers, militiamen from southern states, and federal forces — tried to wrest control of northeastern Florida from the Spanish colonial government in an incursion known as the Patriot war (see the “War” section below). Seminoles, Black Seminoles, and other free blacks fought on the Spanish side. In February 1813, US militiamen attacked Seminole settlements on the Alachua savanna (now called Payne’s Prairie, near present-day Gainesville). Their attack took place over several days and included a day spent tearing down a Black Seminole village.¹⁵⁷

Most members of the Alachua settlements escaped with their lives, but their homes were destroyed. Col. Thomas Smith, commander of the US forces, reported on February 24:

We burnt three hundred & eighty six houses; consumed & destroyed from fifteen hundred to two thousand bushels of corn; three hundred horses & about four hundred cattle were collected, many of which were lost in attempting to drive them in. Two thousand deer skins were found in Bolegg’s magazine; part were used by the troops, the others destroyed.¹⁵⁸

Survivors fled the ruined towns to establish new homes on the Suwannee, Withlacoochee, and Peace rivers and on Florida’s southwest coast.¹⁵⁹

Southwest Florida, 1821

A black settlement known as Angola was established on the Manatee River, just south of Tampa Bay, by at least 1812 and possibly much earlier. As the decade progressed, more black people fled to the area from homes farther north, displaced during attacks by American troops and by the Americans’ Creek allies, establishing settlements from Tampa Bay to Charlotte Harbor. Indians, too, moved to this area, which they knew well from earlier hunting trips.

The southwest Florida coast was difficult to reach, at least for awhile, for the fugitives’ main enemies: US military forces and private slave-hunters. It offered rich farmland, good hunting, opportunities to trade with nearby Seminoles and with more distant Spanish and English markets, and connections by sea to Cuba and the Bahamas (through Cuban fishermen who lived part-time in the area and through Bahamian “wreckers” based in the Florida Keys).¹⁶⁰

But American authorities, even before Florida became a US territory, had their eyes on the area. An 1818 military report described the coastal communities as

“the last rallying spot of the disaffected negroes and Indians”; another reported in the same year that they had received arms from Spanish and British suppliers.¹⁶¹

In summer 1821, around the same time that Florida was formally transferred to US control, a Coweta Creek raiding party attacked the southwest coast settlements, leaving a trail of destruction from Tampa Bay to Charlotte Harbor and seizing many captives and returning them to slavery. A contemporary newspaper account said the raiders were under orders to “make prisoners of all the men of colour, including women and children, they would be able to find.” At Angola, they

surprised and captured about 300 of them, plundered their plantations, set on fire all their houses ... The terror thus spread along the Western Coast [and] broke all the establishments of both blacks and Indians, who fled in great consternation. The blacks principally, thought they could not save their lives but by abandoning the country.¹⁶²

The leaders of the raid had ties to wealthy Georgian slave speculators and to General Andrew Jackson, who had asked for and been denied permission to attack the settlements. The US government disavowed the raid, and the secretary of war warned the Cowetas not to make good on their threat to return. Shortly thereafter Jackson became Florida’s first American governor.¹⁶³

Some survivors of the raid fled overland or by canoe to Cape Florida and the Keys, and from there sailed to the Bahamas, transported by fishermen or “wreckers” or crossing on their own in dugout canoes. Others fled inland to a settlement called Minatti (near present-day Bartow) on the Peace River. Minatti was burned down 15 years later during the second Seminole war.¹⁶⁴

• • •

Two years after the raids, an American traveling on behalf of the territorial government reported that he had been told about black settlements on islands off Florida’s southwest coast, possibly including Pine Island:

I was here informed that on the inner chain of Islands along the coast from Tampa to Charlotte Harbour [there were] several settlements of refugee Negroes who had communications with white persons who resorted to these places in armed vessels. The marshes between the Islands & main land are at low water easily passed over. The Indians state that there were frequently landed from on board vessels with big guns, packages of goods at different depots on these Islands, and that the Indians had at different times been prevented by force from communicating with these Settlements as the Negroes were all completely armed with Spanish musquets, Bayonets & Cartouche boxes. When these persons were in want of Cattle they landed on the main to obtain them, & paid always in powder, lead, molasses & rum ... It is a fact pretty generally known, that there are persons belonging to the city of Havannah who have settled on these Islands since the change of flags, and carry on a constant communication with the West Indies, & have been the means of carrying off a number of refugee Negroes.¹⁶⁵

Other second- and third-hand accounts of outlaw communities on the southwest coast — with ties to Seminoles and Cuban fishermen and communication by ship with Cuba — continued to be reported at least through the early 1830s.¹⁶⁶

North-central Florida, 1822

The 1822 travel writer quoted earlier visited two black villages during his tour, which took place not long after the raid on black and Indian settlements on the Suwannee River during the first Seminole war (1818, see the “War” section below) and the Creek attack on the southwest coast (1821, described in the previous section). Of the first village he reported:

These people were in the greatest poverty, and had nothing to offer me; having, not long before, fled from a settlement further west, and left their crop ungathered, from an apprehension of being seized on by the Cowetas, who had recently carried off a body of Negroes, residing near the Suwaney.

“I, several times, in my route,” he continued, “saw the sites of Indian towns, which had been recently broken up, and the crops left standing on the ground.”¹⁶⁷

He set out the next morning, with a new guide and fresh horses, for another black village about 30 miles away. As it had the day before, night fell while he was still underway. “Though there were several Negroes going the same way, who had often travelled it,” he remarked, “there was no one but my guide, who, after it became dark, seemed to know the route.”

As many of these Negroes were refugee slaves, and some had ... fought against the Americans, I did not feel perfectly safe, while travelling in such company, through swamps and obscure paths, in the Seminole country.

(He did not hold this train of thought for long, though; in the next paragraph he blamed black and Indian mistrust of Americans on propaganda by “the Spaniards.”¹⁶⁸)

The second village seems to have been more well-to-do than the first. He stayed overnight in a “new and excellent house constructed in the Indian manner, without nails,” and slept well “upon a bed of deer skins.” He considered his hosts, “as usual, stout and even gigantic in their persons,” and noticed that their farm fields produced well.¹⁶⁹

His next stay was with a white host at the site of the future town of Micanopy, a few miles south of the Alachua towns that had been destroyed in 1813. Indians still lived in the area, his host told him, but avoided the site of the tragedy. Visiting the area, he wrote, he “felt a melancholy sensation in listening to the remarks of our guide, a Negro, who had once resided on the settlement, and spoke of its former plenty and population.”¹⁷⁰

Central Florida, 1837

In the Seminole wars, the battlefield for blacks and Indians was rarely far from the home front. In January 1837, a little over a year into the second Seminole war, a chief named Osuchee or Cooper was recovering from battle wounds near Lake Apopka when Indian troops under US command overran his base. They killed him, one of his sons, the native healer attending him, and another warrior. Nine Indians (women and children) and eight black people (two men, two women, and four children) were captured. The main force had left before the Americans arrived, but the prisoners disclosed their general direction, and the Americans followed the tracks of their livestock.

When they caught up with them four days later, most of the fugitives made a narrow escape. One American officer, in a letter to his family, described finding “fifty Indian huts, where the meat was on the fire, cooking, and all their utensils were scattered about. But no Indians could be found.” The Americans split into several groups, chasing the fugitives through the woods and swamps and across Hatcheelustee Creek.¹⁷¹ Among the events of that frenetic day:

A volunteer ... brought information that fresh signs of women’s and children’s tracks were discovered ... When we came up with [the officer who had sent that message] he was in possession of two Indian women and three children, besides a body of negroes taken by the volunteers in the adjoining pine woods. He had also in his possession over a hundred ponies, a large quantity of plunder packed on them, as well as several stand of arms. The main body of the enemy escaped in the swamp.

[After hot pursuit, a firefight in the swamp, and the fugitives’ further retreat], a negro man and woman, with a child, were taken ... The wife and child of the negro man were kept, and he was sent to the enemy to induce them to come in, as they had lost all their clothing, blankets, and other property ...

The result of this day’s operations was the capture of two Indian women and three children, and twenty-three negroes, (young and old,) over a hundred ponies, with packs on about fifty of them. All their clothing, blankets, and other baggage, was abandoned by the enemy, and either taken or destroyed by us.¹⁷²

Another officer noted the capture of 400–500 cattle; the general in charge reported that the captives were mostly women and children.¹⁷³

Kidnappers and swindlers

Even in peacetime, maroons and their Indian allies often fell prey to kidnappers (operating legally or illegally under the laws of the slavery era) and swindlers taking advantage of their vulnerable position in the legal system.

Frontier raiders crossed from Georgia and Alabama into British and Spanish Florida — and, in the US era, into Indian lands that were supposed to be off

limits to whites — to seize black people regardless of their legal status (escaped slave, free, or under the protection or ownership of a Seminole). During the American revolution, the Georgia–Florida border region was desolated as the Georgians raided Florida and the mixed-race St. Johns Rangers regiment struck back. The raids continued in the US era. Even legally legitimized efforts to retrieve runaway slaves often degenerated into kidnap and fraud, and even Americans who supported slavery and Indian removal denounced the “hoard of desperadoes” engaged in slave-hunting and the US government’s inability or unwillingness to restrain them.¹⁷⁴

Pro-US Indians on the Apalachicola River

Slave raiders hit settlements on the Apalachicola River in the months just before and after the outbreak of the second Seminole war, seizing black women, men, and children who were held by or affiliated with local Indians, many of whom did not consider themselves Seminoles and in fact supported the United States during the war.

In the early 1830s, a chief named Econchattamico was sued by a white man who claimed ownership of black men and women who had been in the chief’s “quiet and undisputed possession” for 30 years, as well as their children. The claimant withdrew his suit (the judge later stated for the record that he had had “no shadow of a claim”), but sold his spurious claim to two men from Georgia, who tried to take the blacks by force. After their first attack failed, they spread a rumor that the chief and his warriors were about to take up arms against the United States. (Econchattamico had actually sent warriors to fight on the US side in the second Seminole war, which had started a few months earlier.)

The rumors took hold, and the chief was pressured into giving up his weapons. The second attack occurred the next day, and on March 10, 1836, 20 black men, women, and children under his control were carried off to be sold outside of Florida, possibly in New Orleans. Maroons living with or near them may have been caught up in the raid. Neither Econchattamico nor his white supporters held out any hope that the blacks could be rescued. The elderly chief petitioned Congress for financial reimbursement for his loss.¹⁷⁶

In the same month, the same perpetrators kidnapped six black people from another Apalachicola River chief, John Walker. The year before, Walker — who, like Econchattamico, had already fended off a legal challenge and an initial attack — had written to the Indian agent Wiley Thompson for help and advice:

People abducted from Chief Econchattamico’s land

“Henry, aged twenty-five years; Robertson, twenty-four years of age; Dacio, a man, aged thirty; Fanny, aged thirty; Betsey, a girl, twelve years old; Butler, a negro boy, eight years old; Daniel, a boy, two years old; also Tom, aged forty-five; Wanda, aged forty, and an infant child; Rubin, aged thirty; Nanie, aged five years; Hannah, aged forty; Jenny, twenty-one; Tenor, fourteen; Ballow, a boy, aged fourteen; Mary Ann, aged five years; Moses, aged twenty-eight; Toney, aged twenty-six, and a woman called Anluza, aged forty-five.”¹⁷⁵

I am induced to write you in consequence of the depredations making and attempted to be made on my farm by a company of men, negro stealers ... It is reported and believed by all the white people around here that a large number of them will very shortly come down here and attempt to take off Billy, Jim, Rose and her family, and others ... I should like to have your advice how I should act. I dislike to make any trouble, or to have any difficulty with any of the white people; but if they will trespass on my premises and on my rights, I must defend myself in the best way I can. If they do make this attempt, and there is no doubt but they will, they must bear the consequences. But is there no *civil law* that will protect me? Are the free negroes and the negroes belonging in this town to be stolen away publicly — in the face of all law and justice carried off and sold to fill the pockets of these worse than “land pirates?” Certainly not. I know you will not suffer it. Please direct me how to act in this matter. Douglas and this company hired a man, *who has two large trained dogs* for the purpose, to come down and take Billy. The man came, but seeing he could do nothing alone, has gone off somewhere, probably to recruit. He is from Mobile, and follows for a livelihood *catching runaway negroes* with these large dogs.¹⁷⁷

Walker’s plea passed up and down the chain of command — to the commissioner of Indian affairs in Washington, and back to the US district attorney in Pensacola — to no avail. All six black people on Walker’s farm were carried off. The calamity they had been dreading at least since 1834 — when they told a government interpreter that they were “fully hot to go” west because they were “very much alarmed” about attempts to take them from Walker — had come to pass. Rose Factor, the free black/Indian wife of the Indian Sam Factor, her children Sarah and William or Billy, and Sarah’s children, were carried into slavery in Georgia. Rose and Billy Factor eventually escaped, but Rose’s daughter and grandchildren did not. The support (or at least neutrality) of the local Indian agent, and the advocacy on the couple’s behalf of several north Florida Indian chiefs, were not enough to prevent the kidnapping.¹⁷⁸

Seminole slaveholders

Seminoles made numerous complaints to US authorities about black slaves being stolen from them; white observers also acknowledged the issue. An 1848 history of the second Seminole war, discussing various problems created by unscrupulous whites in the 1820s, noted:

The Indians had in their possession a number of slaves, many who were born among them, and others purchased from the whites. The Indians possessing no rights in a court of justice or in law, and the negroes having been purchased and paid for, efforts were made to take possession by force.

The Indian, conscious of his rights, and knowing that he paid the money, though incapable of showing the papers executed under the forms of law, as he had received none ... protested most earnestly against these demands.¹⁷⁹

Whatever the nature of black people's practical day-to-day relationships with their Indian patrons, they are described in these complaints as slaves. Speaking at the Seminole agency (near present-day Ocala) in 1829, chief John Hicks said:

There is a negro girl at Charleston, that belongs to my daughter — her name is Patience. I want her restored to me. She has a husband here; she has a child about a year old, and I suppose that by this time she has two children.¹⁸⁰

The documents contain substantial detail about every element of these conflicts except how they would have been experienced by the people taken from their homes and sold into US-style chattel slavery.

An unscrupulous Indian agent

Sometimes the Indian agents who were supposed to mediate these conflicts became part of the problem. One example is the 1835 dispute between Gad Humphreys, former Indian agent, and a Seminole woman named Culekeechowa. Culekeechowa had a slave named Caty (sometimes spelled Katy), who married a man named Mungo (apparently a Seminole) and had four children with him. During a period of scarcity shortly before Florida became a US territory, Mungo had gone to work for a trader who had a plantation on the St. Johns River, and Caty and the children eventually joined him there.

Somehow, the trader cut a deal with Culekeechowa's aunt and uncle to sell him Caty and her children, paying "in whiskey and goods a trifling consideration." Culekeechowa called on Humphreys, then the Indian agent responsible for the Seminoles, for help getting them back. The trader offered the family for sale in St. Augustine. Humphreys bought them, ostensibly to prevent their being sold out of Florida — and then kept them as his own property. When Caty's sons, Jim and Israel, grew older, they fled back to the Seminoles; but Caty, her daughters Sally and Nancy, and her grandchildren remained under Humphreys's control.

In the early 1830s Humphreys, by then a private citizen, continued to press his claim on the two young men. Months after the case was submitted for guidance to the secretary of war (who was responsible for Indian affairs), the second Seminole war broke out. Katy was captured (or liberated) by the Seminoles in summer 1836, but recaptured by US forces the following year and sent west.¹⁸¹

Shifting allegiances

Maroons also had to be agile enough to survive in a world where allegiances repeatedly changed and promises were not always kept.

As discussed earlier, Spanish Florida's sanctuary policy officially ended under pressure from the United States in 1790. Although the new policy may have been only half-heartedly implemented, and some individuals were still able to navigate

the gray area between policy and enforcement, Spanish Florida ceased to offer a state-sanctioned refuge.¹⁸²

The British offered freedom and relocation to US slaves who joined their ranks during both the American revolution and the war of 1812. In both wars, the promised reward proved elusive for many. After the American revolution, as discussed above, the Americans pushed hard to prevent the defeated British from transporting their black recruits to freedom. After the war of 1812, many black British recruits were left behind at a fort at Prospect Bluff on the Apalachicola River in Spanish Florida. They received military discharge papers and recognition as free British subjects, which eventually proved useful for the few who were able to make their way to a British jurisdiction, and apparently a promise that the British would come back for them, but that promise went unfulfilled. (See the sections “War of 1812” and “A brief postwar experiment in freedom” below.)

Alliances with the Seminoles were also vulnerable to change as pressures from the slaveholding societies around them changed and intensified. Seminoles sometimes gave refuge to fugitives from slavery and at other times cooperated with demands to turn them in. A British planter remarked in 1771 that “it has been a practice for negroes to run away from their Masters and to get into the Indian towns, from whence it proved very difficult and troublesome to get them back.” He suspected that the Indians sheltered escaped slaves more often than they admitted; he had some success, though, in offering bounties for their return.¹⁸³

Around 1817 US General Edmund Gaines wrote to the Seminole chief Kinache (also known as King Hachy or King Heijah), accusing him of harboring black fugitives and demanding that he turn them over. The letter opened abruptly with “Your Seminolys are very bad people” and ended: “You harbour a great many of my black people among you, at Sahwahnee. If you give me leave to go by you against them, I shall not hurt any thing belonging to you.” Kinache rebuffed him:

I harbour no negroes. [This was almost certainly untrue.] When the Englishmen were at war with America [the war of 1812], some took shelter among them, and it is for you, white people, to settle those things among yourselves, and not trouble us with what we know nothing about. I shall use force to stop any armed Americans from passing my towns or my lands.¹⁸⁴

When the American invasion came, however, Kinache’s forces were unable to stop it. Kinache died either during the first Seminole war or shortly thereafter; he was about 80 years old.¹⁸⁵

An observer remarked in 1822 on the Seminoles’ relation to their “slaves”:
“Though hunger and want be [very strong], the greatest pressure of these evils, never occasions them to ... dispose of them, though tempted by high offers, if the latter are unwilling to be sold.”¹⁸⁶ After an 1828 dispute over an escaped slave the Seminoles were accused of harboring, a commentator noted:

It was thought the presence of troops would intimidate the Indians, and cause an instant delivery. But the demand, under such circumstances, was ridiculed, and while the commander was wasting his arguments, the negroes were immediately taken to the swamps and hammocks, under direction of experienced guides.¹⁸⁷

Refuge among the Indians was far from guaranteed, however. In 1766, four escaped slaves who joined up with a party of Indian hunters were turned in by the Indians — who “were very fond of them, and employed them as servants, but immediately gave them up when they were applied for.”¹⁸⁸

Even the Seminole chief Bowlegs — who welcomed many black refugees (escaping directly from slavery or from destroyed maroon communities) and would rely heavily on black warriors during the first Seminole war, gave in to pressure (and a monetary reward) from the Spanish authorities in 1815 and turned in some of the escaped slaves who had come to him for refuge.¹⁸⁹

Seminoles appear to have sold or surrendered more fugitive blacks during the hard times after the first Seminole war. Hardship intensified after Florida became a US possession in 1821 — they were soon confined to an inland reservation, plagued by food shortages, hounded by opportunistic outsiders with schemes ranging from the unscrupulous to the violent, and pressured repeatedly to surrender the black people living with them and to emigrate west.¹⁹⁰ These stresses would have been enough to fracture even strong relationships.

In 1828, the chief John Hicks, making a formal complaint at the Seminole agency, recalled turning in a black man to the US government, even though “he is not a runaway, but was raised in the nation, out of which he has never been.” Hicks’s main complaint appeared to be that “the negro was never properly paid for.” A few months later, again at the Seminole agency, Hicks said, “I agreed to send away all the black people who had no masters.” Again he primarily expressed concern about unfair business and legal transactions and the fact that his cooperation had not been reciprocated.¹⁹¹

During the second Seminole war, the Seminoles’ refusal to abandon their black associates was recognized by US officials as a key barrier to peace. As the war dragged on and pressure on both sides mounted, Seminoles sometimes refused to turn in their black associates and other times willingly did so.¹⁹²

Seminole leaders sometimes disagreed with each other on whether to give in to US pressure to turn in fugitives from slavery. Some maroons who surrendered during the second Seminole war described a dramatic debate on the issue between the well-known warrior Osceola and another chief in 1837. And maroons did not always go quietly when Seminoles withdrew their support. A US military officer reported in 1837: “There was a party on Cedar Creek who were all runaways and ... resisted telling the Indians that they [the Indians] had not taken them & that they [the maroons] would not give up.” Even before the war, an

Indian agent reported in 1828 that “one of the most respected and valuable chiefs in the nation [was] killed in an attempt to arrest a runaway slave.”¹⁹³

It seems clear that the relations between blacks and Seminoles, however positive and mutually beneficial and preferable to chattel slavery, were also complex and precarious. It may be difficult or even impossible to get a clear picture, from this vantage point in time, of how these relationships played out. Given the variety of ways black people arrived in the Seminole communities (on their own initiative, purchased, or captured), the presence of newcomers as well as long-term residents, the differences in their skills and other assets, and the loose-knit and evolving nature of the Seminole communities themselves, they may not all have been treated the same.

War

When war erupted, whatever stability black people in Florida — whether maroons, legally free, or enslaved — were able to achieve was immediately threatened. By the time of the American revolution, black people in all three conditions were probably already living with the Seminoles. Florida, which had been a British colony since 1763, did not join the revolution; many Loyalists moved to Florida from the rebel colonies and brought slaves with them. A mixed-race military unit known as the East Florida Rangers, which may have included fugitive slaves from the north, helped to protect Florida’s border with Georgia and raided pro-independence plantations farther north.¹⁹⁴ Black Seminoles had a greater, or at least better documented, role in wars on the Florida peninsula beginning with the so-called Patriot war in 1812.

Patriot war

In March 1812 a small fighting force calling itself the Patriots of East Florida, made up primarily of Georgians and a few pro-US Florida plantation owners, attacked northeast Florida, seizing Amelia Island and marching south to besiege St. Augustine from a base at the site of the old Fort Mosé two miles north of the capital. Their goal was to declare an independent republic and turn the territory over to the United States. (Many northeast Florida plantation owners had strong ties to the United States.)¹⁹⁵

The beleaguered Spanish colonial government relied heavily on the help of its black and Indian allies — as well as its own black militia, with reinforcements from Havana — to fend off the invasion. As rural residents moved to St. Augustine for safety, members of the black militia patrolled the countryside and herded cattle to the capital to feed the besieged population.¹⁹⁶

Many of the plantation owners who fled to St. Augustine left the people enslaved on their plantations behind to fend for themselves. Some slaves used the opportunity to escape, either to the Seminoles or farther afield. Some were killed or captured by Seminole/Black Seminole raiders or by the invaders. Both enslaved and free black people were vulnerable to slave hunters, many of whom carried their victims into Georgia. Historian Patricia Griffin uncovered the story of a man named Jim, enslaved on the Pellicer plantation (near today's Princess Place Preserve in Flagler County). When the family fled, Francisco Pellicer gave Jim a gun and told him to protect the house. Jim died trying to defend Pellicer's property from the Patriots.¹⁹⁷

Hundreds of enslaved people escaped from Georgia and South Carolina plantations to join the fight on the Spanish side. Leaders of the Patriot invasion believed that Florida, which had officially ended its sanctuary policy in 1790 under US pressure, was again promising freedom to runaway slaves, this time in return for military service. Spain's reliance on black fighting men offended the Patriots, who feared that it would inspire a slave uprising on the home front.¹⁹⁸ During the siege of St. Augustine, the governor of Georgia complained to the governor of Florida about

the black troops which you have in your service. Your certain knowledge of the peculiar situation of the southern section of the Union in regard to that description of people, one might have supposed, would have induced you to abstain from introducing them into the province, or of organizing such as were already in it ... I may venture to assure you that the United States will never tolerate their remaining in the province.¹⁹⁹

But the Spanish authorities, aside from their outrage at this attempt by the aggressors ("the banditti, whom you unblushingly call patriots") to present themselves as the injured party, were not about to give up an indispensable military asset. Black men made up more than half of St. Augustine's defense force, and the Black/Seminole alliance provided critical support in the backcountry. In any case, the Spanish colonies had long since incorporated black and mixed-race troops into their armed forces.²⁰⁰

In late July, Indian and black fighters attacked the pro-Patriot St. Johns River plantations, shaking morale and leading to widespread desertions from the invasion force.²⁰¹

In September, a supply convoy — traveling between the invaders' base at Fort Mosé and a depot on Davis Creek, just off the St. Johns River to the northwest — was overrun in a night attack in the Twelve Mile Swamp. The convoy was guarded by US Marines and Georgia militiamen; the attackers were a mixed group of black militiamen, Black Seminoles, and Seminoles, led by Prince (Juan Bautista) Witten, a lieutenant in Florida's free black militia. The convoy survivors

fled to Davis Creek. The attack effectively cut the invaders' supply line and ended the siege of St. Augustine.²⁰²

Later that month, another Patriot force marched inland in the invaders' first attempt to destroy the Seminole towns on the Alachua savannah (now called Payne's Prairie). But it was stopped before it reached the towns and barely survived its encounter with Seminole and Black Seminole warriors, enduring a week's siege and a miserable retreat that lasted almost another week. In his report, the colonel who led the ill-fated excursion described the black warriors as his enemy's best soldiers.²⁰³

While the Alachuans succeeded in fending off the American attack, they did so at a price. The Americans estimated that at least 50 "Indians" had been killed or wounded. One of the casualties was the 80-year-old King Payne, who died days later of a wound received during the battle.²⁰⁴

The Alachua towns would enjoy only a few more months of peace. In February 1813, Tennessee and Georgia militiamen marched on the savannah, with the aim of destroying the towns and killing or returning to slavery as many black residents as possible. Although they met vigorous resistance, they were able to loot and burn at least three settlements: Payne's Town, Bowlegs' Town, and an affiliated black village. The villages were deserted when the Americans arrived; most survivors soon left the Alachua region.

The invaders could chalk this up as a victory, but the resistance they encountered also slowed their advance. Domestic opposition to US support for the Patriot movement grew, and by mid-May 1813 US federal troops had been withdrawn from Florida. Diehards held out for another year, some resorting to banditry, but the invasion ultimately failed — thanks in large part to the military prowess of the Seminoles, the Black Seminoles, and Florida's black militia.²⁰⁵

• • •

Antonio or Tony Proctor was enslaved to the trading firm Panton, Leslie, and Company when the Patriot war broke out. Known as a highly skilled interpreter, he was sent inland by Florida's governor to recruit Seminole warriors to fight for the Spanish. He was in his late 60s.

Proctor was captured by the Patriots, who tried to force him to translate for them in their own negotiations with the Seminoles. While feigning cooperation, he in fact warned the Seminoles that the Patriots planned to subdue them and take their land. When the meeting failed to produce the desired results, the Patriot negotiator lost his temper and switched from promises to threats, thus further alienating the Seminoles. Proctor eventually escaped and succeeded in recruiting hundreds of warriors for the Spanish cause.

Proctor was born in Jamaica around 1743, served a British officer during the American revolution, and probably came to Florida during the British era, where he most likely learned Indian languages while working for traders. During the Patriot war, in addition to his services as a negotiator and interpreter, he was one of the few Spanish subjects who dared to leave the safety of St. Augustine to round up cattle to keep the beleaguered city fed. For his services during the war, he was freed by the governor and received a land grant. He remained in Florida during the American era and lived to an advanced age.²⁰⁶

War of 1812

The war of 1812, between the United States and Britain, began while the Patriot invasion in Florida was still underway. During the war, Britain again encouraged American slaves to defect with a promise of freedom and relocation. Enslaved people heeded the call from across the south, including from Spanish Florida; British ships sailed along the US Atlantic coast picking up runaways.

Britain hoped to mobilize both blacks and Indians for the war effort. To this end, in May 1814, a British captain landed on Florida's Gulf coast at the mouth of the Apalachicola River, distributed arms to Indians and escaped slaves, and sailed upriver about 20 miles to Prospect Bluff, where he started to build a fort. The fort was in Spanish territory, about 50 miles as the crow flies south of the US (Georgia) border. Three months later, Major Edward Nicolls assumed command of the fort. For Nicolls, the British policy of recruiting and freeing slaves was more than a military tactic; he was an impassioned abolitionist.²⁰⁷

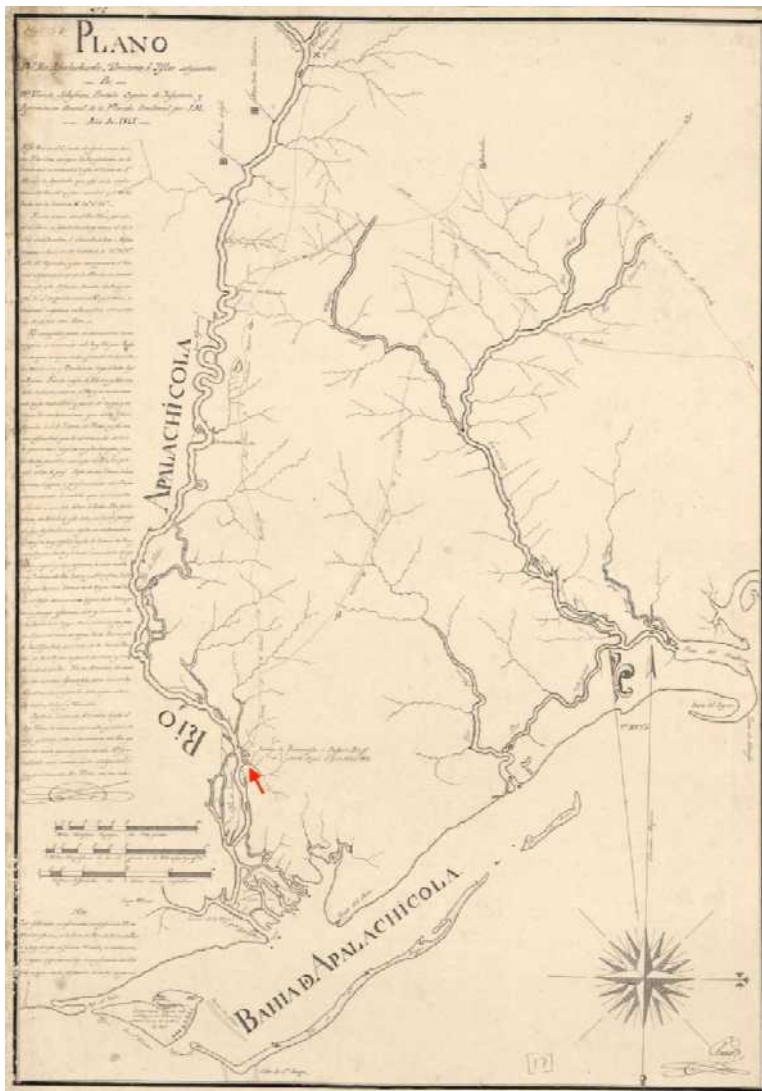
At Prospect Bluff, several thousand black and Indian recruits trained and drilled and received weapons, uniforms, and a regular wage. In late 1814, they carried out raids on the Georgia frontier that did considerable damage and kept US troops tied up. Nicolls thought highly of his black recruits, comparing them favorably to their British counterparts. "Better or braver soldiers," he wrote decades later, "I would never wish to serve with." Free blacks from Spanish Florida as well as escaped slaves rallied to Prospect Bluff.²⁰⁸

In the last major conflict of the war, the January 1815 Battle of New Orleans (which famously took place after the peace treaty had been signed), Britain lost badly; but the war itself essentially ended in a draw. Nicolls remained at Prospect Bluff for a few months after that, and escaped slaves continued to arrive at the fort.

For a brief period at the end of the war, the British still hoped to protect the Indians' postwar interests and to curb American influence in Spanish Florida. But by March, Nicolls's orders changed: He was to leave his recruits as well supplied and armed as possible and come home. Nicolls, who already had a reputation for exceeding or ignoring orders, continued to advocate on behalf of the Creeks and

Seminoles and encouraged them to resist white encroachment on lands they still considered theirs. He did not leave Prospect Bluff until early summer.²⁰⁹

Before Nicolls and the British left, they provided the black recruits with military discharge papers that implicitly acknowledged their status as free British subjects. Nicolls encouraged blacks and Indians to continue cooperating, to avoid strong drink and contact with Americans, and to continue welcoming escaped slaves who reached their community. He left the fort well armed, and promised to send for the freedmen when he could; but he was unable to keep that promise. After their service in the war of 1812, more than 4,000 former slaves were transported by the British to freedom in Canada and Trinidad, but the majority of the Prospect Bluff veterans were left behind.²¹⁰



Map of the Apalachicola River region, 1815; the red arrow points to the fort at Prospect Bluff.

A brief postwar experiment in freedom

After the British left, the community at the fort survived for a little over a year. Many of the Indians left shortly after Nicolls did, but the black population swelled as escaped slaves fled to it from neighboring American states and from Spanish Florida. Free black people were also drawn to this precarious experiment in liberty, and some Indians, most frequently referred to as Choctaws, remained as well.²¹¹

The Prospect Bluff maroons could count on a number of assets that weren't available to other escaped slaves. They could live stable lives out in the open, under the protection of a well-made fort with thick earthen walls and wooden palisades. Located on a bluff overlooking the Apalachicola River, surrounded by forest and swampland, the fort was nearly inaccessible by land. The British left ample supplies behind, including weapons, tools, and several boats. Community members possessed a variety of skills learned in both urban and plantation settings and had a well-organized defense force. They had access to fertile farmland and bountiful forest for hunting and gathering.²¹²

Maroons at the settlement came from a wealth of different backgrounds. "There were Africans; Spanish creoles from both Floridas [east and west], Cuba, and elsewhere in Spain's empire; English-speaking former slaves from the United States and Anglo-Caribbean; and people from French colonies. Other members of the community had lived with various southeastern Indians or in independent maroon communities." The community not only welcomed newcomers (which could be dangerous for less well-defended maroon settlements) but actively recruited them.²¹³

Family life flourished at Prospect Bluff — partly because of the community's relative (if short-lived) stability and because women, while still a minority as in most maroon communities, were a relatively large one, making up perhaps one-fourth to one-third of the population. The community also included children, and a number of married couples escaped to Prospect Bluff together.²¹⁴

Most residents lived outside the fort, with homes and farmland stretching for miles along the river. In addition to farming and hunting, they traded with a number of black and Indian settlements. They supplied arms to the Seminoles — a trade that disturbed the Spanish colonial government because their product was so superior that it threatened the Spanish arms trade. There was at least one allegation that the maroons also engaged in piracy.²¹⁵

Traveling on foot and by boat, Prospect Bluff residents established ties with maroons in the town of Micosukee in northern Florida, settlements to the south on the Suwannee River and Tampa Bay, and to the east on the St. Johns River. They were also in touch with a number of Indian groups, no doubt including

some who had spent time at Prospect Bluff. One measure of the breadth of their connections is the concern expressed by their enemies about how easily they could escape if attacked, using their small marine fleet or the network of forest trails.²¹⁶

However, hostility toward the outpost on the Apalachicola was growing. Slaveholders resented its attraction for freedom-seeking slaves; Spanish and American officials feared violence from the heavily armed settlement; the maroons were accused not only of providing safe haven but of actively recruiting on nearby plantations, as well as of piracy, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and attacking river vessels.²¹⁷ While the British were still at the fort, at least three delegations — two Spanish and one Creek — visited demanding the return of escaped slaves. The British allowed aggressive persuasion but not forced removal; only a handful of maroons agreed to return to slavery, most of them mothers with small children. There was also at least one armed attack, which the maroons were able to repel, a few months after Nicolls departed.²¹⁸

Destruction

Although Prospect Bluff was on Spanish territory (Florida would not become a US possession until 1821), it was the Americans who led the calls for its destruction. A military outpost (Camp Crawford, later renamed Fort Scott) was built in spring 1816 just north of the Georgia border. The Spanish gave the Americans permission to send supplies up the Apalachicola from the Gulf of Mexico, but the fort at Prospect Bluff blocked this access. Protracted negotiations between increasingly forceful US military officials and an ambivalent Spanish government eventually yielded something the Americans felt able to interpret as a green light to attack.²¹⁹

In mid-July 1816, two American forces headed toward the fort. One moved downriver from Camp Crawford and was joined by a party of pro-American Creeks, while the other, a naval convoy sailing from New Orleans, moved upriver from Apalachicola Bay.²²⁰ The maroons' scouts soon alerted them to the Americans' presence. During the blockade, a party of maroons lured an American boat, sent for fresh water, into an ambush, killing three men immediately and capturing another, who they later burned alive.²²¹

Many of the Prospect Bluff warriors were away on a hunting trip, and a messenger sent to ask Seminole allies for help was captured by the Americans. Still, the fort was nearly impregnable, and the maroons who remained were well organized and determined. The Camp Crawford contingent arrived across the river from the fort on July 19; but four days later, the attack had stalled.²²²

Creek chiefs known for their negotiating skills were sent in to try to talk the maroons into surrendering, but the maroons remained defiant. Declaring that they were British subjects defending British territory and would sink any

American ship that tried to pass, they raised a red flag signifying their intention to fight to the death. “We were pleased with their spirited opposition,” one American officer wrote to his father, “though they were Indians, negroes, and our enemies. Many circumstances convinced us that most of them determined never to be taken alive.”²²³

Under that red flag, the siege continued, with neither side inflicting decisive damage, until July 27. On that day, a heated cannonball fired by the Americans landed in the fort, possibly making a direct hit on a powder magazine, triggering an explosion that could be heard 135 miles away in Pensacola. The same officer wrote:

You cannot conceive, nor I describe the horrors of the scene. In an instant, hundreds of lifeless bodies were stretched upon the plain, buried in sand and rubbish, or suspended from the tops of the surrounding pines. Here lay an innocent babe, there a helpless mother; on the one side a sturdy warrior, on the other a bleeding squaw.²²⁴

The American commander estimated that 300 people were in the fort when the bombardment began — 100 warriors and 200 women and children, probably mostly Spanish-speaking ex-slaves from Pensacola and some of their Choctaw allies — and only about 50 survived, many of those badly wounded.²²⁵

One of the maroons at Prospect Bluff was Mary Ashley. During the siege, according to a letter Nicolls wrote years later on her behalf, she raised and lowered the fort’s flag daily and fired the “morning and evening gun,” hoping to alert the absent warriors. Ashley was one of the few who survived the explosion; she was sold into slavery in Cuba.²²⁶

Two men considered leaders of the maroon community, a black warrior (and former carpenter from Pensacola) named Garçon and an unnamed Choctaw man, survived the explosion but were killed by the Americans’ Creek allies with the Americans’ blessing. The remaining survivors, and others captured in the vicinity of the fort, were re-enslaved. Most of them had escaped from slavery in Spanish Florida or among the Creeks; many of the American ex-slaves had left the area before the attack.²²⁷

Aftermath

During the slow American advance on Prospect Bluff, many residents, especially those living outside the fort, were able to escape. Many fled to the Suwannee River area; others fled farther south, especially along Florida’s west coast. The settlements established by Prospect Bluff survivors continued to attract new runaways, and their warriors, especially on the Suwannee, continued to train and drill. They received some covert assistance from men with ties to Nicolls. But as the geopolitical winds on the continent shifted, the possibility that Nicolls would

send for them (as he later said he had promised to do), or transport them to the freedom promised when he first recruited them, dwindled to zero.²²⁸

When they next fought the Americans, they would fight on their own. Their military discharge papers, which gave them the status of free British subjects in British eyes, would mean little in other jurisdictions. Their quest for freedom would continue to involve harsh and often lonely choices, as it had before and during their time at Prospect Bluff. But their experience there allowed them to develop stronger military and organizational skills, social and diplomatic ties, and a sense of connection to global movements toward freedom and equality.²²⁹

First Seminole war

Exactly when the first Seminole war began depends on which events, out of a generally violent era, are chosen to define its start and end points. As many historians describe it, it lasted about six months — from November 1817 to May 1818 — with most of the sustained action taking place in Spanish Florida over about a month in March and April.²³⁰

Factors that drove the war included white–Indian conflict over land as well as general lawlessness in the border area. A former Georgia governor described conditions just before the war in written testimony to Congress:

The peace of the frontier of Georgia has always been exposed and disturbed, more or less, by acts of violence, committed as well by the whites as the Indians; and a spirit of retaliation has mutually prevailed ... [The situation is aggravated by] lawless and abandoned characters, who had taken refuge on both sides of the St. Mary's River, living principally by plunder.²³¹

American slaveholders, driven by their fear of slave escapes and revolts, wanted to root out maroon and Indian safe havens across the border in Spanish Florida.²³² Word also got back to the United States that blacks and Indians, among them many survivors of the Prospect Bluff catastrophe, were organizing a military force. A February 1817 letter to a US military officer reported that residents of the black/Indian settlement of Fowltown in southern Georgia (near present-day Bainbridge) “speak in the most contemptuous manner of the Americans, and threaten to have satisfaction for what has been done — meaning the destruction of the negro fort.” He also reported, presumably referring to the towns on the Suwannee River, that an acquaintance

saw the negroes on parade there: he counted about six hundred that bore arms. They have chosen officers of every description, and endeavor to keep up a regular discipline ... There is said to be about the same number of Indians belonging to their party, and there are both negroes and Indians daily going to their standard. They say they are in complete fix for fighting, and wish an engagement with the Americans, or McIntosh's troops [US Creek allies who had joined the attack on Prospect Bluff]; they would let them know they had something more to do than they had at Apalachicola.²³³

Blacks and Seminoles considered themselves British subjects and allies — as they had been encouraged to do by Edward Nicolls at Prospect Bluff — and continued to hope that Britain would intervene on their behalf. While Nicolls never returned to Florida, several men associated with him did reappear and encourage continued resistance, providing military training and supplies.²³⁴ One of them wrote to him from the Suwannee River:

There are about three hundred blacks at this place, a few of our Bluff people. They beg me to say, they depend on your promises, and expect you are on the way out. They have stuck to the cause, and will always believe in the faith of you.²³⁵

The war's opening battle was the US attack on Fowltown in late November 1817. A few days later, in retaliation, a supply boat coming up the Apalachicola River to Fort Scott was attacked, killing more than 40 people, including women and children. In the weeks that followed, black and Indian warriors shooting from the shore made resupply of the fort by river almost impossible.²³⁶

Andrew Jackson was ordered to take over the command at Fort Scott and “adopt the necessary measures to terminate [the] conflict.” Arriving at the fort in early March, Jackson's army marched down the Apalachicola and built a new fort at the site of the ruins on Prospect Bluff. Then, reinforced by a large contingent of pro-US Creeks, they captured the Spanish fort at St. Marks near the Gulf coast, and laid waste to Indian and black towns near Lake Miccosukee and on the Suwannee river.²³⁷

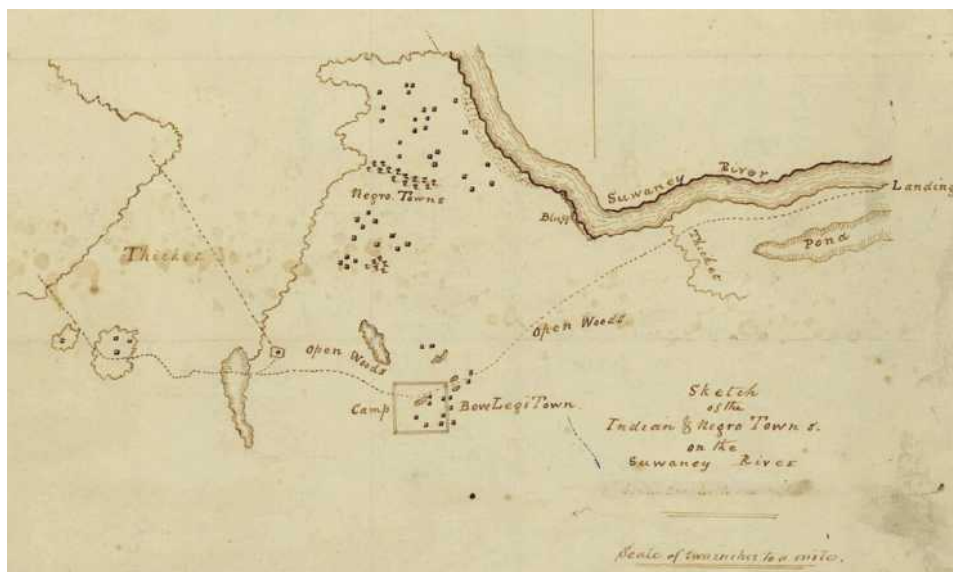
The community on the Suwannee River, led by the Seminole chief Bowlegs, was one of the main targets of the campaign. Many of the residents were rebuilding their lives there after fleeing from Alachua, Prospect Bluff, and other locations during earlier bouts of violence. On the Suwannee, as they did elsewhere, black and Seminole people lived connected but physically separate lives; their towns were about a mile apart. The black community was probably larger than its Seminole counterpart and the largest maroon settlement in the US south.²³⁸

The leader of the black warriors was a man named Nero, who was also an advisor to (and sometimes described as a slave of) Bowlegs. Very little is known about Nero. Although apparently a Prospect Bluff veteran himself, he once intervened to help save the lives of two white men accused of helping US forces destroy the fort. A man who spent time in the Suwannee towns later testified that “Nero commanded the blacks, and was owned and commanded by Bowlegs; but there were some Negro Captains, who obeyed none but Nero.”²³⁹

When the American attack came, the settlement would be obliterated, but many people would be able to escape thanks to the community's military preparedness and advance warning. Men with ties to Edward Nicolls appeared on the Suwannee before the war, offering their help. Robert Ambrister, who had served under Nicolls in the war of 1812 and reportedly said that he had come to the

Suwannee “to see the Negroes righted,” helped train the black warriors and apparently took over their command from Nero for a few months. Alexander Arbuthnot, a trader and Indian advocate who had corresponded with Nicolls, sold them ammunition and other supplies.²⁴⁰

Arbuthnot sent a warning from St. Marks, just a few days before that post was captured, to warn that Jackson was coming. “The main drift of the Americans,” he wrote, “is to destroy the black population of Suwannee. Tell my friend Boleck that it is throwing away his people to attempt to resist such a powerful force.” About the same time, refugees from the devastated Lake Miccosukee towns began to arrive. By the time the American troops approached, the settlement was on high alert, and scouts discovered them a few hours before they arrived.²⁴¹



Map of the settlements on the Suwannee River, 1818.

The Suwannee settlement was attacked late in the day on April 16, 1818, by a US force of more than 3,000, which included some of the same Creek allies who had participated in the attack on Prospect Bluff. It appears to have been mostly the black warriors who fought off the American advance long enough for the remaining noncombatants to escape. Ambrister left the settlement before the battle began, returning command to Nero, and most of the Seminoles had already fled into the swamps and woods on the east side of the river. Badly outnumbered, the warriors fought long enough to enable the villagers remaining on the Suwannee’s west bank to cross the river. After darkness fell, they crossed it themselves; the Americans did not follow until the next day.²⁴²

This was considered the fiercest battle of the war.²⁴³ Two black members of the Suwannee community who survived the battle testified about it years later in a related civil case. John Prince, one of the warriors who had fought the rearguard action, said

that he was at the town when the attack was made; that he remained with the Indians and negroes, and fought as long as he dared; but they came too hot upon them, and they all ran to save their lives, and that all their houses were burnt before their eyes ... There were a great many of them, and so strong that we stood no chance.

The second witness, named Nero Bowlegs, testified that he “did not engage in the fight, being occupied in swimming horses across the river” to the east side, but knew that “a good many Indians and negroes were killed by the assailants.”²⁴⁴

Both men recalled hearing about black residents fleeing as far as an island in the river but being captured there by pro-US Creeks and carried into slavery in the United States. Both had also heard that a man they knew at Suwannee named Harry had been wounded and captured during the battle and that Harry was later killed trying, again, to escape. Both witnesses had spent time, in the intervening years, with the Creeks and had talked with them about the attack.²⁴⁵

Jackson’s army burned hundreds of homes, destroyed food stores, and made off with livestock; it’s impossible to know how many people were killed or captured. Those who survived the attack scattered in many directions, from the panhandle to the southwest coast and beyond.²⁴⁶

The destruction of the Lake Miccosukee and Suwanee towns was completed by mid-April. Jackson then took two actions that were controversial both at home and abroad. In late April he executed Ambrister and Arbuthnot for supporting the Seminole war effort. And in May he attacked and occupied Pensacola, the capital of Spanish West Florida. The United States soon returned control of Pensacola to Spain, but negotiations were already underway that ended in the 1819 Adams-Onís treaty ceding all of Florida to the United States.²⁴⁷

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The man named Nero who served as a war leader and chiefly advisor on the Suwannee River may have died during the Suwannee battle, or he may have lived on.²⁴⁸ There are at least three other mentions of a man named Nero in the histories of the era.

In 1812, a very young man by that name either was captured or escaped during an Indian raid on the New Switzerland plantation on the St. Johns River. If this was the same person, he would still have been quite youthful for a role as military commander and senior advisor on the Suwannee six years later.²⁴⁹

In 1828 (as described above), a free black man named Nero Bowlegs made a sworn statement in a civil proceeding about people he had met at Suwannee and his experiences during the battle.²⁵⁰

And in 1836, “old Nero, who had lived long with the Indians” worked for US forces as a guide and interpreter in the early months of the second Seminole war. At least one of the men familiar with his work remarked on his bravery and

honesty, and he had served as a guide to the Florida governor. He and two other men were once sent to a tense parley with the enemy during a lull in fighting on the Withlacoochee River. To reach the meeting place, they had to cut through dense vegetation on the side of a “prairie pond.” A few minutes into the meeting, his two companions fled, sensing a trap, but Nero stood his ground and completed the mission.²⁵¹

The Nero who disappeared from the St. Johns area in 1812 would have been in his 30s or early 40s in 1836, and the bravery shown by the latter is consistent with that shown by the troops defending the Suwannee settlement; but the four references could just as plausibly refer to four different men.

Hard times between the wars

Formal control of Florida passed from Spain to the United States in 1821. Although almost another 15 years passed before the outbreak of the second Seminole war, those years were not free of turmoil and dislocation.

The Coweta Creek raid on the southwest coast settlements (see the “Frequent moves” section above) took place at about the same time that Florida was changing hands. The settlements were destroyed, captives were sold into slavery, and the survivors scattered, some to inland Florida and others to Cuba and the Bahamas.²⁵²

The 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek required most Seminoles to relocate to an inland reservation. US officials were not familiar with the land they had designated for the reservation, but the Indians apparently were: During negotiations, chief Neamathla said that its soil was poor and that “we hope that you will not send us south, to a country where neither the hickorynut, the acorn, nor the persimmon grows.” His objections were in vain; and the Seminoles did indeed suffer severe food shortages on the reservation.²⁵³ A military officer wrote in 1825:

The major part of the nation are, and have been, suffering for some time in extreme want. Some have died from starvation ... I can assure you they are in the most miserable situation ... It is impossible for me, or any other officer who possesses the smallest feelings of humanity, to resist affording some relief to men, women, and children, who are actually dying for the want of something to eat.²⁵⁴

They were also vulnerable to harassment by a range of opportunists, from shady businessmen to armed robbers, from whom the government was unable or unwilling to protect them. Black people living with the Seminoles in the 1820s and 1830s were also vulnerable, as discussed earlier, to raids by slave hunters — some considered legitimate under the slave regime, others without any pretense of legality. For the land the Seminoles had relinquished under the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek, they were promised a modest annuity, some of which was withheld as a penalty for harboring fugitive slaves.²⁵⁵

The Seminoles faced a deadline in January 1836 to assemble for transport west or be forcibly removed. Tensions simmered throughout 1835. The Seminoles may have appeared, to superficial observers, to be resigned to leaving. But looking back later on the start of the war, Seminole chief Halpatter-Tustenuggee (Alligator) said, “We had been preparing for this more than a year. Though promises had been made to assemble on the 1st of January, it was not to leave the country, but to fight for it.”²⁵⁶ Black Seminoles would play an important part in these preparations.

Second Seminole war

The second Seminole war was costly, complex, and marked by betrayals, confusion, and civilian suffering. This section offers a brief overview of the war, and then explores in more detail a few elements with especially strong Black Seminole involvement.

Scattered violence took an irreversible turn into war during Christmas week 1835, with a Seminole attack and slave uprising on plantations in east Florida. On December 28, a military column led by Major Francis Dade was attacked on a lonely road between Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay and Fort King (near present-day Ocala); only two men made it back to Fort Brooke alive. At Fort King on the same day, warriors led by Osceola killed Indian agent Wiley Thompson and several other men.²⁵⁷

Many east coast plantation owners fled to St. Augustine, the Florida city most heavily affected by the war. US military efforts in the year that followed achieved little and were marred by infighting between key generals.²⁵⁸ Fighting in early 1837 inflicted significant losses on the Seminoles but also impressed the Americans with their enemy’s tenacity and elusiveness. An agreement in March known as the Fort Dade capitulation raised hopes that the war might be nearing an end, but broke down with a dramatic Seminole exodus in June.

Within a few months, however, Seminole and Black Seminole ranks were thinned by a series of defections and surrenders and the capture in September of Philip, chief of the St. Johns River Seminoles. Philip’s son Coacoochee (Wildcat) came in to confer with his father and was taken prisoner. Several key war leaders, including Osceola and the Black Seminole chief John Horse, were also taken prisoner during talks held under a flag of truce. Wildcat and John Horse, along with 18 others, made a daring escape in November from the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine. Osceola died in prison, and Philip died en route to Fort Gibson in the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma).²⁵⁹

After that, the focus of the war moved south. In a battle at Lake Okeechobee on Christmas day 1837, the Seminoles bought time for women and children to escape, inflicting more casualties than they took, and then scattered in small

groups. In January 1838, two battles on the Loxahatchee River ended without a decisive victory. After that, US forces built a fort at Jupiter Inlet and took some time to resupply.²⁶⁰

Although the Fort Dade capitulation had failed, the Americans remained conscious that US policy toward the Black Seminoles was critical to their ability to win the war. At the urging of his senior officers and with the help of a Black Seminole messenger, General Thomas Jesup offered the chiefs a tentative new peace agreement, which they welcomed, camping near the Americans while Jesup sought his superiors' approval. When Washington rejected the deal, Jesup's forces attacked the peace camp and rounded up hundreds of warriors and civilians. In the weeks that followed, hundreds more Seminoles and Black Seminoles surrendered. A number of Black Seminoles joined the US ranks and played a critical role as guides and interpreters.²⁶¹

After the Fort Jupiter roundup, the war continued for four years, mostly in smaller skirmishes that sometimes covered the same ground multiple times. In the Withlacoochee River area in central Florida, US troops continued to find villages they had missed in earlier searches, and seemed unsurprised to find that crop fields they had destroyed had been replanted.

The year 1840 saw Seminole attacks from St. Augustine to the Keys. In the town of Mandarin in northeast Florida, three years of peace ended abruptly in 1841 with an attack a few days before Christmas. "So sudden an outbreak in a section of country thickly settled," a contemporary wrote, "caused much dissatisfaction and alarm." While the Seminoles faced an increasingly desperate war of attrition, they had enough strength left to create a persistent threat.²⁶²

Black fighters on the Seminole side appear in the historical record for this era only "fleetingly and singly," as historian Kenneth Porter noted. Porter found references to one or two black fighters taking part in an Indian attack on a family near Tallahassee in the summer of 1838 (as reported by the sole survivor, a five-year-old girl), a "most demoniacal looking" black man serving as advisor to the Seminole chief Sam Jones (Arpeika) in August 1839, and black warriors in an April 1840 firefight near Fort King and in a raid the next month on a wagon traveling between Fort Fanning and Deadman's Bay on Florida's northern Gulf coast. During the August 1840 raid that killed botanist Henry Perrine at Indian Key, his daughter, from her hiding place, heard one of the attackers speak and had the impression, she wrote later, that he was a "runaway negro." In a lull in the fighting during a September 1840 US attack on a village on the Chocochatti savannah (near present-day Brooksville), a black villager approached by the Americans' interpreter said that they "did not want to talk, they were ready for a fight" — which was a good call, because the overture was a trick. (Apparently, all of the villagers were able to escape that day.) And in March 1841, at an army post in Sarasota, "an Indian and a negro

came in ... with a white flag and said they were tired of the war and wanted something to eat, for they had nothing for three days.”²⁶³

While these references may be scanty, several letters between military officers in Florida and officials in Washington, continuing at least into September 1841, acknowledged the Black Seminoles’ continued influence. Of the Black Seminoles remaining in Florida, Wildcat’s band probably had the largest number. Of the 229 emigrants on the ship that took Wildcat west in October 1841, 18 were black.²⁶⁴

The last major battle of the war took place in April 1842 in central Florida near the site of Pilaklikaha, the Black Seminole village burned in 1836. Fighting in “a mass of grassy ponds and oak islands, intersected here and there by pine ridges,” Seminole warriors led by Halleck Tustenuggee managed to delay and distract US troops long enough for women and children to escape into the swamp. John Horse, along with other black and Indian warriors fighting on the American side, took the most intense fire.²⁶⁵

While the new village was probably not as elaborate as the one destroyed in 1836, it did contain “well-constructed bark and palmetto huts [that] indicated a permanent abode.” The Seminoles had left behind “large quantities of dried deer-meat, dressed deer-skins, half-finished moccasins [*sic*], axes, hoes, kettles, and articles of clothing,” as well as “thimbles, needles, thread, and several highly-ornamented dresses.”²⁶⁶

While the civilians and most of the warriors had escaped, they were destitute. By the end of April, Halleck Tustenuggee had approached the US camp asking for talks, and on July 14 he and his band left Florida for the west. John Horse and his family left on the same ship. The United States declared the war at an end on August 14, 1842.²⁶⁷

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The rest of this section explores parts of the second Seminole war in which Black Seminoles and other black actors played an especially critical role: the plantation attacks that launched the war, wartime St. Augustine, fluctuating US policy on concessions for the Black Seminoles, and the black guides and interpreters who worked on the US side.

Plantation attacks

The east coast plantation attacks that launched the war would have been impossible without the participation of both maroons and enslaved people. In the runup to the war, Black Seminole leaders Abraham and John Caesar secretly recruited plantation slaves to support the attacks, taking advantage of long-standing ties between the plantations and the world of the maroons. These

contacts ensured the attacks a place in history not only as the Second Seminole war's opening salvo but also as the largest slave uprising in US history.²⁶⁸

The attacks started during Christmas week 1835 and continued into the following February. They focused on a stretch of the east coast from St. Augustine to New Smyrna, but reached as far south as the Miami River and well inland. Some plantation owners and their families were killed, while others escaped, mostly to St. Augustine.²⁶⁹

An army sergeant sent to Florida after the first raids described the scene like this:

Everything also that industry and civilization has done is utterly destroyed. We visited the site of many dwellings which presented a most desolating scene — many buildings were burned, others partially, and some cut and hacked to pieces. I saw tables, bureaus, sofas, mirrors, pictures, beds, books &c strewed about everywhere, cut and broke in all shapes. The marks of the tomahawk was visible everywhere in the ceilings and walls of unburned houses — not a window or door left unbroken, feather beds emptied and the contents flying about the country — the shores of the river and sound lined with chests and trunks broken open and rifled of their contents. On some plantations nothing left to tell of the destruction but the naked chimneys and the ashes of the buildings and contents.²⁷⁰

Various witnesses reported seeing Indians dancing around burning plantation buildings. One member of a Florida militia known as the Mosquito Roarers also reported seeing members of his own militia “chasing the chickens around the burning houses.” The attacks continued for weeks, as plantation owners fled first to some of the better fortified plantations — such as Bulowville, which was also briefly used as a military post — and then to St. Augustine.²⁷¹

Farther south, near present-day Fort Lauderdale, raiders attacked the home of justice of the peace William Cooley, who had a small plantation on the New River. The attack on January 6, 1836, killed his wife and children and the children's tutor. The few other white families on the New and Miami Rivers fled to the Cape Florida lighthouse, some bringing slaves with them, and eventually on to more secure locations including Key West.²⁷²

One battle with the insurgents took place on January 17 when Florida militia volunteers went to the Dunlawton plantation (in present-day Port Orange) to pick up corn and other supplies abandoned in the initial rush to safety. A 20th century history described the force sent to Dunlawton as green; one member of the militia called his comrades an “undisciplined rabble” and was horrified at their mutilation of an Indian corpse.²⁷³

The plantation must have been fired the same day that these troops set out; they arrived after nightfall to find the buildings still burning and cattle penned up, presumably for removal the next day. Hoping to ambush the Indians when they returned for the cattle, they spent the night in nearby slave cabins. But the next

morning's battle quickly went against them. In the chaos, they tried to retreat, leaving a number of comrades behind. Benjamin Wiggins, a well-known free black man fighting on the American side, "was greatly scandalized," a participant later remembered, "and called out, 'My God, gentlemen, [are you] going to run from a passel of dam'd Indians?'" The order to retreat was rescinded, but soon had to be given again, resulting in a "devil take the hindmost" rush for the boats, during which most of the guns became too wet to fire. The boats had been grounded by the outgoing tide; after a struggle, the men were able to get two canoes afloat, but the Indians commandeered a third, larger boat.²⁷⁴

The first to die in the battle on the American side was an enslaved "good black waiting man" named Will; three others died or received mortal injuries. The survivors fled back to the Bulow plantation and after a few days relocated to St. Augustine. Within weeks, the Bulow property was destroyed as well.²⁷⁵

The uprising would have presented people enslaved on the plantations with terrible choices — how to respond to the Seminole emissaries when they came around in the weeks before the war, whether to keep the conspirators' secret or warn the whites, how deeply to get involved, whom to believe, and whom to trust — choices that had to be made at close quarters with little privacy, in conditions where any choice could be overridden at any time by someone more powerful or less scrupulous.

There were no safe options — joining the Seminoles could get them killed, but so could staying loyal to the whites. Some slaves on the Cruger and Depeyster plantation (in present-day New Smyrna Beach) hid members of the raiding party on the plantation before the attack, supplied a boat that the raiders used to cross the Indian River and attack another plantation, and even took to wearing war paint. During the uprising, a St. Augustine newspaper reported, "Some of Depeyster's negroes joined them, and they carried off all the rest, about sixty, except one old negro man, whom they shot, and burned in his hut." Some of those slaves were later recaptured; according to the plantation manager's wife, "they were glad enough to get away from the Indians as they treated them very cruelly."²⁷⁶

Like they had during the Patriot war, slaveholders sometimes abandoned slaves on the plantation when they fled to safety. One couple — the manager of the Cruger and Depeyster plantation and his wife — shared their memories of the uprising years later. While their reminiscences differed in some details, they both remembered leaving slaves behind — either to wait with the boat carrying their belongings until the tide rose, or to spend the night, apparently in the open, while the white family found a safer place to stay. The manager said that he returned for the slaves in the morning but they had escaped to the Seminoles, while his wife recalled the boat being intercepted by the Seminoles but said nothing about the fate of the slaves.²⁷⁷

Some enslaved people carried out feats of bravery on behalf of their masters. While other plantations burned to the ground, the Douglas Dummett plantation house, on the east bank of the Indian River, survived (at least initially) because a “faithful servant” hid on the property during the attack and managed to put out the fire. And in early February, men identified only as “two of gen. Hernandez’s negroes” (Hernandez was a plantation owner and a general in the east Florida militia) rode for over 30 miles, through a landscape that had been abandoned by white residents, past the Mala Compra and St. Joseph’s plantations — the latter engulfed in flames and guarded by Seminole sentries — and reported their observations in St. Augustine.²⁷⁸

Other slaves grasped the chance to flee, and fight, for freedom. While some white military memoirists insisted that few would back the Seminoles and voluntarily leave their “happy and secure state of servitude,” more senior officers, and men who knew Florida better, took a more sober view. Hernandez called the plantation slaves’ support for the uprising “the very worst feature of the whole of this war.” And General Jesup, shortly after he took command of the US forces in December 1836, wrote in an often-quoted letter to the secretary of war, “This, you may be assured, is a negro, not an Indian war; and if it be not speedily put down, the south will feel the effects of it on their slave population before the end of the next season.” Several hundred slaves are believed to have joined the uprising.²⁷⁹

A few months later, people enslaved by the American general Duncan Clinch almost managed to join the Seminoles but were caught at the last minute. A field slave was found talking (so the authorities believed) with Seminoles in a field near the woods outside the general’s house, which was doubling as a small fort. At least 11 people had planned to escape from the fort that night; one had managed to steal a rifle and hide it under the floor in the slave quarters. An army officer (who was based at the fort but heard about the incident second-hand) recorded additional detail in his journal: The conspirators

were ... to have gone off with a party of Seminoles, who were to have made a feint upon the pickets so that it might appear that the negroes were forced off. Their bundles were already made up and they began disposing of some of their truck [small possessions] to the soldiers, which causing suspicion, finally led to their detection. One of the negro women in the end confessing the plot. Upon the overseer’s going to the negro houses, a woman warned him away and then told him that the Indians were lying in wait not 50 yards ahead to shoot him.²⁸⁰



People enslaved on the Cruger and Depeyster plantation took part in the Seminole/Black Seminole attacks that launched the second Seminole war. The plantation ruins are now a public park.

Instead of making their break for freedom, “all the male negroes were secured, and . . . under guard employed in completing the defences.”²⁸¹

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As the east coast plantations burned, one Black Seminole father’s love for his own children is said to have inspired him to save the lives of a white mother and four daughters who he found hidden, half-starved and nearly overcome by fear and exhaustion, in the swamp. Left alone when the father of the family was drafted into the territory’s military defense, they had fled their home when their neighbor’s property went up in flames, and had spent four cold and hungry days in hiding. The baby’s cries gave away their hiding place. When the warrior, who was armed with an axe, found them, he was apparently moving through the swamp alone, though the war whoops of his comrades could be heard all around.

As the mother later told the story, his first reaction was to raise his axe and approach as if to kill them. But he soon “dropped his axe, and after contemplating the sad spectacle for a few moments, appeared much affected.” He had two children of his own, he told them; he had escaped from slavery, but they were still trapped on the plantation; if he killed these white children, surely “God would be angry, and might doom his little ones to a similar fate.” He promised to keep their secret, bring them supplies, and help them escape as soon as possible.

The warrior returned in the evening with food, water, and blankets salvaged from one of the ruined plantations; the following morning he led them to safety, at some risk to himself. His name is unknown, as is his fate and that of his own children. The woman he rescued referred to him as “the humane African (our deliverer).”²⁸²

Wartime Saint Augustine

As plantation residents fled to St. Augustine for safety, many of the slaves they brought with them were held, at the orders of the city government, on Anastasia Island, just east of the city. There, historians believe, they suffered badly without adequate shelter and food during an unusually cold winter.²⁸³

White residents remained fearful that black St. Augustinians would help the Seminoles or rise up themselves. But they sometimes undermined their own security interests. When, after the war broke out, they tried to organize self-defense patrols, they found that they had left the purchase of ammunition too late: “Most of the powder at the stores had been bought up by a party of Indians, just before the commencement of hostilities.” Civilian patrols suffered from absenteeism and from conflicts with drunk and disorderly soldiers, who seemed to drink a lot at taverns owned by free black men.²⁸⁴

Black Seminoles were able to infiltrate the city before and during the war, recruiting both enslaved and free black people for the war effort, and black residents of St. Augustine were able to cross into enemy territory and return. A

major in the Florida militia reported in July 1836 that his entire dismounted force was tied up just trying to prevent these movements.²⁸⁵

One enslaved man, Andrew Gué or Gay, escaped in summer 1836 but returned to the city at night to recruit more slaves and brag of his standing with the Seminoles. Gué joined a band led by John Caesar; he was wounded in the aftermath of that band's last raid in January 1837 and recaptured a few weeks later.²⁸⁶ (John Caesar is discussed in more detail near the end of this section.)

Free black St. Augustinians were mostly asked to contribute information and supplies rather than to fight. More than a year into the war, the insurgents were reportedly still being supplied with ammunition by a free black resident. Supporting them was punishable by enslavement or even death, but some were willing to take that risk. Free black people in Florida had seen their status and their freedoms erode sharply when Florida passed from Spanish to US control in 1821.²⁸⁷

One free black man who took up arms on the Seminole side was Joe Merritt, who belonged to a black family with deep roots in the city. In wartime St. Augustine, various conflicting stories attached to the Merritt family — Joe Merritt was on bad terms with his father, Stephen; Stephen Merritt was a Seminole ally like his son, or had briefly been captured by the Seminoles and escaped, or had had a falling out with John Caesar over money, or had never met him. The elder Merritt was accused of treason but acquitted; his son fought and died alongside John Caesar.²⁸⁸

Free black men's military options had also diminished under the US territorial government; among other things, they no longer served as officers or had their own military units. In spite of this, some chose to fight on the US side.²⁸⁹

One of these men was William Clarke, who served in several US militias from 1836 to 1838 — including a stint as a musician, during which he “wore out ‘two drum heads’” in five months. Clarke's family, both the black and white branches, had a tradition of military service; the same was true of other free black men who chose the same path. The limited military options open to them included serving as musicians and guides.²⁹⁰

Another free black man who fought on the US side was Benjamin Wiggins, the man who rallied retreating troops during the battle at the Dunlawton plantation. Wiggins was well known and respected in St. Augustine circles, with a career stretching back to the Spanish era, during which he served as a militiaman, interpreter, and river pilot and spent substantial time among the Seminoles. At the start of the second Seminole war, he worked as an express rider and military guide. Severely wounded during the Dunlawton battle, Wiggins continued to serve as a guide and an officer's “right hand man.” He died in St. Augustine during the war.²⁹¹

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The Black Seminole warrior John Caesar played a critical but short-lived role in the war; from the time he entered the historical record to the time he died was a little over a year. He was affiliated with Philip (sometimes referred to as Emathla or King Philip), the leader of the St. Johns River Seminoles.²⁹² Like other Black Seminoles who took on leadership roles, he has been described both as the chief's slave and as his trusted counselor. Unlike some of his Black Seminole counterparts, his personal life is almost completely unknown, and no portraits of him appear to exist.

John Caesar was probably about 60 years old when he entered the war, and he appears to have been living free for a long time. He was described by contemporaries as an "Indian Negro" — that is, someone who had lived with the Seminoles long-term and adopted their ways (as distinct, for example, from a recently escaped slave or someone legally recognized as free by the Spanish or American government). Whether he was born free or had spent time in US/British-style slavery, and how he came into Philip's orbit, nobody knows, but he was well acclimated to living free in Florida. He was said to have a wife on a plantation near St. Augustine, but nothing else is known about her. American officials described him as highly intelligent.²⁹³

The parts of John Caesar's career that made it into the documentary record are few but critical. His first known contribution to the war effort was to help organize the east coast plantation uprising.

A little over two months later (on March 5, 1836), he may have tried to broker a truce with US troops on the Withlacoochee River, during what has come to be known as the siege of Camp Izard. The Americans had been pinned down since February 27, but they were expecting reinforcements, and the mixed black and Indian force knew that. That night a black man hailed the camp to say that the Seminoles were ready to discuss a truce. Contemporary accounts vary on whether that man was John Caesar or the better known Abraham, and on whether he had been sent by the Seminoles or had gone at his own initiative.²⁹⁴

John Caesar may have been the only representative of the St. Johns River Seminoles at the siege and the negotiations. One contemporary writer said that his overture to the whites angered the other Seminole fighters so much that they threatened to kill him and Osceola had to intervene to save him. But whether or not he was the original emissary, and whether or not the Seminole leadership originally supported the idea, they were there for the truce talks the next day, and both John Caesar and Abraham were there to interpret. The talks started off well, but ended when the Americans' long-awaited reinforcements arrived and start firing. The Seminoles disappeared into the woods, and nothing more came of the truce talks.²⁹⁵

As 1836 progressed, US forces began to get the upper hand on the Withlacoochee River, driving the survivors east, toward John Caesar's home territory and that of his patron, Philip. There, after their dramatic early successes, Philip seems to have lost his fire; one historian has referred to his subsequent actions as desultory, spasmodic, and apathetic.²⁹⁶ But John Caesar fought on.

He slipped in and out of St. Augustine apparently at will — conspiring, organizing, and buying supplies — and built up small guerrilla bands consisting mostly of recently escaped plantation slaves, with a few free black men and a handful of experienced Seminole/Black Seminole warriors. Some of his new fighters had escaped from prominent St. Augustine residents, including the commander of the local militia. In January 1837, they began raiding again, this time on plantations closer to the city.²⁹⁷

On January 17, 1837, John Caesar and his band raided a plantation just west of St. Augustine to steal horses. The raid failed; they escaped, but a posse tracked them the following night to their camp on the ruins of another plantation, near present-day Daytona Beach. John Caesar and two others (including Joe Merritt) were killed, a third man (Andrew Gué) was wounded and eventually captured, and about half a dozen men escaped.²⁹⁸

No one knows where John Caesar was buried. Historians have given him much of the credit for recruiting the east coast plantation slaves who helped launch the war, in what was essentially also the largest slave uprising in North America, which he led together with his patron, Philip.²⁹⁹

He is considered one of the most important Black Seminole war leaders, for both his military and clandestine activities. Even in death, he struck fear into the hearts of St. Augustinians, as the belongings he and his band left behind could be identified as coming from shops in that city, which suggested that they had allies there and had been able to enter and leave at will. He, and the fighters he led or inspired, tied up military forces that might otherwise have been free to fight on other fronts, and created a persistent threat that helped convince US forces that this enemy could not be taken lightly.³⁰⁰

Collapse of the Fort Dade capitulation

A little over a year into the war, there was a brief surge of optimism that peace might be at hand — a peace that hinged on significant concessions to the Black Seminoles, whose influence on the Seminoles was clear and who were bitterly opposed to surrender. A tenuous ceasefire in February 1837 led to talks in early March at Fort Dade (about nine miles north of present-day Dade City).³⁰¹

The Black Seminole leader Abraham played a critical role in the negotiations. An army officer described him as “a non-committal man, with a countenance which none can read, a person erect and active, and in stature over six feet ... an enemy

by no means to be despised.” The officer described Abraham’s first entry into the American camp that February:

Abraham made his appearance, bearing a white flag on a small stick which he had cut in the woods, and walked up to the tent of Gen. Jesup with perfect dignity and composure.

He stuck the staff of his flag in the ground, made a salute or bow with his hand, without bending his body, and then waited for the advance of the General, with the most complete self-possession. He has since stated that he expected to be hung, but concluded to die, if he must, like a man, but that he would make one effort to save his people.³⁰²

The result of the talks was an agreement known as the Fort Dade capitulation, which committed the Seminoles to leave Florida and resettle west of the Mississippi. During the talks, the Seminoles held firm that any agreement must also apply to the black people living among them.³⁰⁴ In recognition of this demand, Article 5 of the agreement stipulated that

the Seminoles, and their allies who come in and emigrate to the west, shall be secure in their lives and property; that their negroes, their bona fide property, shall accompany them to the west, and that their cattle and ponies shall be paid for by the United States at a fair valuation.³⁰⁵

The ambiguity of the terms “allies” and “property” would soon lead to much grief, but at the time of signing, all parties seem to have been satisfied with them. The young Black Seminole warrior John Horse (his name recorded as John Ca-wy-ya) was one of the signers of the agreement. Jesup, who was in charge of the Florida campaign, was optimistic that peace was at hand.³⁰⁶

Starting in late March, Seminoles and Black Seminoles began to gather in two camps, one at Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay and a larger one at Fort Mellon (in present-day Sanford) to await relocation. In Tampa Bay, 26 ships waited to transport them west. They continued to trickle in slowly well past the original deadline of April 10, and numbers in the camps fluctuated.³⁰⁷

The delays were partly due to the difficult logistics of dissolving households, selling livestock, and preparing to travel halfway across a continent, but trust between the Americans and the Seminoles was also fragile. Rumors that the Americans were planning to harm or even kill surrendering Seminoles led some to abandon the camps at least temporarily. Other exchanges showed greater trust and cordiality. When Osceola, who had been deeply reluctant to endorse the agreement, finally came in, he slept in the Fort Mellon commander’s tent and arranged a ball game to entertain the troops.³⁰⁸

In the camps, complications soon arose, including an outbreak of measles. Slaveholders who had (or claimed to have) lost slaves to the Seminoles began



Black Seminole warrior John Horse was known by many names. The most common alternatives were Juan Caballo (the Spanish equivalent of John Horse, which pre-dated the English version) and Gopher John (a nickname based on the tortoise, not the rodent). Other variations included Cavallo, Ca-wy-ya, Coh-wy-yah, Coheia, Cowaniou, Cowaya, Cowiya, and Ko-wa-e.³⁰³

entering the camps, which caused many blacks and Indians to flee. Jesup complained on May 17, not for the first time, that “the arrival of several Floridians in camp for the purpose of looking after and apprehending negroes spreads general consternation among them. Those that were in camp fled, and carried the panic with them, and we cannot now induce them to return.”³⁰⁹

Florida planters and the Florida press vigorously opposed the terms of the Fort Dade agreement. Planters held protest meetings, arguing that their right to regain control of their human chattel was of “scarcely less moment” than ending the war, and sent formal complaints to Congress and to the secretary of war. Jesup had issued an order (general order 79) on April 5 banning white civilians from entering the territory where Seminoles were gathering; but in early May, after planters complained, he modified the order, creating so many exceptions that it became nearly meaningless.³¹⁰

Soon the question of who among the Black Seminoles was protected under the terms of the Fort Dade capitulation — in either of the two categories it established, “allies” and “bona fide property” — became critical. Whatever Jesup originally thought, and whatever he encouraged the signers of the agreement to think, he came to exclude black people who had joined the Seminoles during the war (whether as runaways or captives) from its protection.³¹¹

Over the space of a month, his official correspondence expressed a kaleidoscope of views on the subject. To his superiors in Washington, he emphasized the need to ensure that the Black Seminoles felt secure. To the head of the Florida militia, he held out hope that black fugitives who had joined the Seminoles during the war would be recaptured and re-enslaved. Another letter to Washington contained both messages. Writing to a fellow military officer, he distinguished between runaways and captives. And to a slaveholder in St. Augustine, he made an ambiguous promise that not only recent escapees/captives but also “those who absconded before the war” would be kept behind in Florida (and presumably returned to slavery) — though for the latter group, he said, “I have no right to require the Indians to surrender them.”³¹²

Whether these messages represented a change in approach over time, a conscious attempt to create a false sense of safety, an honest semantic distinction, or simply a muddle (as he told one correspondent in early May, “I hope you will be able to make out the sense of this letter ... I am a good deal confused”), it spelled danger for the Black Seminoles.³¹³

After all his efforts to prevent other white people from alarming the Black Seminoles, Jesup himself sent an aggressive message via the Fort Mellon commander on May 25:

If you should see Powell [Osceola] again, I wish you to tell him that I intend to send exploring and surveying parties into every part of the country during the summer; and that I shall send out and take all the negroes who belong to white people, and he must not allow the Indians or Indian negroes to mix with them. Tell him I am sending to Cuba for blood hounds to trail them, and I intend to hang every one of them who does not come in.³¹⁴

It is not clear whether the message was delivered.

Only three days after he issued general order 79, Jesup also negotiated, in what was apparently a not-very-well-kept secret, an agreement with Coa Hadjo and possibly other chiefs to turn in the black people who had joined them during the war. Coa Hadjo was second-in-command of the St. Johns River Seminoles, whose black allies presumably included veterans of the east coast plantation uprising that had launched the war and helped ensure the Seminoles' early successes. If so, it would have been a spectacular betrayal. Many black people were in fact seized from the relocation camps and returned to slavery.³¹⁵

Eventually, the threats outweighed the promises and whatever trust had been established by the Fort Dade agreement was broken beyond repair. On the night of June 2, the emigrant camps emptied, led by Osceola, John Horse, and the militant Miccosukee (also spelled Mikasuki) chief Sam Jones or Arpeika. A few Seminole chiefs, including Micanopy, resisted and were taken along by force. About 700 people left the camps overnight and “fled to their former fastnesses, far in the interior, and once more determined to defend their liberties or die in the attempt.”³¹⁶

The Fort Dade capitulation, which had seemed so close to ending the war, had “entirely failed,” Jesup reported. The war, less than halfway into its second year, would drag on for another five. The short-lived peace process had required the Black Seminoles to navigate a welter of rapidly changing agendas and loyalties and to keep their footing amid secret plots and broken promises. Many survived, but about 200 were lost, including a substantial part of the black leadership. While John Horse escaped, Abraham remained a captive. Jesup later remarked, “I have promised Abraham the freedom of his family, if he be faithful to us; and I shall certainly hang him if he be not faithful.” Abraham served the US Army as an interpreter and emissary until he emigrated west in 1839.³¹⁷

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In the months that followed, some maroons left the Seminoles and surrendered to US forces — perhaps overwhelmed by the hardships of life on the run, or seeing their bonds with the Indians deteriorate under the strain of war.³¹⁸ Newspapers reported in September 1837 that

Four negroes ... who were captured by the Indians in 1835, made their escape and delivered themselves up ... They were delighted to rejoin the whites, and complain of hard fare among the Indians; they have been living on nothing but coonty [a starchy food derived from a species of cycad], alligators, and fish.³¹⁹

There is reason to take the words “captured” and “delighted” with a grain of salt. Given the brutal punishments that were routinely inflicted on slaves for trying to escape, it seems unlikely that people would admit to running away if they had an alternative. During the war, “captured” was sometimes used as a euphemism for “helped to escape.”³²⁰ As one 1985 history put it: “Some of them [the returning slaves] told tales of dreadful hardship, even of abuse at the hands of the Seminoles. This was what slaveholders wanted to hear; they were sure that Negroes were better off in slavery than in any other condition.”³²¹

One such defector, John Philip, turned himself in at the ruins of the Bulow plantation in September 1837 and guided US forces to the capture of Philip, John Caesar’s patron and the leader of the St. Johns River Seminoles, who was camped about 25 miles away on the ruins of the Dunlawton plantation.³²²

Elusive compromise

The second Seminole war was arguably fought to preserve slavery as much as to remove Indians to the west. But pursuit of these two goals often worked at cross purposes, given the importance of Black Seminoles to the larger Seminole community, their military prowess, and their fierce opposition to surrender.³²³ This tension persisted almost to war’s end.

A contemporary writer on the war summed up the argument for compromise, noting that the fugitives had become accustomed to freedom and had developed close ties with the Seminoles:

These habits could not be subdued, nor these ties broken, without a struggle ... It was folly to turn the negro, thus imbued, and with such ties, upon his white master ... The independence and freedom so long enjoyed, unchecked, had unfitted him for any usefulness to the claimant. To have deprived the Indians of this property, on surrendering, would have greatly embarrassed the favorable results anticipated. True policy dictated otherwise. The negro, returned to his original owner, might have remained a few days, when he again would have fled to the swamps, more vindictive than ever; while his Indian master, between whom there was cherished a mutual affection, had embarked for Arkansas, dissatisfied and deeply wronged.

Prolonging the fight would also have been even more costly, he argued:

The negroes, from the commencement of the Florida war, have, for their numbers, been the most formidable foe, more blood-thirsty, active, and revengeful, than the Indian ... Ten resolute negroes, with a knowledge of the country, are sufficient to desolate the frontier, from one extent to the other.³²⁴

But officials were caught — as the undoing of the Fort Dade capitulation clearly showed — between military considerations and the demands of slaveholders.

US willingness to compromise developed in fits and starts — with promises made, broken, made again, kept for some people and not others, implemented unofficially and then officially, on the military field and finally, formally, in Washington. Eventually the US position came around again to one similar to that offered at the Fort Dade capitulation, but more complicated and ambiguous and much less well documented.

Outsiders divided the black people living with the Seminoles into multiple shifting and overlapping categories — recent runaways, long-term runaways, slaves captured by the Seminoles during the war (and, theoretically at least, either set free or enslaved by them), slaves owned by Seminoles (through purchase, inheritance, gift, or capture), vassals owing their patrons only a light annual tribute (usually of agricultural goods), and free blacks.³²⁵

These labels could determine an individual's fate, but it is difficult to imagine how anyone could keep track of, much less verify, each person's status. As one historian summed it up, "The blacks emigrated under a tangled web of legal and social arrangements." Even the way they surrendered during the war — alone or with Seminoles — could affect how their claims to freedom were treated later.³²⁶

The first major step toward compromise was taken at the Fort Dade capitulation but failed, as described above. Another took place after the January 1838 battles on the Loxahatchee River, at Fort Jupiter. The Americans initially built a fort at Jupiter Inlet to recover from the Loxahatchee battles (among other things, after fighting and marching through sawgrass, 400 soldiers no longer had shoes). Both sides had apparently fought to a state of exhaustion and misery.³²⁷

General Jesup sent a Black Seminole messenger to the chiefs, and by early March, a tentative truce had been reached and several hundred people had come in and camped near the fort, waiting for Washington's approval of the agreement.³²⁸ The wait appears to have been a congenial affair, with ball games and dances, plenty of liquor and cigars, and visits back and forth between the Indian and army camps, which were about a mile apart.³²⁹

Jesup promised the Black Seminoles who were still at large freedom if they would leave the Indians and surrender. And he promised the Indians that he would try to persuade Washington to let them remain in south Florida. But he was adamant that the blacks had to leave. His promises to the Black Seminoles were apparently not written down until years later, and were ambiguous and inconsistent enough to ensure continued uncertainty and difficulty long after the warriors and their families had relocated to the west.³³⁰

On March 17, Jesup received word that the secretary of war had rejected his proposal; the Seminoles would have to leave Florida. On March 19, he

summoned them to a council to be held the next day. It's possible that the Seminoles had gotten wind of the bad news, since they didn't respond to the summons and they appeared to be getting ready to leave.

So Jesup ordered his troops to surround the Seminole camp and seize its residents. In an attack that started before dawn and went on for at least two days, US troops rounded up hundreds of warriors and civilians — a betrayal of trust (and not the first of its kind) that damaged Jesup's reputation but did far worse harm to the Seminoles' chances of survival in Florida. In the weeks after this calamity, hundreds of other black and Indian people surrendered, including Alligator and John Horse.³³¹ And yet the war dragged on.

It was apparently not until 1841 that Jesup's ambiguous informal promise to the Black Seminoles was formalized in print, and then only in letters between military and government officials. Meanwhile, the pressure from slaveholders continued. A captain stationed at Tampa Bay reported in March of that year that, during talks on emigration, six white strangers had arrived, claiming they had authorization from Washington and asking to speak with the Indians, but the Indians adamantly refused to see them: "All the Indians said at once, they came here to look out for Negroes, and if they were not sent off, the Negroes that were out with the hostiles would prevent them from [coming] in." Military officials sent the whites packing.

Later the same month, the secretary of war instructed the commander of the Florida forces that blacks should not be seized if "the effect of this would be to prevent the Indians from coming in and removing. This should by all means be avoided" — but added that unresolved slaveholder claims could be pursued again after relocation.³³²

By August, the Florida forces had a new commander, who reported: "Indians have been solemnly guaranteed retention of slaves indifferently ... to the mode or time ... they obtained possession." At this late date he still felt the need to justify his decision: "If ... the swamps of Florida ... become the resort of runaways, their intelligence, so superior to the Indian, might impose upon the general government a contest, quadruplicate in time and treasure than that now being waged." The office of the secretary of war confirmed in September that this was the desired approach.³³³

Black guides and interpreters

After they surrendered or were captured, a number of Black Seminoles served the US military, willingly or under duress, as interpreters, scouts, and guides. They went into the swamps and forests seeking to persuade others to surrender, participated in negotiations, and sometimes took up arms. Sometimes they were able to establish rapport with their former comrades, and other times they died trying.³³⁴ Five of their stories are outlined below.

Abraham

After playing a critical military and diplomatic role in the first year and a half of the war, the Black Seminole warrior Abraham was detained by the Americans when the Fort Dade capitulation failed. He then served as an army interpreter and guide for almost two years.³³⁵ In September 1837 he dictated a letter to the chief Coa Hadjo, an old friend, urging him to come in.

I wish you to remember that you and I went to Arkansas together and now recollect that one rainy evening after passing a hill we sat down together on a bee tree which we had found & felled. The country was a good one ... You said "Abram, I used to think that all the whites hated us, but I now believe they wish us to live" ...

You have since talked to the General as you then talked to me. You did not know who would Kill you first — the whites or yr own people. If you can believe me listen to me — and I have been known to you so long that I think I have a right to expect credit for my talk.

Come in with as many of yr people as you can & if you can bring none come alone. Do not sacrifice yourself to the advice of crazy men ...

Think in a minute as much as in a day and act.³³⁶

The following month, Coa Hadjo was one of the warriors seized with Osceola under a flag of truce and imprisoned in the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine; he emigrated west in 1838.³³⁷

Abraham participated in the talks at Fort Jupiter; later, he helped to persuade the Seminole chief Alligator and his band to turn themselves in. On April 25, 1838, he wrote a letter to Jesup, asking to be released from service:

Myself and Tony Barnet have done everything promised by us, and expect the General will do by us as he said at the beginning of this Campaign ... We wish to get in writing from the General, the agreement made with us ... I cannot do any more than I have. I have done all I can, my heart has been true since I came in.

But the army required him to stay on as an interpreter (albeit one of its best-paid ones) for almost another year. He left Tampa for the west in February 1839.³³⁸

Primus

If the various mentions in the histories all refer to the same man (which is plausible but not at all certain), Primus had a complicated war. He was enslaved, but his wife lived among the Seminoles. He worked for the Fort King sutler, who was killed with Wiley Thompson at the start of the war. Three days after that incident, at the end of the first battle on the Withlacoochee River, the Americans sent him out as a scout, and he came back with a report on Seminole casualties.³³⁹

Two months later, he was reportedly with the Seminoles during the siege of Camp Izard (February 27 to March 6, 1836), also on the Withlacoochee. But after the siege, somehow back with the Americans, he was sent out again to scout.

Accounts vary on how often he went back and forth between the US and Seminole forces, but eventually he failed to return to the US side. A first-person account of the war published in late 1836 mentioned a rumor that he had “gone down to the seashore.”³⁴⁰

Primus spent less than a year with the Seminoles before he was captured by Creek allies of the US forces near the Ocklawaha River in January 1837. He gave up some information about the Seminoles (possibly under duress): Osceola was sick, he said, and accompanied by only three warriors, but able to raise a force of 100.³⁴¹

After his capture, Primus “became a faithful interpreter” and emissary for the Americans. One 20th century historian seemed to suggest that he may have been working almost as a double agent: “His services as messenger and informant during the earliest stage of the Seminole War may have been as valuable to the people among whom his wife was living [ie, the Seminoles] as to the generals who employed him.”³⁴²

Military correspondence in late 1841 contained a brief reference to “Primus, who ... is getting infirm.” But he was still at work the following April, when “old Primus” was listed as interpreter during talks between the commander of the Florida forces and Halleck Tustenuggee, the last major chief to surrender, and he accompanied the chief back to his camp at the end of the first day of talks. Primus may have won his freedom in the end; there was at least one man with free papers by that name in Indian Territory in 1850.³⁴³

Murray

A black man named Murray came to be recognized as “the best and most useful” interpreter and “the best guide in the nation.” Captured by US forces in January 1837, Murray was listed in military records as having three different putative owners, two Seminole and one white.³⁴⁴ In summer 1837, a man who claimed to own him wrote to the army to see if any of his missing slaves had shown up among the war captives. Jesup wrote back:

Murray was taken in January, and is now here; he will be so important to us as a guide, should the army take the field in the fall, that I have thought it necessary to retain him; should he be killed, I will be responsible that the Government pay for him. Pay will be allowed for him as a guide.³⁴⁵

A few months later, however, Jesup promised Murray that if he remained loyal, Jesup would free him, as well as his wife and his cousin Katy (also spelled Caty) — the Seminole slave who fell into the hands of Indian agent Gad Humphreys and then was captured by the Seminoles and recaptured by the Americans (see the “Kidnappers and swindlers” section above) — if he remained loyal. In May 1838, on his last day as commander of the Florida forces, Jesup signed a statement confirming this promise, at least as far as Murray’s own freedom went.³⁴⁶

But Murray did not live long enough to see whether that promise would be kept. In May 1839, he and other black interpreters played a critical role in arranging a new round of peace talks, which were initially labeled a major success by the US general who led them. But before the month was out, Murray was killed — not, as Jesup had thought might happen, by a former Seminole ally, but by an American soldier: a sergeant who had complained about the accomplished and widely respected interpreter’s “insolence” and, enraged when his superior officer didn’t investigate as quickly as he wanted, shot Murray to death in his sleep.³⁴⁷

Murray’s cousin Katy made it safely to the west, where she lived at Fort Gibson and worked as a cook. But her freedom, for which Murray had arguably paid with his life, remained precarious and threatened, as it did for many of the relocated Black Seminoles. In 1845 she and two children were kidnapped but eventually rescued. In 1850, multiple slaveholders, both white and Indian, were still pursuing complicated legal claims against her, and she may have eventually been returned to slavery. What happened to Murray’s wife is unclear.³⁴⁸

Sandy Perryman

Also supporting the May 1839 peace talks was Sandy Perryman, “a negro interpreter of considerable cleverness.” Perryman was sent out from Key Biscayne to approach chiefs in the southern part of the peninsula.

Entering Seminole territory during the war could, of course, be dangerous. The general who headed the talks noted that “it had been given out that the Indians would ... destroy any person that might approach them with a flag. This threat [had] been executed more than once.” And a newspaper article describing conditions just before the talks said that the senior chief Sam Jones (Arpeika), who had a strong influence in the area where Perryman traveled, “had sent in word, that any stranger who approached his camp, under any circumstances whatever, should be put to death.” However, several black and Indian men (in some cases accompanied by women and children) were sent out to approach “the hostiles.” It’s not clear how much choice they had in this, but their persuasive skills must have been up to the task, because a number of chiefs — including Sam Jones, although he did not personally attend — agreed to give the talks a try.³⁴⁹

Negotiations resulted in an agreement under which the participating chiefs would move with their people to a designated area in southern Florida. The agreement had a number of weaknesses: Many white Floridians vehemently opposed it; senior military officers doubted it would do any good; it was not written down; it did not specify how long the new arrangement was meant to last (the Americans had no intention of making it permanent); and the chiefs who agreed to it did not represent all of the Indians remaining in Florida. All the

same, the general who organized the talks was so convinced of their success that he announced that the war was over.³⁵⁰

Under the terms of the agreement, a trading post was established two months later on the Caloosahatchee River. But within days, the store and the army camp guarding it were attacked, and 16 soldiers and civilians were killed. Sandy Perryman was captured in the attack and another black interpreter, named Sampson, disappeared.³⁵¹

Sampson surfaced two years later with a gruesome story of torture, murder, and terror. Sandy Perryman had been burned alive, he reported, four days after being captured, and he himself had been threatened with the same fate several times, but Billy Bowlegs interceded on his behalf; another prisoner from the trading post had had his head bashed in. Sampson had been unable to escape for two years, he said, but finally saw an opening and ran for it.³⁵²

The information Sampson provided helped US advances against the Seminoles and was considered credible. (A newspaper report published a few weeks after the attack gave one detail that seemed to diverge from his version; it said Perryman had been found “dead on the ground,” not tied to a pine tree and burned.)³⁵³

Sandy Perryman paid with his life for his affiliation (whether voluntary or involuntary) with the American forces — but this did not earn him much recognition. Instead, he became the target of at least two unproven (and in one case, highly implausible) accusations.

Articles appearing in Florida newspapers claimed that he had heavy-handedly interfered in tribal politics to install more cooperative men as chiefs. One paper said that he “deposed” Sam Jones and “appointed” commoners to attend the peace talks as chiefs. Later, reporting his death, the same paper suggested that in dying he had “atoned [sic] for his offences.” Another paper — in an article so virulently opposed to the peace process that it was headlined “Shame! Shame! Shame!” — claimed that Perryman had been heard saying that he “found Sam Jones so thick headed and Wild Cat such a fool that he ... made Chitto Tustenuggee chief.”³⁵⁴

Aside from the unlikelihood of such a project succeeding or even being attempted, given the racial and military makeup of the era, there is ample contemporary evidence that Perryman’s arrangements had the full approval of both US military officials and Sam Jones, the chief who had supposedly been “deposed.”³⁵⁵

Another accusation — made by the general who headed the failed peace talks, in a report written several months after the incident in which Perryman lost his life — was that “the interpreter Sandy, a negro of great influence among the Indians,” had spread a rumor that the peace deal was a trap and that the Americans still intended to forcibly remove them from Florida.³⁵⁶

In fact, the Americans did intend to do that — the United States was still fully committed to Indian removal. And this truth hardly needed Sandy Perryman to publicize it, since it was discussed openly in Florida newspapers, including in a statement by the US secretary of war.

Just before the peace talks started, a “friendly Indian” who had gone over to the “hostiles” was accused of spreading the same rumor. And a journal kept by a military officer present at the talks identified another suspect in the rumor: “Genl. T[aylor] believes [it] to have been told them by the whites in the Territory, many of whom are using every exertion to continue the war” (in order to maintain lucrative military contracts and other war-related opportunities).³⁵⁷

John Horse

John Horse, who surrendered in April 1838, left Florida for the west that June. But after three months he asked to return to Florida to help persuade others to turn themselves in. By May 1839 at the latest, he was back and working for US forces. As the pool of interpreters shrank through emigration or death, his services were in increasing demand as both an interpreter and a negotiator, and he persuaded many Seminoles, including Wildcat, to come in.³⁵⁸

While his main role seems to have been as an interpreter and negotiator, he also participated in military actions.³⁵⁹ In April 1842, he fought in the last major battle of the war. A contemporary writer described his role like this:

The fire of the enemy was concentrated principally upon the Indian guides and negro interpreters ... The tall figure of the negro interpreter, Gopher John, his loud voice, and negro accent, the repeated discharge of his unerring rifle, well known to the Indians as he was, made him a conspicuous object of assault. The balls flew by him so thick, striking the trees around, that he suspected his courage was oozing out, when, pulling from his pocket a well-filled flask [he said] to an officer by his side, ‘I feel all over, mighty queer, de Ingen fight so strong! I must take a big un;’ and suiting the action to the word, he drained his bottle, reprimed his rifle, whooped, and was soon lost in the midst of foliage and smoke.³⁶⁰

The target of that operation was a chief named Halleck Tustenuggee, who was holed up in a village not far from the old black settlement of Pilaklikaha, which had been destroyed in 1836. Halleck, most of his warriors, and all of the band’s noncombatants escaped, but their supplies were exhausted. Within a few days they approached the US camp asking for talks; but the talks dragged on, and the US forces grew suspicious and impatient. Eventually they raided the Indian camp and took the chief and his people captive; John Horse participated in that raid as a guide and interpreter.³⁶¹

John Horse’s last known action in the war took place about a week later; he left Florida for good in July 1842, a month before the war officially ended. During his stint with the US army, he had persuaded more than 500 Seminoles to surrender.

Military officers who worked with him remembered him as an excellent hunter, fisherman, and tracker — and as a first-rate cook who enjoyed dressing elegantly when he could afford it. One 19th century military historian remarked that he “could smell an Indian a mile off [and] follow a trail by moonlight, at a gallop over a burnt prairie.”³⁶²

When he left he carried with him two letters, signed by army generals, confirming his freedom and that of his wife and children, and apparently enough savings to get him started in his new life. He was 30 years old.³⁶³

After Florida

By 1842, when the second Seminole war ended, most Black Seminoles had left Florida. A small number participated in the third Seminole war (1855–1858), including Ben Bruno, who left Florida in May 1858 with Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco) and was described by *Harper’s Weekly Magazine* as the chief’s slave but also as his “guide, philosopher, and friend.”³⁶⁴

Relocated to the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), the Black Seminoles initially worked to establish the same kind of loose tributary alliance they had had with the Seminoles in Florida. But under the stresses of the new environment, relations between the two groups deteriorated. White and Indian slave raiders became increasingly aggressive, sometimes targeting children.³⁶⁵

Steps by US authorities to regularize the Black Seminoles’ legal status were halting and contentious, and within less than a decade, nearly every promise made to them during the war in Florida had been broken and they faced mass re-enslavement.³⁶⁶

So some of them took their fate into their own hands again. In 1849 and 1850, John Horse and Wildcat led the first of several groups to flee south through Texas and into Mexico, where slavery had been outlawed in 1829. The Texas–Mexico border was a turbulent place — with the Mexican–American war (1846–1848) a recent memory, Comanches and other *indios bárbaros* fighting US and Mexican control, Texas slaves fleeing south into Mexico, and debt peons, who faced almost equally grim servitude in Mexico, fleeing north — and many who fled were killed or recaptured.³⁶⁷

Even in Mexico, slave raiders continued to pursue them, and new fugitives continued to join the community. In return for safe haven in Mexico, Black Seminoles, now called Mascogos, fought Comanches and Apaches, and sometimes helped Mexican authorities repel invasions by “filibusters” (military adventurers) from Texas.³⁶⁸



Ben Bruno

John Horse went on to a long career of military and civic service. As one historian recently summarized, “Over a long life he defeated leading US generals, met two Presidents, served as an adviser to Seminole chiefs, a Scout for the US Army, and a decorated officer in the Mexican military. He defended free black settlements on three frontiers.” He died in Mexico City in 1882.³⁶⁹

The interpreter and ex-warrior Abraham had a mixed career after leaving Florida. The ship that carried him west in 1839 was the scene of a bitterly emotional leave-taking, according to one observer: “The women were very reluctant to go and upbraided the men with cowardice ... The vessel departed amid their lamentations and taunts.” In the Indian Territory, he worked off-and-on as an interpreter. He seems to have been drawn into the conflict between Seminole militants and accommodationists, and to have sided (unlike John Horse and Wildcat) with the latter; he and his family also suffered at least one attack by slave raiders.

Abraham’s last stint as an interpreter was a high-profile one: He joined an 1852 delegation sent to Florida to persuade Billy Bowlegs to emigrate, and toured east coast cities with the chief. After that, he appears to have withdrawn to his home on the Little River and raised cattle; according to one newspaper account, he lived until at least 1870.³⁷⁰

After slavery was abolished in the United States, some Mascogos settled in Texas, some eventually returned to Indian Territory, and some remained in Mexico. In 1870, Black Seminole warriors in Texas joined the US army, forming the Detachment of Seminole Negro Indian Scouts. There, they continued to be recognized for their military prowess and tracking skills, while their people continued to struggle for land and a living. The black communities in Indian Territory, already decimated, underwent further suffering and dislocation during the US civil war and struggled to gain a foothold after it; the survivors were eventually recognized as members of the Seminole nation.³⁷¹

The Seminole Negro Indian Scouts were disbanded in 1914. The Seminole tribal roll closed in 1907, the same year Oklahoma became a state. The Mascogos’ land grant in Coahuila, Mexico, called Nacimiento de los Negros, was confirmed in 1887 and again in 1919, and the community has survived to this day.³⁷²

From Florida, black people seeking freedom continued to flee to the Bahamas until the civil war. Many who fled in the 1820s settled clandestinely at first on the more remote islands, especially Andros; but by the end of the decade they had been recognized as free British subjects. Before their discovery by British officials in 1828, they had already built a church and started a school. The Bahamas community, too, has survived to present times.³⁷³

Andrew Gué, the escaped St. Augustine slave who fought alongside John Caesar during the second Seminole war but was recaptured two months after John

Caesar's death, made another break for freedom after the war. In July 1843, he fled St. Augustine with six other men in a stolen boat, traveling down Florida's east coast to Key Biscayne and from there to the Bahamas — an exploit that caught the attention of British and American abolitionists and created diplomatic tension between the United States and Britain. Free black Bahamians paid for a lawyer for the fugitives. In the end, the Bahamas refused to extradite them, and they appear to have remained free men.³⁷⁴

Mary Ashley, the Prospect Bluff veteran who was captured and sold into slavery, was still fighting for her own and her children's freedom a quarter-century later — enlisting the help of the British consul in Cuba based on the status as a British subject she had acquired at Prospect Bluff. She no longer had the papers she received at the fort, and British officials tried to verify her claim in the government archives. Most of what we know about her comes from a letter Edward Nicolls wrote in 1843 confirming that she was one of his recruits. It is not clear whether her claim succeeded.³⁷⁵

For those who were brave or desperate enough to reach for it, and the smaller number who were fortunate enough to grasp it, the ultimate prize of the maroons' perilous journey was freedom and a chance to live in peace. As fugitives from slavery, some may have been just a few years or a generation removed from Africa. All of them no doubt experienced pain and fear and the wrenching loss of beloved people, places, and beliefs. But whether as individuals they experienced prosperity or ruin, their tenacity and courage would help to shape the soul of America.



The family of Ben July, a sergeant in the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts, at Seminole Camp outside Brackettville, Texas, in the 1870s.

Notes

The source notes use abbreviations to refer to American State Papers (ASP), an archival collection at the Library of Congress, and three sections of that collection: Foreign Relations (FR), Indian Affairs (IA), and Military Affairs (MA). This is one of several collections cited in the notes that have made materials available online; the internet addresses for these collections are listed at the top of the bibliography.

¹ Bird, *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Etienne-Gray, *Black Seminole Indians*; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*; Lozano and Mock, *My Black Seminole ancestors*; Mock, *Dreaming with the ancestors*; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*; Nichols, *Line of liberty*; Porter, *Black Seminoles*; Sivad, Juan Caballo. Excellent studies of escape and marronage with a broader geographical scope include Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*; Kelly, *Masterless people*; and Price, *Maroon societies*.

² Florentino and Amantino, *Runaways and quilombolas*, 712, 737; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 116, 118, 145, 279-280; Schweningen, *Maroonage*, 16.

³ Williams, *Sunshine and shadow*, 12.

⁴ Anthony Dawson, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, Oklahoma. Some transcripts of interviews conducted for the Federal Writers' Project were heavily edited, including through the introduction of dialect and nonstandard spellings that did not accurately reflect the interviewees' speech patterns. (For a discussion of this, see for example Blassingame, *Slave testimony*, xvii-l, and Library of Congress, *A note on the language of the narratives*.) In spite of these distortions, the interviewees' words deserve attention. Two shorter interview collections, conducted slightly earlier by more highly trained interviewers, are John Cade's *Out of the mouths of ex-slaves* and Ophelia Settle Egypt's *Unwritten history of slavery*.

⁵ John Fields, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, Indiana.

⁶ Berlin, *Generations*; Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Cade, *Out of the mouths of ex-slaves*; Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*; Egypt, *Unwritten history of slavery*; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*. Many former slaves spoke or wrote about daring and inventive escape techniques, including William Craft (Craft, *Running*); Octave Johnson, interviewed in Louisiana in 1863 by the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission (Blassingame, *Slave testimony*, 394-395); Isaac Williams (Williams, *Sunshine and shadow*); and Samuel Simeon Andrews and Gus Smith, interviewed in the 1930s by the Federal Writers Project (*Slave narratives*, Florida and Missouri). A short selection of accounts by former slaves about escapes during the slavery era has been published online by the National Humanities Center at <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text8/runawayswpa.pdf>.

⁷ Baptist, *Creating an old south*, 79; Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 89-92; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 63-64, 210-213; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 156; Riordan, *Finding freedom*, 35; Schweningen, *Maroonage*, 14.

⁸ On George and Lettus: Baptist, *Creating an old south*, 79. Also, Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 46, 74, 87-92, 134; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 50, 63-64, 213, 233; Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana* (digital edition), "Flight from slavery was often a family affair," "The runaways left in families," "Here we have one family"; Maris-Wolf, *Hidden in plain sight*, 453.

⁹ Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 66.

¹⁰ Told by all three interview participants; reproduced in Blassingame, *Slave testimony*, 533-543, at 538 (first published in Mary White Ovington, *Slaves' reminiscences of slavery*, *The Independent*, vol. 67 [1910], <https://books.google.com/books?id=Z5weAQAAAMAAI&ppis=e&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>, 1131-1136).

¹¹ Olmsted, *Journey in the seaboard states*, 159.

¹² Redpath, *Roving editor*, 288-295, at 293.

¹³ Still, *Underground Railroad*, 83-92.

¹⁴ Williams, *Help me to find my people* (digital edition), "The article, titled 'Another Family Are Free.'"

¹⁵ Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 86, 252.

- ¹⁶ Bird, The mystery of the cimarrons in colonial Virginia, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*; Price, *Maroon societies*; testimony from former slaves in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*: Samuel Simeon Andrews (Florida), Leah Garrett (Georgia), Margrett Nickerson (Florida), Jordon Smith (Texas).
- ¹⁷ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares; Bilby, Ethnogenesis; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas; Kelly, Masterless people; Lockley, Runaway slave colonies; Mann and Hecht, Where slaves ruled; Parris, Alliance and competition; Price, *Maroon societies*.
- ¹⁸ Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas, 737. See also Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*; Hall, Africans in colonial Louisiana; Maris-Wolf, Hidden in plain sight; Price, *Maroon societies*; Schweningen, *Maroonage*.
- ¹⁹ Translation adapted from Price, *Maroon societies*, xviii; original quote appears in Jean et Raoul Parmentier, *Le discours de la navigation de Jean et Raoul Parmentier de Dieppe* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1883, <https://archive.org/details/lediscoursdelana00parm/page/n7>), 99.
- ²⁰ Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 123; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas, 720; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 291–292; Hall, Africans in colonial Louisiana (digital edition), “Slaves and maroons from various plantations,” “These maroon ‘passages,’” “They met in the ciprière”; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 190–191; Price, *First-time*, 102 (“an absolutely staggering amount”).
- ²¹ Lockley, Runaway slave colonies, 6; Berlin, *Generations*, 189, 202; Cecelski, *Waterman's song* (digital edition), “Long vital agents of communication”; Willis Dukes, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, Florida; Robert Glenn, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, North Carolina; Hall, Africans in colonial Louisiana (digital edition), “The slaves were very well informed”; Landers, *Black society*, 25; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* 5, 24–25; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 13, 240–241; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole War, 1817–1818, 225; Price, *First-time*, 81; Pybus, *Epic journeys*, 5–6.
- ²² “I've known my mother”: unnamed interviewee in Egypt, *Unwritten history*, 53; “I went to an old mother”: Robinson, *From log cabin to the pulpit*, 29–30.
- ²³ Baptist, *Creating an old south*, 203; Julia Blanks, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, Texas; Julia Brown, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, Georgia; Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 25, 126–127, 145, 170, 183, 230–255; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas, 718–720, 723–724; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 85–89, 292; Hall, Africans in colonial Louisiana (digital edition), “During the spring of 1784”; Lockley, Runaway slave colonies, 6–7, 11–14; Maris-Wolf, Hidden in plain sight, 453; Price, *First-time*, 153–159.
- ²⁴ Green Cumby, in Federal Writers' Project, *Slave narratives*, Texas.
- ²⁵ Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190.
- ²⁶ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares, 553; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas (“all sorts of craftsmen,” 729); Funari, Conflict; Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190 (“well-kept lands,” 178); Lockley, Runaway slave colonies; Mann and Hecht, Where slaves ruled; Parris, Alliance and competition.
- ²⁷ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares, 551–552, 555; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas, 731; Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190; Lockley, Runaway slave colonies, 5–6.
- ²⁸ Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190.
- ²⁹ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares, 551–552; Lockley, Runaway slave colonies, 8.
- ³⁰ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares; Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190; Parris, Alliance and competition.
- ³¹ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares, 559; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas 722; Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190; Lockley, Runaway slave colonies, 8.
- ³² Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares; Florentino and Amantino, Runaways and quilombolas; Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190.
- ³³ Kent, Palmares: An African state in Brazil, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 170–190.
- ³⁴ Ibrahim, The Afro-Brazilian story; Wills, Brazil's maroon state.
- ³⁵ Anderson, Quilombo of Palmares, 546.

- ³⁶ Johannes King, *Guerilla warfare: A Bush Negro view*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 298–304; Price, *First-time*, 1, 56, 75, 78, 82, 94, 98, 100, 161, 179; Price, *The Guianas*, in *Maroon societies*, 293–297; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 467–468, 473.
- ³⁷ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 127–128; Johannes King, *Guerilla warfare: A Bush Negro view*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 298–304; Louis [last name unknown] and M. Le Tenneur, *Rebel village in French Guiana: A captive's description*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 312–319; Price *First-time*, 51, 65, 78, 81, 85, 89, 105, 107, 115, 161; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 470–471.
- ³⁸ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 132.
- ³⁹ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 128; Price, *First-time*, 81.
- ⁴⁰ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 127–129, 134; Price, *First-time*, 89, 161; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 466–471.
- ⁴¹ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 128; Louis [last name unknown] and M. Le Tenneur, *Rebel village in French Guiana: A captive's description*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 312–319; Price, *First-time*, 51–53, 78, 93, 121, 135–137, 140, 143; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 470.
- ⁴² Louis [last name unknown] and M. Le Tenneur, *Rebel village in French Guiana: A captive's description*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 312–319, at 315.
- ⁴³ Price *First-time*, 59, 64, 121–122; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 472.
- ⁴⁴ Louis [last name unknown] and M. Le Tenneur, *Rebel village in French Guiana: A captive's description*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 312–319; Price, *First-time*, 51, 63–64, 121.
- ⁴⁵ Price, *First-time*, 47–49, 54, 70, 78, 80, 82, 85, 89, 90, 93, 98, 112, 124; Price, *Uneasy neighbors*, 4.
- ⁴⁶ Johannes King, *Guerilla warfare: A Bush Negro view*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 298–304; Price, *First-time*, 51, 102, 128–134, 144; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 471, 475.
- ⁴⁷ Price, *First-time*, 45, 48, 49, 51, 80, 145, 162; Price, *Uneasy neighbors*; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 467–468.
- ⁴⁸ Johannes King, *Guerilla warfare: A Bush Negro view*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 298–304; Price, *First-time*, 56, 81, 115–116 (“were always a matter of great delicacy”), 153–159; Stedman, *Narrative*, volume 2, 359–361.
- ⁴⁹ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 127; Price, *First-time*, 70, 116, 148–149; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 470, 478.
- ⁵⁰ Bilby, *Ethnogenesis*, 127; Florentino and Amantino, *Runaways and quilombolas*, 723–724; Price, *The Guianas*, in *Maroon societies*, 293–297; van der Linden, *The Okanisi*, 471–472, 477–478, 480–481.
- ⁵¹ Stedman, *Narrative*, vol. 1, 68–70.
- ⁵² Stedman, *Narrative*, vol. 2, 116–11.
- ⁵³ Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 230; Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana* (digital edition), “Although the maroons were denounced as brigands.”
- ⁵⁴ Baptist, *Creating an old south*, 158, 203; Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 28, 231–236; Florentino and Amantino, *Runaways and quilombolas*, 719–720, 725; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 86–89.
- ⁵⁵ Herbert Aptheker, *Maroons within the present limits of the United States*, in Price, *Maroon societies*, 151–167, at 153–154; Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 86; Landers, *Slave resistance*, 82.
- ⁵⁶ Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 87–89.
- ⁵⁷ Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 89.
- ⁵⁸ Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 230–255.
- ⁵⁹ Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 236–252.
- ⁶⁰ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 13–16; Woodard, *Republic of pirates*, 1, 3, 78–80, 87–88, 112–114, 131 (“unemployed seamen”), 153, 159, 213, 262–266; Woodard, *More than a pirate*.
- ⁶¹ Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 121, 122; Florentino and Amantino, *Runaways and quilombolas*, 718, 721, 730; Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana* (digital edition), “The growth of the cypress industry,” “By the early 1780s,” “During the spring of 1784,” “a powerful family network.”
- ⁶² Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 89–90, 124–136.
- ⁶³ Schweningen, *Maroonage*, 15.
- ⁶⁴ Berlin, *Generations*, 185–186; Cecelski, *Waterman's song* (digital edition), “Together, the character of the coastal landscape”; Williams, *Sunshine and shadow*, 60.
- ⁶⁵ Craft, *Running*, 30.

- ⁶⁶ Olmsted, *Journey in the seaboard states*, 161.
- ⁶⁷ Olmsted, *Journey in the seaboard states*, 160.
- ⁶⁸ David Hunter Strother, quoted in Maris-Wolf, *Hidden in plain sight*, 452; original article is in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 13, p. 451, <https://harpers.org/archive/1856/09/the-dismal-swamp/>.
- ⁶⁹ Maris-Wolf, *Hidden in plain sight*, 455–456; see also Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 213–215.
- ⁷⁰ Olmsted, *Journey in the seaboard states*, 159–160; Diouf, *Slavery's exiles*, 209–229.
- ⁷¹ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 96.
- ⁷² Andrews, 10 things about Francis Drake; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-headed hydra*, 195; Price, *Maroon societies*, 14; Twyman, *Black Seminole legacy*, 25–28.
- ⁷³ Berlin, *Generations*, 43–49; Landers, *Black society*, 24–66.
- ⁷⁴ Hall, Africans in colonial Louisiana (digital edition), “Jacobin agents”; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*; Pybus, *Epic journeys*; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 90–93.
- ⁷⁵ Berlin, *Generations*, 201; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway slaves*, 13; Hall, Africans in colonial Louisiana (digital edition), “It is clear from the extensive testimony,” “The slaves were very well informed”; Pybus, *Epic journeys*, 5–6.
- ⁷⁶ Millet, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 13.
- ⁷⁷ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 24–25; also viewable in *The Works of John Adams*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little and Brown, 1850, <https://ia800202.us.archive.org/33/items/worksofjohnadams02adam/worksofjohnadams02adam.pdf>), 428.
- ⁷⁸ Berlin, *Generations*, 124–125; Bolster: *Black Jacks* 3, 94; Public Broadcasting Service: *Revolution*; Pybus, *Epic journeys*, 8–11, 22–23, 38; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 84–90.
- ⁷⁹ Berlin, *Generations*, 112; Pybus, *Epic journeys*, 17–19, 50–53; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 85.
- ⁸⁰ Pybus, *Epic journeys*, 60–71; the text of the Paris Peace Treaty is available online at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/paris.asp.
- ⁸¹ Pybus, *Epic journeys*, xvii, 53, 70; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 85.
- ⁸² *Florida Native American heritage trail*; Milanich, *Original inhabitants*; Worth, *Evacuation*; Landers, *Black/Indian interaction*.
- ⁸³ Weisman, *Like beads*, 27 (“near-constant fissioning”), 37; Digital Alabama, *The Creek confederacy*; *Florida Native American heritage trail*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 179–180; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 1–2; Mahon and Weisman, *Florida's Seminole and Miccosukee peoples*; Sattler, *Remnants, renegades, and runaways*, 44–50; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 1–2.
- ⁸⁴ Covington, *Seminoles*; Sattler, *Remnants, renegades, and runaways*; Sturtevant, *Creek into Seminole*; Weisman, *Unconquered people*; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*.
- ⁸⁵ “We are strangers”: Cohen, *Notices*, 215, italics in the original (the reference is to a Bible verse—Exodus 2:22, “I have been a stranger in a strange land”); “as little knowledge”: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 9 April 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 867. Also, eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts: Bartram, *Travels*, 90; Forbes, *Sketches*, 96; Military court of inquiry, General order no. 13, Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, 21 March 1837, published in *Niles' Register*, 1 April 1837, 71–73, at 72 (“absence of all knowledge by the general, or any part of his forces, of the topography of the country”); and more recent accounts: Covington, *Seminoles*, 82; Fairbanks: *Ethnohistorical report*, 22; Mahon, *History*, 129; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 100, 156; Riordan, *Finding freedom*, 35.
- ⁸⁶ Brown, *Tales*, 7–8; Covington, *Seminoles*, 27; Hammond, *Spanish fisheries*, 355, 357; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 155–156; Simmons, *Notices*, 78; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 13, 64.
- ⁸⁷ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*; Landers, *Black society*, 24–25, 32–35; Landers, *Spanish sanctuary*; Riordan, *Finding freedom*, 25–26; Wright, *Dispatches*.
- ⁸⁸ Berlin, *Generations*, 46–49; Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 1, 20; Landers, *Black society*, 7–8, 27–28, 50, 137, 188, 201; Landers, *Spanish sanctuary*; National Park Service, *Fort Mose site*.

- ⁸⁹ Berlin, *Generations*, 44, 74; Landers *Black society*, 27, 30, 34, 47; Landers, Spanish sanctuary. George Cato, a descendant of the leader of the Stono Rebellion, shared his family's account of the rebellion with an interviewer for the Federal Writers' Project in 1937. That interview was not included in the project's standard collection for South Carolina, but a copy of the interview transcript exists with the other Federal Writers Project papers at the University of South Carolina's South Caroliniana Library, and it has been reproduced in several secondary sources, including the National Humanities Center's online resource *Two views of the Stono slave rebellion*, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/peoples/text4/stonorebellion.pdf>.
- ⁹⁰ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 181–182; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 11.
- ⁹¹ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 20; Landers, *Black society*, 30–35; Landers, Spanish sanctuary; Los Negros Fugitivos de los Plantages de Yngleses á S.M., Florida, Junio 10 de 1738, in Wright, *Dispatches*, 175; National Park Service, Fort Mose site.
- ⁹² Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 22–23; Landers, *Black society*, 36–37; TePaske, Fugitive slave.
- ⁹³ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 24–25; Landers, *Black society*, 30, 47–49; National Park Service, Fort Mose site.
- ⁹⁴ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 32–33; Florida Museum of Natural History, Fort Mose; Landers, *Black society*, 49.
- ⁹⁵ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 30–31; Florida Museum of Natural History, Fort Mose; Landers, *Black society*, 32, 49–53, 113.
- ⁹⁶ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 34; Landers, *Black society*, 55–56; TePaske, Fugitive slave.
- ⁹⁷ El Gobernador de la Florida, D. Fulgencio Garcia de Solis á S.M., S. Agustin de la Florida, Diciembre 7 de 1752, in Wright, *Dispatches*, 187; Landers, *Black society*, 47–48; Landers, Spanish sanctuary.
- ⁹⁸ Landers, *Black society*, 52–57.
- ⁹⁹ Deagan and MacMahon, *Fort Mose*, 37; Landers, *Black society*, 59, 113; Landers, Spanish sanctuary.
- ¹⁰⁰ Landers *Atlantic Creoles*, 48, 98–100, 111; Landers, Spanish sanctuary, 311.
- ¹⁰¹ Landers *Atlantic Creoles*, 100; Landers, *Black society*, 13; Parr, San Miguel de Gualdape; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 6, 73–100, 164–165, 278.
- ¹⁰² Landers, Slave resistance, 85; Riordan, *Finding freedom*, 24, note 1; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 84, 86.
- ¹⁰³ Covington, *Seminoles* 5, 12; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 192–193; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 6–7; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 4–5; Weisman, *Labor and survival*, 70.
- ¹⁰⁴ Covington, *Seminoles*, 96; Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 130–131; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 179–180, 185; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 4–5; Riordan, *Finding freedom*; Weisman, *Plantation system*, 142; Wright, Blacks in British East Florida.
- ¹⁰⁵ Brown, *Tales*, 7; Landers, *Black society*, 3; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 61, 142–143, 148, 204; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842*, 427.
- ¹⁰⁶ Bird, Did Seminole slaves have a “controlling influence” over their Indian masters? in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 185; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842*, 427–428.
- ¹⁰⁷ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 98.
- ¹⁰⁸ Nineteenth century accounts: Giddings, *Exiles*, 4–5, 79; McCall, *Letters*, 160; Morse, *Report*, 311 (quoting Indian agent Jean A. Penieres). More recent accounts: Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 130; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 5.
- ¹⁰⁹ Simmons, *Notices*, 76.
- ¹¹⁰ Wiley Thompson, letter dated 27 April 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 533–534.
- ¹¹¹ Nineteenth century accounts: McCall, *Letters*, 160; Williams, *Territory of Florida*, 240. More recent accounts: Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 14; Weik, *Archaeology*, 139–140; Weik, *Ethnogenesis*, 224–225.
- ¹¹² “Unbounded influence”: William Duval, letters dated 12 January 1826 and 2 March 1826, *Territorial papers*, vol. 23, 413–414 and 452–454. Other contemporary accounts: Richard Call, letter dated 22 March 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 464; William Duval, letter dated 20 January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 458; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 26 March 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 835; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 16 June 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 876; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 81, 100, 309; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 1 January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 453–455; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 27 April 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 533–534. More recent accounts: Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 19; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 27.
- ¹¹³ Horatio Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 84; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 185; Mahon, *History*, 78; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 97–98.

- ¹¹⁴ Wright, *Blacks in British East Florida*, 427.
- ¹¹⁵ “Because the black fugitives”: Hall, African religious retentions, 49. Also, Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 6; Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 14–15; Weisman, Labor and survival, 77.
- ¹¹⁶ Nineteenth century accounts: letter from a highly respectable gentleman of Florida, dated 20 January 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 20 (“better disciplined and more intelligent”); J. B. Hogan, letter dated 1 February 1836, ASPMA vol. 7, 259 (“decidedly the most active, keen, and intelligent fellows among them”); Daniel Newnan, letter dated 19 October 1812, published in Smith, United States troops (part 3), 155 (“including negroes who were their best soldiers”); Sprague, *The Florida war*, 309 (“the most formidable foe”). More recent accounts: Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 181, 185; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 65; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 16, 19; Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 14–16; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842, 428–429.
- ¹¹⁷ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 34, 57, 66; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 180; Weisman, Plantation system, 142. Years later, in Texas, the Seminole warrior Wildcat, who had strong ties to the Black Seminoles, nonetheless tried to sell two of his black associates during a drinking spree in Fredericksburg — Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 129–130.
- ¹¹⁸ Vignoles, *Observations*, 134–135.
- ¹¹⁹ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 50–51.
- ¹²⁰ “Vassals and allies”: Edmund Gaines, letter dated 28 February 1836, ASPMA vol. 7, 427.
- ¹²¹ Nineteenth century accounts: Alachua County slaveholders, petition dated January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 465; Coe, *Red patriots*, 14; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 66. More recent accounts: Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 131–132; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 181; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 98–99.
- ¹²² Mahon, *History*, 201; Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 13–14; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 405.
- ¹²³ Fairbanks, *Ethnohistorical report*; Sattler, Remnants, renegades, and runaways; Weisman, *Like beads*; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*.
- ¹²⁴ Douglas, *Autobiography*, 120; Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 131, 150; Porter, Abraham, 17–18; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 391.
- ¹²⁵ Frank Berry, in Federal Writers’ Project, *Slave narratives*, Florida; Sheldon, Seminole attacks, 189.
- ¹²⁶ Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 218.
- ¹²⁷ Simmons, *Notices*, 41, 44.
- ¹²⁸ Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88–95 (“a guide, interpreter, and horses,” 89).
- ¹²⁹ McCall, *Letters*, 160.
- ¹³⁰ Nineteenth century accounts: Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 87, 92; C. Fitzpatrick, letter dated 9 January 1836, ASPMA vol. 7, 218–219. More recent accounts: Brown, *Peace River*, 8, 11; Brown, *Tales*, 7, 10; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 180, 190, 193.
- ¹³¹ Nineteenth century accounts: Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88–89; McCall, *Letters*, 160; Simmons, *Notices*, 48, 76; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 27 April 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 533–534; Young, Topographical memoir, 100. More recent accounts: Frank Berry, in Federal Writers’ Project, *Slave narratives*, Florida; *Florida black heritage trail*; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 19, 20, 85; Parker, Cattle trade, 153–155; Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 14–16; Schafer, Yellow silk ferret, 85; Weik, Ethnogenesis, 228; Weisman, Labor and survival, 76.
- ¹³² Young, Topographical memoir, 100 (“Their cabbins”); Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 15–16; Simmons, *Notices*, 44, 76.
- ¹³³ Jarvis, Army surgeon’s notes, part 4, 270.
- ¹³⁴ Landers, *Black society*, 163–164.
- ¹³⁵ Women: Simmons, *Notices*, 45; Frank Berry, in Federal Writers’ Project, *Slave narratives*, Florida. Children: Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 148, 155–156, 235; Weik, *Archaeology*, 134. Molly: Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 183; Landers, *Black society*, 91–92.
- ¹³⁶ Nineteenth century accounts: Marcus Buck, letter dated 4 August 1816, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 25 February 1836, 115–116; Duncan Clinch, letter dated 2 August 1816, published in *Niles’ Register*, 20 November 1819, 186–188; Giddings, *Exiles*, 135–136. More recent accounts: Covington, *Seminoles*, 45–46; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 228, 243–244; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole War, 1817–1818, 273–274.
- ¹³⁷ Thomas Jesup, letter dated 7 February 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 828.
- ¹³⁸ Weik, *Archeology*, 133–134.

- ¹³⁹ Quote: Abraham, letter dated 25 April 1838, reprinted in Porter, Abraham, 38, and Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 200–201. See also Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 161–165.
- ¹⁴⁰ Nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 174; Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88, 93; Jones, Brief narration, 63; McCall, *Letters*, 160; Simmons, *Notices*, 59. More recent accounts: Weik, *Archaeology*, 126–127, 150; Weisman, Plantation system, 144.
- ¹⁴¹ Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88; Jones, *Brief narration*, 63.
- ¹⁴² Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 196; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 26; Weik, *Ethnogenesis*, 221.
- ¹⁴³ Cohen, *Notices*, 174; Jones, *Brief narration*, 63; McCall, *Letters*, 160; Weik, *Archaeology*, 128.
- ¹⁴⁴ McCall, *Letters*, 160. See also Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88; Jones, *Brief narration*, 63.
- ¹⁴⁵ Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 88.
- ¹⁴⁶ Weik, *Ethnogenesis*, 228.
- ¹⁴⁷ Cohen, *Notices*, 176.
- ¹⁴⁸ “He always smiles”: John Casey, quoted in Coe, *Red patriots*, 45–46; “perfect Talleyrand”: unnamed officer of the army, letter dated 22 May 1837, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 15 June 1837, 378; phrase also appeared later in Motte, *Journey*, 210. Other nineteenth century accounts: Childs, *Extracts*, 374; Coe, *Red patriots*, 45–46; Cohen, *Notices*, 239; Douglas, *Autobiography*, 121; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 7 June 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 871; McCall, *Letters*, 160; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 100; Williams, *Territory of Florida*, 214. More recent accounts: Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 141; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 11, 175, 185, 194–198; Landers, *Black society*, 224, 236; Mahon, *History*, 62, 77, 79, 128, 199, 201; Porter, Abraham 5, 7, 10–11, 13, 17–19; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 27, 33, 48, 77.
- ¹⁴⁹ McCall, *Letters*, 160.
- ¹⁵⁰ “Chiefly runaway slaves”: McCall, *Letters*, 160. Other nineteenth century account: Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 82, 88. More recent accounts: Landers, *Black society*, 236; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 24–25, 54–55; Weik, *Ethnogenesis*, 214.
- ¹⁵¹ Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter; McCall, *Letters*. Horatio Dexter’s trip took place in 1823, and one of his instructions (at least theoretically) was to bring in runaway slaves; George McCall visited Pilakikaha in 1826 but did not publish his account until 1868.
- ¹⁵² Nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 174; Jones, *Brief narration*, 63; Potter, *War in Florida*, 173–174. More recent accounts: Mahon, *History*, 156–157; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 55–56.
- ¹⁵³ Jones, *Brief narration*, 63.
- ¹⁵⁴ Three-pronged attack: Mahon, *History*, 143–157; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 53–57; “a complete failure”: Cohen, *Notices*, 192.
- ¹⁵⁵ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 179; Landers, *Black society*, 3; Mahon, *History*, 19; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 61, 142–143, 148, 204; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 4–6; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 73–100.
- ¹⁵⁶ Brown, *Peace River*; Covington, *Seminoles*; Cusick, *The other war of 1812*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*; Mahon, *History*; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*; Porter, *Black Seminoles*.
- ¹⁵⁷ Cusick, *The other war of 1812*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 110–119; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 5–7; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 3–12; Porter, East Florida annexation plot, 26.
- ¹⁵⁸ Thomas Smith, letter dated 24 February 1813, published in Smith, United States troops, part 4, 271–274.
- ¹⁵⁹ Brown, *Peace River*, 6–8; Brown, Sarrazota; Covington, *Seminoles*, 33; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 232; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 13; Weisman, *Like beads*, 78.
- ¹⁶⁰ Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 81; Brown, *Peace River*, 4, 7–8; Brown, Sarrazota, 6–8; Brown, *Tales*, 7–10; Davis, *The Gulf*, 119–121; Dodd, The wrecking business; Hammond, Spanish fisheries; Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 133–134; Landers, *Black society*, 237; Weisman, *Like beads*, 74–75.
- ¹⁶¹ Gadsden, The defenses of the Floridas (“the last rallying spot,” 248); A.C.W. Fanning, letter dated 27 November 1818, ASPMA vol. 1, 752.
- ¹⁶² “Make prisoners of all the men of colour ... surprised and captured”: report in the *Charleston City Gazette and Commercial Advertiser*, quoted in Brown, Sarrazota, 13. Also, Brown, *Peace River*, 7–9, 19–22; Brown, *Tales*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 193; Worth, *Creolization*, 153.
- ¹⁶³ Brown, *Peace River*, 21; Brown, Sarrazota, 12–15; Brown, *Tales*, 11–13.

- ¹⁶⁴ Nineteenth century accounts: John Bell, letter dated 17 July 1821, *Territorial papers*, vol. 22, 125–126; Forbes, *Sketches*, 105; Vignoles, *Observations*, 135–136. More recent accounts: Baram, A haven from slavery; Brown, Sarrazota; Brown, Tales; Goggin, Seminole Negroes of Andros, 204; Howard, *Black Seminoles in the Bahamas*, 45–47; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 193–194; Landers, *Black society*, 237; Neill, Sailing vessels; Newton, History of Red Bays; Worth, Early African heritage.
- ¹⁶⁵ Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 92.
- ¹⁶⁶ Gad Humphreys, letter dated 2 March 1825, *Territorial papers*, vol. 23, 202–203; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 1 January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 453–455, at 454; John Winslett, letter dated 21 December 1833, ASPMA vol. 6, 453.
- ¹⁶⁷ Simmons, *Notices*, 41.
- ¹⁶⁸ Simmons, *Notices*, 44.
- ¹⁶⁹ Simmons, *Notices*, 44.
- ¹⁷⁰ Simmons, *Notices*, 46, 51.
- ¹⁷¹ Childs, Extracts, 372–373 (“fifty Indian huts”); Thomas Jesup, letter dated 7 February 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 827–829; Mahon, *History*, 198–199; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 69–70.
- ¹⁷² Archibald Henderson, letter dated 28 January 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 829–830.
- ¹⁷³ Childs, Extracts, 373; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 7 February 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 827–829.
- ¹⁷⁴ Nineteenth century accounts: Potter, *War in Florida*, 14–27 (“hoard of desperadoes,” 17); Sprague, *The Florida war*, 5. More recent accounts: Covington, *Seminoles*, 32; Fairbanks, *Ethnohistorical report*, 22; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 320; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 31; Schafer, Yellow silk ferret, 94.
- ¹⁷⁵ Econchattamico, petition dated 2 April 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 462.
- ¹⁷⁶ “Quiet and undisputed possession” / “no shadow of a claim”: J. A. Cameron (judge, West Florida district), statement dated 12 April 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 467–468. Other nineteenth century accounts: Giddings, *Exiles*, 89–92; Potter, *War in Florida*, 14–16; William Duval, letter dated 26 January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 458–459; William Duval, letter dated 23 May 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 461–462; Econchattamico, petition dated 2 April 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 462; Grand jury, Jackson County, statement dated March 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 469–470; William Pope, affidavit dated 2 April 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 462–463; George Walker, letter dated 21 April 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 468. More recent accounts: Foreman, *Indian removal*, 324–325; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 30, 49; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 35.
- ¹⁷⁷ John Walker, letter dated 28 July 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 463 (italics in the original).
- ¹⁷⁸ “Fully hot to go” / “very much alarmed”: Stephen Richards, letter dated 4 November 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 465. Also, Daniel Boyd, letter dated 15 July 1838, published in Johnston, Documentary evidence, 39–40; Elbert Herring, letter dated 4 June 1832, ASPMA vol. 6, 459–460; Elbert Herring, letter dated 28 October 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 459; Potter, *War in Florida*, 16; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 24 November 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 463–464; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 23 September 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 463; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 5 October 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 547; George Walker, letter dated 21 April 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 468; John Walker, letter dated 28 July 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 463.
- ¹⁷⁹ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 34.
- ¹⁸⁰ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 66.
- ¹⁸¹ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 37–38; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 19 July 1835, ASPMA vol. 6, 460.
- ¹⁸² Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 48, 98, 111; Landers, Spanish sanctuary, 311.
- ¹⁸³ Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 131–133; Schafer, Yellow silk ferret, 93 (“it has been a practice”).
- ¹⁸⁴ *Narrative of a voyage*, 221–222.
- ¹⁸⁵ Covington, *Seminoles*, 41, 44; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* 187, 311, note 29; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 239–242; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 214–215.
- ¹⁸⁶ Simmons, *Notices*, 50.
- ¹⁸⁷ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 48.
- ¹⁸⁸ Schafer, Yellow silk ferret, 93.
- ¹⁸⁹ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 192.

¹⁹⁰ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 26–27, 37–38, 47; Covington, *Seminoles*, 50–71; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 319–321; Landers, *Black society*, 174; Mahon, *History*, 29–50; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 26; Schafer, U.S. territory and state. Also see the “Kidnappers and swindlers” section above.

¹⁹¹ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 57 and 66.

¹⁹² For more on this, including source citations, see the discussion of the Second Seminole War below, especially the sections “Collapse of the Fort Dade Capitulation” and “Elusive compromise.”

¹⁹³ “There was a party”: Porter, *Florida slaves and free*, 407, quoting Lieutenant Colonel W. S. Harney, 16 May 1837; “one of the most respected”: Sprague, *The Florida war*, 46–47, quoting Indian agent Gad Humphreys, 1 March 1828. Also, Porter, *Black Seminole*, 81; Porter, *Osceola and the Negroes*, 236–237.

¹⁹⁴ Landers, *Slave resistance*, 81; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 6–7; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 4–5; Riordan, *Finding freedom*, 35; Schafer, *Yellow silk ferret*, 93; Weisman, *Labor and survival*, 70. On the East Florida Rangers: Wright, *Blacks in British East Florida*, 435; Wright, *Creeks and Seminole*, 91.

¹⁹⁵ Nineteenth century account: Smith, *United States troops*. More recent accounts: Cusick, *The other war of 1812*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 110–115; Porter, *East Florida annexation plot*.

¹⁹⁶ Landers, *Black society*, 220–228; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 7, 117; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 205–207, 217, 221; Griffin, *Life on the plantations*, 169–170; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 65.

¹⁹⁸ David Mitchell, letter dated 19 September 1812, extract published in *State papers and public documents of the United States*, vol. 9 (Boston: Thomas B. Wait, 1819, available from the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/statepaperspubli09uspruoft/page/n3>), 168–172 (allegation on page 169); Thomas Smith, letter dated 30 July 1812, published in Smith, *United States troops*, part 2, 106–107; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 111; Porter, *East Florida annexation plot*, 24.

¹⁹⁹ David Mitchell, letter dated 6 July 1812, published in *State papers and public documents of the United States*, vol. 9 (Boston: Thomas B. Wait, 1819, available from the Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/statepaperspubli09uspruoft/page/n3>), 194–196.

²⁰⁰ “The banditti”: Benigno Garzia, letter dated 12 December 1812, published in *Niles’ Register*, 16 January 1813, p 311–312. Also, Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 232; Landers, *Black society*, 202–228; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 12.

²⁰¹ Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 217–218; Landers, *Black society*, 224; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 7; Porter, *East Florida annexation plot*, 9.

²⁰² Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 232–234; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 114–115; McClellan, *History*, chapter 19, 8–10; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 9.

²⁰³ Daniel Newnan, report dated 19 October 1812, published in Smith, *United States troops*, part 3, 146–155 (“including negroes who were their best soldiers,” 155). Also, Covington, *Seminole*, 29–31; Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 239–244; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 115; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 9–11.

²⁰⁴ Daniel Newnan, report dated 19 October 1812, published in Smith, *United States troops*, part 3, 146–155; Covington, *Seminole*, 29, 31; Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 241–244; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 10.

²⁰⁵ Covington, *Seminole*, 32; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 7; Monaco, *Fort Mitchell*, 5–6; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 11–12; Porter, *East Florida annexation plot*, 26–28.

²⁰⁶ Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 216–217, 309; Landers, *Black society*, 225, 361 note 96; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 117–118.

²⁰⁷ Landers, *Black society*, 229–231; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 19, 40–47; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 24; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf borderlands*, 96–105.

²⁰⁸ Landers, *Black society*, 229–231; Malcomson, Edward Nicolls; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 61–65 (“Better or braver soldiers,” 64), 77, 86–88, 148, 200, 204; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 25–26; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 15.

²⁰⁹ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 121–125; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 75–77, 88–94, 117, 124; Owsley, *Struggle for the Gulf borderlands*, 179–184.

²¹⁰ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 125–126; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 97, 108–109, 115–118, 120, 124–125, 161, 163; National Park Service, *Enslaved African-Americans confront difficult choices*; Porter, *Black Seminole*, 16; Public Broadcasting System, *Black soldiers and sailors in the war of 1812*.

²¹¹ Cusick, *The other war of 1812*, 206; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 61, 76–77, 125, 127, 144, 148, 150, 159, 189–192, 200, 204; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 14; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War*, 1817–1818, 260–261.

- ²¹² Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 133–135, 138–140, 159–160, 173–175, 178, 193, 202, 210; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 25–26; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 16; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 183.
- ²¹³ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 147, 151, 154 (“There were Africans”), 189–190.
- ²¹⁴ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 6, 45, 105, 117, 144, 148, 155–165, 163, 170, 228.
- ²¹⁵ Coker and Watson, *Indian traders*, 302; Landers, *Black society*, 231; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 139, 176, 178–180, 192–193, 224, 228, 258; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 16.
- ²¹⁶ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 180, 190–193.
- ²¹⁷ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 123–124; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 151, 192, 210; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War*, 1817–1818, 261; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 197.
- ²¹⁸ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 124–126; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 102–110, 115–116, 216.
- ²¹⁹ Mahon, *History*, 23; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 220–223; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 14; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War*, 1817–1818, 261.
- ²²⁰ Duncan Clinch, letter dated 2 August 1816, published in *Niles’ Register*, 20 November 1819, 186–188; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 222–225; Mahon, *History*, 23; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 16–17; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 197–199.
- ²²¹ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 224, 226; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War*, 1817–1818, 218, 222.
- ²²² Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 225–226.
- ²²³ “We were pleased”: Marcus Buck, letter dated 4 August 1816, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 25 February 1836, 116. Also, Duncan Clinch, letter dated 2 August 1816, published in *Niles’ Register*, 20 November 1819, 186–188; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 225–227; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 17.
- ²²⁴ Marcus Buck, letter dated 4 August 1816, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 25 February 1836, 116.
- ²²⁵ Duncan Clinch, letter dated 2 August 1816, published in *Niles’ Register*, 20 November 1819, 186–188; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 121–127; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 28–30; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 144, 222–228.
- ²²⁶ “Morning and evening gun”: Edward Nicolls, letter dated 11 September 1843, published in *Correspondence on the slave trade 1844*, 13–14. Also, Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 118–119, 226.
- ²²⁷ Marcus Buck, letter dated 4 August 1816, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 25 February 1836, 115–116; Duncan Clinch, letter dated 2 August 1816, published in *Niles’ Register*, 20 November 1819, 186–188; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 124–127; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 205–206, 228–229; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 17; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 199–200.
- ²²⁸ Nineteenth century accounts: Edward Nicolls, letter dated 11 September 1843, published in *Correspondence on the slave trade with foreign powers 1844*, 13–14; George Perryman, letter dated 24 February 1817, ASPIA vol. 2, 155. More recent accounts: Brown, *Peace River*, 7–8; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 45, 117, 119–120, 223–227, 236–239; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 31; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 15.
- ²²⁹ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 101, 127, 180, 208, 210–213, 231.
- ²³⁰ Brown, *Peace River*, 9–10; Mahon, *History*, 17, 24; Mahon and Weisman, *Florida’s Seminole and Miccosukee peoples*.
- ²³¹ David Mitchell, statement to the US Senate dated 23 February 1819, ASPMA vol. 1, 748.
- ²³² Mahon and Weisman, *Florida’s Seminole and Miccosukee peoples*; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 243, 248; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 41; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War*, 1817–1818, 254.
- ²³³ George Perryman, letter dated 24 February 1817, ASPIA vol. 2, 155. Also, Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 234–235.
- ²³⁴ Brown, *Sarrazota*, 6; Coker and Watson, *Indian traders*, 314–316; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 187–190; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 96, 231–232, 236–240; Wright, *Note on the first Seminole war*, 572–574.
- ²³⁵ Robert Ambrister, undated letter, published in *The trials of Arbuthnot and Ambrister*, 69–71.
- ²³⁶ Covington, *Seminoles*, 41–42; Mahon, *History*, 24–25; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 240; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 35–40; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 20.
- ²³⁷ “Adopt the necessary measures”: John Calhoun, letter dated 26 December 1817, ASPMA vol. 1, 690. Also, Covington, *Seminoles*, 43–46; Mahon, *History*, 25–27; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 241–242.

- ²³⁸ Covington, *Seminoles*, 45; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* 185, 187; Mahon, *History*, 10, 16, 24; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 232–233, 243; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 13, 18, 22.
- ²³⁹ “Nero commanded”: testimony by Peter Cook, *The trials of Arbuthnot and Ambrister* 8, 37. Also, William Hambly, certificate dated 24 July 1818, *Appendix to the history of the fifteenth Congress (second session)*, 2018–2019, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=034/llac034.db&recNum=116>; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 11, 183, 185, 187; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 233–234, 241; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole War, 1817–1818*, 266, 269, 272.
- ²⁴⁰ “To see the Negroes righted”: testimony of John Arbuthnot, *The trials of Arbuthnot and Ambrister*, 66. Also, Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 236–239; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 122, 187–188; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 18, 21; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 33.
- ²⁴¹ “The main drift”: Alexander Arbuthnot, letter dated 2 April 1818, ASPFR vol. 4, 584. Also, Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 21–22; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 205.
- ²⁴² Brown, *Peace River*, 9–10; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 41; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 16; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1817–1818*, 273–275.
- ²⁴³ Mahon, *History*, 25.
- ²⁴⁴ John Prince and Nero Bowlegs, testimony given in St. Augustine, 10 and 11 January 1828, published in *United States congressional serial set*, 27th Congress, 2nd session, House of Representatives (<https://books.google.com/books?id=W19HAQAAlAAJ&dq>), pages 4–5 of Report 723, dated 20 May 1842 (pages 1545–1547 of the document as a whole). The two men’s statements were entered into the congressional record in 1842 as part of an investigation into a claim by an east Florida slaveholder for compensation for the loss of his “property” during the first Seminole war. (The claim was denied.)
- ²⁴⁵ John Prince and Nero Bowlegs testimony 1828, as described in the previous note, pages 4–6.
- ²⁴⁶ Brown, *Peace River*, 9–10; Covington, *Seminoles*, 46–47; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 190–192; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 23, 25.
- ²⁴⁷ Covington, *Seminoles*, 46–47; Mahon, *History*, 27; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 38–47; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 19–24; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 208.
- ²⁴⁸ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 191; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 26.
- ²⁴⁹ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 183–184; the author refers to this young man as an adolescent.
- ²⁵⁰ John Prince and Nero Bowlegs, testimony given in St. Augustine, 10 and 11 January 1828, published in *United States congressional serial set*, 27th Congress, 2nd session, House of Representatives (<https://books.google.com/books?id=W19HAQAAlAAJ&dq>), pages 4–5 of Report 723, dated 20 May 1842 (pages 1545–1547 of the document as a whole), pages 4–6.
- ²⁵¹ “Old Nero”: Simmons, *Recollections of the late campaign*, 554–555. Also, Cohen, *Notices*, 189, 195; G. S. Drane, testimony in a military court of inquiry dated 27 January 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 384–385; Samuel Parkhill, letter dated 18 July 1837, published in *Niles’ Register*, 19 August 1837, 397–398; Porter, *Negro guides and interpreters, 178–179*; Potter, *War in Florida*, 176.
- ²⁵² Brown, *Sarrazota*, 13–16; Brown, *Tales*, 11–14; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 193; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 250–251.
- ²⁵³ “We hope that you will not send us south”: Neamathla, statement on 11 September 1823, ASPIA vol. 2, 439. Also, Gad Humphreys, letter dated 6 March 1827, published in Sprague, *The Florida war*, 37–39; Covington, *Seminoles*, 52–54, 58–60; Mahon, *History*, 29–50; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 70–72.
- ²⁵⁴ George Brooke, letter dated 20 December 1825, published in *Niles’ Register*, 18 March 1826, 37.
- ²⁵⁵ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 47; Covington, *Seminoles*, 52–53; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 28–29; Schafer, U.S. territory and state. See also the “Kidnappers and swindlers” section above.
- ²⁵⁶ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 84–90 (“We had been preparing,” 90); Foreman, *Indian removal*, 326; Mahon, *History*, 95–96; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842*, 431–433.
- ²⁵⁷ Covington, *Seminoles*, 79–80; Mahon, *History*, 103–106; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 39–43. See also the “East coast plantation attacks” section below.
- ²⁵⁸ Mahon, *History*, 131, 148–150, 161–166, 183, 191; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 65–66; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 80, 108, 130–131.

²⁵⁹ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 24–25; Mahon, *History*, 197–199, 205, 223–224, 252; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 126–127, 134, 141; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 36, 69–70, 82–86, 97; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842*, 441–442; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 264, 300.

²⁶⁰ Nineteenth century accounts: Jarvis, Army surgeon's notes, part 3, 451–452; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 6 July 1838, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 26 July 1838, 49–54; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 214. More recent accounts: *Florida Seminole wars heritage trail*; Mahon, *History*, 219–235; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 142–145; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 88–93.

²⁶¹ See the sections “Elusive compromise” and “Black guides and interpreters” below.

²⁶² “So sudden an outbreak”: Sprague, *The Florida war*, 400. Also, Walker Keith Armistead, letter dated 30 May 1840, published in *Niles' Register*, 27 June 1840, 260; Benjamin Beall, report dated 27 September 1840, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 21 October 1840, 268; J. G. Rains, report dated 29 May 1840, published in *Niles' Register*, 27 June 1840, 260; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 278–279, 400, 457–458; Covington, *Seminoles*, 98–100; Mahon, *History*, 197, 305–308; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 168, 183–185, 200–201.

²⁶³ Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842*, 448–449; Important from Florida, *Niles' Register*, 18 August 1838, 386; Letter from a young officer, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 8 August 1839, 92–93; G. J. Rains, report published in *Niles' Register*, 27 June 1840, 260; Recent Indian murders in Florida, *Niles' Register*, 23 May 1840, 180–181; Walker, *Massacre*; Benjamin Beall, report dated 27 September 1840, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 21 October 1840, 268–269; letter from Fort Armistead, Sarasota, dated 14 March 1841, published in *Niles' Register*, 10 April 1841, 90.

²⁶⁴ See the section “Elusive compromise” below. On Wildcat's band, Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842*, 448.

²⁶⁵ McCall, *Letters*, 401–404 (“a mass of grassy ponds,” 401); Sprague, *The Florida war*, 456–459; Covington, *Seminoles*, 105–106; Mahon, *History*, 307–308; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 106.

²⁶⁶ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 458.

²⁶⁷ McCall, *Letters*, 404–409; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 462–468, 482, 485–486; Covington, *Seminoles*, 106–109; Mahon, *History*, 308, 315–321; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 106.

²⁶⁸ Douglas, *Autobiography*, 120–121; Sheldon, *Seminole attacks*, 189; Bird, *The largest slave rebellion in US history and Tally of plantation slaves in the Black Seminole slave rebellion*, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Klos, *Blacks and the Seminole removal debate*, 131, 150; Mahon, *History*, 128; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 33, 39; Rivers, *Slavery in Florida*, 13.

²⁶⁹ Nineteenth century accounts: *An authentic narrative*; Cohen, *Notices*, 79–80, 88–91; Jones, *Brief narration*, 59; The Seminole war, *Niles' Register*, 27 February 1836, 441; Ormond, *Reminiscences*, 18; Potter, *War in Florida*, 116–118; Sheldon, *Seminole attacks*, 188–190; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 106; *St. Augustine Herald*, untitled article dated 13 January 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 21–22; Williams, *Territory of Florida*, 224. More recent accounts: Black, Richard Fitzpatrick's South Florida, 39, 40; Boyd, *The Seminole war*, 58–69; *Florida Seminole wars heritage trail*; Griffin, *Halifax-Mosquito*, 20–21; Kirk, *William Cooley*, part 1, 7–9, and part 2, 24; Mahon, *History*, 102, 135–138; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842*, 433–434.

²⁷⁰ Jones, *Brief narration*, 59–60.

²⁷¹ “Chasing the chickens”: Ormond *Reminiscences*, 14–15. Also, Cohen, *Notices*, 89–92; *St. Augustine Herald*, untitled article dated 13 January 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 21–22; The Seminole war, *Niles' Register*, 27 February 1836, 441; Carrier, *Trade and plunder networks*, 76–78; Griffin, *Halifax-Mosquito*, 20; Mahon, *History*, 112.

²⁷² Nineteenth century accounts: *An authentic narrative*; Cohen, *Notices*, 79–80; Potter, *War in Florida*, 117. More recent accounts: Black, Richard Fitzpatrick's South Florida, 39–40; Boyd, *The Seminole war*, 67; Kirk, *William Cooley*, part 2, 24–25.

²⁷³ “Undisciplined rabble”: Ormond *Reminiscences*, 15. Other nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 91; Williams, *Territory of Florida*, 224. More recent accounts: Boyd, *The Seminole War*, 64; Mahon, *History*, 112, 137–138.

²⁷⁴ Nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 92–94; Ormond *Reminiscences*, 14–18 (“Ben Wiggins . . . was greatly scandalized,” “devil take the hindermost,” 16); Potter, *War in Florida*, 118–119; Sheldon, *Seminole attacks*, 190–191; Williams, *Territory of Florida*, 224–225. More recent accounts: Boyd, *The Seminole war*, 64; Carrier, *Trade and plunder networks*, 78; Mahon, *History*, 112, 137–138.

- ²⁷⁵ “Will, a good black waiting man”: Ormond *Reminiscences*, 16. Other nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 94–96, 143; The Seminole war, *Niles’ Register*, 27 February 1836, 441; Jones, *Brief narration*, 59. More recent accounts: Boyd, The Seminole war, 64–65; Knecht, *Florida’s Seminole wars*, 83; Mahon, *History*, 112, 138.
- ²⁷⁶ “Some of Depeyster’s negroes”: *St. Augustine Herald*, untitled article dated 13 January 1836, ASPMA vol. 6, 21–22. Also, Potter, *War in Florida*, 118; Sheldon, Seminole attacks, 191–192 (“they were glad enough,” 192); Carrier, *Trade and plunder networks*, 74; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 433–434.
- ²⁷⁷ Sheldon, Seminole attacks, 189; Gold, *History of Volusia County*, 52; Sweett and Marsden, *New Smyrna*.
- ²⁷⁸ “Faithful servant”: Potter, *War in Florida*, 118; “two of gen. Hernandez’s negroes”: The Seminole war, *Niles’ Register*, 27 February 1836, 441. Also, Cohen, *Notices*, 92; Boyd, The Seminole war, 63–64; Carrier, *Trade and plunder networks*, 138; Griffin, Halifax-Mosquito, 6, 19.
- ²⁷⁹ “Happy and secure state of servitude”: militia volunteer quoted in Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 434; “the very worst feature”: quoted in Porter, Florida slaves and free, 394; “this, you may be assured”: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 9 December 1836, ASPMA vol. 7, 820–821. Also, Bird, The largest slave rebellion, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*.
- ²⁸⁰ Andrew Humphreys, journal entry for 19 June 1836, in Percy, Documents, 226. Also, Porter, Florida slaves and free, 396.
- ²⁸¹ L. Gates, letter dated 12 June 1836, quoted in Porter, Florida slaves and free, 396.
- ²⁸² *An authentic narrative*, 8–12.
- ²⁸³ Nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 96; Douglas, *Autobiography*, 120. More recent accounts: Boyd, The Seminole war, 65; Carrier, *Trade and plunder networks*, 79–80; Griffin, *Life on the plantations*, 172.
- ²⁸⁴ “Most of the powder”: Douglas, *Autobiography*, 120–121. Also, Jones, *Brief narration*, 60; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 66, 71–73; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 396–397.
- ²⁸⁵ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 65–71; Porter, Abraham, 17; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 73–74; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 397–398; Porter, John Caesar, 197–199.
- ²⁸⁶ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 71; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 398, 402–403.
- ²⁸⁷ Carrier, *Trade and plunder networks*, 74; Landers, *Black society*, 248; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 66; Porter, Abraham 17; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 433.
- ²⁸⁸ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 67–71; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 74; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 401–402; Porter, John Caesar, 200.
- ²⁸⁹ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 62–63. On other losses of rights and status under US rule, see Landers, *Black society*, 242, 248, 252.
- ²⁹⁰ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 52–62.
- ²⁹¹ Nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 95; Ormond *Reminiscences*, 15; Scenes in the Florida war, 502; *Sketch of the Seminole war* 201, 215 (“right-hand man”). More recent accounts: Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 112, 182, 252; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 61–62, 73; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 82; Porter, Negro guides and interpreters, 179–180.
- ²⁹² Mahon, *History*, 129; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 393; Porter, John Caesar, 191; Porter, Three fighters, 58.
- ²⁹³ Nineteenth century accounts: Douglas, *Autobiography*, 121; *Sketch of the Seminole war*, 28. More recent accounts: Heard, John Caesar; Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 150; Porter, John Caesar, 191–192.
- ²⁹⁴ Nineteenth century accounts: Potter, *War in Florida*, 154–164; Prince, *Amidst a storm of bullets*, 24; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 110–111. More recent accounts: Mahon, *History*, 149; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 48–52; Porter, John Caesar 194–195.
- ²⁹⁵ Nineteenth century accounts: Potter, *War in Florida*, 154–164; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 112. More recent accounts: Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 51–52, 73; Porter, John Caesar, 194–196.
- ²⁹⁶ Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 73; Porter, John Caesar, 196–197.
- ²⁹⁷ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 67–70; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 73–74; Porter, John Caesar, 197–201.
- ²⁹⁸ Heard, John Caesar; Mahon, *History*, 197; Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 67, 71; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 74; Porter, John Caesar, 199–200.

- ²⁹⁹ Nineteenth century accounts: Cohen, *Notices*, 86–87; Douglas, *Autobiography*, 121; *Sketch of the Seminole War*, 19. More recent accounts: Bird, The largest slave rebellion and Tally of plantation slaves, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Mahon, *History*, 128; Marotti, *Heaven's soldiers*, 65; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 33, 39; Porter, John Caesar, 192–193.
- ³⁰⁰ Thomas Jesup, letter dated 16 June 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 876; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 74; Porter, John Caesar, 201–207.
- ³⁰¹ Giddings, *Exiles*, 138–139; Coe, *Red patriots*, 45; Covington, *Seminole*, 90; Mahon, *History*, 199–200; Porter, Abraham, 22; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 69–72.
- ³⁰² Letter from an unnamed officer dated 22 May 1837, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 15 June 1837, 378. On Abraham's role in the negotiations, other nineteenth century accounts: Childs, *Extracts*, 9; Giddings, *Exiles*, 138, 141. More recent accounts: Foreman, *Indian removal*, 344; Mahon, *History*, 201; Porter, Abraham, 24; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 72–77.
- ³⁰³ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*; McReynolds, *The Seminoles*; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*; Porter, *Black Seminoles*; Sivad, Juan Caballo.
- ³⁰⁴ Giddings, *Exiles*, 139–140; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 344–345; Mahon, *History*, 201.
- ³⁰⁵ The full text of the agreement is recorded in Sprague, *The Florida war*, 177–178 and in *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 52–53.
- ³⁰⁶ Nineteenth century accounts: Giddings, *Exiles*, 139–141; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 18 March 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 54–55; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 9 April 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 867; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 178–179. More recent accounts: Foreman, *Indian removal*, 344–345; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 18; Mahon, *History*, 201–202; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 77.
- ³⁰⁷ Nineteenth century accounts: Giddings, *Exiles*, 141; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 178. More recent accounts: Boyd, Asi-Yaholo, 291–293; Covington, *Seminole*, 90; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 345–346; Mahon, *History*, 200–204; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 78–79.
- ³⁰⁸ Thomas Jesup, letter dated 8 May 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 870; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 17 May 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 838; Boyd, Asi-Yaholo, 292; Covington, *Seminole*, 90; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 346; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 79.
- ³⁰⁹ “The arrival of several Floridians”: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 17 May 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 838. Other Jesup letters: 27 March 1837, quoted in *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 9; 18 April 1837 to Gov. Call, quoted in Giddings, *Exiles*, 153; 27 April 1837 to J. L. Smith, quoted in Giddings, *Exiles*, 150; 7 June 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 871. More recent accounts: Boyd, Asi-Yaholo, 292; Covington, *Seminole*, 91; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 346–347; Mahon, *History*, 202–203; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 79.
- ³¹⁰ “Scarcely less moment”: *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 108–110; general order 79 (issued April 5, modified May 1 and May 2): *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 2–3, 13–14 (see also 55–56). Other nineteenth century accounts: Coe, *Red patriots*, 75–76; Giddings, *Exiles*, 144, 148, 152. More recent accounts: Foreman, *Indian removal*, 346; Mahon, *History*, 201–203; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 78.
- ³¹¹ Mahon, *History*, 202; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 78.
- ³¹² Letters from Thomas Jesup: 26 March 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 835; 29 March 1837, published in *Niles' Register*, 29 April 1837, 133; 9 April 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 867; 26 April 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 12; 27 April 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 12–13. See also Mahon, *History*, 201–202.
- ³¹³ Thomas Jesup, letter, May 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 870–871 (date not specified, possibly 8 May—compare From the Army, *Niles' Register*, 3 June 1837, 213). See also Mahon, *History*, 205.
- ³¹⁴ Thomas Jesup, letter dated 25 May 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 16.
- ³¹⁵ Nineteenth century accounts: Giddings, *Exiles*, 149–151, 252–253; C. A. Harris, letter dated 5 May 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 39–41, at 40. More recent accounts: Bird, *Betrayal*, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Mahon, *History*, 202; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 78–79; Porter, *Florida slaves and free*, 405–407.
- ³¹⁶ “Fled to their former fastnesses”: Giddings, *Exiles*, 154. Also, Covington, *Seminole*, 90–91; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 19–21; Porter, Abraham, 24–25.
- ³¹⁷ “Entirely failed”: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 5 June 1836, ASPMA vol. 7, 838; “I have promised Abraham”: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 24 September 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 70–71. Other Jesup letters: 14 June 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 18; 20 July 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 65–69. Also, Mahon, *History*, 204; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 80; Porter, *Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842*, 439–440.

³¹⁸ Nineteenth century accounts: Joseph Hernandez, letter dated 16 September 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 849–850; Jarvis, Army surgeon’s notes, part 4, 285; Motte, *Journey*, 116, 132. More recent accounts: Mahon, *History*, 324; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 79.

³¹⁹ Report dated 6 September, *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 21 September 1837, 187.

³²⁰ On punishments, see for example Franklin and Schweningen, *Runaway slaves*, 239, 251–252; Diouf, *Slavery’s exiles*, 50–51, 298–301; on “captured” as a euphemism, see for example Porter, Florida slaves and free, 392.

³²¹ Mahon, *History*, 205.

³²² Nineteenth century accounts: Reports dated 12 and 13 September 1837 in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 28 September 1837, 200, 203–204; report dated 13 September 1837 in *Niles’ Register*, 30 September 1837, 66; Joseph Hernandez, report dated 16 September 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 849–850; Jarvis, Army surgeon’s notes, part 4, 277–278; Motte, *Journey*, 116–123. More recent accounts: Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 82; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 441.

³²³ Nineteenth century accounts: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 14 June 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 18; Jean Penieres, letter dated 15 July 1821, ASPIA vol. 2, 411–412; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 309; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 1 January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 454; William Worth, letter dated 19 August 1841, quoted in Porter, Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842, 446. More recent accounts: Klos, Blacks and the Seminole removal debate, 146; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 28; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 33; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842, 429–432. See also the earlier section “Maroons and Seminoles.”

³²⁴ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 309.

³²⁵ Alachua County slaveholders, petition dated January 1834, ASPMA vol. 6, 465; Coe, *Red patriots*, 14; Dexter papers reproduced in Boyd, Horatio S. Dexter, 81, 84; Fort Dade capitulation (Sprague, *The Florida war*, 177–178; *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 52–53); Edmund Gaines, letter dated 28 February 1836, ASPMA vol. 7, 427; general order 79 (*Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 2–3); Giddings, *Exiles*, 79, 148; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 29 March 1837, published in *Niles’ Register*, 29 April 1837, 133; McCall, *Letters*, 160; Morse, *Report*, 310; Jean Penieres, letter dated 15 July 1821, ASPIA vol. 2, 411–412; Simmons, *Notices*, 75–77; Wiley Thompson, letter dated 27 April 1835, ASPMA vol. 7, 533–534; Vignoles, *Observations*, 135. More recent accounts: Mahon, *History*, 201; Missall and Missall, *Seminole wars*, 75; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 28–29; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 427, 439, 447; Wright, Blacks in British East Florida, 430–431; Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles*, 98–99.

³²⁶ “The blacks emigrated”: Bird, The largest slave rebellion, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*. Also, Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles* 15–35 (especially 26–27), 98–137; Mahon, *History*, 235; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 94–96, 111–126; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 443–434.

³²⁷ Nineteenth century accounts: Jarvis, Army surgeon’s notes, part 3, 451–452; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 6 July 1838, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 26 July 1838, 49–54, at 52; letter dated 15 July 1838 from a young officer, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 16 August 1838, 105. More recent accounts: Foreman, *Indian removal*, 358–359; Mahon, *History*, 235.

³²⁸ Thomas Jesup, letter dated 6 July 1838, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 26 July 1838, 49–54, at 52–53; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 26; Mahon, *History*, 235–237; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 93–95.

³²⁹ Jarvis, Army surgeon’s notes, part 4, 452–453; Motte, *Journey*, 209–217; Mahon, *History*, 236–237.

³³⁰ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles* 15–35, especially 27; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 31–32; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 94–96; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842, 443–446.

³³¹ Nineteenth century accounts: Giddings, *Exiles*, 185–186; Jarvis, Army surgeon’s notes, part 3, 453; Thomas Jesup, letter dated 6 July 1838, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 26 July 1838, 49–54, at 53. More recent accounts: Covington, *Seminoles*, 95; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 361–362; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 27–28; Mahon, *History*, 237–238; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 96; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 443, 447.

³³² “All the Indians said at once”: John Page, letter dated 3 March 1841, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 26, 276–277; “the effect of this”: secretary of war, letter dated 12 March 1841, *Territorial papers*, vol. 26, 282–283.

³³³ William Worth, letter dated 19 August 1841, quoted in Porter, Florida slaves and free, 419; secretary of war (acting), letter dated 15 September 1841, *Territorial papers*, vol. 26, 374–375.

³³⁴ Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 448–449.

³³⁵ Porter, Abraham.

³³⁶ Abraham, letter dated 11 September 1837, published in Porter, Abraham, 39–40.

³³⁷ Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 84, 97.

³³⁸ “Myself and ’Tony Barnet”: Abraham, letter dated 25 April 1838, published in Porter, Abraham, 38, and Landers, *Atlantic Creoles*, 200–201. Also, Thomas Jesup, letter dated 24 September 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 70–71; Motte, *Journey*, 210–211; Foreman, *Indian removal*, 362, 370; Mahon, *History*, 128, 238; Porter, Abraham 25–29; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 96, 98.

³³⁹ Potter, *War in Florida*, 163; Covington, *Seminole*, 81–82; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 68; Porter, Negro guides and interpreters, 180.

³⁴⁰ Nineteenth century accounts: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 12 January 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 825; Potter, *War in Florida*, 163; report dated 18 January 1837, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 2 February 1837, 79; Simmons, *Recollections of the late campaign*, 555 (“gone down to the seashore”); Sprague, *The Florida war*, 112. More recent accounts: McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 166; Porter, Negro guides and interpreters, 181.

³⁴¹ Nineteenth century accounts: Thomas Jesup, letter dated 12 January 1837, ASPMA vol. 7, 825; report dated 18 January 1837, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 2 February 1837, 79. More recent accounts: McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 166; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 68; Porter, Negro guides and interpreters, 182.

³⁴² “Faithful interpreter”: Sprague, *The Florida war*, 112; “his services”: Porter, Negro guides and interpreters, 182; also John Sprague, journal kept during the 1839 peace talks, published in White, Macomb’s mission, 164.

³⁴³ John Garland, letter dated 5 December 1841 to William Worth, quoted in Sprague, *The Florida war*, 396–398, at 397 (“getting infirm”); Sprague, *The Florida war*, 463 (“old Primus”), 465; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 152.

³⁴⁴ “The best and most useful”: report from Fort King, 30 May 1839, *Niles’ Register*, 22 June 1839, 265; “The best guide in the nation”: Registry of negro prisoners, in *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 68. The people identified as claiming ownership of Murray were John Crowell (with whom Jesup corresponded — see the note immediately below), Nelly Factor, and Miccopotoka; the *Niles’ Register* article said Murray “belonged to Micapotaka, now west.” Also, Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 17, 21, 25, 30–31; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 99.

³⁴⁵ Thomas Jesup, letter to John Crowell dated 17 June 1837, *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 18; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 21.

³⁴⁶ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 25, 30–31, 38; *Negroes, &c., captured from Indians*, 68.

³⁴⁷ Report dated 30 May 1839, published in *Niles’ Register*, 22 June 1839, 265, and in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 20 June 1839, 394; John Sprague, journal kept during the 1839 peace talks, published in White, Macomb’s mission, 164, 178; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 25, 33 note 19; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 99.

³⁴⁸ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 113–114, 152–153.

³⁴⁹ Nineteenth century accounts: Alexander Macomb, General orders issued at Fort King, Florida, 18 May 1839, and letter to the secretary of war, 22 May 1839, published in Sprague, *The Florida war*, 228–232 (“it had been given out,” 230); Alexander Macomb, report dated 27 November 1839, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 16 January 1840, 38–41 (“a negro interpreter of considerable cleverness,” 39); report dated 27 May 1839, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 13 June 1839, 379–381, at 379 (“Sam Jones had sent in word”); report dated 26 August 1839, published in *Niles’ Register*, 14 September 1839; John Sprague, journal kept during the 1839 peace talks, published in White, Macomb’s mission, 145–146, 164–165, 169–179. More recent account: Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 448.

³⁵⁰ Nineteenth century accounts: Alexander Macomb, General orders issued at Fort King, Florida, 18 May 1839, and letter to the secretary of war, 22 May 1839, published in Sprague, *The Florida war*, 228–232; John Sprague, journal kept during the 1839 peace talks, published in White, Macomb’s mission, 164, 172; more recent accounts: Mahon, *History*, 257–261; Sturtevant, Chakaika, 44–46.

³⁵¹ Nineteenth century accounts: Alexander Macomb, report dated 27 November 1839, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 16 January 1840, 38–41, at 39; report dated 26 August 1839, *Niles’ Register*, 14 September 1839, 44; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 233–236. More recent accounts: Covington, *Seminole*, 98; Mahon, *History*, 262–263; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 99; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 448.

³⁵² Sprague, *The Florida war*, 315–319; Mahon, *History*, 263; Porter, Negroes and the Seminole war, 1835–1842, 448.

³⁵³ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 319; report dated 26 August 1839, published in *Niles’ Register*, 14 September 1839, 44.

³⁵⁴ Report dated 7 July 1839, published in *Niles Register* 20 July 1839, 321; *Niles Register*, 14 September 1839, 44; *The Floridian*, June 22, 1839, quoted in West, Abiaka, 394–395; Mahon 257.

³⁵⁵ John Sprague, journal kept during the 1839 peace talks, published in White, Macomb’s mission, 176–177; report dated 27 May 1839, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 13 June 1839, 380.

- ³⁵⁶ Alexander Maccomb, report dated 27 November 1839, published in *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 16 January 1840, 38–41, at 40.
- ³⁵⁷ Joel Poinsett, secretary of war, extract of a letter to a Florida resident, published in *Niles Register*, 6 July 1839, 289; “friendly Indian”: *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 13 June 1839, 379; “this story Genl. T. believes”: John Sprague, journal kept during the 1839 peace talks, published in White, Maccomb’s mission, 162. A contemporary history of the war, also written by Sprague, asserted that both whites and blacks, as well as “Spaniards on the Gulf coast,” undermined efforts to end the war: “Some of every class of society, every profession, the opulent as well as the humble, in and out of the territory, had a pecuniary interest in the prolongation of the war” (Sprague, *Origins*, 268–269; see also Giddings, *Exiles*, 283, and Mahon, *History*, 298). Other accounts: Coe, *Red patriots*, 145–149; Mahon, *History*, 258–259; Sturtevant, Chakaika, 45.
- ³⁵⁸ Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 97–105.
- ³⁵⁹ Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 99–106.
- ³⁶⁰ Sprague, *The Florida war*, 459; other accounts of the battle include Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 106; Mahon, *History*, 308.
- ³⁶¹ McCall, *Letters*, 404–406; Sprague, *The Florida war*, 457–467 (“well-constructed . . . huts”: 458); Mahon, *History*, 307–308; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 106.
- ³⁶² McCall, *Letters*, 399–401; Covington, *Seminole*, 108; *Florida Seminole wars heritage trail*; Mahon, *History*, 318; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 37; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 99–100 (“could smell an Indian”), 106, 111; Sivad, Juan Caballo.
- ³⁶³ McCall, *Letters*, 164; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 37; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 3, 100, 106, 111–112.
- ³⁶⁴ Billy Bowlegs & the Seminole war; Covington, *Seminole*, 143; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 97, 106–107.
- ³⁶⁵ Bird, Exile: 1838–1850, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Etienne-Gray, Black Seminole Indians; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 36–204; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 35–51; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 111–225.
- ³⁶⁶ Bird, American justice, in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 119–137, 157–158, 162; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 115–116, 118–125.
- ³⁶⁷ Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 124–136, 139–140; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 61–64, 78; Nichols, Line of liberty.
- ³⁶⁸ Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 61–81; Nichols, Line of liberty, 430–431; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 137–158, 161–162.
- ³⁶⁹ “Over a long life”: Bird, Frequently asked questions: Who was John Horse? in *Rebellion: John Horse and the Black Seminoles*; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 217–225.
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- ³⁷¹ Littlefield, *Africans and Seminoles*, 162–204; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 107–132, 152–173; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 175–214.
- ³⁷² Ferguson, Why this Mexican village celebrates Juneteenth; Mulroy, *Freedom on the border*, 162–175; Muñiz Estrada, Los negros mascogos; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 205–225; Sieff, Their ancestors fled.
- ³⁷³ Brown, Tales, 12; Gallagher, Seminoles found on Andros; Gallagher, “Black Seminole” descendants; Goggin, Seminole Negroes of Andros, 204; Howard, *Black Seminoles in the Bahamas*; Howard, The “wild Indians” of Andros; Kersey, The Seminole Negroes of Andros Island; Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 168, 170, 252; Newton, History of Red Bays; Porter, *Black Seminoles*, 26; Tinker, *Bahamas*, chapter 6; Winsboro and Knecht, Saltwater railroad.
- ³⁷⁴ Marotti, *Heaven’s soldiers*, 71, 80–89; Porter, Florida slaves and free, 397–398, 402–403; Winsboro and Knecht, Saltwater railroad.
- ³⁷⁵ Millett, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 188–119; *Correspondence on the slave trade* 1843, 42–43, 49, 50, 57; *Correspondence on the slave trade* 1844, 11–14 (Nicolls’s letter, 13–14).

Sources

While this story draws heavily on both primary and secondary sources, it does not reflect an exhaustive search of archival records. The important paper trails through the archives were opened by other people's hard work and ingenuity. In those archives, a thousand untold stories remain.

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