



## Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS) January 2017 Newsletter

### PRESIDENT'S CORNER *by John Furey*



#### **HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL FOR 2017**

May 2017 be a great year for all of us. May archaeological research provide us with a better understanding of prehistoric human culture and behavior and insights into understanding each other.

### SWFAS JANUARY MEETING



On Wednesday January 18, 2017 Dr. Uzi Baram, a Professor of Anthropology at New College of Florida in Sarasota, FL spoke at the Imaginarium in Ft. Myers on: Tragedy and Survival on the Early Florida Gulf Coast: History and Archaeology of the Freedom Seeking Peoples Known as the Black Seminoles. Dr. Baram was able to trace the movement of a group of maroons and escaped slaves, native Americans and Seminoles by using U.S. military records and archaeology from a settlement on the Apalachicola River in 1816 through several battles against the US military including a settlement on the Manatee River that lasted until 1821, when the USA took Florida; many escaped after each military batter, finally finding

freedom on Andros Island in the Bahama Islands. At the Apalachicola River, this group had been organized and trained by British officers to defend their fort and considered themselves British subjects. Andrew Jackson considered them escaped slaves and attempted to take them into slavery in the US South. By reaching the Bahamas they could finally have their liberty. The archaeology fills gaps in the history written by Rev. Bertram Newton, one of the elders of the Red Bays community, from oral traditions. One of the attendees in the audience had actually met the minister on a trip to Andros Island several years ago. The presentation was enjoyed by all.



*Uzi Baram and the digital Angola project*

### SWFAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2017

The slate of officers submitted by the nominating committee was voted unanimously to be elected to the board as presented. The new 2017 SWFAS Board Members are:

**President:** John Furey

**First Vice-President:** Jim Oswald

**Second Vice-President:** Elizabeth Clement

**Secretary:** Susan Harrington

**Treasurer:** Charlie Strader

**Trustees:**

**First of Three Year Term:**

Colin Andrews

**Second of Three Year Term:**

Theresa Schober

Mary Southhall

William Locascio

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next SWFAS meeting is Wednesday February 15, 2017 at 7 PM at The Imaginarium in Ft. Myers. Dr. Ed Gonzalez-Tennant will speak on Digital Archaeology and the Destruction of Rosewood, Florida. Please plan to attend. All our presentations are open to the public and are free.

## **DUES ARE DUE IN JANUARY**

Please send in your dues using the attached SWFAS Form and help continue our program of offering quality archaeological and anthropological presentations by highly qualified presenters. An additional contribution would also help. Thank you in advance. This is also a good time to renew your membership in FAS or to join. Forms for both SWFAS and FAS are included at the back of this attachment.

## **PBCAS LECTURE SERIES: DR. BARBARA PURDY, FEBRUARY 18, 2017**

*The Palm Beach County Archaeological Society Invites you to Attend a Very Special Lecture by Internationally Renowned Wet Site Archaeologist, Dr. Barbara Purdy*

### **THE NATIVE AMERICANS OF FLORIDA**

### **12,000 YEARS AGO TO HISTORIC CONTACT**

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 18, 2017 at 2 PM**

### **SUMMIT BRANCH OF THE PALM BEACH COUNTY LIBRARY**

**Address: 3650 Summit Blvd, West Palm Beach, FL 33406**

**For more information : 561 853 4443**



Penetrating the darkness of time is not an easy task when there are no people to interview and when more than 90% of material items have not survived. In this presentation, I first attempt to furnish the most accurate account available to describe native Floridians who lived here when climate conditions were vastly different, and when now extinct megafauna still roamed. The past becomes more visible with the emergence of modern flora, fauna, and landscapes around 7000-8000 years ago. The preservation of plant and animal species used for food, as well as stone, bone, wood, and shell artifacts add valuable pieces to the prehistoric puzzle. When ceramic technology is introduced around 4000 years ago, an even broader picture of social and ritual life is revealed. Works of art, although rare during early periods, increased through time and were created in many media, such as ivory, bone, wood, stone, shell, and ceramics. In the early 1500s AD, the descendants of this

12,000-year cultural evolution were encountered by the French and Spanish. This encounter soon led to the collapse of Florida's Native American way of life.

## **FORT CENTER**

In keeping with my goal to highlight local archaeological sites that can be easily visited, this month Fort Center has been selected. Located in Lakeport, Glades County, this site was excavated by Dr. William H. Sears over a six year period and is a major site with earthworks, several types of mounds and a charnel house at the A B mound area. I am familiar with the artifacts from Ft Center as I was his graduate research assistant at Florida Atlantic University for two years from 1970 to 1972. I worked on the ceramics and created the complete map of Ft Center from several smaller mound maps. Bill was a marine in World War II and could be described as avuncular and a great guy once you got to know him. His excavations at Ft Center opened up the western glades area archaeologically. The site was very large and spread along Fisheating Creek for over 2 ½ miles. For six years he established a camp at the site with three trailers purchased under his NSF Grant, one dorm trailer, one office/storage trailer and a kitchen/lab trailer and eliminated commuting back and forth. He used a backhoe to trench in some areas and a bulldozer to carefully strip large areas to quickly identify where to excavate with traditional methodology. The nature of the site dictated this and he was ahead of his time in using heavy equipment. I have included a few articles on Ft Center to familiarize you with the site and hope that you visit it. Sears believed that the earthworks were used for maize agriculture, however, it was later determined that the pollen that he recovered was intrusive

from modern times and not prehistoric. His monograph on Fort Center was published in 1982 and, if you read it before you visit the site, you will have a greater appreciation for the site. In 1977 the three trailers and a bulldozer were loaned to Dr. Greald Milanich and were used by him to excavate the McKeithen site (Archaeology of Northern Florida A.D. 200-900. Milanich et al 1984, p. 3.). The authors dedicated this book was to William H. Sears for his assistance.

#### **DENEGE PATTERSON - SWFAS MEMBER TO RELEASE NEW BOOK ON PINE ISLAND SOUND ISLANDS**

Denege Patterson's book is being launched at the Randell Research Center on February 11, 2017, entitled, ***A Tour of the Islands of Pine Island Sound Florida: Their Geology, Archaeology, and History***. Her book is edited by William Marquardt, and will be released by the Institute of Archaeology and Paleoenvironmental Studies, University of Florida, at the RRC.

Kristi Anders of Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation said that her book will be the first of its kind about the islands and all in one place. Ms. Patterson hired a professional photographer who hung out of the door of a helicopter to get spectacular aerial photographs of the islands. As a result, the book is in full color with many beautiful, high resolution pictures, and the text has been well-researched, documented, reviewed by professionals in those fields, and refined and edited by Marquardt.

On Saturday, March 24, 2017, at 10 am and at 1 pm, Ms. Patterson will give two Power Point Presentations on Sanibel Island at the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Sanctuary entitled "A Tour of the Islands of Pine Island Sound." The book will be sold in their gift shop. On Sunday, March 25, 2017, she will be giving "A Harbor Tour of the Islands" leaving from Pineland on a Captiva Cruises boat on Calusa Heritage Day sponsored by the Randell Research Center. On that day, the cruise boat leaves from the Tarpon Lodge at Pineland. Starting on December 16th, she will be giving land tours as usual at the RRC every Friday at 10 am and 1 pm through April.

The proceeds of her book-- 100% --support the Endowment Fund of the RRC.

#### **THE BATTLE OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE 1837**

This year we celebrate the 180th anniversary of the Battle of Lake Okeechobee which took place on Christmas Day December 25, 1837 during the Second Seminole War in Okeechobee, Florida. It was called a "tactical Seminole victory and a strategic US victory". On February 25-26 (Saturday/Sunday) there will be a reenactment of the battle at Okeechobee Historic State Park 3500 SE 38th Avenue, Okeechobee, FL 34974. If you go, follow Route 441S through the town of Okeechobee, then East along the lake, past the Taylor Creek Bridge. There will be signs and the entrance is on the North side of the road. Please note that this State Park is only open for the annual reenactment of this battle and that there is a \$10.00 fee per car. The park is open from 10am to 4pm both days with the reenactment at 2pm both days. Please see the enclosed articles.

## 2017 SWFAS LECTURE SERIES

### FEBRUARY MEETING

**Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 7:00 pm**

**Dr. Ed Gonzalez-Tennant presents: Digital Archaeology and the Destruction of Rosewood, Florida**

**Coincides with Black History Month**

**Location – Fort Myers Imaginarium, 2000 Cranford Ave, Fort Myers, FL 33916**



By 1900 Rosewood was a successful, majority African American community in southwestern Levy County. The town's residents enjoyed a degree of prosperity rarely afforded black communities at the time. This came to an abrupt end on January 1st, 1923 during a weeklong episode of violence commonly referred to as the Rosewood Race Riot. In the ensuing violence, several of Rosewood's residents were brutally murdered and the town burned to the ground.

Archaeologists who seek to engage with such episodes of so-called "difficult heritage" often struggle to produce meaningful interpretations for the public. This presentation examines the potential digital archaeology has for these kinds of difficult and hidden histories. The application of virtual reality and video games to such sites provides new insights regarding memory and place.



Ed Gonzalez-Tennant is a digital/historical archaeologist working in the southeastern United States and Caribbean. His research centers on recovering hidden histories through the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and virtual technologies to interpret archaeological, documentary, and ethnohistorical data. In so doing, he examines identity, memory, and landscape with an orientation towards social justice education through the creation of digital media. Following completion of his dissertation on Rosewood at University of Florida, Dr. Gonzalez-Tennant taught at Monmouth University, New Jersey before forming Digital Heritage Interactive LLC based in Gainesville, Florida.

### TO GO TO THE IMAGINARIUM:



**FROM THE SOUTH:** Take the 75 fwy North toward Ft. Myers, then take the FL-82 exit, EXIT 138, toward ML King Jr Blvd/Ft Myers/Immokalee. Turn left onto FL-82/State Road 82. Continue to follow FL-82. Go 3.60 miles, then turn left onto Cranford Ave. Go 0.09 miles, and the Imaginarium is on the right.

**FROM THE NORTH:** Take I-75 South toward Fort Myers. Take the FL-82 exit, EXIT 138, toward Ft Myers/ML King Jr Blvd/Immokalee. Merge onto Dr Martin Luther King Blvd/FL-82 toward Ft Myers/Edison/Ford Estates/Imaginarium. Go 3.46 miles, then turn left onto Cranford Ave. Go 0.09 miles, and the Imaginarium is on the right.



Lee Trust for Historic Preservation & Friends of Mound Key Present



Florida Southwestern State College, U-102, Fort Myers, FL To Register: [WWW.HERITAGE-MATTERS.ORG](http://WWW.HERITAGE-MATTERS.ORG)

From the 1560s on, Jesuit and then Franciscan friars established over 150 missions across *La Florida*. Yet by 1763, only two missions and less than one hundred mission Indians remained. Join preeminent historians, archaeologists, and linguistics in exploring this era that brought together diverse peoples, cultures, & ideas.

## PROGRAM

9:00AM Welcome and Opening Remarks

**FREE!**

**Jerald T. Milanich** | A New World: Southeastern Indians and Spanish Missions

**J. Michael Francis** | Politics, Power, and Polygamy: Rethinking the 1597 Guala Uprising

**George Aaron Broadwell** | Timucua Writers in Mission Period Florida

**John E. Worth** | Rebellion and Consequences: The 1656 Rebellion and the Reorganization of Timucua

**Rochelle Marrinan** | The Archaeology of the Apalachee Missions

12:30PM Question & Answer Lunch available for advance purchase at [www.heritage-matters.org/mound-key-events](http://www.heritage-matters.org/mound-key-events)

**Jerald T. Milanich** | The End of Time: Destruction of the Missions and Resettlement of Indian Refugees around St. Augustine

**John E. Worth** | So Far but So Near: Native Refugees in West and South Florida

**J. Michael Francis** | 'Not Even the Devil Could Read This': Digging in the Archives

**George Aaron Broadwell** | Timucua Miracle Stories: European Folklore Through the Eyes of Florida Indians

**Rochelle Marrinan** | San Luis de Apalachee: Bringing Missions to Life

5:00PM Meet & Greet to follow

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Group Rate of \$174 per night (king or two doubles) includes complimentary shuttle to and from event and complimentary Wi-Fi for each guest room. Rate valid through February 10th. Ask for LEE TRUST HISTORIC. (239) 938-2901 or book at [www.heritage-matters.org/mound-key-events/](http://www.heritage-matters.org/mound-key-events/)

Funding for this program was provided by Lee Trust, our sponsors, and through a grant from the Florida Humanities Council (FHC) with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the FHC or the NEH.

## **FEBRUARY PRESENTATION WITH LEE TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**Saturday February 25, 2017 at Southwestern State College**

Lee Trust for Historic Preservation and Friends of Mound Key are pleased to announce a free public event focused on the Spanish Mission period in Florida history. The program entitled, "Laboring in the Fields of the Lord: Southeastern Indians and Spanish Missions," will be held on February 25th at Florida Southwestern State College, Auditorium U-102, 8099 College Parkway, Fort Myers, FL from 9:00AM to 5:00PM. Funding for this program is generously provided by a grant from the Florida Humanities Council and local sponsors.

From the 1560s on, Jesuit and then Franciscan friars established over 150 missions across La Florida – from the southern reaches of the Florida peninsula to the Chesapeake Bay. San Francisco, San Antonio, Santa Fe – names we associate today with Texas and the southwest – were first missions among southeastern Indian groups. Yet by 1763, when Great Britain took over Florida from Spain, only two missions and less than one hundred mission Indians remained. The Laboring in the Fields of the Lord program brings together five preeminent scholars in American Indian languages and mission period history and archaeology. The presenters will address the rise and fall of the Spanish missions including language barriers and contrasting world views, the impact on indigenous peoples and cultures, and how these histories are interpreted and presented to the public at heritage sites. Interested parties are encouraged to register in advance at [www.heritage-matters.org/mound-key-events](http://www.heritage-matters.org/mound-key-events). Attendees may attend one presentation or all presentations. Box lunches are available for advance purchase should you wish to remain on-site to interact with the speakers at lunch.

Event speakers: Jerald T. Milanich, John E. Worth, J. Michael Francis, Rochelle Marrinan, and George Aaron Broadwell.

Event sponsors/partners: Florida Humanities Council, Lee Trust for Historic Preservation, Friends of Mound Key, Florida SouthWestern State College School of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences, and the Southwest Florida Archaeological Society.

## **MARCH MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 15, 2017, 7:00 pm**

**Dr. Keith Ashley presents: Living Life on the Edge: Northeastern Florida and the Mississippian World**

**Location – Collier County Museum, 3331 Tamiami Trl East, Naples, 34112**

## **2017 CALUSA HERITAGE DAY**

**Saturday March 25, 2017**

**9:30 am – 4:00 pm**

**Randell Research Center, Pine Island, FL**

## **APRIL MEETING**

**April 19, 2017, 7:00 pm**

**Dave Southall presents: Florida's Mission Trail**

**Location – Collier County Museum, 3331 Tamiami Trl East, Naples, 34112**

**MAY 5-7, 2017**

**FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING**

**University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL**

## FORT CENTER

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort\\_Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Center)

Fort Center is an archaeological site in Glades County, Florida, a few miles northwest of Lake Okeechobee. It was occupied for more than 2,000 years, from 450 BCE until about 1700 CE. The inhabitants of Fort Center may have been cultivating maize centuries before it appeared anywhere else in Florida.[1]

Fort Center is a complex of earthwork mounds, linear embankments, middens, circular ditches, and an artificial pond occupying an area approximately 1 mile (1.6 km) long and 0.5 miles (0.80 km) wide extending east-west along Fisheating Creek, a stream that empties unto Lake Okeechobee.[2] The complex is named after a blockhouse located at the site during the Second Seminole War. No trace remains of the blockhouse, which may have been eroded by the river.[3]

### Physical environment

The Fort Center site consists of three environments; a meander belt along the stream consisting of a floodplain swamp and natural levees, wet prairie, and oak-cabbage palm-saw palmetto hammocks.[4][5] The floodplain and prairie are subject to frequent flooding.[6] The prairie consists of two to four feet of sandy soil on a hardpan, resulting in poor drainage. The stream meander belt cuts below the hardpan.[7]

Pollen evidence shows that the river meander belt and prairie existed in essentially their current condition since human occupation began 2,500 to 3,000 years ago until the 20th century. The area covered by hammocks has increased since sustained occupation ended around 1700.[8] Much of the area around Fort Center was developed as improved pasture during the 20th century.[5] Lake Okeechobee was surrounded by a system of dikes built during the 20th century, except for where Fisheating Creek enters the lake.[9]

### Cultural environment

Fort Center is in the Lake Okeechobee Basin, an area that surrounds and drains into Lake Okeechobee, and is synonymous with the Belle Glade culture area, one of several related culture areas in southern Florida.[10] The Kissimmee River valley is usually regarded as a sub-area of the Lake Okeechobee Basin (Belle Glade culture area).[11] Sears treats the Lake Okeechobee Basin, including the Kissimmee River Valley, as a sub-region of the Glades culture area, while others place the Belle Glade (Lake Okeechobee) and Glades areas on an equal footing.[11][12][13][14] The cultural traditions of southern Florida had a long history and were well adapted to the area. Archaeological evidence of changes in those cultures is mostly limited to small changes in the few ceramics that were decorated.[10]

Mounds, ditches, canals and other earthworks have been found at a number of locations in interior southern Florida. More than thirty sites of the Belle Glade culture or its predecessors are known from the area around Fisheating Creek.[5] A number of sites with extensive earthworks have been found in the Belle Glade culture area.[15] At least seven other sites in southern Florida, including two near Fisheating Creek, have similar circular features, although none of them has been subject to detailed examination by archaeologists.[16] McGoun quotes Stephen Hale as saying that complexes "with sequences of construction and architectural style almost identical to those at Fort Center" are found from Lake Tohopekaliga in the north to Palm Beach and Hendry counties to the south.[17] There are also similarities between Fort Center and the Crystal River site.[18] Milanich also notes resemblances between Period II Fort Center and contemporary Cades Pond culture sites at River Styx and Cross Creek in northern Florida.[19]

Authors have sometimes postulated that the various mounds and other earthworks in the Belle Glade and Glades areas were constructed by or at least used by the Calusa. Archaeologists now generally discount that theory. While the Calusa exercised political hegemony over much of southern Florida during the historic period, the Belle Glade and Glades culture areas remained distinct from the Caloosahatchee culture area inhabited by the Calusa. It may be the case that the Caloosahatchee culture developed later than the Belle Glade culture.[20][21]

## Excavation

The Fort Center site came to the attention of archaeologists after a carved wooden bird was found in the pond in 1926.[22] Working for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration beginning in the Great Depression, archaeologists conducted surveys and test excavations at Fort Center during the 1930s and 1940s.[15] Archaeologist John Goggin surveyed the site in the early 1950s, digging some test pits.[23] In 1961, an amateur group obtained permission from the land owner, Lykes Brothers, to survey the site. The group exceeded their permit and conducted an uncontrolled excavation. They took many artifacts, including objects from the historic period that had been reworked from metals of Spanish origin. When Lykes Brothers realized what was happening, they cancelled the group's permit, closed access to the site, and invited a professional archaeologist to survey the site.[24]

The complex was excavated over six years (1966–1971) by teams from the University of Florida, Colgate University and Florida Atlantic University.[25] The State of Florida acquired the Fort Center site from Lykes Brothers in 1999 as part of the Fisheating Creek Ecosystem. It is operated as a wildlife management area.[26]

## Origins

Sears believed that the freshwater regions of peninsular Florida were peopled by immigrants from northern South America who preceded Arawakan language-speakers through the Antilles. He cited the use of celts and adzes

made from conch-shells, the proposed derivation of the Timucuan language from South American roots, the cultivation of maize, and the use of earthworks to form fields in savannahs (wet prairies) as was done in South America. He also cited the use of fiber-tempered pottery, similar to that used in South American, and distinct from pottery used in the rest of the eastern United States.[27]



*Carved wooden eagle found at Fort Center archaeological site and displayed at Florida Museum of Natural History.  
10 April 2011 by Donald Albury*

Sears divided the period of occupation at Fort Center into four periods. Period I began before 450 BCE, perhaps as early as 1000 BCE, and lasted until around 200 CE. Period II ran from about 200 to between 600 and 800, followed by period III until 1200 to 1400, and then period IV up to about 1700.[28]

Other archaeologists have been skeptical of Sears' migration theory. There is no evidence of South American root crops being introduced to Florida, and the evidence from pottery does not give a clear south to north sequence of introduction within Florida. But, there is some support for the idea that maize, and at least one strain of tobacco, were introduced into Florida by a sea route.[29] Other archaeologists have noted that the peoples living in the Greater Antilles prior to the arrival of Arawakan-speakers were hunter-

gatherers, not agriculturists. They believe that the agricultural Arawakan-speaking Tainos did not reach Hispaniola and Cuba until 600 to 700, near the end of Sears' Period II, well after the introduction of maize at Fort Center.[30]

## Period I

Period I is characterized by several mounds, mostly artificial, that supported living areas, and by circular ditches, which Sears interpreted as enclosing fields. Only one or a few families lived on the site at any given time, and there is no evidence of any differentiated status.[31] Maize pollen was found in middens on the mounds and in the fields dating from this period.[31]

Five artificial mounds, identified as Mounds 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, are in or near the stream meander zone. They are each round, about 100 feet in diameter, and two to three feet high. Most of these mounds are now part of the natural levees along the Fisheating Creek. The mounds may have been built on existing natural levees, or the presence of the mounds may have helped shape the levees. Three burials were found in Mound 13, which may



have been used as a burial mound and later as a house mound. Mound 10 was not excavated. Little other than sherds were found in the other mounds.[32]

The Okeechobee basin is subject to frequent flooding. Mounds are required in most parts of the basin to raise house floors above flood levels. The only place in the area high enough to remain above the flood waters was a section of old natural levee. Part of this levee, named Midden B, was also used as a living site during Period I. While the mounds at Fort Center were mostly used as house platforms, some mounds and other earthworks served other purposes. The site may have been inhabited because it provided easy access to food sources in the stream.[33]

### **Circular ditches**

Archaeologists found three circular ditches at Fort Center. Two of the circular ditches were about 300 feet in diameter, and partially overlapped. A third, later circular ditch was about 1,200 in diameter. It enclosed the earlier circular ditches, but was not concentric with either of them. This ditch was 25 to 30 feet wide, and six feet deep. Most of the dirt from the ditch had been thrown on the inner side of the ditch. There were two gaps in the ditch, one on the southeast side and another on the east side, closest to Mound B in the Ceremonial Complex.[34]

No artifacts were found in the ditches or in the area enclosed by the ditches, but maize pollen was found under soil that had been disturbed from digging the ditches. Radio-carbon dating indicates that all three circles were complete by 450 BCE. There is no evidence of the circles' being used for habitation, ceremonial or defense purposes. Sears holds that the maize pollen indicates that the circles were used for cultivation. The ditches around the circles penetrated the hardpan, helping to drain the prairie soil. Sears also states that the Great Circle likely was used for gardens from several centuries BCE until the end of period II, around 600 to 800. Sears compares the circular ditches at Fort Center to similar circular ditches used for agriculture in pre-Columbian Colombia.[35]

Sears states that the circles at Fort Center were earlier than those of the Adena culture of the Ohio River valley. Sears believes that the Fort Center circles are related to circles at Hopewellian sites. He states that circle earthworks were almost certainly imported into Florida from South America along with maize.[36] Sears believes that the inhabitants of Fort Center, who dug the circular ditches and introduced maize and cord-tempered pottery to the area, were people who were descended from migrants from South America, but they had been resident in Florida long enough to have adapted to the local environment.[37]

### **Period II**

During Period II, from about 200 until sometime between 400 and 600, all of the residents of Fort Center, three to six families, were involved in a ceremonial center. Two mounds, A and B, and an artificial pond are interpreted as a ceremonial complex. An embankment or wall surrounds Mound B and the pond, with both ends attached to Mound A. Part of the area enclosed by the embankment forms what appears to be a courtyard, but no evidence of how it may have been used was found. The complex was located on the prairie, close to the stream meander belt, and was the focus of the Fort Center site during Period II.[38]

### **Mounds**

Mound A is irregular in shape and about three feet tall. It has been interpreted as a living site. A couple of slightly higher places on the mound were probably structure sites. Middens on Mound A contained potsherds, maize pollen, animal bones (mostly deer), and human baby teeth. Some human bones, broken similarly to the animal bones, were also found in the middens, suggesting that cannibalism was practiced at the site. Shell tools, stone grinding tools and pipes were found in the living areas of the mound. Also found were sherds from imported ceramics, including types identified as Deptford, Cartersville, Pasco, Crystal River, and St. Johns. Sears suggests that this trade pottery was sacred and acquired for ceremonial purposes. Many post holes found in the lower level of the mound indicate that round or oval houses about 30 feet in diameter had stood on the mound. There were also pits in which shells had been burned to produce lime. Unburned shells around the edges of the lime pits were mainly river mussels, but also included conchs and venus clams. Human coprolites, feces preserved by

exposure to the lime, were also found around the edges of the pits. Mound A was expanded at least twice during Periods II and III (200 to 1200 or later), with a particularly dense midden area deposited in the first half of that period. Some habitation of the mound extended past 1400.[39]

At its final development, Mound B was cone-shaped (with a steeper slope on the upper part) with a slightly truncated top.[40] Decayed conch shells, along with badly decayed human bones and teeth, were found on the original surface of the mound, below the lowest midden layer of Mound B.[41] Dirt excavated from the adjacent pond was used to build the earliest part of Mound B and the embankment that surrounded the mound (connecting to Mound A at both ends).[42] Around 500 Mound B was built up more with dirt from another borrow pit (not the pond).[43] Around 150 secondary bundled burials were placed in the sides of mound in the dirt added at this time.[44] No artifacts were found with the secondary burials, but small deposits of muck, presumed to be from the pond associated with Mounds A and B, were found with them.[45] A set of objects, described by Sears as a "Hopewellian type deposit", was found in the side of Mound B facing the pond.[46]

Mound B was originally used as a living site and for preparing and bundling bodies. The habitation area was later moved to Mound A while the body preparation activities continued on Mound B. Use of Mound A for ceremonial purposes is indicated by broken pipes found on Mound A and in the charnel pond. Pipes have been found at only one other place (the University of Florida Mound) at Fort Center. Habitation of Mound A apparently continued for a while after the site ceased being used as a ceremonial center.[47]

### **Charnel pond**

The artificial pond in the ceremonial complex was four to five feet deep, with a nearly flat bottom. It was cut through the hardpan, allowing water above the hardpan to flow into the pond, keeping it full. Dirt from Mound B had washed into the pond, partially filling it.[48] Excavation of the pond yielded wooden objects, human bones from about 150 individuals, and human coprolites.[49] Some of the wooden pieces found in the pond were carved (it was a carved wooden bird found in this pond that first brought the site to the attention of archaeologists). Some of the carvings had remnants of a lime-based coating. Other pieces of wood were long enough to have been set in the bottom of the pond and hold the carvings above the water. Some of the wood was rotted, other pieces were charred.[50] Under the wood and bones was a midden layer, consisting of sherds, shells, pipe fragments and coprolites (preserved human feces). Some of the coprolites showed evidence of constipation, others showed evidence of diarrhea. Sears interpreted the materials in the midden layer as having been thrown into the pond during a "housecleaning" of Mound A, with the coprolites coming from the lime pits where similar coprolites were excavated.[51]

Sears interprets the pond as a "charnel" pond, with a wooden platform in the pond holding bundled bodies. The carved figures of birds and animals found in the pond were probably mounted on the platform.[Note 1] The platform stood long enough for some of the wood to rot. The platform apparently caught fire and collapsed into the pond sometime around 500. As the bones found in the pond accounted for about 150 bodies, and about 150 bundled bodies with muck from the pond were found buried in Mound B, Sears states that the platform in the charnel pond must have held about 300 bundled bodies when it burned and collapsed. About half of the bundled bodies dumped into the pond were recovered and reburied in Mound B. The sex and age distribution of the bones is normal for the level of culture attributed to the inhabitants of Fort Center. Sears states that the platform was "clearly ceremonial", that the pond was a "culturally correct environment for [a] charnel platform", and that the water was "a ceremonial requirement." Water burials were common in inland (freshwater) sites in Florida, such as the Windover archaeological site and Little Salt Springs.[52] Artificial ponds have been noted at two other sites near Fisheating Creek.[53] A "water mortuary cult" may have been widespread in southern Florida from Paleoindian times into the historic period.[54]

Later analysis of the bones found in the charnel pond and in Mound B indicated the people suffered from osteoarthritis and anemia due to parasite infections and iron deficiency, but were relatively well nourished and

showed less tooth wear than other contemporary populations in Florida. Few lived past age 35, and none in the analyzed population lived past about 55.[55]

### **Significance**

Sears interprets the complex consisting of Mounds A and B and the charnel pond as a ceremonial center where mortuary specialists processed bodies; in particular, they cleaned flesh from bones.[Note 2] They probably lived with their families on Mound B early in Period II, moving to Mound A later in the Period. They served a population spread through a large area, and probably also supplied tobacco, pipes, and lime for processing maize to the surrounding population.[56] The 300 bodies kept on the platform may represent the people of the ceremonial center over several centuries. All of the residents of the ceremonial center would have been in a sacred social class, serving some large portion of the Okeechobee Basin (including the Kissimmee Valley). (There were many small sites with single houses on mounds throughout the area.)[57]

### **Period III**

Period III ran from between 600 and 800 to between 1200 and 1400. The ceremonial center was no longer active. Two places on the natural levee along Fisheating Creek, Midden A and part of Midden B, were occupied during this period, as was Mound A for at least the early part of the period. There was little change in the artifacts left by Period III inhabitants compared to artifacts from Period II. There is no evidence of maize cultivation from Period III.[58]

### **Period IV**

Period IV ran from sometime between 1200 and 1400 to around 1700. Most of this period was after European contact began affecting the peoples of Florida. Artifacts recovered from this period include reworked metal of Spanish origin. Occupation continued at Middens A and B on the natural levee along Fisheating Creek, and expanded to new mounds on the prairie away from the stream meander zone. Linear earthworks associated with those mounds also appeared in this period. Maize pollen was found in deposits from this period, after being absent during Period III. Burials from after 1500 were found in the top of Mound B. Most of these burials were flexed (legs bent), while the rest were bundled. Post holes associated with the upper level burials may be from small shelters built over the burials.

Burials from Period IV were associated with grave goods, including objects reworked from Spanish gold, silver, copper and brass, unlike those from earlier periods. Some of the grave goods may have been symbols or badges of rank. Fort Center was probably now part of the Calusa realm. Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, who was held captive by Indians in Florida for 17 years in the 16th century, indicates that the Mayaimi people, who lived around Lake Okeechobee and were therefore the likely inhabitants of Fort Center, were subject to the Calusa. Fontenada describes the Mayaimi as living in very small towns and scattered settlements. Sears states that the Calusa probably did not use Fort Center as a ceremonial center.[59]

During Period IV, several living sites were occupied (although not necessarily all at the same time), including Middens A and B, and Mounds 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, and the University of Florida Mound. Most of the mounds were new to this period. Mound 3 was built up from a small natural mound, and had been previously occupied. Mound 8 may be natural. Broken smoking pipes were found at the original ground level under the University of Florida mound, indicating the site may have served a ceremonial purpose before the mound was built. The mounds (not including the middens on the levee) are each big enough for a single house, and each mound is associated with a linear earthwork, which Sears interpreted as "agricultural plots." The linear earthworks varied in size, from 30 to 100 feet wide and 300 to 1,200 feet long. The earthworks were raised two to three feet above the prairie, and were surround by ditches from which the fill was taken. Although one end of each linear earthwork was close to a house mound, they were never connected to the mounds. No artifacts were found in the linear earthworks.[60]

Earthworks similar to the mounds and linear ridges at Fort Center have been reported from Belle Glade, Tony's Mound, Big Mound City and the Boynton Mound complex, and these sites may all have been part of a "prehistoric farmstead culture." [61]

### **Diet**

Other than maize, which was perhaps used only in a ceremonial role or as a high-status food, the inhabitants of Fort Center relied on gathering, hunting and fishing for food. [62] They ate a variety of animal food, particularly turtles (nine different species) and fish. They also ate alligators, snakes, frogs, sirens, opossums, raccoons, muskrats, moles, squirrels, foxes, bobcats, deer, geese, turkeys, and turkey buzzards. [63]

### **Maize cultivation**

Sears reported several lines of evidence for the cultivation of maize at Fort Center. Direct evidence for the presence of maize was the discovery of maize pollen in several environments at Fort Center. [Note 3] Maize pollen from Period I was found in the fields surrounded by the circular ditches and in middens. From Period II maize pollen was found in the lime-based coating on a carved bird found in the charnel pond, and in some (three out of 121) of the human coprolites examined. Maize pollen was also found in some of the Period IV linear earthworks. [64] [65]

Indirect evidence for cultivation of maize at Fort Center includes the fields enclosed by circular ditches created during Period I, and the linear earthworks of Period IV, which Sears compares to the circles and ridges used for agriculture on tropical savannahs in pre-Columbian South America. Sears points out that the lime produced by burning shells on Mound A during Period II could be used to process dried maize into masa, and that pestles found in middens could be used to produce mush. [66] Fontaneda stated that the Mayaimi ate bread made from roots, and does not mention maize, but Sears wondered whether Fontaneda may have failed to recognize maize. [67]

The claim that maize was cultivated at Fort Center by 450 BCE has been controversial. Some archaeologists have pointed out that neither maize kernels nor cobs have been found at Fort Center. Others have questioned the dating of the maize pollen. McGoun argues that while the maize pollen found in fields might be the result of later contamination, the pollen in the coating on the carved wooden bird and in the coprolites is harder to explain away. [16] Later reanalysis of samples from Fort Center confirmed the presence of maize pollen long before maize is known to have appeared elsewhere in Florida. [1] Evidence against the proposition that the circular ditches drained fields so that maize could be cultivated includes that one of the earlier ditches did not cut through the hardpan in at least some places. The soil at Fort Center has low fertility, high acidity, and high levels of aluminum, and thus is not suited for growing maize. [68] Milanich also notes that the raised ridges and circles in South America that Sears cites as the models for the structures at Fort Center differ in important details from Fort Center. [69] An analysis of dental wear indicates that the Period II residents of Fort Center did not depend on horticulture for their diet, and any use of maize did not contribute significantly to their diet. [70]

### **Notes**

1. The carvings may have represented ritually significant birds and animals. Alice Gates Schwehm thought that the Fort Center carvings showed a "soul in eye" concept. (McGoun:82) (More than 1,000 years later the Calusa believed that people had three souls, one of which resided in the pupil of the eye.) Hann places the wood carvings at Fort Center in an "effigy style" of wood carvings that have also been found at Key Marco and Belle Glade and described in Spanish reports about the Calusa. Hann states that this southern Florida style shows some resemblance to the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, but is missing many of its elements, and that it more closely resembles the Hopewell tradition. (Hann:47, 192)
2. Sears compares the Fort Center specialists to the Choctaw "Buzzard Men". These mortuary specialists, sometimes called "bone-pickers", cleaned bones and then returned them to the family of the deceased. They held high status in their society. The practice may have been widespread in the Southeastern United States.



- Swanton, John Reed (2001) [1931]. Source material for the social and ceremonial life of the Choctaw Indians. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press. ISBN 978-0-8173-8436-4.
  - Lewis, Thomas M. N.; Madelaine Kneberg (1958). Tribes That Slumber: Indians of the Tennessee Region. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press. p. 67. ISBN 0-87049-020-6.
3. Specimens from Fort Center were examined for the presence of four types of cultivated food plant pollen: maize, manioc, squash, and sweet potato. Only maize pollen was found. However, pigweed, goosefoot, and elderberry pollen was more common in the coprolites than was maize pollen, which indicates that gathered wild plants formed part of the diet.(Purdy:96)

## Citations and References

Please see the website at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort\\_Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Center) .

## Fisheating Creek - History

from *The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*

at <http://myfwc.com/viewing/recreation/wmas/lead/fisheating-creek/history>



Florida Photo Archives  
*Traveling on Fisheating Creek, 1842*

The name Fisheating Creek is derived from the Creek Thlothlopopka-hatchee meaning "the creek where fish are eaten." The first known settlement occurred along the banks of Fisheating Creek between 1000 and 500 BC. The early inhabitants, known as the Belle Glade people, began building mounds and other earthworks and subsisted by netting fish and harvesting turtles, snakes, and alligators. According to University of Florida archeologist Jerald Milanich, who worked on the area as a student in the 1960s, perforations found on turtle shells indicate turtles were tethered to be eaten as needed. The creek was more than a source of food and water. It was also a canoe highway leading to Lake Okeechobee and its resources to the east and other settlements to the west.

The Fort Center site consists of mounds, ponds, circular ditches, and linear embankments built over at least 2000 years. William Sears, director of the excavation and author of *Fort Center: An Archeological Site in the Lake Okeechobee Basin*, believes that corn pollen found in one of the three overlapping basins indicates that the Belle Glade people grew corn. If true, Fort Center would be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, example of agriculture in the pre-Columbian Eastern United States. Sears theorizes that people dug ditches to drain the soil for corn, which will not grow in wet soils, and that this practice may have spread across the Caribbean or around the Gulf from the lowlands of Mexico.

At the site, bundles of human remains were found along with the remnants of a wooden platform decorated with wooden carvings of wildlife including life-size cats, a bear, foxes, eagles, and wading birds. Other objects were preserved in the muck at the bottom of the pond including a wooden carving of an otter running with a fish in its mouth. The site, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was still occupied, although there was no evidence of agriculture, when the Europeans arrived in the 16th and 17th centuries.



Florida Museum of Natural History Artist's Rendering of  
*Fort Center*

During the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), a cabbage palm palisade at the site was named Fort Center for Lieutenant J.P. Center. Oscan Tustenuggee, who had organized many war parties, and his two brothers Micco Tustenuggee and Old Tustenuggee and their wives lived in villages

along the creek. In 1842, George Henry Preble of the U.S. Navy described the difficulties of a trip up Fisheating Creek in a 30-foot cypress dugout canoe named "Susan" after his sweetheart: "This stream is very tortuous, and sometimes swells into a river, and then dwindles into a brook."

The fort was reactivated at the start of the Third Seminole War in 1855. Lieutenant Henry Benson described Fort Center upon his arrival in April 1855 as "more disagreeable, unhealthy and devoid of interest than I had expected....Mosquitos awful. 1,000,000,000 of them....Hot-hot as fire all day." His diary concludes with "the same in the same. Killed two snakes." At the conclusion of the Third Seminole War in 1858, many Indians had been removed from Florida. In 1881, Clay MacCauley at the direction of the federal government found 37 extended families living in 22 campsites in five areas, one of which was Fisheating Creek. By 1930, cultivation of sugar cane, cattle ranching, and establishment of a refinery at Moore Haven forced the remaining Seminoles to move from Fisheating Creek. Some Seminoles went to work for cattle barron Jacob Summerlin.



*Florida Photo Archives  
Fisheating Creek Picnic*

Much of the land surrounding the creek came to be owned by the Lykes Brothers. The Lykes Empire began in the 1880s when Dr. Howell Tyson Lykes began exporting cattle to Cuba. All seven of his sons went into the family cattle or shipping business, and today Lykes Brothers Inc. is the largest producer of cattle and the biggest meat packer in Florida. Over the years the creek has been the focal point in the lives of the local people. They courted, married, honeymooned, and baptized their children there. Along the banks they colored and hid Easter eggs and celebrated Thanksgiving. They depended on the creek for subsistence and recreation, hunting, fishing, and camping along its banks.

The Lykes family prohibited development along the creek and ran a campground and a canoeing concession at Palmdale. In 1989, the Lykes Brothers closed the creek to the public, igniting a 10-year legal battle. On February 19, 1998, Circuit Court Judge Charles Carlton ruled that Fisheating Creek belonged to the people of Florida, although the ordinary high water line, which is used to determine the boundary between public lands and private lands, had not been determined. Lykes Brothers appealed the decision. To put an end to litigation, the parties agreed to a settlement calling for the state of Florida to purchase a corridor along the creek under the auspices of the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Program using funds appropriated by the Florida Forever Act. This land (18,272 acres) became Fisheating Creek WMA. The settlement agreement has a number of stipulations that determine recreational use on the area including prohibition of motor vehicles, jet skis, and jet-powered watercraft; hunting west of U.S. 27 by quota permit only; prohibition of hunting east of U.S. 27 except for special opportunity spring turkey hunts; and restriction of airboats from portions of Cowbone Marsh.

## **If You Go:**

**from Florida Hikes! at <http://floridahikes.com/fortcenter>**



The Fort Center site is at Fisheating Creek WMA. A variety of mounds, ditches, embankments, and ponds were built in the prairies along Fisheating Creek as part of a village occupied between 1000 and 500 B.C. In 1835, during the Second Seminole War, a fort palisade was built and named after Lieutenant J.P. Center, hence the name. The trail system is comprised of two parts—a linear 3.5 mile round-trip on a dirt road (with trail markers to guide you), and a 1 mile interpretive loop through the shady cabbage palm and oak hammock.

## Overview

Location: Lakeport

Length: 5 miles

Lat-Long: 26.950668, -81.135548

Type: balloon

Fees / Permits: none

Difficulty: easy to moderate

Bug factor: low to moderate

Restroom: Modern composting privies at the trailhead

Follow the trail markers from the trailhead kiosk to a nearby observation platform on an open prairie. The trail turns left and follows the road. Follow the markers past the FWC maintenance yard to continue on the hike. It's been recommended to me that you bicycle the long, open straight dirt road between the trailhead and the hammock loop along Fisheating Creek (where bikes are not allowed).

## Directions

From US 441 in Okeechobee, follow SR 78 west to Lakeport, or from US 27 in Moore Haven, follow SR 78 east to Lakeport. Look for the turnoff for Banana Grove Road on the north side of the road, between two branches of Fisheating Creek. There is a sign at the entrance "Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area." Follow the unpaved road for about a mile to reach the trailhead parking area on the left.

## Hike

There are two parking areas at this trailhead, and you should start your hike at the first one—there's a restroom, a large kiosk with information about the trail, and the markers lead you across the road to an observation deck overlooking a wet prairie, a perfect (and wheelchair-accessible) spot for birding. As the trail leaves the observation deck, it turns right (west) and heads past the second trailhead. Follow the gravel road through a gate around the FWC manager's house and work area. It continues into an open prairie with a large slough on the opposite side of the fence on your left, obscured in October by tall Southeastern sunflowers that grow along the edge of the road. It's a long, straight, flat walk. A ditch with lance-leaved arrowhead parallels the trail on the right. In a stand of oaks on the left, a bizarre collection of golden orb spiders cling to their last days before the cold comes by huddling their webs close to each other. Around you are the classic Okeechobee prairies, broad and open, dotted with cabbage palms and small oaks. Slight depressions along the road create tiny depression marshes where aquatic plants thrive.

Along this open stretch you encounter shaded benches with detailed interpretive information presented on one side, starting with how this was once a working ranch and is now a wildlife management area, and presenting information on the wildlife and history of the area. The name "Fort Center" comes from a Third Seminole War fort erected on the site, built out of cabbage palm logs. It is high ground between arms of the vast Fisheating Creek floodplain as it meanders into Lake Okeechobee, thus the reason for its long-time occupation by a variety of civilizations.

When the trail jogs to the left and begins passing under the shade of oaks, you're drawing close to the beginning of the loop. You may see a hog trap set on the side of the trail—wild hogs frequently root through the forest and damage the understory. More than 500 were trapped and removed this year alone. The trail passes through a gap in a fence at 1.6 miles, marking the high ground and protected area of Fort Center. While instinct might lead you to continue straight down the path into the deep shade of the ancient oaks, it was more fun to leave the best for last. When you see the sign for the nature trail loop (no bicycles allowed), turn left to take the trail less traveled. It's a narrow track but obvious enough, marked with Lucite posts with hiker symbols, and it meanders along the edge of a ranch fenceline before reaching a large willow marsh on the left. The ancient oaks – and site of the even more ancient village – are to your right, and this path circles its edge, rounding a large depression marsh and

slipping through the thick understory of saw palmetto beneath the oaks. Look up, and you'll see bromeliads dangling from the trees.

After 2.4 miles the nature trail emerges at an intersection with the main trail. Continue straight ahead to enjoy a sweeping view of Fisheating Creek off to your left from a high embankment. Depending on the water level, you may be able to scramble down to its shores. The trail continues to a picnic table under an oak tree, kindly placed there by members of the Lakeport Airboaters' Club. Loop around here and head back along the creek to the intersection with the main trail. Turn left.

Beneath the cool canopy of live oaks, it's now time to explore the ancient village at Fort Center. This started as a settlement of what archaeologists call the Belle Glade people, dating back to 1000 B.C. It is thought that these people, who dug ditches and built mounds to live on above the creek's floodplain, might have been the first to cultivate corn in the Americas. Look for a narrow path on the left. It's not marked, but it leads beneath wild citrus trees and climbs up a mound surrounded by forest. Return the way you came. Farther down the main trail, there is a more obvious short path on the right that leads to an interpretive spot. Between 200-800 A.D., a pond was intentionally constructed in the low spot at this site. One amazing artifact found within this pond was an elaborately carved wooden platform used for ceremonial cremation. Remains were interred in the adjoining mound.

Back on the main trail, you're walking under both a canopy of live oaks and a lower canopy of very old citrus trees. Since citrus was brought to the New World by the Spanish in the 1500s, it's possible this wild grove is one of the oldest in Florida. We sampled a handful of fruits and found them to be very unusual. The lemons and limes were tasty, not tart, and the grapefruit tasted sweet. Watch for the final side trail on your left, leading to the largest of the mounds. The interpretive panels here tell the entire history of native occupation of this settlement, which ended sometime in the 1700s. The Fort Center complex has been of great interest to archaeologists for more than a century. Well-documented artifacts removed from the complex – including pottery, tools, bones, carvings, and pollen – are displayed at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville and at the South Florida Museum in Bradenton, in the special Tallant Collection gallery.

Returning to the main trail, turn left. Within a few minutes, you leave the shade of the oak hammock and encounter the first junction for the nature trail, at 3.4 miles. You've completed the loop through the hammock. Continue straight ahead, passing through the fenceline, and follow the obvious road / trail back through the vast open prairie to the trailhead to complete the 5 mile hike.



# THE BATTLE OF OKEECHOBEE

SECOND SEMINOLE WAR BATTLE REENACTMENT

## Fun Filled Family Day!

Please join the Okeechobee Battlefield  
Friends for the commemoration of the  
largest & fiercest battle in the  
Seminole Wars fought on  
Christmas Day 1837.

**Gates Open:**  
10 AM — 4 PM

**Battle Reenactment  
Start Time:**

**2:00 PM**  
BOTH DAYS

**Admission:** \$10 Per Car

**Feb. 25th & 26th 2017**

- Colors Presentation
- Battle of Okeechobee Narration
- Alligator Demonstration
- Living History
- Seminole Jacket Raffle
- Artisans
- Seminole & Other Exhibitors
- Children's Horse Rides
- 1800's Irish Folk Music
- Pow Wow Dancing

## Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park

3500 SE 38th Ave. Okeechobee, FL  
GPS 27.211601 - 80.789530



/BattleofOkeechobee

For further information & updates please visit:  
[OkeechobeeBattlefield.com](http://OkeechobeeBattlefield.com)

## THE BATTLE OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE 1837

from Blackpast.org at <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/battle-lake-okeechobee-1837>



*Battle of Lake Okeechobee, Christmas Day, 1837*  
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On Christmas Day, 1837, during the Second Seminole War, the Africans and Native Americans comprising Florida's Seminole Nation defeated a superior US fighting force. In more than half a century of Florida invasions, this was the worst defeat the Seminole Nation inflicted on the American Army, which was the strongest military force on the continent at that time. This victory, though long omitted from history books, is a milestone moment in American history.

Spain claimed Florida during the 17th and 18th centuries, but so loosely governed it that it attracted untold numbers of pirates, adventurers, and—in particular—runaway slaves from Georgia and Carolina plantations. Spanish colonial officials offered sanctuary to escapees from the British colonies.

After the United States became an independent nation and plantation agriculture—and slavery—increased, more runaways sought out Florida and freedom. After 1776, Creek dissidents known as “Seminoles” (derived from the Spanish word for “runaways”) who broke away from the Creek nation also sought refuge in Florida. There they were welcomed by the Africans, who taught them methods of rice cultivation learned in Senegambia and Sierra Leone.

As the Africans welcomed and incorporated the Seminoles and their descendants who had fled to Florida, the two peoples forged an economic and military alliance. US slaveholders in turn confronted what was for them a nightmare: Florida now served as a beacon that offered additional escapees shelter and military assistance in preserving their freedom. Planters demanded US military intervention; by 1811, President James Madison authorized covert slave-catching invasions into Spanish Florida. In 1816, General Andrew Jackson, probably supported by President James Monroe, ordered an attack to “restore the stolen negroes to their rightful owners.” This invasion destroyed “Fort Negro” on the Apalachicola River, the center of a region where hundreds of Seminoles and runaway slaves had villages, farms, and cattle. In 1818, Jackson invaded Florida again, seizing fugitive slaves as well as free black women and men, returning them the United States.

In 1819, the United States government purchased Florida from Spain for \$5,000,000; this purchase, however, did not mean pacification. For the next four decades the US Army fought three Seminole Wars to bring that Indian nation under control and to end the Seminole practice of sheltering fugitive slaves. These wars involved the seizing of women and children as hostages and destroying crops and villages. The Second Seminole War (1835-1842) cost 1,500 US military lives and over \$40,000,000 from the US Treasury, eight times the initial purchase price of Florida. These wars, however, were the largest and longest slave revolt in US history, and were the strongest military alliance between African Americans and Indians in North America. Numerous military figures such as Osceola, Wild Cat, and John Horse led the Seminoles.

On Christmas Day, 1837, on the northeast corner of Florida's Lake Okeechobee, about 450 Seminole soldiers and their black allies awaited Colonel Zachary Taylor and his 70 Delaware Indians, 180 Tennessee volunteers, and 800 US infantrymen. Initial Seminole fire sent the Delaware fleeing. Tennessee riflemen marched into withering fire that brought down most of their commissioned officers and then their noncommissioned officers. With their leadership in disarray, they fled. Taylor then ordered his three US Infantry Regiments forward. Pinpoint Seminole fire brought down, he later reported, “every officer, with one exception, as well as most of the non-commissioned officers.”



After a two-and-a-half-hour battle, Colonel Taylor counted 26 US dead and 112 wounded, four Seminole dead, and no prisoners. After his survivors limped back to Fort Gardner, Taylor officially declared victory. "The Indians were driven in every direction," he erroneously stated in his report. On the strength of that report, Taylor was promoted to General. Decades later, after serving in the Mexican War, he was elected the 12th president of the United States. The real victors, however, were the Indians and the blacks, who held on to their freedom for another two decades.

#### Sources:

Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York, Atheneum, 1971); Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2003).

Contributor: Katz, William L.

## The Battle of Lake Okeechobee

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Lake\\_Okeechobee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Lake_Okeechobee)

The Battle of Lake Okeechobee was one of the major battles of the Second Seminole War. It was fought between 800 troops of the 1st, 4th, and 6th Infantry Regiments and 132 Missouri Volunteers (under the command of Colonel Zachary Taylor), and between 380 and 480 Seminoles led by Billy Bowlegs, Abiaca, and Alligator on 25 December 1837. The Seminole warriors were resisting forced relocation to a reservation out west. Though both the Seminoles and Taylor's troops emerged from the battle claiming victory, Taylor was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General as a result, and his nickname of "Old Rough and Ready" came mostly due to this battle.

In 1837 President Martin Van Buren commissioned a force which included Zachary Taylor and Richard Gentry to quell Seminole Resistance. Taylor's army came up to a large hammock with half a mile of swamp in front of it. On the far side of the hammock was Lake Okeechobee. Here the saw grass stood five feet high. The mud and water were three feet deep. Horses would be of no use. It was plain that the Seminole meant this to be the battleground. They had cut the grass to provide an open field of fire and had notched the trees to steady their rifles. Their scouts were perched in the treetops to follow every movement of the troops coming up.[2]

Battle of Lake Okeechobee	
Part of Second Seminole War	
<b>Date</b>	December 25, 1837
<b>Location</b>	Lake Okeechobee, Florida
	<span><span><span><span><span>27°12′45.44″N</span> <span>80°47′6.43″W</span></span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span><span><span></span></span></span></span>
<b>Result</b>	Tactical Seminole victory; Strategic US Victory <sup>[1]</sup>
Belligerents	
<span><span></span></span> United States	<span><span></span></span> Seminole
Commanders and leaders	
Zachary Taylor	Alligator
Richard Gentry +	Billy Bowlegs (Holata Micco)
Alexander R. Thompson +	Abiaca
Strength	
1,100	400
Casualties and losses	
26 killed	11 killed
112 wounded	14 wounded
<div> <div><span>V</span><span>T</span><span>E</span></div> <div><b>Seminole Wars</b> <span>[hide]</span></div> <div> Watering Hole Massacre<span> </span><span>•</span> Negro Fort<span> </span><span>•</span> Fort Barrancas<span> </span><span>•</span> Dade Massacre<span> </span><span>•</span> Outhlaicoochie<span> </span><span>•</span> San Felipe Hammock<span> </span><span>•</span> Wahoo Swamp<span> </span><span>•</span> Lake Okeechobee<span> </span><span>•</span> Jupiter Inlet<span> </span><span>•</span> Pine Island Ridge </div> </div>	

At about half past noon, the sun shining directly overhead and the air still and quiet, Taylor moved his troops squarely into the center of the swamp. His plan was to make a direct attack rather than encircle the Indians. All his men were on foot. In the first line were the 132 Missouri volunteers. As soon as they came within range, the Indians opened with heavy fire. The volunteers broke, and their commander, Colonel Richard Gentry, fatally wounded, was unable to rally them. The Indians then mounted a counterattack on the remaining soldiers. In the deadly assault some of the soldiers were scalped by the Indians. Gentry had suggested to Taylor before the battle an encirclement strategy which Taylor rejected, charging that Gentry was afraid of a direct confrontation. This could have motivated Gentry to keep charging the Seminole positions even though the original battle plan had the militia retreating at the first sign of enemy fire to re-form behind the regular army lines.[3]

As a result of the additional casualties induced by the continued charge, the Missouri Militia fled back across the swamp, where they were too disorganized and disheartened to re-form as planned. The fighting in the saw grass was deadliest for five companies of the Sixth Infantry; every officer but one, and most of their noncoms were

killed or wounded. When that part of the regiment retired a short distance to re-form, they found only four men of these companies unharmed. The 6th Infantry's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander R. Thompson, was among the dead. Lieutenant William H.T. Walker, later a general in the Confederate Army, was wounded in the neck, shoulder, chest, left arm, and also his leg during the battle.

26 U.S. soldiers, including the majority of Taylor's officers and NCOs, were killed, with 112 wounded, against 11 Seminoles killed and 14 wounded. The battle stopped Taylor's troops from further advance south (for the time being) and no Seminoles were captured, although Taylor did capture 100 ponies and 600 head of cattle.[4] Years later Holata Micco (also known as Billy Bowlegs) visited Washington and on being escorted through the buildings of the Capitol and viewing many statues and paintings, he suddenly halted before a portrait of Zachary Taylor, grinned and exclaimed: "Me whip!"[5]

### **Battlefield Endangered**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation placed the site of the Battle of Okeechobee as one of 11 places, in the whole country, on a list of "America's Most Endangered Historic Places 2000".[6] The state of Florida spent \$3.2 million for a 145-acre (0.59 km<sup>2</sup>) park. An annual battle reenactment is held to raise money for the State park.[7]

### **Okeechobee Battlefield State Park**

from <http://www.okeechobeebattlefield.com/>

**2017 Battle of Okeechobee**

**Feb. 25-26, 2017**

**Okeechobee Battlefield Historic State Park**

**3500 SE 38th Ave**

**Okeechobee, FL 34974**



*Okeechobee Battlefield today*

The Okeechobee Battlefield Friends, Inc are a support organization for the Park and coordinate the Annual Battlefield Re-enactment on this portion of the original battlefield site the last weekend of February. The re-enactment serves to heighten public awareness for this historic battle and the battlefield's plight as we strive to create a battlefield park. The festival's success is a gauge of the public's willingness to support a future battlefield park and for this we thank all participants.

You Can Help! Support the Okeechobee Battlefield Friends by volunteering to help with the Re-enactment, attending the event, donating funds to support the activities of the Friends, and contacting your legislators to provide funding for development of the Park. Your

assistance will be appreciated not only by the Okeechobee Battlefield Friends, but by the future generations who learn of our Florida history thru this historic state park.

### **FAS AND SWFAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS**

We encourage those interested in Florida archaeology to become members of The Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) and The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS). Annual dues are due in January of 2017 and membership applications to both organizations are attached. Membership in the FAS provides you with four annual volumes of *The Florida Anthropologist* and occasional newsletters on anthropological events in Florida in addition to the annual statewide meeting. More information on FAS can be found online at: [www.fasweb.org](http://www.fasweb.org). Membership in SWFAS offers you a local series of talks on archaeological and anthropological subjects that you can attend. The SWFAS monthly newsletter keeps you up to date on local events as well as other important archaeological topics. We urge you to support both with your membership. All of the SWFAS Lecture Series are open to the public at no charge.



## *FAS Membership*

Membership in the Society is open to all interested individuals who are willing to abide by the Florida Anthropological Society Statement of Ethical Responsibilities, which can be found on our website: [fasweb.org](http://fasweb.org). Membership is for one year.



### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Student*	\$15
Regular	\$30
Family	\$35
Institutional	\$30
Sustaining	\$100
Patron	\$1000
Benefactor	\$2500

Student membership is open to graduate, undergraduate and high school students. A photocopy of your student ID must accompany payment

- Add \$25.00 for foreign addresses

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

FAS Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to make a donation to:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Dot Moore/FAS Student Grant Fund      \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Florida Archaeology Month Account

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Florida Anthropologist Monograph Fund      \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Florida Anthropologist Endowment Fund

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to abide by the Code of Ethics of the Florida Anthropological Society.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Send Membership Form and Dues Payment to:**  
Florida Anthropological Society  
c/o Pat Balanzategui  
P. O. Box 1135 - St. Augustine, FL 32085

**Membership dues can be paid with PayPal.**  
To submit your membership form electronically and pay with PayPal,  
go to the Membership form page on our website: [fasweb.org](http://fasweb.org).

The Florida Anthropological Society, Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Tax ID#59-1084419.



# JOIN US!

## The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society

<http://fasweb.org/swfas/>

The Southwest Florida Archaeological Society (SWFAS) was founded in 1980 as a not-for profit corporation to provide a meeting place for people interested in the area's past.

Our goals are to:

- Learn more of the area's history
- Create a place for sharing of this information
- Advocate for preservation of cultural resources

Its members include professional and amateur archaeologists and interested members of the general public. Members come from all walks of life and age groups. They share a lively curiosity, a respect for the people who preceded them here, and a feeling of responsibility for the conservation of the places and objects they left behind.

The Society holds monthly meetings between October and April, attracting speakers who are in the forefront of archaeological and historical research. Occasionally members join in trips to historical and archaeological sites.

A monthly newsletter, Facebook page, and website keep members abreast of our events and happenings.

The organization is a chapter of the Florida Anthropological Society, a statewide organization that publishes quarterly newsletters and a journal, *The Florida Anthropologist*, and holds an annual conference.

**I want to help The Southwest Florida Archaeology Society preserve and interpret Florida's heritage!**

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Check One:

Individual (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining Individual (\$50) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$35) \_\_\_\_\_

Student (\$5) \_\_\_\_\_ Life (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to Support SWFAS Speakers and Programs \_\_\_\_\_

Skills, training, interests: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to abide by the rules and bylaws of the Southwest Archaeological Society. I further release from any and all liability due to accident and injury to myself, dependents and any property owners cooperating with the society.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check out to SWFAS and mail to:

SWFAS  
PO BOX 9965  
NAPLES, FL 34101

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