

# **Last Command: The Dade Massacre**

By W. S. Steele

## **INTRODUCTION**

One hundred and fifty years ago Dade County was established amidst the smoke and flames of burning plantations. This violent period of our history is known as the Second Seminole War. Precipitated by the massacre of U.S. troops under the command of Brevet Major Francis Langhorne Dade, near Bushnell, Florida, this war has been referred to as the fiercest of all the American Indian wars. The Dade Massacre is also the second greatest defeat the U.S. Army ever suffered at the hands of the Indians (Custer's defeat at the Little Big Horn decades later, being somewhat worse).

The creation of Dade County came shortly after the attack on Dade's troops. On receipt of the news of the disaster, the proposed new county's name was changed from Pinkney, after a Revolutionary War hero, to Dade.

At the time, the Dade Massacre created a national sensation much like the fall of the Alamo or Custer's Last Stand. But as the years passed, the event faded from the public memory. After 150 years the story bears retelling.

As Major Francis Langhorne Dade swung into his saddle on the morning of December 23, 1835, he faced a familiar challenge. He was to lead two companies of approximately 110 men across more than 100 miles of wilderness which lay between Fort Brooke, at Tampa, and

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Fort King, near modern day Ocala. This march was to be made in spite of the fact that the small garrison at Fort King had not been heard from for some time, an ominous indication of Indian activities between the two posts.

Major Dade faced this dangerous expedition with more than a decade of military experience on the Florida frontier. As an officer of the 4th Infantry, he had led his men against staggering odds in the Florida wilderness and had a good record of success. Incredibly, he had accomplished the same march twice before (a march of which the post commander, Captain Francis Belton, had said he would rather resign than lead).<sup>1</sup> Dade had made the first of these journeys to Fort King in 1825 during an Indian disturbance which threatened to grow into open warfare. A counterpart expedition from St. Augustine, also destined for Fort King advanced only 12 miles before poor quality territorial roads, and weather completely stalled the expedition forcing them to return to St. Augustine.<sup>2</sup>

In 1826 Dade was again ordered to lead two companies from Fort Brooke to Fort King to provide military security for an Indian election being organized by the U.S. authorities. The result of the election was unpopular with the Seminoles because the minority Miccosukees and Tallahasseees had united in electing a minority tribe (Miccosukee) member as head of the new nation.

This 1826 expedition was not without incident; 15 miles south of Fort King, Dade had to pass Micanopy's town (Micanopy was one of the most important Seminole leaders). Lieutenant George A. McCall, who commanded one of the companies, later wrote "on arriving at Micanopy's town . . . we found it abandoned. A negroe who came out to meet us informed the commanding officer that the inhabitants on hearing our approach had taken to the swamp and would fight if followed."<sup>3</sup> Dade did not follow and the potential battle was averted.

The situation in Florida worsened ominously between 1826 and 1835. The settlers' ill feelings toward the Indians was fueled by distrust, fear, greed, and bigotry. The Indians' ill feelings could be traced to more specific causes. The lands assigned to them by the Moultrie Creek Treaty of 1823 were too poor to cultivate or raise cattle. "19/20 of their whole country," wrote Governor Duval of Florida, "is by far the poorest and most miserable region I have ever beheld."<sup>4</sup> There was little healthy drinking water. Those Indians who did move onto the reservations were not properly maintained and funds were not fairly distributed. To make matters worse, an 1826

flood created famine among the Indians.

In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president. This was to have a profound effect on American-Indian relations. He was the first of four presidents between 1828 and 1844, two of whom won fame as Indian fighters and the other two were their Vice-Presidents. Acts of Congress during this time were to reflect this. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 proposed removal of all 72,000 Indians who lived east of the Mississippi River. The Moultrie Creek Treaty of 1823 had given the Florida Indians 20 years (1843) to emigrate, but a new treaty at Payne's Landing in 1832, changed it to 1835. This further solidified Indian anti-removal factions, and added to their ranks.

On March 27, 1835, an address by President Jackson was read before the assembled Florida Indian chiefs. Although it began "My children" and ended "your friend A. Jackson," in between it revealed the un-veneered harshness of Jackson's intentions. "The game has disappeared from your country," he wrote, "your people are poor and hungry . . . The tract you ceded will soon be surveyed and sold and immediately occupied by a white population . . . You have no right to stay . . . I have directed the commanding officer to remove you by force."<sup>5</sup>

When principle leaders such as Micanopy, Alligator, Jumper, and Sam Jones expressed their disapproval, Indian agent Wiley Thompson illegally struck their names from the list of chiefs. The chiefs who agreed to leave asked for and were granted time to harvest their crops. They were given nine months before they were scheduled to assemble in Tampa for emigration. By mid-January they were to board transport ships bound for the west.

After this meeting Thompson cut off the sale of ammunition to the Indians. He also made the reservation off limits to traders and Negro hunters.<sup>6</sup> The Negro hunters were a constant source of irritation to the Seminoles because an estimated 25% of their population were Negroes. As a Spanish territory, Florida had been a haven for blacks, but when Florida became an American territory, many slavers came into Florida to reclaim or abduct them.

An example of the slavers harrassment occurred in June, 1835, when Osceola visited Fort King with his wife, whose mother was an escaped slave. When a slaver claimed Osceola's wife as a slave, Osceola reacted with such language that Thompson ordered him into irons.<sup>7</sup> After being jailed for six days, Osceola became "penitent" and was released. Later, when asked what should be done about Thompson, Osceola remarked that the agent was his "friend", and he would take

## 8 TEQUESTA

care of him personally.

Other incidents added to the tension. One skirmish between seven settlers and seven Indians left three settlers and one Indian wounded and one Indian dead. Early in August, Private Kinsly Dalton (after whom Dalton, Georgia was named) was killed while carrying the mail between Fort Brooke and Fort King.<sup>8</sup> On the 19th of August Indians and the authorities held the last council with ten chiefs and seventeen sub-chiefs present. Osceola sat quietly as only Holata-Emathla, a pro-removal chief, spoke for the Indians. The anti-removal chiefs said nothing. Soon after, the Indians held their own council in the Big Swamp. It was decided that any Indian who prepared for removal would be put to death. When Holata-Emathla brought 400 of his people into Fort Brooke on November 9, they were closely followed by a war party.<sup>9</sup> On the 26th of the same month Osceola killed Charley Emathla because he sold his cattle, a preliminary step toward removal. Osceola took the money Charley Emathla had received for his cattle and threw it to the ground, forbidding anyone from picking it up, because the white man's money came from Indian blood. Four days later agent Thompson postponed cattle sales and warned the public to guard against Indian depredations.

What might be considered the first battle of the war occurred at Payne's Prairie on December 18th when 50 or 60 Indians attacked a military wagon train. Of the 30 militia-men, eight were killed and six wounded. As a result, 500 men joined the mounted Florida militia and landowners began fortifying their plantations. Some built fairly elaborate forts like the stockade at the Bulow Plantation. It consisted of an "alley-way, made of substantial squared cedar posts 10 feet high, that led into a palmetto fort having four angles or bastions. The palmetto logs were laid horizontally and morticed in one another to a height above that of a man. Loop-holes were cut between them. On one side of the fort there was a terrace, or log platform for a sentinel to walk on, and a fine wall in its center. On the outside some little way off, there was a high tree with steps like a ladder reaching to its top which commanded an extensive view of the country around for a mile or more, and had been used as a lookout."<sup>10</sup> Because most settlers could not afford such elaborate defences, many abandoned their homes and gathered at fortified points.

At this time, there were only 500 Federal troops in Florida. Commander Duncan L. Clinch, of the 4th Infantry had asked for reinforcements. This small number of troops encouraged the Indians to resist removal because 500 men could not enforce the removal of

over 4,800 Indians. One reason given later for the government's inaction was that "the Indians were not to be removed before January, hostilities were not to be expected until the time of actual embarkment."<sup>11</sup> President Jackson's views of the Florida situation are easily seen in a statement he made to Representative White of Florida. Jackson claimed "that he could take 50 women and whip every Indian that had ever crossed the Suwannee . . ." He maintained that there never were 600 Indians. White further quoted the old Indian fighter as saying that the men in Florida "had better run off or let the Indians shoot them, that the women might get husbands of courage and breed up men who would defend the country."<sup>12</sup> This gross understatement of the situation in Florida led to Dade's orders that day 150 years ago.

Dade was representative of the regular army in which President Jackson had so much confidence. He was a "tall man but so well built he did not appear so."<sup>13</sup> He served as an officer under Jackson and was commanding officer in Key West. His extensive service in Florida led to his assignment as commander of the territory lying between Charlotte Harbor and Cape Florida. His orders specifically required him to occasionally accompany expeditions into the interior of the territory to keep familiar with Indian affairs there.

The men of Dade's command reflected a recent change in recruiting policy. Prior to 1835, immigrants had not been accepted into the military service. Now, less than a year after this change, nearly one-half (47) of Dade's men were immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Scotland, England, Prussia, Canada, and Saxony.<sup>14</sup>

Private John Thomas was one of these immigrants. He and his younger brother had come to America together. The younger brother impetuously joined the army, and John had joined to see after him.

Another private among the ranks was a 19 year old American named Ransom Clarke. He was described as a vulgar, unappreciative youth who had already accomplished all but the crowning achievement of an astonishing career in the Army. In 1835 he had been the only survivor of the crew of a small ship that sank in Mobile Bay. On reaching Florida he was assigned the mail route between Fort King and Fort Brooke after the previous courier, Private Dalton, was murdered by the Indians. Clarke survived this hazardous duty although it was reported that the Indians captured him twice.<sup>15</sup>

The road on which Dade's men marched had been established by the military to connect Ft. Brooke with the Indian agency at Ft. King. The road crossed four rivers and several hammocks before reaching Fort King. Each of these crossings and hammocks was an ideal loca-

## 10 TEQUESTA

tion for Indian ambushes. The first crossing was at the Little Hillsborough River, seven miles from Fort Brooke. The men felled trees and raised a breastwork where Dade camped the first night. Transporting the cannon hampered the day's march. Dragging this gun through the sand was too much for its team of oxen so it was finally abandoned four miles from Ft. Brooke. Lieutenant Benjamin Alvord was sent back to Ft. Brooke to get a team of horses to pull it.<sup>16</sup>

On the first day's march, the command had been joined by Captain George Gardiner and a Negro guide-interpreter. Captain Gardiner, who was described as being "almost as thick as he was long,"<sup>17</sup> contrasted to the taller Dade. He was originally ordered to command this mission but because his wife was gravely ill, Dade offered to take his place. After accepting this kind offer, Captain Gardiner discovered that the schooner *Motto* (the same ship which later saved the keeper from the top of the Cape Florida Lighthouse) was preparing to leave for Key West. Because his wife's father and their children were at Key West, he sent her there on board the *Motto* and caught up with Dade.<sup>18</sup> Had he known about the *Motto* sooner, present day Dade County might have been named Gardiner County.

With Gardiner arrived a slave, Louis Pacheco. Fluent in four languages, Pacheco went ahead of Dade's small army to scout for potential Indian ambushes. There is still controversy as to which side Pacheco was on in the approaching battle. Osceola had told Pacheco that no man could save him from the wrath of the Indians.<sup>19</sup> General Jessup said Pacheco was a dangerous man and that he should be hanged.<sup>20</sup>

When the march continued the next day, Dade sent Pacheco ahead to scout the next crossing at the Hillsborough River. Pacheco discovered that the bridge was a smoldering ruin. When Dade and his men arrived, Dade decided to camp for the night and cross the river the next day. He put his men to work cutting timber for the breastwork and camp fires. Timber was also needed for a raft to float the cannon across the river. Dade sent Private Aaron Jewell back to Fort Brooke to inform Captain Belton of the burnt bridge and urge him to send supplies and reinforcements.

In the morning the men were able to ford the river but had problems with the cannon that fell into the river. It was extricated only after much difficulty during which Private John Thomas painfully injured his back. Unable to continue, Thomas was forced to make his own way back the 15 miles to Fort Brooke. When the command left him, nearly helpless and alone in the wilderness, Thomas could

not have known his life had just been saved.

Crossing the Hillsborough River took time and Dade's command only made six miles before setting up the next fortified camp. Some time after dark Private Aaron Jewell rejoined them. He had left Fort Brooke that afternoon and brought news that Major Mountfort's command was to join Dade in the morning. What Jewell did not know was that the ship with Mountfort's equipment was lost and Mountfort would not be coming.

On the 26th, as the command proceeded, Pacheco was again sent forward to reconnoiter the next river crossing, this time the Outhlacoochee. As before, the bridge was burned but this time only partially. After replacing the damaged planks, the army crossed and went into camp two miles above the river. To Dade, these burnt bridges must have seemed more malicious than strategic. What he did not know was that the Indians were delaying him to allow more time for the arrival of additional Indian forces under Osceola and Micanopy.<sup>21</sup>

The Little Outhlacoochee was reached the next day. The 20 foot bridge here was also burnt, but the small river posed no serious obstacle. The men felled a tree and used it as a foot bridge for the soldiers, as the horses dragged a small cannon through the stream. The next camp was made four miles above the Little Outhlacoochee.

Surviving accounts show a sharp contrast between the camps of the soldiers and Indians. The soldiers awoke before dawn, relieved as they cooked their breakfast under overcast skies. Most believed that the danger was behind them because they were heading into open country where ambush would be difficult. As the soldiers moved out of camp in a drizzling rain, they marched with their hands up their sleeves, muskets carelessly held across their arms. Even Dade was serene, as he failed to post men on his flanks to guard against surprise.<sup>22</sup>

Not far away the scene at the Indian camp was one of intense excitement. The warriors danced to keep warm. The moment had come which could wait no longer.

"We had been preparing for this for more than a year," Alligator later reported, "Though promises had been made to assemble on the 1st of January, they did not plan to leave the country, but to fight for it. In council, it was determined to strike a decided blow about this time."<sup>23</sup> Micanopy wanted to delay the attack until Osceola arrived. He was opposed by Jumper who reproached Micanopy for his timidity. Jumper addressed the Indians and then requested that those faint hearts should stay behind. As Jumper prepared to leave, Micanopy

## 12 TEQUESTA

said he was ready.<sup>24</sup> The following three accounts embody nearly all we know of what happened that day. Almost poetically, in justice to the three factions involved, one is from a soldier, Ransom Clarke, another is from chief Alligator, and third is from the enigmatic Negro guide, Pacheco.

### STATEMENT OF RANSOM CLARKE

It was 8 o'clock. Suddenly I heard a rifle shot in the direction of the advance guard, and this was immediately followed by a musket shot from that quarter. Captain Fraser had rode by me a moment before in that direction, I never saw him afterwards. I had not time to think of the meaning of these shots, before a volley, as if from a thousand rifles, was poured in upon us from the front, and all along our left flank. I looked around me, and it seemed as if I was the only one left standing in the right wing. Neither could I, until several other volleys had been fired at us, see an enemy and when I did, I could only see their heads and arms peering out from the long grass, far and near, and from behind pine trees. The ground seemed to me an open pine barren, no hammock near that I could see. On our right, and a little to our rear, was a large pond of water some distance off. All around us were heavy pine trees, very open, particularly towards the left and abounding with long high grass. The first fire of the Indians was the most destructive, seemingly killing or disabling one half our men.

We promptly three ourselves behind trees, and opened a sharp fire of musketry. I for one, never fired without seeing my man, that is, his head and shoulders — the Indians chiefly fired lying or squatting in the grass. Lieutenant Bassinger fired five or six rounds of cannister from the cannon. This appeared to frighten the Indians, and they retreated over a little hill to our left, one half or three quarters of a mile off, after firing not more than 12 or 15 rounds. We immediately then began to fell trees, and erect a little triangular breastwork. Some of us went forward to gather cartridge boxes from the dead, and to assist the wounded. I had seen Major Dade fall to the ground by the first volley, and his horse dashed into the midst of the enemy. Whilst gathering the cartridges I saw Lieutenant Mudge sitting with his back reclining against a tree — his head fallen, and evidently dying. I spoke to him, but he did not answer. The interpreter, Louis, it is said, fell by the first fire. (We have since learned that this fellow shammed death — that his life was afterwards spared through the intercession of the chief Jumper, and that being an educated negro, he read all the dispatches and letters that were found about the dead to the victors.)

We had barely raised our breastwork knee high, when we again saw the Indians advancing in great numbers over the hill to our left. They came on boldly till within a long musket shot, when they spread themselves from tree to tree to surround us. We immediately extended as Light Infantry, covering ourselves by the trees, and opening a brisk fire from cannon and musketry. The former I don't think could have done much mischief, the Indians were so scattered.

Captain Gardner, Lieutenant Bassinger, and Dr. Gatlin, were the only officers left unhurt by the volley which killed Major Dade.



Lieutenant Henderson had his left arm broken, but he continued to load his musket and fire it, resting on the stump, until he was finally shot down towards the close of the second attack, and during the day he kept up his spirits and cheered the men. Lieutenant Keyes had both his arms broken in the first attack; they were bound up and slung in a handkerchief, and he sat for the remainder of the day until he was killed, reclining against the breastwork — his head often reposing upon it — regardless of everything that was passing around him.

Our men were by degrees all cut down. We had maintained a steady fight from 8 until 2 p.m. or thereabouts, and allowing three quarters of an hour interval between the first and second attack, had been pretty busily engaged for more than 5 hours. Lieutenant B. was the only officer left alive and severely wounded. He told me as the Indians approached to lay down and feign myself dead. I looked through the logs, and saw savages approaching in great numbers. A heavy made Indian of middle stature, painted down to the waist, (corresponding in description to Micanopy) seemed to be chief. He made then a speech frequently pointing to the breastwork. At length, they charged into the work; there was none to offer resistance, and they did not seem to suspect the wounded being alive — offering no indignity, but stepping about carefully, quietly stripping off our accoutrements and carrying away our arms. They then retired in a body in the direction from whence they came.

Immediately upon their retreat, forty or fifty negroes on horseback galloped up and alighted, tied their beasts, and commenced with horrid shouts and yells the butchery of the wounded, together with an indiscriminate plunder, stripping the bodies of the dead of clothing, watches, and money, and splitting open the heads of all who showed the least sign of life, with their axes and knives, and accompanying their bloody work with obscene and taunting derisions, and with frequent cries of "what have you got to sell?"

Lieutenant B. hearing the negroes butchering the wounded, at length sprang up and asked them to spare his life. They met him with the blows of their axes, and their fiendish laughter. Having been wounded in five different places myself, I was pretty well covered with blood, and two scratches that I had received on my head gave to me the appearance of having been shot through the brain, for the negroes, after catching me up by my heels, threw me down, saying "d. n him, he's dead enough!" They then stripped me of my clothes, shoes and hat, and left me. After stripping all the dead in this manner, they trundled off the cannon in the direction the Indians had gone, and went away. I saw them first shoot down the oxen in their gear, and burn the wagon.

One of the soldiers who escaped, says they threw the cannon into the pond, and burned its carriage also. Shortly after the negroes went away, one Wilson, of Captain G's company, crept from under some of the dead bodies, and hardly seemed to be hurt at all. He asked me to go back to the Fort, and I was going to follow him, when, as he jumped over the breastwork, an Indian sprang from behind a tree and shot him down. I then lay quiet until 9 o'clock that night, when Decourcy the only living soul beside myself, and I started upon our journey. We knew it was nearest to go to Fort King, but we did not know the way, and we had seen enemies retreat in that direction. As I

came out I saw Dr. G. lying stripped amongst the dead. The last I saw of him whilst living, was kneeling behind the breastwork, with two double barrel guns by him, and he said, "Well, I have got four barrels for them!" Captain G. after being severely wounded, cried out, "I can give you no more orders, my lads, do your best!" I last saw a negro spurn his body, saying with an oath, "that's one of their officers." (G. was dressed in soldier clothes.)

My comrade and myself got along quite well until the next day, when we met an Indian on horseback, and with rifle coming up the road. Our only chance was to separate — we did so. I took the right, and he the left of the road. The Indian pursued him. Shortly afterwards I heard a rifle shot, and a little after, another. I concealed myself among some scrub and saw palmetto, and after awhile saw the Indian pass, looking for me. Suddenly, however, he put spurs to his horse and went off at a gallop towards the road.

I made something of a circuit before I struck the beaten track again. That night I was a good deal annoyed by the wolves, who had scented my blood, and came very close to me; the next day, the 30th, I reached the Fort.<sup>25</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF ALLIGATOR

Just as day was breaking we moved out of the swamp into the pine-barren. I counted, by direction of Jumper, one hundred and eighty warriors. Upon approaching the road, each man chose his position on the west side; opposite, on the east side, there was a pond. Every warrior was protected by a tree, or secreted in the high palmettoes. About nine o'clock in the morning the command approached. In advance, some distance, was an officer on a horse, who, Micanopy said, was the captain; he knew him personally; had been his friend at Tampa. So soon all the soldiers were opposite between us and the pond, perhaps twenty yards off, Jumper gave the whoop, Micanopy fired the first rifle, the signal agreed upon, when every Indian arose and fired, which laid upon the ground, dead, more than half the white men. The cannon was discharged several times, but the men who loaded it were shot down as soon as the smoke cleared away; the balls passed over our heads. The soldiers shouted and whooped, and the officers shook their swords and swore. There was a little man, a great brave, who shook his sword at the soldiers and said, 'God-dam!' no rifle ball could hit him. As we were returning to the swamp supposing all were dead, an Indian came up and said the white men were building a fort of logs. Jumper and myself, with ten warriors returned. As we approached we saw six men behind two logs placed one above another, with the cannon a short distance off. This they discharged at us several times, but we avoided it by dodging behind trees just as they applied the fire. We soon came near, as the balls went over us. They had guns but no powder; we looked in the boxes afterwards and found they were empty. When I got inside the log pen, there was three white men alive, whom the negroes put to death, after a conversation in English. There was a brave man in the pen; he would not give up; he seized an Indian; Jumper's cousin, took away his rifle, and with one blow with it beat his brains, then ran some distance up the road; but two Indians on horseback overtook him, who, afraid to approach, stood at a distance and shot him down. The firing had ceased, and all was quiet

when we returned to the swamp about noon. We left many negroes upon the ground looking at the dead men. Three warriors were killed and five wounded.<sup>26</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF PACHECO

About 10 o'clock, while I was with the advance guard, Captain Frazer and I turned aside to examine an old gray horse we found by the road, and finding it worthless, had returned to the road, and had nearly overtaken the advance guard, when I heard a single rifle shot, and I looked back to see if someone was shooting game, but just in time to see Major Dade fall just in front of me, shot in the breast. Although this was perfectly open country, and I had just looked carefully for Indians ahead, the country was now filled with large numbers of them on our left, coming for us with the war-whoop; I immediately threw down my gun and laid down behind a tree, very much frightened. As I could speak the Seminole language, I begged each one for my life, as they leveled their guns at me, and they were not a few, telling them I was a slave and was doing what I was bidden, etc. Finally Jumper, the chief in command, interfered and ordered as well as he then could, that I should not be shot, but even after this, one Indian was determined to kill me, but fortunately another Indian got his rifle ball stuck in his gun and ran, when the other Indians seeing this one run, became frightened, and all ran, when Jumper again took me and put me under guard. The same Indian, though, still assured me that when he came back he would kill me yet, but, luckily for me, he was shot by the whites. The battle lasted from about 10 o'clock in the morning until nearly sunset.<sup>27</sup>

After the battle the Indians, joined by Osceola, retired to an island in the Wahoo Swamp. That same day Osceola had exacted his vengeance on Wiley Thompson. As he ventured outside Fort King for an evening stroll with Lieutenant Constantine Smith, Osceola and his followers volleyed round after round into Thompson and Smith. (Thompson was shot 14 times.) Nearby, Mr. Euastus Rogers, Fort King's sutler, and two clerks Suggs and Hizler, were killed at their dinner table.<sup>28</sup> The post was so weak that a force large enough to retaliate could not be mustered. The soldiers did not even dare venture out of the safety of the fort to recover the bodies of Thompson and Smith which lay nearby. That night, some of the Indians gathered in Wahoo Swamp, addressed humorous speeches to the scalp of General Thompson, imitating his gestures and manner of speaking.

Private John Thomas returned to Fort Brooke on December 29th. On his way from the Big Hillsborough to Fort Brooke he had met an Indian. In his disabled condition he had to buy his life from the Indian who threatened to kill him by giving the Indian all of his money.<sup>29</sup> Thomas had not been in the battle and no news of it reached Fort

Brooke until December 31st when Ransom Clarke arrived. Although he had been shot five times, he managed to walk and crawl the 65 miles back to the post. Fort King had been 35 miles closer, but the Indians had gone that way and the only certain safety seemed to be in the direction of Fort Brooke. When within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of Fort Brooke he had collapsed, a friendly Indian woman found him and helped him to the post.<sup>30</sup> He gave a full account of the battle to Captain Belton, who began fortifying the post, expecting an attack at any moment. The last survivor, Joseph Sprague, reached Ft. Brooke on January 1st. He had found a letter left on the trail by Captain Frazer for Major Mountfort and had brought it to the post. The letter described being "beset by the enemy every night and we're pushing on."<sup>31</sup>

Instead of attacking Fort Brooke or Fort King, Osceola turned his attention to a force under Colonel Duncan L. Clinch. Osceola fought Clinch at the Outhlacooshee on December 31. This was an evening battle fought to a draw, but coupled with the destruction of Dade's command, demonstrated the inability of the army to remove the Indians. After this engagement Osceola told Clinch he could hold out against the army for five years.<sup>32</sup>

Quickly, destruction spread across the state. In January 1836, 16 large plantations in east Florida were destroyed by Indians. Each plantation had from 100 to 150 working slaves. Most of the slaves evacuated to safe areas such as Anastasia Island. On January 6, the Cooley family in Fort Lauderdale was massacred while William Cooley, husband and father, was away. By the end of 1836, all but one house of all the settlements in what is now Dade and Broward Counties had been burnt by the Indians.<sup>33</sup> The settlers had gone first to Key Biscayne for safety, then to places such as Indian Key or Key West.

News of the Dade disaster stimulated belated military action. Colonel Clinch was authorized to call state troops from Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. President Jackson ordered General Winfield Scott to Florida to assume command. Gaines arrived at Tampa with 1100 men on the 10th of February. He immediately went with these troops into the interior and on February 20th was the first to arrive at the scene of Dade's battlefield.<sup>34</sup>

Unburied for nearly two months, identification of the dead had to be made in the following manner: Major Dade by his vest and infantry buttons; Captain Frazer by his shirt and a miniature pin; Lieutenant Mudge leading the head of the main column by a charred ring on his finger, his officers pants and his fine teeth; Lieutenant Bassinger by his undershirt, stock, large whiskers and position, and the broken

sponge near him; Lieutenant Keais by his pants, shoes, shirt and pocket pistol which dropped on the ground moving the body; Dr. Gatlin by his size, stock and hair, and gold filled tooth; Captain Gardiner by size, shirt, and hair; and Lieutenant Henderson partly by clothing and his broken arm.<sup>35</sup>

The bodies of the officers were buried in a common grave with the barrel of the six pounder planted vertically at the head of the grave as a marker. The other 98 soldiers were buried in two common graves. Gaines had a brief ceremony and the command moved on.

Although only two soldiers of Dade's command actually survived the battle, there were two in the command who missed the battle. The man sent back the first day to have the cannon brought up, is believed to have been Lieutenant Benjamin Alvord.<sup>36</sup> Private John Thomas who injured his back pulling the cannon from the Big Hillsborough, continued to serve in the army until his discharge on June 28th, 1837.<sup>37</sup> The battle survivors included Private Ransom Clarke who convalesced until April, 1836, and was discharged from the Army May 2, 1836.<sup>38</sup> He received a full disability pension of \$8 a month. He went on a speaking tour, charging 12.5¢ a person to speak about his experiences, and wrote several articles about the Dade Massacre. He embellished his accounts greatly as time went by. His first account stated that after the battle the negroes picked him up by his heels and said "he's dead enough."<sup>39</sup> A later account quotes the negroes as saying "our God is dead."<sup>40</sup> Clarke married in 1838 and fathered a daughter. He died on November 18, 1840, less than five years after battle. He was 24 years old.

Private Joseph Sprague, like Clarke, actually survived the battle, but was illiterate and left no accounts of the battle. Curiously, Sprague served in the army until his discharge on March 6, 1843, and yet no one recorded his account of the battle, as was done with survivors Clarke and Thomas. He drew a pension of \$8 a month until September 1847. He is believed to have died some time in the next six months.<sup>41</sup>

In 1837, Pacheco, long thought dead, made his appearance at Fort Brooke. He had come in to emigrate as the slave of Coacoochee and was shipped west where he lived for many years.<sup>42</sup> In 1892, a man claiming to be Louis Pacheco came to Jacksonville and presented himself to the daughter of Pacheco's old master. Here he lived until his death in 1895.<sup>43</sup> He was the last survivor of Dade's Massacre.

## NOTES

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22. J.O. Parrish, *Battling the Seminoles*, (Lakeland, Fla.: Southern Printing Co., 1930) pp. 44-45.
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26. Sprague, *The Fla. War*, pp. 90-91.
27. White, *Private Joseph Sprague*, p. 68.
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