

Florida Swamps (from page 3)

he had not taken any further advantage of the situation.

In February 1842 Casey participated in what was to be the last action in the Second Seminole War, the pursuit of Hallech-Tustenugge. He was placed in command of two companies from the 2nd Infantry. Casey was by now a captain, having been promoted to that rank in 1836, and proceeded by boat on the St. Johns River to Lake George. When they reached the lake, they disembarked and started on the trail of the Indians, finding it difficult to follow. They had brought mules to carry stores, but as the trail was through swamps the mules could not pass. The men, including officers, carried their supplies, while the mules were sent around the difficult places. The heavily laden men trudged through the waist deep muck of swamps and marshes with each step releasing an unbelievable stench.

Once through, they rested while the mules caught up. Casey kept following the trail where it led, crossing and re-crossing rivers, streams and swamps. Not finding the Indians, they went into Fort King for rest and re-supply.

There was another hazard to cross country travel: saw grass. It was thick and sharp and cut the men's hands and faces. Casey was forced to

change file leaders every few hundred yards. Florida was, indeed, not a paradise.

Casey's small detachment soon joined with the main body under the command of General Worth, and the combined commands pursued the Indians. Reports were received that the Indians were occupying a dense hammock.¹ When they reached the hammock, they were greeted by heavy fire from the Indians, which they returned driving the Indians away. After two days of pursuit, the Indians capitulated. The war was done, although isolated hostile acts occurred afterward.

Casey had served for five years in the Seminole War. It cost the United States millions of dollars and the sacrifice of men's lives. Casey summed up his experiences thusly:

What those engaged in this inglorious warfare endured will never be known. Suffice it to say that they exhibited, in those long years, a sacrifice to duty and a devotion that will one day occupy no obscure place in this country's annals.

The hostilities in Florida being essentially over, the 2nd Infantry was returned to frontier duty along the Canadian border. Casey was sent to Buffalo, New York, and then to Fort Mackinac, Michigan.

On April 25, 1842, Brigadier General Worth recommended several officers for brevets. Casey's recom-

mendation reads, "Captain S. Casey, 2nd Infantry, is an officer of rare merit; has seen much, and, in particular during the recent operations, rendered valuable service; equally intelligent and preserving in pursuit and combat with the enemy: recommendation for the brevet of major." The recommendation was not approved.

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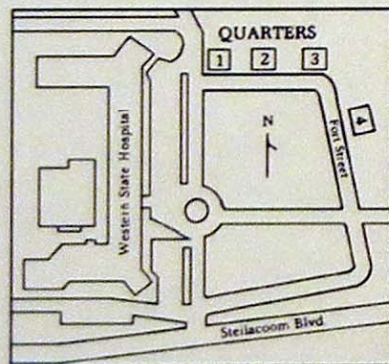
¹Modern spelling is hummock, meaning a wooded land above a marsh.

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Fort Steilacoom

Vol. XXI, No. 1

Fort Steilacoom, Washington

Spring, 2004

Into the Florida Swamps Casey Fights the Seminoles

by Kenneth A. Morgan

In 1819 five million dollars was a lot of money, but Spain needed it and the young United States wanted Florida, so a deal was struck. Florida was now a part of the country. But just what did the United States get for its money? It received economic benefits in the form of timber and land. Live oak for shipbuilding, and pine and cypress for furniture manufacturing were abundant, as was land needed for growing cotton and grazing cattle. There were new species of plants and animals for study. But mostly the United States got a lot of problems.

Even before the Adams-Onís Treaty ceding the Florida Territory to the United States became final, natives of the region, the Seminoles, the Miccosukees, and to a lesser extent the Creeks, were harassing American settlers who had crossed into the Spanish lands. Additionally, the natives often extended their attacks into southern Georgia. But by far the biggest problem was how to return escaped slaves to their owners. Florida had become a place of refuge for them. They were welcomed by the natives and were accepted into native society. Several Negro settlements were established and intermarriage took place. Perhaps if Florida were part of the United States, the army could help get back the escaped "property."



painting by H. Charles McBarron

The army was again engaged with the Seminole Indians in the Florida swamps during the 1830s.

In 1817 the Army did just that. General Andrew Jackson, with the support and approval of John C. Calhoun, the new Secretary of War and an avid expansionist, raised an army of volunteers for the invasion of Spanish Florida. In addition to the regular troops from the Seventh Infantry, his force consisted of militia from Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Jackson had several problems, however; supplies were difficult to

transport, there were no maps of the territory, and the climate was terrible.

Jackson left Fort Scott, located on the Apalachicola River near the southern border of Georgia, traveled down the river into the panhandle of Florida and turned east to begin his campaign. As the army advanced, they engaged the natives as they found them, burning their towns and taking their cattle.

Continuing the movement toward the Suwannee River, Jackson engaged the natives, who mostly fled towards Tampa Bay. Jackson then decided to reverse his movement and advance on Pensacola. He was convinced that the Spanish Governor, who was located in that city, was providing weapons to the Indians and that a large native force was assembling in that area.

Of course, Governor Mascot was not happy that a foreign army was invading his country and declared that if Jackson advanced on Pensacola that he, Mascot, would respond militarily. During this time Spain and the United States were seeking a diplomatic solution. Mascot did not have the force to hold off Jackson, but he withdrew to Fort Carlos de Barrancas, fired one shot and surrendered. Jackson set up a government, which in effect made Spanish Florida a United States possession. Secretary of State John

(Continued on page 2)

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President's Message



April is Membership Month. We are asking you to renew your membership and also to invite others to join Historic Fort Steilacoom Association.

Your support is vital to the Fort's mission "...to perpetuate the significance of the site for the benefit of the public by operating a museum complex and a strong educational program stressing the role of the fort in Northwest history."

The yearly activities, including tours of the four quarters, lectures, the Civil War reenactment, Fourth of July booth at Steilacoom, Founders' Day picnic, Annual Meeting, and "Christmas at Fort Steilacoom," are made possible because of member efforts. We value our members!

During 2004 Fort Steilacoom is also sponsoring a lecture series to celebrate the Town of Steilacoom's 150th Anniversary Celebration. The lectures are held on the third Wednesday of each month through December at 7 p.m. in the Steilacoom Town Hall. Come and bring a friend. The April program will feature Joan Curtis, editor of the Steilacoom Historical Quarterly, who will show slides highlighting the life of Lafayette Balch, Steilacoom's founder.

The "Battle at Fort Steilacoom" will be a highlight of the spring. On

Saturday and Sunday, June 26-27, 2004, the Civil War reenactment will feature living history with four battles, civilian life in the 1860s, camps of the Blue and the Grey, and tours of the Fort Steilacoom historic buildings.

The reenactment, jointly sponsored by the Washington Civil War Association and Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, will be held at Fort Steilacoom Park, just across Steilacoom Boulevard from the fort at the 87th Avenue entrance. Paid-up members of Historic Fort Steilacoom get in free; otherwise, admission is \$7.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children 12 years and under.

You can keep in touch with the Fort by logging onto the new web site at www.fortsteilacoom.com. See historic and activity photos, read articles, and keep up with the dates and times of events on the calendar.

And remember to complete the enclosed membership form and send your check in the self-addressed envelope provided.

Carol E. Neufeld

Florida Swamps (from page 1)

Quincy Adams and Spain's representative Luis de Onís agreed on the terms of a treaty. Florida now belonged to the United States. But there were still problems with the Seminoles to solve.

All of this happened while Silas Casey was still a young man. In 1822 he entered the Military Academy, graduated in 1826 and entered the army. He was posted to Fort Towson, was sent to duties in New York and Michigan, married and started a family.¹

By 1834 Casey had been assigned to the Second Infantry and was posted to Fort Gratiot.² He was in-

involved in the routines of garrison duty, protecting the frontier, and in 1835 was ordered to Chicago to sit on a court martial. He would soon again be called upon to battle Indians, this time in Florida.

The situation in Florida had not really changed. The United States government had sought to solve the Indian problem in the east through the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which required all Indians east of the Mississippi to give up their lands and relocate to lands set aside for them in the West.

Some of the Seminoles agreed to be relocated, but others did not. They continued to raid settlers' farms, steal their livestock, and kidnap their slaves. Pressure was being placed on members of Congress to do something about it.

Several treaties were made with the Indians, but, like most Indian treaties, they were stacked in favor of the government and against the Indians. Native Americans did not understand the concept of contracting, which is essentially what treaty making is, whereby one representative could speak for all and the results were binding upon all. The Indians felt that an agreement was only binding if each individual agreed to it.

By the end of 1835 Florida was again in turmoil. Major Francis L. Dade had been ordered to Fort Brooke³ from Key West. On December 22nd a supply train was attached and several volunteers were killed. Dade's column, consisting of infantry and artillery, was enroute to Fort King,⁴ when natives and their black allies attacked them. Dade and his command of 108 was destroyed; only three of the men survived. The United States was again at war in Florida.

In the 1830s the Second Infantry was deployed along the frontier with Canada. The several companies occupied posts stretching from Maine along the St. Lawrence River and on the shores of the Great Lakes. Silas

¹See the Spring 2002 and Autumn 2002 issues of the Fort Steilacoom newsletter for a discussion of Casey's experiences at West Point and at Fort Towson.

²Fort Gratiot was located at the outlet of Lake Huron.

³Fort Brooke was located in present day Tampa.

⁴Fort King was located in present day Ocala.



Indians east of the Mississippi River were forced to resettle on reservations in Oklahoma, but not all went peaceably, including the Seminoles of Florida.

Casey, then a Second Lieutenant, was posted with Company D of the 2nd Infantry at Fort Gratiot. On June 28, 1836, he was promoted to First Lieutenant, only two days short of his tenth anniversary as an officer in the US Army.

In the spring of 1836 the Creek Indians in Georgia began to act up. The 2nd Infantry began to consolidate its scattered companies and send them south to counter the threat. Casey was ordered to Fort Mitchell,⁵ and subsequently to Montgomery, but while enroute was ordered from his company to Tuskegee as Assistant Commissary of Subsistence (ACS) for that place. After serving there several months, General Jessup, commander of the Army of the South, created a regiment of Creeks to be used against the Indians in Florida. Casey was appointed as Captain in that regiment, assigned as company commander, and retained his duties as ACS. Captain John F. Lane of the 2nd Dragoons was

⁵Fort Mitchell is located south of present day Phenix City, Alabama. A National Military Cemetery is located there. The Fort was also the starting point for the Creeks who migrated on the "Trail of Tears."

made Colonel of the Regiment.

The new Regiment departed from Fort Mitchell, sailed down the Chattahoochee River in steamboats, crossed the Gulf, and landed at Tampa Bay. Upon arriving, they were sent overland to Fort Drane, near Micanopy, and passed the place where Maj. Dade was killed. There they were joined by a brigade of Tennessee volunteers, several companies of regular troops, the whole being commanded by General Richard K. Call who was also the Governor of Florida.

In order to be successful in battle it is necessary to find the enemy. Scouts are employed for this task. A report was received that a large body of Seminoles were in the Wahoo Swamp on the Withlacoochee River and General Call set out with his troops. An engagement ensued during which Casey reports, "There was a great quantity of powder burned that day, and a great noise made." Many of the Indians were killed.

On the march from Fort Drane to Micanopy, Colonel Lane committed suicide. Some say he was despondent over the lack of success in engaging the enemy, others that he was suf-

fering from "brain fever."⁶ In any case, running his sword into his brain through his eye did the deed.

Casey was suffering from an attack of dysentery and had been since leaving Tampa. The campaign was about over, so he asked to be relieved from duty with the Creek Regiment and to return to his company in Georgia.

In November 1837 Casey participated in the establishment of Fort Lane,⁷ named after the Colonel, on the west shore of Lake Harney on the St. Johns River in eastern Florida. It was established as a supply depot, with Casey serving as the Fort's adjutant. The fort was abandoned in March 1838.

Casey continued to serve in Florida in several capacities, one of which was securing the area around the Suwannee and Withlacoochee rivers. He relates the following:

On every mile of this distance we proceeded to secure the country to the Gulf. On reaching the Gulf, we marched one mile along its shore, and then returned in a line parallel to the one on which we first marched. Officers as well as soldiers were obliged to take their blankets and five days rations on their backs and march in a straight line through all obstacles. Thus equipped we were obliged to wade through swamps and marshes and one in the neighborhood of the Gulf was six miles in width, and in places up to the middle in mud and water. We frequently killed rattlesnakes and moccasin snakes of a very large size.

One night when encamped on the Wacassassa River after a hard day's march, I was awake in the night by a very sharp pain in the back. From the feeling I thought it was a scorpion and I arose up and brushed the blanket in which I had been lying, with my hand, supposing I had brushed away the animal. In the morning when I arose and commenced to roll up my blanket I found this scorpion in one of the folds, and I felt much relieved that

⁶Encephalitis

⁷Fort Lane today is a park operated by the Geneva (Florida) Historical and Genealogical Society.

Lecture Series

Steilacoom Sesquicentennial 2004*

Sponsored by Historic Fort Steilacoom Association

The lectures will be held at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the Steilacoom Town Hall. They will highlight an historic event, person, or time period. There is no charge.

April 21 – Joan Curtis, editor of the *Steilacoom Historical Quarterly*, using slides will highlight the life of “Lafayette Balch,” Steilacoom’s founder.

May 19 – Walter Neary, journalist and board member at Historic Fort Steilacoom, will relate the “Life and Times of Pioneer Editors,” including that of Charles Prosch, editor of Steilacoom’s *Puget Sound Herald*, 1858-1864. Interesting events chronicled by early papers will be presented.

June 16 – Karen Haas, a master story teller, will interpret the lives of four women living in the 1850s. Each one comes from a different cultural and social background with her story of living in the Pacific Northwest.

July 21 – George Wilkinson, professional land surveyor, will locate historical roads in and around Steilacoom using an aerial map. He will explain historic legal facts, names and places. Displayed will be old survey and drafting instruments, and surveyor’s notes and maps drafted before 1900 by local surveyors living in Steilacoom.

August 18 – John Hemphill, retired Major General, and **Alan Archambault**, Curator of the Fort Lewis Military Museum, will present a series of interesting events in the Town of Steilacoom’s long relationship with the Military. The military came permanently to the area in 1849 and had a close relationship with the town that ended abruptly in the late 1860s. The connection began again at the end of the Nineteenth Century and continues to build into the Twenty-first Century.

September 15 – Alan Spreen, a member of the Steilacoom Masonic Lodge, and **Stan Cybulski**, of the Grand Lodge Library and Museum committee, will relate the history of the lodge, explain its importance to the town of Steilacoom, and emphasize the contributions of pioneer members. Masonic books and memorabilia will be displayed.

October 20 – Gary Reese, director of Tacoma Public Library Northwest room, will speak about Lt. August V. Kautz, a friend of Steilacoom. Lt. Kautz’s diaries reveal the life at the fort and the town. Quartermaster Kautz supervised the construction of the four 1858 buildings that remain at Fort Steilacoom. He joined Steilacoom lodges, wrote for the town newspaper, socialized, and surveyed. He was friendly with Hudson Bay officials at Fort Nisqually and had an Indian wife.

November 17 – Eileen Melberg and Laurie Sterling, Fort Steilacoom Board members and historical reenactors, will present impressions of women from different backgrounds connected with Fort Steilacoom during the 1850s.

December 15 – Patrick Haskett, an artist noted for nautical paintings, will present the achievements of the 1841 Wilkes United States Exploring Expedition in Puget Sound. The large square rigger, the *Vincennes* was anchored off Solo Point, where the original Fort Nisqually was located. Members of the expedition surveyed, charted, and named all points of the Sound. Historical ship paintings will be on display.

*Lectures in January, February and March were given by Steve Anderson, “Steilacoom Farm”; Kenneth Morgan, “Silas Casey”; and Danny Marshall, “Steilacoom Tribe.”

~ Battle at Fort Steilacoom ~

CIVIL WAR

★★★ RE-ENACTMENT ★★★ BATTLES & ENCAMPMENTS

- LIVING HISTORY - Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- 4 BATTLES: 11:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m. on Saturday & Sunday
- CIVILIAN LIFE IN THE 1860s
- VISIT CAMPS OF THE BLUE & THE GREY
- TOURS OF FORT STEILACOOM HISTORIC BUILDINGS - 12 to 5 p.m.

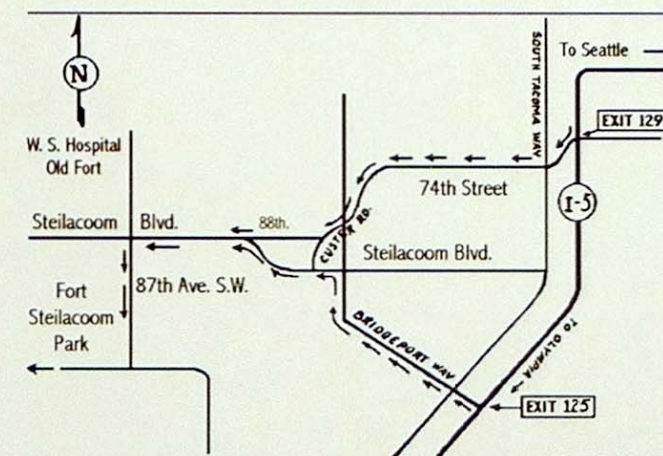
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