

# THE FOUNDATION REPORT

SEMINOLE WARS FOUNDATION, INC.

Spring 2008



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## Re-enactment Wrap-up

Like the actual Seminole Wars, re-enactments also have a season where active “campaigning” takes place. Because of the heat, heavy rains, and hordes of insects, fighting in the nineteenth century wars was called off for the summer months. It’s no different in the twenty-first century. The Seminole War re-enactment season runs from New Years to the end of March. In our last issue, we told you about the first two events of the season, the Dade Battle (oldest and largest) and a first-time event at Payne’s Creek State Park (newest and smallest). This issue we’ll report on the rest.

These re-enactments are not only important as a means to bring the public’s attention to the history of the Seminole Wars, they are also important for the health of our Foundation. This year alone, we managed to raise nearly \$1750 at the booths we set up at the various events. When we add together the funds we’ve brought in over the past few years, it amounts to enough to publish another book. The re-enactments also bring in new members. If nothing else, they allow us to meet the public and explain why the Seminole Wars are important to the history of Florida and the nation.



*Portion of the crowd at the Okeechobee Re-enactment.  
(John Missall)*

## Battle of Okeechobee

An old event that had gone away returned in 2008. For several years, the Battle of Okeechobee had not been held due to lack of a proper staging ground. In those intervening years, a campaign was fought to acquire some of the same land on which the original battle had been fought. The effort, spearheaded by Shawn Henderson, former Seminole Tribe President Moses Osceola, Foundation Board Member Willie Johns, Okeechobee County Commissioner (and re-enactor) Dowling Watford, and State Representative Richard Machek, culminated in the state’s purchasing of approximately 140 acres of ranchland that will soon become the Okeechobee Battlefield State Historic Site.

For a new event, the attendance was overwhelming, numbering well over 2,000 people for the two-day event. The Foundation table was set up and manned by Board members John & Mary Lou Missall. A special guest was Elizabeth Gentry Sayad, a descendant of Col. Richard Gentry, leader of the Missouri Volunteers, one of the first men killed in the battle. Archeologists Bill Steele and Bob Carr, who helped pinpoint the location of the site, were on hand, as well as several members of the Seminole tribe.

## Big Cypress Shootout

Another event that always draws a big crowd is the Big Cypress Shootout held at the Big Cypress Seminole Reservation in the Everglades, midway between Ft. Lauderdale and Naples. For the re-enactors, this is always a special event, and the wonderful weather made it all the more enjoyable. Indeed, this is the first year in some time when all the events were blessed by warm, dry weather. The Seminole hosts make it a point to treat their guests well, from bar-be-que buffalo to a fantastic fireworks show on Saturday night. Every year, the choreography of the battle gets better. This year, before the battle began, Moses Jumper read a very moving poem he had written, explaining the Indians’ love of the land and their determination to remain upon it.



*Seminole re-enactors (L-R) Moses Jumper, Jimmy Sawgrass, and Matthew Griffin at the Big Cypress Shootout. (Mary Lou Missall)*



*Soldiers fire a volley as the cannon smoke clears at Big Cypress Shootout. (Mary Lou Missall)*

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## Fort Cooper Days



*Board member Mary Lou Missall in the new tent at the Ft. Cooper Days event. (John Missall)*

The final event of the season was held at the Ft. Cooper State Park in Inverness. This is one of the loveliest locations to hold any event, with a pristine lake in front and moss-draped oaks spreading overhead. This event also gave us the opportunity to try out a new canopy to cover our table. Some events require participant's booths to be "period," to keep the feeling of the event as accurate as possible. Because our old canopy was made of green and white striped plastic and our folding chairs were metal, this prevented us from either participating in certain events or from being placed in an advantageous location. If nothing else, we just didn't look right. Simply constructed out of canvas, uprights, and guy ropes, the new canopy did its job admirably, standing firm in a strong breeze that lifted a few of the modern canopies off the ground. With the addition of a pair of cleverly-crafted wooden folding chairs and our hand-made period costumes, we fit right in.

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## A New Name and Two New Books

If you look closely at the banner at the top of this newsletter, you'll notice a slight change. We are now going by the simplified name "Seminole Wars Foundation." The subject came up at the April Board meeting, and most of us had to admit that in normal conversation, we tended to omit the "historic" part of our name. We also realized that the word served no real purpose. A vote was taken, and the Board unanimously voted to start "doing business as (dba)" the Seminole Wars Foundation. Our legal, incorporated name remains the same.

Unless you are someone like Stephen King, it takes quite a bit of time to write a good book. That is especially true if the book is historical in nature. Researching sources, collecting the available data, organizing it, and writing a good narrative all take time. Although Foundation members are working on several exciting projects, it has been almost three years since we've published a new title. That drought is about to end. We are happy to announce that later this year we will publish "Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier," a collection of articles on the Second Seminole War from Board member and noted Florida historian Dr. Joe Knetsch. Many of you are familiar with Joe's work and have had to search for it in various hard-to-find publications. With the publication of this book, Joe's best work will be gathered in one convenient place. With its wide scope and attention to factual detail, this will be a volume that every Seminole Wars scholar will want to have on his or her bookshelf.

President Frank Laumer is pleased to announce the forth-coming publication of his novel "Nobody's Hero" by Pineapple Press of Sarasota. This book is the story of Ransom Clark, the survivor of the Dade Battle, a subject that Frank is the undisputed authority on. We look forward to reading it. Pineapple Press hopes to have it available by the Dade Re-enactment in January, where you'll be able to get your personally autographed copy.

## Fort Van Swearingen Report

Foundation member and Archaeologist Bob Carr of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, Inc. has been kind enough to send us a copy of his detailed report, "A Phase II Archaeological and Historical Assessment of Fort Van Swearingen, St. Lucie County, Florida."

The fort, which is located to the northeast of Lake Okeechobee, was erected in early 1838, shortly after Col. Zachary Taylor's battle on the shores of the big lake. It was named after Capt. Joseph Van Swearingen of the Sixth United States Infantry, who was slain in the battle. Abandoned later in the war, it was re-occupied by the Florida Mounted Volunteers during the Third Seminole War. The installation was part of a network of forts erected under orders from Maj. Gen. Thomas Jesup, the commander of the war at that time. As Jesup's army of nearly 9,000 men moved southward through the peninsula, camps and depots such as Fort Van Swearingen were set up to store supplies for the campaign and house troops that would patrol the area, keeping an eye out for any Seminole movements. This was certainly not a large structure, such as Fort Foster at the Hillsborough River State Park. Because there was little danger of attack and the post was considered temporary, it was a simple, crude camp with a large storehouse and little in the way of defenses. The soldiers would have lived in their tents, ever on the lookout for the occasional skulking warrior or the ever-present rattlesnake.

The site is now situated on ranch land and has been used since the 1950s for grazing cattle. When looking at the site, there is no indication that a fort ever stood there. The only way it could be found was by metal detection at places that seemed likely from information contained on old maps. The archaeologists found two possible sites, one on either side of a small stream known as Van Swearingen Creek. Among the items found at the site were musket balls, percussion caps, buttons, glass, part of a tobacco pipe, and two coins, one of which, an 1841 dime, is remarkably well preserved.

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## Jackson Walker receives *Florida House Distinguished Artist Award*



The Florida House Distinguished Artist Award recognizes a Florida artist for artistic excellence as well as for a significant impact on the state's cultural life. The Florida House's inaugural award was presented to Foundation Board member Jackson Walker for his artistic work in documenting Florida's rich history through paintings depicting the personalities, scenes, and events that make Florida's past come alive. The award was presented in partnership with the Museum of Florida Art at the spring, 2008, Florida House Board of Director's Meeting in Washington, D.C.

As many of you know, Jackson's paintings have graced the covers of most of our publications, including both the hard and soft cover versions of "Amidst a Storm of Bullets" and "This Miserable Pride of a Soldier." Jackson will also be doing the artwork for our forthcoming book "Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier." In addition, he will be doing the cover art for Foundation President Frank Laumer's novel "Nobody's Hero."

The Florida House, located in Washington, D.C., is a nonprofit organization that showcases Florida's culture and diversity and promotes the state to those visiting our nation's capital. Jackson is Artist in Residence at The Museum of Florida Art in Deland. His collection "Legendary Florida" is on permanent display at the Volusia County Historic Courthouse, also in Deland.

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## Important Information Concerning Membership Renewals

Enclosed with this quarter's newsletter is your annual renewal notice. Over the past few years, the total membership of our organization has been steadily growing. Please renew so that we can keep the momentum going. We value all our members and hope to see you at future events.

As important as renewals are to the Foundation, they *do not* cover all of our regular operating expenses. If you are financially able, please consider making a donation above and beyond the normal renewal dues. It will help keep your Foundation in the black, and discourage us from raising the dues. Any extra funds go toward our other works, such as the archaeological work at Fort Dade and the publication of books and pamphlets.

One of our largest expenses is the publication of this newsletter. In hopes of reducing the costs of printing and mailing, we would like to send it by e-mail to as many members as possible. If you would like to receive your copy by the normal U.S. Postal Service, please check the appropriate box on the renewal form. If you are happy to receive it by e-mail, please make sure your e-mail address is clearly printed in the space provided. The Foundation Report will be sent to you in the popular Adobe Acrobat .pdf format.

Besides saving the Foundation money, receiving the newsletter by e-mail gives you the added benefit of seeing it in full color on all four pages, not just the front page.

# Bill Goza 1917-2008

Foundation members were saddened to hear of the passing of William M. Goza on May 6<sup>th</sup> at Gainesville. Bill was a former member of the Board of Directors and one of our “founding fathers.” Born in Madison, Florida, August 18, 1917, Bill was a 5th generation Floridian and direct descendent of John Francis Webb, a signer of the Florida Constitution. He had a distinguished and varied career as a lawyer, judge, and teacher. His avocation was history and forensic science, and he was instrumental in fundraising for the founding of the C. A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory at the University of Florida.

Mr. Goza moved from Madison to Clearwater at the age of three, and graduated with a B.S. in business administration from the University of Florida in 1938, where he was president of the John Marshall Debating Society. He then went on to earn his J.D. from the University of Florida Law School in 1941. Enlisting in the army during World War II, he served as a First Lieutenant and Battery Commander of the 54th Armored Field Artillery.

After the War, Bill returned home to practice law in Clearwater, serving as a municipal judge, city attorney, and founding the law firm Goza and Hall, PA. Although a successful attorney, Mr. Goza's true passion was Florida history and forensic science. He was twice President of the Florida Historical Society, an avid student of the Seminole Wars, and participated in the Dade Battle Talks, the Ft. King Road march, and the Prince Diary Acquisition at the University of Florida. In addition he was a long-time supporter of the University of Florida, donating his extensive collection of rare and unique items, such as historical newspapers, imprints, photographs, archaeological reports, and books, many of which are invaluable for those of us who conduct Seminole Wars research.



## President's Message

Because so much material dealing with the Seminole Wars has been lost to history, the search for it takes dedication and time. If the search is successful (the discovery of hand written letters, orders, diaries, etc.), putting them in typescript for easy reference takes more time, but the satisfaction of having contributed to the rescue of the lost events and people of the period will last a lifetime.

Fortunately, we have received several responses from our members to our appeal in our last report for assistance. Many pages of pertinent documents in typescript have been added to our collection and new sources of information have been brought to light. We are very grateful for this help and we trust that those doing this selfless work have taken justifiable satisfaction in their generous contribution of time and effort.

There is much yet to be done. If you'd like to take a hand in the work, please call or email.

*Frank Laumer*

### Editorial Box

The Foundation report is published quarterly for members of the Seminole Wars Historic Foundation, Inc. Anyone wishing to submit articles should contact Managing Editor John Missall at 11155 Rabun Gap Dr., Ft. Myers, FL 33917; 239-543-8831; missall@comcast.net.

The Seminole Wars Historic Foundation, Inc. (dba: Seminole Wars Foundation) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1992. Its mission is to work toward the preservation of sites important to Florida's three Seminole wars and to promote publishing and education about this time period. The main office of the Foundation is at 35247 Reynolds Ave., Dade City, FL 33523. Phone: 352-583-2974. FAX: 352-583-3486. [www.swhfoundation.org](http://www.swhfoundation.org)



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