



The Foundation Report

Seminole Wars Foundation, Inc.

Winter 2009

November Members' Meeting a Big Success



Frank Laumer signing copies of *Nobody's Hero*
Photo by Sam Smith

The Dade Battlefield Historic State Park was the site of the fall 2008 members' meeting, and it was a fitting site indeed. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce two new books on the Seminole Wars: The first was Board Member Joe Knetsch's *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier*, a collection of articles on the Second Seminole War that Joe has written over the past twenty years. The book also has the distinction of being the first book the Foundation has published under its own imprint and not in conjunction with the University of Tampa Press. The other volume being debuted was *Nobody's Hero*, President Frank Laumer's novel about Ransom Clark, the survivor of Dade's Battle. The book was released by Pineapple Press this past October.

Approximately thirty members and guests attended the meeting on a day with perfect weather. The only disappointment was the absence of Dr. Knetsch, who had undergone

extensive back surgery the day before the meeting. We are happy to report that Joe is recovering nicely and sends his thanks to those who wished him well. Fortunately, Joe had sent down a case of signed copies of *Fear and Anxiety* so that those who attended were able to purchase an autographed copy.

The meeting was opened by President Laumer who welcomed the members and guests, then introduced Vice President John Missall, who, as editor of *Fear and Anxiety*, talked about producing the book and gave an overview of the many interesting articles it contains. John then turned the podium back to Frank, who spoke about his writing of *Nobody's Hero* and his forty years of research into Ransom Clark and the Dade Battle. Upon the conclusion of Frank's talk a catered lunch from Sonny's Bar-B-Q was served.

After lunch a table was set up to sell both of the new books and other works on the Seminole Wars that the Foundation has on hand. It was a wonderful opportunity for members to stock their libraries and many of them did. Total sales for the day were over \$700, which will help pay for future publications. The Board wishes to thank President Laumer for generously donating the day's profits of *Nobody's Hero* to the Foundation.

As book sales began to wind down, the attendees moved outside and onto the old Fort King Road, on the ground where the actual battle took place. Frank then related the story of the battle, moving from the spot where the first soldiers fell to the reconstructed breastwork where most were laid to rest. As always, Frank gave a moving narration that brought home the desperation those doomed soldiers must have felt, and the tenacity of the severely wounded Ransom Clark.



Frank Laumer speaking at the breastwork
Photo by Sam Smith

Upcoming Spring Members' Meeting

One of the most important functions of the Foundation is the archaeological work we are conducting at Fort Dade and that our members conduct at other Seminole War sites. In the process of these excavations numerous artifacts have been uncovered, cataloged, and preserved. Many of our members have expressed an interest in viewing these artifacts and a limited number have been shown at previous meetings.

To accommodate this interest, the Board has decided to have an "Artifact Showing" for our next members' meeting, to be held on April 25, 2009, at Foundation Headquarters. The meeting will commence at 10:00 a.m.

The display should be quite impressive. Gulf Archaeological Research Institute, which is conducting the excavations at Fort Dade, will bring the most important of the many finds from that site. Board member Harley Gilmore and his partner Ralph Van Blarcom of Historical Preservation, Inc. will bring portions of their extensive collection, which contains items from nearly every major Seminole War era fortification. Other members who have personal collections they would like to display are more than welcome to bring them.

Please call Headquarters at 352-583-2711 or e-mail us at info@seminolewars.us to RSVP, to let us know if you have a collection you would like to bring, or for directions to Headquarters.

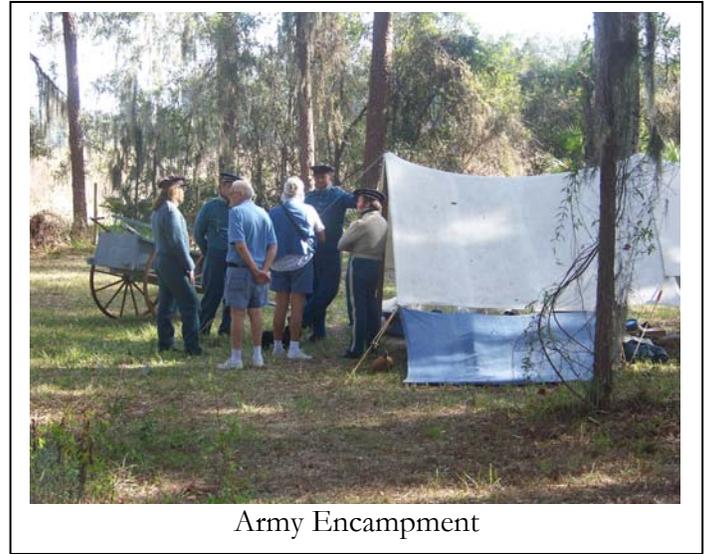
The Dade Reenactment: More Than Just a Battle



Jerry Morris explains the finer points of 1830s military cuisine.

The reenactment season is upon us once again, and as usual, the first event is the re-creation of Dade's Battle. For those of us who attend the event annually, the scene is familiar: The soldiers march onto the field, the Seminoles spring their ambush, and the battle begins. The soldiers who are not cut down in the first volley return fire and take up defensive positions. The cannon is rolled into place and its thunderous roar forces the Indians to fall back. During the lull in the fighting the soldiers chop down trees and hurriedly build a defensive breastwork. Cautiously and carefully, the Seminole warriors return, picking off the soldiers one by one until no one is left standing. Throughout the re-creation of the battle, narrators Kent Low (Saturday) or Frank Laumer (Sunday) fill in the details.

Yet there is more to this annual event than the reenactment of a battle. It is a time when Seminole War scholars and enthusiasts gather to renew friendships and pay honor to the men on both sides of the conflict who gave their lives to defend their homes and way of life. As part of the Seminole Wars community, your Foundation actively supports the Dade Battlefield Society and its efforts to make this event a success. The actual beginning of the annual remembrance usually takes place a few days before the reenactment, on December 28th, the true anniversary of the battle. An honor guard made up of reenactors and ROTC students lay a wreath at the reconstructed breastwork on the ground where the soldiers were originally buried. This year the Foundation sponsored the event and a total of sixty-five people attended. We thank member Jerry Morris and others for their work in bringing it about.



Army Encampment

The Foundation participates in many other ways. As always, we had a booth set up to answer visitors' questions and to sell our many publications. There were record crowds at this year's event, and sales were brisk. On Saturday, Advisory Board member Henry Sheldon gave two talks at the breastwork, telling the history of the Dade Battlefield. On Sunday, Vice President John Missall gave a talk that related how the Seminoles felt about their dealings with the government and their forced removal to the west. The most solemn event, and one few visitors see, is the memorial service held on Saturday night at 9:00 p.m. Within the breastwork four rows of candles are lit, one for each member of Dade's command. As each of the 108 names are read, a candle is snuffed out. After the

final candle was extinguished, Mary Lou Missall read an 1836 poem that expressed the hope that these fallen soldiers would not be forgotten. The poem was followed by readings from Ray Giron, Frank Laumer, and John Missall. A fife and drum then led a solemn procession around the breastwork. Yes, we attend the annual reenactment to have fun and see old friends, but we also remember the real reason for the park's existence.

Other Foundation members are reenactors and participate in the battle. Board member Ray Giron portrays Capt. Gardiner and is one of the principal organizers of the event. Others set up period encampments where the visitors can learn about the ways of life of both the soldiers and the Seminoles who fought in this tragic conflict. If you missed this year's event, we hope you will attend next year or attend one of the other reenactments taking place in other parks throughout the state. Please see the calendar below for dates and places.



Bettie & Earl DeBary at the Seminole Encampment

Now Available: Motte's *Journey Into Wilderness*

One of the most significant primary sources for information on the Second Seminole War is Jacob Rhett Motte's memoir *Journey Into Wilderness*. An account of an army surgeon's experiences during the war, Motte's book is a must-have for the bookshelf of any student of the Seminole Wars. The book has been out of print for several years, but a limited number of unsold copies were recently discovered and have been acquired by Board member Harley Gilmore. Harley has made them available for sale through the Foundation. These are brand new, hardback editions in perfect condition. They are available from our office for \$39.95 plus tax. Members receive a 20% discount. We encourage you to get your copy while they last.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

January 31 & February 1, 2009: Battle of Okeechobee Re-enactment, Okeechobee Battlefield, Okeechobee. This event is held at one of the state's newest parks, located several miles east of the city of Okeechobee on the north side of the big lake. For more information go to the website of the Okeechobee Battlefield Friends, Inc.

February 14 & 15, 2009: Ft. Foster Rendezvous, Hillsborough River State Park, Tampa. The fully reconstructed fort is located about twenty minutes north of Tampa on US301. For more information call 813-987-6771.

February 28 & March 1, 2009: Big Cypress Shootout, Big Cypress Indian Reservation, south of Clewiston. Held on the Seminole Reservation, this is also a great opportunity to visit the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Contact Billie Swamp Safari at 800-949-6101, ext. 12125.

March. 21 & 22, 2009: Ft. Cooper Days, Ft. Cooper State Park, Inverness. One of the nicer settings for a battle re-enactment, come and enjoy the show under the shade of the spreading oak trees. Contact the park at 352-726-0315.

April 25, 2009: Members' Meeting "Artifacts of the Seminole Wars." To be held at Foundation Headquarters, 35247 Reynolds St., Dade City, FL, at 10:00 am. Call 352-583-2711 for details and to RSVP.

We Now Take Credit Cards

More and more Americans are making the majority of their purchases with credit cards. As a consequence, they carry little cash and leave their checkbooks at home. In recent years we've noticed that when people approach our booth at reenactments and other events, they often don't have enough cash or a check with which to purchase the books they want. "Do you take credit cards?" has become a familiar phrase. To counteract the problem, the Foundation has opened a credit card account. Besides being able to purchase books at our booth, visitors to our website will be able to purchase books with a phone call, join our organization, or renew their membership using their "plastic." At this year's Dade Battle Reenactment, approximately two-thirds of our sales were made using credit cards.

Visit Our Updated Website

One of the Foundation's primary missions is the dissemination of information regarding the Seminole Wars. In today's world one of the best tools for doing that is through a well-maintained website. Although the Foundation has long had a website, it has not always been kept up to date and has not been well publicized. The Board has recently decided to remedy the situation and has hired a professional web designer to manage our site. To keep costs down we did not totally redesign the site, but instead opted to enhance our old design and make it more accessible. In the process, we've also acquired a new web address: www.seminolewars.us. Please note that our old address (www.swhfoundation.org) is still valid and will be maintained for the foreseeable future.

We've added some important enhancements to the site to make it more useful to our members and visitors. Previous issues of *The Foundation Report* are available with just a click of the mouse. A detailed reading list is provided, showing not only Foundation publications, but works available from other publishers and works that are important but may only be available through your local library. Thanks to the Foundation's ability to take credit cards, you can order some of these titles straight from our office. There's also an updated history of the Seminole Wars and links to other websites. In addition, we've included a membership form for those who would like to join our organization. Next time you're at the computer, check us out.

Seminole Wars Classes at FGCU

For those members living in the Southwest Florida area, Florida Gulf Coast University will be offering classes on the history of the Seminole Wars through their adult education division, the Renaissance Academy. The first class will be held at the Port Charlotte campus on February 9, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. A more in-depth class will be held at FGCU's Ft. Myers campus on two consecutive Fridays, February 20 & 27, beginning at 2:00 p.m. The instructors will be John and Mary Lou Missall. For more information or to sign up, call the Renaissance Academy at 239-590-1095 or go to their website: <http://RegisterRA.fgcu.edu>.

Getting the Words Out



Foundation books on display at the Miami International Book Fair

The Miami International Book Fair is one of the largest in the nation, a place where hundreds of book sellers and publishers gather to promote and introduce their products. At this year's fair the Foundation's publications were prominently displayed at the booth of our distributor, Past Perfect Florida History. Being shown for the first time was our newest book, *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier*, which had arrived from the printer only a week before the event. For other books on Florida history and the Sunshine State, visit Past Perfect's website at www.past-perfect-florida-history-books.com.

President's Message

This year's reenactment of Dade's Battle was the best attended since its inception twenty-nine years ago. The gate was approximately 3,500 on Saturday and 2,500 on Sunday. This seems to indicate an ever-growing awareness among the public of this pivotal event of the Second Seminole War.

As members of the Seminole War Foundation we can all legitimately take some satisfaction in this. Our principal goal is to bring these forgotten wars to the attention of the public, and our research, writing, and speakers have contributed to this attendance. And behind the research, writing, and speakers are each of you, who, through your contributions of money, typing of manuscripts, spreading the word, and general encouragement and support, are bringing these wars out of obscurity. The men, women, and children, black, red, and white, who suffered destruction, defeat, and death through a half-century of conflict must not be forgotten. If we can help to remind others of the egregious errors of our past; the taking of Seminole land, the enslavement of blacks, and the needless death of American soldiers, then their terrible fates will not have been for naught. We can remember and do better.

We have entered a new year and are witnessing the inauguration of a new president. The very fact of his race should be taken as a sign that the bigotry and racial injustice of our nation's past are fading. Together, we can find a better way.

Frank Laumer

Board of Directors

Frank Laumer (President)
John Missall (Vice President)

Samuel Smith (Secretary)
Debbie Harper (Treasurer)

Bill Dayton
Joe Knetsch
Harley Gilmore
Richard Tombrink, Jr.

Ray Giron
Jackson Walker
Dale Anne Laumer

John Griffin
Mary Lou Missall
William H. Edwards, Jr.

Gary Ellis
Willie Johns
Gregory Moore
James M. Denham

Editorial Information

The *Foundation Report* is published quarterly for members of the Seminole Wars 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; or newsletter@seminolewars.us

The Seminole Wars Foundation, Inc. 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. Web: www.seminolewars.us



35247 Reynolds Ave.
Dade City, FL 33523

Ph. 352-583-2974
Fax: 352-583-3486

www.seminolewars.us