

A WAR OF ATTRITION

“If the devil owned both Hell and Florida, he would rent out Florida and live in hell.”

ANONYMOUS US SOLDIER - CIRCA 1833



The years of conflict that followed the Indian Removal Act were brutal and bloody, and it soon became apparent that the Seminole had the advantage. The United States entered the war with weapons, uniforms, and tactics that were not fit for the harsh wetland conditions. Meanwhile the Seminole knew how to utilize Florida's environment, moving through swampy regions that slowed or stopped horses and wagons, and using the thick hammocks as concealed bases. The Seminole fought a guerilla campaign, using hit and run tactics, and staying on the move. Not only the active warriors, but every man, woman, and child were constantly moving camp to keep ahead of the Army, who burned every town and camp they found.

This period of conflict, what the United States would later call the Second Seminole War, turned out to be the longest and most expensive of America's "Indian Wars", costing the nation over \$30 million (equivalent to \$1.2 billion in 2025 dollars) and the lives of over 1,500 soldiers and sailors.

But the United States had the advantage of numbers. The Army continuously called in new men to replace those they lost. The Seminole were estimated to have roughly 1,400 warriors in 1832. For the defenders, every single loss was a harsh blow. In battle the Seminole continuously inflicted more casualties than they took, but there were no reinforcements to replace their dead and wounded. Still, despite this, the Army would spend the next seven years trying to force the Seminole out of Florida.

For more Seminole History Stories visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com

Pictured: "Charge With Every Man," by Jackson Walker, depicting the Battle of Micanopy, which took place on June 9th, 1836. Image courtesy the Micanopy historical Society

