

*This year, 2017, is an important year of anniversaries for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. It marks the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the Seminole Wars in 1817. It is the 60th anniversary of federal recognition of the Seminole Tribe of Florida as a government and a business enterprise. Over the year, this column will alternately explore key events of the so-called First Seminole War and highlight the great advances of the Tribe during the last 60 years. This month marks the signing of the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819.*

The Seminoles of Florida proudly call themselves the Unconquered and with good reason. It is often noted the Seminoles of Florida did not sign a final peace treaty with the United States government. This is true but there once was a treaty the Seminoles agreed to, the Treaty of Moultrie Creek.

Many are familiar with the story of Osceola stabbing another treaty - the Treaty of Payne's Landing in 1832. It was a renouncement of the Federal Government's plan to remove Seminoles from Florida to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. History tells us war flared up again shortly after the U. S. government's attempt to enforce this treaty.

The Treaty of Moultrie Creek was signed on Sept. 18, 1823, nine years earlier. It was, in part, a reaction by Seminoles to the United States gaining Florida under the Adams-Onís treaty. The Seminoles recognized they needed to create their own treaty with the U. S. Neamathla was appointed on the Seminole side to negotiate with Governor Duval and James Gadsen. This treaty was to be in effect for 20 years and give the Seminoles four million acres of land, although none of the land was on the coast, where Seminoles could easily have traded with Cuba and other islands.

The Seminoles were to receive a \$5,000 annuity and additional monies to support a school and blacksmithing shop. In return Seminoles were to allow roads to be built through their lands and freely allow U. S. citizens to pursue runaway slaves. From the beginning, the U. S. failed to hold up their end of the bargain. Monies were slow to come, if at all. Theft, kidnapping and murder committed by settlers towards the Seminoles went unpunished. But the ultimate insult was the introduction of a new treaty a mere 9 years after the first one. Sitting President, Andrew Jackson, was an old and well known enemy of the Tribe. Seminoles were quick to understand that no fair deal was to be had, and many Seminoles, under the guidance of warriors like Abiaki, Coacoochee and Osceola, chose to stay and fight.

Since the U. S. government violated the treaty - initially by not upholding it and later presenting the Seminoles with the Treaty of Payne's Landing - it was the U. S. Government who voided the existence of the Treaty of Moultrie Creek. The Seminoles wisely chose to never sign another treaty.

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