



Dade Battlefield Society's
*Fort Armstrong
 Gazette*
 Autumn 2015



**From Beginning
 to End** by Steve Rinck

Twice previously The Fort Armstrong Gazette autumn issue's cover page has featured an annual St. Augustine event, but this edition chronicles as yet the largest, most elaborate of those occasions. On August 15th, at precisely 173 years after the original 1842 ceremony, 77 living historians recreated the funeral march marking the reinterment of Second Seminole War military dead at what would later become the first U. S. National Cemetery. Virtually all of Dade's Command, including Major Dade, were laid to their final rest on that day, a mere 24 hours following the end of the war that began when these same men sacrificed their lives six years and eight months earlier at Dade Battlefield.

As one of the four major sponsors of this 8th annual event, Dade Battlefield Society arranged for the participation of all 40 military, 19 Seminole, and 18 civilian reenactors, as well as horses, mule-drawn caisson, and our working cannon. Approximately 125 guests and spectators were there to witness the ceremony that included wreath-laying, musket and cannon salutes, and short addresses from a variety of speakers, most notably Lt. Col. (Ret.) Sherman L. Fleek, West Point Command Historian. Mr. Fleek's remarks centered on West Point's history of producing officers who went directly from classroom to combat, beginning with the Second Seminole War and still continuing today.



Dignified Procession | Ted Pappas

The event closed with a luncheon that served not only as a way to celebrate our mutual successes, but also as the semiannual general meeting of the Seminole Wars Foundation. Reenactors received commemorative coins, financial donors were recognized, and John Missall debuted the "Florida Seminole Wars Heritage Trail," a Foundation publication that will be available to visitors in all Florida State Welcome Centers. Dade Battlefield Society members are proud to have contributed to that 60-page book, and hope that it, as well as enthusiastically-presented events such as this most recent one, will increase public knowledge of the importance of the Second Seminole War to the history of our nation.



**Honor the
 Fallen** | Ted Pappas



Ladies-in-Waiting
 Ted Pappas



Pyramid, Obelisk, and Flag | Steve Rinck

Admirers of the Sponge by Steve Rinck

In 1898, Item #2140 in the U. S. Military Academy Ordinance Museum was identified simply as, “Staff with part of sponge.” The accompanying description identified it as having been in service of the six pounder in “Dade’s Massacre,” and had by that time been museum property for 55 years. Over the last decade many people have been working on the effort to return to Florida this object that has achieved iconic status among those who still honor and regularly commemorate the memory of Major Dade’s desperate 1835 struggle. With barely a week to



Made of Lamb’s Wool | Sam Smith

spare, Dade’s cannon sponge/rammer arrived at the Florida National Guard’s St. Francis Barracks in time to be on display during the August 15 Reinterment Commemoration in Saint Augustine. The artifact’s six-month loan marks the first time it has left West Point grounds since its placement there in 1843!



Society members and friends, kneeling l-r: Blake Lorentzson, Steve Creamer, Hal Merritt, Kent Low, Rick Caravona; standing l-r: Joseph Lorentzson, Bill Gruber, James Permane, John Henderson, Eric Ardjewski, Steve Rinck.
Admirers of the Sponge | Debbie Cox

For the living historians and others who were among those viewing this precious object, the thought of the sweat and blood that must have been absorbed by the sponge staff during the final moments of so many was a truly moving experience. We are grateful to West Point for the loan of what may well be the very first item received for their museum on the

Hudson, and encourage our readers so inclined to journey to St. Augustine to see the sponge while it is still there. Arrangements for viewing can be made through Alison Simpson, FLNG Historian, 904-823-0696.

Source: Thompson, John T. (1898). *Descriptive Catalogue of the Ordinance Museum, West Point, NY*: U. S. Military Academy Press, p. 221.

Living History Musings

Field-expedient Vent Pick by Bob Waters

This article is the sixth in a series dealing with items and activities of interest for reenactors and others sharing a love of American history.

Have you ever been involved in a heated reenactment battle and find yourself with a repeated flash-in-the-pan situation? Obvious clogged vent, right? The simple solution is to use your vent pick to clear the clog. The only problem is that the lovely flash guards mandated by the state do not easily allow the vent pick to access the vent. I came up with a simple solution that works great and is easily carried onto the battlefield. Best of all, it’s free or nearly free.

First, drill a ¼ inch diameter hole 1 inch deep longitudinally into a 2 ¼ inch long section of 5/8 inch diameter wooden dowel rod. Next, cut one clip loop plus a 1 inch section from a jumbo paper clip, and then bend the 1 inch section perpendicular to the loop. One paper clip will make two picks so you might as well make two, then you will have an extra to lose or share. Fill the hole in the dowel with epoxy or hot glue, and insert the bend in the paper clip into the hole.



Vent Pick | Bob Waters

Your new pick is not authentic to the period so I reserve one space in my cartridge box to carry it while keeping it handy. If you are clearing a vent, you simply open the cartridge box, reach in, and “palm” the pick. The dowel sizing specified makes it an exact fit and easy to grab.

Old Ways are Good Ways by Kristin Wood, Park Ranger

Forty-one youngsters between 8 and 12 years of age, attended Dade Battlefield Historic State Park's 4th Annual Pioneer Day Camp for one week last June, experiencing a different aspect of Old Florida life each day.

Monday focused on Dade's Battle and introduced live people portraying a Cracker Cowman, Frontiersman, Pioneer Lady, 1835 Soldier, and Seminole Indian. The following day's theme was about 19th Century gardening, livestock and foods. Children made their own lunches that included zipper peas, hoe cakes and hand-cranked ice cream. There was even the opportunity to milk a cow and churn butter.

Wednesday found the campers playing a variety of pioneer and Seminole games, as well as developing some skill with a bow and arrow and the more unusual atlatl. Corncob twirlers were made, hoop rolling and stilt walking practiced, and even dancing was available through the Virginal Reel and Indian Stomp.

Home and School Day allowed our youthful charges to experience many useful skills such as weaving, sewing, candle making, bed stuffing and dying fabric with plant fibers. One-room school instruction and storytelling in a chickee rounded out Thursday.

Friday was a day for outdoor crafts ranging from cranking out rope and making saw palmetto brushes to using a cross cut saw and making fire without matches. Parents arrived early to witness their children recreating Dade's Battle, singing camp songs, and starring in a slide show of the week in review.



Clockwise from top:
Take Cover!
Cross Cut
Milking
One-room School
Atlatl Launch
Sight Down the Shaft
 | Lucille Lane

It Happened During the Seminole Wars

A True Shakespearean Tragedy by Steve Rinck

(Second in an occasional series about lesser-known facts of the 1817-1858 period of history).

On May 22, 1840, a Savannah theater operator named William C. Forbes brought an acting troupe by ship to the Florida Territory town of Picolata on the St. Johns River. Less than a day later he had secured a stagecoach and wagon to transport his cast, crew and supplies the 17 miles to St. Augustine for a two-week engagement. About halfway there, the travelers were ambushed from a patch of palmettos by an estimated 15 Seminoles led by Coacoochee, or Wildcat. The coach driver and all save two of the



The illustration above is from the article cited. It is taken from a painting by Guy LaBree and is titled, "Suspect Foul Play."

troupe members managed to escape with their lives. It was thought that most of the victims survived due to the fascination that occupied the Indians upon opening their luggage to discover

costumes from plays such as "Othello," "Hamlet," and "Julius Caesar."

Later that night the small garrison guard at Fort Searle, 8 miles east of Picolata,

was surprised when 30 Elizabethans came out of the mist just outside the gate, taunting and challenging those within. Almost a year later Coacoochee and others appeared at Army headquarters on Peace Creek as early 17th Century ladies and gentlemen.

When the actors finally reached St. Augustine they regrouped to continue the initial plan. Amazingly, other costumes were located, and the

group performed both Shakespeare and contemporary plays with two local amateurs stepping into the dead actors' parts. Apparently then, as now, the show must go on.

Source: Lane, Marcia. "When Acting was Deadly." Saint Augustine Record, St. Augustine, November 16, 2009. (Accessed 9/5/2015 from the website, St. Augustine.com).

Notice to All Members of Dade Battlefield Society

For more than a quarter century, the functions of your Society have grown in number and variety far beyond the operation of a 1-day battle reenactment. We operate the annual World War II Weekend, provide services to the National Guard, National Staff College, and many school and community groups, as well as sponsor other living history programs, festivals and cultural events.....all this while expanding and improving Dade's Battle weekend each year. During all this time we have taken pride in maintaining membership dues of only \$10.00/person; the modern reality, however, requires a new structure.

Effective July 1, 2016, an individual

membership will become \$20.00 per year. Your DBS Directors feel as if this is a reasonable response to help defray the increases in service costs that we face, and represents an amount that is consistent with other non-profit groups similar to ours in the Central Florida area.

As a means of thanking our loyal colleagues, the Board has voted to allow individuals to pay their 7/1/2016 - 6/30/2017 membership in advance at the old rate of \$10.00 per year, if they transmit payment before January 1, 2016. You can renew by mail to: Dade Battlefield Society, 7200 CR 603, Bushnell, FL 33513. PayPal or credit card can be used by clicking on the "Membership"

button at www.dadebattlefield.com. Questions/comments may be sent to stevenrinck@gmail.com.

THANK YOU!!

Upcoming Events

Sept. 25, 26, 27

Native American Powwow

Oct. 23, 24

Halloween Hayride

Nov. 14

Frank Thomas Folk Music and Heritage Festival

Dec. 5

Christmas on the Florida Frontier

Jan. 2, 3

Dade's Battle and Trade Fair