



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



## Remembering Abraham's Old Town by Steve Rinck



Photo: Joe Carrier

On the morning of April 18, an important step was taken in the long-overdue recognition of the significance of the site of Abraham's Old Town, or Pilaklikaha, a Black Seminole Maroon village that prospered between 1813 and 1836. On that day a collection of approximately 75 interested persons gathered along Sumter County Road 567, directly adjacent to the townsite on an elevated hammock of large oaks and pasture close to sinkholes and ponds, to hear several speakers describe Pilaklikaha's unique history and culture. Society Board Member John Griffin, a direct Black Seminole descendant, very movingly spoke of his personal quest to understand a people sharing a heritage that is both African and American Indian. Dr. Brent Weisman, an anthropologist at the University of South Florida, reviewed the more recent

efforts by a variety of interested parties that continue to provide evidence of how the town's residents developed societies that were both multicultural and enduring.

The immediate goal of those present at the event was to have the requisite steps taken that will result in the erection of a highway marker that will better familiarize the public with the importance of Abraham's Town. The like-minded groups supporting this effort are Sumter County Historical Society, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byways, Dade Battlefield Society, Seminole Wars Foundation, and Historic Hernando Preservation Society. Members of each of these groups, as well as other committed parties, are confident that the marker will become a reality by 2016.

Anyone wishing to make donations to the marker fund can send checks to: Sumter County Historical Society, 217 Market St., Bushnell, FL 33513.

### Attention!

Saint Augustine  
 St. Francis Barracks  
 August 15, 2015

Reenactment of  
 1842 Ceremony of Reburial  
 of those who gave their lives  
 in the Seminole Wars  
 including  
 Major Francis Dade  
 and his command

Be a witness to this remarkable event.  
 information: [stevenrinck@gmail.com](mailto:stevenrinck@gmail.com)

# Florida Music and Heritage Festival

by Steve Rinck

Visitors to Dade Battlefield Historic State Park received a special treat on November 15th as they enjoyed the variety of experiences offered at the Second Annual Frank Thomas Folk Music and Heritage Festival. Organized by park volunteer and head of the Florida Folk Festival and Music Heritage Association Jim McAlister, the air was filled all day with down-home instrumentals and vocals, and the ground held plenty of family-oriented diversions for all to enjoy. “Dean of Florida Folk” Frank Thomas, by lending his name to the event, was a big draw for a number of other performers, even including Florida Park Service Director Donald Forgione. Along with a full music schedule, visitors enjoyed pioneer craft demonstrations, 19th Century games, stories and cowboy poetry, and a living history timeline of reenactors portraying a conquistador, Seminole, Florida cowboy, and soldiers from the 2nd Seminole War, Civil War, and World War II.



**AT THE MUSIC AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL** - From left, Park Manager Bill Gruber; Volunteers Steve Rinck, Steve Creamer, Jim McAlister, Paul Remis, and Pablo Remis; Musicians Frank Thomas and Florida Park Service Director Donald Forgione.

## *Strings, Songs and Storytellers - Memories from the Second Annual Frank Thomas Folk Music and Heritage Festival*



**ON STAGE** - Sheyenne McAlister, far left, performs with Frank and Lisa Thomas.

Photos: Lucille Lane



Darlene Powell



Eli Perras and Emmett Carlisle



Whitey Markle



Storyteller Hank Mattson

# Dade Pioneers at Osprey Point by Karen Cloud

On the day of Halloween, several Dade Pioneers decided it would be nice to take their “trick or treating” to their neighbors at Osprey Point Nursing Home. Students shared home-made fall decorations with every resident, and took a few moments to wish them a “Happy Fall, Ya’ll!” All of them members of South Sumter High School’s student body, this group also participated the following April in the Sumter Relay for Life, and continues providing support for virtually all activities at Dade Battlefield. As one of the Pioneers said, “What a great way to earn my Bright Future Hours for scholarships, but also to know that I am helping our community.”



Montel Presley, Amber Rivera, Kayla Smothers, Activity Director Gerri Stephenson, Brenda Ortiz, Almarie Brown, Achaia Jackson, Greg Knight at the home. Photo: Karen Cloud

## For the Boys

Our Annual World War II Commemoration event was held during the first weekend in March, and included period Axis and Allied living history camps, historic military vehicle displays and a battle reenactment scenario each afternoon. About 1,000 people attended. Volunteers even staged a USO Show for the reenactors and honored World War II veteran guests including Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Sam Coverston, 88, and Marine Lance Corporal Don Dorrington, 90. The show included music from a local high school jazz band, singing of 1940s tunes by volunteers in period attire and a variety of humorous skits including the CSO president and secretary performing “Who’s on First” as Abbott and Costello. Cokes in glass bottles, coffee in ceramic mugs and snacks were served.



**Portraying the Andrew Sisters** - Entertaining the “troops” at the USO Show are, from left, Samantha Gordon, Shannon Werner and Sue Blakeman. Photo: Joe Carrier

**Making History Live**  
A German field hospital (far right);  
and a period arms demonstration.



## Senior Ranger Webb Earns Recognition by Steve Rinck

Last December, Dade Battlefield State Park's Senior Ranger George Webb was named Florida Park Service District 4 Employee of the Month. We are so very pleased that his strong dedication to service and the high production standards that he holds out for himself as well as others have served to recognize him as being tops in his profession. Through both happy and tougher times, George has always been proud to be a part of, as he often says, "the best little park in Florida."

George is famous for tackling tasks head-on and doing his best to get the job done. The casual park visitor, however, may not be as well acquainted with the care he takes when performing

his living history interpretive programs as a character straight out of the 1830s. Delivered many times yearly to visiting groups of all ages, "Trapper George" describes life on the Florida frontier from multiple perspectives, ultimately focusing on the reasons for, and results of, Dade's Battle and the Second Seminole War.

Beyond his valued service at our park, George also fills the needs of related events at several other sites, acting as reenactor, interpreter, and historic weapons safety officer. We are proud to work alongside him not only as a colleague but also as a valued friend of Dade Battlefield Society.



George portraying an 1837 Marine Corporal.

### DADE BATTLEFIELD SOCIETY MEMBERS

#### NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Annual General Membership Meeting will be held on

**Tuesday, June 2, 2015,  
at 6:00 p.m.**  
in Major Dade's Lodge.

Election of new board members and officers will take place.

New Business raised by any Society members is welcomed.

## A Walk Through the Old Battleground by Lucille Lane



It seems quiet under the great oak canopy that arches over the path, but it can be neither still nor silent here. If you allow your thoughts to wander, as mine did on a recent walk along this section of old road that runs through Dade Battlefield Historic State Park, a cacophony of sounds might assault you. Is that rustle in the clump of saw palmettos a waiting Seminole? Did I hear a musket shot or was it an Indian war cry? At the replica breastworks, I see red-stained sky-blue coats on fallen bodies, hear the moans of the dying, and smell the acrid odor of gunpowder. The whisper of a breeze moves the long, gray masses of Spanish moss that hang from the ancient tree limbs above. The tangled strands sway like spirits of the dead returned. Is this place haunted? Perhaps.



Membership renewals for all Society members are due as of July 1, 2015. Send a check for \$10.00 to Dade Battlefield Society, 7200 CR 603, Bushnell, FL 33513, or use PayPal online at [www.dadebattlefield.com](http://www.dadebattlefield.com)