



Dade Battlefield Society's  
*Fort Armstrong  
 Gazette*  
 SUMMER 2014



## DBS Assists at Dual Dedications by Steve Rinck

We are proud that the Dade Battlefield Society is being called upon with increasing frequency to provide assistance with a variety of events connected with Florida's Seminole Wars. In May, there were two that took place back-to-back on a single weekend!

**Chocochatti.** A new highway marker stands in the southeast

section of Brooksville (State Road 50 Bypass) denoting the first Florida colony of Upper Creeks who were eventually transformed into Seminoles. This town of Chocochatti ("Red House") prospered in the Big Hammock from 1767 to 1836, when the residents were forced to emigrate to Oklahoma. The May 30, 2014 dedication ceremony was attended



Photo by Earl Debary

This artist's rendition of Fort King as it appeared in the early 1830s is on a kiosk at Fort King National Historic Landmark.



Photo by Ken Badgley

Members of the Seminole and soldier honor guards on May 30 at the highway marker signaling the location of the first Florida colony of Upper Creeks. They are, from left, E. Debary, S. Rinck, H. Nipper, K. Wood, D. Beremand, P. Remis, and J. Griffin.

by both Seminole and soldier honor guards, composed primarily of Society members.

**Fort King.** On May 31st, several of the same DBS members joined more local reenactors to celebrate the public re-opening of the land surrounding the "King of Forts" in frontier Florida, Fort King in present-day Ocala. Originally constructed of native long leaf pines in 1827, Fort King served as the southern headquarters for the U. S. Army during the Second Seminole War. And the exciting news is that this National Historic Landmark will be rebuilt, in its entirety, and appear as it would have to Major Dade's command had they not been stopped en route on that cold winter day of 1835. Perhaps their march will one day be symbolically completed after all!

## It Happened During the Seminole Wars by Steve Rinck

This is the first article in an occasional series about lesser-known facts of the 1817-1858 period of history.

### First in an Unfortunate Pattern

There have been four assassinations of U. S. presidents, and at least twice that number of foiled attempts, the first of which occurred in January of 1835, 11 months prior to Major Dade's Battle.

A British house painter, Richard Lawrence, believed himself to be the rightful heir to the throne of England and that he was stymied from doing so because the U.S. government owed him a large amount of money. He approached Andrew Jackson as the President was leaving a Congressional funeral, removed two Deringer pistols from his pockets and pulled the triggers. Both guns



A contemporary engraving of the attempted 1835 assassination captures the moment Lawrence, at right, levels his pistol at President Jackson. Image source: U.S. Library of Congress

misfired and Jackson proceeded to use his cane to repeatedly strike the would-be assassin, who was eventually subdued and disarmed by several men, including Tennessee Representative Davy Crockett. The District Attorney for the District of Columbia, Francis Scott Key,

prosecuted Lawrence, who was ultimately found not guilty by reason of insanity and spent the rest of his life in mental institutions.

A century later, Smithsonian workers test fired both of Lawrence's pistols; they operated normally on the first try.

#### Sources:

- 1.Regan, Chris (2008). *Mass Historia: 365 Days of Historical Facts and (Mostly) Fictions*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing.
2. This Day in History, History.com website.

### MVP Award by Steve Rinck

On May 19, graduating senior Melanie Butler received the very first MVP ("Most Valuable Pioneer") Award at the annual award ceremony held at South Sumter High School in Bushnell. This honor and monetary reward referenced not only Melanie's membership in the Dade Pioneers Youth Program, but also her leadership in supporting events that DBS sponsors at Dade Battlefield Historic State Park and her never-ending encouragement of other youth to become a part of the fun and service that our student members experience. Even after graduation, and prior to leaving for college in August, she managed to squeeze in two weeks to help younger students in the park's two summer day camps. In her junior and senior years, Melanie logged over 300 hours of volunteer service time, more than any other Dade Pioneer. We are proud of her, wish her great success at the University of West Florida, and are sure we will see her again at some future events.



Photo by Danielle Stewart

Melanie Butler with Dade Battlefield Society Vice President Jim Velten following the awards ceremony on May 19.

# Dade's Sponge Staff by Steve Rinck

When General Edmund Gaines, with a force of 1100 men, buried the fallen of Dade's Battle in February of 1836, First Lieutenant James Duncan recovered and took possession of the sponge staff that had doused embers in the six pounder cannon used against the attacking Seminoles only 54 days previously. In 1843, Lieutenant Miner Knowlton wrote to Duncan requesting the staff for the existing Musee d'Artilerie at West Point. Duncan fulfilled the request, writing that, "Of the identity of the sponge there can be no doubt, as I took it from the battlefield myself....It may be interesting to know that with this staff Lieut. Bassinger himself (who was the last man killed), rammed home the only remaining cartridge of the 40 rounds that constituted his supply of ammunition when the battle began."

This artifact is therefore proof that the West Point Museum was already

in existence in 1843, making it the oldest federal museum in the country. It is apparently so prized that it was selected as one of the very few museum pieces to be displayed at the June, 2013 Army Birthday Celebration at the West Point Club. This fact may help to explain why, despite high level professional contacts made since at least 2004, it has been very difficult to attain permission from the West Point Museum to place this authentic Dade treasure on loan to our museum at Dade Battlefield Historic State Park.

The effort continues, spearheaded by DBS member Lt. Col. Greg Moore, USA, ret., Florida National Guard Historian, who will link the request to both the upcoming 180th anniversary of Dade's Battle and the 450th anniversary of the military founding of St. Augustine. Should West Point remain reluctant about housing the sponge staff in Bushnell, perhaps they



Photo source: a posting on the Facebook page of the West Point Museum at <https://www.facebook.com/WestPointMuseum>

would be more willing to place it in the Florida National Guard Museum, literally only a few dozen yards from the final resting place of Dade's command.

## Source:

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

# From the Front

by Nina Mattei

*Editor's Note: This year's World War II Weekend was the best attended ever, and manifested the largest number of new reenactor impressions, including that of a war correspondent. Performed by DBS Board Member Nina Mattei, what follows is her 1944 wartime style of reporting what she witnessed.*

## Third Army Elements Engage Enemy at Ft. Dade, Belgium

Five different army units engaged several German units near Ft. Dade, Belgium, on 01 March 2014, with one American soldier wounded in the leg and a German Major captured and then lost when the enemy rallied. The units reengaged on 02 March, 2014, near the same



Photo by Rich Reaume

War correspondent Mattei proofs her dispatch written after the March 2nd battle.

location, with two Nazis killed, the Major captured a second time, one American carried from the field in care of a WAC medic, and another G.I. transported by jeep.

Sgt. Todd "Rock" Dolin, hometown Myramar, Fla., suffered a bullet to his left leg on 01 March, but is expected to make a full recovery. "This was a

tough battle and a lot of sacrifice," said Captain John Manolis of the Second Infantry Division, hometown Spring Hill, Fla. "I'm proud of them."

Captain Dennis Wallace, Sixth Cavalry Regiment, was among the lead elements on the ground when the German Major was captured. The Nazi aggressors rallied to rescue their Major whose identity was not available, but rumored to be from the well-known Rincks of Berlin.

Among the American elements present at Ft. Dade, Belgium, are the 1st Infantry Division, 2nd ID, 9th ID, the 2nd Ranger Battalion, and the 6th Cavalry Regiment. German units engaged in the battle are reportedly the 10th S.S. Mountain Division, the elite Panzer Lehr Division, and the 6th Fallschirmjager Division.

# Nature Day Camp at Dade Battlefield Historic State Park

by **Kristin Wood, Park Ranger** (photos by Lucille Lane)

Hand-cranking homemade ice cream, visits by a barred owl and barking tree frogs, adrenaline-pumping relay races, puppet shows, making home-made paper and “Who Dung It?” activities were just a few of the exciting highlights of the recent Nature Day Camp held at Dade Battlefield.

The second annual Nature Day Camp took place July 14th through 18th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. This year, 37 happy campers came out and participated in the many games, crafts, walks and other activities planned for them daily. Every day featured a different theme: Monday – Birds; Tuesday – Reptiles and Amphibians; Wednesday – Animal Detective Day; Thursday – Walk through the Forest; and Friday – Insects and Spiders. Campers even got to watch workers from the City of Bushnell install bat houses in the park with a bucket truck.

Camp food was an important part of the week, with snacks matching the theme of the day. Children enjoyed eating dirt dessert with their own flower spoon on Thursday, plant day. They also made spiders with marshmallows, pretzels and candy on Friday, spider and insect day. Community businesses donated lunches to make each meal a treat for the kids.

This year approximately 35 volunteers assisted with the camp or camp set up to make the event run smoothly. The week was packed with energy and enthusiasm as the three camp groups, Tortoises, Foxes and Kites marched to their different activities hoisting proudly their group flags for all to see. We look forward to seeing many campers back as Dade Pioneers (ages 8-18), which starts back up in September on the first Tuesday of each month that school is in session.



Day campers set out on a wildflower discovery trek during Thursday’s “Walk through the Forest” program.



Following a live reptile and amphibian presentation on Tuesday, it’s time to paint a wooden snake based on the markings shown in sample photos of Florida species.



There’s nothing like a Dung Beetle Relay to bring out the competitive spirit—and lots of laughter.



On day one of camp, building bird boxes is a nature lesson and also one in carpentry. The kids took the finished boxes home at the end of the day.



On the final day of camp, park volunteer Karen Cloud leads the campers in writing cards to donors to express appreciation for their support of the five-day event.

## Thank You Nature Day Camp Donors!

The Dade Battlefield Society - Hungry Howie’s - McDonalds - Sonny’s - Winn-Dixie - Sumter County Farm Bureau - Cracker Barrel - Wendy’s - Total Tease Salon - Adams and Sons Stump Grinding - Sumter County Farmers Market - Chuck’s Odd Couples Café - Elizabeth Wood - Sherry and Larry Recla - Sheriff Bill Farmer and the Sumter County Sheriff’s Dept. - Clerk of Court Gloria Hayward - Tax Collector Randy Mask - Supervisor of Elections Karen Krause - Property Appraiser Joey Hooten - Hernando Audubon Society - David Sundeen - Linda Thigpen, CPA - Richard Sutherland - Michael Johnson and Michele Morley - City of Bushnell - Sumter County Chamber of Commerce - Julie Knight.