

Activity 2
Seminole Wars in Florida: 1812-1858
Teacher Background Materials
Florida Seat of War

Shows forts, battle locations, and U.S. line of attack. "The Second Seminole War, 1835-1842, was a seminal event in the mapping of Florida. By the late 1830s, the Florida coastline and northern tier of counties had been fairly well surveyed and mapped but the southern interior, the homeland of the Seminole Nation, remained virtually a terra incognita.

When the Army of the South under General Zachary Taylor was ordered to remove the Seminoles for transfer to the West, mapmakers of the Corps of Topographical Engineers accompanied it. The Corps of Topographical Engineers was a small, elite Army unit of West Point graduates formed during the War of 1812 to survey and map the American frontier. They prepared the first detailed topographic maps of Florida Territory.

Captain John Mackay and Lieutenant Jacob E. Blake compiled the map on display at Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay from field surveys conducted by officers of the Corps of Topographical Engineers and from information obtained from Indian informants.

The entire South Florida interior drainage system is depicted for the first time, from Lake Tohopekaliga to Lake Okeechobee, nearly three hundred years after rumors of Florida's great inland lakes first began to circulate among European explorers. Taylor and the Army of the South explored this region during the fall campaign of 1837, which culminated in the Battle of Okeechobee on Christmas day, the last formal engagement of the Seminole War.

Other major features found on this map include an Indian route across the Everglades, major battle sites along the Withlacoochee River, military roads, and numerous military posts and forts encircling the Seminole homeland. A number of the Seminole War forts survive in the names of modern communities and cities - Fort Bassinger, Fort Dade, Fort Lauderdale, named for Major William Lauderdale, Fort Pierce, Fort Walton Beach, and Fort White." - Henry P. Beers. "A History of the U.S. Topographical Engineers, 1813-1863," Broward.org Exhibition Checklist.

Of interest on the map:

Brigadier General Zachary Taylor: Before Taylor was the 12th President of the US, he was a General who fought the Seminole Indians during the Second Seminole War. It is while he was in Florida that he gained the nickname "Old Rough and Ready" for his rumpled clothes and wide brimmed hat.

U.S. Dragoon is a Cavalry unit.