



Famous Old Soldiers

The Seminole Indian Wars in Florida, the nation's longest and bloodiest Indian wars, became a training ground and prepared its young soldiers for the future wars that were soon to come. The United States Army produced future officers and generals for the Civil War by sending these men to Florida to fight the Seminoles. Later many of these officers became famous in the War between the States, and two, Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, became President of the United States. George Gordon Meade, who designed our Jupiter lighthouse during the Third Seminole War, went on to meet and defeat Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg. Robert Anderson, who fought in the "Battle of the Loxahatchee" here in Jupiter (1838), was later promoted to major general for his gallant defense of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, during the Civil War.



*Captain G. Meade
courtesy US Army Military
History Institute*

Other veterans of the Seminole War who served the North or the South were: Braxton Bragg, William S. Harney, David Emmanuel Twiggs, William Henry Walker, Edward Ord, Samuel Heintzelman, John C.

Pemberton and two in particular, . . . Joseph Eggleston Johnston and William Tecumseh Sherman. The last two who became future generals began their outstanding careers in Jupiter and Fort Pierce.

Joseph Johnston who was a cadet at West Point in the same class with Robert E. Lee, was assigned to assist Lieutenant Levin M. Powell, United States Navy (USN), in an expedition to explore the headwaters of the Jupiter River. The USN had hoped to develop a strategy for riverine warfare in the water wilderness of Florida. Although Powell knew that his sailors lacked military cohesiveness, he pressed on when he heard that there were several Indian villages on the Loxahatchee River. Using many small boats, Powell with fifty-five sailors and twenty-five soldiers made his way to the southwest fork of the Jupiter River, disembarked and headed for the Loxahatchee slough.

The Seminoles were experienced fighters, using the terrain to maximum advantage. Starting with nerve-shattering war whoops and then steady rifle fire from the underbrush the Naval casualties began to mount and the sailors, some being raw recruits, broke ranks and ran for the boats. Powell realized that a panic had set in and ordered a withdrawal. Joseph Johnston immediately took charge and directed the rearguard

activity of the army regulars and probably prevented what could have been the "Powell massacre." Powell's report to Commodore Dallas listed five killed and twenty-two wounded. Powell's battle occurred on January 15, 1838, nine days before the "Battle of the Loxahatchee," both in the same area, of West Jupiter.

William Tecumseh Sherman, also in Florida during the Seminole War, was based out of Fort Pierce where he captured the famous Indian Chief Coacoochee. Later he wrote that the Florida War was the sort of war a young soldier ought to know since the Indian would probably continue to be an enemy and that the training and hardships were valuable. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Johnston, like nearly all the Virginia officers of the army, sent in his resignation and offered his service to his state. In 1861, when the Southern States were seceding, Sherman was asked to serve under the flag of the South. His reply was warm, but said that his allegiance was to the Constitution. During the Civil War, Joseph E. Johnston was commander of the last Confederate Army and pursued his famous Fabian policy (guerrilla style, hit and run tactics) with William T. Sherman on the road to Atlanta.



General Sherman

Finally, on April 17, 1865 William T. Sherman met with Joseph E. Johnston to discuss surrender terms. It appears that the two men went far beyond their own responsibility and signed an armistice containing sweeping civil and political concessions.

Secretary of War Stanton who wanted harsh terms for the defeated South, was furious and even challenged Sherman's loyalty. When Sherman had offered the Rebels ten days rations, Johnston wrote, "reconciles me to what I have previously regarded as the misfortune of my life, that of having you to encounter in the field.

"When Sherman died on February 14, 1891, it was Joe Johnston who stood hatless in the cold winter rain at his funeral. A few weeks later Joe Johnston died of pneumonia, contracted from the exposure received while saying good-bye to an old friend. Johnston and Sherman were just two of many famous soldiers who learned their trade during the Indian Wars in Florida.