

FLORIDA POSTAL HISTORY JOURNAL



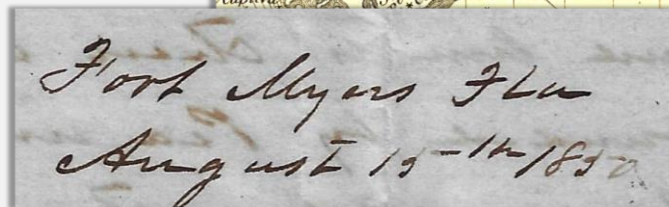
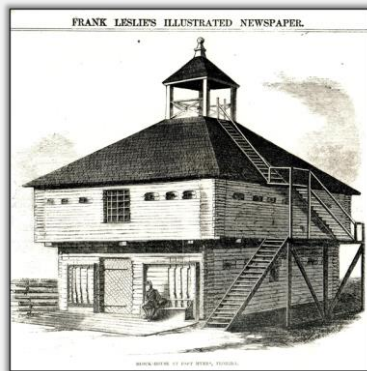
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Vol. 29, No. 1

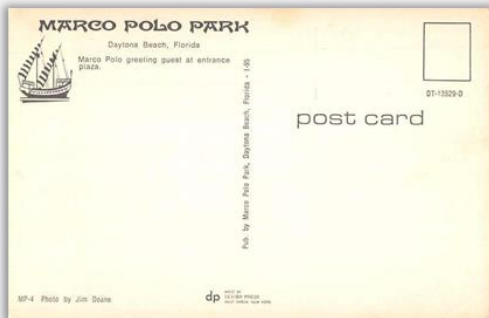
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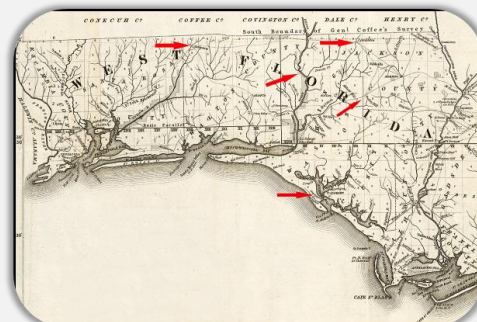
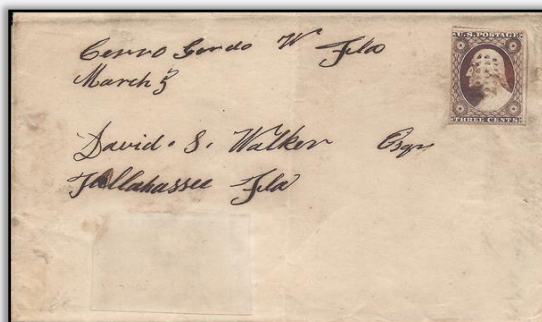


Military Fort Myers from 1850 – Part 1

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Middle Florida and West Florida Used in Postmarks

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Military Fort Myers from 1850 – Part 1

By Vernon R. Morris, Jr., M.D.

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of articles presenting letters originating from military forts during the Seminole Wars. Additional authors to be part of the series are welcomed. If you are interested, please contact Steve Kennedy at skycopatc@yahoo.

The only known cover in private hands, and possibly the earliest archival example, from military Fort Myers on the Caloosahatchee River contains important historical content. The mailing travelled a long, varied, segmented postal route, and hailed from the moment of conception of a future great metropolis. The dynamics of the indigenous people are germane not only to this article but to the entire series of Seminole War military fort postal history articles. The postal history and contents are integral to the three Seminole Wars and the fort itself.

Caloosa Indians

In 1513, Ponce de Leon explored Florida's southwest coast and discovered an archaic Caloosahatchee culture which had migrated up from Central America over the previous thousand years (*Figure 1*).



Based upon estuarine fisheries, they fashioned fishhooks, prized conch shells, built burial mounds, were canal diggers, and lived on wild berries, fruit, nuts, and roots.¹ Ponce de Leon returned in 1521 searching for the Fountain of Youth and was mortally wounded.²

By the seventeenth century Spanish traders developed a relationship with the Caloosas who became known as Spanish Indians. The Spaniards unfortunately brought dreaded white man's diseases. Entire villages were devastated by smallpox, tuberculosis, yellow fever, and measles.³

English eventually settled the nearby Carolinas and Georgia where

Figure 1. Caloosa Indians 1521.

Creek populations had lived and were being pressured south from expanding white populations. In 1708, the Spanish Governor at St. Augustine reported twelve thousand Christian Indians had been captured by English and sold into slavery.⁴

Seminole Indians

The word Seminole, derived from Spanish "cimarrones," or "Sim-in-oil," means "wild ones" or those who "broke away."⁵ The name Seminole first appeared during the late 1700s near Gainesville for Creeks pushed south into unoccupied Florida.⁶

In 1813, a Creek Indian rebellion in Alabama forced more into Spanish held northern Florida between the Suwannee and St. Marks rivers⁷ (*Figure 2*).

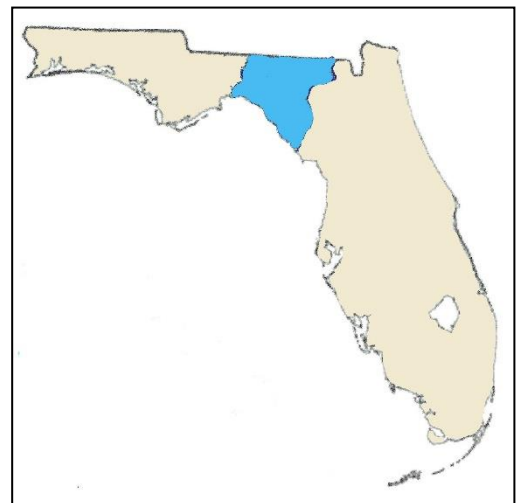


Figure 2. Seminole Indians 1813.