



The Florida Black Historical Research Project, Inc.

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Celebrating and Preserving Seminole Maroon History and Heritage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 30, 2010

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TWO VIRTUAL BATTLEFIELD REMEMBRANCES TO LAUNCH NEW ERA OF SEMINOLE MAROON HISTORICAL AWARENESS

The 2021 Annual Remembrance of a pivotal chapter of Native/African/American history will make history in itself on January 9, and 17, from 1:00-2:30 p.m. EST on both days, with a two-part, first-time-ever virtual online Seminole Maroon commemoration of the two 1838 Battles of the Loxahatchee River in northern Palm Beach County, Florida; in a radical and innovative departure from an ever-popular 28-year-old tradition of public gatherings at the Battlefield Site, due to the public health risks of the COVID-19 pandemic, but which brings the story to national and even global awareness.

A Unifying Remembrance

On Saturday, January 9, the 183rd Anniversary Annual Seminole Maroon Spiritual Remembrance of the Two Battles will be a livestreamed presentation which honors the memory of all of the fallen, on all sides, with traditional Native American and African opening rituals, multicultural prayers, and a presentation of colors accompanied by the ceremonial playing of “Taps,” followed by greetings and brief informational presentations about the two battles and the sacred site.

Children Specially Remembered

The Remembrance culminates with an offering of flowers in memory of the most tragic victims of the warfare, the non-combatant children who were captured after the battles and forced to endure the torments of the Trail of Tears in mid-winter weather from their Florida homelands to present-day Oklahoma.

The Diaspora: Looking Back and Ahead

On Sunday, January 17 (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend), a lively online webinar will present the fascinating story, told from the perspective of those who continue to live the history, of Seminole Maroons in the Diaspora, featuring speakers representing the Bahamas, Oklahoma, Texas, Mexico, and other destinations where survivors of the wars sought freedom and established lasting free communities, as well as Florida itself, where a considerable number were able to remain.

A Turning Point in History

The two decisive 1838 Battles on the banks of the Loxahatchee River in present-day Jupiter, Florida, occupy a highly significant place in American history because it was their outcomes that turned the tide of the U.S. government’s decades-long fight against the freedom and independence of Native and African American Seminoles in Florida, known as the Seminole Wars:

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The January 15 Seminole ambush and defeat of a Naval expeditionary force was followed by a January 21 retaliatory strike by 1,500 U.S. troops and Tennessee Volunteers which did not succeed in defeating against vastly outnumbered warriors fighting to defend their freedom and families, but future Seminole resistance was greatly diminished when large numbers of survivors who had “vanished into the wilderness” were lured to Fort Jupiter weeks later under a flag of truce, where they were dishonorably captured, the aforementioned children included, and deported from Florida.

To Re-enslave African Americans

A most notable, yet often forgotten aspect of this conflict was plainly stated by U.S. General Thomas Jesup who informed his colleagues that “This, you may be assured, is a Negro war, not an Indian War,” recognizing that “Indian Removal” was actually a secondary goal to its primary purpose of capturing and (re) enslaving Seminole Maroons, and preventing their Native allies from providing safe refuges for them; indeed, several of those captured at Fort Jupiter were handed over to “slave catchers” as supposedly returned “stolen property.”

Even more importantly, historians and other scholars have brought to light the critical role of Black Seminoles, who often fought the hardest because of having the most to lose, but also served as interpreters and negotiators for their Native allies, amidst many other contributions based on shared goals, and cultural and spiritual understandings.

Seminole Peace

In light of such realities, organizers of the two-part Remembrance emphasize that the focus on “Battles” and “Wars,” for all of their real importance and continuing consequences, is misleading because conflicts that lasted a few hours on two days should not overshadow the more than 150 years of “Seminole Peace,” during which African and Native self-liberators enjoyed freedom and independence, raising farms and herds, in both separate and combined settlements, building a deep-rooted legacy with major impacts on subsequent history.

Further Information

The Annual Remembrance is presented by the nonprofit Florida Black Historical Research Project, Inc., with generous cooperation by the partnering Loxahatchee Battlefield Preservationists organization and the Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department. For further information, call 305-772-7714 or 205-904-7620, or visit www.fbhrpinc.org.

To join the virtual Remembrance ceremony on January 9, the links are:
<https://m.facebook.com/FloridaBlackHistoricalResearchProject>
or <https://www.facebook.com/loxahatchee.battlefield>.

To join the Zoom meeting on January 17:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89195261636?pwd=MDFIRlJvZ3UrdW8xWHdDOUZrdzJ4UT09>
Meeting ID: 891 9526 1636
Passcode: 397959