

by C. Guy Cutler

westward over the tragic "trail of tears" as the climax of a series of events filled with deception, death and broken treaties.

"Es-ta-had-kee Ho-lo-wa-gus Lox-ee-o-jus!"

The words are as good now as in olden times. They have held good since the Florida migration; since the white man and his oil derricks ~~invaded the Indian Territory to crowd out the tribesmen; since the New Deal came to promise much and give little, and they are remembered now.~~

In the recent negotiations with Mexico the four principal Seminole bands or divisions--the Mekusukeys, the Eufaulas, the Hitchitas, and the Thlawathlas--were represented, respectively, by Peter Tiger, Edward Harjo, Peter Miller and John Morgan.

These have been doing most of the talking at the councils, explaining how Mexico invites them to reclaim the 36,000-acre tract in Coahuila, but it is still the voice of Wildcat the Wanderer that urges action.

And a proper one to lead the way, this chieftain Coacoochee (as he was called by his own people) but to get at the primary reasons let us look into the beginnings of those dramatic events which, nearly a century ago, took the Wildcat and his warriors into Coahuila, the land which even now covers his bones....

~~Whisker~~ Wildcat was a co-conspirator with the famed Osceola in the Florida Seminole Wars of the 1830s; and in the experiences of that conflict, five bitter years of fighting against the United States government, he found that soreness of heart which he has caused to be handed down to the present generation.

In Indian dialect the word Seminole means "runaway", and this tribe gained the appellation in 1750 when, under the chieftain Seacoffee, they left the Creeks of Georgia and fled to Florida to become a separate tribe. A liberty-loving people they were well content in their new home, giving refuge to all who came into the Everglades, and that, eventually, got them into trouble.

Too many negro slaves were running away from Georgia planters and taking refuge with the Seminoles. At first nothing could be done about it, the Seminoles at the time being subject to the Spanish crown; but after 1819, when the United States purchased Florida from Spain, Uncle Sam "took steps."

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