Form 10-300 (July 1969)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Florida	
COUNTY:	
Sumter	
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Dade Battlefield is located in the eastern 1/5th of Dade Battle-field Memorial State Park. A paved road curves through the property away from the historic grounds which are covered by clumps of palmettos and live oaks hanging with Spanish moss. There is a visitor trail, a segment of the historic Fort King (Tampa) Road, with information markers explaining the various stages of the battle. A simulated-log breastwork identifies the location of the original last-ditch defense of Major Dade against the Seminole ambuscade. Across the entrance road, opposite the log breastwork is a small visitor center and museum. The western 4/5th of the State Park contains facilities for picnicing, camping, and playground activities which do not intrude upon the historic grounds.

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SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as A	ppropriate)		
Pre-Columbian	16th Century	18th Century	20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	🔃 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable	and Known)	ecember 28, 1835	
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dade Batlefield is the site of the first military confrontation of the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842. A victory for the Seminole Indians, it was part of Chief Osceola's concerted plan of resistance to the Indian removal policy of President Jackson. This encounter opened the most devastating of the nation's Indian wars and the most difficult chapter in the history of Indian removal.

The effect of the Second Seminole War upon the military service was substantial. Seventy-four commissioned officers were killed while a much larger number left the service because of this grueling and gloryless war. In the regular army there were 1,466 deaths of which 328 were killed in action, the remainder dying from disease. It proved a real training round for future top officers--Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, Sherman, Heintzelman, Ord, Thomas, Bragg, Harney, Meade, Johnston, and Pemberton.

The war was important too in military history because of its development of guerilla, or partisan-style warfare. Classical confrontation was given-up in favor of light mobile actions sustained off the land and capable of penetrating to the sources of Seminole vitality.

History

President Jackson's policy of Indian removal was applied to the Seminoles in 1834. The end of that year was to be the deadline for them to move to Oklahoma under the terms of the treaties of Payne's Landing (1832) and Fort Gibson (1833). Behind the resistance to removal was the brilliant Chieftain, Osceola, whose plan was threefold: (1) terrorize collaborationists prepared to accept removal by murdering Charley Emathla, a chief, steadfast in his determination to leave Florida; (2) kill Indian Agent, Wiley Thompson, who had so often humiliated him and his people; (3) destroy the feeble American forces then in Florida.

All three events unfolded together. The strike against the army took place along the road built in 1828 between Forts Brooke and King. On December 21, 1835, Francis L. Dade was dispatched to Fort King with reinforcements. The detachment consisted of eight officers and a

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Keeper of The National Register

Form 10-300a (July 1969) UNITE TATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (1) Dade Battlefield

hundred enlisted men. All were "redlegged" infantrymen--artillerists trained as infantry, but they had one six-pounder with them. The road was a clear gash in the wilderness. There were no alternative routes and it was reasonable to believe that they were already betrayed by their guide, a slave named Louis Pacheco.

The Indians had scouted every step of the detachment's march. At a spot near what is today the town of Bushnell, the Indians lay in wait. They had selected an area of open pinewoods where escape by the enemy would be difficult, and hid among the palmetto clusters in a line west of the road. The Wahoo Swamp lay at the Indians' backs to provide an escape, if necessary.

According to the report of the sole survivor, Major Dade had just finished promising his men a late Christmas celebration at Fort King, when a sheet of fire rained down on them. The first volley felled half the command, including Major Dade. Captain Gardiner took command and with good discipline ordered a fall-back without panic. As they retreated they fired from behind trees and managed to fire the six-pounder. The effective return fire drove the attackers off for awhile, leaving the soldiers sufficient time to erect a log breastwork into which they dragged their fallen companions.

One hundred eighty Indians opened fire once again with such a withering fusillade that the breastwork and surrounding trees were later found saturated with lead. An attack with tomahawks and clubs was thrown back, but eventually the six-pounder ran out of ammunition and by four in the afternoon not a soldier was standing.

Osceola did not follow up this victory by an assault on Fort Brooke as expected by that garrison. Instead he was content to join the revelry of his people in celebrating this great day. But his joy was misplaced. He had not won back Florida for his people, but rather, had precipitated a long and hopeless war.