
THE CREEK & SEMINOLE INDIAN CAMPAIGNS

Company F, 4th Artillery Regiment was garrisoned at West Point, Fort Columbus, and Fort Hamilton, New York from 1827 until 1832. Starting in 1831, a band of over 500 Sac warriors, under Chief Black Hawk, began burning settlers' homes in Illinois in an attempt to re-establish themselves east of the Mississippi. On June 11, 1832, Company F was ordered to battle to help destroy the troublesome "Black Hawk" Indians. The journey from Fort Columbus was perilous. On July 1, 1832, the company embarked on the steamer Henry Clay, but was forced to land at Fort Gratiot, Michigan, due to a small pox and cholera epidemic, which spread among the men on the ship. Company F lost five men to disease. Our unit arrived in the area on September 29, 1832, after hostilities had ceased, and then returned to Fort Columbus.



Chief Black Hawk

Almost three years later the states of Alabama and Georgia began to have hostilities between the settlers and the Creek Indians over disputes in the fraudulent sale of Creek Indian land. Again Company F, now commanded by Captain Levi C. Whiting, was ordered to Georgia to assist in the "unconditional submission of the Indians." On June 30, 1836, Company F, with a large number of militia troops, crossed the Chattahoochee River in Georgia. Until October 18, 1836, the company made several marches against the Creek Indians. In most of this campaign, the battery fought as infantry under General Winfield Scott. For this campaign, our unit later received a red and black campaign streamer inscribed CREEKS.

Following a brief respite at Fort Columbus, New York, Company F, 4th Artillery Regiment was dispatched to Florida to fight the Seminole Indians. General Andrew Jackson had been the senior commander in the first Seminole War, fought in 1818, which had ended with arrangements for the Seminoles to relocate in the Arkansas Territory. The Seminoles remained in Florida, conducting raids on the settlements and harboring fugitive slaves. The second Seminole War actually commenced prior to our campaign against the Creek Indians, when on December 28, 1835, the Seminoles ambushed a company escorting supplies from Tampa Bay to Fort King. Brevet Major Francis L. Dade's 4th Infantry Company was wiped out. Two survivors alerted the Army of the terrible attack that killed 107 men. General Scott ordered reinforcements to defeat the Seminoles and remove them from the Florida frontier. Company F, 4th Artillery arrived in 1837, equipped with the French 6-pounder gun. Due to the lack of adequate roads, the gun carriages were modified with larger wheels and pulled by oxen to gain mobility in this terrain.

General Scott's campaign went slowly and Congress became impatient with this war. In part, Congress was responsible due to an established "invisible line" separating the areas of responsibility between General Scott, commander of the Eastern Department, and General Edmund Gaines, commander of the Western Department. Both generals had little success bringing the Seminoles in line with established treaties because of the breakdown in their logistical trains and the outbreaks of malaria.

Frustrated with the lack of movement on the Army's part the Secretary of War dispatched Colonel William J. Worth to finish the campaign. Company F, 4th Artillery, apparently served as infantry under Colonel Worth to finish the conflict. Colonel Worth used new tactics to defeat the elusive Seminoles. Instead of surrounding them and awaiting surrender, Worth launched the first campaign to destroy Seminole settlements and farmland. This cut off the Indians' food supply and kept them on the move.

Both sides suffered numerous casualties, but the Seminole tribe was nearly wiped out. President Tyler ordered Colonel Worth to proclaim the war's end due to monetary reasons and the pursuant troubles developing in Mexico. The Seminoles tribe numbered less than 250 at the completion of this campaign and Company F, 4th Artillery returned to Fort Columbus, New York in May 1839. The streamer marked SEMINOLES represents one of the most savage campaigns in our unit history when our unit served a period encompassing three years and remained longer than a majority of units dispatched to that region.

