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Early Days at Fort Brooke

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On 5 November 1823, the Adjutant General in Washington ordered Lieutenant Colonel George Mercer Brooke of the Fourth Infantry to take four companies from Cantonment Clinch near Pensacola to Tampa Bay for the purpose of building a military post. Exactly three months later, Brooke reported from the Tampa Bay area that he had arrived and work on the post was under way.

A study of this troop movement and the construction of the cantonment later called Fort Brooke gives some insight into the problems the army faced one hundred and fifty years ago. At that time the population of the country was only ten million and the immigration flood of the nineteenth century was as yet only a trickle. The population was predominantly rural, only seven per cent living in urban areas. The railroad era lay in the future. Missouri had just recently been admitted as the twenty-fourth state after a portentous struggle on the slavery issue, and the country was laboring to recover from the Panic of 1819 induced in large part by overspeculation in land. In that very year, 1823, President James Monroe in his annual message stated what historians would call the Monroe Doctrine, but at the time it caused hardly a ripple.

After the War of 1812, the army underwent several reorganizations. It was envisioned at the cutting edge of white civilization and was concentrated in a number of small, usually temporary, posts along the frontier. It was the army's function to preserve peace on the rim of settlement for whites and Indians alike. The army conducted surveys, laid out roads, cleared rivers, and built fortifications. Usually isolated and thrown upon their own resources, the troops cut wood, gathered hay, and to augment their basic diet of beans' salt pork and bread' planted vegetable gardens.¹

EARLY DAY ARMIES WERE SMALL

The army in those days was very small, comprising 6,000 men divided into seven regiments of infantry and four of artillery.² Each regiment of infantry was allotted one colonel, one lieutenant colonel and one major, and consisted of 547 officers and men broken up into ten companies of fifty-four men each.³ As the frontier posts were usually manned by only a few companies; it was unusual for an officer to command more than one or two hundred men at a time. The highest-ranking officer in the army at that time was Major General Jacob Brown; his title was Commanding General. Although he had a staff stationed in Washington with him, the General Staff concept which had been developed in Prussia would not be adopted in the United States for another eighty years. The country was divided into an Eastern Department and a Western Department, commanded in 1823 by Brigadier General Edmund Pendleton Gaines and

Brigadier General Winfield Scott, respectively. The line of division was drawn arbitrarily from the southern tip of Florida to the northwest extremity of Lake Superior. This division created command problems for troops stationed in Florida. Aside from this there was no clear-cut chain of command in the army, and the letter book of the Fourth Infantry shows that Brooke wrote to the Secretary of War, the Commanding General, the generals commanding both the Eastern and Western Departments, the Quartermaster General, the Commissary General, the Surgeon General, the Governor of Florida, the Indian Commissioner, and the commander of the Fourth Infantry, Colonel Duncan Lamont Clinch.⁴ Given the uncertainty and slowness of the mails and the fuzzy lines of command responsibility, officers had to act on their own initiative and hope that their actions would be approved retroactively. A nagging worry was the rigid adherence of the government to a policy of financial stringency.

Life on a frontier post was marked by danger, monotony, and hard work. As the posts were built usually to meet a particular frontier situation, they were frequently abandoned as the tide of settlement passed on, only to be reactivated if conditions changed once more. To add to the confusion, the same name was sometimes given to posts at different locations built at different times. In those days there was little to attract recruits for the work was hard, the discipline was strict, and the pay was only \$5.00 per month.⁵ A civilian could purchase eighty acres of land for \$100 or earn a dollar a day as a laborer. The cantonments were especially vulnerable to epidemics and there was a constant dread in Southern posts of yellow fever, typhoid, dysentery, and sometimes smallpox. It was a day when reliance was placed on the militia and there was little appreciation of the Regular Army.

Promotion was slow and by seniority. Exceptional gallantry or especially meritorious service were rewarded by brevet promotions. It was the custom for a regiment to be assigned to a particular geographic region for a period of many years under the same commanding officer and broken up into detachments as need dictated. Officers joined a regiment as lieutenants and advanced within the regiment as vacancies occurred.

SON OF A PIONEER FAMILY

George Mercer Brooke was a professional soldier. Born in Virginia in 1785 he was the son of Richard Brooke, a planter and state senator, and Maria Mercer. He entered the army in 1808 as a first lieutenant of infantry, and in the War of 1812 he rose to the rank of major and won distinction in the sanguinary Battle of Lundy's Lane. During the war he was brevetted twice. In 1819 he married Lucy Thomas of Duxbury, Massachusetts. In his correspondence he comes through as a man with a high sense of duty and honor. His letters are clear and direct and he avoided the verbosity so common in that day. Also, he seems to have steered clear of the petty quarrels which distracted some officers of high rank.

The Fourth Infantry Regiment was scattered over the southeastern states in the years after the War of 1812 and participated in General Andrew Jackson's Seminole campaign of 1817-1818.⁶ It was commanded by Colonel William King; its lieutenant

colonel was Duncan L. Clinch and its major, Brevet Colonel George M. Brooke. Among the second lieutenants was Francis Langhorne Dade. In 1818 Dade was promoted to captain, and in the following year Clinch was promoted to colonel and took over the regiment and Brooke was raised to lieutenant colonel.

This was the situation in 1821 when the Transcontinental Treaty, by which Spain ceded East Florida to the United States, was ratified. As Florida was sparsely settled then and did not become a state until 1845, it was inevitable that units of the Fourth Infantry should be sent there. When Brooke was ordered to Tampa Bay there were already units of the regiment at Cantonment Clinch, Barnacles and St. Marks. As the army moved into Florida it came into contact with the Seminoles again and the question of removal flared. The policy of transferring the eastern Indians beyond the Mississippi in order to clear the way for white settlement had been first advocated when Thomas Jefferson was President ⁷. And as opportunity offered removal treaties were made with a number of tribes, but not until the 20's and 30's did the policy gain momentum. Although Andrew Jackson pushed removal, not all army officers favored the policy. General Gaines, for example, believed in "the civilization and education of the Indians in their own dominions."⁸

PROBLEMS OF INDIAN REMOVAL

When Florida was ceded to the United States, the government instituted a policy of removal. It is estimated that there were only 5,000 Seminoles at that time,⁹ but their opposition to removal was stubborn. The problem was complicated by the presence of fugitive Negro slaves who fled from Southern plantations to Indian villages in Florida. The United States showed its intentions with the Treaty of Camp Moultrie signed near St. Augustine in September 1823.¹⁰ Among the signatories were Colonel James Gadsden and William P. DuVal, the territorial Governor of Florida. Some thirty-two Indians signed by giving their mark, and three lieutenants of the Fourth Artillery witnessed the ceremony.¹¹ The Florida Indians agreed to give up their claims to Florida and to be "concentrated and confined" to a narrowly defined area in the middle of the peninsula. For its part the United States agreed to "take the Florida Indians under their care and patronage, and afford them protection against all persons whatsoever; provided they conform to the laws of the United States, and "refrain from making war" without the permission of the United States. It was agreed that an agent, sub-agent, or interpreter would "reside within the boundary." As it turned out the land assigned to the Indians was not suitable for cultivation and many were soon in a starving condition. This of course created problems for the troops under Brooke's command ¹².

At the time Brooke received his orders for Tampa Bay he was thirty-eight years of age. He had been in command at Cantonment Clinch for several months and during that time had vigorously pointed out; the need to replace the large number of competent men whose enlistments were running out daily ¹³. He had also called attention to the vital need for ordnance supplies ¹⁴. This was the situation when he received his orders which he found ambiguous and incomplete. Acknowledging them on 3 December he wrote:

In the location of this post, I am directed to consult with Col. Gadsden, but not informed where, shall meet him, it is understood here, that he is on his way to Washington City – I shall, however as soon as prepared, move by water from this place, and on not meeting with the Colonel, establish myself, with a view to health, the location of the Indians, the convenience of being Supplied, bar the Subsistence and Quarter Master Depts., and the defense of the of the place, in case of any Opposition from the Indians, or negroes, of the latter, I am told there are a great many, and most of them runaways front the Southern States. I should wish to be informed of the Course, the Dept. would prefer, in the case of those negroes, who are suspected of being runaway Slaves, and those who are proved to be so. I should also like to be instructed, how far I am to furnish the Indians with Rations.

To complete four Companies, or nearly, will take almost every man here, not leaving more than thirty¹⁵.

He reminded the War Department; of The complete seclusion" of the projected post and the total dependence upon Pensacola and New Orleans for supplies.

To carry out his orders, Brooke immediately requisitioned from the Quartermaster in New Orleans "10 Common Tents and 18 Wall Tents." He asked that the best tents be selected as it would be "several months" before his troops would "get into quarters (and) some of the wall tents are intended to use as a Hospital."¹⁶ Brooke urged that the tents be shipped "by the very first vessel as we are ordered to move with the least possible delay." He advised that all letters sent to Tampa Bay be sent to Pensacola and forwarded "as opportunities may occur."¹⁷

The same day that Brooke ordered the tents, Colonel Gaines, "the Commissioner for locating the Indians in East Florida,"¹⁸ wrote him from St. Augustine stating that he had received a copy of the orders directing Brooke to consult with him "as to the proper site" for a post on Tampa Bay. Urging speed, Gadsden remarked that

the Indians to the South have of late exhibited something like an unfriendly feeling, and are unwilling that I should run the line immediately-your presence with troops will produce the most happy effects.¹⁹

Information available indicated that Tampa Bay would be "sickly," so Brooke urged the Surgeon General "to send on at least Two Gentlemen of the Medical Staffs as in case of Sickness we can expect no Succour"²⁰. He requested a large supply "of those Medicines anti Stores, which are most useful in yellow fever and Scurvey (Sic), the last of which I fear certainly." He noted that the troops at Barrancas had been afflicted with scurvy every year.

Brooke informed the Quartermaster General in Washington that his orders authorized him to call on the Quartermaster Department for transportation and supplies²¹. Most of the necessary supplies were at hand. He observed, however, that in building Cantonment Clinch it had been found "that framed houses weather boarded are much the cheapest and soonest completed." Those who had visited Tampa Bay said there was "little or no timber near it, and none fit for building." Consequently, Brooke decided to take

a considerable quantity of plank which would be necessary if we were ever to build hog Houses also Brick for a Bake house . . . and some other fine places which may be necessary as well as Lime for their Erection and to white wash in case of Epidemic diseases.

Adding that "Every necessary precaution must be taken for the preservation of health and the men made comfortable as early as possible," he assured the Quartermaster General that; he would "not require more, than what the good of the service and a proper economy will justify."

To carry out his plans Brooke informed Capt. D. E. Burch, Assistant Quartermaster in Pensacola, that he planned to sail between the 1st and 5th of January, and that he would need transportation for four companies carrying three months' provisions and fifteen days' supply of water²². Simultaneously, transportation would be required "for 20 thousand brick, 50 Barrels of lime, 30 thousand feet of plank, nails, Tools and other necessaries."

DELIVERY OF SUPPLIES SLOW

Christmas Day, 1823, found Brooke at his desk writing to both the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General²³. He explained that he had been delayed by the slow delivery of the tents he had ordered from New Orleans. When finally they arrived, he found the order short by fourteen wall tents. His difficulties were compounded by the absence of Captain Daniel E. Burch, the Assistant Quartermaster in Pensacola, who was busy constructing a road between St. Augustine and Pensacola. During Burch's absence, Captain Isaac Clark of the Quartermaster Department had refused to accept the responsibility for honoring Brooke's requisition for transportation and supplies.

Brooke was in a dilemma because he had no authority over the Assistant quartermaster. "But," he assured the Adjutant General, "I have been ordered to move by the Government and I must go—There is however some fault somewhere." On his own responsibility he ordered one of his captains to Mobile "to charter a vessel not less than 120 Tons, or more than 150 and return here to this post with the greatest dispatch possible." Further, he personally chartered a brigantine of 120 tons in Pensacola, and took planks, bricks and lime from the surplus at Cantonment Clinch totaling about one-third of his original requisition. Unable to get the additional tents from New Orleans he seized some old ones at Pensacola²⁴.

As it turned out, Brooke and four full companies of the Fourth Infantry left Pensacola on 15 January.²⁵ A severe gale delayed passage to Tampa Bay, but on 22 January Brooke met Colonel Gadsden who "had made a reconnaissance of the whole Country, and upon mature deliberation," Brooke reported, "it was determined to fix upon this point on Hillsborough Bay, and not Tampa, as all the objects of the expedition could be much better obtained."²⁶ The spot was on the "North East bank of the Hillsborough River on its entrance to the Bay of the same name."²⁷ Gadsden proposed that the new cantonment be named for Brooke, the commanding officer, as was a common practice, but Brooke replied that it would be called Hillsborough "til the pleasure of the War Department shall be ascertained."²⁸ In the regimental correspondence it was called Camp or Cantonment on Hillsborough Bay until June 1824. Brooke believed that the country would be settled by emigrants from the South, "so soon as it is known they are protected from the Indians by the command stationed at this place." The many large hammocks appeared "adapted to the cultivation of sugar and every variety of vegetable." Brooke assured the War Department that the Indians would be treated "with kindness and respect but at the same time with determination and firmness."

SHIP TIMBER SURPLUS

Meanwhile, a problem developed with some wood cutters in the Hillsborough Bay area. Brooke was instructed by William P. DuVal, Governor of Florida, to arrest this party, apparently for trespassing on government land²⁹. After some delay, Brooke did so and sent them to Pensacola³⁰. But Governor DuVal, after he had ordered their arrest, "discharged them on their arrival saying that there was no evidence against them."³¹ This did not end the matter. Five months after the arrest Brooke wrote John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War, asking what should be done with the ship timber, valued at \$4,000-5,000 which had been taken over from the wood cutters and which "will be lost, both to the public and the individual who claims it, unless something is done with it."³² Calhoun replied that he had submitted the matter "to the Secretary of the Navy who will give the Naval commanding officer on that Station the necessary instructions in relation (to) it."³³ Receiving this letter five months later Brooke responded that no naval vessel had called for the timber, nor was one likely to do so, and he expressed the hope that the timber could be turned over to the post for sale and the proceeds used for "a library, Musical Instruments for a band and such other things as may add to the comfort and convenience of the troops."³⁴

Not until April, two months after writing his first letter to General Brown announcing the arrival on Hillsborough Bay, did Brooke have another opportunity to send a letter to that officer. He dealt mainly with the building of the cantonment, health, the Indians, and ordnance matters. By the middle of the month he expected the men to be in their barracks, which he described as "the best log buildings I have ever seen, both for health & duration, the rooms being large, high, airy, and as well put together as possible, the whole 260 feet in length and 12 feet from the floor to the loft."³⁵ The quartermaster and commissary store houses were completed. Considering that the men had had to spend the first month landing the supplies and clearing away the worst undergrowth Brooke had ever seen, he had "every reason to be pleased with the great

industry of the officers and men."³⁶ About one-third of the command was constantly employed constructing the buildings.³⁷ And fearing scurvy as he did, Brooke was delighted "that each Company has a large garden now in fine Cultivation."³⁸ But he still dreaded an epidemic and wrote: "I might beg to renew my application for two Asst. Surgeons for should any epidemic disease take place here, we should be in a most deplorable situation. I wrote to the Surgeon Genl on this subject early in Jany but he has not done me the honor of acknowledging my letter."

INDIANS WERE RESTLESS

The Indians appeared to Brooke "to be more & more displeased at the Treaty and still more so at the running of the (boundary) line."³⁹ He was "not unapprehensive of some difficulty." "They have an idea," he reported, "that the nation, is about to go to war with Great Britain, and was it to be the case, they would most certainly join our enemy." Already there had been a false alarm about a surprise attack. Brooke informed the Commanding General that "The officers and men turned out with an alacrity and spirit which did them great credit," and he was confident "that no Indian force in this Country could meet us with the least prospect of success. Although they can bring at least 700 warriors into the field." At that time the aggregate strength at the Cantonment was 212⁴⁰. But Brooke needed field pieces and he urged that the commanding officer at Pensacola be directed to send him "two six pounders, with a proper supply of ammunition and implements."

In a historic vein Brooke noted that the site of the post had been "a depot for pirates." The remains of three victims had been found with shot holes in their hats. There was evidence that others had been burned to death. It was estimated that the murders had taken place four or five months earlier⁴¹.

Brooke was gratified to learn from the Quartermaster General that his action in arranging transportation on his own responsibility had been approved⁴². In response he assured General Jesup that since Captain Burch had returned to Pensacola from St. Augustine every assistance had been given his detachment. He believed that the meets barracks braised on blocks 3 feet from the ground . . . with a portico 12 feet wide, surrounding the building," were the best plan for quarters in such low latitudes. The officers' quarters and hospital, built on the same plan, were to be completed in June provided more plank and brick arrived. A search in every direction for clay to make bricks and stone for the chimneys had been fruitless. The Indians reported there was "none in the country."⁴³ Brooke felt that the reasons which prompted the building of the post "must exist for a long time," therefore, unlike many frontier posts, it would be permanent. The water at the camp site was not good and Brooke planned to dig deep wells or bring in water from a good spring a mile away. The eventual solution was to haul water from the spring which kept a team busy.⁴⁴

ONLY TWO SHIPS ARRIVED

Early reports described the buildings that had been built. But Captain Isaac Clark, whose job it was to get the buildings up, reported in June that "much still remains to be done. A House for Col. Brooke, Quarters for Qr Master, Commissary & Surgeon, Store house for Qr Master Stores, Mess house for officers, Kitchens for the men, Guard house, Shops for the artificers, and Magazine for ammunition, are yet to be erected."⁴⁵ The cost of establishing the post was "very great," because there was no forage for the teams in the country, and neither clay, limestone, nor shale in sufficient quantities for building or plastering. All of these supplies had to be shipped from Pensacola or New Orleans.⁴⁶ And on 31 July Clark lamented that only two transports had arrived in more than two months so construction lagged.⁴⁷

The major part of the building was over when on 28 September Captain Clark made a detailed report to Brooke. He stated that the troops had "cleared about fifteen Acres of Ground, have now in Gardens about nine Acres, in a high state of cultivation, secured with a good picket fence."⁴⁸ After describing the buildings he noted that "The Timber for all these buildings has been hauled with Teams, or rafted by the Troops from two to ten miles." He boasted that "this labour has been performed by Ninety three men, with three Teams every building has been put up in the best manner; I do not hesitate to assert, they are the best barracks, of the kind in the United States."

By the end of the summer, 1824, the post was quite firmly established Land activities followed a routine of sorts which would continue during the remaining five years Brooke was there. The monthly returns of the detachment give interesting statistical information. In the first report from the cantonment the aggregate strength was given as 218, in January 1826 it was 168, in March 1827 it was 159.⁴⁹ Expiring enlistments were a constant problem. Sending in the return for January 1825 Brooke commented that six men would be discharged in January, five in February, seven in March, five in April, and seven in May, which would reduce his strength to 101 unless he got replacements.⁵⁰ Desertion was another problem. The return for December 1824 showed that during the preceding three months fourteen men had been sentenced to hard labor by General Court Martial for desertion. One man had eluded capture for one year, ten months, and twenty-two days, and another for eight months, thirteen days. One restless soul was a three time deserter. In the remarks column four were characterized as "worthless." In forwarding the monthly report for January 1825 Brooke wrote: "You will perceive by the monthly return of the post, that our total is now 177 from which 9 have been discharged & 1 dead and 26 prisoners leaving our effective force 141."⁵¹ Fortunately there were no epidemics and Brooke exulted: "From the last year it appears that this is one of the most healthy positions in the southern country, there has been much less sickness here than at Cantonment Clinch although the number of troops was greater."⁵²

BUILDING ROADS A GREAT NEED

One of the chief occupations of the troops was building roads. In March 1825 Brooke was ordered by the War Department to turn over all the troops that could be spared for the purpose of building a road from the cantonment "to the interior of

Florida."⁵³ At the time the order was received Clark "had not the tools, tents or wagons" needed. And by the time these things arrived the country had been "Completely inundated by extremely heavy rains." The "experience of long residents" indicated the land would remain "literally under water" until October. Because of these conditions and the fact that the months of July, August and September were the "most unhealthy in the year" work was deferred until fall. In November Brooke informed General Jesup that the road was "progressing rapidly" and would be "the best in the Southern country."⁵⁴ "I have given Capt. Clarke (Sic), more than one half of my command for the road," Brooke wrote. He was convinced that these internal improvements were "the great link which will bind the American Confederacy and prevent its separation." Late in January 1826 Captain Clark wrote the Quartermaster General that he had completed the road to Wantons in the interior after three months, hard work—"I flatter myself," he wrote, "it will be pronounced by judges to be the best road which has yet been opened in Florida."⁵⁵

In the spring of 1826 when Washington ordered that the road be extended beyond Wantons, Brooke again remarked that the rainy season was starting and road construction should be deferred until late September. The difficulties the old army encountered in road building have perhaps never been more graphically depicted than by Captain Clark in an official report from Cantonment Brooke in August 1826. He wrote:

*I have the honor to report my return to this post, after wading & swimming for several miles between this (post) and St. Augustine. The rains have been tremendous. More than one half of East Florida is now under Water. I swam my Horse over several of my Bridges which at ordinary seasons were ten feet above high water mark, the bridges altho under water remain firm, except one over a creek seven miles from this (place) the water being so very high I could not get near where the Bridge was placed. I am unable to say whether the Bridge is still standing. Should this bridge be gone I know not what is to be done. I have exhausted my skill in endeavoring to secure the bridges. I am satisfied that all the other Bridges are secure should this one be gone I shall as soon as the Water subsides, require a detachment of Troops to repair it, and commence the transportation of supplies for operating the road from Wantons to Black Creek . . . after this I sincerely hope you will release me from road making in Florida, it is extremely hard service and my health is delicate, wadding and swimming Rivers, Creeks, and ponds is not likely to improve it much.*⁵⁶

During the nearly six years Lt. Col. Brooke was the commanding officer at; Cantonment Brooke there were Indian troubles but no war. Brooke's instructions from the War Department were clear. He was directed "in the most positive manner, to act only on the defensive, unless attacked, and all information of any importance" was to be communicated to Washington immediately.⁵⁷ As to the question of removal, Brooke seems to have had no strong feelings. But he was a man of action rather than a philosopher, and as a soldier deemed it his duty to execute policy rather than formulate it. Space will not permit a detailed analysis of Indian relations, but an account of one incident will illustrate his methods.

INDIAN HOSTILITIES BREAK OUT

The first serious threat came in July 1825. On the sixth of the month an appeal for help arrived from the Indian agent at the Big Swamp with the news that the Indians and settlers on the St. Johns "had commenced hostilities."⁵⁸ The next morning two companies set out under Captain Francis Dade. The streams being flooded the wagons could not get through, so all the horses and mules were packed with provisions for twelve days. By the 13th it appeared that the disturbance had been "amicably settled" and Brooke ordered the troops under Captain Dade to return to the post; at once⁵⁹. It was his opinion that should the troops remain the Indians would "naturally be suspicious." In addition, the Indians in the vicinity of the post had been alarmed by the troop movement and should Dade's command not return they might be tempted to attack. As Brooke phrased it, "The force is too small to divide, for any length of time, and . . . (Dangerous consequences might result, leading to destruction of both parties." Furthermore, no part of Cantonment Brooke was stockaded and Brooke wished Dade's force to help in making the post defensible "should hostilities occur." But the matter did not end so easily. Captain Dade sent word that "the difficulty with the Indians remains unsettled" and requested more provisions.⁶⁰ By 27 July events had taken an ugly turn. With Dade still on the St. Johns an attack on the post seemed imminent. To Captain John Brown of the cutter Florida Brooke dispatched an urgent message,

I have received information which may be relied on, that the Chiefs, of the different tribes of Indians with their followers in East Florida have assembled at an Indian village about forty miles from us for the purpose of concerting an attack on this post . . . The Ladies and Children of the Officers at this post I am well assured will be received on board of your vessel during the Alarm . . . I shall have by tomorrow night two Block houses up, and the Cant. Stockaded, Having only one six pounder, I must beg the favour of you to loan me three guns, with as many charges of Grape & Carlister as you can spare⁶¹.

Once again it was a false alarm. There was no attack and on 4 August Captain Dade and his force returned. In reporting to the Commanding General Brooke had high praise for Dade:

they have effected the object of their visit, in a manner highly creditable to themselves and important to the Government. They have shown the Indians that we are at all times on the alert, and that Acts of hostility, on their parts will be immediately punished. From the quickness and rapidity of the movement, (through a country now almost impossible (sic) to Indians themselves) the first Information (the Indians) had of the march, was the presence of the troops amongst them.⁶²

The false information about the impending attack had been given to Brooke directly by an Indian in whom the command "had previously placed the highest confidence, for Integrity anti Friendship for the whites." The war scare at least had the good result of

putting the cantonment in a better state of readiness. The two block houses were completed and the pickets pulled up and preserved in case of future need.

After the excitement was over Brooke received from the Ordnance Department; one six pounder and one 5 3/10 inch iron howitzer, "both without carriages and incomplete in every respect."⁶³ In a letter to the ordnance officer he remarked caustically:

*that the Shells are good for nothing, the fuses are too large & intended for Mortars, would be condemned in every service but the Spanish . . . The tin of the Canister shot is so much rusted, that the shot drops out when the canister is raised from the ground, and all the fixed ammunition more or less damaged.*⁶⁴

Such were the tribulations on a frontier post;.

In time Brooke came to feel that the best safeguard against Indian disturbances would be the construction of our block houses, suitably spaced, between the Suwannee River and the St. Johns, each block house to be occupied by a company until the Indians were "perfectly pacific."⁶⁵ In December 1826 he wrote: "The majority of the Seminole Indians are particularly friendly to the U.S. and indeed, within our own command, I have seen no hostile feeling, whatever."⁶⁶ But the Creeks were hostile. The proposed chain of block houses, which could be built and manned by forces from Pensacola, could intercept messages between the Creeks and Seminoles. Brooke envisioned Cantonment Brooke as the main depot and felt that the Seminoles placed "between two fires" would be encouraged to remain at peace.

During the years Brooke was at the cantonment his family life was scarred by tragedy. His wife was with him part of the time, but she was plagued by ill health. In January 1824 at the very time Brooke and his troops were clearing away the dense undergrowth on the shores of Hillsborough Bay, Mrs. Brooke, presumably at Pensacola, gave birth to her third child, a boy. A fourth child was born at the cantonment on 18 December 1826. That was a critical time at the post. That very (lay Brooke had received several desperate letters from Governor DuVal describing a new crisis with the Indians, and in response he was fitting for combat two companies of soldiers who had just arrived on the Florida.⁶⁷ Because of Mrs. Brooke's failing health her husband took her to Pensacola in February 1827. He returned to his command, but when she failed to respond to treatment, he obtained sixty days' leave from General Gaines with permission to apply to the Commanding General for an additional six months. Brooke made the request for the extension on the grounds of his wife's condition, his own health which was "very much impaired," and the fact that he had "not been on furlough for ten years."⁶⁸ Brooke was granted the furlough. In October the following year, 1828, he sustained his greatest loss. In stark words he related the tragedy.

I have lately been visited by the heaviest calamity which a Father and Husband can feel. Whilst in Ma. my family was attacked by a most violent billious fever, which has taken from me two of my beloved children (my daughter and eldest son). My wife's life was despaired of for some time and in her illness (she) gave

*birth to a dead son. She is most unhappy anal wretched and wishes me to come on.*⁶⁹

Brooke was granted another furlough.

Of Brooke's eight children, only two John Mercer Brooke and William Neverson Brooke, lived to maturity. The latter never married. John Mercer Brooke, the one born at Cantonment Brooke, served with distinction in the United States Navy and later in the Confederate States Navy of which he was Chief of Ordnance. Lucy Brooke died in 1839 at the age of thirty-five and the old soldier never remarried.

BROOKE TRANSFERRED NORTH

In early 1829 when Brooke returned from his second furlough he signed himself as brevet; brigadier general, and the Register the next year would show him to be the only one among the twelve lieutenant colonels in the army. As a brevet Brigadier General Brooke for some purposes outranked Colonel Clinch, the regimental commander. This might have been a factor in Brooke's transfer in October 1829 to Ft. Mitchell, Alabama, the Fourth Infantry post near the Creek Nation. In 1831 Brooke was promoted to Colonel and transferred north of the Ohio River where he took command of the Fifth Infantry Regiment with headquarters at Fort Macinac, Michigan Territory. The Fifth Infantry remained in the northwest until the Mexican War. Brooke died in 1851 at San Antonio, Texas, as a brevet major general in command of the Department of Texas.

Text of paper read at the Fort Brooke Dinner meeting of the Tampa Historical Society, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the founding of Fort Brooke, at Air Host Hotel, Tampa, Florida, Jan. 23, 1974.



¹ An excellent account of the various activities of the United States Army before the Civil War is Francis Paul Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Development of the Northwest, 1815-1860 (The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953). See also: Henry Putney Beers, The Western Military Frontier, 1815-1846 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1935).

² Emory Upton, The Military Policy of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), pp. 149-155. See Beers, The Western Military Frontier, pp. 48-49; Charles Al. Wiltse, John C. Calhoun, Nationalist, 1782-1828 (Indianapolis: The Bobbs Merrill Company, 1944), pp. 142-174.

³ "Army Register for the Year 1828," American State Papers (Military), III, 675.

⁴ Records of the United States Regular Army, Mobile Units, 1821-1942, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, 1823-1835, Record Group 391, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as: Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.)

⁵ See Prucha, Broadax and Bayonet, pp. 34-54. Also, Francis Paul Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846 (New York: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 319-337.

⁶ Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, p. 149; James A. Leydin, "The Fourth Regiment of Infantry," Theodore F. Rodenbough and William L. Haskin (eds.), The Army of the United States: Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals in Chief (New York: Maynard Merrill & Co., 1896), pp. 452-465.

⁷ Beers, The Western Military Frontier, p. 56. James W. Silver, Edmund Pendleton Gaines, Frontier General (Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 140. '

⁸ James W. Silver, Edmund Pendleton Gaines, Frontier General (Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 140.

⁹ Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, p. 269.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 271.

¹¹ Charles J. Kappler (ed.), "Treaty with Florida Tribes of Indians, 1823," Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties (Treaties), (Washington: Government Printing Office 1904), II, 203-205. Also, see Prucha, The Sword of the Republic, p. 271.

¹² Brooke to Col. (Duncan Clinch), 21 June 1826, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

¹³ Brooke to the Adjutant General, Washington, 14 July 1823, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (main series), 1822-1866 (Microfilm), Record Group 94, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA).

¹⁴ Brooke to the Secretary of War, 10 October 1823, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

¹⁵ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 3 December 1823, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94,

¹⁶ Brooke to Captain F. F. Hunt, New Orleans, La., 1 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

¹⁷ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 3 December 1823, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

¹⁸ Brooke to General Thomas Jesup, the Quartermaster General, 25 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

¹⁹ Gadsden to Brooke (copy), 1 December 1823, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

²⁰ Brooke to Dr. J. A. Lovell, the Surgeon General, 5 December 1823, Letter sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

²¹ Brooke to Jesup, 5 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

²² Brooke to Burch, 20 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

²³ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 25 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA. Brooke to Jesup, 25 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA. Brooke to Jesup, 25 December 1823, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

²⁴ Brooke to Major General Jacob Brown, 5 February 1824, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Brooke to General Winfield Scott, 20 April 1824, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

²⁷ Brooke to Scott, 6 February 1824, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

²⁸ Brooke to Brown, 5 February 1824, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

²⁹ Brooke to DuVal, 6 February 1824, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

³⁰ Brooke to (head of the woodcutting party), 5 February 1824, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

³¹ Brooke to Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, 12 July 1824, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

³² Ibid.

³³ Calhoun to Brooke, 12 August 1824, War Department, Secretary's Office, Letters sent, Military Affairs (Microfilm), Roll 12, p. 76, RG 107, NA.

³⁴ Brooke to Calhoun, 18 January 1825, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

³⁵ Brooke to Brown, 6 April 1824, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

³⁶ Ibid.

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- ³⁷ Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916, Roll 147, Fort Brooke, Florida, January 1824-December 1829 (Microfilm copy #617), Record Group 393, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as Returns from U.S. Military Posts, RG 393, NA).
- ³⁸ Brooke to Brown, 6 April 1824, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Returns from U.S. Military Posts, RG 393, NA.
- ⁴¹ Brooke to Brown, 6 April 1824, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.
- ⁴² Brooke to Jesup, 25 April 1824, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Capt. Isaac Clark to Jesup, 5 June 1824, consolidated correspondence file, 1794-1915, Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92, National Archives (Hereinafter cited as Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA).
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Clark to Jesup, 31 July 1824, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁴⁸ Clark to Brooke, Pensacola, 28 September 1824, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁴⁹ Returns from U.S. Military Posts, RG 393, NA.
- ⁵⁰ Brooke to General Henry Atkinson, 18 January 1825, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 22 June 1825, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.
- ⁵⁴ Brooke to Jesup, 30 November 1825, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁵⁵ Clark to Jesup, 26 January 1826, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁵⁶ Clark to Jesup, 24 August 1826, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁵⁷ Brooke to Col. Gad Humphreys, 18 July 1825, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.
- ⁵⁸ Clark to Jesup, 15 July 1825, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁵⁹ Brooke to Humphreys, 18 July 1825, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.
- ⁶⁰ Clark to Jesup, 18 July 1825, Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, NA.
- ⁶¹ Brooke to John Brown, 27 July 1825, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

⁶² Brooke to Gen. (Jacob Brown), 14 August 1825, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Brooke to Lt. John B. Shaw, 13 August 1825, Letters sent, 4th Infantry, RG 391, NA.

⁶⁵ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 18 December 1826, Letters Received, AGO, EG 94, NA.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 18 December 1826, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

⁶⁸ Brooke to the Adjutant General, 10 June 1827, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.

⁶⁹ Brooke to General Winfield Scott, 18 October 1828, Letters Received, AGO, RG 94, NA.