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***The Florida Wars* by Virginia Bergman Peters**

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On the Bethel Trail. By Enoch Douglas Davis. (St. Petersburg: Valkyrie Press, 1979. 139 pp. Bibliography, Index, Appendix. \$4.95)

Taken as professional history, this paper-cover account of St. Petersburg's racial experience is poorly organized and simplistic, but as an involved participant's rambling delineation of a remarkable human rights struggle, it has scrapbook integrity. The reader understands at once that the author is a Baptist preacher who assumes the intervention of God into man's affairs, strengthening righteous causes.

Born in rural Georgia of religious parents, Enoch Douglas Davis migrated to St. Petersburg in the middle 20's and started his ministry at Bethel Community Baptist Church in 1930. It is obvious that in the intervening half century, Davis not only pursued the fundamentalist gospel but sought intellectual and spiritual guidance as to problems of black people from such as Moses, Paul, Walter Rauschenbusch and Benjamin Mays. When the time came he was prepared for quiet civil rights action in his search for a decent society. He literally took St. Petersburg for his church.

Mr. Davis divides his discursive narrative into four periods: the Depression, World War II through the great desegregation decision, the decade or so before 1967 of furious activity and lasting achievement, and the last ten years when he seems to have emphasized the consolidation of gains. There's a little of everything in his jumble of history—personal reminiscence, private dreams, handed-down anecdotes of suffering, heroism and joy, biographical sketches, tales of extreme Florida weather, atrocity stories and accounts of humiliation and persecution, tidbits from other people's histories (extraneous and pertinent), and numerous sermons such as "Social Implications of the Teaching of Jesus."

Davis is a righteous man working courageously and successfully for equality in democracy in education, in housing and public facilities, and in the upgrading of jobs as well as employment itself. As he put it, he "decided to put God ahead of the local pattern of discrimination." Which seems to be exactly what he's done. Now and then he hears "voices from above calling me upward." He should one day get a good reception. He has already proven down here that the church and black achievement are one.

James W. Silver

The Florida Wars. By Virginia Bergman Peters. (Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1979. 333 pp. Preface, illustrations, \$22.50.)

The United States has been to Cambodia and Vietnam before. As Virginia Bergman Peters says in her book, *The Florida Wars*, "What happened in Florida (between 1810 and 1858) has startling resemblances to more recent troubles which our nation has endured in Vietnam and Cambodia. The places in which American soldiers found themselves fighting had names unpronounceable; the conditions of battle were baffling; the arguments for and against the actions taken were as confusing and the moral questions raised as embarrassing; the costs were as comparatively great in national treasure, human lives and property; and the results, in some ways, as inconclusive."

All the above statements can be applied to the Florida Wars without hesitation. What would make any nation spend an extraordinary amount of its national resources in an effort to remove a people from their land, houses and loved ones? As Mrs. Peters says: "The Florida Wars are interesting because they show how a government, having committed itself to solving a human and political problem with military force, was trapped in a policy as ineffective as it was costly." Thus the problems that the United States faced in Vietnam are not new.

The series of small wars which were fought in Florida during the first half of the nineteenth century are divided by the author into three distinct periods: 1810-1818; a period of three "highly irregular military intrusions into Spanish territory," with the result that Florida became a territory of the United States; 1835-1842, when the government tried to remove the Indians to reservations on lands west of the Mississippi River; and 1849-1858, a period of Indian removal without governmental purpose.

From the beginning, the wars in Florida were carried out with little regard to Spain's legal ownership of Florida. General Jackson wanted to protect the rights of the settlers living on the frontier and those Americans who happened to be living in Spanish Florida. "In a few months, Jackson had done what he promised his president he could do in sixty days," Peters writes. "He had virtually conquered Spanish Florida. He had also punished Spanish Indians for depredations on Americans passing through Spanish territory, had occupied Spanish forts and cities without a declaration of war, and he had executed British subjects. . . . President Monroe defended his general's behavior to the House . . . by referring to Jackson's actions as 'the measures which it has been thought proper to adopt for safety of our fellow-citizens on the frontier exposed to these ravages'; . . . The president forebore to mention that the Indians which so threatened the United States and which the army had pursued into foreign territory had fled there after their homes had been demolished by the Americans for what can only be judged by any criteria exceedingly petty reasons." As the result of Jackson's actions, Spain ceded Florida to the United States and President Monroe got what he wanted, whether the means of accomplishing this were legal or not.

The second period analyzes the treaty of Payne's Landing which stipulated that the Seminoles must move to the west and become assimilated into the Creek tribe already there. The Seminoles were not only to be deprived of their land, but were to move into the same territory with their



General Winfield Scott, commander of U.S. Forces in Florida, 1836-1842

(courtesy of the National Archives).

natural enemies! The land question is best summed up in a speech made by John Quincy Adams in 1802: “Their cultivated fields, their constructed habitations . . . a space for their subsistence, was undoubtedly by the laws of nature theirs. But what is the right of the huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he has accidentally ranged in question of prey? . . . Shall the lordly savage not only disdain the virtues and enjoyments of civilization himself, but shall he control the civilization of the world?” As the result of this consensus about the lands that the Indians lived on, a protracted war was carried out with the sole purpose of removing the Indians to the west in order to get their lands.

The war was costly to the United States. It involved the services of eight generals to lead campaigns into Florida. “The lives of fifteen hundred white soldiers and at least thirty million dollars (two hundred fifty million dollars in today’s dollars,) had been sacrificed to remove less than six thousand Indians and a handful of Negroes,” Peters somberly notes. “There is no way to measure the loss of black and Indian property, the misery and heartache they endured in defense of their liberty. If one counts at least two men severely wounded, maimed or chronically ill for everyone who died on the battlefield, Americans paid with one of their own for every two of the Seminole allies removed!”

Mrs. Peters has written an excellent account of the Florida wars. Her research has been supported by primary records and unpublished materials from the National Archives. E. Glendon Moore has drawn several maps for this volume that are clear and very useful in following the events of the text.

Joseph Hipp

History of Keystone, Odessa and Citrus Park. Edited by Henry J. Binder (Published by Keystone-Odessa-Citrus Park Historical Society, 1979. 62 pp. Photographs, drawings, maps)

History is everything that has happened, small as well as large, and assembling an account of the past in a manner to mesmerize unconcerned readers in the present is a prodigious feat.

Happily, Henry J. Binder and his associates of the Keystone-Odessa-Citrus Park Historical Society have succeeded in preserving a delicacy with a great deal of ripeness. Their project was conceived as a phase of the area’s participation in the nation’s Bicentennial and now, in 1979, has achieved public attention in a soft-cover book.

At the outset I realized that such histories may be written solely for participants and their descendants. Yet the obvious authenticity of research shines through for future historians who may want to build on it at some time in the future—say, the nation’s next centennial.

The History of Keystone, Odessa and Citrus Park may be interpreted, then, to be intended primarily for the posterity of people in the area. Mr. Binder, as the editor, surely never expected an outsider to be looking over his labor of love and did not bother to bring it into perspective for a stranger.