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Restaurant stands on site of old Fort Brooke

Hampton Dunn
RESTAURANT STANDS ON SITE OF OLD FORT BROOKE

By HAMPTON DUNN

TAMPA --- At the corner of Franklin and Platt streets stands today a replica of a fort that houses a restaurant and bar operating under the name of "Old Fort." In front is a historical marker pinpointing the site of old Fort Brooke, an important military installation during the Indian wars and the beginning of the settlement that eventually became Tampa.

The Treaty of Camp Moultrie in 1823 called for the removal of the Indians to the southern part of the state. The Federal government decided to establish a string of forts in various parts of South Florida to police the area and keep the Indians down.

Late that year Col. George Mercer Brooke, comfortably situated at Fort Clinch near Pensacola, was ordered to Tampa Bay. Col. James Gadsden was sent first to mark the boundaries of the new military reservation. Thus, the landing place of the party was designated "Gadsden Point" and the new fort itself was named to honor Brooke. The officer and his five-ship convoy transporting four companies of men arrived in late January, 1824. During the first Seminole War (1835-42) more than 3,000 soldiers were stationed here in the 16-mile-square reservation. It served as Army Headquarters for that war and the later Seminole war (1855-58). Because of its proximity to the water, Fort Brooke was the chief supply depot for troops in Florida.

Meanwhile, outside the reservation early settlers came and established a tiny village that later became the metropolis of Tampa.