

THE WEST POINT SOCIETY OF NORTH FLORIDA

Commemorates The End Of The Second Seminole War, and Honors Those, Including Many Graduates, Who Perished In It.
St. Augustine, 12 August, 2017



For the tenth consecutive year, the West Point Society of North Florida held the event in St. Augustine's National Cemetery. It reflects the 15 August, 1842 parade through the city and subsequent ceremony at three pyramids there. Now the oldest monuments in any national cemetery, they had been constructed in the then garden of the St. Francis Barracks to receive the reinterred remains of Major Francis Dade's column. His 108 man strong column was

ambushed in 1835 in an incident that triggered the seven year long Second Seminole War. The reinterment parade and ceremony marked its end. Five of the seven officers killed in the ambush were West Point graduates, including the academy's first Commandant, and the "Florida War" was essentially the first proving ground for its graduates. Consequently the North Florida Society has organized a solemn, annual reflection of this historic event.

[A detailed, poignant contemporary newspaper account of the 1842 event is at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/thayer/e/gazetteer/people/Robert_Mudge/Alfred_Mudge_appendix*.html , under the title "Honor to the Dead."]



Two mounted officers led a contingent of about 30 living historians/re-enactors from throughout Florida who portrayed the military burial escort, townspeople, and Seminoles who followed as the procession moved in to the National Cemetery. A military caisson drawn by two mules driven by Tom Fitzgerald (www.heyamule.com.) symbolized the

mule drawn wagons in the original parade, and the "Peace River Artillery" crew fired half hour salutes from an exact replica of the lost cannon that accompanied Major Dade's column. A professional video by Jorge Rivera of this year's commemoration can be viewed at www.firstcoast.tv/second-seminole-war-fallen-honored/.





Colonel (ret.) Joe Naftzinger, '60 introduced the ceremony at the pyramids, and the Society's President George Godfrey,'90 then addressed the approximately 60 attendees, including St. Augustine's Mayor Nancy Shaver. He emphasized the Academy's continuing importance to the nation in domestic and foreign affairs, and the local Society's community outreach efforts. Colonel (ret.) "Ned" Woolfolk, '81, and "Al" Richbourg, Director of the Jacksonville and St. Augustine Cemeteries, laid the Society's commemorative wreath and Colonel (ret.) Howard McGillin, '81 led the assembly in the Cadet Prayer. A musket volley, cannon salute, and double taps closed the event. It was indeed a fitting remembrance of all those who perished in the difficult, painful struggle that was the Second Seminole War.

This year, the parade and ceremony were imbedded in a three day "Convocation of Seminole War Historians" held in St. Augustine. The first of its kind, the Convocation will convene at different locations alternate years. At the Convocation lunch, distinctive re-enactor coins were awarded to those who participated in and supported the event.



While many hands were involved, particular thanks go to Mark Tolzmann, '84 who supervised the logistical arrangements, and his Boy Scout Troop 205 as well as Cub Scout Pack 23. The complete program for the parade and ceremony is at the Society's site, www.wpsnf.net.

