

President Andrew Jackson had given the order: all the Seminole Indians had to leave Florida. They were to be sent west, to Oklahoma Territory.

That was what the President said. But the Seminoles thought otherwise. They refused to give up their lands.

A man named Wiley Thompson was sent to talk to them. The meeting took place at Fort King. Thompson sat at a desk placed outdoors. Soldiers stood on each side of him.

Soon an old Indian chief and some warriors stepped into the clearing. Thompson spread a paper on the desk. It was a treaty, he explained. It said that the Indians would go in peace. Would the chief please sign it? The old chief shook his head.

Thompson's face grew red with anger. "Ships are waiting to take you west!" he roared. "Do not make the army force you to go!"

There was only silence. Suddenly one of the warriors drew his knife and threw it at the paper. There it stood, its handle quivering. The warrior's voice rang out: "This is the only way we will sign a treaty!"

That was how the Second Seminole War began. Osceola, the man who threw the knife, was its great leader.

It was the longest and bloodiest war ever fought against the Indians. The Seminoles hid in the swampland that they knew so well. They would strike without warning and kill great numbers of soldiers. Then they would slip back among the swamp grass and snakes. U.S. troops poured into Florida. One general

after another was sent there. The Seminoles won nearly every battle.

But life was hard for the Seminoles. They could not grow food, and they were starving. But still they would not give up.

At last the white men asked for a peace talk. Osceola and the other big chiefs agreed to meet them near St. Augustine.

The Seminoles sent signs of peace before them—a feather and a peace pipe. They arrived under a white flag of truce. The white men arrived with two hundred soldiers.

Something warned Osceola not to trust these men, but he met them proudly. The meeting began.

Then, in the middle of the peace talk, a dead silence fell. It was like that instant before a snake strikes. Suddenly soldiers leaped upon the Indians and took them prisoner. They shut them up in an old Spanish fort.

Even then, some of the Indians were not through. A young chief called Wildcat starved himself until he was very thin. He made an exciting escape through a thin slit in the stone wall. But Osceola knew that it was no use. He could see that his people had no chance. They might hide and fight for years, but they would never get their land back.

Osceola died in prison in January 1838.

After his death many Indians were sent to Oklahoma. Some bands, however, were never caught. A few Seminoles still live in Florida. They are poor, but they are proud. For the Seminoles did not sign a peace treaty until 1934. They were the last of all the tribes to do so.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. **President Jackson said that the Seminoles would be moved**
 - A west
 - B south
 - C north

2. **The treaty the old chief was asked to sign said that the Seminoles would**
 - A keep their land
 - B join the army
 - C leave in peace

3. **Osceola "signed" the treaty with**
 - A a knife
 - B a spear
 - C an arrow

4. **The Seminoles hid in the**
 - A mountain country
 - B swampland
 - C desert area

5. **In their war on the army, the Seminoles won**
 - A most of the battles
 - B about half the battles
 - C almost no battles

6. **What did the Seminoles bring to the St. Augustine meeting?**
 - A A large army
 - B A robe of feathers
 - C A white flag

7. **The writer seems to think that what the white men did at St. Augustine was**
 - A clever
 - B unfair
 - C useless

8. **The chief called Wildcat escaped by**
 - A losing a lot of weight
 - B finding a secret tunnel
 - C making a white friend

9. **In the end Osceola knew that his people**
 - A had done a great wrong
 - B would win out someday
 - C could not get their land back

10. **The Seminoles were the last tribe to**
 - A move to the west
 - B sign a peace treaty
 - C win a large war