

tied like a topknot. The women wore no head decoration and left their hair flowing, except in cases of the death of a relative or friend they "bobbed" their hair as a token of distress. A chief or headman decorated himself with the tail of a raccoon or a fox drooping from the peak at the top of his head; deer-hoof rattles dangled from his loin-cloth, while suspended from his neck on a buckskin string a large shell disc six inches or more in diameter was sometimes worn.

These Indians were tall of stature, muscular and very strong. They were an agricultural people, raising crops of maize and vegetables and tilling their fields with implements of wood and shell. Tobacco was known to them and they used it as an emetic in cases of sickness. Among their ceremonials was the "Busk Ceremony," sometimes referred to as the "Green Corn Dance," which lasted several days with a distinct ritual for each day. It was a harvest festival and celebration, but included ceremonials of penitence for crime within the tribe, as well as supplication for protection against injury from without. Their war ceremonies and celebrations of victory were on the order of those of the early Creek Indians and doubtless originated in a common source.

These were the people in possession of this part of Florida when Ponce de Leon arrived. They were not the Seminoles of a later day.

It may safely be assumed that the visit of Ponce de Leon left a lasting impression on the minds of the natives and that long afterward when they were in sight of the ocean they would look out to sea for the strange objects that brought the pale-face to their shore. A generation was born, grew up, and passed into middle age, yet these had not returned. Reports had now and then sifted through from the lower coasts that the white man had been down there, or from the direction of the setting sun that he had passed that way; they had heard of pale-faced people held captive by neighboring tribes, and had knowledge of one even among themselves several days' journey away; but it was not until the approach of the 50th annual harvest after Ponce de Leon's time that runners announced the return of the white man's vessels to this coast of Florida.