

# OSCEOLA, THE PATRIOT

THOMAS FREDERICK DAVIS in Florida Review.

Most accounts of Osceola's early life are so inflated with tradition that it is often difficult to distinguish fact from fiction; and many statements now accepted as fact when traced are found to be based upon legends pure and simple. Perhaps the most common error, perpetuated even to this day, is the idea that Osceola was a half-breed, the offspring of a white trader named Powell. As a matter of fact, this famous Indian was a thoroughbred Muskogee, a powerful nation "Creoles" by the English, because so many small streams flowed through their territory. An English, or a Scotch, trader by the name of Powell did marry the mother, however, after the death of the lad's father, and from this fact the erroneous impression that Osceola was a half-breed was originated. Osceola at all times scorned and repudiated the name "Powell," and he is known to have remarked, "No foreign blood runs in my veins, I am a pure-blood Muskogee."

Osceola, "The Rising Sun," was born about the year 1804 near the Chattahoochee river in the vicinity of the present city of Columbus, Ga. After his father's death his mother moved to Florida when the boy was but five years old, and took up her abode near where Ocala now stands. It is here that Osceola developed into manhood. According to the statements of Cudjoe, interpreter to the American army during the second Seminole war and who had known Osceola from childhood, the youth possessed all the requirements necessary to become a great war chief, as he always excelled in the Indian exercises and sports. In early manhood Osceola was described as being of "medium height, with a superb figure and a graceful, elastic step. His black hair, as in after life, hung in tresses about his face, which was rendered attractive by a high, full forehead and a small well-shaped mouth expressing indomitable firmness."

Frequently Visited Forts.  
When Fort King (near the present Ocala) was established, March 1827, the army officers of that post often had occasion to notice Osceola, for he was a frequent visitor to the fort. They described him as "possessing great pride of character, joined with no small amount of self-esteem and

connected with the army. Out of simple justice let it be said, and vouched for by persons still living, that the Indians seldom attacked those settlers who were known to have been fair and kind in their dealings with them. Is it natural, then, that the proud Osceola should look calmly and favorably on this unjust persecution of his people? And is it strange that there finally came a time when his friendship gave way to all the hatred of an Indian's nature and found outward expression in "Yo-ho-eh," the terrible war hoop of the Seminoles?"

Osceola was present at the treaty of Payne's Landing, on the Oklawaha river, May 9, 1832. He was then 29 years of age, but he took no official part in the proceedings, being not even a sub-chief; yet his commanding appearance elicited the following comment from an officer who was present:

"His (Osceola's) eye calm, serious, fixed; his attitude manly, graceful, erect; his rather thin and close-pressed lips indicative of mind made up of which he speaks; his firm, easy, yet restrained tread, free from all stridings or swaggers; his dignified and composed attitude; his perfect and solemn silence, except during his sententious talk; the head thrown backward and the arms firmly folded on the protruding chest—all instantly changed as by an electric touch whenever the agent stated a proposition from which he dissented."

The council of Payne's Landing, and practically all the other councils held subsequently, was for the purpose of enticing the Indians, by one means or another, to give up their homes and emigrate to the West.

Osceola bitterly opposed emigration and the next two years of his life were undoubtedly spent in exhorting his people to repudiate the action of a few chiefs and remain firm in opposing removal, even until "The life-blood of the nation wets the grass like morning dew." He must have accumulated considerable influence by his persistent efforts, for at a "talk" held at Fort King, October 23, 1834, he was present as a sub-chief and took a prominent part in the proceedings. During the course of the meeting the chiefs withdrew for private consultation. Osceola addressed them, beseeching them to remain firm and to "resist emigration at any cost; and, further, to look upon any chief or warrior who dared favor the step as an enemy of the tribe."

The oration of this brave patriot must have had the desired effect, for when the chiefs returned to the council he acted as spokesman and through the

interpreter informed the agent that their decision was against emigration. The meeting then broke up. A few months afterward, April, 1835, another council was held at Fort King between General Thompson and a number of chiefs and sub-chiefs, including Osceola. General Thompson here made the fatal mistake of threatening the Indians with a violent expulsion from the country if they refused to emigrate peacefully. As may be expected, this but added fuel to the already kindling flame. The chiefs were then invited to step forward and sign a paper acknowledging the validity of the treaty of Payne's Landing. A majority of them refused to sign. When Osceola's name was called, he arose and walked forward, to the great astonishment of all the chiefs. Instead of signing and with these words, "This is the only treaty I will execute," he "drew his long sheath knife and raising it high above his head thrust it through the paper into the table." Oh, the pathos of this scene! There can be no doubt that this knife-thrust was the visible expression of what his heart felt and that it represented the loosening of those pent-up emotions which surcharged the Seminole nation. General Thompson heeded not this ominous warning.

Osceola Arrested.  
Osceola was immediately arrested and thrown into irons. For four days he was a prisoner at the fort, shackled and degraded. Still refusing to sign the treaty, he was then released. Nothing could be gained from this Indian by extortion, and he was freed.

Shortly after this affair Osceola went to Fort King it is said to remonstrate with the agent. "After considerable excited talk, in the course of which General Thompson intimated that Osceola had, the young chief was again arrested and confined." This second confinement was brief, but it was the culmination of a series of persecutions sufficient to create in the Indian's heart a spirit of everlasting hatred and revenge. In his official report to the commissioner of Indian Affairs the agent simply said: "Powell (Osceola was frequently referred to as Powell in these reports) used such language that I was compelled to order him into irons," and in doing so General Thompson signed his own death warrant.

A Council Held.  
In the fall of 1835 a council of head chiefs was held, at which it was decided to resist emigration at any cost, and, also, that death should be the penalty of those who refused to abide by this decision of the nation. It will be remembered that this is precisely what Osceola advised a year before at a council held at Fort King. Osceola had by this time become one of the most influential chiefs of the Seminoles, and he was unquestionably the most determined of them all in opposing emigration. Charley Amathla was the only chief of prominence who favored emigration, and he had gone so far as to make arrangements to that end, having sold some of his cattle and other property. Fearing that this would prove a bad example, Osceola went to Amathla and demanded that he remain and join in the fight for home and justice. The determined chief had no effect, however, and Amathla paid the penalty with his life, having been shot by Osceola himself. Although gold was on the person of the dead chief, Osceola refused to take it or allow any of his followers to do so, saying it was "the price of the red man's blood." Following this event Osceola, at the age of about 32 years, became the head war chief of the Seminoles.

The energies of the head war chief were now constantly engaged in preparing for the war which both whites and Indians knew was inevitable; but he was never forgetful of the insults he had received at the hands of General Thompson. The opportunity for revenge came on December 28, 1835. On that fateful day Osceola and twenty of his warriors stationed themselves near Fort King. General Thompson and his lieutenant, Smith, started for an after-dinner walk, but they had scarcely left the fort when the Indians opened fire upon them. Both officers were instantly killed. Gen. Thompson's body being pierced by fifteen bullets, Osceola and his band then proceeded to the sutler's house, a few hundred yards distant from the fort, killed the inmates, three in number, and scalped them. So, under the very guns of Fort King, he took his revenge, even at the expense of being present at an event which was at that very moment transpiring sixty miles distant at an event which was destined to startle the entire country—the annihilation of Major Dade's command.

Just Retribution.  
Whether the terrible retribution that was thus visited upon General Thompson was just retribution must be decided by the reader; but it is remembered that no class of whites was less humane in dealing with the Indians than they. After the tragic affair at Fort King, Osceola and his warriors mounted their ponies and rode rapidly southward, expecting to join in the prearranged attack on Major Dade; but they did not arrive until after the battle was over. Major Dade's command lay unburied for almost two months, owing to lack of troops in that portion of the country. When on February 26th, General Gaines and a regiment of soldiers reached the scene of the disaster "Major Dade's uniform was not to be found. With this exception, not one of those brave but unfortunate men had been plundered. Silver, gold, jewelry and watches were untouched—nothing was taken but arms and ammunition. To what are we to ascribe conduct so singular? It was not the effect of hurry or fear of an attack for they (the Indians) hurled their dead bodies against the field of battle. Osceola is a master tactician and must have gained a wonderful influence over the minds of his followers to induce them to forego the opportunity of gaining possession of articles of which they are notoriously fond."

Three days after the "hide massacre" an engagement occurred on the Withlacoochee river between 250 soldiers under General Clinch and about 200 warriors under Osceola and Alligator. Great havoc was displayed on both sides, and it was only after the Indians had been charged three times

that they finally retired. Osceola was slightly disabled in this fight. Henceforth, it is a difficult matter to follow the movements of the head war chief. He would be here today and there tomorrow; appearing in one place, a short time afterward his shrill, far-reaching "Yo-ho-eh" would be heard in another locality many miles away. It is more than likely that he figured in many engagements where his presence was not indicated by the reports. He was the master spirit of the war, and as a result of his unquestioned bravery and skill the closing of the year 1835 found nearly all the United States troops driven from the peninsula, while the Indians held their ground in all quarters.

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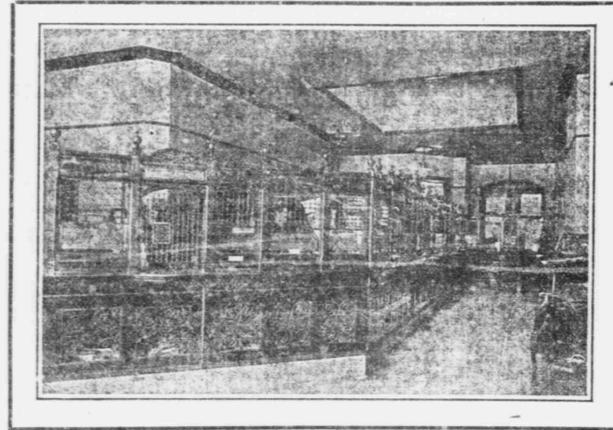
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MAKING READY FOR SHRINERS

NEW ORLEANS WILL ENTERTAIN GREAT GATHERING — ELABORATE ENTERTAINMENT IS BEING PLANNED BY JERUSALEM TEMPLE OF CRESCENT CITY.

New Orleans, Dec. 18.—For the first time in its history the Imperial Council of the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North America will meet in New Orleans during the early part of April, 1910. At this early date the executive committee of Jerusalem temple, which is the New Orleans-Louisiana branch of the big organization, has begun making plans for the entertainment of Imperial Potentate George I. Street, of Richmond, Va., all of the other Imperial Council officers, the several thousand Shriners who will come to the Crescent City and partake of the hospitality of Southern Shriners.

In opening headquarters on the ground floor of the St. Charles hotel, the hotel selected as official headquarters for the Imperial Council officers, on Saturday, Oct. 30, this far in advance of the convention, the New Orleans executive committee did so with the view of perfecting the very best and most elaborate plans of entertainment. To begin with, the New Orleans-Louisiana Shriners contemplate a visit from more than 75,000 members of the Mystic Shrine, with their ladies and families.

The Largest Crowd.  
This will be one of the largest, if not the largest crowd that ever assembled in New Orleans for a convention, and, accordingly, Jerusalem temple's executive committee will make arrangements for entertainments on the most elaborate scale. This is among the good reasons for the establishment of headquarters at this date.

This 1910 convention will be the first time the Imperial Council has met in annual session this far South, and the delegates and their families who do attend will be afforded an excellent opportunity of seeing the Southland. Efforts are being made by the executive committee to have all roads carrying delegates to grant

the important concession of "diversified routings." In this manner the visitors will see more of the South than if they came by one road and returned by it. There appears to be a disposition on the part of the heads of many roads to grant the privilege sought. There is a strong belief here that if "interchangeable routings" is granted for the benefit of the Shriners next April there is not the slightest doubt but that the attendance will even be larger than at present anticipated.

Will Handle the People.  
New Orleans Shriners will be able to handle the crowd, no matter how large. The delegates to the Imperial Council have already been taken care of in the matter of hotel accommodation. Individual temples have also been assigned space in the St. Charles, Monteleone, Commercial, Grunewald, the Deanechard and other well-known hostilities. Other arrangements for accommodations are now under way.

This is the first and most important item to receive the attention of the executive committee, and now that the major portion of this work is over, the various sub-committees are devoting their time to other matters in connection with the entertainment of the Shriners from over the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Many thousand dollars will be expended in illuminating the entire business section of New Orleans. A considerable sum will also be expended in decorating the principal thoroughfares, erecting columns, etc. Progress along all lines is apparent, and when the Imperial Council officers, as well as the delegates and Shriners generally, come to the Crescent City next April they will not be disappointed in the reception that will be accorded them.

Deadly Subject.  
Jack—But I thought she was much smitten with that handsome young palmist. He was always talking about the lines in her hands.  
Katherine—Yes, but one day he happened to mention the lines in her face.

Normally Swelled.  
Honeybees—Was there no swelling where the bees stung Domblday?  
McComb—No unusual swelling; they stung him on his head.

Done For.  
Fred Fish—I don't believe I'll go to the show tonight.  
Sara Seabour—I hear the starfish is a finished actor.  
Fred Fish—I know he is. Mr. Whale took in the show last night.

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