



Francis Langhorne Dade was born in Virginia and joined the U.S. Army in March 1813. He was brevetted **Major** in February 1828 and commanded the 4th Infantry Regiment.

American Natives of the Seminole tribe in Florida resisted their forceful removal from their homeland to a reservation and defended their way of life.

On December 23, 1835 two U.S. companies of 110 troopers including Artillery departed under Major Dade's command from Fort Brook to Fort King in order to resupply the forces there. He initially anticipated an Indian attack. However, after having passed potential ambush sites, he felt safe and recalled his flanking scouts in order to move his command faster.

180 Seminole warriors lay in wait, having the knowledge of the terrain and the element of surprise in their favor. In the pre-arranged attack the very first shot was fired by leading Chief Micanopy, which brought down Major Dade on horseback. The following volley of fire killed half of Dade's men. Captain George W. Gardiner took charge, but was only briefly in command as he was shot shortly after his superior fell. The soldiers, in two single file lines presented easy targets. Their heavy winter coats limited their mobility and only a few managed to ready their flintlock muskets. The six-pounder field cannon was discharged several times, but the men who loaded it were cut down as soon as the gunpowder smoke cleared.

Privates Edward Decourcey, Ransome Clarke and Joseph Sprague were the only three U.S. soldiers to survive the attack. All three tried to retreat towards Fort Brook. However, Seminole warriors chased them well into the next day and eventually killed Private Decourcey. Clarke, who was wounded five times, collapsed less than a mile from Fort Brook. He survived because an American Native woman physically assisted him the final mile back to safety. He provided the only written eyewitness account of the battle. Private Joseph Sprague, who also managed to reach Fort Brooke, couldn't do so since he was illiterate.

The almost total annihilation of Dade's command escalated in the Second Seminole War, also known as the Florida war. It lasted for 7 years, resulting in an U.S. victory. Merely 300 Seminoles were able to avoid relocation. They retreated to the southern tip of the State, where they adapted to the tropical wetland region of Florida, the Everglades.