

Justifiable or Self-Serving ? An Analysis of the Resignations of
Ninety-Eight West Point Graduates as a Result of the Seminole War

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History largely ignores the Second Seminole War, fought between late 1835 and 1842. Whether this oversight is deliberate (as can be the case with unpopular wars), or just circumstance due to concurrent events is unclear. The relative "popularity" of the War for Texas Independence over-shadowed the Seminole War, in part due to the defeat at the Alamo and the massacre at Goliad, both of which inflamed the nation. The subsequent defeat of Santa Anna by Sam Houston's Army at San Jacinto was a victory which brought the Texan Army, as well as the nation, tremendous glory and prestige. Victory, however, was never achieved in the Seminole War, nor so in Vietnam, both of which are characterized as unpopular wars. There are other similarities between the Second Seminole War and the Vietnam War, particularly from the standpoint that both wars entered the nation into a lengthy "quagmire" of war. Common issues include the morality of the war, the strategy and tactics employed by the Army, and the deplorable conditions endured in the theater of operations. The leadership, both civilian and the Army's, also deserve scrutiny.

Emerging from the aftermath of the Vietnam War is a significant amount of literature which addresses these and other issues surrounding that war, but the historical record of the Seminole War is, by comparison, bare. The nation committed over one-half of the standing Army to the Florida theater and conducted several call-ups of militia in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. The cost of the Seminole War to the fledgling nation was a then-staggering 40 million dollars. These facts alone merit the Seminole War closer examination.

Several historical documents state that "conditions" endured during the early phases of the Seminole War caused the resignation of over 100 company-grade officers between March and December of 1836, most of whom were West Point graduates. For example, Mahan writes that

“service in Florida was deservedly unpopular with the men because the incidence of disease was high, the chances of glory were small. As a result, 103 company officers resigned during 1836.”¹ In his book The Best School in the World, James Morrison writes, “In 1837, for instance, 117 officers resigned because of dissatisfaction with conditions of service in Florida; 99 of these were West Pointers.”² Research indicates that Mahan’s data is more correct. Compiled from Congressional Records, a total of 103 officers resigned in 1836. West Point records reveal an additional six which were omitted from the Congressional report. Ninety-eight of these officers were graduates of the United States Military Academy. Only forty-seven officers resigned in 1847.

Were these officers motivated to resign as a protest against the nation’s conduct of the war? For the small number of the 98 West Pointers who actually served in the Seminole War this may have been their justification, however, the primary factor contributing to the resignation of these officers was the assignment policy of the standing Army, which in some ways actually discouraged service with units on the existing frontiers. This paper examines the Seminole War from the military, moral, and professional development perspectives of these officers in order to examine their true motives.

Examination of the military at the outset of the Second Seminole War reveals a number of problems including strategic uncertainty and inexperienced leadership. Additionally, political feuding among commanders, mutual distrust between regular and militia units, and officer

¹ John K. Mahan, History of the Second Seminole War 1835-1842, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967), p. 188.

² James L. Morrison Jr., “The Best School in the World” West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866, (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1986), p. 15.

shortages at the company-grade level contributed to tactical defeats and strategic failure during the campaigns of 1836. These factors may have led a number of officers to resign.

Early in the campaign, General Winfield Scott opted for a "limited warfare" strategy common in contemporary European armies. Limited warfare had historically been ineffective in Indian Warfare, particularly when executed by unseasoned troops. Americans had been fighting Indians almost from the beginning of the colonization of America. Indian fighting had evolved to its own particular strategy, tactics, and viciousness. These characteristics were evident not only when Americans were fighting just Indians, but also in the "coalition" warfare of the French and Indian War and the American Revolution where Indians were serving both American forces and as allies to the opposition.

Success in military operations against the Indians resulted from destroying Indian homes and supply bases during inclement weather conditions, forcing the Indians into a decisive engagement or facing them with starvation and death by exposure. Successful examples of this strategy include the Battle of Horseshoe Bend which ended the Creek Indian Uprising of 1813-14 (in the aftermath of the War of 1812), and the Battle of Bad Axe, which ended the Blackhawk War of 1832.

Despite the "validation" of Indian fighting doctrine as a result of these and other conflicts, national strategy at the outset of the Second Seminole War was unclear. The Dade Massacre, which resulted in the death of 105 soldiers and officers in late 1835, the first Battle of Withlacoochie, and the January 1836 pillaging of sixteen Central Florida plantations by the Seminoles had, in effect, brought the nation to war. General Winfield Scott, then commander of the Eastern Department, assumed command of forces charged with the removal of the Seminoles.

General Edmund Pendleton Gaines, commander of the Western Department, was a political rival of Scott's. Animosity between the two would hinder military operations throughout the campaign. Interestingly, the boundary which divided their two commands ran right through the middle of the zone which held the highest percentage of Seminoles. Scott received guidance from Secretary of War Lewis Cass to ignore the boundary, a fact which drew the ire of Gaines, who had not been informed of this decision.³ Scott's campaign plan was to drive the Seminoles north by using three columns along roughly parallel axes to a point called the Cove of Withlacoochee. There, the Army could force the Indians into a decisive battle, bring a rapid end to the conflict, and facilitate the removal of the Seminoles in accordance with President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal policy.⁴

Scott, who had earned his reputation during the War of 1812, was a careful planner and meticulously slow in his preparations. He also had very little experience in Indian fighting, with only a theater-level command of the Blackhawk War in his background. "The kind of war he understood was that in which one did not fire at the enemy except when he had offered himself in battle...Scott was a practitioner of the "limited" war of eighteenth-century Europe."⁵ Although the soldiers and leaders at the junior level performed well, the strategy failed because the Seminoles merely broke into small bands, eluded the large columns and then converged to wage battle against the force commanded by General Gaines.

³ Mahan, p. 139.

⁴ Ibid. p. 143.

⁵ Ibid. p. 152.

Gaines' force had boarded ships at New Orleans, disembarked at Pensacola, and then marched to Tampa. An unusually large force of approximately 1100 Seminoles attacked Gaines, who, in desperation, appealed to one of Scott's subordinate commanders for assistance. Scott, who was irritated by the "intrusion" of Gaines into his zone of operations, ordered his subordinate commander, General Duncan L. Clinch, not to assist Gaines. Although Scott later rescinded this order, the opportunity for a decisive battle was lost, for after inflicting a significant number of casualties upon Gaines' 980 man force, the Indians slipped away into the swamps. Gaines had made no attempts to envelop or counter-attack the Seminoles, and by refusing to move, was cornered after three days' fighting. Clinch's arrival ultimately saved Gaines' force.⁶

Scott was also blamed for the 45 day encirclement and near-loss of a small garrison at an outpost twelve miles from the Cove of Withlacoochee. Scott had become aware of the force after one of its members had escaped the encirclement. Scott ordered Clinch to relieve it. Clinch, believing his force to be understrength for such a task, made no attempt to do so. Scott failed to ensure compliance with the order. Ultimately rescuing this garrison was a company of Florida militiamen commanded by an officer of local notoriety, Leigh Read, who emerged as one of Scott's principle detractors.⁷

The controversy surrounding Gaines' charges that Scott failed to assist both his command and the force at the block house at Withlacoochee led to a Court of Inquiry late in 1836. Scott, in turn, laid counter-charges that Gaines had interfered with the conduct of his campaign. Scott was absolved of any wrongdoing, yet this mutual non-support, public rivalry, and parochialism

⁶Mahan, p. 149.

⁷George Walton, Fearless and Free The Second Seminole Indian War 1835-1842, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merril Company, 1977.), p. 119.

undoubtedly had a negative impact on the morale of not only the officers and men serving in Florida, but the officer corps as a whole.

The commander who succeeded Scott in the newly redrawn Florida theater was Richard Keith Call, Governor of Florida and a political crony and protégé of President Andrew Jackson's. Call was not a commissioned officer, his limited military experience coming in the Creek War as a militia officer where he came to the attention of Jackson while serving on his staff. After lobbying for, and receiving, command of forces deployed in Florida, Call proposed to President Jackson a summer campaign in which to defeat the Seminoles. He ordered the establishment of four supply outposts, essentially on the four corners of the Seminole's principle swamp enclave. However, inability to provide initial stockage of these outposts with adequate stores, inadequate troop strength, and feuding amongst Call's subordinate commands delayed his expedition into the Fall.

The feuding between Call's subordinate commands was primarily between active and militia component forces. This feud had originated in December of 1835, when on the 31st of December a group of militiamen had refused to cross a narrow stream to relieve a force of regulars at the First Battle of Withlacoochie. Although a series of poor leadership decisions led to the near-encirclement of the regulars, the militia refused to assist them because their enlistments expired at the turn of the New Year, twelve hours away.⁸

The feuding between active forces and militia continued under Scott's command. One of Scott's commanders, Colonel Lindsay, was so bitterly disliked by Leigh Read and his militiamen, that Lindsay could not even "... appear around the volunteer camp except when guarded by a

⁸Mahan, p. 110.

detachment of marines...”⁹ The feuding became even more divisive under Call. Several of his subordinate commanders, including LTC William Foster (a West Point graduate and 1837 resignee), threatened to resign if forced to serve with or under the command of militiamen again. This feeling was countered by the militiamen with charges of incompetence among the regular officers summed up with the words of an Alabama volunteer who wrote that he was not going to serve as a “laquey (sic) boy . . . to little upstart foppish lieutenants of the regular army who thought it a great condescension to speak to or to notice a common person.”¹⁰

Aside from personal dislike, an additional aspect of discord between active and militia forces is the perceived ineptitude of the militia forces. The militia was considered by the regulars as not possessing the ability to fight. For example, a personal anecdote from Jacob Motte describes the futility of militiamen, “All the regular troops behaved as they always do, with the most consummate daring and courage. It is regretted that the same cannot be said of the volunteers who were engaged...It was another proof of the inefficiency of that description of troops. When will Congress awake to the worse than useless squandering of the public money in the employment of these useless and unwieldy hordes of unorganized militia.”¹¹

Examination of troop strength and, in particular, officer strength, provides insight into the inevitable delays of Call’s campaign. Only 1000 regulars and 230 militia remained in Florida when Call assumed command.¹² Officer strength, from Congressional records¹³, is reflected in the chart below.

⁹ Mahan, p. 153.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 172.

¹¹ Jacob Rhett Motte, Journey Into Wilderness, ed. James F. Sunderman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953), p. 196.

Officer Manning in Florida Troop Units on 30 June 1836

<u>Regiment</u>	<u># of Companies</u>	<u># of Captains</u>	<u># of 1st Lieutenants</u>	<u># of 2nd Lieutenants</u>	<u>Total</u>
1st Artillery	8	4	2	2	8
2nd Artillery	7	2	1	7	10
3rd Artillery	3	--	3	2	5
4th Infantry	8	3	1	6	10
<u>Totals</u>	26	9	7	17	33

While this chart does not in itself reflect shortages of officers, the 3rd Artillery, for example, was authorized fifty-five officers. However, as of 30 June 1836 the regiment had but five. Despite the activation of militia, movement of additional regulars to the theater of operations, and the reassignment of officers back to regiments from special duty, by the 30th of September the regiment still only had six officers. Congressional Records contain an excerpt from a field report from Brevet Lieutenant Colonel B.K. Pierce describing the shortages of personnel in deployed units, "There are here 11 companies of artillery; the whole present a fighting force of 110 men; and when we are entitled to fifty-five officers, we have here only six for company duty."¹⁴ Despite these leadership challenges, Call proceeded with the late 1836 campaign. Success in a number of relatively small skirmishes initially bolstered the morale of the forces of both components of the Army, however, the second failed campaign of 1836 led to a rash of resignations late in the calendar year.

¹² Mahan, p. 172.

¹³ Statement of the Number of Company Officers of the Army in Service Against the Creek and Seminole Indians in Florida in 1836; The Number and Rank of Those who Resigned; The Number of Companies of the Several Arms in Service There During that Year, by R. Jones, Adjutant General. 24th Congress, 2nd Session, February 27, 1837.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Call's command is summarized as one of failed opportunities, likely attributable to his lack of experience in military operations. Twice his unit's movements had chance encounters with significant numbers of Seminoles with opportunity for a decisive engagement, yet on both occasions Call failed to capitalize on opportunities. Particularly incriminating is the second major encounter, where across a creek lay a sizable village composed of approximately 650 warriors and their families. A Major Moniac (West Pointer), was killed while trying to cross the creek and his body sank and was not recovered. The opinion was that the water was too deep to cross, and Call disengaged from the firefight. The water was three feet deep.¹⁵

Call's failure to cross was heavily criticized by John T. Sprague, a Brevet First Lieutenant who, as an active participant, wrote the first published history of the Seminole War. "Had the contemplated charge been made, the river would have been crossed, not without loss, but the sacrifice would have been worthy of the object. There were assembled two hundred Negro men, and four hundred and twenty warriors, with their women, children, and all their baggage, together with the horses and ponies. They had lived there since the commencement of hostilities, and were determined to make a decided stand. The men might have fled, but the capture of their families would have soon induced them to surrender."¹⁶

The futility of Call's campaign was also effectively summarized by Motte, who expressed the growing sentiment that the war would be a protracted affair due to the tactics employed by the Seminoles, "The public was disappointed and dissatisfied because no brilliant and decisive

¹⁵ Mahan, p. 185.

¹⁶ John T. Sprague, The Origin, Progress, and Conclusion of the Florida War, (1848; reprint ed., Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), p. 166.

victories were achieved. . . the fact of his being near not known until the crack of his rifle and savage yells were heard, and our men seen falling. Thus it was in every engagement, nothing but a series of running fights from hammock to hammock, and swamp to swamp. Very different from an encounter between civilized troops..."¹⁷

The effects of the 1836 campaigns, as well as a growing sense of futility among the officers, led to a significant number of resignations late in 1836. A Lieutenant Smith, (there were three resignees with the last name of Smith in 1836) wrote in a letter to his wife, "If Henry could help me to anything, by which application I could support us--I would willingly quit a profession for which I think there is no longer a feeling of respect entertained by the country."¹⁸

Analysis of the resignations by calendar month (see chart on page 12) reveals that most resignations occurred between June and October of 1836, coinciding roughly with Call's tenure in command and following Scott's fruitless campaign. July, August and September held the highest percentages of resignations, likely due to Call's appointment, the feuding between active and militia forces, and the onset of ravage sickness in the troop units serving there. No doubt the failed exploits of 1836 were reported in the newspapers of the time, causing the resignation of many special duty officers receiving orders to join regiments in Florida.

An additional analysis of resignations by-month includes consideration of climactic conditions, particularly since most resignations came during or just following the hottest summer months. There is little doubt that the climate and environmental conditions were key factors in the resignation of officers, particularly those officers who resigned after lengthy service in Florida

¹⁷ Motte, p. 146.

¹⁸ Mahan, p. 118.

and Alabama. The hot summer months caused nearly unbearable heat and humidity, particularly those officers who were not acclimated to such a climate. Motte described it as "certainly the poorest country that ever two people quarreled over. . .the climate in the first place is objectionable; for even in winter, while persons further north were freezing, we were melting in heat."¹⁹ Conditions were worsened by the insect and snake populations of the swampy terrain in which operations were conducted. Walton captured an additional description by Motte which further described the infested area of operations as a "most hideous region to live in, a perfect paradise for Indians, alligators, serpents, frogs, and every other kind of loathsome reptile."²⁰

1836 Resignations of USMA Graduates (By-Calendar Month)

<u>Month</u>	<u># of Resignations</u>
January.....	2
February.....	1
March.....	4
April.....	5
May.....	7
June.....	8
July.....	10
August.....	11
September.....	23
October.....	13
November.....	7
December.....	7
Total	98

While officers were not strangers to undesirable weather and harsh conditions, the sickness which resulted from the weather at times rendered entire garrisons combat ineffective. In

¹⁹ Motte, p. 199.

²⁰ Walton, p. 55.

1836 alone, two different Forts had to be abandoned due to the disease which was rampant at those locations.²¹

Moral/ethical questions concerning the legitimacy of the Seminole War or the policies of the Jacksonian administration may have caused a significant number of officers to resign from service. Questioning the morality or ethical treatment of the Indians was not without precedent, and was certainly a prevalent theme in later Indian Wars.

The legitimacy of the war itself is certainly questionable (the American Revolution is considered by most historians as an example of a "legitimate" war), and while personal anecdotes condemning the Seminole War are rare, there exists a theme of distaste for the war, for several moral reasons. Jacob Motte, who served in Florida from 1836-8, writes to this effect early in 1836, "Here was a people, once mighty and magnanimous, who owned no equal; a race intrepid and unslaved, who roved happy and contented o'er the boundless wild, about to be swept from their ancient inheritance by the withering proximity of the white man; from that fair soil on which their forefathers lived and died."²²

There were additional publicized misgivings about the Seminole War, which may indicate a general dissatisfaction among many Americans. Mahon cites an event at a Florida dinner party where 'some intrepid diner offered a toast to Osceola, "the great untaken and still unconquered red man", who was fighting for his home'.²³ Mahon adds a perspective of national sentiment,

²¹ Mahan, p. 173.

²² Motte, p. 4.

²³ Mahan, p. 189.

“Osceola became to many Americans a symbol of the patriot chief fighting for the land he loved. In consequence, . . . a real Osceola fad developed.”²⁴

President Andrew Jackson’s policies were also not without question. The ratification of the Seminole Treaty of 1835 was delayed in Congress for over a year. The then-Governor of Florida and another political ally of Jackson’s, John H. Eaton, took significant risk in writing to Jackson in hope that the delay in ratification of the treaty, had, in fact, nullified it. “Such a perverse view of the nature of Indian treaties was not appreciated by Jackson, . . . the treaties were still in full force and effect.”²⁵

President Jackson was also not universally popular among the officers, due in part to his cronyism and parochialism. Motte expressed disdain over Jackson’s and his appointees’ “hands-on” management describing a popular officer’s court martial. “It was a high-handed and unauthorized act of President Jackson, . . . merely on his own individual and biased opinion. Such acts of vindictive injustice have characterized others in high places in Washington, who, contemptible as individuals, think by copying a man, who however excellent he may have been yet had failings . . .”²⁶

Accounts later arose alleging Jackson’s questioning the courage of the officers and residents in and of Florida, “The General had observed in one of his letters, to someone, which was published in the newspapers, that the Florida men were all cowards . . .”²⁷ This

²⁴ Mahan, p. 218.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 89.

²⁶ Motte, p. 99.

²⁷ Ibid. p.92.

undoubtedly did little to endear Jackson to the men in Florida, who were already becoming discouraged and disenchanted with the Florida War.

Additional moral issues arise from the standpoint that the Seminoles had legal right to the land by virtue of several treaties which had been signed with the United States Government. Violating treaties was not new to Americans, certainly not so with respect to Native Americans. The Moultrie Creek Treaty was the first such treaty, negotiated and ratified by Congress in 1823. Among other provisions, the treaty included roughly four million acres for a Seminole reservation in Central Florida. The treaty held clauses implying a twenty-year duration.²⁸

The Treaty of Payne's landing was negotiated after the approval of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This second treaty, in effect, nullified the Moultrie Creek Treaty and stipulated that the Seminoles had to clear out of Florida for lands in the West within three years. An additional clause stated that the Seminoles would become members of the Creek tribe and live on Creek reservations. The legitimacy of this treaty was questioned due to the fact that no one was certain who signed the treaty on behalf of the Seminoles. Although Floridians openly embraced the Treaty, popular opinion was generally critical of the treaty. A Thomas L. McKenney wrote that the treaty was a fraud and "a foul blot upon the escutcheon of the nation".²⁹ Mahon further asserts that officers of the Army concurred, writing "officers of the regular army who served in Florida nearly to the man took the same view."³⁰

²⁸ Mahan, p. 53.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 77.

³⁰ Ibid.

Finally, a third treaty was signed at Fort Gibson, where seven “chiefs” of the Seminole tribe allegedly accepted lands in Arkansas, forfeiting all lands in Florida. However, the “chiefs”, who held no authority within the Seminole tribe, were actually a delegation authorized only to survey the lands and report back to the legitimate Seminole chieftains in Florida. The delegation was coerced into signing the treaty after receiving a threat that without signing the treaty, they would not be returned to Florida.³¹

Another moral conflict arose regarding slavery. Florida was a slave state, with a relatively large number of slaves. The Seminoles themselves held slaves, but not necessarily in the same sense that White Southerners did. The relationship was more of indentured servitude, with Seminole Negroes frequently earning freedom or becoming full members of the tribe through marriage into the tribe. Blacks rose to highly respected positions within the Seminole tribe, some becoming principal war advisers to Seminole chieftains or even war chiefs themselves. Armed blacks were extremely disconcerting to the Florida slaveholders. Inevitably, conflict arose between the Seminoles and the White slave-holders, who accused the Seminoles of harboring runaway slaves within safe-havens in Central Florida. The Seminoles were extremely reluctant to leave Florida without their “slaves”, and this became a major point of contention in negotiations of both the Treaty of Payne’s Landing and the Fort Gibson Treaty. With polarity on the issue of slavery growing at the national level, slave-owner rights in a “slave-state” thus made slavery a theme of the Seminole War.

The result was that the Army was effectively caught in the middle of a moral dilemma that the nation itself had not yet confronted. Nonetheless, the Army’s Florida leadership was very

³¹ Mahan, p. 89.

cognizant of the issue, and in no uncertain terms made the Army's position very clear. Major General Thomas Sidney Jesup articulated this sentiment when he succeeded Call in command of the Florida Army in late 1836; "This . . . is a Negro, not an Indian War. I will not make slave-catchers of the army."³² Walton additionally states that the Seminoles' "loyalty to their Negro allies was a characteristic of the Seminole both before and during the War. There can be little doubt that, had the Indians been willing to refuse asylum and turn over Negro fugitives to the Territorial government, there would have been no War . . . The conflict that followed was the only Indian War that the United States fought not for land but rather to defend the institution of slavery."³³

While it is virtually impossible to attribute officer resignations to the moral issues described above without the benefit of personal anecdotes, Mahon accurately captures what may have been the prevailing attitudes of many resignees' in the following passage, 'West Point, stressing "Duty, Honor, Country," indoctrinated its graduates with an outlook which set them apart from John Q. Citizen . . . Even so, there was a tension in the officers' attitudes created by the values with which they had been indoctrinated and those they saw in the society around them."³⁴

A final aspect of the resignation of the 103 officers in 1836 may be attributable to the Army itself. Policy for branch assignments for graduates of West Point was based on class rank. The most desirable branches, those being Engineers and Ordnance, most frequently were bestowed on the graduates attaining the highest class standings. Following the logic that these

³² Walton, p. 37.

³³ Ibid. p. 37.

³⁴ Mahan, p. 118.

branches were heavily dependent on mathematics and the physical sciences, the best students were afforded the opportunity to select these branches. However, these branches (Engineer and Ordnance) often had actual duty assignments away from troop units, usually in conjunction with projects such as building or improving coastal defenses, interior fortifications, a burgeoning railroad industry, and service at arsenals scattered throughout the nation. The officers and respective branch bureau chiefs did not view troop assignments as particularly rewarding, since promotion and recognition most frequently came about as a result of accomplishments in construction. The social aspect of service in these branches was also more appealing than the demanding life of service in the frontier.

Branch Affiliation of 1836 Resignees

<u>Branch</u>	<u># of Resignees</u>
Artillery.....	54
Infantry.....	35
Engineers.....	5
Dragoons.....	3
Ordnance.....	1
<u>Total</u>	98

Analysis of the resignees by branch (see chart) provides some answers to prospective hypotheses as to why these officers resigned, particularly the Artillery officers. First, however, the relatively low numbers of Engineer, Ordnance, and Dragoon officers are easily explained. As previously noted, service in either the Engineers or Ordnance branches was the most highly desired service for the West Point graduate. These assignments were normally not in troop billets, hence the likelihood of service in Florida for these officers was slim. Additionally, these were also relatively low-density branches, the number of officers serving within them was small. After about 1818, there were usually no more than a total of 3 graduates per West Point

graduating class commissioned into these branches. Dragoons was a relatively new branch of commissioning, officers serving in Dragoon regiments had previously been detailed from the Infantry. Also of note, there was only one active regiment of dragoons previous to 1836, the 2nd Regiment was not activated until that year, hence Dragoons was also a low-density branch. The 1st Dragoon Regiment was only present in Florida in detachment strength, the majority of the regiment was still on frontier duty.

The large number of Artillery resignees (54) is intriguing. Artillery was considered an acceptable branch of service, due to its reliance on principles of mathematics and engineering. Graduates just below (based upon class rank) those commissioned in the Engineer and Ordnance branches were usually commissioned in Artillery. Due to the large number of special duty positions requiring Engineer expertise, the low number of Engineers to fill the positions, and the high number of officers commissioned as Artillery officers, Artillery officers therefore received a relatively high percentage of these special duty positions. Hence, of the 54 Artillery resignees, 30 were on special duty assignments or on leave of absence from special duty and recalled to their regiments. The remaining 24 officers resigned from service while deployed in Florida or while assigned to other units deployed on the frontier.

Artillery in the Florida theater had not been used in its traditional role, as artillery fire was largely ineffective in the dense, swampy terrain. The Artillery regiments were therefore used almost exclusively as light infantry forces. Among the 105 soldiers killed in Dade's Massacre were two companies of artillery returning from extended combat patrols. "The infantry . . . had no monopoly of service on foot. The red-legged infantry and the dragoons shared it with them."

³⁵ Service as light infantry was likely to be unappealing to Artillery officers, causing them to resign instead of serving in this capacity.

Officers assigned in Infantry and Dragoon troop units were also occasionally afforded the opportunity to serve in positions requiring the special academic skills their West Point education provided them. Officers assigned to these "special duty" positions frequently held these positions for five to eight years, and considering that the amenities of this assignment were similar to those enjoyed by the Engineer and Ordnance branches, the officers can certainly be justified in their reluctance to leave these positions for service with their actual regiment. Service in the Infantry was undesirable, for not only was the prospect of promotion in this branch slim, the duty was difficult and isolated.

Analysis of the Infantry resignees provides roughly the same percentages as that of Artillery. Of the 35 Infantry resignees, 22 were either on special duty or leave of absence from their unit, while 13 resigned from units deployed to Florida or other troop duty assignments.

The chart on page 21 represents the year groups of the 1836 resignees and confirms not only the relatively slow promotion rate, but also reveals that eleven officers failed to meet the required service obligation of one year. The high number of resignees from the Classes of 1831-36 reflects not only larger, more recent classes, but also the group of officers in the cycle for special duty assignment. Despite the actual undermanning in the Florida theater, vacancies in troop units were few, and many of these officers held Brevet Second Lieutenant rank. This was due to the fact that officers on special duty assignment still held a particular "slot" in their regiment.

³⁵ Mahan, p.119.

USMA Graduation Date of 1836 Resignees

<u>Year Group</u>	<u># of Resignees</u>
1814	2
1815	1
1818	1
1819	1
1820	2
1821	2
1822	3
1823	5
1824	4
1825	2
1826	5
1827	5
1828	5
1829	4
1830	5
1831	8
1832	13
1833	5
1834	6
1835	8
1836	11
<u>Total</u>	98 (All Company-grade officers)

Reassignment to troop units from these positions may have caused the resignation of many officers who opted to use their engineering specialty in civilian life rather than join their regiment.

The hypothesis that the officers resigned to pursue employment as Engineers is supported by the data (see chart page 22). The corollary hypothesis that these officers resigned in order to maintain their special duty position as a civilian is for the most part not supported by the data obtained from historical records. While two-thirds of the resignees actually pursued engineering positions of some type, only one fifth of those officers pursuing engineer employment resided in the area from which they had separated from service. In fact, of all the resignees that could be

traced, only one-third resided in the location from which they had separated from service, regardless of the civilian employment pursued. Thus, while the resignees preferred civilian life to military service, they did not necessarily prefer the location where they had performed their military service.

The significant number of unknowns is due not to a lack of knowledge as to the location in which the resignees resided following separation, but rather to the inability to pinpoint the location from which these resignees separated from service and the type of service engaged upon separation. A significant number of the officers were on leave at the time of separation.

EMPLOYMENT DATA FOR 1836 RESIGNEES

Residence Data

	<u>Resided in area where separated</u>	<u>Relocated following Separation</u>	<u>Unknown</u>
<u>Profession</u>			
Civil Engineer	14	21	12
Railroad Engineer	3	8	5
Educator	3	2	1
Farmer	1	5	1
Lawyer	1	2	1
Merchant	--	4	--
Topography	1	2	2
Clergy	--	1	--
Medicine	--	--	1
Government Official	--	1	--
Fur Trader	--	1	--
Unknown			5
<u>Totals</u>	23	47	28

A second hypothesis regarding the large number of resignees in 1836 is that due to their extended service in positions away from troop units, these officers either lost the desire to soldier,

or lacked the moral courage to serve in wartime. Cullum's Biographical Register (1868) provides additional data which partially supports this latter hypothesis. Of the ninety-five 1836 resignees who were alive at the outset of the Mexican War, only one-half ever rejoined the military in federal, militia, or Confederate forces. Considering the relative legitimacy and national fervor the Mexican and Civil Wars produced, this statistic is significant.

Some of the resignees, however, did rejoin the Army, some as soon as one-month after their resignation. Of those who rejoined, two served with militia forces in the Seminole War at a higher rank. Nine of the 1836 resignees did ultimately attain General Officer rank, among them Major General George G. Meade, Commander of the Army of the Potomac for Union forces at the Battle of Gettysburg. W. H. C. Bartlett also rejoined the military, albeit as an Academy Professor at the United States Military Academy.

MILITARY SERVICE RECORD OF 1836 RESIGNEES

Number never rejoining Federal, Militia, or Confederate forces.....	46
Number rejoining Federal or Militia forces with Wartime Service.....	39
Number joining Confederate forces during Civil War.....	7
Unknown.....	3
Number not meeting initial Service obligation of 1 year.....	11
Number attaining General Officer rank in Federal or Militia forces.....	9
Number deceased prior to 1846.....	3
Number serving six months in Florida or Alabama prior to resignation.....	9

Consideration of all the existing conditions of military service in Florida as well as Army policy leads to a conclusion that only the nine officers who actually served with their unit in Florida for at least six months were justified in their resignations. Additional officers did serve in Florida, however their period of service ranged from two days to two months and thus,

subjectively, did not merit justifiable resignation. While impossible to document, those officers who resigned due to moral reasons attributable to the unethical treatment of the Seminoles and Blacks in Florida are also justified, although that figure can not be determined without additional research. Undoubtedly the strategy, petty politics, and climatic conditions provided reasons for resignation for those who endured them, however, those resignees who opted for separation instead of service in Florida are guilty of selfish service, rather than the selfless service espoused by the institution of West Point. One final consideration exists apart from the conditions of war and assignment policies of the Army which was undoubtedly instrumental in the decision for many officers to leave service. Many officers may have simply preferred civilian life rather than the constant challenges endured in Army life in 1836. The officers, however, are only partially to blame.

The Army itself, as it existed in 1836, was also at fault due to the policies which supported lengthy and repeated assignments of special duty. Promotion policies, based on merit for engineering feats rather than successful troop unit service are equally at fault. Officers can hardly be blamed for their reluctance to serve in positions where promotions were slow or not forthcoming, conditions were harsh, and the threat to one's life from combat or disease was a daily reality.

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