



COUNCIL ON AMERICA'S MILITARY PAST - U.S.A.

PRESERVING, INTERPRETING AND SHARING OUR MILITARY HERITAGE

presents

The Persistent Pandemic Preservationist

December 2020

Editor's Note: *This is Number 5, Volume 1 of a monthly newsletter featuring historic sites across the country responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intent is to stay in touch with old and new members, and to share information that is interesting and useful, perhaps to build a community of practice. Each issue will focus on one or more sites. The original Persistent Preservationist was a newsletter produced by esteemed long-time CAMP member Col. Hal Youmans, USA (Ret).*

The November issue featured a tour of Civil War sites in the Washington, D.C. area that a CAMPer could undertake even in the Pandemic. In this issue we take a look at another such activity. The Seminole Wars Foundation has come up with a challenge that is virtual on account of the Pandemic but could benefit both the individual CAMPer and the cause of historic preservation. Florida-based CAMP member Patrick Swan tells us more. We also feature a piece on the preservation of a unique site in Seattle that played a role in the 1936 Olympics. It started out as a World War I airplane hangar and morphed into a boat house for the rowing champions described in Dan Brown's bestseller Boys in the Boat, a haunting story that had me from the first line. I was delighted to hear from CAMP member Lee Corbin that their boathouse started out as a World War I naval site and is currently the object of a preservation campaign.

I had hoped to have room in this issue to tell readers about military-themed board games that are produced by fortcircle.com, another excellent way to get through the Pandemic while exploring interesting corners of American history. I will lead off with their story in January — stay tuned! If you would like to order a game before then, the discount code "CAMP" will get you a 10% discount.

We welcome feedback and suggestions from readers! Do you know of a fort or museum that has an interesting pandemic story? Would you be willing to reach out and document its story (or persuade the curators to do so)?

Happy Holidays! — Nick Reynolds, history-maker@comcast.net

A Historic Military Road Beckons Hikers to Explore its Pathways, Virtually

By Patrick Swan

Forts did not survive long in the Florida wars in the 19th century. When the sickly season came, the Army often burned down the fort and left the area, only to return in late fall to rebuild. This was especially true during the Seminole Wars, the three interrelated wars between the United States and the Seminole Nation that roughly spanned the years between 1816 and 1858. Still, in the last 50 years, we've been able to reclaim the sites of these forts from nature and private ownership to preserve a slice of our military past.

A series of forts lined the 100-mile distance of the 1830s' Fort King Military Road between Ocala and Tampa, Fla. It blazed a path through the heart of the Seminole Indian reservation. When war came, forts followed: McClure, Armstrong, Dade, Foster, among others, ending where the road terminated at Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay. Today, markers identify where Forts McClure, Armstrong, and Brooke once stood, while Forts King and Foster are re-creations on the same site as the originals.

War came on Dec. 28, 1835, when the Seminole, angered by a US Government ultimatum to leave Florida, attacked a passing formation of foot soldiers on their way to Fort King. The ambush all but annihilated the 108-man column. Only three soldiers limped back to Fort Brooke to tell the tale. The site in Bushnell, Fla., is now a historical state park, named for the column's commander, Maj. Francis L. Dade. A marble gun barrel within its confines marks the site where he fell. Nearby, the Boy Scouts re-created the desperate breastwork the beleaguered men built for cover during the attack.

Three times, in 1963, 1988, and 2004 living historians trekked on or near the old Fort King Military Road from Tampa to Bushnell to commemorate Dade's march. (With development, it is much too complicated *and* perilous to conduct an organized march along the original path.) This year, the Seminole Wars Foundation is promoting awareness of Dade's ill-fated march by sponsoring a virtual march tracking the full route. This allows anyone, not just in Florida, to participate. The 103-mile-long virtual march follows the actual route based on 1840s survey maps. Participants can walk/run/cycle or swim the same distance on their own. Then, they just enter their mileage into the virtual march program. It advances a participant along the road for the distance of that day's exercise. Even better, the self-paced course can be completed in just one- or two-mile increments each day from inside one's home or outside in one's neighborhood or at a gym. There is no need for a ponderous 12 to 15 miles per day that a physical march would require. The virtual march is a great reason to get outside to exercise after the pandemic lockdowns of this year. It may even be more satisfying because while one can see the route via satellite images at street-level view, participants also receive "virtual postcards" via email that provide historical narratives about landmarks one passes.

These virtual postcards are packed with useful historical information. The postcard explains not only what happened, but the "why" behind it as well. There are 25 such postcards one activates as one proceeds along the route.

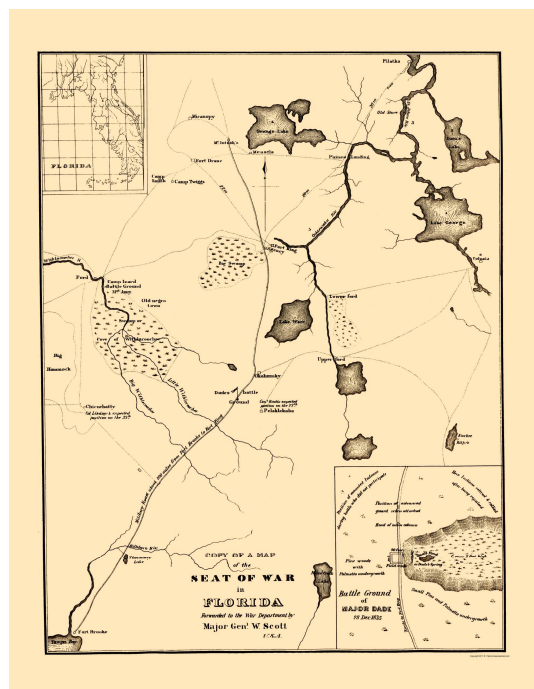
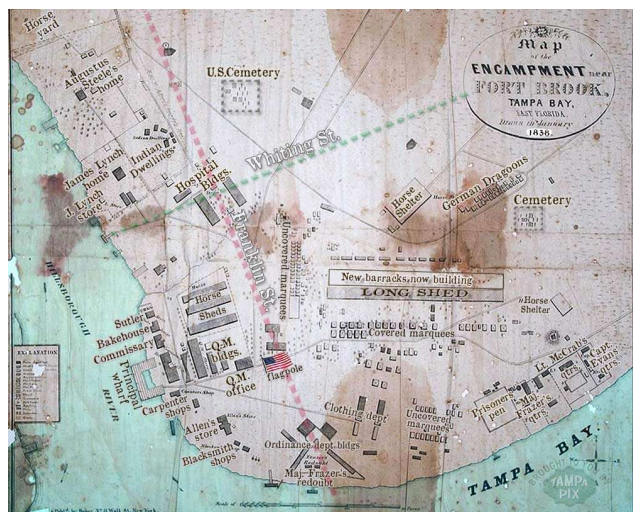
To learn more about the Seminole Wars Foundation, or to sign up for the march, go to: www.seminolewars.us. Registration is now open and the mission launches Dec. 22. Many freebies are included in the \$25 registration fee. The virtual march challenge promises to be one of the most enjoyable occasions for exercise one may likely encounter this year – or next!



The re-created Fort King near present-day Ocala

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Patrick Swan is a board member with the Seminole Wars Foundation and host of the weekly Seminole Wars podcast. A military historian and an Army War College graduate, he holds masters degrees in Public History, Communication, and Homeland Security.

Contemporary sketch and map from the Seminole Wars. On the map, Ft. King is very roughly in the center, between two lakes, Ft. Brook at the lower left hand corner.



The World War I Hangar That the Boys in the Boat Called Home

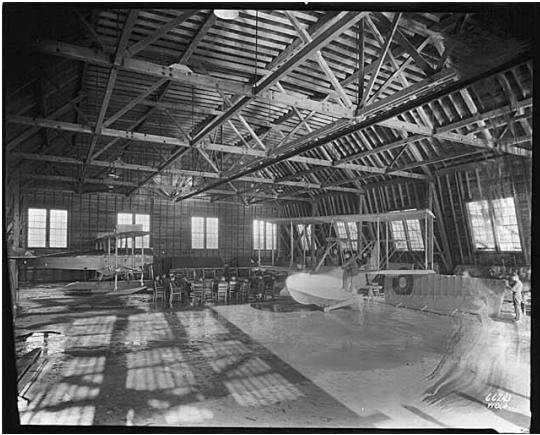
By Lee Corbin

There had been a few minor skirmishes the previous three days, with the Germans always claiming victory. The British would win their fight late in the afternoon of the final day. But at 6:00 that evening, August 14, 1936, the United States fought its first major battle against Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Far less lethal than the battles yet to come, this fight would take place at “Langer See” in Grünau just outside of Berlin. It was the 1936 Olympics and the final race, the eight-man boats, was about to run. With the American victory, the “Boys in the Boat” became legend.

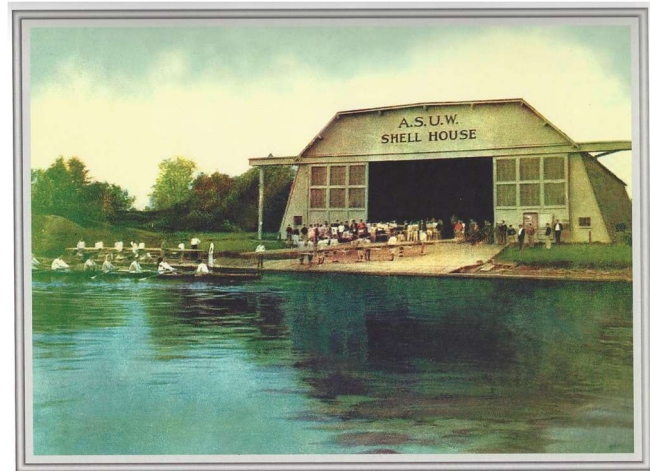
So, what does that winning team have in common with Naval aviation during World War I?

In 1917, the US Navy recognized the benefit of running cadets through a pre-flight ground course prior to actual flight training, and established three schools during the war. One such school was created on the campus of the University of Washington in Seattle, which benefited from its location on the shores of Lake Washington for the training of seaplane operations. It also helped to have the backing of an influential local citizen who ran a small airplane factory, one William Boeing.

By the time the school’s hangar was completed in the late summer of 1918, its intended use only lasted about five months. With the war over and demobilization, the university suddenly found itself the owner of a 10,000 square-foot, timber construction hangar. It was quickly recognized that such a building would make a perfect “Shell House” for the UW rowing team, and would serve that function until 1949. It was this former Navy seaplane hangar that produced the “Boys.” The university was also fortunate to have the services of George Pocock, the 20th Century’s greatest builder of collegiate rowing shells. His shop at the back of the old hangar produced scores of boats from 1922 until 1949 when he and the UW crew moved into a new shell house on the campus waterfront. For the next 70 years, the building quietly served various marine purposes for the university



The Seaplane Hangar (courtesy Seattle MOHAI) in 1917 (above) and, repurposed in 1933 (right).



Old ASUW Shell House on Montlake Cut – circa 1933

including canoe and kayak rentals, yacht club, and boat storage. 102 years after its construction, it remains the only World War I-era, all-wood, US Navy seaplane hangar in the world...in need of restoration.

How has the pandemic affected that project? In 2018 a network of volunteers of varying backgrounds (rowing, engineering, history, architecture, etc.) came together and met at the hangar to discuss funding, history, restoration, and preservation. A capital campaign under University of Washington auspices, *The Next 100 Years*, was created to fund that restoration of this unique building. Meetings came to a screeching halt in this Spring and have since been carried on via emails and Zoom meetings, so the Shell House hasn't had quite the in-person physical attention it was receiving. It does, however, receive regular visits by the UW Buildings and Facilities Department on campus. One of our volunteers is a former Navy hangar engineer, and he makes regular trips to the building to look things over from an engineering standpoint.

The possibility of vaccines gives us hope our preservation project will only be delayed about a year. Hollywood's interest in the film version of Dan Brown's book — he is one of our volunteers — was delayed by the pandemic, but should be moving again soon. That will certainly bring world-wide attention to the old hangar and Shell House. Learn more at: <https://www.washington.edu/ima/waterfront/asuw-shell-house/campaign/>.

Lee Corbin is 22-year Navy and Air Force veteran, both active and reserve, enlisted and officer. He served as radial engine mechanic, flight engineer, and C-141 pilot, as well as airline pilot for Western and Delta Airlines, not to mention historical preservationist.

Founded in 1966 as the Council on Abandoned Military Posts, its name was changed in 1981. CAMP is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization whose members are interested in the identification, restoration, preservation and memorialization of old military installations and their history and traditions. All persons sharing these interests are invited to join. CAMP publishes an academic journal (The Journal of America's Military Past), and a newsletter on recent developments in historic preservation (Headquarters Heliogram), and holds an annual conference. Find out more at: www.campjamp.org.