William P. DuVal, the Founding of Tallahassee, and the "First Removal"

By

James M. Denham

Full of misgivings and plagued by problems well beyond his control, Florida's Governor William P. DuVal set out overland from St. Augustine in early December 1823 aiming to reach Pensacola some 400-or-so miles to the west. He expected that the trip would require a month or more of rugged travel. There were no improved roads and few bridges, only Indian trails and ill-defined paths between the former Spanish towns. Indeed, the journey was so precarious that a harrowing ship voyage around the peninsula and the Florida Straits was the only viable route

between the two distant points. As the forty-year-old governor slogged his way west through swamps, rivers, and all manner of other obstacles, he found abundant time for reflection of his troubles. Doubtlessly, in the process of assessing woeful circumstances he questioned what factors had brought him to the largely uncharted wilderness. The answers would not have come easily.

Born in Richmond, Virginia, William P. DuVal took the well-worn path to Kentucky as a teenager, read law, and settled in Bardstown, where he distinguished himself as lawyer, soldier and War Hawk politician. DuVal fought in the War of 1812 and served in the 13th Congress. Returning to Kentucky after one term, he practiced law but fell on hard times during the Panic of 1819. Relief came in 1821 when DuVal used his family and political connections to secure a judgeship in the newly created territory of Florida. The next year, President James Monroe appointed DuVal the territory's second governor, succeeding Andrew Jackson's brief three-month tenure. In the two preceding years, among other arduous duties, DuVal had presided over the first two meetings of the legislative council in Pensacola and St. Augustine. Now he was determined to forge a path toward establishing a territorial capital between those two towns.[1]

Several months before at the territorial legislative council session in St. Augustine, DuVal had commissioned two men (John Lee Williams and Dr. William Hayne Simmons) to

[1] James M. Denham, *Florida Founder William P. DuVal, Frontier Bon Vivant* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015).

select a site somewhere between St. Augustine and Pensacola for a new territorial capital. Commissioners Williams and Simmons knew right where they were going, and they were already there by October. The lands between Pensacola and St. Augustine were hardly *terra incognita*. The "chance rendezvous" of the commissioners at the site of the future capital is a myth.

Only five years earlier, during a raid through the panhandle that eventually became known as the First Seminole War, Andrew Jackson and his scouts recognized the "Tallahassee Old Fields," and the surrounding Red Hills's potential, as prime cotton lands.[2] Included, in Jackson's report to the war department was his adjutant general Hugh Young's detailed topographical sketch of the region. Though the 1818 report was not made public, it was available to Jackson's inner circle.[3] Jackson men Richard Keith Call, James Gadsden, Daniel Burch, three participants of his strike force, were on the scene practically simultaneously with

[2] On the First Seminole War see David S and Jeanne, *Old Hickory's War: Andrew Jackson and the Quest for Empire*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1996); James G. Cusick and Sherry Johnson, *Andrew Jackson in Florida, Forging His Legacy*, (Cocoa, Florida: Florida Historical Society Press, 2016), 115-275; Herbert J. Doherty**,** *Richard Keith Call: Southern Unionist* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961), 12-13**;** Edwin C. McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957) 76-87; Joe Knetsch, *Florida's Seminole Wars, 1817-1858*, (Charleston: Arcadia, 2003), 23-41.

[3] Captain Hugh Young, Corps of Topographical Engineers, "The Topographical Memoir on East and West Florida with Itineraries of General Jackson's Army, 1818" was published in 1934. Since Mark Boyd's transcription and annotation of the report in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, scholars have analyzed and written about this important document. These essays, with comments, are available in Cusick and Johnson, *Andrew Jackson in Florida*, 149-275.

Simmons and Williams. A fourth, Robert Butler, who became surveyor general of the new territory, would soon follow. From the very moment DuVal succeeded Jackson as governor in 1822, he kept up a steady correspondence with the general and met with him numerous times at the Hermitage. Many of these conversations likely pertained to the potential of the Red Hills. It is also a fact that Charlestonian William Simmons visited the Hermitage before coming to Florida.

As DuVal made his way west, a number of thoughts and concerns coursed through his mind. One was the seeming inevitability of Jackson's rise to the Whitehouse, perhaps even as early as that year. DuVal knew that all four Jackson men listed above, and many others, would seek political roles in the new Florida territory, and DuVal would be obliged to forward their interests. Another related concern was the growing factionalism in the territory based on the conflict over political appointments. National political battles deeply affected social and economic affairs in the territory. Nearly all political appointees owed their office to some political faction in Washington traceable directly to Monroe's cabinet, and these factions played themselves out in the territory. Moreover, these divisions also took on sectional overtones. Yet another concern was accommodating the interests of the "Forbes Purchase" tract, the boundaries of which encompassed the lower Apalachicola River and stretched as far east as the Old Fields. DuVal probably understood that the eventual confirmation of the land grant—that had originated with cessions from Indians' obligations to the Panton Leslie Company during the Spanish

period—might be a boon or a detriment to settlement. But the most serious concern that plagued his mind was his wife Nancy and his seven children that he had left behind in Bardstown, Kentucky. He had not seen them in almost two years and there was little likelihood that he could return to Kentucky any time soon. In fact, DuVal had become so despondent that rumors circulated that he intended to resign. But DuVal's honor and professional commitments forced him in another direction. Given the circumstances, he had no choice but to push ahead. He soldiered on as best he could.

The previous spring DuVal, Gadsden, and other federal officials held talks with Indians near St. Augustine. The resulting Treaty of Moultrie Creek marked out a reservation in the lower peninsula for all Florida Indians.[4] This agreement, with some exceptions, included all the natives within the territory. DuVal's objective on his travel to Pensacola was to visit all known Indian towns in route to the site intended for the capital, including the villages headed by Miccosukee leader Neamathla. A year and a half earlier DuVal's predecessor Andrew Jackson

[4] On the treaty of Moultrie Creek see John T. Sprague, The Florida War, (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2000; reprint of the 1848 edition), 20-26; John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, *1835-1842*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), 42-50; J. Leitch Wright, *The Creeks and Seminoles: The Destruction of Regeneration of the Muscolgulge People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 232-37; James C. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 52-54; Canter Brown, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1991), 29-33, Paul E. Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), 287-88; John T. Ellisor, *The Second Creek War: Interethnic Conflict and Collision on a Collapsing Frontier*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 32.

had sounded out the recalcitrant chief on either joining his Creek kinsmen in Alabama, or remaining on a confined reservation along the Apalachicola River.[5] Neamathla was a signatory with other Seminole leaders at Moultrie Creek but his subsequent behavior indicated that he had little intention of relocating to the lands set out in the pact. Indeed, as time would tell, there was every indication that Neamathla was determined to resist. As historian John T. Ellisor has noted, by the time of the Moultrie Creek talks, "the Florida Indians, a mixed lot of old-time Seminoles and more recently arrived Red Sticks and non-Red stick Creek refugees from Georgia and Alabama came together as a body to elect Neah Emathla as their principal chief, which may have been the birth of the Seminole nation."[6]

Neamathla and his people had come to Florida after their defeat by Andrew Jackson in the Creek War and the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814). Neamathla's precise involvement in that carnage and the subsequent dispossession of Creek lands as a result of the imposed Treaty of Fort Jackson is not known, but it is known that the leader led a contingent of poor and disaffected elements of the Lower Creek towns to a location near the Georgia-Florida border. Determining that the Peace of Ghent had invalidated the Treaty of Fort Jackson, Neamathla

[5]Extract of a Talk held by Gen. Jackson with three Chiefs of the Florida Indians at Pensacola," September 18, 1821, in St. Augustine *East Florida Herald,* March 8, 1823; Governor Jackson to the Secretary of War, September 20, 1821, Clarence Carter, ed. *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 26 vols, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-1962 TP, 22: 210-13. Hereinafter TP.

[6] Ellisor, *The Second Creek War*, 32.

established a series of Hitchiti Fowl Towns along the international boundary and only fifteen miles from Fort Scott, just north of the Georgia-Florida border. From there clashes between Neamathla's people and Americans precipitated Jackson's 1818 raid into Florida. Neamathla subsequently moved his people to villages near Lake Miccosukee and the "Old Fields" (the site of the abandoned center of the Spanish Apalachee missions). There, Neamathla bided his time. Even now, as J. Leitch Wright asserted, he was "determined to retain his culture, clan, and way of life."[7] Most understood, including DuVal, that Neamathla would be uncompromising in his determination to resist the whites. James Gadsden represented the chief as the "head of the discontented . . . and an enterprising and daring savage, and if not the only, among the principle instigators of the Seminole War."[8]

Indeed, by all accounts, Neamathla presented a striking physical appearance. One observer of the chief noted that he was over six foot two and "finely proportioned." His eyes were "coal black, and exceedingly piercing. His head was shaved after the fashion of his whole

---

[7] Wright, *Creeks and Seminoles,* 220-21. On Neamathla's background and activities see Mahon, *The Second Seminole War*, 24-26; Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 41-42; Ellisor, *The Second Creek War*, 32; William S. Belco, "Epilogue to the War of 1812: The Monroe Administration, American Anglophobia, and the First Seminole War," in William S. Belco, ed. *America's Hundred Years' War: U. S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole*, 1763-1858, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 76-77; Clifton Paisley, *The Red Hills of Florida, 1528-1865*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 46-47, 69-71, 73-74; McReynolds, *The Seminoles*, 98-106.

[8] James Gadsden to Secretary of War, June 11, 1823, Clarence Carter, ed. *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 26 vols, (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-1962): 22: 694-96.

tribe, leaving a crest of hair about one and a half inches from the back of the head to the forehead." He wore silver rings in his ears and bracelets on his arms. His moccasins grounded chestnut colored leggings buttoned up with brass buttons. The chief also sported red, green, and yellow garters with tassels. His striped calico hunting shirt was "belted around the waist . . . tied with a graceful knot. . . on his left side. His action, when speaking was quick but graceful and apparently corresponded with the force and point of the sentiments he was uttering."[9]

If Neamatha's warriors were DuVal's immediate concern they were not his only ones. Some five thousand other Indians and their Black allies were scattered in various towns throughout the peninsula. Indian affairs had been in a state of flux since the transfer of flags. In the west Jackson had met with Indians briefly but there had been no official communication with them since his departure. In the east the situation was even less satisfactory. The first agent had died of yellow fever in St. Augustine. Another had served temporarily as agent but was removed, and yet another man had served only briefly before leaving the territory due to illness. New Yorker Gad Humphreys had been appointed for three months but the former U. S. Army major would not arrive in Florida to assume his duties until after DuVal set out for Pensacola.[10]

---

[9] Sketches of Florida," in Scotio (Ohio) *Gazette* quoted in Easton, *Maryland Republican* Star, May 10, 1825.

[10] Commission of Gad Humphreys as Indian Agent, May 8, 1822, Secretary of War to Peter Pelham, June 24, 1822, Abraham Eustis to Secretary of War, July 23, 1822, Acting Governor to the Secretary of War, January 9, 1823, TP, 22: 429-30, 474, 495, 597-98.

DuVal finally reached Pensacola after his two-month journey from St. Augustine. He reported to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun that the land between the Suwannee and Apalachicola rivers was "the most desirable and valuable region in all of the Southern Country." He had also "visited all the Indian Towns" on his "rout [sic] to this City and endeavored to impress on the minds of the Chiefs the importance of restraining their Warriors, and preserving the friendship of the U. States. . . . I have taken great pains to ascertain the real feeling of the Indians toward us—and can rely with some confidence, on the friendships of all the Indians except Neamathla. He is a man of uncommon capacity, bold, violent and restless—he can not submit to a superior or endure an equal. No reliance can be placed on him. His men are the most lawless and vile of the Indians in Florida. I feel confident that they will *not remove* into the boundary given to them by the late Treaty unless there is a military force in the vicinity to *overawe them.*" He cited examples of Indian under Neamathla's command threatening whites and killing their cattle due to their dissatisfaction with the treaty and road building work through their lands.[11]

Three months before DuVal arrived in Pensacola, Commissioner Simmons set out west from St. Augustine on September 26, reaching St. Marks on October 10. Simmons explored the area for about two weeks before meeting Williams on the 26th. Williams was the first to enter

[11] Governor DuVal to Secretary of War, January 12, 1824, TP, 22: 823; Pensacola *Gazette*, February 2, 1824; Mobile *Register* quoted in New London (Conn.) *Connecticut Gazette*, January 28, 1824.

the "new Tallahassee village." As Williams recalled, "Seeing a fine, stout Indian in a nut patch, I left my horse and accosted him, asking for information where the chief of the village might be found. He very sternly demanded what I wanted and said he was Neamathla. I told him we were sent to him by Governor Duval to inform him that he wished to build a house in which he might meet his council; that the distance to St. Augustine was too great; that in order to make such a selection, he had sent Dr. Simmons and myself, and he was requested to assist us with his advice and counsel." Neamathla was shown papers with the signature and seal of the governor and he seemed to be satisfied. Simmons soon came up and after cigars and discussions Neamathla saw that their horses and baggage were taken care of and they stayed overnight in one of the council houses. In the ensuing days the men explored the surrounding country and witnessed Indian ball games, and the rattlesnake dance.[12]

Commissioner John Lee Williams described the site as "within four miles of the centre . . . of the territory, a more beautiful country can scarcely be imagined, it is high, rolling, and well-watered, the richness of the soil renders it so perfectly adapted to farming, that living must ultimately be cheap and abundant." Many settlers were already there. Williams predicted that fields now under cultivation "will be immediately occupied by the white people and improved to great advantage. To these may be added the old fields from which the Indians were driven by

[12]John Lee Williams, "Journal of John Lee Williams" in "The Selection of Tallahassee as the Capital," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 1 (July 1908): 18-19. See also "Journal of Dr. W. H. Simmons," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 1 (April 1908): 26-36.

General Jackson. These are covered with fine old peach trees, and many of the huts still remain in a good state of preservation. These circumstances render an early emigration to Tallahassee much less difficult than if the country was wholly unimproved." Another prominent feature of the future territorial capital site was a beautiful cascade that sent water pitching nearly thirty feet down in a pool, sending a rivulet toward the center of what would become the town.[13] The Moultrie Creek talks excluded Neamathla from the general removal to the south, stipulating that Neamathla would be provided with a two-square mile tract several miles west of his present location. But the chief had still not moved and there was every indication that he intended to stay right where he was.[14]

Over the next several days, Williams and Simmons made a careful survey of the Indian villages in the area, reporting that five principle villages and other scattered towns contained approximately 500 inhabitants and 174 warriors. The Indians hunted, and raised corn, groundnuts, beans, pumpkins, melons, and sweet potatoes. They made bread from the briar root. They also raised cattle, hogs, and fowl. "They seem to enjoy much peace and happiness among

---

[13] Journal of the Expedition to the Interior of West Florida, Pensacola *Gazette*, May 29, 1824.
[14]The Moultrie Creek Treaty stipulated that "for the use of Neamathla and his connections two miles square, embracing the Tuphulga village, on the waters of Comfort Creek." "It is further stipulated that of the four thousand five hundred dollars and two thousand dollars provided by the 5th article of this Treaty, for the payment of improvements and transportation, five hundred dollars shall be awarded Neamathla as a compensation for the improvements abandoned by him, as well as to meet the expenses he will unavoidably be exposed to, by his own removal and that of his connections." Treaty of Moultrie Creek, January 2, 1824, printed in St. Augustine *East Florida Herald,* March 20, 1824.

themselves, and except occasionally hunting the cattle and hogs of their white neighbors, are quiet inhabitants. . . . The chiefs are generally men of much talent and experience and seem disposed to recommend to the people the raising of stock and the cultivation of the soil." Of the other Indian attributes, William and Simmons noted that they were a "rather idle" and "violently republican" set. "The men are more handsome than the women, and dress more neatly and with better taste. The women are more close and sharp in making a bargain than the men . . . Their children appear healthy and smart. The female usually carries her infant in her arms, not on her back, as is usual among the northern tribes. Education is not known there, children experience very little restraint from their parents, yet there seems to be much affection existing between them; they scarcely are made to labor until they adopt it by choice." Williams and Simmons thought the Indians were "not so ingenious in manufacturing . . . but are much more addicted to raising cattle, hogs, and fowls. Indeed, their savage character is considerably broken and it would be surprising if they should not make considerable progress in civilization at the situation where they are now about to be located."[15]

The lands the commissioners explored and reported on would eventually become the center of the rich cotton producing lands of Middle Florida. This country had once been the center of the agricultural activities of the Apalachee. Telltale evidence of a former Spanish

[15] Journal of the Expedition to the Interior of West Florida (continued), Pensacola *Gazette,* June 12, 1824.

occupation could be found whenever farmers turned the soil. Not the least of these was the ruins of the Spanish mission Fort San Luis, destroyed and abandoned in 1704. Its remnants provided a fascinating curiosity to new arrivals, including Gov. DuVal, once he arrived on the scene that summer.

Positive reports on the site began appearing in newspapers throughout the country and DuVal kept close tabs on the commissioners' work. On March 4, from Pensacola, DuVal issued a proclamation ordering the next legislative council to meet on the date prescribed by law. DuVal proclaimed that the Commissioners had selected a "scite [sic]" described to him as "'situated roughly a mile southwest of the old deserted fields of Tallahassee about a half mile south of the Oke-lock-o-ny and Tallahassee trail, at a point were the old Spanish road is intersected by a small trail running southwardly.'"[16]

New settlers flocked to the area. One of the first on the scene was John McIver who brought his family from Fayetteville, NC.[17] Others in nearby Gadsden County were already there. Judge Jonathon Robinson, probably the area's first planter, had greeted Williams and Simmons soon after they arrived. His plantation on the Ochlocknee River was often frequented

[16] Floridus to the Editor, St. Augustine *East Florida Herald,* January 10, 1824; Proclamation of Governor DuVal, March 4, 1824, TP, 22: 854-55; St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, April 3, 1824; Pensacola *Gazette,* March 13, 1824.
[17] Affidavit of John McIver, January 31, 1831, Executive Proceedings of the Senate, 22nd Congress, Papers Re. Nominations: Governor William Pope DuVal, File Number Sen. 22B-A3, fo. 1, Records of the United States Senate, RG 46, NA.

by new arrivals. Robinson had numerous slaves and was already producing valuable crops of cotton. Between Robinson's and the "Old Fields" was Sherrod McCall, a South Carolina native who also owned many slaves. Both Robinson and McCall's enslaved people provided the labor for many of Tallahassee's first structures, including the first council buildings.[18]

But DuVal's attention remained fixed on Neamathla. As a way to placate the chief he suggested to Secretary of War Calhoun that the leader and a delegation of his warriors be sent to the nation's capital. Writing from Pensacola, DuVal noted, "If this chief could be attached warmly to our Government, it would cirtainly [sic] be good policy to acquire his confidence & friendship." He is a man of "uncommon abilities and has great influence with his Nation. He is one of the most eloquent men I have ever heard." Again, a month later DuVal reiterated that "Neamathla is a most uncommon man. He ought to be induced to remove with his people. This chief you will find perhaps the greatest man, you have ever seen among the Indians. He can, if he chooses to do so, control his warriors with as much ease as a Col. could a Regiment of regular soldiers. They love and fear him. If this man can be made, as I have no doubt he can, the firm friend of our Government," matters would move more smoothly. "If Congress would allow him to sell his reservation and direct that the money be "laid out in cattle for him, it would awaken his gratifies to the Government and render him of essential service in commanding the nation.

[18] Paisley, *Red Hills of Florida*, 65; "Tallahassee, September 10," Pensacola *Gazette and West Florida Advertiser*, September 24, 1825; Baltimore *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, November 19, 1824.

The chief should be seen by you; and then you can judge of the force and energy of his mind & character. Neamathla and the Chiefs who will go with him to Washington City have never seen the Interior of the United States, and have no precise knowledge of the strength and power of our country." Calhoun eventually authorized the Washington visit but Neamathla, after first agreeing to go, refused the privilege.[19]

From January through June, at far remove from the new capital site, DuVal administered the affairs of the territory as best he could from Pensacola. Uppermost in his mind was Neamathla and preparing the legislative council's first session in the new site. By this time, DuVal's friend Samuel Southard had been appointed Secretary of the Navy and the governor requested that the official dispatch a small vessel to transport books, records, public furniture, and other materials from Pensacola and St. Augustine to the capital site by way of St. Marks. DuVal waxed eloquent on the prospects of the territory. He wrote Secretary of State John Quincy Adams that he considered the land between the Suwannee and Apalachicola rivers, as, "in my opinion, the most valuable Southern Country I have ever seen," estimating the good land at greater than 1.2 million acres. "The region produces Sugar Cane and Sea Island Cotton in greater perfection than any other part of the Southern Country. The lands are uncommonly rich

[19] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, March 19, 1824, TP, 22: 904; William P. DuVal to John C. Calhoun, April 11, 1824, Clyde Wilson et al. eds, *Papers of John C. Calhoun*, 28 vols. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1959-2003): 9: 27-28 herein cited as *Calhoun Papers*. John C. Calhoun to William P. DuVal, April 8, 1824, *Calhoun Papers,* 9:21; Pensacola *Gazette,* July 24, 1824.

and finely watered. . . I have no doubt," DuVal declared, "that this tract of Country alone will sell for more than the Florida Debt. . . From the view which I have had of Florida I state, without fear of contradiction, that there is more good land in Florida than is to be found in Louisiana."[20] A month later DuVal's positive appraisal of the land was undiminished. Appealing to Secretary Adams for $1,000 to cover the expenses of moving the records and public documents from St. Augustine and Pensacola to the new site north of St. Marks, DuVal reminded the official, "The emigration to this Territory is considerable and from information little doubt is entertained that the whole country between the Apalachicola and Suwanee rivers will soon be settled with a dense population—The appointment of a surveyor general for this Territory who should commence his labors immediately would serve to increase the emigration to Florida."[21]

Calhoun soon notified DuVal that Congress appropriated $65,700 for removal of Indians to their reservation. Included in that amount was $6,000 for farm tools, payment for cattle and hogs, $4,500 as compensation for improvements, $2,000 for their transportation to their new land, $2,000 annually for 20 years, funds to establish a school and hire a gunsmith, and $5,000 to run the boundary of their reservation.[22] But who would administer these arrangements? While DuVal was ultimately responsible for carrying out these initiatives, because of his many other

[20] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of the Navy, February 27, 1824, Governor DuVal to the Secretary of State, March 25, February 13, 1824, TP, 22: 853-54, 907, 847-48.
[21] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of State, March 25, 1824, TP, 22: 907.
[22] John C. Calhoun to William P. DuVal, June 2, 1824, *Calhoun Papers*, 9: 133.

obligations, he certainly could not do it alone. Soon a large slaveholder with extensive resources came to DuVal's notice. John Bellamy and his brother Abram would play important roles in the early years of the territory. As events would show, DuVal would eventually turn to John Bellamy to assist him in this important work.

On June 21 DuVal and Florida Territorial Secretary George Walton boarded the schooner *Florida* in Pensacola bound for St. Marks.[23] From there DuVal was able to ride the twenty of so miles to the new capital site. DuVal boarded briefly with John McIver. Then he temporarily occupied a log cabin within the ruins of a Spanish mission, close to the site of the first council building.[24] He soon selected a site for a homestead on a quarter section of land less than a mile away that faced the beautiful cascade. Among DuVal's many other duties, he oversaw the construction of what would become an "immense and magnificent dwelling," the completion of which took many years.[25] As soon as he could he moved into the unfinished structure. The site was indeed a majestic one. The hill upon which DuVal's house eventually stood was adjacent to the cascade. It was crowned by majestic live oaks, and overlooked the valley through which the St. Augustine Branch curved around the town. The house stood on a hill roughly a mile south of

---

[23] "Ship News," *Pensacola Gazette*, June 26, 1824.
[24] Archeologists have identified the mission as Purification de la Tama, built in 1675 roughly two miles south of San Luis Mission. Mark F. Boyd, "Enumeration of Florida Spanish Missions in 1675," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 27 (October 1948): 184-85. For early descriptions of the site see John Lee Williams, *A View of West Florida*, (Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1827), 34; Bertram Groene, *Antebellum Tallahassee*, (Tallahassee: Heritage Foundation, 1971), 7-8
[25] "A Well-Improved Place," Tallahassee *Weekly Floridian*, August 2, 1881.

the new capital site, separated by a densely wooded jungle-like ravine. It would become the largest and most familiar structure in the new town--a place for parties, and it was a stopping point for visitors coming to the territory for the first time. Thus, DuVal strove mightily to prepare a home for his family who still resided in Kentucky.

That summer DuVal divided his time between Tallahassee and St. Marks, overseeing shipments of supplies, and supervising as best he could his new residence's construction. Most of DuVal's efforts were dedicated to speedily removing the Indians, but in this work, he encountered considerable resistance from Neamathla, who dragged his feet at every turn. Growing tensions accelerated once Robert Butler's surveying parties began their work in the area. By that time Washington authorities had ordered the new surveyor general to proceed immediately to the territorial capital and "open his Office at that place." The seat of government would be "selected for the basis of all the surveying operations in Florida, the ranges and townships, numbered from that point." The goal was for at least twenty townships to be prepared and proclaimed for sale by the end of the next session of Congress.[26]

Meanwhile, Neamathla, DuVal wrote Secretary Calhoun, was "assuming an insolent disposition and was threatening to drive out the White Settlers. I must take some decided step with this Chief—he is the only turbulent Man in the Nation—he is creating daily more and more

[26] George Graham to Robert Butler, July 9, 1824 and George Graham to Governor DuVal, July 10., 1824, TP, 23: 6-9, 11.

dissatisfaction among the Indians. [He] has avoided me since my Arrival here, although he was to meet me on the Day appointed, which he promised and failed to do." Also alarming was the fact that Neamathla's people were "now busy clearing land and building their habitations as if they were never to remove." DuVal appealed for more troops to be sent to St. Marks and asked that they be put under his command. He promised to act with "the soundest dressscretion [sic] and Coolest and most Mature reflection. . . But if a Single Chief should be factious or should in a Fit of rage or Drunkeness do mischief I should Certainly like to send a Detachment immediately & Arrest him."[27] A showdown was imminent.

Still, DuVal received little support from authorities. He again pleaded with Calhoun for assistance, citing Neamathla's strange behavior for "some time past; he has threatened strongly to take up arms. He will not come near; he has ordered off some of the settlers and certainly created no small alarm among the people . . . . I must take some decisive step with this chief immediately, or he will, perhaps, become more troublesome, if not dangerous. I shall act with prudence, but I shall do what ever may be necessary to give security to our inhabitants."[28] James Gadsden also understood the danger. Writing from Charleston, the officer that Secretary Calhoun provide DuVal with three or four companies of troops and that they be dispatched at the

[27] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, July 12, 1824, TP, 23: 14-17.
[28] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, July 22, 1824, *Calhoun Papers*, 9:239.

governor's command to "meet any emergency."[29] Even so, no support was forthcoming and the situation continued to degenerate.

The dangers notwithstanding, two weeks after his latest plea to Calhoun, DuVal moved decisively to counter the threat. As he reported to Calhoun on July 29, the military not being under "my direct command, I determined at once to call out the few men that reside in this quarter. They came as volunteers to the New Seat of Government well-armed. In the meantime," he continued, "I called to the chiefs and warriors of the Apalachicola to meet me at Judge Robinson's, about 30 miles from their towns—they all promptly attended—and were ready to act as I might order. This sudden movement so surprised the Tallahassee and Meckkessukee [sic] Indians, that they hurried to meet me and promised to obey my Orders and respect my authority." The next day, the governor wrote, "I took the interpreter with me and went to Neamatha's Town. I found their [sic] about 300 warriors and I saw many of them armed--I immediately went into their square yard (which is their foram [sic]) and gave them a talk, and ordered them all to meet me on the 26th of July at St. Marks & assured them that their ruin and distruction [sic] was cirtain [sic] unless they obeyed my orders—on the day appointed about 600 Indians attended at this place and I dilivered [sic] to them a talk that made considerable impression on them, I then appointed John Hicks their head chief to lead them south to their land, I selected the oldest son of King Hijah [Tuski Hajo], as his chief councellor [sic],

[29] James Gadsden to John C. Calhoun, July 24, 1824, *Calhoun Papers*, 9:242.

these appointments the warriors confermed [sic]."[30] In subsequent weeks the Indians formalized Hicks (Tuko-see-Mathla) as their leader.[31]

DuVal acted in the Neamathla crisis out of desperation, determination, or a combination of both. His action certainly evidenced much bravery, and his description of his confrontation with Neamathla would be embellished as time went on. In later years, the governor's vivid story-telling ability soon transformed the act into legend-like proportions. Accounts of the governor's bold action began to circulate in newspapers and other sources. A few months later one newspaper reported that once the Indians in the Tallahassee area "manifested a repugnance at leaving this country . . . and some of them evinced a disposition and actually armed themselves for hostility. They were happily quelled by his Excellency the Governor, who regardless of personal danger, rode into their towns, reproached them for their perfidy, and prevented their mischief."[32]

Writing in later years, Richard Keith Call reiterated the standard account of the event: "Angered" with Neamathla "beyond endurance, and recognizing that he was the cause of the disobedience to the Executive Order—Gov. DuVal charged him with disaffection and treachery

[30] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, July 29, 1824, TP, 23: 22-24.
[31] In an election held between Hicks and Micanopy he was elected head chief of all the Seminoles at the Indian Agency at Fort King. By August 1826 he was formally inaugurated. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War,* 52-63; Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida*, 55-56.
[32] Tallahassee *Florida Intelligencer* quoted in Pensacola *Gazette,* April 23, 1825.

and in the presence of his people—then seized him by the throat and shaking him bodily, thrust him out of the assembly, naming another man chief.[33] By the time Call wrote these words Washington Irving's "Conspiracy of Neamathla," (1840), had been well circulated and had become the accepted account of DuVal's confrontation with the chief.

On August 31 DuVal wrote Secretary Calhoun that he was actively engaged in preparing the Indians for transportation south. They were selling their corn and other crops. He urged the secretary to order troops to remain at St. Marks, as "their presence will induce the Indians to move off quietly—I fear they will do some mischief about the time of their departure expecting in the confusion to escape detection." From there DuVal turned to the matter of building a road from Pensacola to St. Augustine. DuVal recommended John Bellamy, who has a "settlement near the Mick kee Sukkee [sic] Towns" to undertake the project. For an advance of $5,000 toward the full amount of $23,000, Bellamy, with his slave force could accomplish the task. "Mr. Bellamy is a man of wealth, enterprise and of strict honesty, if he makes a contract it will be fulfilled to your satisfaction. This gentleman has a number of slaves and could do the work principally with his own force. I believe. . . . it would save much expense and leave the military force for other objects."[34] Authorities in Washington eventually followed DuVal's advice and

[33] Journal of Richard Keith Call, 154-55, Florida Historical Society Library.
[34] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, August 31, September 1, 1824, TP, 23: 61-62, 62-63.

contracted Bellamy for the project. In this work he consulted closely with Captain Daniel Burch—one of Jackson's engineers, and a man who eventually became Bellamy's son-in-law.

From August through October DuVal worked tirelessly planning for the Indians' departure and preparing for the legislative council's first session. One account noted "our worthy governor . . . as an example to others, is erecting a house of considerable magnitude, intended for the reception of his family. Under all the difficulties incident to new governments—the alternation of the sessions of the Council, the impracticability of bringing a large family into the country, and the privations necessarily attending on such a state of things—the Governor has been laboring, with an indefatigable zeal, in accomplishing the laudable objects of relieving the Territory from its embarrassments, and promoting its property and population, at the sacrifice of social endearments. To the uncommon promptitude of his exertions may be attributed the early location of the seat of government, and removal of the Indians, so important to accelerating the settlement of the Interior, and his course entitles him to the gratitude and affection of the Territory. . . . We are informed that a large number of strangers are travelling thro' the country with a view of selecting places for settlement. On the whole, we think that Tallahassee & surrounding country, have as fair a prospect of an increase of population as good society as ever was enjoyed by so young a country."[35]

[35] Pensacola *Gazette*, October 23, 1824.

Yet the Indians were fighting among themselves and DuVal was forced to arbitrate. They are "preparing to remove, but it is with *evident reluctance*," he wrote Secretary Calhoun. The governor had been ill and this he attributed to "the exposure to the hot sun and rain in a wilderness such as this. . . I have, for several weeks, been . . . confined to my bed. . . . The want of the services of the agent, or any one to assist me, had imposed heavy duties on me, and engrossed the whole of my time." Though his fifteen-year-old son accompanied him on many of his excursions in the wilderness, DuVal longed for his family. "It is now nearly two years since I have seen my family. I contemplate the ensuing winter returning to Kentucky for them."[36] The fever and strain had weakened and broken him down to the point that, as he confessed to Samuel Southard, his "health and spirits have failed so much in the last nine months that I have no more life in me than a Pitcher of stale Beer." Despite these obstacles, DuVal reported, he was determined to execute the removal within one month. "I have lived among these savages all summer, and was on the eve of battle with them," he wrote. [37]

A few days later, DuVal's began to regain his strength. He offered Southard a more vivid picture of the new territorial capital in the midst of the wilderness, as well as the obstacles he faced.

---

[36] William P. DuVal to John C. Calhoun, August 31, 1824, *Calhoun Papers,* 9: 296-97; TP, 23: 45n.
[37] William P. DuVal to Samuel Southard, September 3, 1824, Samuel Southard Papers, box 14, fo. 11, Samuel Southard Papers, Princeton University.

I have certainly spent the most lonely summer in this wilderness that ever passed over my head. Three poor families only live here. For the last four months, not one companion, not one intelligent person has given me an hour's conversation, with the exception of a land hunter who may now and then call on me for information relating to this country. . . . My presence was absolutely required at this point to keep the Indians in order, and I apprise you it has put me to great trouble, to preserve peace. At one time I had to bring out some volunteers in order to reduce them to submission. This was done without any bloodshed—but my opinion is that the prompt manner and decisive course on my part alone prevented dreadful outrages. I had made up my mind never to quit this spot unless overpowered. I felt as if I could die sooner than it should be said I was driven from the New Seat of Government.

Within the last Ten days hundreds of people from many of the states are riding over and exploring this fine country. There is no section in the Southern part of the United States to be compared with this region, between the Suwannee and Appalachicola rivers. It is rich, high, delightfully watered, and healthy—in fact here is the termination of the great Allegany [sic Appalachian] chain—I have visited all the southern states—and assure you that this district . . . very far exceeds any of them. Sugar cain [sic] and sea Island cotton have for two years past been cultivated on the Oclocknee & Appalachicola [sic] rivers with success—The Mississippe [sic] cannot yeald [sic] these articles in the perfection.

> My presence in this part of Florida has been of much service to the interests of the Territory and will rapidly advance the interests of the government. The sales of the publick [sic] lands (dispised [sic] and degraded as this country has been by cirtain [sic] politicians) will surprise the nation. For near two years have I devoted myself to my duties. Neither exposure, bad health, opposition, or the difficulties of settling a wilderness surrounded by savages, have for a moment stayed me in executing the projects which my judgement approved. This duty was required by the confidence reposed in me by the President, and the friends who recommended me for the station I fill. It was due to my own character and standing that it has been performed without regard to health, fortune, or domestic happiness—all have been sacrificed to duty and honor.
>
> How often with bitterness and grief have my thoughts lead me to my own happy quiet fireside and how deeply have I repented of ever having abandoned my lowly, sweet, happy home. I can at least command the common comforts of life—and my conscience will not render me unhappy. I know not what is going on in the world. The nearest post office to me is Hartford in Georgia 150 miles distant.[38]

While DuVal was absorbed with other pressing matters, he also found time to collaborate with those on hand to design the new town. Familiar with his father's work in Richmond and

[38] William P. DuVal to Samuel Southard, September 11, 1824, Samuel Southard Papers, box 14, fo. 11, Samuel Southard Papers, Princeton University.

his own planning efforts in Bardstown, Kentucky, DuVal assisted newly appointed Judge Augustus Woodward--who arrived in the Fall, in the work. Only few years before, Woodward had been the principle designer of the plan for Detroit, Michigan. The Tallahassee Plan eventually selected called for broad avenues, a capital square and four other squares named for American heroes George Washington, Anthony Wayne, Nathaniel Green, and Andrew Jackson.[39]

DuVal planned to pay the Indians as soon as possible for their improvements, call them to St. Marks, and prepare them for their movement south to their new lands. "I have held out as an inducement for the Indians to go in canoes by water & thus provide for their own a certain sum of from $5 to $10 for each canoe they should make for this purpose," he wrote Secretary Adams. He expected some forty or fifty would be built.[40] On October 26 DuVal reported to Calhoun, "The difficulty of reconciling the Indians to the late treaty; and restrain them from outrage had not been inconsiderable [and had] required the exercise of uncommon patience, time, and prudence. I now believe confidently that they will go without force, but evidently with reluctance. I hesitate not to aver that even now, was I to leave this country not one would move;

[39] Paisley, *The Red Hills*, 74-77. Also on the founding of the capital see Venila Lovina Shores, "The Laying Out of Tallahassee," *Apalachee* 5 (1957-1962): 41-47; Dorothy Dodd, "Old Tallahassee," *Apalachee* 5 (1957-1962): 63-71; Mary Lamar Davis, "Tallahassee Through Territorial Days," *Apalachee* 1 (1944): 48-50; Edward E Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 13-15; "Notes of Clifton Paisley," Red Hills of Florida Collection, box 1223, fo. 4 and box 1226, Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University.

[40] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of State, October 2, 1824, TP, 23:78-80; Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, October 26, 1824, TP, 23: 88-91.

when it is recollected that the Florida Indians never were controlled until the United States took possession of this country and that even since they have not the greater part of the time had either an agent or subagent with them to inform them and reduce them to order; it must be obvious that my duties have been as arduous as they are unpleasant."[41]

DuVal predicted that many of the Indians would rejoin the Creek nations. He urged that the others be paid for their improvements immediately as they are the poorest Indians in the southern country. "The money distributed to them for their improvements will furnish them with blankets & such things as will render them comfortable in their march. I have sent to New Orleans for the specie to meet this object and to provide them transportation (for they will not receive any paper money). It is expected in eight or ten days. . . I intend to pay them off by towns, and will require each Chief of a town to sign a receipt . . . This is the only way that this business can be satisfactorily performed."[42]

DuVal tasked John Bellamy with this duty. As previously noted, Bellamy resided in the neighborhood of the Miccosukee towns and no doubt fulfilled the duty with enthusiasm and efficiency. DuVal ordered the planter to "value the improvements of those Indians in Florida who are by Treaty to remove South within the lines assigned by Col. Gadsden the Commissioner appointed for that purpose." Bellamy was to go to every town, carefully record improvements,

[41] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, October 26, 1824, TP, 23: 89.
[42] Ibid, 91.

make a strict account, and report the names of the chiefs who accepted his evaluation. Those who objected to Bellamy's appraisal were to be reported to the governor. Bellamy visited twenty-nine towns and paid out $4,693 for improvements. Just over $1300 was paid for transportation for approximately 2,000 Indians.[43] Within days DuVal and a guard of volunteers were in St. Marks and oversaw the evacuation of the Indians to their new homes in the south. Richard Keith Call was not an eye witness but wrote of the scene years later: "It was a sad sight," Call wrote, "their poverty and dejection appealed to the hardest heart—Gov. DuVal—sympathized heartily with them—and endeavored in many general ways to reconcile them to this distressing exodus."[44]

While DuVal was busy with the Indians, the territorial secretary delivered his address to the legislative council on November 10. After congratulating the delegates on their first meeting in the new territorial capital, DuVal represented the site chosen by the commissioners as in the "centre of a beautiful and extensive body of high fertile land, finely watered and blessed with a salubrious atmosphere." The site was destined to acquire "talent, population, enterprise, and

[43] Governor DuVal to the Secretary of War, September 1, 1824 and Statement of John Bellamy for Services as Indian Commissioner, November 12, 1824, TP, 23:62-64, 101-05.
[44] Journal of Richard Keith Call, Florida Historical Society Library, 341. For an account of the trek south see Pensacola *Gazette,* December 11, 1824. For secondary accounts of Indian affairs during this time frame see Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida,* 52-60; Mahon, *The Second Seminole War,* 54-55; McReynolds, *The Seminoles,* 102-08; John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict,* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 69-72; Hoffman, *Florida's Frontiers,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 289.

wealth" which will "render it in a few years a delightful residence." He announced that the surveyor general would prepare twenty townships that would be brought into the market in a short time. He urged the council to select one of the three city plans under consideration and begin laying out the town and selling town lots so that the money can be used to "enable us to erect some of the most necessary buildings." DuVal noted that Congress had appropriated $23,000 to complete a road between St. Augustine and Pensacola.[45]

As the delegates strained to hear DuVal's address, nearly 2,000 Indians paddled and trudged their way south toward their new home in the reservation set out for them by the Treaty of Moultrie Creek. Neamathla was not among them. Having spurned the land provided for him in Gadsden County, the recalcitrant chief returned to Alabama. On November 26 an observer reported, "The Indians—Neamathla and family departed today for the country of Upper Creeks, with whom he intends to pitch his tent. The remaining tribes (Seminole) was assembling at Hick's town, from whence they take up their line of march for Tampa, in four days, all parties contented and happy as could possibly have been looked for."[46] By this time DuVal's reputation regarding his role in the founding of Florida's territorial capital and the "first removal" was beginning to take shape. In a positive portrayal of the governor's accomplishments, the *Pensacola Gazette,* noted, "The Indians are removed—the very last are about taking their leave

[45] Message of Gov. William P. DuVal, November 10, 1824, in St. Augustine *East Florida Herald*, November 27, 1824; Pensacola *Gazette*, December 11, 1824.
[46] Pensacola *Gazette*, December 11, 1824.

& seem reluctant to move from a country so pleasant and beautiful. They speak with great affection of the Governor, who has labored beyond the knowledge of most people in their behalf. By his personal courage and perseverance, they were quelled when about to commit excesses. They also speak of the kindness and attention of the white people generally."[47]

DuVal's handling of his civil duties also drew praise. A few weeks after the adjournment of the legislative session, in a confidential letter to the Secretary of State Adams, newly appointed Judge Augustus B. Woodward felt compelled to forward to the secretary an appraisal of the state of affairs in the new territorial capital," I found the public measures here had been modeled, according to my conception with sound judgement, and with such resolutions and foresight, as to render unnecessary a farther prosecution of that intention. For these results our country is principally indebted to the talents, the activity, and the integrity of Governor William P. DuVal; and it is due to that candor, with which I would wish to conduct myself toward all mankind, not to withhold my humble testimonial to his merits."[48]

Indeed, according to another account, all was well in the territory's new capitol. Of the frontier village, a new settler wrote, on November 26, "We are well, as could be expected, for a woods-town of five months old, and all the essential appointments of shelter for the head, and lining for the stomach; well-roofed houses, all with chimneys—more or less—great plenty of

[47] Ibid.
[48] Judge Woodward to the Secretary of State, January 7, 1825, TP, 23: 153.

fuel, as old Boon required it, two lengths of a tree from the door sill—good beds and blankets plenty; some chairs and an occasional table; good flour and corn-meal, bacon, beef, pork, poultry, wild turkeys, geese and ducks, butter, potatoes both kinds, onions, apples, coffee, tea and all the variety of Bar . . . and comforts—all good and plenty."[49]

Agreements obliged the government to supply the Indians with food, farm implements, and other necessities to assist them in their new living arrangements. But incompetence, inadequate funding, and outright fraud of contractors—despite DuVal's vigilance—meant that these obligations were often unmet. Finding the land allotted to them poor and unproductive, the Seminoles often moved beyond their boundaries, and clashes with the whites grew more frequent. By the time DuVal left office in 1834 Indian affairs were at a breaking point because President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal policy was being put in place. This scheme constituted a "Second Removal"—a plan that erupted into the Second Seminole War.

[49] Pensacola *Gazette*, December 11, 1824.