



UNITED SOUTH AND EASTERN TRIBES, INC.

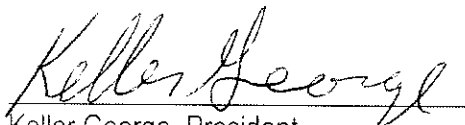
USET Resolution No. 2003:068

FORT HAMER SITE

- WHEREAS,** United South and Eastern Tribes, Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-four (24) federally recognized tribes; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member tribe, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member tribes' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are considering a proposal to construct a four lane highway and bridge, designated the Upper Manatee River/Fort Hamer Bridge project; and
- WHEREAS,** this highway and bridge will have an adverse impact upon the Fort Hamer Site (8 MA 315); one of the embarkation points during the period of native removal by the Federal Government (1818-1858), and as such is part of the Trail of Tears for the Native people of Florida; and
- WHEREAS,** the Fort Hamer site should be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under criteria (a) and (b); and
- WHEREAS,** the construction of this road and bridge has been strenuously objected to by the Seminole Tribe of Florida as well as the Sierra Club, and other environmental groups, historic preservationists, and local/regional citizens; and
- WHEREAS** the Florida Federal Highway Administration has not responded to the request of the Seminole Tribe of Florida to enter into consultation; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** that the USET Board of Directors supports the Seminole Tribe of Florida's request to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to re-open the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 review process and reconsider the proposed Upper Manatee River/Fort Hamer Bridge project.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Impact Week Meeting, at which a quorum was present, in Arlington, VA, Thursday, February 6, 2003.


Keller George, President
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.


Beverly M. Wright, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

“Because there is strength in Unity”

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Significance Statement for the Fort Hamer Site

Fort Hamer is a relic of the Indian Removal period, 1818-1858, of American history. It was established for the purpose of emigrating the few remaining native peoples in Florida and was used to that end. By the time the post was established in 1849, there may have been as few as three-hundred indigenous people left in the newly formed state. While logic cries out that such a small number of people should have represented a minimal threat to the non-Indian population, the Government, both Federal and state, moved to reduce the last of the tribal population. Three more conflicts occurred during the years 1849-1850, 1852 and 1855-1858.

The massing of tens of thousands of troops had failed to remove all of the native population. This war, called the Second Seminole War, lasted for seven years (1835-1842). The effort failed to remove the most determined of the resistance fighters. Since all out war had failed, a more devious method of removal was adopted. The following is an excerpt from a letter dated September 17, 1849. It was signed by both the Secretary of the Interior, T. Ewing, and George Crawford, the Secretary of war. It gives a striking insight into the official policies of the U.S. Government toward the natives peoples of Florida at that time.

“ The most obvious policy demands the employment of peaceable measures where there is a reasonable probability that they will effect the desired end. Such a course harmonizes with the general tone of humanity heretofore pursued towards that unfortunate and perishing race, and is congenial with the sense of justice which their pupilage to the government naturally awakens.

Accordingly, after reminding them, on all occasions of friendly conference which may be allowed by them, of the feebleness of their merely nominal strength as compared with the overwhelming force which will be brought to act against them- of their insecure and unhappy condition in a dense neighborhood of whites who everyday advance upon them and restrict them to narrow limits- of the interminable strifes which that neighborhood (as all past experience has proven) will certainly and fatally entail upon them, and from which there can be no escape, unless by a removal from such destructive influences as degrade the morals and would ultimately destroy their race- strengthening these suggestions by reminding them of the peace, and comfort, and security which a reunion with their brethren of the West, from whom they have been so long separated, would insure, you will

propose, in behalf of the government, to pay each Indian in Florida (without regards to sex or age), and to every negro or mixed blood attached to the nation, one hundred dollars, and to furnish transportation to the country of their tribe west of the Mississippi, and subsistence for twelve months after reaching their new homes.

The essence of this proposition is in its application to their voluntarily emigrating.”

The emigration was anything but voluntary. Harassed by troop movements, road building and the establishment of military posts across the state, a small group of Mickasuky finally responded by attacking a trading post and a white settlement. Following this the frontier teetered on the edge of open warfare. Troops were moved into the state and many old military posts were reopened. Billy Bowlegs and Sam Jones responded by capturing the Mickasuky responsible for the attacks and turning them over to the military. These people and nearly one hundred other native people “voluntarily” boarded a boat at Fort Hamer and left their ancestral lands forever.

While the Fort Hamer landing remained in use for generations, relatively little development has occurred in the region. This had left the site relatively intact. Not long ago a golf course was built near the western portion of the site. The owners of the golf course set aside a preservation area and a local historical society put up a monument memorializing the site. Ironically, the Florida Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration are seriously considering putting a four lane highway, with a right-of-way big enough for a later six lane highway, right through the site. The initial determination of the site’s significance did not even mention the fact that the site was part of the Trail of Tears. The area of potential effect (APE) discussed in the report clearly showed that the site significance had been determined under criteria (d) of the Criteria of Significance. This site’s significance should be reviewed under the criteria (a) and (b). We believe that there is little question that this site, one of only two remaining in the state that pertain to the Trail of Tears, would qualify for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under those criteria, and that this would also change the APE of the proposed project, placing the site well within the APE and indicating that adverse impacts to a site eligible for the NRHP would occur as a result of this project. These impacts would be those adverse impacts described in 36 CFR section 800.5(a)(1)(i), 36 CFR section 800.5(a)(1)(iv) and 36 CFR section 800.5(a)(1)(v).