

BOOKS

RED PATRIOTS THE STORY OF THE SEMINOLES By Charles H. Coe

A Facsimile Reproduction of the 1898 edition with an introduction by Charlton W. Tebeau (Gainesville: Univeristy of Florida Press, 1974).

Both the author and the book should be of special interest to the Florida history buff. Charles H. Coe was born in 1856 in Farrington, Connecticut. In 1874 he came with his family to live for six years in Florida. He lived most of the next forty years in Washington, D.C. Beginning in 1912 he made annual vacation trips to Florida, and in 1948 moved to Jupiter where his son, Mayne Reid, was retiring. Coe died there in 1954 in his ninety-ninth year. Among his many friends in the Jupiter area were Ernest F. Lyons, editor and publisher of the *Stuart News*, and Mr. and Mrs. John R. DuBois with whom he shared his interest in history.

Coe grew up to love nature. He enjoyed forests, streams, wildlife, hunting, fishing, boating, botany, and photography. For many years he lived on a boat and earned the title "Captain" as did other boat operators. He learned the printing trade in Appleton, Wisconsin, and practiced it all his working life. Like Benjamin Franklin, he received much of his education from his vocational life. In February 1877 he launched his first newspaper, the *Florida Star*, which was printed at Glencoe and mailed at New Smyrna. He sold the paper early in 1880 and for two decades it was published at Titusville before merging with the *Indian River News* at Cocoa.

The details of how Coe came to write *Red Patriots* remain a mystery. He probably had no direct contact with the Florida Indians during his brief, early stay in the state. Perhaps he came into contact with people active in the Indian Rights movement while in Washington. In the bibliography he listed Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor*, published in 1881. He quoted Joshua R. Giddings, another friend of the Seminoles who wrote *Exiles of Florida* . . . published in 1858. In the final chapters of the book, he recounted the efforts of individuals and organizations in behalf of the American Indians.

He dedicated his book to Mrs. Amelia S. Quinton, General Secretary of the Women's National Indian Association for some twenty years. One of the organization's forty missions for the education and Christianizing of the Indians was near Fort Myers, Florida, and is briefly described. He reported the futile efforts at the national level to assist the Indians, and the scattered, feeble attempts to do something about them on the Florida frontier, which Coe and others realized would soon be overrun by settlers. He would have been encouraged by state and national accomplishments regarding Indian Rights in this generation.

Admired Their Resistance

Coe's basic concern was for the future of the Seminoles living in Florida at the time. He considered their attachment to the country and land and their resistance to removal patriotism of the highest order. Hence, he selected the title *Red Patriots* and provided the long recital of their fight to remain in Florida. Having established to his satisfaction the wrongs done to the Indians, he turned to the fate of the handful, certainly less than a thousand, still in Florida. He saw a secure future for them only if they lived on lands of their own from which they could not be evicted.

Although he had little formal education, and no training or experience in historical research and writing, the book is remarkably good. It should be recalled that his purpose was to write the history of the Seminoles only as a background for the plea he was making in their behalf. Partisanship and lobbying are not history, but in this case we learn about the Indians still living in the state and glimpse the Indian Rights Movement in the nation and in Florida.

Charlton W. Tebeau