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'Dade pyramids' in National Cemetery

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



'THE DADE PYRAMIDS' IN NATIONAL CEMETERY

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. AUGUSTINE --- Three stone pyramids in the National Cemetery at St. Augustine mark the last resting place of the 105 men of Maj. Francis L. Dade's command massacred by the Seminoles near Bushnell on Dec. 28, 1835.

The cemetery, at Marine Street and Cemetery Lane, is bordered by a concrete wall, and contains graves of many soldiers killed during the Seminole Wars, other than Major Dade and his men. The tombs of Dade and his men are marked by three gray stone monuments known as the Dade Pyramids.

The bodies of the heroes lay exposed at the site of the massacre from the day of the battle until Feb. 20, 1836, when a body of soldiers under command of General Gaines came up from Fort Brooke at Tampa and gathered up the bodies of Dade and his men and buried them within the little log pen or fort where they had made their last fight. In 1842 the bodies were removed to St. Augustine and Interred in the Federal Cemetery at the St. Francis Barracks.

It was almost six years after the massacre, on August 15, 1842, the officers and men of the Army solicited donations to pay the cost of a second interment. And so it was the move to St. Augustine was financed. Ironically, nine days after the re-burial ceremonies, the cruel Seminole War, "The War of Florida," came to an end.

A monument to Dade and his men was erected on the grounds of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1945.

In 1965, a group of history buffs, led by Frank J. Laumer of Dade City and William M. Goza of Clearwater, got permission to excavate the grave sites of Dade and his men at Bushnell. They found in the mass graves some 300 buttons of the period, rifle butt plates, lead bullets, nails, a metal cannister fragment, belt buckles and miscellaneous metal fragments. They are now on display at the Dade Battlefield Museum. The property for the park was acquired by the Florida Legislature in 1921.

Major Dade's memory was honored by the naming of the newly-formed Dade County a few weeks after the massacre, and again with the naming of the town of Dade a City, a few miles south of the park on U.S- 301.

