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Serene spot marks site of brutal massacre

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



SERENE SPOT MARKS SITE OF BRUTAL MASSACRE

By HAMPTON DUNN

FORT LAUDERDALE --- Under the shade of giant oak trees in a little park alongside New River near downtown Fort Lauderdale is a significant marker on the site of a brutal massacre that took place here during the Second Seminole War in 1836.

The redskins were really on the warpath after the massacre of Maj. Francis L. Dade and his company of men at Bushnell in central Florida shortly after Christmas, 1835. But the word of that slaughter had not reached this tiny fishing village a couple weeks later when another mass murder wiped out a white family here.

William Colee, whose name is sometimes reported as Cooley, was a pioneer in this deep south Florida settlement. He came from Maryland and was doing well growing arrowroot from which starch was manufactured.

It happened that around New Year's 1836, Colee had gone down to Miami and was serving temporarily as the keeper of the Cape Florida lighthouse on Key Biscayne.

Everything was quiet around the homeplace with Mrs. Colee and her three children going about their household chores, and the tutor for the children, a man named Joseph Flinton, was on hand to instruct. About midday, two dozen or more Indians surprised the whites. In a few moments it was all over. Mrs. Colee, her children and the tutor had been massacred and their little log cabin was put to the torch.

The tragedy brought quick action from the U.S. Government: It built a stockade and called it Fort Lauderdale in honor of the C.O., Maj. William Lauderdale.

