UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Alexander Ramsey Thompson (1793-1837)

https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/biographies/sanc/BPYR-0-ATHOMPSON-F.html

Alexander Ramsey Thompson Jr. was born around 1793 in New York City, NY. He had one brother and three sisters, and his father had served in the American Revolutionary War and then worked at West Point. West Point is a military academy in New York that trains people to be officers for the Army. After his father passed away, Alexander entered West Point as a student, called a cadet. There, he learned science, math, and engineering.

Thompson graduated early from West Point when the War of 1812 began. As a Lieutenant in the infantry, he traveled to Northern New York to fight. Due to his distinguished performance, he earned the rank of Captain, and after the war ended in 1815, he served as a tactical instructor. Shortly after, in 1816, he married Mary Nexsen.

In 1824, Thompson served a temporary assignment as a Major, with a special title of Brevet Major, and he and his men traveled to the US frontiers to fix and build new forts. After fighting in the Black Hawk War of 1832, he officially earned the rank of Major in the 6th Infantry. He continued to serve at frontier posts, but in 1837, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and was sent to Florida to serve under Colonel Zachary Taylor. There, the Second Seminole War was underway.

The Second Seminole War started in 1835 and lasted until 1842. It was part of a three-war conflict between Florida Native Americans and the United States military. In 1830, the government had passed the Indian Removal Act, which had the goal of moving all of the Native Americans in Florida west to modern-day Oklahoma. Even though there were different tribes, the Native Americans were incorrectly all referred to as Seminoles.

On December 25, 1837, Zachary Taylor's troops, including Thompson, fought against 380-480 Seminoles in The Battle of Okeechobee. After three hours of fighting, the Seminoles retreated. Taylor called this battle a victory, even though his 800 troops lost more lives than the Native Americans. Sadly, one of those lives was that of Alexander Ramsey Thompson. Thompson was at the front lines of the attack and was shot. He is famously known for calling out, as he fell, "Keep steady men; charge the hammock - remember the regiment to which you belong."

The war had been difficult, deadly, and very expensive. U.S. soldiers had fought in new places against an enemy that used unfamiliar battle strategies. Nearly 1,500

U.S. Army soldiers died, and the war cost $30-40 million. Even though some Seminoles still remained in Florida, the United States decided to declare victory.

Thompson left behind a wife, mother, and sisters. He had left behind money for his wife, but due to financial depression in the United States of this time, his family (and many others) lost their savings. Eventually, after much petitioning to Congress from his wife, the Senate passed a bill that made sure Mary would receive money for life, called a pension, to help her financially.

Alexander Ramsey Thompson Jr. is buried at the US Military Academy Post Cemetery at West Point, NY. His grave is in Section A, at Site 44. He is also memorialized at the St. Augustine National Cemetery in Florida, due to his service in the Second Seminole War in Florida. He is remembered for his patriotism and military service.

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