
Turning Sufferers into Settlers

Gender, Welfare, and National Expansion in Frontier Florida

LAUREL CLARK SHIRE

In January 1836 Joseph White, the Florida Territory's Delegate to Congress, asserted, "The question now is, whether the women and children of respectable planters . . . driven from their homes by a merciless and savage enemy, and forced into your military cantonments, to escape the tomahawk and scalping-knife, are to be left to starve." This oratorical flourish, from an 1836 House debate on a resolution to aid Florida's "suffering inhabitants" during the Second Seminole War, was one of many moments in which policymakers mobilized gender and social provision to support national expansion. Invoking images of threatened and indigent widows, they enacted welfare policies aimed at protecting, retaining, and encouraging frontier settlers, both male and female.

This article traces federal policies in Florida that harnessed gender to expansionist policies between 1836 and 1842, and argues that as federal welfare policy evolved as a tool of expansionism, policymakers employed gender to naturalize and justify this evolution. This pattern of policymaking likely shaped national growth well beyond the southern frontier.¹

Influenced by a stream of stories about "Indian depredations" on

Laurel Clark Shire is assistant professor of history at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. She thanks the anonymous readers and the Editors of the *Journal of the Early Republic*, Joe Knetsch, Teresa Murphy, Julie Passanante Elman, Laura Cook Kenna, Kyle Riismandel, Stephanie Ricker Schulte, and Beth Richards.

1. Delegate Joseph M. White (Terr. of Florida), *Gales and Seaton's Register of Debates in Congress* (14 vols., Washington, DC, 1825–1837), 12: 2445.

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white settlers in Florida, Congress passed a resolution to “Aid the Suffering and Indigent Inhabitants of Florida” on February 1, 1836. Under this policy, the U.S. Army distributed food to hundreds of individuals whom they considered eligible for aid. As that program became too expensive and counter to the goal of populating the frontier with white families, policy shifted in the summer of 1841 to require whites to return to the Florida frontier as members of “families” if they wanted to continue to receive rations. Federal assistance changed again in 1842 when Congress passed the “Armed Occupation Act,” under which white household heads received free public land rather than food, a policy aimed at creating permanent settlements of white, male-headed family farms throughout Florida.²

Over the course of six years, leaders used ideas about femininity and masculinity, the social norms that Americans used to construct gender difference, to build support for these policies. Initially they relied on women’s feminine dependence to justify a rations policy as chivalrous charity. Subsequently, leaders exploited armed men’s masculine independence to rationalize free land programs as the most effective way to permanently install white settler families throughout Florida. As recipients of federal aid changed from “suffering inhabitants” to “armed settlers” between 1836 and 1842, each aid program aimed to restore women and men to their proper roles, which policymakers assumed would settle the frontier. As this shift indicates, gender is not a synonym for women in this story, although the essay will pay special attention to women. Policymakers used ideas about men’s and women’s ideal roles to naturalize and justify federal spending in Florida. Gender made it possible for them to debate policies aimed at ending the Second Seminole War as if those policies were federal social provision for the benefit of deserving white Americans. Gender allowed American leaders to begin a welfare program for war victims and subsequently change it into a policy of land entitlements for deserving settlers.³

2. “Resolution Authorizing the President to Furnish Rations to Certain Inhabitants of Florida,” Feb. 1, 1836, reprinted in *Public Statutes at Large of the USA* (Boston, 1850), 131.

3. Feminist historian Joan Scott defines gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes,” as well as “a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91 (Dec. 1986), 1053–75, quote on 1067.

The 1836 Suffering Inhabitants policy became law in the first few months of the Second Seminole War, the costliest Indian war the United States ever fought. Spain relinquished Florida to the United States in 1821, and in the early 1830s Americans began to exert pressure on the Seminoles to leave Florida. By late 1835 conflicts between whites and Indians in Florida had escalated into a guerilla war, which lasted until 1842. Homesteads and, therefore, women and children were on the front lines. Americans viewed Seminole attacks on families and property as “savage” and “barbaric,” in spite of the fact that American forces resorted to similar strategies. The U.S. Army attacked Seminole villages, where they killed and captured people, and burned homes, goods, and fields. The Seminoles retaliated by bringing the fight to white settlers while evading American troops. Many white settlers, fearful of “Indian depredations” (as Americans termed them), fled to other states or to military garrisons.⁴

This was not the first conflict in which American leaders combined military, land, and social policies in support of territorial expansion. Generous land policies for veterans, pre-emption rights for squatters, and distribution and graduation schemes all happened before or concurrent with the policies in Florida discussed here. Laura Jensen argues that beginning in the early republic, entitlements such as land grants and veteran pensions enabled and largely accomplished the geographical expansion of the country through military and civilian conquest. Jensen contends that social provision in the United States was rarely about need, but was usually about drafting citizens into service toward national goals. This study supports Jensen’s case, but argues that gender should not be overlooked in the history of welfare and expansion. The desire to support independent men and help dependent women shaped the debates, content, and implementation of expansionist policies. Gendered rationales for expansionist welfare policies appeared so natural, however, that one can easily fail to see them. For example, one might assume that all the “suffering inhabitants” were female, or that (as Jensen assumes) all “armed occupiers” were men. After all, women rarely appear as significant actors in territorial conquest; they are usually the victims or help-meets. And Americans typically have not classified men (whether settlers,

4. Joe Knetsch, *Florida’s Seminole Wars, 1817–1858* (Charleston, SC, 2003); John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835–1842* (Gainesville, FL, 1967; 2nd ed., 1985); John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America’s Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville, FL, 2004).

veterans, firefighters, or civil servants) as “welfare” recipients, even though the benefits granted to such men were arguably a form of social provision. This study of a short period on a specific frontier reveals, however, that both men and women benefitted from all of these policies, and furthermore that military policies aimed at supporting male settlers included social provision, and that aid programs aimed at women were part of a larger military strategy of conquest.⁵

These assumptions arise from the ways that gender has shaped notions of independence and dependence, concepts that had both gendered and racial connotations in early America. The antebellum social order, across regional variations, presumed that white men were independent, chivalrous, and responsible for the well-being of “dependents”—women, children, servants, and slaves. Those dependents, especially women and the servants and slaves they supervised, were charged with creating domestic spaces that nurtured their families. Since the policies enacted in Florida in the period discussed here were aimed at providing for widowed and orphaned dependents and supporting the settlement of white families (many of them slave owners), the household social order was central to the framework policymakers used.⁶

Although in some ways women were limited by antebellum gender ideology, women’s roles also expanded due to their presumed ability to create proper domesticity, especially on a violent frontier. In Florida, white women played important roles as wives, mistresses of slaves, domesticators of new territory, and mothers of what would be the first generation of Americans born in Florida. Nineteenth-century domestic ideology did not confine women to the private sphere; rather, gender operated as a way for politicians and military leaders to recognize women

5. Laura Jensen assumes that only men applied for and received Armed Occupation Act (AOA) land in *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy* (New York, 2003), 181. Susan Sterett notes that beginning in the mid nineteenth century, Americans framed entitlements granted to men as benefits given to deserving citizens, and those granted to women as charity for the indigent and dependent. Sterett, *Public Pensions: Gender and Civic Service in the States* (Ithaca, NY, 2002).

6. Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York, 2005); Joan Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York, 1991); Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY, 2002); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York, 1995).

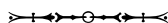
in Florida—“the women and children of respectable planters”—as individuals with a direct claim on the nation’s resources. Domesticity, American politicians believed, would guarantee permanent settler colonialism.⁷

Yet there were also gender challenges policymakers had to meet to pass each policy. Politicians believed that settlers were more effective than soldiers at colonizing and holding land in Florida, yet it was a dangerous frontier where Indians harmed and killed white women and children. American politicians thus cast white women in two roles: the innocent victim and the civilizing agent. As victims of Indian violence white women were highly visible in American press, and support for the war in Florida was cast as a defense of white women and their families, regardless of public dispute over the expansion of slavery or the removal of Native Americans. In their role as moral helpmeets, white women became less visible in policy. Behind protective male household heads, policymakers tacitly recognized women’s presence in language about “families.” In the midst of these rhetorical changes, some women adeptly played both roles; widowed “sufferers” under one policy became “settlers” under another, and some *single* women filed land claims as “heads of families.”⁸

7. On white women’s work in Florida, see Anya Jabour, “‘The Privations & Hardships of a New Country:’ Southern Women and Southern Hospitality on the Florida Frontier,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 75 (Winter 1997), 259–75; Tracy Revels, *Grander in Her Daughters: Florida’s Women During the Civil War* (Columbia, SC, 2004); Edward Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida’s Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002). On domestic ideology see Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70 (Sept. 1998), 581–606; Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood, 1800–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966), 151–74; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, CT, 1977); Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (Urbana, IL, 1987); Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826–1860* (New York, 1979); Alisse Portnoy, *Their Right to Speak: Women’s Activism in the Indian and Slave Debates* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Michael Pierson, *Free Hearts & Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003).

8. Amanda Bleach Willis, Adela Flotard, Eliza L. Crews, Susannah Brown, and Rebecca Munden were suffering inhabitants in 1842 and filed AOA land claims in 1842–43. Single/widowed women Eliza Ann Riley, Charlotte Davis, Christian Brown, Mary Darby, Eliza Glenn, Elizabeth Standley, Susan Whitehurst, Mary

This article analyzes the passage and implementation of the Suffering Inhabitants policy in Florida. The analysis follows several of its female beneficiaries into the decades following the Second Seminole War when many of them became successful farmers and planters. The choices made by the women who received these benefits shaped these policies, as did the ideas about male and female roles held by men in congress and the military. Throughout, some of the surprising connections among gender, welfare, and national expansion in antebellum Florida become clear.



The resolution “for the relief of the indigent and suffering inhabitants of Florida,” enacted by Congress in early 1836, gave rations “from the public stores to the unfortunate sufferers who have been driven from their homes by Indian depredations.” It was in the context of a public outcry against Seminole attacks on whites that the U.S. Congress voted to aid the “suffering inhabitants” of Florida. A January 13, 1836, memorial to congress from the leading citizens of St. Augustine requested rations for citizens who had been dispossessed by Indians or who had lost male providers killed in action. Sympathy for the victims of Indian violence was one motivation for congressional action, but Florida leaders also believed that stabilizing and increasing the population of white families moved Florida closer to statehood, something that affluent planters in Middle Florida hoped to achieve in the 1830s.⁹

Hall, Elizabeth Ann Barry, Mary Ann Garrison, Charlotte Ayers, Nancy Campbell, Elizabeth Hogan, and Ann Mangham filed AOA claims. “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants,” Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1822–1860, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, DC; United States Bureau of Land Management, *Florida Pre-1908 Homestead & Cash Entry Patents*, General Land Office Automated Records Project [CD-ROM] (Springfield, VA 1993); Armed Occupation Act Permits, General Land Office Records, Title and Land Records Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Tallahassee).

9. See note 2. Reid recounted that during a very recent attack on the Stafford family, the husband had distracted Seminole attackers while his wife took their children out the back door. She fled ten miles to a neighbor’s house with her three small children, “one five year old, one smaller and a third at the breast . . . the poor woman counted seven guns—then an interval—& then a single gun; she made her way through a cold night, with one child in her arms, another on her back and the third following . . . she arrived safely but much exhausted—poorly

The federal response, however, focused on aid to women and children. In Congress, support for the resolution was overwhelming but not unanimous: 178 representatives voted for it, while 14 opposed it. While some representatives issued partisan attacks, ultimately they did not vote along party or sectional lines. Regardless of party and region, members of Congress relied on gendered ideology. When Congress considered this request in early 1836, members invoked a wide range of arguments for and against the policy, including sympathy for victims (widows and their children), a need for civilizing women on frontiers, honorable men's duty to provide for the needy, the moral blameworthiness of the indigent (which depended on gender and age), and the construction of white settlers as "innocent" bystanders in wars between the United States and Native Americans (which rested on the assumption that Americans were dependent on a paternal nation).¹⁰

Gender's significance in this debate had historical roots, as it had long influenced American discourse regarding aid to indigent people. Beginning in the early republic, gender ideology—assumptions about

clad & suffering from cold." Reid clearly hoped that her story would compel national leaders to send military aid to the anxious territory. Robert Raymond Reid to John Forsyth, Dec. 3, 1835, University of Florida, Special Collections, PKY, Florida Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, Box 5, Folder 23. In 1839, following several depredations in Madison County, forty-one frontier residents sent a petition to Army Headquarters at Fort Lawson, requesting that commanders station a company of soldiers near their settlements. Explaining that they were "living upon the immediate frontier, exposed continually to the hostile attacks of the Indians," the petitioners cited the recent attack against the Chaires family as the reason for their fears. Green Chaires survived, but his wife and children had not. Undated petition, William Davenport Papers, 1835–1842, University of Florida, Special Collections, PKY, Florida Manuscripts Collection, Box 1, Folder 1. The depredation on Chaires's family occurred in July 1839, so this petition was sent sometime after that; see R. K. Call to William Davenport, July 17, 1839, in the Davenport Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

10. *Gales & Seaton's*, 12: 2438–2439; "Domestic Intelligence—from the St. Augustine Herald," *Army and Navy Chronicle* (Washington, DC), Oct. 26, 1837; votes for similar policies during other Indian Wars did split along party lines, as Michele Landis discusses, "Let Me Next Time Be Tried By Fire: Disaster Relief and the Origins of the American Welfare State 1789–1874," *Northwestern University Law Review* 92 (Spring 1998), 967–1034; "Sufferers in Florida," *Gales and Seaton's*, 12: 2438–2448; U.S. Congress, "Biographical Directory," <http://bio.guide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>.

independence and dependence rooted in the social norms of patriarchal household order—influenced which public payments counted as “charity” and which were well-deserved rewards for “patriotic service.” Policies aimed at male workers and at mothers shared an underlying belief in paternalist family structures, as both supported male-headed households or replaced absent men with public support. The policies that the United States enacted in Florida in the 1830s and 1840s shared this commitment to a patriarchal norm. The Suffering Inhabitants policy aided women and children only because they were without male providers, justifying the government’s role as a stand-in paternal provider and reinforcing notions of feminine helplessness.¹¹

During the January 30, 1836 House debate, several representatives presented the government, or perhaps the nation itself, as a paternal figure that should provide for the white victims of the Seminoles and the Florida war. The war had created a situation in Florida in which individual patriarchs could not protect or provide for their families on the Florida frontier. Representative Francis Granger, a New York Whig, decried the government’s impotent response: “The war-cry is up in the woods, the tomahawk glitters in the sunbeam, the scalping-knife is urged to its cruel duty, the flower of your chivalry is strewed along the plain, and yet every department of this administration is as dumb as the bleeding victims of this inglorious contest.” Granger was issuing a partisan attack, but he did so in highly gendered terms. If militant masculinity had allowed the “flower” of its “chivalry” to be killed, then the nation absolutely had to act to rescue survivors, as well as its own pride and manhood. Having failed to protect them, the nation moved to provide for their widows and children.¹²

Pitiable widows inspired much public sympathy in the nineteenth

11. Sterett, *Public Pensions*; Barbara Nelson, “The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen’s Compensation and Mothers’ Aid,” in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon, (Madison, WI, 1990), 123–51; Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (New York, 1994); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

12. Kirsten E. Wood, “Broken Reeds and Competent Farmers: Slaveholding Widows in the Southeastern United States, 1783–1861,” *Journal of Women’s History* 13 (Summer 2001), 34–57; and Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

century and often received public aid. Although they were women independent of male household authority, widows had fulfilled their proper family role by marrying and (usually) bearing children. Americans expected widows to be helpless in the aftermath of their husbands' deaths, but also anticipated that they soon would competently shoulder their new household responsibilities. In fact, many widows succeeded at running family farms and businesses in the antebellum south. Kirsten Wood finds that they operated as "independent inferiors" in the patriarchal order, emphasizing their commitments to maternity and family, and justifying their power as simply carrying out their departed husbands' wishes. While many of the women who benefited from the government programs in Florida in the 1830s and 1840s were widows who subsequently proved themselves competent as household heads in a frontier territory, the policies themselves did not require them to be widowed. Rather, political leaders used the sympathy generating category of "widow" to propel policies forward, without restricting either rations or land programs to widows only. In addition to widows, many married women (as well as men) and some single people took advantage of them.¹³

As justification for this aid, and to heighten their colleagues' sympathies, many congressmen repeated stories of Indian attacks in Florida during the debate. Several cited female victims and their children who were attacked at home and torn from their secure domestic spaces. They also repeatedly invoked the "tomahawk and scalping-knife" as symbols of the cruel methods of the "savage" Indians. Representative Amos Lane of Indiana (Democrat) described Florida's frontier as "a scene that can but call for the commiseration of every sympathetic bosom," in response to "the cries of women and children" as "the scalping-knife is urged to its bloody office." Sympathy for women and children, in addition to calling on a national paternalism, also identified the speaker as "civilized" in contrast to the "savages" who attacked these pitiful white settlers with exotic weapons. Rhetorically, gender framed policymakers as paternal protectors, and aid recipients as damsels in distress.¹⁴

13. Granger, *Gales and Seaton's*, 12: 2441; "Hostility of the Indians of Florida and Military Operations Against Them in 1836," *American State Papers: Military Affairs* 6: 19-22.

14. Lane, *Gales and Seaton's*, 12: 2441-2442; for examples of Indian depredation narratives, see "An Authentic Narrative of the Seminole War; and of the Miraculous Escape of Mrs. Mary Godfrey, and Her Four Female Children" (1836), reprinted in Kathryn Z. Derounian-Stodola, *Women's Indian Captivity*

The Suffering Inhabitants policy not only aimed to feed women and children, but it was also designed to prevent them from fleeing Florida in search of food and shelter, and thus supported existing white settlements and their future expansion. By 1836 East Florida's white American residents faced food scarcity. The flight of farmers to the safety of towns and forts and the arrival of American troops in need of supplies quickly led to a shortage of provisions in Florida. Even for those with means, there was not enough food to buy. This necessitated government intervention because, as Rep. Granger noted, without aid the few inhabitants left in Florida who had been "driven from their homes" would "inevitably perish." The alternative to starvation and Indian depredations was to leave the territory, an option that would create a flow of migrants in precisely the wrong direction. Giving rations to widows and orphans not only satisfied a paternalistic urge, but it also served national interests by encouraging Americans to remain in Florida.¹⁵

Alongside white women's useful roles as sympathetic victims of Indian violence and recipients of paternal aid, policymakers also considered them vital to the process of building successful and permanent settlements. Single male settlers with guns were hardly distinct from soldiers, since without families they were less likely to settle permanently. As Senator Samuel Stokely of Ohio (Whig) later opined during the debate over the Armed Occupation Act in July 1842, "the presence of the families would bind the settlers to the soil" and women had "a most happy effect in stimulating the courage and enterprise of their male relatives." The senator took for granted that white women were necessary for settlement, as did many of his peers, who rarely made comments as explicit. Since

Narratives (New York, 1998), 211–34; "Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mason, with An Account of the Massacre of Her Youngest Child," reprinted in *Captivity and Sufferings of Gen. Freegift Patchin* (New York, 1977); "A True and Authentic Account of the Indian War in Florida, Giving the Particulars Respecting the Murder of the Widow Robbins" (New York, 1837); Andrew Welch, "A Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Mrs. Jane Johns" (1837), reprinted in *A Narrative of the Early Days and Remembrances of Ocoela Nikkanochee, Written by His Guardian* (Gainesville, FL, 1977), 229–60.

15. "Renewal of the War in Florida," *Atkinson's Saturday Evening Post*, May 21, 1836, 3; "The Seminole War," *Niles Weekly Register* (Baltimore), Mar. 26, 1836, 53; Granger, *Gales & Seaton's*, 12: 2441; see also *Army and Navy Chronicle*, Feb. 11, 1836.

white women were fundamental to American settlement, granting rations and protection to them was a shrewd method of encouraging them to stay in the territory. The Suffering Inhabitants policy was more than a paternalist response to needy women and children. It was also an investment in the colonization of Florida, where women's presence would make white communities permanent and prevent the Seminoles from gaining ground.¹⁶

Beyond national paternalism, sympathy for needy widows and orphans, and the desire to retain female residents and their civilizing influence, debate also included matters that bridged expansion and social provision. Placing Floridians in the category of "sufferers" implied a connection to others who had received federal disaster aid. As Michele Landis Dauber argues, disaster relief was "the first sustained, organized social welfare program." Beginning in 1789, the U.S. sent aid in various forms to victims of earthquakes, floods, fires, Indian depredations, and, during the War of 1812, British attacks. The Suffering Inhabitants policy in Florida shares much with the disaster relief precedents that Dauber identifies in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, including concern about policy precedents, the moral blamelessness of the victims, the assertion that the government was partially to blame, invocations of charity above precedent, and (in the case of Indian depredations) a focus on the "savage" nature of the Indians. Politicians discussed precedents for this policy, including relief of victims on the Niagara Frontier after the War of 1812 and aid the American government had sent to victims of earthquakes, floods, and Indian and British depredations. Unlike previous "sufferers," those in Florida were the first white Americans to receive food and shelter *as a group* from the Army *during an ongoing war*, though congress had granted aid for individual petitions during and

16. Stokely, as quoted in Michael E. Welsh, "Legislating a Homestead Bill: Thomas Hart Benton and the Second Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57 (Oct. 1978), 169. Senator William Campbell Preston expressed a similar view. Florida was "low and dangerous to the health of the Anglo-Saxon blood, and inviting only to those who had slaves to perform their labor," distinguishing it from the West where "farmers, a man and his wife" would subsist on the land. Real, permanent settlement required the presence of white farmers and their wives, not the absentee slave owners he feared would acquire Florida lands. Preston (South Carolina, Whig), *Congressional Globe* (Washington, DC, 1840) 26th Cong., 1st sess., appendix, 75.

after other armed conflicts. For example, Congress partially reimbursed the Niagara victims for property losses suffered due to British attacks during the War of 1812, granting them cash payments after the war.¹⁷

Congressmen also (ironically) discussed *Indian* treaty provisions as a pertinent precedent for government aid during a war. Such provisions had granted many displaced Native Americans rations and annuities in exchange for leaving their land. Supporters of the Suffering Inhabitants policy cited previous aid for the Seminoles as one rationale for providing similar aid to its own citizens; if the Seminoles had received help, surely white families deserved as much. Delegate Joseph White of Florida noted that even as Congress debated this resolution, the Army was feeding the Seminoles awaiting removal at Fort Brooke (Tampa Bay). The United States had granted Seminoles a variety of provisions in treaties, including rations, farming equipment, livestock, and cash. All the Seminoles forced westward received money, food, and clothing beginning in 1834 and continuing through the period of the Suffering Inhabitants policy. In the long history of Indian diplomacy, the U.S. granted annuities to many Indian tribes in exchange for their land, which again indicates that provisions for “welfare” (of Indians as well as white frontier settlers) were policies aimed at supporting national territorial expansion.¹⁸

Given these extensive precedents in disaster relief and Indian policy, congressional leaders tried to foresee how their actions might inspire future policies. Many anticipated that Americans would continue to spread further to the south and west. They worried that this resolution would result in a legislative precedent for taking “a hundred millions”

17. Landis, “Let Me Next Time Be Tried By Fire,” quote 973; Michele L. Landis, “Fate, Responsibility, and ‘Natural’ Disaster Relief: Narrating the American Welfare State,” *Law & Society Review* 33 (June 1999), 257–318; Michele Landis Dauber, “The Sympathetic State,” *Law and History Review* 23 (Summer 2005), 387–442; Michele Landis Dauber, “The War of 1812, September 11th, and the Politics of Compensation,” *DePaul Law Review* 53 (2003–2004), 289–354.

18. Joseph White, *Gales and Seaton’s*, 12: 2439; Joe Knetsch, *Florida’s Seminole Wars*, 47–48, 54; Knetsch, *Fear and Anxiety on the Florida Frontier: Articles on the Second Seminole War, 1835–1842* (Dade City, FL, 2008), 34; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 47; Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, OK, 1972), 314–386; Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816* (New York, 1999).

from the Treasury to aid settlers who suffered in frontier wars with Indians. Their concerns were prescient. Just four months later, following a debate in which lawmakers cited the Suffering Inhabitants policy, the House approved rations for whites displaced by Creek attacks along the Florida border in Alabama and Georgia.¹⁹

While the concern with precedent occupied some leaders, others took up the question of “relief” itself, or social provision. Policymakers debated the moral responsibility of the targeted aid recipients. Some congressmen worried that this policy would make Florida’s residents lazy and dependent. Rep. Richard Hawes of Kentucky (Democrat) proposed amending the resolution by replacing “sufferers” with the phrase “women, children, and men unable to bear arms,” in order to avoid creating dependence: “Feed men up, stuff them with rations, and . . . there is no fighting. . . . Let them be hungry at times, and then they will fight fast enough.” As Hawes’s proposed amendment indicates, gender and age were two significant criteria for establishing that a victim was not responsible for his or her own suffering. Dependent white women, children, and disabled men could not possibly be responsible for their situation.²⁰

The concern about creating dependence came directly from debates about poverty relief in the early nineteenth century. Americans disagreed about the relative superiority of “outdoor” relief (assistance to poor people living in their own homes) or “indoor” relief (aid that required poor people to live and labor in institutions). Those who attacked “outdoor” relief believed that giving the poor aid without surveillance undermined their work ethic and encouraged idleness. Deliberations in Congress regarding the Florida victims never directly addressed “outdoor” and “indoor” relief because there was no option for indoor relief. Florida was an overwhelmingly rural federal territory. It lacked the state agencies and the urban centers in which benevolent agencies typically operated. The Suffering Inhabitants policy offered white settlers the option to live at a fort if they sought a safe place to dwell, but it did not require them to do so. The policy also excluded “able-bodied men” in order to satisfy skeptics such as Representative Hawes. Rather than debating whether to

19. Gorham Parks, a Maine Democrat, *Gales and Seaton’s*, 12: 2440; *Gales and Seaton’s*, 12: 1537, 1592–93, 4032–50.

20. Hawes, *Gales and Seaton’s*, 12: 2442.

build poorhouses in Florida, the congressional debate took up questions about moral blameworthiness, disaster relief, and precedents.²¹

The question of moral blame was also distinct from contemporary poverty debates because Florida was a frontier where Indian warfare, rather than the tax burden created by poor people, was the problem. It was easier, therefore, for lawmakers to blame forces other than the victims themselves for their situation. Supporters of the policy put the responsibility on the Indians and the American government. Delegate Joseph M. White of Florida (as a federal territory Florida sent a nonvoting delegate to congress) opined, “This bloody war, now raging on our frontier, was not produced by any acts of the people who were plundered and murdered, nor by causes which they could, by any foresight or courage, control or prevent. It grew out of the relations between the Government of the United States and these Indians. A treaty was entered into . . . the time arrived, and they violated this convention, and commenced this scene of destruction upon the peacable (sic), unsuspecting, and unoffending inhabitants of Florida.” Although surely the Seminoles recognized the presence of whites as very clear proof of American aggression, this view maintained white American settlers’ innocence by relying on gendered relations of power. It presumed that Americans were dependent on the paternal nation, unconnected to the government’s diplomatic endeavors, and, therefore, innocent of any aggression. Conveniently, it held that whites were victims of their government’s statecraft, rather than its perpetrators and beneficiaries.²²

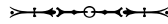
Although no one expressly cited it, the federal Indian Depredation Claims System probably contributed to this framing of the conflict, because it rewarded private citizens who had suffered in the process of expanding settlement and encouraged Americans to make their government responsible for losses they suffered in frontier conflicts. From 1796 until 1920, the government pledged to reimburse losses that citizens incurred by “Indian depredation” if the attack took place outside of Indian territory during a time of peace. So many southerners filed claims against the Creeks and Seminoles in the 1830s that Congress appointed

21. Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York, 1986), 3–57; Greg Shaw, *The Welfare Debate* (Westport, CT, 2007), 19–40.

22. White, *Gales and Seaton’s*, 12: 2443–2444.

a commission to investigate in 1837. It eventually rejected these claims because the attacks had taken place during war, not peacetime.²³

Although some placed responsibility on the government, others in Congress did not accept white settlers' innocence. Opponents pointed out that the settlers went to the frontier because they stood to benefit. Rep. Joel Turrill, a New York Democrat, believed that Floridians were no different from other pioneers "whose spirit of enterprise has stimulated them, with the hope of gain, to press their settlements into the wilderness, where savage tribes still linger . . . with a full knowledge of the hardships and privations, of the difficulties and dangers they have to encounter." As such, they had "no particular claims over other pioneers." Turrill proposed an image of the hardy, presumably male pioneer aware of danger as an alternative to the assertion that the Florida victims were dependents without responsibility for their own suffering. Although this opposition failed in debate, it foreshadowed the gendered shift that took place as policies changed in the early 1840s. When Congress passed the Suffering Inhabitants resolution on February 1, 1836, gendered arguments for sympathy, nationalist paternalism, and white women's vital role in colonization overcame concerns about creating precedents and idle dependents. Gender also shaped how the military executed this policy.²⁴



As violence escalated toward war in 1835, terrified whites began to pour into towns like Jacksonville and St. Augustine. Anna Maria Dummett, daughter of a sugar planter, narrowly escaped an 1836 Seminole attack on her family's plantation and weathered the remainder of the war in St. Augustine. She recalled, "It might be said we lived under 'martial law.' It was not safe to ride half a mile out of town, for the Indians were at times very near. . . . A very strict guard was kept up." Many other white refugees arrived in towns in 1836 and 1837, where they faced food shortages, overcrowding, and disease.²⁵

23. Larry C. Skogen, *Indian Depredation Claims, 1796–1920* (Norman, OK, 1996).

24. Joel Turrill, *Gales and Seaton's*, 12: 2446.

25. Anna Maria Dummett, "Remembrances of the Old Plantation," *Literary Florida* (Feb. 1949), 8–15.

Garey's Ferry, established in early 1836 as the principal depot for the Army in Florida, was a post where Floridians drew rations. During the war between seven and eight hundred people camped there in open-sided shanties. They had left their homes for protection from the Indians. In 1836 one visitor noted that in all of the 300 huts he visited he found two or three people sick with measles, cholera or influenza. Army Surgeon Jacob Motte concluded that Garey's Ferry was "remarkable for nothing except flies, fleas, and heat." The settlers camped in this squalor were the "sufferers" Congress intended to aid.²⁶

President Jackson delegated the execution of the rations program to the Army, which was the only organization in Florida with the infrastructure and resources to provide aid. This meant that American military leaders decided who was worthy of support as they attempted to support settlement and defeat the Seminoles. Since the Army's goal was to end the war with at least a claim of American victory, it designed an aid program that encouraged behaviors that were likely to help win the war and limited those that might hinder their efforts.²⁷

Secretary of War Lewis Cass employed normative values to establish who was an eligible "sufferer": These were women and minors who had suffered an Indian attack or lost a husband or father in the war, and who demonstrated a stable, moral character. He authorized rations only for people who had fled their farms or who could not find supplies to purchase, and further limited the program to the typical dependents of southern households: women, children, and slaves. Heads of families drew rations for their families as a unit. The Army also required able-bodied men to serve in the military if they wanted access to rations, since if they were otherwise employed then they ought to be supporting their families. Those who did join the military had to support their own families, except for their children under fourteen and slaves under ten, who were allowed half rations (presumably children and young slaves could not work to support themselves). Rations included flour or bread, meat, salt, vinegar, beans, coffee, sugar, soap, and candles. Free and enslaved

26. "War In Florida," *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore), Sept. 3, 1836, 6; Jacob R. Motte, *Journey into the Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field During the Creek and Seminole Wars 1836-1838*, ed. James F. Sunderman (Gainesville, FL, 1963), 95.

27. *Army and Navy Chronicle*, Feb. 4, 1836, 2 and 76; Feb. 11, 1836, 95.

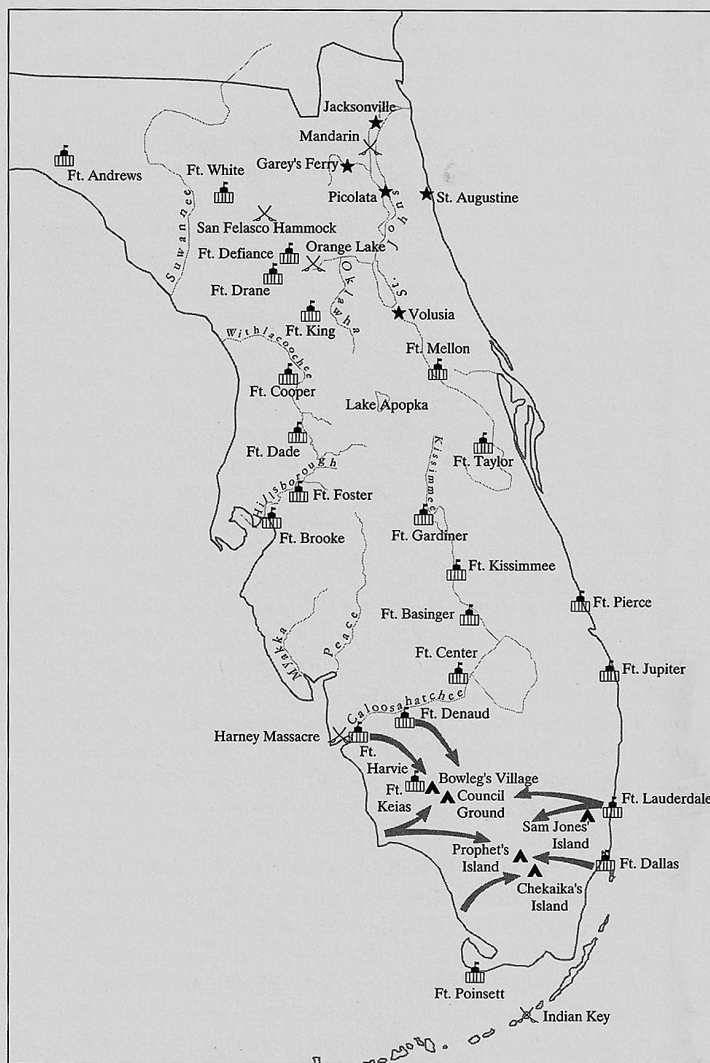
“colored” persons “whose owners could not procure provisions for them” received partial rations—of bread, meat, and salt.²⁸

As anticipated in the language of the resolution and its implementation, the lists of suffering inhabitants were limited mostly to white women and children, but widowers, displaced families, elderly, and indigent residents who had no other means of support also drew rations for their families. At the end of the war in June of 1842, the one surviving list of the suffering inhabitants included four hundred individuals, drawing rations at five different forts or garrisons located in north Florida (see Figure 1). By the time Army officers made this list (the only extant evidence), the program had shifted to rewarding settlers who returned to the frontier, and the Army had already removed many people from the rations rolls. These four hundred people were a small fraction of the hundreds who had received rations in the previous six years. Of the four hundred aid recipients remaining on the rolls in 1842, most were white women and their children; seventy-five women (mostly war widows) accompanied by two hundred children and about fifty slaves continued to receive rations. At least sixty of these women were widows of the war or survivors of an Indian attack. “John Beasley’s widow” and her four children, for example, drew rations at Jacksonville, because her husband had been “killed by Indians.” Charlotte Joyner and her two children drew rations in 1842 as well. Her husband was “killed in service” in 1836, and she was “very old and infirm,” so the military officer in charge of distribution recommended that she and her children continue to receive rations. In addition, about forty orphans and another fifty slaves rounded out the rolls of suffering inhabitants at the end of the war.²⁹

Despite the rules articulated by the War department, the officers in charge of the rations rolls made exceptions. Some of the widows lost husbands before the war, but benefited from the aid program anyway. Other families who had lost property and fled their homes after an Indian attack also received rations, although their male providers were still alive

28. *Ibid*; Joel Poinsett to Thomas Jesup, Sept. 13, 1837, “Letters Relating to the Relief Program Sponsored by Congress for Indigent and Suffering Inhabitants in Florida,” P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida Misc. Mss Collection, Box 48, Folder 15; “Correspondence, Reports, and Lists Relating to Feeding of ‘Suffering Inhabitants of Florida,’ June 1841–June 1842,” University of Florida Library, Gainesville.

29. “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants.”



MAP 6. Florida War, 1838-1842.

Figure 1: Sufferers received aid at St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Garey's Ferry, Micanopy (Fort Defiance on this map), and Fort Robert Gamble (not pictured, west of Ft. Andrews, near Wacissa in Jefferson County). From John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America's Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville, FL, 2004), 170. Reprinted with permission of the University Press of Florida.

and able-bodied. Elderly men and women drew rations, too. Many were not the direct victims of war or Indian violence, but presumably had lost the ability to provide for themselves because of the shortages brought on by the war. Some of these people might have been destitute before the war, but took the opportunity to get rations. For instance, two women abandoned by their husbands, Mary Adams and Martha Tippin, drew aid for themselves and their children. Thus, under the Suffering Inhabitants program, the federal government even took care of women and children whose male providers had failed them for reasons unrelated to the war. Here, the government's role as paternal provider and protector is especially clear. The military was attempting to stabilize a chaotic frontier community so that Americans would stay and eventually become self-sufficient again. Thus, the policy yielded the national benefit of new territory as well as served a sympathetic cause that reaffirmed stable gender roles on a frontier of broken families.³⁰

Some slaves and free African Americans also received aid under the Suffering Inhabitants program, and at the end of the war there were about fifty people identified by military staff as "negroes" drawing rations. Almost all of them were slaves who received rations from white household heads. Slaves were the property and the dependents of whites, so keeping them alive protected white private property. Further, slave labor would be needed for colonizing Florida when the war finally ended. Finally, if whites abandoned them to starve, both slaves and free blacks might run away to fight with the Seminoles. (The Seminoles infamously had a number of allies of African descent in Florida.) While most of the enslaved blacks enrolled at rural posts, all the free blacks (only thirteen on the rolls in June 1842) drew rations in St. Augustine or Jacksonville.³¹

Although there were many Floridians in need of assistance during the war, political and financial pressures limited federal aid. In September 1837, facing a national financial panic and widespread attacks on the

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid. Black and mixed-race residents had participated in the social and economic life of Spanish Florida; Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Chicago, 1999). About 500 people of African descent lived and allied with the Seminoles. Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock, TX, 1993); Mahon, *History of Second Seminole War*.

expensive and so far failed war effort in Florida, the Army issued new rules to regulate aid, hoping to cut costs. The new regulations reveal what kinds of “sufferers” the War Department considered worthy, as well as those it sought to exclude. Anyone caught wasting or selling their rations was permanently stricken from the rolls. The Army instituted a procedure to prevent recipients from doubling their rations by drawing at two places, which apparently some had done. It excluded others for moral reasons, including selling whiskey, running gambling houses, or being “notoriously immoral.” Frances Snowden lost her rations for “living with a man not her husband.” Such women and men, violators of family norms and national interests, were not the kind of civilized colonists that the United States hoped to retain in Florida.³²

This aid policy was one small part of what proved to be a successful set of expansionist policies for settling Florida. Some of the women (and men) who drew rations at the end of the war remained after the conflict ended and settled in Florida. Historical records are incomplete, however, and it is difficult to trace women in nineteenth-century public records. It is impossible therefore to offer any statistical assessment of the success of the Suffering Inhabitants policy, but a few of the widows who received rations can be traced and used to illustrate the paths that aid recipients might have followed after the war.

In June 1842 thirty-one families received federal aid at St. Augustine because they had “no other means of support.” They included twenty-one widows, sixteen of whom had dependent children; two women whose male relatives were insane; two free African Americans; two disabled people; and four male-headed families. At least ten of the female “sufferers” continued to live in Florida until 1850, and nine remained until 1860 and beyond. Nine of them also remained in or near St. Augustine. Several had become fairly prosperous, with estates worth \$250 to \$4,250 according to the 1860 census (roughly equivalent to

32. Although the financial crisis did not reach Florida’s banks and markets until the early 1840s, the national economic panic likely influenced decisions about military spending beginning in 1837. Reginald McGrane, *The Panic of 1837: Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era* (New York, 1965), 121–22; “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;” “Regulations,” *Army and Navy Chronicle*, Feb. 11, 1836; Poinsett to Jesup, Sept. 13, 1837, “Letters Relating to the Relief Program.”

\$6,760 and \$115,000 in 2010). The other twenty-one household heads had disappeared. They may have moved out of state, but it is also possible that they died or remarried.³³

Many of the widows who received aid in St. Augustine descended from Europeans who came to Florida before 1821 and remained after the change of flags, while others were more recent migrants. Eleven of the families on the ration rolls at the end of the war had Minorcan or Italian surnames, indicating that their ancestors were among the 1,403 Mediterranean laborers whom Andrew Turnbull had recruited in 1767–68 to work on his sugar plantation at New Smyrna in what was then the British province of East Florida. Conditions there were so terrible that survivors fled to St. Augustine, where the colonial governor granted them town lots. By 1786, the “Minorcans” (as they were known) made up half of the population of St. Augustine, and over 70 percent of its white population. In the racial landscape of territorial Florida, Americans incorporated these immigrants and their descendants, who might have been considered nonwhite elsewhere, into white society, because Americans were far more concerned about distinctions from Indians and blacks than from European Catholics.³⁴

The ten women who drew rations and remained in Florida after the war included six widows of Minorcan descent. Antonia Geneva, Mary and Antonia Medici, Rafaele Goff, Jane Baya, and Antonia Marine owned between \$400 and \$600 in property in 1850 (comparable to \$11,500 to \$17,300 in 2010). By 1860 their average wealth had increased, ranging from \$250 to \$3,850 (comparable to \$6,760 to \$104,000 in 2010). These figures reveal how the circumstances of these women improved over time, and that none of them were completely destitute in the decade after the war. Perhaps since their families had once relied on help from

33. “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;” *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, National Archives, Washington, DC; *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, National Archives, Washington, DC; comparative value calculated using a GDP per capita formula, “Measuring Worth,” accessed Jan. 13, 2012, <http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html>.

34. Philip D. Rasico, “The Minorcan Population of St. Augustine in the Spanish Census of 1786,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 66 (Oct., 1987), 160–184; David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT, 1992), 337.

the British colonial government, these St. Augustinians were inclined to rely on the American government for help as well.³⁵

Jane Baya is perhaps the most startlingly successful of the aid recipients who stayed in Florida, although she may not have been a widow. Jane, identified as “Antonio Baya’s widow,” and five of her children drew rations in St. Augustine during the war. Yet someone named Antonio Baya continued to appear in the St. Augustine census in 1850 and 1860. It is unclear whether reports of his death in 1842 were intentionally fraudulent or sincere but premature (his age and that of his wife and children confirm that this is the same family in the 1840 census). Jane and Antonio Baya were quite successful following her time on the rations rolls. Not only did Antonio apparently come back from the dead, but he rose from the rank of town butcher worth \$500 to a farmer worth \$3,000 who owned enough land to merit the labor of at least a dozen slaves. Since she may not have truly been widowed, and he may have been able-bodied, they might not have been exactly the victims targeted by the 1836 policy, but they certainly became the kind of respectable citizens that Americans wanted to settle Florida—they owned slaves, moved out of the town into the county where they planted, and together raised another generation of white Floridians.³⁶

35. “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;” Rasico, “The Minorcan Population of St. Augustine,” 160–184; Joseph B. Lockey, “The St. Augustine Census of 1786: Translated from the Spanish with an Introduction and Notes,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 18 (July, 1939), 11–31. These surnames (except Southwick and Goff) are identified with families of Minorcan, Greek, and Italian descent in the 1786 Spanish Census of St. Augustine, and they appear in population records with diverse spellings; Genova was a form of Jenovardy, for example. Catalina (also spelled Catharina) Southwick was likely of Minorcan descent, given her first name. Rafaela Pellicer married Jacob Goff in December 1830 in St. Johns County, Jordan R. Dodd et al., *Florida Marriages, 1822–1850* (ancestry.com database online, Provo, UT, 1999); *The Eighth Census of the United States: 1860; Sixth Census of the United States, 1840*, National Archives, Washington, DC; *Seventh Census, 1850; Eighth Census, 1860*; “Measuring Worth,” accessed Jan. 13, 2012.

36. Baya’s age and the names and ages of his children indicate that the Antonio Baya listed in the 1850 and 1860 census are the same; *Sixth Census, 1840*; “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;” *Seventh Census, 1850; Eighth Census, 1860*; Baya’s Minorcan ancestors are enumerated in the 1786 Spanish census, see Rasico, “The Minorcan Population of St. Augustine,” 177. A \$3,000 estate in 1860 compares

The other St. Augustinians who remained in Florida included Jane Long, Mary Kelly, Louisa Fatio, and Mary and Anna Maria Dummett. While Kelly and Long came from unknown circumstances (Long had some property in 1850, Kelly worked as a domestic in 1860), Fatio and the Dummetts came from slave-owning, land-holding colonial era families. They, more than any others, embodied “the women and children of respectable planters” whom advocates of the resolution in Congress had cited. In 1860, Mary Dummett reported \$1,250 in property (approximately \$33,800 in 2010) and owned one slave, but her children were more prosperous. Son Douglass Dummett claimed an estate worth \$15,000 (equivalent of \$406,000 in 2010) and owned twelve slaves. Daughter Anna Maria Dummett, who ran a boarding house in St. Augustine where she raised ten orphaned nieces and nephews, owned eight slaves in 1860 in addition to her townhouse.³⁷

Louisa Fatio also ran a boarding house in St. Augustine following the war, as did many other single and widowed women in the nineteenth century. Fatio was the granddaughter of Francis Philip Fatio who arrived in British East Florida from Switzerland in 1777 and founded a 10,000-acre plantation on the St. Johns River. His descendants became prominent members of Florida society. In 1842, the widowed Louisa Fatio drew rations for herself at St. Augustine. She never remarried, but remained in St. Augustine where she, too, prospered, ran a boarding house, and raised orphaned nieces and nephews in a house on Aviles Street. She and the Dummetts attest that in 1842 even women from extremely wealthy planter families could not find food, even if they had the resources to buy it. Rather than leaving Florida and their land and connections behind, they weathered the war in St. Augustine, survived on government rations, and emerged in the 1850s with some of their wealth intact. Collectively, all the women who drew rations in St. Augustine in 1842 illustrate that the Suffering Inhabitants policy, while it may have assisted some who were not totally indigent, did ensure that

to a 2010 standard of living based on \$81, 200; “Measuring Worth,” accessed Jan. 13, 2012.

37. “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;” *Sixth Census, 1840; Seventh Census, 1850; Eighth Census, 1860*; “Measuring Worth,” accessed Jan. 13, 2012; Lucy Wayne, *Sweet Cane: The Architecture of the Sugar Works of East Florida* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2010); Anna Maria Dummett, “Remembrances of the Old Plantation.”

at least some of the white women and children widowed, orphaned, and displaced by the war stayed in Florida and raised successful children.³⁸

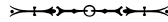
The rations recipients of St. Augustine were not the only aid recipients who behaved as policymakers hoped. Some of the women who drew rations at rural posts also stayed and eventually thrived. Rachel Board, Frances Wood, and Ann Monroe were neighbors near Garey's Ferry in 1840. All three women were widows by 1842. Rachel Board was in her twenties, drawing rations for herself at the post. Frances Wood was in her forties, and received provisions for herself and three young children. Ann Monroe was the oldest, in her late fifties in 1840, and lived with a grown son but still received food for herself. Twenty years later, in 1860, all three still lived in Middleburg, the town built around Garey's Ferry. They remained neighbors for many years, as their families intermarried and their children and grandchildren grew. All three women flourished on the eve of the Civil War, with property holdings in 1860 worth between \$600 and \$1,280 (roughly equivalent to between \$202,000 and \$430,000 in 2010). Board and Monroe, as well as Monroe's son, purchased their own land after the war ended in the 1850s. Although they were widows in need of aid during the War, each of them ended up as successful Florida farmers. Women willing to remain in Florida, like the widows of St. Augustine and Garey's Ferry, simultaneously mobilized a combination of two seemingly contradictory roles for women—as suffering victims and as successful, prosperous, civilized white colonists. Their children benefited from their risks and efforts, as did the nation.³⁹

38. Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore, 2007); William Scott Willis, "A Swiss Settler in East Florida: A Letter of Francis Philip Fatio,"

Florida Historical Quarterly 64 (Oct. 1985), 174–89; Walter C. Hartridge, "The Fatio Family—A Book Review," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 31 (Oct. 1952), 140–44; "Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;" *Seventh Census, 1850; Eighth Census, 1860*.

39. It is likely that Frances Wood and Rachael Board were related by marriage. Rachael Silcock married Edward Board in 1838 in Duval County; while her brother Henry Silcox married Mary Ann Woods in 1848 in Alachua County Jordan R. Dodd, et. al, *Florida Marriages, 1822-1850* [database online] (Provo, UT, 1999). It is unclear where Wood was farming, perhaps she rented a farm or one of her children owned the land. Ann Monroe (also spelled Munro) bought land in 1854, Rachel Board bought land in 1855 and 1857, *Florida Pre-1908 Homestead & Cash Entry Patents*; "Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants;" *Sixth Census, 1840*;

In 1841, when the Army began to shift from aiding victims to supporting settlements, it recruited some women from the lists of “Suffering Inhabitants” into resettlement parties with the threat that their rations would end if they did not comply. They arrived with other families to parts of Florida, such as Hernando County, where the military still could not guarantee their safety from Seminole attacks. Federal and military leaders believed that their presence ensured permanent, successful white settlements, which would pressure the Seminoles into submitting to removal.



Colonel William Worth, in command in Florida in the summer of 1841, wrote to Major David Wilcox, the officer in charge of the suffering inhabitants ration rolls, “I desire to encourage those who have been compelled to abandon their farms or plantations to reoccupy the same, believing a few sturdy frontier settlers will operate a powerful influence upon the savage.” Remarkably, Worth explicitly named settlers as part of his military campaign against the Seminoles, and laid out a plan in which the military would continue to protect and provide for them on the condition that they return to abandoned farms or join new settlements. He suggested that settler-colonists should be protected on their journeys back to the frontier by the military, and that the federal government not only continue their rations but also give them guns and (most surprisingly) soldiers’ pay. Clearly, he and other military leaders viewed male-headed family households as a replacement for troops or a corollary force that would encourage the Seminoles to go.⁴⁰

Floridians had prompted this policy. As early as August 1839, Florida Governor Richard K. Call suggested the “government should invite people to settle in the territory and let them occupy the forsaken plantations free of rent or tax and also pay them monthly wages and furnish them with arms and ammunition to defend themselves and others. In this way there would be a gradual advance upon the Indians which would soon

Eighth Census, 1860; Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, National Archives, Washington, DC; “Measuring Worth,” accessed June 1, 2010.

40. William Worth to David Wilcox, June 24, 1841, Extracts from Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821–1920, University of Florida Library, Gainesville; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 301.

cause them to give up the contest.” In the summer of 1841 the Army adopted Governor Call’s plan and advised Florida aid recipients to start making resettlement plans because their rations would soon end (unless they were especially pitiable). If they did leave for the frontier and planted immediately upon arrival, rations would continue through the next crop season. Planting indicated to the Army and the Seminoles that these settlements were permanent.⁴¹

In July 1841 the War Department accepted the premise of this plan, but rejected Worth’s generous proposal of incentives, including the soldiers’ pay for armed settlers. Instead of paying them, military leaders used the dependence that the Suffering Inhabitants rations program had created to compel “sufferers” to become “settlers.” It continued to support the most indigent people with rations, but military leaders decided to stop settler rations altogether to push them to go find some other way to sustain themselves. Those who were able to resettle the frontier, therefore, had to go back out and begin planting, as the Army would no longer give them rations.

The War Department’s decision was likely motivated by political and gender concerns. While the expediency of the plan to pay settlers appealed to those serving in Florida, paying settlers to occupy Indian territory would have admitted that white settlers risked their lives not simply for their own gain, but in order to dispossess Indians and expand the United States. Hardly innocent bystanders to the conflict between the Seminoles and the United States, settlers were vital to any policy that promised success in Florida, and paying them for their service would have made that explicitly clear. While expansionists touted freedom, independence, and the spread of democracy as the benefits of expansion, paying colonists communicated that they were agents of a national force (not to mention the precedent that such a policy might set for other frontiers). Paying civilians to settle also would have challenged gender norms by indicating that policymakers believed families (which included white women and children, and slaves) were more effective than troops at wresting the Florida territory from the Seminoles.⁴²

41. Call quoted in Daniel Wiggins Diaries Collection, Aug. 11, 1839, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee; Mark Cooper to Marsena R. Patrick, Apr. 27, 1842, and Apr. 30, 1842; Marsena R. Patrick to the Commanding Officer, May 5, 1842, Extracts from Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands.

42. Mark Cooper to David Wilcox, Dec. 20, 1841; David Wilcox to Mark Cooper, Oct. 9, 1841; William J. Worth to David Wilcox, July 29, 1841; David Wilcox to Headquarters of the Army of Florida, July 6, 1841; Extracts from

The new resettlement policy proved popular among Florida's displaced residents. Although some of the aid recipients who had been promised soldiers' pay balked when the War Department withdrew that incentive in July 1841, most eventually resettled. Some widows, along with single and widowed men, and married couples with children, joined resettlement parties headed by men (often veterans). The settlement parties occupied nineteen sites in Florida, many of them vacant Army forts and burned-out Indian towns, a material manifestation of the replacement of soldiers and Indians by settled families. In August 1841, for example, William Cason led a party of white settlers to Fort White that included his own wife and children, seven other male-headed families, and widow Elizabeth Berry and her two children. By June 1842 there were over 1,400 people receiving rations from the Army under the resettlement program. In addition to the nineteen groups making new settlements, thirty-nine families returned to their farms. Among both groups there were 250 white women, 348 white children, 394 black slaves, and 446 white men. These individuals and families appeared on rolls of people "reoccupying plantations" and "making new settlements" sent to military commanders in 1841 and 1842. These lists accompanied the June 1842 accounting of the remaining 400 suffering inhabitants, indicating that the dependents (white widows, white children, and slaves) on the resettlement rolls had formerly received rations as "suffering inhabitants." The new settlements differed from military garrisons, since there were hundreds of white women and children, as well as slaves owned by these white families. Military leaders intended for the presence of women, children, and slaves to clearly signal to the Seminoles that the whites had come to stay.⁴³

Although they did not get soldiers' pay, eventually these settlers received far more aid than the War Department originally intended. Rather than just a month's rations, they received rations to sustain their

Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands; Ronald P. Formisano, "The New Political History and the Election of 1840," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Spring 1993), 661–82.

43. William J. Worth to David Wilcox, June 24, 1841, Extracts from Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands; Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, 301; "Roll of Persons Forming New Settlements, Returning to Plantations, and Suffering Inhabitants," Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1822–1860, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, DC; 1842, 217–405.

families and slaves through the next growing season, when they could feed themselves. They traveled with military guards and borrowed military horses, wagons, boats, and ferries to get to their new farms, passing through or inhabiting block houses and traveling down roads that the Army expressly constructed for their safe passage. The American military literally cleared the way and protected them as they made their way to the settlements. After they arrived the military remained concerned about the moral character of those receiving government benefits. In the resettlement reports, officers noted that alcohol had negative effects on settlements, and the most prosperous included those too far from towns to purchase “ardent spirits.”⁴⁴

The strategy that Worth put in place in mid-1841 shifted the government’s relationship to the white inhabitants of Florida from one of charity for worthy victims to one of reciprocal benefit, and refocused attention on male settlers, away from female supplicants. Under the new policy, the government armed and supplied settler families because they were colonizers and civilizing agents who furthered national and military goals. Although both men and women populated the new settlement parties, the military emphasized that those who led and benefited from the resettlement policy were citizens—men with a stake in national expansion who could be explicitly drafted into the war effort. Without any fanfare, two hundred and fifty white women joined them, in spite of the assumptions about female vulnerability. These women, formerly understood as indigent “sufferers,” whose terrified cries had motivated and justified that Suffering Inhabitants policy, left the rolls of “sufferers” to join military-sponsored resettlement parties, drafted by the threat of starvation. The change restored individual men as “heads of families” to their role as providers and protectors. By transferring responsibility for white women and children back to male settlers, this policy reinstated gender and family norms in Florida, moving it closer to “civilized” status.

At the same time, by including former “suffering inhabitants,” the military implicitly drafted women into the war effort. Women—their labor and the symbolism of their presence—were vital to the resettlement policy. Without women, children, and slaves, the resettlement groups

44. “Rolls of Suffering Inhabitants,” 445; Extracts from Records of the U.S. Army Continental Commands.

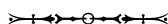
would have looked pretty similar to American troops, whose presence thus far had done little to sway the Seminoles. Yet chivalrous men were supposed to protect women, not deploy them in Indian wars, and so policymakers and military leaders had to narrate their presence as “families” accompanying sturdy settlers. Although in 1836 Florida policy sought to aid and protect female victims, by 1841 it relied on the fact that women were brave colonizers (accompanied by men, of course) who would enable the United States to finally take Florida from the Seminoles. In 1842, resettlement policy shifted again, with further emphasis on independent pioneers and limiting federal costs. As the Florida war ceased in August, 1842, congress enacted the Armed Occupation Act (AOA).

While it is clear that gender shaped these policies and changes in strategy, it is less clear how individual women reacted to them. Women were, in some ways, the pawns of policymakers and military leaders, who relied on their dependence and vulnerability to justify war and aid programs, and on their labor and symbolic power to make American homes in Florida. Yet policymakers were not all-powerful. Without white women’s cooperation and complicity, (whether as direct recipients of aid or as the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters whose labors sustained their households) the aid, resettlement, and armed occupation policies would have failed. Women took advantage of American policies in Florida, both as “sufferers” and as “settlers.” Along with white men, these women survived the war and then built and rebuilt homes and families on the Florida frontier. Their combined efforts displaced over four thousand Seminoles, who surrendered to the Army between 1836 and 1843. As white settlements spread into former Indian towns and farms, white women and their families extended American control over Florida.⁴⁵

The shifts in Florida policy in 1841 were not only practical strategies to end an Indian war and establish white settlements, they were also characteristic of American patterns of social provision and expansion. For example, the fear that entitlements encouraged idleness and dependence often resulted in reforms requiring aid recipients to work, and in this case many of those who continued to receive federal benefits had to recolonize a dangerous frontier. Americans also historically rewarded citizens who supported national goals with entitlements and under these

45. Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 314–86.

policies, some citizens who settled a dangerous country received food, transportation and construction assistance, and land. Benefits for military service in wartime comprised a massive portion of social provision in the nineteenth century, and American defense spending has always funded “loyalty benefits,” or social and medical provision for military service members, veterans, and their families. The rations provided to Second Seminole War victims in territorial Florida are one example of welfare spending in the American military budget. Although the War Department did not approve it, Worth’s 1841 proposal to compensate Florida settlers with soldiers’ pay also would have granted benefits usually reserved for soldiers to settlers who served on a violent frontier. Some have also argued that there is a connection between war spending and social spending. Libertarian Murray Rothbard coined the term “welfare-warfare state” to call attention to the ways in which the American state enlarged itself using social welfare provisions and emergency war measures that it never fully retracted. The free land program passed in 1842, justified as part of winning the Second Seminole War, served as a blueprint for the 1862 Homestead Act which greatly expanded what had been a war-related free land policy (a policy practice that arguably originated in the land bounties that the United States originally granted to veterans of the American Revolution and War of 1812). Furthering national expansion on a violent Indian frontier rendered one a “worthy” recipient of federal aid in Florida, which illustrates the historical connections between the growth of social provision alongside national boundaries. Many of the military conflicts of the nineteenth century—when this pattern in social welfare policy began—were Indian wars directly related to expansion.⁴⁶



46. Michael Shalev, “The Social Contract Revisited: ‘Loyalty Benefits’ and the Welfare State” (Oxford, UK, 2010) www.fljs.org/uploads/documents/Shalev.pdf; Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy*; Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; Brian Gifford, “The Camouflaged Safety Net: The U.S. Armed Forces as Welfare State Institution,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 13 (Fall 2006), 372–99; Murray Rothbard, “The Great Society: A Libertarian Critique,” in *The Great Society Reader: The Failure of American Liberalism*, ed. Marvin E. Gettleman and David Mermelstein, (New York, 1967).

The wartime aid and land policies that the United States implemented in Florida between 1836 and 1842 took social provisions for the deserving needy and turned them into land entitlements for the presumably male hard-working settler. The evolution of these policies in Florida history suggests three important conclusions, each related to the historical linkages among welfare, expansion, and gender.

First, these policies came before many of the social provisions that scholars such as Susan Sterett, Theda Skocpol, and Linda Gordon examine in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This suggests that a longer and wider view of welfare history in the United States is necessary, one that looks at how land, Indian, military, and expansionist policies also provided for needy Americans. Studies of social provision, which have long recognized how welfare has enlarged the state and its bureaucracies, should also examine how American social spending required recipients to serve expansionist roles. As this article argues, attending to these connections will reveal that the United States used “domestic” matters such as the welfare of widows, orphans, and families to support military efforts to expand the country. Highlighting this, scholars will be able to reveal how social policy enlarged not only the welfare state but the territorial nation as well.⁴⁷

Illuminating the connections between welfare and expansion also highlights how gender shaped policies that supported national growth. While welfare studies have historically attended to the influence of gender, studies of federal expansionist policies have not, in part because policymakers often implicitly included women, while they explicitly recruited men to be pioneers. As political and cultural speech, policy cannot be trusted to be completely truthful about either its intents or outcomes. Only by tracing gender in policymaking rhetoric and tracking the recipients of these policies can one discover the unexpected recipients of federal entitlements: female “armed settlers,” or even male “sufferers.” In Florida highly gendered expansionist policies supported both Indian removal and white settlement because gender naturalized recipients’ dependence or cast federal support as empowerment for “independent” male household heads. In many other contexts, Americans used land, disaster relief, and veterans’ benefits policy (including land bounties) to settle frontier zones, but the degree to which gender underwrote

47. Sterett, *Public Pensions*; Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*.

those policies is unexplored in many studies. Another conclusion, then, is that histories of national expansion will benefit from including gendered analyses of federal spending in assessments of expansionist policy-making. Doing so will reveal that policymakers justified and naturalized material support for expansion using gender (protecting women, enabling hardy men).⁴⁸

Finally, looking at the histories of gender, welfare, and expansion together brings women into focus as historical actors complicit with American imperialism. The literature on social provision *emphasizes* that women were often its beneficiaries, and so connecting that history to national expansion makes it clear that white women were also important to efforts that ousted Indians and enlarged the country. A third conclusion, then, is that white women were important subjects and actors in national expansion, not just helpers or civilian casualties. While this has been clear to historians of women for a long time, histories of expansion that focus on military campaigns, federal policy, and foreign affairs have yet to incorporate women fully into narratives of American expansion and Manifest Destiny. Much as they have shaped federal policies, gender norms have shaped historical scholarship about frontier settlement, making it difficult to conceive of female settlers as politically significant. The growing body of scholarship about gender and expansion tends to be more concerned with manhood than womanhood. Yet as several generations of women's historians have already illustrated, women operated as actors and agents, as well as sympathetic victims and symbols of civilization, in American history. This should be no less true in studies of territorial expansion.⁴⁹

48. Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy*; Landis Dauber, "Let Me Next Time Be Tried By Fire," "Fate, Responsibility, and 'Natural' Disaster Relief," "The Sympathetic State," and "The War of 1812, September 11th, and the Politics of Compensation." Generous land policies also drew desirable immigrants into the U.S. during the nineteenth century, operating as a form of positive immigration policy and impacting nation-building through population. Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation By Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Boston, 2008).

49. Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York, 1995); Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York, 2005); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New

This study of frontier Florida illustrates how federal social spending closely aligned with expansion supported national goals to expand national territory, oust Indians, and support permanent white settlement and patriarchal families. The “suffering inhabitants” and recolonization policies spent federal resources to support white Americans settling Florida, including women. The rhetoric and policies that linked social spending to those national interests relied on gendered logics and on female bodies inhabiting the Florida frontier. These policies were precedents for later federal entitlements used to support expansion, and helped to establish that in the United States social provision benefited citizens furthering national goals, not simply citizens in need. Through expansionist policies, American leaders established the roots of the modern American welfare state, supported white settler colonists in frontier zones, and reinforced patriarchal family and gender norms. The history of settling Florida suggests a national pattern in which gender and national expansion, rather than concern for social welfare, shaped early patterns of social provision in the United States.

York, 1979); Joan Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York, 1991); John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, CT, 1979); Anya Jabour, “‘It Will Never Do For Me To Be Married’: The Life of Laura Wirt Randall, 1803–1833,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (Summer 1997), 193–236; Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish–American and Philippine–American Wars* (New Haven, CT, 1998); Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).