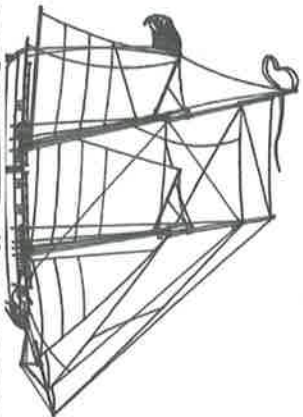


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FUTURE ADMIRAL COMMANDED SCHOONER IN KEYS DURING SECOND SEMINOLE WAR

by John Viele

One of the strangest chapters in American naval history was written in South Florida and the Keys during the Second Seminole War (1836-1842). Naval officers led sailors, marines, revenue marines, and sometimes soldiers in operations against the Seminole Indians in the Keys and the Everglades. One of these naval officers was Passed Midshipman John Rodgers. (A passed midshipman was one who had passed the examination for lieutenant but was waiting for a vacancy in order to be promoted.)

John Rodgers was the son of Commodore John Rodgers, the Navy's senior officer. (see Sea Heritage Journal Vol. 17, No. 3, Spring 2007 re the Commodore's visit to Key West in 1823). Passed Midshipman Rodgers was 26 years old when he received orders in November 1839 to take command of the schooner *Wave* at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. His orders directed him to prepare her for action against the Seminole Indians in South Florida and the Keys.

Wave was a 65-foot, pilot-boat schooner, armed with a single long gun, and manned by a crew of six officers and forty men. Picture if you can, forty-six men trying to find space to sleep on a sixty-



Commander John Rodgers about 1861. Photo credit: Monroe County Library.

five foot boat Obviously pleased the beautiful tapering of her run, with his new command, Rodgers the rich fullness of her beam, and described her with these words, " the delicate roundness of the waist . . . the graceful swell of her bow, (Continued on page 3)