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Maxfield Whidden was born May 1, 1805, in Montgomery County, Georgia. He is a son of James Whidden Sr, He grew up in Camden and Ware Counties, Georgia. Maxfield and Sophia P. Crews were married by Rev. David Bryan in Camden County, Georgia. She was born in the Colleton District, South Carolina on March 27, 1805. She is the daughter of Alexander Crews and his first wife (name unknown). The children of this marriage are:

1. Eli (Eley) Perry, born July 10, 1829; married in Hillsborough County, Feb. 4, 1847, to Lavinia Platt, daughter of Peter Platt.
2. Lydia A. (some records give her name as Elizabeth) born Sept. 27, 1831; married 1st to David J.W. Boney on Oct 8, 1846, and 2nd to Mr. Russell.
3. Sophia, born May 13, 1833.
4. Maxfield Jr., born Jul 9, 1835
5. Charity Whidden, born Jan. 3, 1837
6. Susan, born Mar 1, 1840, based on mother's pension application, though marker indicates Mar 5. Married first in Hillsborough County on Jan 1, 1852, to David Brannon; married second in Ft Myers in 1863 to her first cousin, Jesse Whidden, son of Willoughby (due to poor record keeping during the Civil War they were remarried on Nov 3, 1874
7. Edward born Jan 13, 1842; died Jan 19, 1910; married Jul 14, 1860, to Mary Ann (Williams) Mathis, daughter of Rowland and Nancy Ann (Sweet) Williams and first wife of James W. Mathis.
- 8 Willoughby, born Jul 18, 1844

Maxfield and Sophia left Camden and settled in Alachua County, Florida. likely in the section that was cut into Columbia County in 1832. The 1830 Federal Census for Alachua County lists Maxey F. Whidden as a resident.

Maxfield served several enlistments during the Second Florida War with the Seminoles. He first enlisted at Ft Gilmore, Georgia on Dec 28, 1835, as a private in Capt. William B. North's Company in the Regiment commanded by Col. Brown. Muster sheet described Maxfield as 6'3", black eyes, fair complexion, and auburn hair. His second enlistment was again with Capt. William B. North's Company this time with the 2nd Regiment of the East Florida Mounted Volunteers commanded by Col. W. J. Mills. He mustered in at Camp North on June 16, 1837, and was honorably discharged at Newnansville on Dec 18, 1837. His brother-in-law Dempsey Dubois Crews, Sr., was a Sergeant in this company. Maxfield was also a private in W. B. North's Company, which was attached to General Floyd's command in the Okefenokee Division of the Army. He volunteered at Ft Gilmore on July 12, 1838, and was discharged there on January 12, 1839. Dempsey was also a member of this company.

Maxfield and Sophia were living in District 719 Ware County, Georgia during the 1840 census, residing close by her family: Stephen, William, Joseph her Father Alexander Crews and his brothers Willoughby and James.

Maxfield moved back to Florida during March of 1843, along with his brother Willoughby settling in southwest Florida in the Hillsborough County area. On May of 1843 he applied for 160 acres of unappropriated public land under the Florida Armed Occupation Act of 1842. Each settler who would settle and cultivate five acres or more of land in eastern and southern Florida for a period of five years would receive 160 acres of land and one year's rations from the Federal government. Settlers were expected to also provide militia service, if needed, to control the activities of the warring Seminole Indians. This was the prelude to the official declaration of the end of the Second Seminole War on August 14, 1842. His property is described as "a tract of un surveyed land lying in a hammock about 6 miles south of Robert Williams settlement and about 5 miles east of the bridge at the Little Withlacoochee commencing at a stake in the pine woods running 40 chains south thence 40 chains east thence 40 chains north thence 40 chains west to the place of beginning". Brother Willoughby received the 160 acres adjacent to Maxfield's property during the same time.

During the 1850 Census for Hillsborough County, Maxfield and family were living in the Thonotosassa-Itchepucksassa (Plant City) area along with Peter Platt, David J. W. Boney, Rabun Raulerson, Jacob Summerlin, Charles Scott, and Joseph Howell.

Maxfield and Sophia were members of the Salem Baptist Church at Itchepucksassa. Maxfield began appearing in the Church minutes on Dec 20, 1850. The couple were baptized there on Mar 19, 1851, by Elder Newton.

On October 1, 1856, Maxfield applied for bounty land based on his service in Capt. William B North's companies. He did receive a warrant for 160 acres in Hillsborough County.

Maxfield enlisted in William B. Hookers company during the Third Seminole War on January 3, 1856. Others in this company included Maxfield Jr., Willoughby, Edward, and Jesse Whidden.

Prior to 1856, Whidden's settled in the Ft Hartsuff area in Manatee (now Hardee) County. Maxfield was enumerated in this area during the 1860 Census for Manatee County along with Willoughby and Dempsey Dubois Crews.

During the early 1860s, Maxfield and Sophia moved to the military post at Ft Myers which came under the protection of the U.S. Army during the later years of the Civil War. Their son Edward and sons-in-law David Boney and Jesse Whidden were members of the Second Florida Calvary of the U. S. Army which was stationed there.

Maxfield died at Ft Myers January 5, 1865, and was originally buried in the Military Post Cemetery, Ft. Myers, Florida but grave was moved to Pensacola around 1885-1888 to a cemetery that has yet been discovered, but is probably in the Barrancas National Cemetery in Escambia County, FL. In 1927 the US Government paid to have all 468 graves reinterred to Barrancas National Cemetery. Unfortunately, due to negligence the records for these burials were mishandled and the reinterments are all in unmarked graves.

Sophia Whidden lived with her daughter in the Popash-Zolfo Springs area. On September 13, 1890, she applied and received a widow's pension until her death on September 28, 1894. She is interred in New Hope Cemetery just east of Zolfo Springs in what is now Hardee County.

References:

Find a Grave, database, and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/137173987/maxfield-whidden>: accessed January 1, 2025), memorial page for Maxfield Whidden (1 May 1805–1 Jan 1865), Find a Grave Memorial ID 137173987; Burial Details Unknown; Maintained by Robin Knowles Miner (contributor 47614397).

Salem Baptist Church Minutes, 1850 - 1851. Polk County, Florida Historical and Genealogical Library; Bartow, Florida

The Florida Historical Society, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa FL 32922. <https://myfloridahistory.org/date-in-history/august-04-1842/armed-occupation-act>

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