

THE FOURTEENTH COLONY:  
FLORIDA AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH

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To my mother, who generated my fascination for all things historical

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CO	Colonial Office Papers of the British National Archives. The Colonial Office was established in 1854, but the CO classifications have since been modified to include those records preceding this date back to the sixteenth century.
PKYL	P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History and Special Collections at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida.
PRO	Public Records Office: previous name of the British National Archives. PRO is still the name of designation on all colonial records of the eighteenth century.
WLCL	William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, Michigan.



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By

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This study will examine the southern theater of the American Revolution from a British perspective. By looking beyond New England, Bunker Hill, and the “original” thirteen British colonies, utilizing the same map of the British Americas one would find at the war ministry in Whitehall, it becomes obvious that Florida was not a peripheral entity to British interests on the North American continent. I will argue three intertwined points: 1) that Florida was the geographic center of the British Americas and, therefore, integral to the American Revolution early on; 2) that the southern colonies were a significant and continual focus of Great Britain’s war ministry from the outbreak of the conflict in 1775 resulting in two major southern campaigns, the first beginning in March 1776; and, 3) that the famous British Southern campaign of 1780 was but one phase of a more extensive British southern invasion, which originated from St. Augustine and Pensacola in 1778, and encompassed the southern mainland from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean.

It is my hope and intention that this study will not only redraw the map of the American Revolution, but redefine the importance of the southern theater’s impact on the war. The objective of this study is to identify one of the most marginalized stories in American history and recreate it from an Atlantic world perspective by utilizing many of the principle characters of the

southern British war effort. My goal is to destabilize one of the more traditional narratives in American Revolutionary folklore by demonstrating the significant importance placed on the southern region by the British throughout the entirety of the war. By rescuing Florida and other “peripheral” zones from regionalized history by inserting this discussion into the primary dialogue of Revolutionary conversations, I will demonstrate how influential they were to the larger panoply of America’s struggle for independence.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

With the Treaty of Paris concluded and the American Revolution at last at an end, the HMS *Cyrus* put the coast of North America to her stern and carried the remnants of a disheveled colony back to England—though not necessarily back home. These Loyalist refugees hailed primarily from Georgia, and the Carolinas, though the overall path of dispersion lay from Baton Rouge, West Florida to Williamsburg, Virginia. Black and white, many were born in North America, having never stepped foot on English soil—proudly proclaiming their status as Americans, though tested under fire as wholly devoted to king and country. Thus, after a long and bitter humiliation at the hands of what the departing colonial governor called “civilized allies and unnatural colonists [who] are ungrateful to British designs,” the last British evacuation vessel in all of North America set sail.<sup>1</sup> However, this final scenario did not play out in New York Harbor on November 25, 1783, as is commonly presumed by many historians, but from the mouth of the St. Marys River on the southern-most border of Georgia’s Atlantic coast. The date was November 13, 1785.<sup>2</sup> And the final bitter salvo toward these “unnatural colonists” was not spouted by Charles, Earl Cornwallis at Yorktown, or General Sir Guy Carlton as the names of

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<sup>1</sup> “Patrick Tonym to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 36. In several passages located in the documents of the Public Records of the Colonial Office in Kew, England, the word “unnatural” can be found in reference to rebellious actions in the British colonies. The Caribbean assemblies of St. Kitts, Nevis, and Antigua made this exact reference to the American Revolution in their oaths of Loyalty to the British Crown, “Address of the Council of St. Kitts to Governor Burt,” PRO, CO, 152/57, f. 252”; “Address of the Council and Assembly of Nevis to the King, 1778,” PRO, CO 152/59, f. 73”; “The offending article in Antigua was reprinted in the *Royal Danish American Gazette*, July 8, 1778”, in Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 304n47. During this era of the British Empire, the relationship between the metropole and its colonies was considered similar to that of a mother and child. Therefore, an act of rebellion was deemed “unnatural” to the propriety of the relationship. Historian J. Leitch Wright contends that “[w]hen East Florida had refused to revolt in 1775, it had followed precedents, because loyalty to the mother country was the colonial norm. It was the thirteen colonies who, by rebelling, had broken with tradition.” J. Leitch Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, Issue 4 (April 1976), 435.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: The Slaves, the British, and the American Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 2006), 132; see also Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 70.

three thousand former slaves entered the “Book of Negroes” in New York City, but by Major General Patrick Tonyn, governor of British East Florida—the fourteenth colony.

East and West Florida, which dominated southern waters from the Atlantic coast of East Florida’s peninsula around the Gulf Coast to West Florida’s eastern banks of the Mississippi River, maintained loyal British dependency throughout the American Revolution.<sup>3</sup> East Florida defended its loyalty until war’s end against military invasions and internal plots, as well as providing the base camp for several offensive campaigns, including Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis’s famous “Southern Campaign.” This chapter of Revolutionary history demonstrates that the British military effort in North America was not as completely riddled with incompetence and ineptitudes as once believed.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the full disclosure of the most prolific and sustained military campaign of the Revolution, the British Southern Campaign of 1780, which includes the only instance of British forces retaking a colony once possessed by a rebel government (Georgia), has not only been misdated since the 1880s—even to the point of misinterpreting the campaign’s point of origin—but has been virtually silenced in the general literature on the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> This study attempts to restore East and West Florida to their proper

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<sup>3</sup> Though West Florida fell to a Spanish invasion from New Orleans by Bernardo de Galvez on May 8, 1781, the colony never willingly relinquished its loyalty to King George III. Likewise, East Florida’s loyalty never subsided, even after the colony’s retrocession to Spain in 1784.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew H. Spring has recently challenged such noted military historians as John S. Pancake who teaches that the Americans did not win the Revolution but rather Great Britain lost the war by ineptitude, both on the battle field and in Parliament. Spring provides provocative details to clarify the evolutionary process by which the British army adapted to the war effort in the Americas, thus explaining many of the military miscalculations historically relegated to incompetence, blunder, and megalomania. Matthew H. Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775–1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> I do not choose to refer to the victors of the American Revolution as “Patriots.” Nor do I refer to them as “Americans” until after the narrative moves beyond the conclusion of the Revolution. From a British perspective the genesis of the United States would not be until after the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, 1783; prior to that they were simply colonies in rebellion. Thus, I will refer to those in rebellion in the same manner that an eighteenth-century Englishman would—as rebels. To the men and women on the streets of London a Patriot was someone who stood proud for king and country, not a rebellious rabble who did not know their place. As for the term “American,” every eighteenth-century man, woman, and child born on the western shores of the Atlantic Ocean was an American—born in the Americas. That would include North, Central, and South America, as well as the Caribbean,

places in the literature as vital theaters in the American Revolution. This will include challenging iconic historians of this field, such as Herbert Aptheker, who believed that “[i]n none of the English-American colonies outside the Thirteen, did the British find such loyalty as to be of any significant assistance in suppressing the rebellion.”<sup>6</sup> By looking beyond the present-day American perspective of the Revolutionary War, it is the intention of this study to expand this discussion into an eighteenth-century British Atlantic framework. This will include a complete re-examination of British policy for the southern colonies in the early years of the war, as well as a re-periodization of the chronology of the British Southern Campaign of 1780 and the final evacuation of British Loyalists from North America. Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy reminds us that “British statesmen thought in terms of Atlantic empire of some twenty-six colonies, not thirteen.”<sup>7</sup> This study, too, will look beyond New England, Bunker Hill, and the “original” thirteen British colonies, utilizing the same map one would find in Whitehall.

I will argue three intertwined points: 1) that Florida was the geographic center of the British Americas and, therefore, integral to the American Revolution early on; 2) that the southern colonies were a significant and continual focus of Great Britain's war ministry from the outbreak of the conflict in 1775 resulting in two major southern campaigns, the first beginning in March 1776; and, 3) that the famous British Southern campaign of 1780 was but one phase of a more extensive British southern invasion, which originated from St. Augustine and Pensacola in 1778.

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Bahamas, and Bermuda. In British North America they were rebels or Loyalists based upon their political preferences, not their place of birth.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *A History of the American People: The American Revolution, 1763–1783* (New York: International Publishers, 1960), 174.

<sup>7</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, xiii–xiv.

It is my hope and intention that this study will not only redraw the map of the American Revolution, but redefine the importance of the southern theater's impact on the war. The objective of this study is to identify one of the most marginalized stories in American history and recreate it from a British Atlantic perspective by utilizing many of the principle characters of the southern British war effort. My goal is to destabilize one of the more traditional narratives in American Revolutionary folklore. By rescuing East and West Florida and other "peripheral" zones from regionalized history by inserting this discussion into the primary dialogue of Revolutionary conversations, I will demonstrate how influential they were to the larger panoply of America's struggle for independence.

I have selected the omission of East Florida from the Revolutionary conversation as the focal point of this study. East Florida represents the most extreme end of the spectrum of a larger general neglect of the southern colonies during the war. British regulars did not materialize for the first time in the South when Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis appeared in Charleston<sup>8</sup> Harbor in 1780. Equally so, the Southern Department of the Continental Army was visibly on display in the lower colonies as early as 1775, under the celebrated leadership of Major General Charles Lee.<sup>9</sup> Other such notables to head the Southern Department were Robert Howe, Benjamin Lincoln, Horatio Gates, and Nathaniel Greene—some of them national heroes; all of them major-generals in the Continental Army, commissioned by Congress, and, with the exception of Gates, assigned to the Southern Department personally by George Washington.

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<sup>8</sup> I refer to the capital city of South Carolina as Charleston rather than Charles Town—even though that is the British name for the city and I am writing from a British perspective. Too many primary and secondary sources refer to the city as Charleston, thus for simplicity's sake my references will be made in a manner that clarifies rather than confuses the narrative by flip-flopping names at every change of possession.

<sup>9</sup> The George Washington Papers, "George Washington to Continental Congress, Cambridge, December 18, 1775." [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gw040168) (gw040168). Lest we forget that Charles Lee was considered by most, including those in the British high command, to be the colonists' most experienced and superior officer. Placing Lee in charge of the Southern Department signifies the importance of this region to the American war effort.

Other than the defense of Savannah in 1779, the efforts of the Southern Army are largely overlooked, outside of local and regional history, until the arrival in Charleston of Clinton and Cornwallis in 1780. Most timelines for the Revolution—including those of the Library of Congress, the National Parks Service, and the Public Broadcasting System—consistently assert that the war was conducted primarily in the northern colonies until 1780, moving into the south almost exclusively from that point forward (Table 1).

Several noted historians have followed this path of observation as well, including military historian John S. Pancake who dedicated two entire books, *1777: The Year of the Hangman*, and *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780–1782*, to this north/south cleavage of British military tactics.<sup>10</sup> Simon Schama provides an extensive accounting of the American siege of a British held Savannah in late 1779, but only allows the reader one page to jump from Commodore Peter Parker’s failed attempt to take Charleston in 1776—virtually bypassing the British re-conquest of Savannah and all of Georgia—to the failed American siege of Savannah three years later.<sup>11</sup> Robert Middlekauff correctly notes the dates of the Southern Campaign, 1778–1781, but defeats his own accomplishment by completely ignoring General Augustine Prevost’s thrust northward from St. Augustine with over 2,000 British regulars, the re-conquest of Georgia, and the second siege of Savannah. Thus, Middlekauff reduces the campaign’s significance from 1778 to 1779 to the one-day, near-bloodless conquest of Savannah

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<sup>10</sup> John S. Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1977); John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780–1782* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985, re-printed 2003). What makes the military aspect of this study different from those that emphasize a military framework is there is no highlighting of troop movements or battlefield heroics. It is not my intention to understand the course of a particular battle, but why the troops were there in the first place. Rather than view the southern military campaigns from the perspectives of generals, it is my goal to remove the reader from the battlefield and get inside the minds of the ministers of war at Whitehall. We know the “where” and “how” of the Revolution’s military events. What I believe we have completely misconstrued is the “why.”

<sup>11</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 99–100.

by the British in 1778.<sup>12</sup> One college text book, in its discussion of the British Southern Campaign simply states that “the whole region from Virginia southward had been free from major action since 1776.”<sup>13</sup> Apparently, the definition of a “major action” is one that involves George Washington or some other icon of American Revolutionary history.

But this simple division of dates and geography does not hold up to scrutiny. Great Britain was mindful of its own history of international warfare and certainly aware of the impending disaster of ignoring the entire southern region of the American colonies. Not only would such a strategy have allowed an unfettered build up of colonial military and political momentum, but the southern colonies collectively were the most profitable to the British treasury in all of mainland North America. Not only had they become rich producers of tobacco, rice, and indigo, but they functioned as the primary source for barrel staves, naval stores, and food stuffs and personal necessities for the slaves in the plantations of the British West Indies. For this reason, as this study will demonstrate, the British ministry and General Sir William Howe viewed the southern theater of the war as a critical sector to be controlled from the outset of the conflict. Thus, the Loyalist colonies of East and West Florida steadily built up troops, munitions, powder, and gunboats to protect the valuable shipping lanes of the Mississippi River, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean’s Gulf Stream. Despite a persistent historiographic focus on the northern military campaigns from 1775 to 1779, even the most banal accountings display repeated engagements between the Southern Department of the Continental Army and British troops: the Battle of Great Bridge, VA, (1775); the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge, N.C. (1776); Continental forces repulsing British warships at Fort Sullivan in Charleston Harbor (1776);

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 434–36.

<sup>13</sup> George Brown Tindall, David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History; Brief Fourth Edition, Volume One* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 166.



General Robert Howe's loss of Savannah (1778); the second siege of Savannah by American and French forces led by General Benjamin Lincoln, Admiral Count d'Estaing, and Count Casimir Pulaski (1779)—all prior to the appearance of Clinton's juggernaut in Charleston in 1780.<sup>14</sup>

But so much more than just these events took place. Revolutionary War historians rarely note the equally significant accounts of three failed invasion attempts of East Florida by large contingents of Continental troops in 1776, 1777, and 1778; in South Carolina alone John W. Gordon records thirteen armed conflicts involving British regulars from 1775 to 1779, not including the attack on Fort Sullivan in 1776.<sup>15</sup> Edward J. Cashin's study of William Bartram reminds us that as early as September 12, 1775, British General Thomas Gage instructed John Stuart, Indian Superintendent to the Southern Region, to distract the southern Continental army and state militias by employing the region's Native Americans to "take arms against His Majesty's enemies and to distress them in all their power for no terms is now to be kept with them."<sup>16</sup> Cashin also describes in full detail a naval battle on the Savannah River on March 2, 1776, involving "the *Hinchinbrook*, the *Cherokee*, the *St. John*, the *Symmetry*, and three schooners."<sup>17</sup> Four ships of the line and three schooners—seven fully rigged war ships—do not simply materialize on demand. Eighteenth-century sailing technology required a flexible disposition to unfavorable winds and storms at sea, which often forced the time-consuming

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<sup>14</sup> W. Calvin Smith, "Mermaids Riding Alligators: Divided Command on the Southern Frontier, 1776–1778," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, Issue 4 (April 1976), 462.

<sup>15</sup> John W. Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 22–70.

<sup>16</sup> General Thomas Gage to John Stuart, September 12, 1775," Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan (hereafter WLCL), in Edward J. Cashin, *William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 189.

<sup>17</sup> "Master's log of the H.M.S. Armed Vessel *Cherokee*, March 1–4, 1776," William Bell Clark, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 4:166–67, in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 219.

regathering of fleets and stops to re-supply. Where did this fleet come from, if not from an early focus on southern naval strategies by the British ministry? Without such significant British military involvement in the south from 1775 through the end of 1779, the southern Continental regulars might have been free during the early stages of the war to bolster Washington's oft-depleted, half-starved, battle-worn army in the North.

Neglect of the early Southern campaigns does not stem from a lack of documentation. Rather, because East and West Florida both remained loyal to Great Britain and reverted to Spanish control after the war, this story does not fit neatly into the standard narrative of the thirteen heroic colonies. Perhaps had Joseph Plumb Martin been from Georgia or South Carolina, rather than Connecticut, southern conflicts would have received more immediate documentation.<sup>18</sup> But it is naïve to presume that a lack of early American authorship on the subject resulted from a scarcity of Revolutionary activity in the South.<sup>19</sup> There is primary documentation from both British and rebel combatants—not to mention Dr. David Ramsay, a South Carolinian and one of the nation's earliest historians—demonstrating that from 1775 to 1780, considerable American military activity occurred in the South, much of it orchestrated from a distance by George Washington. These encounters involved the Continental army, British regulars, French marines, and Spanish military personnel, hailing from a variety of locations: New York, Virginia, Georgia, both Carolinas, both Floridas, Michigan, New Orleans, Havana, and the British and French West Indies. Both the British military and the Revolutionary heroes

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Plumb Martin was a common soldier in the northern Continental Army who wrote a memoir of his eight-year service to the revolutionary cause. It is from this memoir that historians know as much detailed information concerning the northern campaigns of the war as they do. Quotes from this source are considered to be from a primary document. James Kirby Martin, ed., *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* (St. James, N.Y.: Brandywine Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> In all fairness, even Parliament presumed that “the trouble in America was the work of a small number of dissident radicals who had no considerable popular support, and who were confined largely to New England.” Pancake, 1777, p. 18.

thus recognized the importance of the South to the unfolding war, as well as the potential economic well-being of both nations.

As briefly mentioned, St. Augustine figured prominently in the strategies of both combatants from the very earliest days of the war. An intercepted mail packet convinced George Washington that copious amounts of munitions and arms were stored in the town's fortress, the Castillo de San Marcos.<sup>20</sup> Correctly fearing a British southern invasion of the lower states from East Florida, on December 18, 1775 Washington put out the order to seize St Augustine.<sup>21</sup> The American Continental Army, however, failed in three attempts to conquer East Florida, in 1776, 1777, and 1778. The colony also lived with the constant threat of Spanish invasion from New Orleans and Havana. When East Florida's military units were not concentrating on the colony's defenses continuous skirmishes, raids, and intelligence-gathering sorties by Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown's East Florida Rangers ebbed and flowed from St. Augustine into the backcountries and chief municipalities of Georgia and South Carolina. In 1778, over 2,000 regular British troops under Major General Augustine Prevost utilized the strategic base of Loyalist St. Augustine to launch phase one of the British southern invasion. Combining his army with the sea-borne forces of Lt. Colonel Archibald Campbell that took Savannah, Prevost re-captured the state of Georgia and stabilized the Atlantic corridor from St. Augustine to Charleston, paving the way for Cornwallis's invasion in 1780—phase two of the Southern Campaign.

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<sup>20</sup> I will refer to the fortress in St. Augustine as the Castillo de San Marcos rather than by its name during the British period, the Castle St. Marks. Given the fortress's 260 year history as the Castillo de San Marcos, and the lack of primary and secondary sources that utilize the anglicanized version of this name, it would only serve to confuse the accepted narrative.

<sup>21</sup> On December 17, 1775, the British packet ship *Betsey* was taken off the coast of New England. Her confiscated correspondence revealed St. Augustine's build up of powder and arms, which prompted Washington's request to Congress for action. The George Washington Papers, "George Washington to Continental Congress, Cambridge, December 18, 1775." <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gw040168>. For details concerning events of December 17, see also George E. Buker, Richard Apley Martin, "Governor Tonym's Brown-Water Navy: East Florida During the American Revolution, 1775–1778," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 58, Issue 1 (July 1979), 58.

But the Revolutionary events centering in and around East Florida involved more than just battlefields engagements. Official British correspondence reveals the possibility of Sons of Liberty activity in St. Augustine, beginning in 1774. This study will trace Governor Tonyn's relentless pursuit of such Revolutionary movements as he denounced several high-ranking officials within the colony—most specifically Chief Justice William H. Drayton and Secretary of the Colony Dr. Andrew Turnbull—as loyal to the American rebellion.<sup>22</sup> I will utilize the personal papers and official correspondence of these three key players as they jockeyed for political favoritism with Lord George Germain, Secretary of State of the American Colonies, and other notables of the Court of St James.<sup>23</sup> Loyalist records enable the reader to understand the diplomatically explosive atmosphere of the province as civil and military authorities strove to maintain a stable relationship with Creek and Seminole war chiefs, while simultaneously quashing a rebel-led attempt to defraud these nations of millions of acres of ancestral lands.<sup>24</sup> I will address these issues as they pertain to specific concerns within the southern theater as I analyze the political and cultural aspects of life within the only Loyalist British colony that is now a part of the United States to maintain allegiances to King George III throughout the entirety of the war.

The story of the South during the American Revolution has only recently begun to receive the respect it so well deserves. In this study I will pursue the full course of the war as it pertains

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<sup>22</sup> Students of southern Revolutionary events will recognize the name of William H. Drayton, as his nephew was William Henry Drayton of South Carolina—a prominent figure in the independence movement on the national and local level. Dr. Andrew Turnbull is still revered today as the founder and benefactor of New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

<sup>23</sup> Secretaries of State of the American Colonies during the era of this study: Lord Dartmouth (William Legge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Dartmouth), 1772–1775; Lord George Germain (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount of Sackville), 1775–1782; Welbore Ellis, Feb. 1782–March 8, 1782; Lord Sydney (Thomas Townshend, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Sydney), 1782–1783. After 1783 there was no longer an office of Secretary of State of the American Colonies. Governor Tonyn's correspondence from 1783 forward is to Lord Sydney, Home Secretary, 1783–1789.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Galloway, *The Formation of the Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 131.

to the South, not just the era after 1780. However, the stories of British East and West Florida during the American Revolution are those of virtually forgotten colonies in an ostensibly indistinct theater of one of the most important wars in world history. These scarcely noticed British documents expand North American history and present a unique view of a British Atlantic world perspective of the American Revolution through the eyes of the British East Florida royal governor as his colony continued to buy African slaves from the Caribbean, import British goods from the metropole, and export naval stores and supplies to the British West Indies.

A significant source for this study, commanding a major focus of attention is the voluminous, though underused official correspondence between Governor Patrick Tonyn and Whitehall. But this study is much more than just the discovery of a royal governor's inimitable contributions to the missing military history of the American Revolution. The war served as intermittent background music to the daily strains of internal factions, wholesale charges of sedition, great financial gain followed by great financial ruin, a calamitous end to a bitter struggle, and the potential re-enslavement of thousands of free blacks. It is a unique look inside the electrically charged atmosphere in what George Washington perceived to be a critical sector of the war, and an opportunity to consider a wholly eighteenth-century British perspective of the political chaos that enshrouded eighteenth-century North America. Official British correspondence allows us to observe the inner workings of one of the most dynamic anomalies of the American Revolution: a Loyalist colonial government at war, militarily undefeated, with the whole of its populace adamantly loyal to King George III and stubbornly clinging to North American soil two years after most modern historians profess they evacuated.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Example: "In 1783, the Union Jack was lowered, Florida returned to Spain, and British inhabitants of St. Augustine crowded aboard ships headed for the West Indies, the British Isles, or Nova Scotia." Colin G. Calloway,

But not everything that occurred in this region is the stuff of great national pride for either side. In Edward Countryman's "The Colonial Order and the Social Significance of the American Revolution," we are reminded that for every positive aspect that the Revolution brought to white, Anglo America, a host of negative considerations were visited upon the continent's non-white population, "if we seek to understand what the Revolution destroyed as well as what it created."<sup>26</sup> Such "negative considerations" will be examined, as this study locates these seldom-heard voices through the filter of the thousands of letters streaming back and forth across the Atlantic from Whitehall elites to British military commanders and Loyalist colonial authorities. I have found throughout such correspondence that enslaved Africans, freedmen, and exploited Native Americans were no less a topic of discussion than the war itself. These letters are rife with conversations concerning the status of freedmen and their potential re-enslavement by the new Spanish government; new slave codes more progressive than any others in the British Atlantic world, but nevertheless heinous by today's standards of human rights; the false hopes of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation or Sir Henry Clinton's Philipsburg Proclamation as British-held slaves in East Florida witnessed a path to freedom that would not include them; and the ambiguity of those proclamations as many runaway slaves fought for their freedom against former American masters only to be resold into the Caribbean by callous British officers.

The Native American contingency in East Florida was also in a disaffected state due to broken British promises of deliverance from the "Virginians" who invaded their lands and broke

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*The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Countryman, "The Colonial Order and the Social Significance of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 53, Issue 2 (April 1996), p. 362.

treaties.<sup>27</sup> The Seminole and Creek confederations had strong political relationships with Governor Tonyn and Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown, commander of the East Florida Rangers and later John Stuart's replacement as the Indian Superintendent to the Southern Region. It is through such ties that East and West Florida become significant in the narrative for the entire South during the Revolutionary era. It was from Pensacola that John Stuart raised Indian alliances in the conflict between Great Britain and the American colonists, and from St. Augustine that Thomas Brown continued those efforts. From 1775 until his capture in 1781, Brown directed these nations to battle against American regulars and state militias as his East Florida Rangers eagerly incorporated Creek and Seminole warriors into their company.

American Loyalists of all colors found the war's conclusion to be nothing short of capitulation, devastation, and exclusion. After Yorktown, and the peace talks progressed into a treaty in Paris, East Florida remained the only British stronghold in North America south of the Canadian provinces. By December 1782, St. Augustine had become the third most populous city in British North America, with reason to exult in the victory they achieved even when the rest of the empire could not. Loyalists in East Florida were of the firm belief that they had earned the right to remain in a haven of British sovereignty that survived the test of revolution. But they had yet to understand what it was about kings that brought so many of their neighbors and friends—even loved ones—to the point of Revolution. But many would, as only 10,000 of East Florida's Loyalists would ultimately make the journey away from North America.

Loyalism during the American Revolution is traditionally viewed from a purely American standpoint, lending to the vilification of Tories as traitors, dissentionists, and enemies of American liberty. They too were Sons of Liberty—British liberty; they fought for the centuries-

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<sup>27</sup> "Virginian" was a term of derision among many southeastern Native Americans for the rebels fighting for independence. "Governor Tonyn to Lord Germain, September 15, 1775," PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 65–67.

old British freedoms that had been won many times on many battlefields. But after the war ended in humiliation Loyalists were further marginalized by politicians at Whitehall. Britons might hope that history would forget the tumultuous circumstances of the clumsily orchestrated evacuation of ten thousand loyal British citizens from St. Augustine. It is documented that perhaps more than 40,000 Tories fled Savannah, Charleston, and New York at war's end, but most accounts fail to mention that the primary destination of those from Savannah and Charleston was an already refugee-swollen St. Augustine—the closest safe haven for southern British Loyalists.<sup>28</sup> Eighteenth-century political protocol then forced the faithful of East Florida to wait out the definitive terms of the Treaty of Paris, not hearing of the colony's retrocession to Spain until April 24, 1783. Then came the unpleasant task of supervising the ill-devised mass departure of the dumbfounded Loyalists. To complicate the evacuation, the treaty dictated that Governor Tonyn acquiesce to the new Spanish governor in St. Augustine, maintaining a politically impotent administration from July 12, 1784, until the evacuation was completed on November 13, 1785—over four years after the Battle of Yorktown and two years after the Treaty of Paris. This re-periodization of the final evacuation of British Loyalists and Crown authorities further demonstrates the debacle that befell East Florida.

An even more intriguing turn of events involves the silencing of this history after the war was over. Dr. David Ramsay, arguably America's first historian, mentions East Florida's role in the American Revolution prominently. The same may be said for Henry Lee, one of the southern rebel leaders whose firsthand, published memoirs speak of facing East Floridian troops on the battlefield. Lee attests to the significant role played by East Florida, as well as his recognition of

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<sup>28</sup> Loyalists from Savannah, and the backcountries of Georgia and the Carolinas had already made their way to St. Augustine six months earlier, uncomfortably overcrowding the town's hospitalities. Wilbur H. Siebert, ed., *Loyalists in East Florida: The Narrative* (Deland: Publications of the Florida State Historical Society, No. 9, vol. I and II, 1929), 1:7.



Loyalists as “Americans” and fellow countrymen. For the next one hundred years after the war accounts of the conflict allow for entire chapters on the exploits of St. Augustine in the various southern campaigns and as the linchpin of the southern British land-based activities, with Pensacola as the anchor for the western theaters. It is not until the professionalization of the discipline of history in the late 1880s—when theory and discussion gradually replaced “story” over the next thirty years—that tales of exploits slowly made room for hypotheses in the college classroom. By 1910, East Florida was reduced to a paragraph in most Revolutionary dialogues; by 1930, it had all but disappeared. Relegated to regional history—“borderland” and “peripheral” studies—Florida’s role in the American Revolution is no longer remembered as it happened, but rather what we have chosen to recall. As early twentieth-century historians reduced the importance of the Floridas to the Revolution, so much more so did their protégées follow suit until the prevailing historiography no longer included the region at all.

Though the significance of these events as they pertained to, and affected, the larger southern Revolutionary picture is lost on recent generations of historians, the story of East Florida, and to a lesser extent West Florida, is no less a part of the North American narrative than those of other southern colonies. To allow East and West Florida to remain in obscurity during the Revolutionary era is to erase the story of every human being on the North American continent who faced these Loyalists on the battlefields, smoked the pipe with them in the longhouses, or peered through the bars at them from the slave pens.

Table 1-1. Documented Battles and Events of the American Revolution. (battles fought in southern states have an asterisk)

1775	Event
April 19	Battles of Lexington and Concord, MA
May 10	Fort Ticonderoga, NY captured
May 11	Battle of Crown Point, NY
June 17	Battle of Bunker Hill, MA (Breed's Hill)
Mid-July	Continental Army encamps at Cambridge, MA
October 18	British Naval forces bombard and burn Falmouth, ME
November 13	Montgomery occupies Montreal, Canada
December 9**	Skirmish at Great Bridge, VA**
December 31	Battle of Quebec, Canada
1776	Event
February 27**	Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge near Wilmington, NC**
March 2	American forces fortify Dorchester Heights, MA
March 3-4	Continental Navy & Marines raid the British colony of Nassau, Bahamas
March 7-17	British evacuate Boston
April	Continental Army leaves encampment at Cambridge, MA
April 1	Continental Army enters New York City, NY
June 28**	British repelled at Fort Sullivan (Charleston, SC)**
July 4	Declaration of Independence read publicly
August 27	Battle of Long Island, NY
September 12	Washington evacuates New York City, NY
September 16	Battle of Harlem Heights, NY
October 11-13	Battle of Valcour Island, NY
October 13	British occupy Crown Point, NY
October 28	Battle of White Plains, NY
November 16	Fort Washington on the Hudson in New York captured
November 20	Fort Lee on the Hudson in New Jersey abandoned to the British
December 25	Continental Army crosses the Delaware River
December 26	Continental Army attacks Trenton, NJ
1777	Event
January 3	Battle of Princeton, NJ
January 6	Continental Army encamps at Morristown, NJ
May 28	Continental Army leaves Morristown, NJ
June 17	British invade from Canada
July 6	British capture Fort Ticonderoga, NY
August 2-23	Siege of Fort Stanwix, NY
August 16	Germans defeated at Bennington, NY
August 25	British land at Head of Elk, MD, beginning the Philadelphia Campaign
September 11	Battle of Brandywine, PA
September 19	Battle of Saratoga, NY (Freeman's Farm)
September 21	Battle of Paoli, PA
September 26	British capture Philadelphia, PA
October 4	Battle of Germantown, PA
October 7	Battle of Bemis Heights, NY (2 <sup>nd</sup> Saratoga)
October 17	Burgoyne surrenders army to the Americans at Saratoga, NY
October 22	Battle of Fort Mercer, NJ
November 10-15	Siege of Fort Mifflin, PA
December 19	Continental Army encamps at Valley Forge, PA

Table 1-1. Continued

1778	Event
February 6	France allies with the United States
June 18	British leave Philadelphia, PA
June 19	Continental Army leaves encampment at Valley Forge, PA
June 28	Battle of Monmouth, NJ
August 29	Battle of Rhode Island
November	Continental Army encamps at Middlebrook, NJ
December 29**	British occupy Savannah, GA**
1779	Event
January 29**	British capture Augusta, GA**
May	Continental Army leaves encampment at Middlebrook, NJ
May 8	Spain enters the war against Great Britain
June 1	British capture Stony Point & Verplanck's, NY
July 16	Continental Army captures Stony Point, NY
July 19-August 14	Penobscot Expedition
September 16**- October 20**	Franco/American Siege of Savannah, GA** (failed)**
September 23	John Paul Jones captures man-of-war near English coast
December 1	Continental Army encamps at Morristown, NJ
1780	Event
March 29-May 12**	Siege of Charleston, SC**
May 29**	Battle of Waxhaws, SC**
June 22	Continental Army leaves encampment at Morristown, NJ
June 23	Battle of Springfield, NJ
July 11	5,000 French troops arrive at Newport, RI
August 16**	Battle of Camden, SC**
October 7**	Battle of King's Mountain, SC**
1781	Event
January 17**	Battle of Cowpens, SC**
March 15**	Battle of Guilford Courthouse, NC**
April 25**	Battle of Hobkirk's Hill, SC**
September 8**	Battle of Eutaw Springs, SC**
September 28**- October 19**	Siege of Yorktown, VA; General Cornwallis surrenders his entire** force, marking the end of British hopes for victory in America**
1782	Event
January 1	Thousands of Loyalists begin to leave the United States
January 5	British forces begin to withdraw from the United States
July 12-25**	British Evacuate Savannah, GA and Charleston, SC**
August 15**	Canadian's and Indians attack Bryan's Station, KY**
December 14**	British conclude evacuation of Charleston, SC**
1783	Event
September 3	Final peace treaty signed in Paris
November 25	British evacuate New York City, NY <sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> All above information compiled from Revolutionary War timelines as posted by the Library of Congress, the National Parks Service, and the Public Broadcasting Service.

<http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/continental/timeline2.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/vafo/HISTORY/rwtimeline.htm>

[http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/chronicle\\_timeline.html](http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/chronicle_timeline.html)



Figure 1-1. View of the outer wall and moat of the Castillo de San Marcos facing north from the town of St. Augustine. Photograph courtesy of the author.



Figure 1-2. View of the outer wall and moat of the Castillo de San Marcos facing east toward Matanzas Bay. Photograph courtesy of the author.

## CHAPTER 2

### A TALE OF TWO FLORIDAS

After the Treaty of Paris, 1763, Great Britain seized control of all of Spanish Florida, from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean, and divided it into two colonies simply called East Florida and West Florida.<sup>1</sup> West Florida's borders ran from the eastern banks of the Mississippi River in the west, with the exception of the island that is home to New Orleans, to the Apalachicola River in the east. With Pensacola as the provincial capital, in 1764 Parliament expanded its northern boundary from the 31<sup>st</sup> parallel to 32° 28'; thus West Florida "encompassed the panhandle of the modern state of Florida, about half of present-day Alabama, and a large proportion of what is now Mississippi in addition to some of Louisiana."<sup>2</sup> East Florida contained the same boundaries as modern day Florida, less the panhandle; therefore, ending at the Apalachicola River in the west rather than the modern day western border of the Perdido River feeding Pensacola Bay. The capital remained in the former Spanish garrison town of St. Augustine, the only municipality in the colony.<sup>3</sup> Control of East and West Florida gave Great Britain command of the shipping lanes from Havana to New Orleans, all of the Mississippi River above Manchac (an outpost just below present-day Baton Rouge), the entire North American Gulf Coast east of New Orleans, and the valuable shipping lanes of the Atlantic Gulf

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<sup>1</sup> While it is tempting to jump directly into Revolutionary-era events, it is necessary to discuss some background history in the region from 1763–1774. I will discuss what makes British history in this newly acquired territory, called by the Spanish *La Florida*, unique to the rest of Britain's North American holdings in an effort to better understand the region's determination for Loyalism when war broke out in 1775.

<sup>2</sup> Robin F.A. Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida, 1763–1783* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Some might contend that Dr. Andrew Turnbull's "colony" of New Smyrna would qualify as the province's second township. Though the site of Turnbull's New Smyrna is the location of the modern city of New Smyrna Beach, at its origin in 1768 it was an unincorporated indigo plantation that was ultimately dissolved by the decree of Governor Patrick Tonyn of East Florida in 1777.

Stream.<sup>4</sup> Anglo/Iberian aggravations now reached new levels as Spain walked away from over two centuries of tenure on the Gulf Coast, losing one of its most strategically important pieces of real estate north of the Caribbean—a protective port at St. Augustine for the treasure fleets.

As the pre-revolutionary era dawned, Florida fell into place within the British colonial system with little more than geographic location to weave it into the fabric of the empire. For two hundred and fifty years the Floridas were claimed by an empire completely foreign to the other British colonies in North America, not only in its political homeland and ruling family but in its spiritual doctrines and the language they spoke. Florida's European experiences were anomalous within the British Empire, with very little shared history or bonds of economic and cultural commonality.

Though it is often presumed that the Spanish heritage of the now separated East and West Florida permeated traditions and culture in these colonies in an uninterrupted manner throughout the British period, very little Iberian influence remained after 1763. For one thing, there were virtually no Spaniards left in the region. The Spanish Crown not only encouraged its citizens to evacuate the colony, but provided financial compensation and property elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> When James Grant, the new British governor in East Florida, arrived in 1764 he found only three Spanish families and one American-born merchant remaining from the previous white population of 3,500.<sup>6</sup> Each of the former Spanish citizens had strong ties to British commerce, either as

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<sup>4</sup> William S. Coker, Jerrell H. Shofner, *Florida: From the Beginning* (Houston: Pioneer Publications, 1991), 41, 47.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 152.

<sup>6</sup> The last Spanish evacuation ship left the colony on January 21, 1764. The heads of the three families were Francis Xavier Sanchez, Manuel Solana, and Luciano de Herrera. Daniel L. Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years, 1763–1785," *El Scribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History* (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, Vol. 38, 2001), 12. The American-born merchant was Jesse Fish, who moved to St. Augustine in 1735. James W. Raab, *Spain, Britain and the American Revolution in Florida, 1763–1783* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 17.

prosperous farmers or merchants; one family head is now known to have been a Spanish spy.<sup>7</sup> Grant proceeded to tear down all building façades in St. Augustine that resonated with Spanish culture and replaced them with edifices of Anglo origins. In Pensacola, General Augustine Prevost delivered the terms of surrender of West Florida to the Spanish governor on August 6, 1763. It only took the few remaining Spanish officials twenty-seven days to evacuate the colony of all known Spanish inhabitants.

The Native American presence in Britain's newest colonies in the southern American mainland held to histories as diversified as the European populations of the region. West Florida contained portions of the ancestral homelands of three of the South's dominant Indian nations and confederations: the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Lower Creeks. The combined Native American population for the colony in 1764 is estimated at approximately 28,000.<sup>8</sup> In the region of East Florida, the entire historic Native American population was either annihilated by disease and warfare or sold into slavery by end of the first decade of the eighteenth century. British raids during the early years of Queen Anne's War (also known as the War of Spanish Succession, 1702–1713) destroyed the Spanish mission system strung across the province's north central and northeastern regions that housed virtually the entire remaining indigenous population. This catastrophic depopulation of the area allowed the casual migration of smaller communities of Lower Creeks into the vacated lands over the first half of the eighteenth century. The Spanish

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<sup>7</sup> Luciano de Herrera spied for the Spanish government throughout the British period. From 1778–1779, Josef de la Puente, another Spanish agent posing as a botanist, joined Herrera in St. Augustine. Charles Loch Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763–1784* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), 123–24; see also Katherine Abbey, "Efforts of Spain to Maintain Sources of Information in the British Colonies Before 1779," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, xv (1928), pp. 56–68; Katherine S. Lawson, "Luciano de Herrera: Spanish Spy in British St. Augustine," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, xxiii (1945), pp. 170–76; and Light Townsend Cummins, "Luciano de Herrera and Spanish Espionage in British St. Augustine," *El Escribano*, xvi (1979), pp. 43–57.

<sup>8</sup> The Choctaw were allied with the French in the previous war, making relations with their new British co-tenants even more ominous. Robin F.A. Fabel, "British Rule in Florida," in Michael Gannon, ed., *The New History of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 136.



dubbed these new émigrés *Seminoles*, a derivative of the word *cimarrone* or “wild” to “refer to Indians living apart from missions or other Spanish-Indian settlements.”<sup>9</sup>

A treaty between the British and Seminoles at Fort Picolata in 1764 technically confined settlers and planters to lands east of the St. Johns River. Regardless, for the first eleven years of the British period the atmosphere in East Florida was thick with tension as the potential for hostilities escalated as more whites entered the colony, even though by William Bartram’s 1774 estimate the Seminoles numbered less than 2,000 people scattered among nine villages.<sup>10</sup> Less than seventy miles from East Florida’s western border there was an old wooden fort at St. Marks established to protect Spanish trading posts. However, by 1763 the old fort was virtually in ruins and could only house thirty soldiers. So far removed was Fort St. Marks from St. Augustine, both in terms of a traversable road and hospitable relations with the Seminoles, that the outpost was commanded by John Stuart from Pensacola.<sup>11</sup> This tenuous relationship between the Seminoles and British in East Florida would aggravate Britain’s hopes for significant profits in agricultural commerce until the end of Grant’s tenure in the colony.

Governor Grant’s original hopes for populating East Florida included the avoidance of large-scale endowments of massive land grants to court favorites that had often characterized colonial settlement in the British Americas. However, his pleas fell on deaf ears as the vast majority of the colony’s habitable land was handed out in 10,000–20,000 acre parcels—100,000 acres to Lord Dartmouth and his heirs alone. While some of these lands were cultivated, most

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<sup>9</sup> Jerald T. Milanich, *Florida Indians and the Invasion from Europe* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1995), 234.

<sup>10</sup> William Bartram, Mark Van Doren, ed. *The Travels of William Bartram* (New York: 1928, reprinted Cosmo Classics, 2007), 180, 182.

<sup>11</sup> Nearly 200 miles from St. Augustine, Governor Grant declared the fort abandoned in 1769; however, trading post owners and white patrons continued to seek shelter inside the structure of St. Marks at times of unrest with the Seminoles. Raab, *Spain, Britain and the American Revolution in East Florida*, 44, 46.

grantees planned to leave the land idle until the colony's property values increased enough to sell off for large, easy profits. But a new colony required laborers, physicians, merchants, and craftsmen of every variety in order to survive. Governor Grant enticed "five hundred industrious and successful settlers," including some religious-freedom seeking French Protestants, to begin the re-population process of the colony.<sup>12</sup> The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was designed to enhance this effort, but East Florida found little favor within the common population of other North American British colonies.

Like the sugar islands of the Caribbean, much of the land in East Florida was initially granted to absentee landholders and, as a result, an overwhelming majority of the English residents who physically lived in East Florida did not reside in the region until after 1764—many of whom came from non-North American locales. There was no sense of shock, anger, or even dismay in East Florida resulting from controversial laws like the Proclamation of 1763, because such legislation was intended to have a positive impact on this region. Historian Colin Calloway reminds us that the Earl Lord Shelburne, president of the Board of Trade in 1763, promoted the Royal Proclamation of 1763 specifically to redirect the westward movement of the American population north and south, to Nova Scotia and the Floridas.<sup>13</sup> He hoped this would serve the dual purpose of temporarily alleviating western border warfare with Indian tribes, while simultaneously populating peripheral colonies that were virtually empty of whites. How else can one explain that Montreal and Quebec lie west of the Proclamation Line, yet there were no issues

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<sup>12</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 17, 18. In 1763 Madrid dispatched aides to the governors of St. Augustine and Pensacola to assist with the evacuation process and establish fair market values for personal property. All Spanish citizens were strongly encouraged to leave Florida permanently with compensations of free land elsewhere within the empire. Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 152–53.

<sup>13</sup> Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 94.

with whites moving to those vicinities?<sup>14</sup> Even at this, “there was no immediate influx of British [American] immigrants to repopulate East Florida.”<sup>15</sup> Another reason that such a large percentage of the new British inhabitants of East Florida were also relatively new to North America was that few long-term residents of the continent saw East Florida as a destination boasting of the typical enticements of westward expansion. Large land grants worked by slave labor were, by design, established in East Florida for wealthy, well-connected patriarchs, not idealistic back-woodsmen desiring to carve out a niche in the wilderness fifty acres at a time. With the exception of Indian traders, English inhabitants did not begin to move into East Florida until well after the Treaty of Paris, and even then it was a sluggish process.

This posed an immediate problem concerning the demand for common laborers in West Florida.<sup>16</sup> If one observes the map of the Proclamation of 1763 it becomes quite obvious that the intended method for reaching West Florida for such folk was by filtering through East Florida. Clearly, it was legal to dip under the Proclamation Line and then head due west, whereas crossing it anywhere between the St. Marys River and Canada was considered an affront to a royal decree. What one will not find on this map or any other involving the Proclamation of 1763 is that “the northern boundary of [West] Florida is thought of in connection with the establishment of a continuous boundary separating the whites from the Indians—as mentioned earlier was temporarily set up in 1763 [at the 31<sup>st</sup> parallel], and finally determined in the course

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<sup>14</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 93, 94, 155.

<sup>16</sup> This was no small question in the minds of the British ministry, setting off a raging debate within Whitehall. “On July 22, 1763, Secretary Pownall requested from the newly designated governor of West Florida an opinion as to the most reasonable and frugal method by which the ‘New Established Colony in America may be peopled and Settled with useful and industrious Inhabitants either from such of His Majesty’s other colonys that may be overstocked or from any foreign parts.’” The question seems quite obvious, but given the ministry’s insistence upon the demarcating placement of the Proclamation Line this discussion became a great source of contention in both houses of Parliament. Where the people would come from and their method of immigration was as critical as the designation of West Florida’s border, which was “obviously of a tentative character.” Clarence E. Carter, “The

of the succeeding decade [at 32° 28’].”<sup>17</sup> In short, there was no opportunity to duck under and around the Proclamation Line, for the northern border of West Florida provided a ceiling—a barrier—to just such intentions. There was clearly a design for westward movement within the confines of the Proclamation of 1763, just not into the protected Indian Lands; thereby fulfilling both the ministry’s commitment to white frontiersmen in search of western lands, as well as the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

This procedure for westward movement, via East and West Florida, would be controlled and tempered by the metropole, thus benefitting the British ministry in three ways: 1) restricting western border conflicts with Native Americans by regulating the initial flow of pioneers into West Florida to a crawl, thus decreasing the need for large, permanent troop placements in the colony; 2) a liberal land grant program was offered to British officers who served in the region during the French and Indian War who would populate West Florida with men of means, as well as the proper temperament for dealing with any potential hostilities; and, 3) Great Britain’s elites were recruited to take advantage of large land grants.<sup>18</sup> To insure their intentions for West Florida, the lords of the Board of Trade placed an advertisement in the *London Gazette* on November 22, 1763, offering “townships” of 20,000 acres to those who qualify: “These townships were to be granted to such persons as were ‘willing to enter into reasonable engagements to settle the lands, within a limited time, and at their own expense, with a proper

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Beginnings of British West Florida,” in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Dec. 1917), 317, 319.

<sup>17</sup> Carter, “The Beginnings of British West Florida,” 320. In actuality, the augmented northern boundary of West Florida was written into law and officially mapped in 1764.

<sup>18</sup> John Born Dewey, Jr., “British Trade in West Florida, 1763–1783” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1963), 29; see also Carter, “The Beginnings of British West Florida,” 324–25.

number of useful inhabitants.’”<sup>19</sup> The need to populate West Florida was a critical issue, but the ministry had no desire to flood the colony with unseemly characters for the sole purpose of packing the region with people. That had been allowed in the other American colonies by past governments, and such mistakes would not be made again. But the aristocrats of Whitehall forgot to factor in one very distinctive feature of the American colonist to this formula: an independent nature unlike anything the empire had known prior to the colonization of North America.

West Florida offered the type of land highly sought by American frontiersmen and their households. These folk were not from among the empire’s well-bred or financially comfortable lineages; they were rugged, unrefined, and not to be denied. In a letter to Lord Hillsborough, Elias Durnford, Surveyor General and future governor of West Florida, indicates that by 1768 the colony was regularly expecting large groups of frontier families from Virginia, via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, but the cost of moving so far away could prove prohibitive, thus his suggestion that the ministry pay their transport.<sup>20</sup> This is a most interesting request, as a journey down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers was clearly in violation of the Royal Proclamation of 1763—yet Durnford was suggesting that Whitehall find funds to assist in this illegal activity. We may gather three conclusions from this: 1) the “filtering” of settlers through East Florida was neither to the best interests of the colony of West Florida or its administrators, nor was it as successful a method of peopling the colony as Whitehall had presumed; 2) by 1768 Whitehall came to the realization that the Proclamation of 1763 contained built-in hindrances to the ministry’s own designs for westward movement; and 3) frontier families were of a hardy stock

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<sup>19</sup> “John Pownall, Secretary to the Lords Commissioners of the Board of Trade and Plantations, November 21, 1763,” PRO, CO 391/70, pp. 312–14; see also “*London Gazette*, November 22, 1763,” PRO, CO 391/70, in Carter, “The Beginnings of British West Florida,” 325.

<sup>20</sup> “Letter from Elias Durnford to Lord Hillsborough, June 5, 1768,” PRO, CO 5/69, f. 443; see also “Letter from Elias Durnford Concerning Congresses in West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 338.

who were going to make their way to the best available land possible, whether by legal means or not, and river travel was the quickest route. The difference for these people—and to the British ministry, no doubt—between challenging the Proclamation of 1763 by traveling to West Florida via an illegal route or illegally settling west of the Line in the Ohio Valley was that once settlers arrived in West Florida their possession of the land was completely lawful. To attempt the same thing in Tennessee or Kentucky would make these frontier folk squatters and, therefore, their claims to the land they possessed would be tenuous at best, if not seditious.

This is not to indicate that all went smoothly once the new inhabitants arrived. “In the summer of 1770, the movement of settlers from the colonies on the Atlantic seaboard had assumed substantial proportions.”<sup>21</sup> By 1771, Peter Chester became governor of West Florida and he complained of the potential powder keg smoldering in the colony’s backcountry as white settlers were encroaching on Creek territory—literally running the Indians off their lands along the Alabama River.<sup>22</sup> As a result of these trespasses John Stuart’s job became more difficult as he was in a continuous motion of negotiating the ceding of more Creek and Choctaw lands at the expense of ever more gifts and “presents” in return.<sup>23</sup> From early on, Stuart’s requests for gifts to the Indians of West Florida reached approximately twenty-one percent of the colony’s entire annual budget.<sup>24</sup>

As for the elites of the two new British Gulf Coast colonies, historian Linda Colley sheds light on their demographics as she details the progression of status for Scottish citizens in British

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<sup>21</sup> Cecil Johnson, “Expansion in West Florida, 1770–1779,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (March 1934), p. 485.

<sup>22</sup> “Letter from Peter Chester to John Stuart, September 10, 1771,” PRO, CO 5/72, f. 703.

<sup>23</sup> “Letter from Elias Durnford Concerning Congresses in West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 337–39. “Presents” was a term often used to refer to contraband items, specifically rum.

<sup>24</sup> “Expenses and Costs Report for West Florida, June 24, 1766 to June 24, 1767,” PRO, CO 5/67, f. 521.

society; from savage tribesmen north of Hadrian's Wall to important members of a united empire. Colley notes the accomplishments of these previously marginalized people through intellectual enlightenment, prolific economic endeavors, and military service as she traces their ascendancy in British society. Though Colley's emphasis is on Scotland, she includes Irish Protestants and the Welsh in her study of evolutionary processes for which the peripheral members of the "island kingdom" became "peers of the English."<sup>25</sup> The succession of eighteenth-century imperial wars greatly enhanced an Irishman or Scot's "prospects of rapid advancement through the ranks and their opportunities for booty... [thus] securing British victories could be the means of securing their own."<sup>26</sup> Regardless of lands or position, Welsh, Irish, and Scottish officers were more often viewed as pretenders by English aristocracy and, therefore, quite often sought assignments in the colonies as an avenue for political, social, and economic advancement.

Though perceived as inferior posts, colonial appointments were a preferred alternative to the insult of being dutifully deferential, as favored positions on the British mainland were given to Englishmen. Driven by pride, determination, and sometimes poverty, these soldiers of the empire took an "aggressive interest in British imperial expansion...redressing some of the imbalance in wealth, power and enterprise between them and the English."<sup>27</sup> Bernard Bailyn writes that of the British immigrants who relocated to the colonies from 1760 to 1775, the Scots were credited with having the greatest propensity for Loyalism, a direct contrast to the high

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<sup>25</sup> As one proof of this peer status, Colley writes that "[t]he English and foreign are still all inclined today to refer to the island of Great Britain as 'England.' But at no time have they ever customarily referred to an English empire." Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging a Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 130.

<sup>26</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 127; as a profound example of just such opportunities for an Irish Protestant, Colley cites the careers of such Anglo/Irish proconsuls as Arthur Wellesley, the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wellington, and his brother, Marquess Charles Colley Wellesley. Colley, *Britons*, 132.

<sup>27</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 129.

percentage of Irish who joined the American rebellion.<sup>28</sup> Colley speculates that even poor Scots were “attached as well to a British empire that afforded them so many opportunities...in which Scots might see themselves, and be seen by others, as peers of the English.”<sup>29</sup> She cites Alexander Murdoch to complete this thought that ““the American War renewed their opportunity to prove their loyalty and enthusiasm for the concept of Britain.””<sup>30</sup>

However, historian David Hackett Fischer further breaks down the origins and destinations of Great Britain’s seventeenth- and eighteenth-century émigrés. Loyalties were more complicated than just Scots remaining true to the Crown and the Irish joining the Revolution. Highland and Lowlands Scots “differed in language, politics, religion and culture. In America...many of those transplanted highlanders became Tories in the American Revolution, largely because their border neighbors were Whig.”<sup>31</sup> For the Irish it was a matter of religious beliefs, as well as colonial or anti-colonial sentiments, as Catholics from Ireland found one more excuse in the American Revolution to fight against the British. Conversely, Irish Protestants—typically of Scottish descent who were transplanted to Northern Ireland during the seventeenth century—fought ardently for King George III.

As these Scottish gentry broke through national political barriers in London during the 1750s, a rash of nepotistic appointments followed to insure the longevity of this new-found prestige. When Lord Bute, a Scot Highlander and future Prime Minister of Great Britain, was Secretary of State of the Northern Department he “ensured that his countrymen got the lion’s

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<sup>28</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Voyages to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of American on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Knopf Publications, 1986), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 140, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Murdoch, “Lord Bute, James Stuart Mackenzie, and the government of Scotland,” in Karl W. Schweizer, ed., *Lord Bute: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Leicester, 1988), 140, in Colley, *Britons*, 141.

<sup>31</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 620–21.



share of the Crown appointments in East and West Florida, colonies only acquired in the Seven Years War and therefore singularly free of any prior English stranglehold.”<sup>32</sup> Though Fischer’s study does not include the colonies of East and West Florida, it may be surmised from his vast scholarship that both the elites and commoners of Scottish descent who came to the Floridas were in fact Highlanders; otherwise, Loyalism would not have been the overwhelming politics of choice, nor would the commoners have followed the political leanings of the elite leadership had they not all been of a common regional culture.

Governor James Grant is a classic example of Lord Bute’s appointments—an elite with more of a preponderance for war and parties than diplomacy, but a Scotsman nonetheless. From the beginning of his tenure as governor of East Florida in 1763, Grant gained immense popularity in St. Augustine, due largely to the extravagant parties and banquets he would host several nights each week. Grant, a bachelor, boasted North America’s most voluminous selections of wine, beer and liquor—as well as three “‘French Negroes’ already trained in the arts of French cuisine.”<sup>33</sup> This lavish lifestyle prompted the boisterous governor to boast, “There is not so gay a town in America as this is at present, the People Mason[ic], Musick and Dancing mad.”<sup>34</sup> Grant’s popularity waned by 1770, as the highly touted profits the governor promised those who would invest their fortunes in East Florida never materialized. Grant thus felt prompted to make his most astute political move by returning to London, leaving Lt. Governor John Moultrie as the acting chief administrator from 1771 to 1774.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Schafer, “St. Augustine’s British Years,” 41.

<sup>34</sup> Schafer, “St. Augustine’s British Years,” 45.

<sup>35</sup> John Moultrie belonged to one of South Carolina’s most prominent planter families and was lured to East Florida by Governor James Grant with promises of political appointment and vast financial gains. The Moultrie family became so divided over Revolutionary issues that when the Lt. Governor’s brother William, a rebel general in the

Other than a bevy of Scottish aristocrats, East Florida had little in common with her sister Gulf Coast province to the west. Though the colony contained the whole of the Florida peninsula, only the upper northeastern regions from the St. Marys River on the Georgia border to Fort Picolata along the St. Johns River were inhabited by a scattering of white traders, hopeful plantation owners, and the occasional sighting of the king's garrisons.<sup>36</sup> Most non-natives hovered within a day's ride of St. Augustine, the lone fortified town in the colony. Nothing had been done to re-inhabit the extensive southern portions of the peninsula at this point, by either the English or their predecessors, the Spanish, though a letter written in 1784 allows us to understand that East Floridians were familiar with Florida's southern waters, as well as the Keys.<sup>37</sup> European warfare, slave-raiding, and disease robbed the region of its original inhabitants, the Timucua, Calusa, Tequesta, Ais, Jororo, Myaca, and Tocobaga, to name a few. Of the original tribes, only the Apalachee of the Great Bend territory on the northeastern Gulf Coast still clung to an existence in the area. Just decades prior to the American Revolution, the Seminoles, a loose-knit confederation of Lower Creeks that had separated from the primary clans, slowly migrated into the northern sections of East Florida in search of a domain to call their own and quickly rose to prominence. At the outset of the Revolution, East Florida's white population was the smallest in British North America: only 3,000 whites and 2,500 blacks.<sup>38</sup> Fear of Seminole

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Continental Army, spent time in Charleston as a prisoner of war his politically influential Loyalist brother did nothing to alleviate his plight or that of any of his former friends and colleagues. Josiah Smith, Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780-1781," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (January, 1932), 18.

<sup>36</sup> As mentioned earlier, there was a small garrison at Fort St. Marks, but it was small and ineffective.

<sup>37</sup> In this letter can be found many intricacies of the colony's geographic make-up, including an "Eddie of the Gulf Stream" that enables Spanish fishermen to return to Havana; Key Largo and other keys off the Cape of Florida are described as good harbors in good weather, but unsafe in a gale. "Letter from Francis P. Fatio to Major Morrison, December 14, 1784," PRO, CO 5/560, p. 916.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Byrne Lockey, *East Florida, 1783-1785: A File of Documents Assembled and Many of them Translated* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 120-21. This collection of documents was edited by John Walton

uprisings kept East Florida's plantations in constant flux for heading the laborers into St. Augustine for protection. As a result, from 1763 to 1774 the colony's profitability was stagnant and weak. Just weeks after his arrival in East Florida on March 1, 1774, Patrick Tonyn wrote of the situation: "The Indians had been very troublesome to the planters, had taken away whatever they pleased, had threatened and menaced so they were in great fear of their lives."<sup>39</sup>

West Florida, conversely, had several townships that spread the breadth of the second largest colony, geographically, in the British Empire.<sup>40</sup> But in the early years of British rule these towns were rustic, frontier encampments compared to St. Augustine. In spite of the influx of American frontiersmen, population totals within the colony were well below what the Earl Lord Shelburne had hoped. "[A]t the beginning of 1774, Elias Durnford estimated that 2,500 whites and 600 blacks lived in the western settlements on or near the Mississippi. In the remainder of the province were 1,200 whites and 600 slaves."<sup>41</sup> This places the population at 4,900 individuals one year prior to the commencement of the Revolution. The majority of the new arrivals, as these figures demonstrate, were heading for the fertile fluvial plains of the Mississippi River.

Pensacola was the Gulf Coast exception, growing from a fever-infested camp settlement in 1763 to a respectable town by the time of William Bartram's visit in 1775. Historian Robin F.A. Fabel describes Pensacola as having "perhaps 200 houses, wharves, warehouses and a gridiron of

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Caughey as an honorarium after Lockety's death. Other than Caughey's forward and Lockety's introduction, this publication presents 424 primary documents with no secondary interpretation or input other than the translation of some documents from Spanish into English.

<sup>39</sup> "Tonyn to Dartmouth, March 27, 1774," PRO, CO 5/554, f. 18–19, pp. 35–38.

<sup>40</sup> Once West Florida's northern borders were expanded to 32° 28' it became the second largest colony in the British Empire, with only Quebec exceeding it in geographic dimensions. Regardless of the size of the peninsula of East Florida, which is arguably as large as West Florida, only the northeastern region of East Florida was considered habitable. The imaginary Pacific Ocean boundaries claimed by such colonies as Virginia and Pennsylvania were only colonial investors' pipe dreams and never officially sanctioned by Whitehall. Coker and Shofner, *Florida: From the Beginning*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Fabel, *The Economy of West Florida*, 18.

streets surround a central square, in which stood a fort.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, West Florida’s white population was larger than East Florida’s, in spite of Whitehall’s initial efforts to create the complete opposite results, which speaks to the tenacity of frontier Americans seeking their own lands.

However, even with townships at Pensacola, Mobile, Biloxi, Natchez, Baton Rouge, Manchac, and on the western banks of the Mississippi River, Pointe Coupee, the region was dominated by the burgeoning city of Spanish New Orleans. All Mississippi River trade flowed in and out of New Orleans under Spanish control. Spanish and French agents enjoyed great ranges of mobility within West Florida’s borders due to the lack of British influence on, or presence in the region. They also stirred anti-British sentiment among the various tribes, particularly the Choctaw and Lower Creeks, by transporting chiefs and headmen back and forth to Havana for conferences to encourage the disruption of trade and peace with the British.<sup>43</sup> Though the colony was expansive and the land fertile, British subjects here were outnumbered on a very large scale by the indigenous inhabitants and possessed a pathetically small percentage of the land. Even with the colony’s administration utilizing the “wink and nod” method in direct defiance of the Proclamation of 1763, immigration during the 1760s was but a trickle. However, by the early 1770s the winds of change would blow in the Floridas, and not of rebellion.

American frontiersmen were accustomed to being out-numbered by their Native American counterparts. But as bold as they might hope to be it was suicidal to live where a much larger Indian population waged war against colonists while British military support was at a minimum.

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<sup>42</sup> Fabel, *The Economy of West Florida*, 167. Bernard Romans believed the number to be slightly less at “about an hundred and eighty houses.” Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (1775; reprint, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), 303.

<sup>43</sup> The French also made a concerted effort through their own emissaries, as well as the former Spanish governor of New Orleans to antagonize Choctaw/Anglo relations through influence peddling and gifts. “Letter from Elias Durnford Concerning Congresses in West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 337–40; see also “Letter from William Phillips to Philip Stephens, September 18, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/70, f. 643.

However, once news leaked out that Indian hostilities were focused at one another rather than British settlers, land-hungry families and speculators alike arrived from every corner of the British held portions of the continent. This would include such firms as the Company of Military Adventurers from New England, represented in 1773 by Col. Israel Putnam and Lt. Rufus Putnam, both of later Revolutionary War fame. Philip Livingston, of the New York Livingstons, “stood to make a fortune from the fees, which, as secretary [of the colony], he charged on land grants if [Putnam’s company] was followed by the promised hundreds of New England families.”<sup>44</sup>

Such an aggressive land grab put colonists and speculators in a constant position of perpetual confrontation with the powerful Lower Creek confederation who dominated the lands near Mobile and Pensacola, and even more so with the Choctaw, who controlled the western portion of the colony, up to and including the highly sought after Mississippi Valley. These relations were so vital to the peace and economic boom of the region that once the American rebellion ran John Stuart out of Charleston he bypassed the more comfortably settled St. Augustine and made his headquarters for the Southern Indian Department in Pensacola.

Since the first days of the colony’s existence, officials in West Florida developed a knack for deceptive maneuvers, each ploy capable of igniting the region into multiple wars against numerous adversaries. And yet these schemes were implemented with a casualness that makes the modern reader wonder at the audacity. For example, John Stuart brokered a treaty, dated March 26, 1765, that supposedly restored the peace between the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, while establishing Great Britain as their primary source of European goods in the West

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<sup>44</sup> Fabel, *The Economy of West Florida*, 168. For more detailed information see pages 167–69.

Florida region.<sup>45</sup> A separate meeting with the Creeks was set for the following September.<sup>46</sup>

What none of the tribes understood was that the British military, through John Stuart, was manipulating these negotiations in a manner that would keep the Choctaw and Creeks at war with one another, so as to distract their attention from encroaching settlers; there was even conversation at bringing the Cherokees into the war on the side of the Choctaw.<sup>47</sup>

Fragile, frontier shell games such as this were not for the faint of heart. Shortly after the implementation of Stuart's unscrupulous treaty between the Choctaw and Chickasaw, Governor Johnstone bemoaned the colony's impending doom, claiming that the Creeks and Choctaw discovered the conspiracy and were moving on Pensacola.<sup>48</sup> This attack, of course, never happened. Seven years later at Fort Bute on the Bayou Iberville, Charles Stuart, John Stuart's cousin and Indian agent to the Choctaws, heard the complaints of several chiefs from the smaller Mississippi tribes who complained that they were continually forced to seek shelter on the Spanish side of the river. Mattahas, chief of the Biloxis begged Stuart to broker a peace between the Creeks and Choctaw quickly because, he claimed, the Creeks attacked all tribes in West Florida on the off chance they might be Choctaw.<sup>49</sup>

Historian Edward Cashin tells us that "British Indian policy at the time of [William] Bartram's departure from Mobile still consisted in the decade-long promotion of the Creek and Choctaw War."<sup>50</sup> But Bartram had a different take on the lengthy conflict: he believed that the

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<sup>45</sup> "Treaty with the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, March 26, 1765," PRO, CO 5/66, f. 39-46, pp. 77-92.

<sup>46</sup> "John Stuart to John Pownall ("Secretary of the Right Honorable the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations"), August, 24, 1765," PRO, CO 5/66, f. 356-71, pp. 717-48.

<sup>47</sup> "Report of Governor George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, May 19, 1766," PRO, CO 5/67, f. 45.

<sup>48</sup> "Memorial of George Johnstone, June 3, 1766," PRO, CO 5/67, f. 61.

<sup>49</sup> "Talk with Indian Chiefs at Fort Bute by Charles Stuart, October 14, 1772," PRO, CO 5/74, f. 218.

<sup>50</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 173, 199, 200.

Creek and Choctaw wars, as well as all southern Native American conflicts, “proceed[ed] from greater principles and more magnanimous intentions, even that of reuniting all nations and languages under one confederacy or commonwealth.”<sup>51</sup> Though there were sporadic pan-Indian movements in eighteenth-century North America, such arrangements were not the factor behind every Indian war—especially the decade-long conflict involving the Creeks and Choctaws. As so many of the primary documents from the period indicate, Bartram, not being privy to the political underhandedness of the day, sought rational explanations that were palatable to his way of thinking. Governor James Wright of Georgia, on the other hand, was well aware of the deviousness of these “peace” negotiations and became heavily involved in the spectacle. Wright worked ardently to encourage more upper class immigrants from Scotland and England into his colony and fully believed that the prolonged Creek-Choctaw War was to the benefit of the future of Georgia. In one letter Governor Wright’s concerns that the southern Indian war would lead to direct British intervention are demonstrated in a directive given to John Stuart:

The Chactaw Indians should be encouraged and assisted in Carrying on their War against the Creeks and also that the Cherokee & Chickesaw Indians should without delay be applied to, and every method used to find out with as much certainty as possible how they stand affected; and to try to Engage them to Join us against the Creek Indians, in Case we are Obligated to declare war against them.<sup>52</sup>

Shockingly, John Stuart was able to continue this sham until September 12, 1775, when General Thomas Gage determined that Native American hostilities should be focused on the rebels of the southern backcountry.<sup>53</sup> Before leaving West Florida, Bartram would note that

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<sup>51</sup> William Bartram, Mark Van Doren, ed., *The Travels of William Bartram* (New York: 1928, reprinted Cosmo Classics, 2007; originally titled *Treats of Florida*, published in Philadelphia, 1791; published as *The Travels of William Bartram* in 1928 by Mark Van Dorn), 183, 315–16.

<sup>52</sup> “Governor James Wright to John Stuart, January 27, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/75, f. 55, p. 109; see also “John Stuart to General Gage, May 12, 1774,” General Thomas Gage Papers, WLCL, in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 74.

<sup>53</sup> “General Thomas Gage to John Stuart, September 12, 1775,” Gage Papers, WLCL, in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 189.

Charles Stuart was suddenly assigned the woeful task of redirecting ten years of Choctaw/Creek blood-lust toward the frontier families of Georgia and the Carolinas.<sup>54</sup> More shocking was the deputy superintendent's ability to pull this off. However, what these events suggest is less the political aptitude of British diplomats to southern Native Americans, as much as the power of well-made, inexpensive British trade goods on these relations.

Another example of West Florida's shady antics involved the Mississippi River trade flowing into New Orleans, often completely bypassing the British river ports of Natchez, Baton Rouge, and Manchac. In January of 1779 an annoyed Captain Thomas Hutchins of the Royal Engineers complained to Lord George Germain that General Frederick Haldimand sought the opinion of Hutchins's superior, Brigadier General Cortlandt Skinner, on the concept of converting the Bayou Iberville, an overflow tributary of the Mississippi River, into a canal.<sup>55</sup> Hutchins explained to Germain that he had already performed this service over a decade earlier while Haldimand was the military commander in West Florida, thus this was an unnecessary expenditure of Hutchins's time and the king's money. Hutchins then spent the next four pages of this document providing great detail to his recommendations, strongly suggesting that the concept of opening a water route between the Mississippi River and Pensacola, via the Iberville, was achievable.<sup>56</sup> General Skinner was also firmly behind the plan. In a letter between the

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<sup>54</sup> "Letter from John Stuart to Lord George Germain, January 1, 1779," PRO, CO 5/80, f. 155.

<sup>55</sup> "William Bartram referred to the Iberville as a canal. It seemed so, but it was really a partially dredged riverbed, and it ended nine miles short of the junction with the Mississippi." Cashin, *William Bartram*, 193.

<sup>56</sup> There is also little doubt from the composure of this letter that Captain Hutchins had no desire to confront the diseases of West Florida a second time. "Captain Thomas Hutchins to Lord George Germain, January 24, 1779," PRO, CO 5/165, f. 81–89. Furthermore, a letter from Messr. Caminade of New Orleans was included in a packet of letters traveling between the governors of "(2) Floridas; Georgia; S. Carolina; Bahamas"; "In this book is included all that passes by the West Indies." Caminade is an Indian trader who believes he is entitled to ten years of tax exempt status in West Florida. In this letter he mentions that the Iberville River is clear and communication is open from Mississippi River to Mobile, via Lake Maurepas. "Letter from M. Caminade, June 15, 1765," PRO, CO 5/218, p. 16–17.



general and John Boddington of the Principle Offices of His Majesty's Ordinance, one can find a discussion concerning Hutchins's estimate of £2500 to complete the project. Boddington wanted to know Skinner's opinion of the plan, as well as Hutchins's idea to use British troops to perform the labor, thus keeping down costs. Skinner's only concern with the plan after speaking with Hutchins at Greenwich was that his estimate may need to be increased by £200–£300.<sup>57</sup> Further investigation of this promotion demonstrates that the captain was not privy to the full depth of neither Haldimand's request, nor Skinner's enthusiastic support.

This scheme raises the question why the British government would seek to possess the whole of the Mississippi River at the conclusion of the French and Indian War, but allow the most vital city on its shores to go to their Spanish rivals—especially considering that New Orleans was clearly on the British side of the river? But Edward J. Cashin points out that “[w]hen the Duke of Bedford negotiated the Treaty of Paris in 1763, he had in his possession a map that clearly showed that the Iberville [River] offered a shorter alternative to West Florida than the Mississippi at New Orleans.”<sup>58</sup> It had been the plan of the British ministry since the first Treaty of Paris to re-direct the primary flow of the Mississippi River by cutting through its steep banks at a hair-pin curve just below Baton Rouge, down the proposed Iberville Canal and ultimately to Pensacola via the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>59</sup> A quick study of a map of Louisiana (following page) clearly shows that once the Iberville was improved to handle such a re-direction of the Mississippi, the flow would continue directly into the Amite River. From the Amite the Mississippi's hijacked waters would wash into Lake Maurepas and through the channels across

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<sup>57</sup> “Mr. Boddington, Principle Offices of His Majesty's Ordinance to Brigadier General Cortlandt Skinner, April 22, 1779,” PRO, CO 5/165, f. 127–29.

<sup>58</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 193.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, “Expansion in West Florida,” 484.

the isthmus separating Lake Maurepas and Lake Pontchartrain.<sup>60</sup> From Lake Pontchartrain the waters flow freely through the straits known as The Rigolets into the Mississippi Sound and directly into the Gulf of Mexico. Thus, the British hoped to create a significant water route from the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico that would bypass New Orleans and bring the town to ruin.

Elias Durnford, while still Surveyor General of West Florida, gave his overwhelming support for the plausibility of this project, which was important in that the scheme was no longer just a political construct—it had the sanction of the man who would ultimately be held responsible for its success.<sup>61</sup> West Florida governor Peter Chester envisioned a customs house at Manchac to regulate Mississippi River trade flowing into West Florida, as well as a town at the junction of the Iberville and Amite Rivers.<sup>62</sup> Chester was determined to put this plan in motion, going as far as to build trading posts around the fort—all the while pressing Haldimand for an updated military survey of the proposed route. Pirates on the Mississippi River have a colorful history, but this is a plan to literally pirate the flow of the river itself. We will see later how this seemingly far-fetched “theft” of one of the largest rivers in the world would impact Spain’s involvement in the American Revolution.

Meanwhile, in East Florida, storm clouds of political intrigue of a more internal nature were brewing in the early 1770s; the tempest would come quickly. During Governor Grant’s

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<sup>60</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Lake Pontchartrain* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946), viii–ix, in Dewey, “British Trade in West Florida,” 44. Today there is a town of Manchac located on the isthmus separating Lake Maurepas and Lake Pontchartrain. This is not the town referenced during the Revolutionary era. Historical Manchac, or Manchac Post (renamed Fort Bute once the defensive structure was built sometime between 1764 and 1766), was located on the eastern banks of the Mississippi River, in present-day East Baton Rouge Parish—just south of the city proper.

<sup>61</sup> “Letter from Elias Durnford Concerning the Layout of Townships in West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 326.

<sup>62</sup> “Governor Peter Chester to Lord Dartmouth, January 21, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/592, pp. 33–36.

absence in St. Augustine, various members of the colony's Grand Council felt slighted by Lt. Governor Moultrie's temporary promotion, as factions developed. Chief Justice William Drayton's hostile outbursts during council meetings and public conflicts with Moultrie became fodder for gossip throughout the colony.<sup>63</sup> Given this atmosphere, one can imagine the air of tension in 1774 surrounding the arrival in St. Augustine of a newly appointed imperial governor from outside the colony—and of Irish birth. Governor Patrick Tonyn's brusque nature in dealing with such trivialities as personality conflicts when revolution was brewing in New England is often perceived by historians as arrogance.<sup>64</sup> But there was much more involved between these men than petty jealousies. Tonyn was a man with life-long military experience and significant land holdings—"accustomed to exercising far more power over [his] tenants than most" English landowners on the British mainland.<sup>65</sup> For a man with such a background "the business of presiding over thousands of unrepresented subjects in the colonies [was] neither uncongenial nor particularly unfamiliar."<sup>66</sup> In short, Tonyn was accustomed to being shown deference by those he considered less influential. For elites such as Drayton and Turnbull, it was a matter of giving no quarter—Scots had fought for centuries to be seen as peers to Englishmen; they would not easily put themselves in the position of answering to an upstart Irishman.

The majority of East Florida's elites were politically well-placed Scots and there were many who were highly insulted by the selection of this "pugnacious Irishman" as their new chief administrator.<sup>67</sup> When Tonyn arrived in St. Augustine the friction over local political

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<sup>63</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 170–77.

<sup>64</sup> For examples of such perceptions, see any writings on Governor Tonyn by Wilbur H. Siebert, Charles L. Mowat, or J. Leitch Wright.

<sup>65</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 132.

<sup>66</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 132.

<sup>67</sup> Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 60.

appointments and the constant jockeying for position and character assassinations by East Florida's elites was volcanic. But Tonyn was not the least interested in the Machiavellian machinations of the colony's over-privileged sons and heirs. Issues of sedition and rebellion quickly became the new governor's primary focus. It was an era of tempestuous political turmoil in North America and Tonyn's initial dealings with the colonists suggest that he was not concerned with his popularity, nor would he allow the seeds of dissention to germinate into unrest as the result of administrative ineptitudes. Political and social errors of judgment by novice governors who acquired their positions through various degrees of nepotism created a great many of the current tribulations in the American colonies, and Tonyn would not step easily into such traps. John Moultrie, the wealthiest planter in the colony, returned once again to his position of Lt. Governor and became one of Tonyn's most trusted political associates. This alliance would serve Tonyn well with the people, as well as in future political upheavals.

Born in Northern Ireland in 1725, Patrick Tonyn led a little-documented life prior to his arrival in St. Augustine, East Florida. However, the region and era in which he came to maturity give clues to the origin of his iron-clad devotion to king and empire. As mentioned briefly before, it was during the reign of James I that loyal Scottish Presbyterians started relocating into the northern regions of Ireland in an attempt to pacify the island.<sup>68</sup> These Scots-Irish Protestants and their heirs considered themselves superior to their Irish Catholic countrymen—but most importantly, they considered themselves to be English and were passionately loyal to the Crown. Referring to themselves as “‘the Protestant Interest’ or the ‘English Interest,’ Irish Protestants remained convinced that as the ‘English in Ireland’ they were entitled to the same rights and

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<sup>68</sup> While it is recognized that simply being born in such a region would not automatically deem an individual to be of protestant heritage, there exists evidence of Tonyn's religious affiliation in Papers of Bastardy filed with the Church of England in 1754, to “Patrick Tonyn, Captain in the Hon Lieutenant General James Cholmondley's Regiment of Dragoons and Elizabeth Sutton.” National Archives of the United Kingdom, File PE/BF/OV7/21/12 <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/search>

privileges as Englishmen.”<sup>69</sup> For many early eighteenth-century Irish Protestants, Scots, and Welshmen who held no lands or titles, accessibility to honor and fortune came in the form of military service. Legitimate booty earned in the king’s service purchased lands and officer’s ranks—often sufficient enough over the years to endow the heirs of the auspicious warrior.

Such was the case with Patrick Tonyn whose father, Charles Tonyn, rose to the rank of colonel in His Majesty’s 6<sup>th</sup> (Inniskilling) Dragoons, purchasing a lieutenantancy in the regiment for his nineteen-year old son.<sup>70</sup> Swift promotions and fortunes ensued during the Seven Years War due to the successes of young Tonyn’s regiment in Prussia—specifically, the battles of Warburg and Kloster Kamp in the summer and fall campaigns of 1760.<sup>71</sup> But the appreciation of Parliament for battlefield heroics wore off quickly in the peace time years for those outside the English social mainstream.

In 1767, married and with his regiment stationed back in England, Lt. Colonel Tonyn’s fortunes took the kind of turn of which most people only dream. His brother-in-law, Francis Levett, Sr., arranged for Richard Oswald, a wealthy London slave dealer, to convince Governor Grant of East Florida to set aside 10,000 acres of pristine forests for Levett along the Julington Creek near the St. John’s River for a “‘worthy friend’ to whom he owed ‘particular obligations.’”<sup>72</sup> Somewhere in the negotiations, Oswald also counseled Grant to assign a claim

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<sup>69</sup> James S. Donnelly, Jr., ed., *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture Vol. 2* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 584, <http://uf.aleph.fcla.edu.lp.hscl.ufl.edu>

<sup>70</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, “Patrick Tonyn (1725–1804).” <http://www.oxforddnb.com/articles>

<sup>71</sup> Mark Mayo Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1966), 1109; see also Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 262; T.F. Mills, *Land Forces of Great Britain, the Empire, and Commonwealth*. <http://www.regiments.org>

<sup>72</sup> Richard Oswald made much of his fortune as a slave trader, heavily involved with the “slaving entrepôt of Bance Island at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River, where he bought captives from the Temne people.” Oswald was one of the British representatives who signed the Treaty of Paris, sitting across from Henry Laurens of South Carolina—

for 20,000 acres on the east bank of Black Creek, a tributary of the St. John's River, to Levett's brother-in-law, Patrick Tonyn.<sup>73</sup> Though Tonyn remained an absentee land holder for seven more years, the forty-two year old British officer—who did not come from noble birth or a privileged rank in English aristocracy—was among an exclusive and elite cadre of the largest landholders in one of Great Britain's newest North American colonies.<sup>74</sup>

In 1773, Tonyn's regiment moved to the West Indies to provide a military presence to what was becoming the most politically charged hemisphere in the British Empire. The details behind Patrick Tonyn's appointment are unclear, but it is known that Tonyn solicited the position by writing to the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State of the American colonies.<sup>75</sup> What may have ultimately made Patrick Tonyn the King's choice for such a prestigious assignment was a combination of the future governor's military background as ballast against the turbulent times in North America, Tonyn's vested interest in colonial matters due to his large land holdings in East Florida, and the officer's current proximity to North America. Having Lord Dartmouth in his corner was a definite boon to Tonyn's prospects, as well. Given the colony's centralized location in the British Americas, East Florida would need a strong military-minded governor who would understand the strategic value of its geographic location.

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the man who would pocket ten percent of all Oswald's slave transactions in Charleston prior to the Revolution. Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 137–38.

<sup>73</sup> Daniel L. Schafer, "Florida History On-Line," with special acknowledgment to the James Grant Papers and the Florida Claims Commission.  
[http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Julianton\\_Plantation.htm](http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Julianton_Plantation.htm)

<sup>74</sup> There were 27 land grantees of 20,000 acres or more. Among them are Lord Grenville, The Earl of Dartmouth, Charles Legge, Lord Egmont, Sir William Duncan, Denys Rolls, Richard Oswald, Peter Taylor, Francis Levett, Sr., and Patrick Tonyn. "The Turnbull Letters, 3:1; "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, St. Augustine, January 19, 1778," PRO, CO 5/546, pp. 227–28; see also Schafer, "Florida History On-Line,"  
<http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/Plantations>

<sup>75</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 178.

Historians have often cited geographic seclusion, and, therefore, military dependence, as one of the factors that would encourage East and West Florida to maintain loyalties to British interests.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the populations of these colonies were significantly smaller than those of their rebellious neighbors to the north, adding to their presumptive reliance upon the British Crown. Some of East Florida's elites were concerned that no political assembly had been called due to the financial straits of the province, but there were also no taxes yet levied on the inhabitants of East Florida as a direct result of its small size and lack of commercial production. Therefore the populace had no complaints of taxation without representation. Also, having never set foot on American soil, East Florida's new governor had viewed the American colonies from a European perspective his entire career. Tonyn's military analysis of colonial politics made him well aware of the powder keg that was threatening British North America.

West Florida did not enjoy same the tax sanctuary afforded East Florida, but neither was the colony void of an assembly for the elites to voice their concerns about the political issues raging to the fore of colonial North American society.<sup>77</sup> West Florida's needs, however, resembled the early apprehensions of Georgia concerning rebellion against the very monarch and his troops who kept the colony safe from devastation by Indians or, as in the case of West Florida, the politically ambitious governors of Spanish New Orleans. But while Georgia faced harsh political pressures and economic sanctions by a South Carolina government stocked with planter elites, many of whom also owned vast holdings in Georgia, West Florida's leadership

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<sup>76</sup> Robert M. Calhoun, *The Loyalists Perception and Other Essays* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 163.

<sup>77</sup> That West Florida had an elected assembly (1764) and East Florida did not again emphasizes that Whitehall's initial plans for populating the two colonies from east-to-west backfired. Indeed, the very opposite occurred.

found a strong example of Loyalist determination in its closest ally, East Florida.<sup>78</sup> The West Florida assembly received an invitation to the First Continental Congress of 1774. But the letter was delivered to the president of the assembly, who was also the Lt. Governor of the colony. The invitation was immediately passed to Governor Peter Chester, who promptly refused to reveal its contents to its intended recipients.<sup>79</sup> This piece of underhanded political manipulation would probably not have been necessary, however, as the promise of land and military protection were a much greater pull for loyalty than any counteractive push for independence.<sup>80</sup> Had West Floridians truly felt oppressed by their current circumstances Governor Chester's actions would only have encouraged rebellion, not suppressed it.

Though seditious rumblings were spreading in New England and the Chesapeake during the spring of 1774, in East Florida the immediate concern was the need to ensure peace with the Creek and Seminole Indians—specifically through the Seminole chief, Ahaya the Cow Keeper. On March 13, 1774, British military and civil authorities sponsored a council near the St. Marys River with Cow Keeper, Okoneé King, Long Warrior, and several minor chiefs for the purpose of introducing the new governor and establishing a positive rapport. Though this was Tonyn's first documented meeting with an indigenous people, his preparation for the event clearly demonstrated a gift for diplomacy under such circumstances. After making several conciliatory gestures, the new governor casually reminded the chiefs of the magnitude of the "Great King" across the ocean: "altho his warriors and people are in numbers like the leaves on the trees, and his Ships like the trees in the woods, and altho he is able with these to fight the whole world; for

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<sup>78</sup> Robert M. Calhoon, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760–1781* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 5; see also Cashin, *William Bartram*, 124.

<sup>79</sup> J. Barton Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida* (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1976), 233.

<sup>80</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalists Perception*, 163.



neither the strength of his enemies, nor the Mountains nor Rivers, nor Sea can stop him when he goes to War against them.”<sup>81</sup> Tonyn then manipulated the conversation effectively into a discussion which emphasized that the all-powerful king loved peace more than war, and was happiest when “[Indians] and his white children are like Brothers and children under one Father.”<sup>82</sup> Whether the Seminole chief trusted the sincerity of the new governor’s oratorical display or the veiled British threat had its intended effect, Cow Keeper’s pledge of unending loyalty to Great Britain remained a solid fixture in East Florida’s Revolutionary-era policies and military strategies. Not only would Cow Keeper be faithful to his word, but in a letter to Lord Dartmouth Governor Tonyn expressed his confidence that the Seminole chief would be an invaluable asset against the rebellious Americans.<sup>83</sup>

Anglo relations with southern Native Americans had been historically dubious, at best, well before the British arrived in East Florida in 1763 and their assumptions of power from the Spanish aggravated those dealings. Small scale hostilities and killings that disrupted the peace in the past began to resurface in the summer of 1774. On August 5, Georgia’s governor, Sir James Wright, and Governor Tonyn agreed to stop trading with various tribes until the aggression ceased. This was successful for only a few weeks, as in early September the killing of two Indian warriors by white men near Savannah threatened to start a full-scale war. Governor Tonyn sent what few uniformed British troops he could spare on an excruciating hell-bent-for-leather march from the southern regions of the colony near New Smyrna, up and down the St. John’s River, and across the northern borders of Georgia along the St. Mary’s River. Tonyn was attempting to give his new allies a false impression of the number of British regulars stationed in East

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<sup>81</sup> “Address of Patrick Tonyn to Cow Keeper, March 13, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/554, pp. 21–22.

<sup>82</sup> “Address of Patrick Tonyn to Cow Keeper, March 13, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/554, pp. 21–22.

<sup>83</sup> “Governor Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, March 27, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/554, f. 18–19, pp. 35–38.

Florida—and it worked. Such an artificial show of force, with strict orders to “observe peace and good order,” had a calming effect on Creek and Seminole tempers.<sup>84</sup> The British display of presumed strength brought peace to the colony and was a rousing success for East Florida, both militarily and economically, as planters could permanently return to the plantations they had been forced to abandon constantly on occasions of feared uprisings.

In West Florida it would take much more than chicanery to keep the peace. The expansive geography, compounded by constant outbreaks of disease ravaging the troops, made sustaining West Florida’s defenses a governor’s nightmare. For example, in August of 1765, Pensacola alone “suffered simultaneous epidemics of yellow fever (putrid billious fever), dysentery (flux), and either typhus (hospital or jail fever) or typhoid. As malaria was also certainly present, the combination was deadly.”<sup>85</sup> In less than one year’s time the regiment at Mobile had exhausted a medicine supply large enough to accommodate one thousand soldiers for four years.<sup>86</sup> By August of 1768, epidemic among the troops in Mobile was so constant that all but a small detachment of men were withdrawn to the Mississippi River region of the colony in order to fully recuperate. Their hardships persisted; while recovering, they were called upon to deter any hostile activities that might spill over from the Spanish side of the river.<sup>87</sup> Those left behind spent over a year building a “new” Mobile, moving the town to the windier east side of the bay in hopes that this

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<sup>84</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, September 16, 1774,” PRO CO 5/554, pp. 26–29.

<sup>85</sup> Robert R. Rea, “Graveyard for Britons: West Florida, 1763–1781,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Apr., 1969), 348; Brigadier General Frederick Haldimand (1767–1771) “set both the military and civil establishments to their proper tasks” by basically circumventing the inept governor Montefort Browne on every matter—especially the overwhelming concern for the unhealthy atmosphere of the principle towns of Pensacola and Mobile. Rea, “Graveyard for Britons,” 351.

<sup>86</sup> Rea, “Graveyard for Britons,” 349.

<sup>87</sup> “Observations on the Province of West Florida, by Elias Durnford, Surveyor General of West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/514, f. 338–39; see also “Memorial to the Earl of Hillsborough from the Merchants and Traders of West Florida, (no date),” PRO, CO 5/514, f. 401. Durnford became Peter Chester’s lieutenant governor in 1770.

new location, plus the draining of the many swamps in the area and the discontinuation of farming on “unhealthy” soil, would ease the unrelenting attack of disease on the troops.<sup>88</sup> Spanish envoys to the Creeks utilized this dilemma in hopes of convincing the confederation that the British were abandoning West Florida, leaving their stores unprotected.<sup>89</sup> British Indian agents found this ploy frightening.<sup>90</sup> It took Mobile several years to fully recover from its inauspicious beginnings. “In 1766 Mobile’s population numbered 500 whites (300 men and 200 women) and 360 black men, women, and children.”<sup>91</sup> By 1774, the Reverend William Gordon estimated that Mobile’s population consisted of fewer whites (330) but more blacks (416).<sup>92</sup>

There is no mention—official or otherwise; primary or secondary—of smallpox as one of the microbes fueling the Gulf Coast’s arsenal of contagions during the pre-Revolutionary era. As we will see later, smallpox would indeed affect the region in 1778, once the war commenced, but it is presumably not among the maladies infesting Mobile and Pensacola at this time.

Surprisingly, in East Florida there is no mention in either the writings of Governor Grant, Governor Tonyn, or other members of the colony concerning virulent outbreaks of any of the deadly tropical diseases that plagued the Caribbean and Gulf Coast. Given the volume of such complaints to Whitehall by their West Florida counterparts it can only be presumed that either similar epidemics did not afflict East Florida during the British era, or those people responsible

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<sup>88</sup> “Letter from Elias Durnford Concerning the Layout of Townships in West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 326–27.

<sup>89</sup> “Observations on the Province of West Florida, by Elias Durnford, Surveyor General of West Florida, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 338.

<sup>90</sup> “Memorial of the Merchants Trading to West Florida, October 27, 1768,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 211.

<sup>91</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 178.

<sup>92</sup> Fabel, *The Economy of West Florida*, 18; see also Cashin, *William Bartram*, 178.

for the promotion of commerce or financial investitures in the colony were able to keep any disparaging news from traveling across the Atlantic.

With a small civil population in West Florida spread over such a vast area, and the military spread equally as thin and debilitated by deadly disease, fortifications were scattered and constantly in disrepair. As more troops were moved to the Mississippi Valley conditions in Pensacola for proper protection and internal improvements left an exasperated Elias Durnford to demand of Lord Hillsborough immediate action concerning “what a colony of Great Britain deserves.”<sup>93</sup> The regiment’s barracks were “irreparable,” roads and bridges were in desperate need of renovation, the governor’s house was rotting and not worth the money needed to repair it; overall, the present post would be more expensive to maintain than it was worth.<sup>94</sup> In addition to the frustration of the colony’s administrators, settlers began to fear for their safety as they saw the westward movement of redcoats from Mobile due to disease accompanied by the discontinuance of mail packets.<sup>95</sup> The Creeks watched Pensacola and Mobile closely.

This opened the door for Spanish interference with British Indian alliances in West Florida, as well as providing Spanish and French traders the opportunity to regain lost business. Madrid may have forfeited the region in the Treaty of Paris, 1763, but Spain and its allies now posed a constant drain on the new landlord’s Indian trade. But this drain was not just financial. Madrid was sparing no expense to court the Lower Creeks and Choctaw away from British

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<sup>93</sup> “Letter to Lord Hillsborough from Elias Durnford, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 311.

<sup>94</sup> “Letter to Lord Hillsborough from Elias Durnford, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 309–10; see also “Memorandum by Elias Durnford Concerning the Inspection of the Stockade at Pensacola, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 333–35.

<sup>95</sup> “Letter to Lord Hillsborough from Elias Durnford, July 24, 1769,” PRO, CO 5/114, f. 310.

military alliances.<sup>96</sup> During Montefort Browne's interim as governor the various Spanish spies and Indian agents worked overtime to take advantage of the disarray within the colony. Browne sought help from Whitehall to patrol the West Florida Gulf Coast for Spanish schooners filled with trade goods in hopes of reinvigorating old relationships and trade networks; the biggest prize being arrangements for land.<sup>97</sup> The Apalachicola River, which divided East and West Florida, was an especially prime location for Lower Creek and Spanish connections. Remote and on the edge of both colonies, the Apalachicola basin provided an excellent waterway from the Gulf Coast into the backcountry. Traveling due north, the river connects to the Chattahoochee River, which opens up the lands of the Upper Creeks and ultimately the Cherokee. If properly handled, the Spanish believed they could drive a spike of Iberian dissention into the heart of the British Gulf Coast. British experts on Native American relations held grave concerns over the dire possibilities of such a Spanish intrusion.<sup>98</sup>

Even the major chiefs of the Lower Creek confederacy became alarmed at the news of Spanish probings into their lands. Typically accused by historians of "playing one European nation off of another," the exalted Lower Creek chief known as the Pumpkin King demonstrated the opposite reaction by counseling John Stuart on the importance of keeping the Spanish and Creeks at arm's length from one another.<sup>99</sup> According to the Pumpkin King, the Cowetas—a member of the Lower Creek confederation—accepted rum, salt, and sugar from the Spanish,

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<sup>96</sup> Eye witness accounts reported that Spanish officials were transporting minor chiefs of the Lower Creek confederation to Havana for congresses. "Letter from William Phillips to Philip Stephens, September 18, 1769," PRO, CO 5/70, f. 643.

<sup>97</sup> "Letter from Governor Browne Concerning Spanish Inducements for land around Apalachicola, September 18, 1769," PRO, CO 5/70, f. 637.

<sup>98</sup> "Letter from Charles Stuart to Montefort Browne, September 22, 1769," PRO, CO 5/70, f. 647.

<sup>99</sup> "Extract from John Stuart to Governor Montefort Browne Concerning Spanish Intrusions, September 30, 1769," PRO, CO 5/70, f. 655.

though they denied such activity. He also warned Stuart that the Wichitas were seeking a meeting with Spanish traders.<sup>100</sup> As an important chief of the Creek alliance, the Pumpkin King was ultimately capable of pledging the loyalty of all Creek tribes but asked Stuart for British naval support to keep such temptations away from Creek lands.<sup>101</sup> The primary concern of the Pumpkin King had little to do with from whom the Creeks received trade goods, but rather of what those goods consisted. Rum was infesting the Creek lands through these and other illegal means at an alarming rate to Creek leaders. Later Governor Peter Chester would write Lord Hillsborough for support in running the rum traders out of West Florida, blaming the drink for the majority of the colony's Indian concerns. But by Governor Chester's term in office it was not just the Creeks who were drowning in rum—it was the whole of the colony's backcountry, including the Choctaw and Chickasaws.<sup>102</sup>

The primary source for maintaining any continuity in these explosive relations was John Stuart's network of Indian agents throughout the region. British trade goods were considered by many to be superior to those of their European counterparts and less expensive. Stuart's only real competition came after Revolutionary events disrupted the colonial South and American rebel Indian agents attempted to lure the powerful southern tribes and confederations into positions of neutrality, at best, with their own English-manufactured goods that were equally inexpensive. But Stuart's deep pockets and an overall Indian distrust of land-hungry "Virginians" kept West Florida's seemingly precarious atmosphere surprisingly at rest. Elias Durnford credited John Stuart's commissaries among the Native Americans for their ability to deal with Indian concerns

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<sup>100</sup> "Extract from John Stuart to Governor Montefort Browne Concerning Spanish Intrusions, September 30, 1769," PRO, CO 5/70, f. 659.

<sup>101</sup> "Extract from John Stuart to Governor Montefort Browne Concerning Spanish Intrusions, September 30, 1769," PRO, CO 5/70, f. 659.

<sup>102</sup> "Letter from Governor Peter Chester to John Stuart, September 10, 1770," PRO, CO 5/72, f. 703–07.

away from Pensacola and Mobile. It was critical that they always confer with Indian leadership at their own towns and villages out of respect, but more importantly out of necessity to keep the Indians from observing the disheveled British settlements too closely.<sup>103</sup>

East Florida had its share of concerns over maintaining good relations with the Seminoles and Lower Creeks, but not due to orchestrated wars against each other or settler encroachment. Georgians were the principal incendiary component of East Florida's fragile Indian peace, and had been since the Spanish left the area in 1763. Unlike West Florida, whose frontier was continually in flames over the Creek and Choctaw war, East Floridians were troubled more by rumors of war than the actual outbreak of hostilities—and it was almost always over the murders of one or two people; never wholesale slaughter. Interim governor John Moultrie remained in constant alarm of Indian attack over such events, though he continually tried to convince Lord Dartmouth that he was up to the challenge.<sup>104</sup> But events were soon to dictate the necessity of a stronger figure in the governor's manor. In July 1773, two young Cherokee braves, companions of William Bartram's, were ruthlessly murdered by a Georgia frontiersman named Hezekiah Collins, whose wife had invited the two into the Collins' cabin for a meal. Collins disappeared into East Florida, bringing the hostilities to both sides of the St. Marys River, severely hindering a cession of Indian lands that Governor Wright of Georgia had been attempting to negotiate for the last three years.<sup>105</sup> The domino effect of this action would create a financial and political

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<sup>103</sup> "Letter to London from Elias Durnford, Surveyor General of West Florida, July 24, 1769," PRO, CO 5/114, f. 321.

<sup>104</sup> "Florida's lieutenant governor John Moultrie assured Lord Dartmouth that despite the alarms from Georgia, he thought he could keep the peace. However, he acknowledged that Indians lurked about, stealing horses and killing cattle in the woods." Cashin, *William Bartram*, 82.

<sup>105</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 66–67, 69.

upheaval over land grants that could very well have been the spark that ignited the southern theater of the American Revolution.

Hostilities escalated until they had a profound effect on the residents near Mobile as running battles between the Choctaw and Creek caught many settlers in the middle.<sup>106</sup> The governors of four royal colonies came together in one accord, convinced that the region was on the verge of a pan-Indian war. Governors Wright and Moultrie insisted on the protection of British regulars, but to no avail.<sup>107</sup> We see two things in this passage. First, the governors of the southern colonies, and John Stuart as well, were in close contact with one another concerning the dangers of regional Indian affairs. This introduces the concept of inter-colonial ties and cooperation under British rule, rather than a more commonly posed picture of far-flung royal colonies aimlessly pursuing their own concerns. Were any of the southern colonies to fall by Indian wars or revolutionary unrest the impact on the remainder would be monumental. Such a scenario would weaken the chain of British authority in the South one link at a time, compounding the chance of complete overthrow with each capitulation, as none of the colonies were considered militarily strong enough to stand alone. If the southern governors were thus entwined in their dealings involving Native American hostilities, so too would be the military, as they were all subordinate to Lord Dartmouth at this time.

Second, we witness the expressed call for British regulars into the southern colonies in January 1774, prior to any Revolutionary activities. This places the British military in the South and capable of organizing suppressive strikes long before a call for independence or the debacle of Saratoga. We will see later how Thomas Brown, a Loyalist refugee in St. Augustine, and

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<sup>106</sup> “David Taft to John Stuart, January 3, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/75, f. 89, p. 45.

<sup>107</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 73.



Governor Tonyn would utilize this tactical information in devising a plan for a “southern strategy” as early as 1775.

Few colonies within the British Empire were better strategically located for the purpose of serving the mercantilist economic visions of the era than East and West Florida, or as keenly positioned to provide the all too necessary military protection that kept such economies fluid.<sup>108</sup> As stated earlier, these two colonies allowed Great Britain to dominate the waters between the Caribbean and Bahamas, and North America. But they also served as a buffer between a rapidly escalating hostile North American continent and the British West Indies. The American colonies traditionally provided the English with the tremendous advantage of a geographically practical source for food stuffs and naval stores to their sugar colonies, as well as a natural market for British West Indian molasses, rum, and slaves. But in the darkening days ahead that was all to change. East Florida would ultimately become the primary provider for much needed supplies to the valuable British West Indies, and both Floridas would serve well as military command centers for British southern campaigns. Even as the Revolution turned the southern backcountry into a killing field, “Loyalists who fled to St. Augustine and Pensacola had good reason to expect the protection of a powerful military force,” according to historian Robert M. Calhoon.<sup>109</sup> “East Florida, and in some respects West Florida as well,” he continues, “represented the nexus of

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<sup>108</sup> It is a note of irony that the military was spread too thin in West Florida to offer “quick response” assistance to the interior inhabitants of that colony who were not immediately within the vicinity of an outpost, but in relation to Jamaica, for example, a strike from West Florida—as laborious as it might be—was significantly faster than waiting for military transports to arrive from England or other ports in North America. Any fleet sailing from a North American east coast port, even one as close as St. Augustine, must beat against the combined forces of the trade winds and the Gulf Stream. Only ships strategically located in the Caribbean could respond faster than those in Pensacola or Mobile. But again, this is not to argue that this was the fastest or best method of protection for the Caribbean colonies. It was simply the best approach from North America. Thus, once the French entered the American war of independence in 1778, Great Britain had no choice but to keep a large squadron of battleships and troops at the ready in the British West Indies to thwart their counterparts stationed in the French Caribbean. O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 43, 55, 208.

<sup>109</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalists Perception*, 167.

command, that is, the location where leadership, civilian support, supply, manpower, relatively secure fortification, and proximity to theaters of conflict all coincided.”<sup>110</sup>

Eighteenth-century British military commanders might be surprised to learn that many modern historians and military analysts have trouble grasping the concept that the Floridas would have been the “nexus of command” for anything but peripheral skirmishes of no extreme import to the greater picture of a supposedly New England-centered revolution. But that is because we today rarely look at the American Revolution from the perspective of those forced to approach the rebellion from a more global, imperial strategy. Loyalists understood this concept better than most. Anglican minister Jonathan Boucher was referencing his political views when he published “A Letter from a Virginian to Members of Congress,” concerning the proper relationship between Parliament and the colonies: “A British community existed in the world and the [American] colonies made up only a small part of it. A majority represented in Parliament governed the empire; the colonies owed obedience to that majority as a small part owed its being to the whole.”<sup>111</sup> As the British war ministry, General Thomas Gage, or General Sir Henry Clinton well knew, the British colonies in North America that were in rebellion consisted of but one-half of Britain’s total number of colonies. When a map of the western hemisphere is viewed, and the empire’s colonial holdings can be seen all together—from Nova Scotia to Grenada—the literal geographic center can be found just below the St. Johns River in East Florida. Patrick Tonyn well understood that he was landing in the middle of a war zone, both politically and geographically. His job was to keep that war zone from becoming a military reality.

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<sup>110</sup> Calhoun, *The Loyalists Perception*, 167.

<sup>111</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 237.

Governor Tonyn's tenure in East Florida virtually coincided with the outbreak of the American Revolution. Parliament initiated the Coercive Acts—which Robert M. Calhoon describes as the point of “collision” which started the war—only two weeks after the new governor's arrival in St. Augustine; just thirteen months later the first shots of the war broke the air in Massachusetts.<sup>112</sup> On April 17, 1775, in South Carolina, a royal packet, the *Swallow*, was attacked and seized in South Carolinian waters and the king's mail confiscated—a treasonous, offensive assault that was sanctioned by a secret committee of the Provincial Congress of South Carolina.<sup>113</sup> Unlike the defensive posture taken at Lexington and Concord two days later, the war in the southern colonies began that day with a quieter, but no less significantly seditious act of aggression. In April 1775, all pretenses were removed; the discord was now a rebellion. Tonyn, a man who spent the last thirty-one years of his life in military service to king and country, would not remain idle if he believed that his colony was leaning toward joining the revolt. These were difficult times, on a turbulent continent, for a colony to preserve the Loyalist status quo.

To fully understand the British period in Florida one must weave together the three dominant strands discussed here that make this region unique to the rest of British North America. First, the European history of the region was unlike any other on the continent. Two hundred and fifty years of Spanish kings and queens in Madrid did little to colonize Florida, and even less to promote commerce or industry. British planters in Virginia and the Carolinas fell further and further into debt, wailing against unfair lending procedures and the Navigation Acts, as economic difficulties in the port towns of the North East disgruntled tradesmen and laborers in the once-prosperous shipping industry. Meanwhile, Spanish merchants traded profitably with

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<sup>112</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalists Perception*, xii; Smith, “Mermaids Riding Alligators,” 446.

<sup>113</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 19.

Florida's indigenous populations, which brings us to the second strand of the fabric: while British colonists were hacking out townships in the forests of Pennsylvania, Virginia, or New England—reducing the indigenous populations by the thousands through warfare and ravaging diseases—Florida's Native Americans found land in which to expand following Anglo/Iberian wars of religious dominance. Not since the days before the annihilation of the Pequots had British settlers and planters found themselves so outnumbered by the Native American population as they did in Florida in 1763.

Now separated into two colonies, the Floridas were literally centuries behind their sister colonies in North America in agriculture, military dominance over the native peoples, and aggravated relations with the metropole. By 1774, with complete revolution but a musket shot away, Britain placed a governor in St. Augustine who became a force with which to be reckoned unlike any other in the British Americas. This was the final strand needed to strengthen the fabric of British Loyalism in East Florida. Patrick Tonyn brought to St. Augustine a determination for king and country that would right the colony's economic woes, pacify relations with the Seminole confederacy, face down adversaries from within and from without the colony, and uphold the law of the land regardless of political attacks on his office. Tonyn offered a unique blend of military leadership, keen business sense, velvet-gloved diplomacy when necessary, and iron-fisted tenaciousness against any who stood in his way.<sup>114</sup> While taxation without representation became the bon fire of rebellion for the colonists north of East Florida's borders, economic depression fueled the flames. Therefore, Tonyn's first order of business upon arriving in St. Augustine on March 1, 1774, would be to rejuvenate the colony's deplorable economy, thus dousing any sparks that might attempt to cross into East Florida.

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<sup>114</sup> With the colonies divided, West Florida would flounder without strong military leadership and survived only as long as the Spanish stayed out of the war.



Figure 2-1. Map of East and West Florida. The original 1763 northern boundary of West Florida is represented by the lighter line just above the colony's name on the map. The northern boundary of 1764–1783 is represented by the darker line. The boundaries of East Florida include the remainder of the peninsula of present-day Florida, though only the northeastern section of the colony was inhabited by whites. Map courtesy of the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History and Special Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.





Figure 2-2. Proclamation Line of 1763. From this map the boundaries of the Proclamation Line of 1763 in conjunction with the location of the eastern indigenous populations become evident. The lighter-shaded triangular-shaped border jutting westward from the northern reaches of the Proclamation Line represents the region included in the Quebec Act of 1774, a provision allowing the practice of the Catholic faith in this specific portion of the Canadas. Map source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/multimedia/8824>

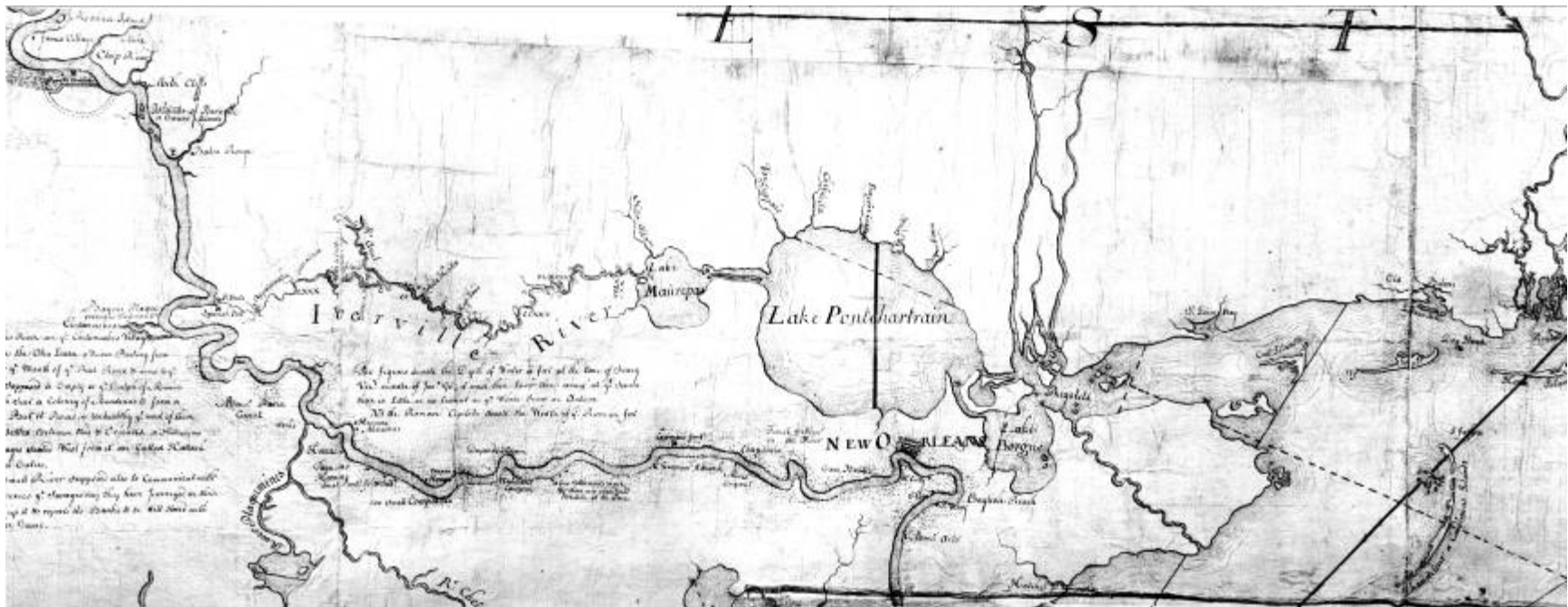


Figure 2-3. 1764 map of the Iberville River connection from the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Map courtesy of the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History and Special Collection at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE ECONOMICS OF REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTH

The initial purpose of Chapter 3 is to establish the economic distinctiveness of the southern North American mainland and Caribbean colonies in comparison to those in New England and the mid-Atlantic region. This is significant due to the rich tradition the United States clings to on the subject of “no taxation without representation” being the primary cause of the American Revolution. While this certainly was a battle cry of American rebels, political “slavery” was not as crucial an issue to southern planters as it was to New York shipping magnates and Boston brewmeisters. It is my goal to establish that while economics drove many southerners to rebellion, I would argue that it was also economics that drove Floridians to Loyalism. I will examine this topic first from an imperial perspective, and then move through the collective British West Indies to the Chesapeake and southward to the Floridas in an effort to understand the economic engines peculiar to each colony. From this we will better understand how the same criteria of economics that bonded colonists from Virginia down to Georgia motivated Floridians and West Indian planters to maintain their dependence upon the British Crown. A study of Florida in this fashion presents an opportunity to view loyalism through the eyes of those financially entrenched in its political dogma as they fought to preserve their economic status by preserving their dependence upon Great Britain.

Up until the mid-1760s, every person born south of the Canadian provinces in British North America had one thing in common that bound them together: they were Americans.<sup>1</sup> True,

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<sup>1</sup> Even at this point in history Americans saw the historically French inhabitants of the Canadas as a separate nationality with a distinctively different culture, ethnic origin, and religious beliefs. This attitude becomes evident when reading the minutes of the First Continental Congress concerning the Quebec Act of 1774. However, in Great Britain, whose perspective this study is viewing, all land formations on the western shores of the Atlantic were a part of a geographic location known as “the Americas.” Though *people* were considered by their regional distinctions (the West Indian interests in Parliament, Canadian fishing rights, New England mobs, etc.), the land was American, and thus Canada and the Caribbean colonies were just as much an American entity as those on the mainland with which we are more familiar. This is important to understand as many eighteenth-century writers did not hold to our



they were subjects of the British Empire and did not possess many of the same rights as their compatriots in the British Isles; their ethnic and cultural backgrounds may have differed. Many were enslaved. Nonetheless, they were all Americans, whether they understood the complete ramifications of that concept or not. But somewhere in the decade between the Stamp Act crisis and the first shots fired at Lexington Americans began to segregate—or be segregated—into three different camps: rebel, Loyalist, and non-aggressor.<sup>2</sup> Americans of all age groups, economic stations, ethnic origins, religious beliefs, and geographic locations within the colonies comprised each of the three categories equally. The purpose here is not to investigate the causes of the Revolution but to analyze what made Americans in the southern colonies, particularly Florida, choose which side in the conflict they would take. In this regard, the close economic, cultural, and ultimately political ties between Florida, the deep South, and the Caribbean colonies are vital to understand. We must appreciate what drove Loyalism as well as rebellion, and East Florida's perspective emerges clearly only in comparison with the colonies that surrounded it at this crucial moment in history.

The age of mercantilism was about gathering wealth, and the purpose of colonialism was to reach beyond a nation's own geographic borders to harvest the wealth of other regions. It was

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modern definitions of "America." Today the terms "North" and "South" continue to be governed in the modern U.S. by the divisions created during the Civil War and hold little in common with maps of eighteenth-century British North America. Such references to northern and southern colonies did not always distinguish between those above and below the Chesapeake, as many of these discussions included the colonies in the Caribbean as well as the colonies on the North American mainland. Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy writes that "The issue of trade between North American and the French West Indies was a major obstacle to a united colonial alliance before the American Revolutionary War." When O'Shaughnessy discusses a "united colonial alliance" he is not referring to the "original" thirteen colonies, but to a British West Indian/North American colonial alliance. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 11, 69 (see also footnotes 17 and 18 in this chapter for further verification of this sentiment). Furthermore, contemporary writers rarely segregated the North American continent into two simple camps, such as North and South. They were much quicker to distinguish between provinces of Canada and New England, or the Chesapeake and the Carolinas, than our modern North and South.

<sup>2</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 69. "What Germain and his generals never understood was that failure to support the Whigs did not necessarily imply support for the Crown and that Loyalist expressions of allegiance did not necessarily signify a willingness to take up arms... Many became convinced that lack of commitment offered the best chance for survival." Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 90.

never intended that the colonies would one day become equals to the metropole, for that would simply mean that not enough of the colonial natural resources were finding their way to the mother country. This was not an age of nurturing or mutual respect, regardless of the constant usage of symbolism involving a mother and child relationship between the provinces and the home country. This was a brutal era that encouraged the compilation of individual fortunes off the backs of human beasts of burden. The pain and suffering of the unfortunates of a given society were acceptable costs and conditions to those who enjoyed the fruits of such labor. One must wonder what the response of Thomas Thistlewood or one of Marcus Rediker's slave ship captains would be were they to read modern accounts that bear their stories.<sup>3</sup> There would probably be little understanding to the sensation created by such reports, for how they lived their lives in the eighteenth century was normative on most continents and many ships at sea.

Of course, rather than justify such horrid failings in human nature, we are better off trying to understand them from an eighteenth-century British mindset. For after the conclusion of the French and Indian War (Seven Year's War in Europe) Britain ruled more than just the waves; overnight it came to rule more of the then-known world than it was capable of controlling militarily. If the British were to succeed in maintaining their vast empire it would be by trade as well as might. Robert M. Calhoon reminds us that "[u]nder the acts of trade, colonial commerce flourished and Britain became the wealthiest trading nation on earth. This economic dynamism held the Empire together."<sup>4</sup> A brutal system of mercantilist self-centeredness was made to work for the British, and it worked very well. As a result the colonies became an outlet for "daring

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<sup>3</sup> Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2004); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Calhoon, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 17.

investors, restless and ambitious settlers, and religious dissenters.”<sup>5</sup> This was one of the primary distinctions between the unbelievably prosperous Caribbean colonies (“daring investors”) and Mainland North America (“restless and ambitious settlers, and religious dissenters”). The endless accounts of religious freedom-seeking dissenters pervade the American nativity. Naturally, much less is said of the countless convicts and destitute souls who came over as indentured servants, for that was a dirty business. In that regard, the early inhabitants of the British North American colonies may have had more in common with those of Australia than anywhere else in the empire. The point being that the demographics of other British colonies—the British West Indies and India; eventually South Africa and Kenya—were dominated by indigenous peoples and/or African slaves. Other than the French population of the Canadian provinces that the British inherited as a result of the French and Indian War, only in North America, Australia, and New Zealand did the immigrant European population soon outnumber those who came before them.

The only exception in what modern Americans cherish as the original thirteen colonies would be South Carolina, which was founded by Barbadian planters seeking a foothold in mainland North America. South Carolinian whites, like their Caribbean blueprint, were also outnumbered, but by imported slaves and in a far less dramatic fashion.<sup>6</sup> South Carolinian whites made up forty percent of the colony’s population, where as Jamaica’s whites fell between six and eight percent of the inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the intentions of South Carolina’s founders,

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<sup>5</sup> Calhoun, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> It is understood that indigenous Americans initially outnumbered Europeans, but Old World diseases and extensive European migration quickly turned those numbers upside down. By the time of the American Revolution the Proclamation Line of 1763 segregated the dwindling numbers of Native Americans from the mainstream white inhabitants to the point that population counts within each individual colony were dominated by the numbers of free whites and black slaves. Thus, this portion of the discussion is viewing those particular figures. Alan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 199–207, 346.

<sup>7</sup> Alice Elaine Matthews, *Society in Revolutionary North Carolina* (Raleigh: The North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1976), 7; Jan Rogoziński, *A Brief History of the Caribbean:*

mainland colonies were destined for settlement by people of all classes; the Caribbean was little more than a production facility designed to enrich the rich. “Tobago was transformed from woods by the enterprise of ‘younger sons of Gentlemen of good families in Scotland’ to become a producer of sugar, indigo, and cotton.”<sup>8</sup> These “younger sons of good families in Scotland” also came to the Floridas for the same purpose—to acquire what they could not inherit. But since the British West Indies were indeed the engine that drove the financial destiny of the wealthiest empire in the world, the search for American partisanship in the Revolutionary War must begin there.

Many claim that the Caribbean cannot be compared to the mainland colonies because of the belief that the loyalism of the British West Indies was born from an “absence of a developed creole identity” as was found in North America.<sup>9</sup> Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, who has done extensive work on this topic, demonstrates that all American colonists—including those in the Caribbean—“strove to be Britons” until circumstances no longer allowed that luxury without a formal commitment to one cause or another.<sup>10</sup> O’Shaughnessy argues that the conditions of the social and cultural bonds between white islanders and Great Britain “were reinforced by the military and economic dependence of the islands on the mother country.”<sup>11</sup>

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*From the Arawak and Carib to the Present* (New York: The Penguin Group, 1999), 117t; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire*, 16t, 17.

<sup>8</sup> “Governor Lord McCartney of Grenada to Lord George Germain, October 12, 1777,” PRO, CO 101/21, f. 24.

<sup>9</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Zuckerman, “Identity in British America: Unease in Eden,” in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Padgen, eds., *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1987), 115; see also O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 33.

As a demonstration of where this economic loyalty was generated, from 1763 to 1773 “the value of the islands’ exports to Britain increased from £62,915 to £859,981 sterling.”<sup>12</sup> Just one year later, in 1774, Jamaica alone exported £1,650,000 to Great Britain, doubling the amount of the entire British West Indies the previous year.<sup>13</sup> Given that as many as two-thirds of Caribbean planters were absentee land owners, and the amount of increase they were now seeing for their investments, why would the concept of revolution against the very metropole that insured the system under which they profited appeal to any of them?<sup>14</sup> This does not even include the political clout West Indian planters accrued in Parliament. “John Adams wrote that there was not a man on the [North American] continent who did not believe that the northern colonies had been sacrificed to the superior interest of the West Indies in Parliament.”<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Franklin complained that when it came to colonial interests in Parliament the “West Indies vastly outweigh us of the Northern Colonies.”<sup>16</sup> Planters in the British West Indies were concerned with little else but economic profits and the military protection of these profit-making enterprises. French invasion and famine were the two primary factors over which they had no control, but each could be dealt with satisfactorily by maintaining proper ties with London.<sup>17</sup> “Governor Lord

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<sup>12</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> On many of the islands the number of absentee owners reached as high as eighty percent. O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 4, 6, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Words of John Adams, Second President of the United States with a Life of the Author* (10 vols.; Boston: 1856), 2:49, in O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 66. For more citations of this quote in multiple secondary sources see 271n, fn. 29.

<sup>16</sup> We see in the quotes of John Adams (footnote 17) and Benjamin Franklin a verification of the eighteenth-century mindset concerning the geography of the British Empire discussed in footnote 1. Adams and Franklin both refer to the northern colonies in their discussions but are clearly referring to the British colonies of North America, not just those located in the mid-Atlantic region or New England. O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> When discussing the dire circumstances of famine in the islands one must remember that a drought of any length rendered the slaves incapable of feeding themselves from their own provision grounds. Lack of preparation for such a natural disaster, or the inability to acquire food stuffs due to the economic sanctions placed on the British West

George McCartney of Grenada, one of the shrewdest contemporary observers, concluded that economic arguments weighed more than political ideas in the response of the white island colonists to the American Revolution.”<sup>18</sup>

None of this is staggering news, for it has long been common knowledge that the Caribbean colonies never considered taking part in the American Revolution. Yet we forget that the impact of the Revolution upon the British West Indies was significant, and vice versa. The build-up of British troops in the Caribbean to protect the islands from slave uprisings and French invasion greatly hindered London’s war effort on the mainland. Likewise, the economic impact of trade embargoes on the British West Indies by the Continental Congress, coupled with a long and severe drought throughout the Caribbean during the course of the war—which ignited the fear of the aforementioned slave uprisings—came very near driving many of these planters to ruin. This gave the new American nation credibility as an economic factor within the Atlantic region. It may well be argued that the economics of Caribbean loyalism played as significant a role in the American quest for independence as the intervention of France or Spain, due to the newly acquired economic clout within the Americas the young nation found itself holding.

Ironically, we find the same economic motivations in the mainland southern colonies, but for independence rather than loyalism. Some of the largest fortunes on the North American continent lay in southern agriculture—an industry predicated upon the institution of slavery.<sup>19</sup> Historian Alan Gallay notes that “[t]he Yamasee War [1715] marks a watershed: from then until

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Indies by the Continental Congress, could lead to starvation among the slaves, food riots, and revolts. Though affected by the famine and/or economic embargoes, island whites rarely experienced the gravity of the circumstances of the slaves.

<sup>18</sup> “Lord George McCartney to Lord George Germain, June 30, 1776,” PRO, CO 101/20, f. 29, in O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 145–46.

<sup>19</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 182.

the Civil War, South Carolina's wealth lay in its ownership of black slave labor. Slaves were the most substantial form of capital and the means for increasing capital through their sale and labor."<sup>20</sup> Simon Schama argues that "[t]heirs (the Southern colonies) was a revolution, first and foremost, mobilized to protect slavery."<sup>21</sup> Sylvia Frey elaborates that the southern gentry's "support for independence and for the war effort generally was part of a desperate effort to reassert their hegemony over their slaves and thereby preserve their fragmenting world... The Revolutionary war in the south thus became a war about slavery, if not a war over slavery."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, one may conclude from these three noted historians that the war in the southern colonies focused on how to protect the greatest form of capital and economic interests. Suddenly, the Loyalist Caribbean and the rebellious South do not seem so different. Thus, many of the decisions made for rebellion by some of America's iconic figures were not easily determined. Henry Laurens, one of South Carolina's preeminent Revolutionary figures, who suffered the pains of imprisonment in the infamous Tower of London before leading the American delegation in the negotiation of the Treaty of Paris to end the war, was not an immediate convert to the cause of independence. As late as December 11, 1774, Laurens advised his son John in a letter, "Don't take either side."<sup>23</sup> In another letter to son John in 1775, Laurens reminded the young man that "popular tyranny" is worse than the tyranny of a king.<sup>24</sup> Laurens was arguably the

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<sup>20</sup> Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 346.

<sup>21</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 60.

<sup>22</sup> Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 326.

<sup>23</sup> "Henry Laurens to John Laurens, December 12, 1774," Philip M. Hamer, George Rogers, Jr., and David R. Chesnutt, eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens* (14 vols. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968–1994), 10:4.

<sup>24</sup> "Henry Laurens to John Laurens, January 22, 1775," Hamer, Rogers, and Chesnutt, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 10:43–44.

wealthiest man in North America and had to consider the economic consequences of his options. Like John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, Henry Laurens remained radical in his appearances to those who elected the local colonial leadership, but privately hoped for some form of reconciliation before events got out of hand.

For some southern leaders the initial decision for independence while British troops occupied Boston was easier than maintaining that stance after the fall of Charleston. Charles Pinckney, Sr., Rawlin Lowndes, Daniel Horry, and Henry Middleton—a former president of the Continental Congress—not only petitioned for pardons after Sir Henry Clinton seized Charleston but asked for restorations of their British citizenship.<sup>25</sup> For these men, the cost of independence became too dear and they sought to protect whatever of their fortunes remained. But it was not only the wealthy that made such economic decisions based upon personal enhancement. Common soldiers in the Continental army found ways to prosper within the colonial system of regular army and state militia recruitment. It was not uncommon for soldiers who had gone months without pay to desert and then re-enlist under a pseudonym in order to receive bounties offered to new recruits. “[T]he generous bounties offered by both Congress and the states indicated that to fill the ranks it was necessary to appeal more to self-interest than to patriotism.”<sup>26</sup>

Choosing independence carried other financial boons to southern planters: the cancelation of debts and internal control of the slave trade. “In 1778, the House of Delegates, no longer constrained by an imperial administration determined to protect British slave traders’ profits,

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<sup>25</sup> “Charles Pinckney, Sr. to Lt. Col. Nesbit Balfour,” PRO, CO 5/178 (microfilm), p. 177; “Henry Middleton to Lt. Col. Nesbit Balfour,” PRO, CO 5/178 (microfilm), pp. 185–86; “Rawlin Lowndes to Lt. Col. Nesbit Balfour,” PRO, CO 5/178 (microfilm), pp. 183–84; “Daniel Horry to Lt. Col. Nesbit Balfour,” PRO, CO 5/178 (microfilm), pp. 175–76, in Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 80.

<sup>26</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 46, 55.



forever abolished the importation of foreign slaves into Virginia.”<sup>27</sup> This is not to be construed as a radical change of heart toward African slavery. Since the American colonies did not experience the negative growth factors among their slave population, as did the Caribbean, the continued importation of slaves flooded the American market, reducing the price of slaves and, therefore, profits. This was nothing more than a long-desired effort to control and enhance the proceeds of slavery and further entrench the souls of African-Americans as nothing more than commodities.

The profits of agriculture had also been held hostage by London’s mercantilist economics. Though choosing independence did not bring immediate relief to the price of tobacco, rice, indigo, or other staple American crops, it did allow an independent Congress, run by many of the planters who were mortgaged to the rafters to Scottish creditors, to simply dissolve all pre-war debts.<sup>28</sup> “‘If we are now to pay the Debts due to British Merchants,’ George Mason heard several growers argue, ‘what have we been fighting for all this while?’”<sup>29</sup> There is a distasteful air of dishonesty in these business attitudes toward legitimate business debts, regardless of how inflated the former system allowed those debts to become. Each planter entered into these contracts fully aware of how the system worked. Many southern planters saw in independence a God-send to their financial woes concerning their large accumulation of debts, though by war’s end this “solution” to their economic problems forced many into bankruptcy.

Historian Francis Jennings relays a significant point in the discussion on the economics of the American Revolution: “When the Americans turned against the Crown they continued an

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<sup>27</sup> Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohondro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 215.

<sup>28</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*, 215.

<sup>29</sup> “George Mason to Patrick Henry, May 6, 1783,” in Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), II, 771, in Holton, *Forced Founders*, 216.

ancient tradition of lords who have marched too far and grown too powerful to accept royal orders gladly. In this perspective the American Revolution was a baron's revolt."<sup>30</sup> No region of the country reminds us more of a setting for such an event than the Chesapeake. Virginia had outgrown its frontier and was pushing into lands we now know as Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison were some of the largest land speculators in these regions. But the Royal Proclamation Line of 1763 basically made such ventures in these lands null and void. Then, in 1768, the Cherokee nation negotiated a treaty with the British government for all of the land in Kentucky, thus creating a significant dilemma for said Virginia speculators. The prospect of increased Native American alliances with the Crown—and the fact that the Indian nations fully understood the connection between colonists' land encroachment and anti-British sentiments—led the Privy Council to deny the petition of the House of Burgesses to the deed to all of Kentucky in 1770. In short, even though Great Britain now held the rights to Kentucky, Parliament continued to enforce the Proclamation Line, thus denying land speculators veritable fortunes—yet yeomen continued to encroach upon Native lands with relative ease. Thus, in the minds of the Burgesses, the British were picking their pockets as they levied taxes and allowed squatters to inhabit what they believed to be rightfully theirs.<sup>31</sup>

But once the former Burgesses became congressional representatives, governors, and presidents of the new nation, the economic tables of western land speculation turned favorably for them.<sup>32</sup> The Virginia gentry, by leading their colony into the American Revolution, recovered

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<sup>30</sup> Francis Jennings, "The Indians' Revolution," *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, Alfred F. Young, ed. (DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 322.

<sup>31</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*, 4, 27–31.

<sup>32</sup> Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), 5.

one of its largest sources of potential income: the sale of Indian lands to yeomen farmers. “In the frontier region, the Revolutionary War looked less like a colonial Independence movement than a continuation of the long-standing struggle over the Indians’ land.”<sup>33</sup> Once the land was removed of the southern tribes—whether by negotiation, extirpation, or extermination—land speculators could finally find financial reward for their efforts for independence in the economic plunder of westward movement. Certainly no one will argue that American attitudes toward Native American lands and sovereignty were not abysmal, and Thomas Jefferson’s vision of empire demonstrates how little difference the Revolution’s visionaries saw in their own place on this continent from that of their European exemplars.<sup>34</sup> But not just the barons won this land revolt. Settlers who encroached on Indian hunting lands that were not claimed by land speculators maintained that these lands were thus abandoned, applying the laws concerning vacant land against absentee proprietors with legal title to Indians.<sup>35</sup>

The lower southern colonies of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia will be viewed somewhat collectively due to their strong intercolonial histories, but economically many would argue that North Carolina resembled colonies much farther to the North than their southern neighbors of Virginia and South Carolina.<sup>36</sup> North Carolina did not have the deep harbors of Savannah, Charleston, or Norfolk, and New Bern was hardly an adequate substitute. Though there was a smattering of large landholders near the coast, the overwhelming majority of settlers in North Carolina were smallholders with little more than subsistence-only farms. “It

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<sup>33</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*, 214.

<sup>34</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*, 214.

<sup>35</sup> Alfred F. Young, ed., *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 343.

<sup>36</sup> Matthews, *Society in Revolutionary North Carolina*, vii, 2.

remained a small-white-farmer's paradise, where the industrious yeoman, the man with fifty acres of land or more, could have some voice in his destiny."<sup>37</sup> But rather than striving toward large monocrop plantations, such as those running from the Chesapeake to St. Augustine, North Carolinians found plentiful bounty in the colony's pine forests. Tar, turpentine, barrel staves, and naval stores churned out of the North Carolina woods made up three-fifths of the North American haul in this important industry.<sup>38</sup> But therein lay the crux of North Carolina's political and economic woes just prior to the American Revolution. Land was not only plentiful, it was valuable and most of it was in the hands of the middle class.

North Carolina's governor at this time was William Tryon, an elitist who indulged himself with voluminous amounts of luxuries and a bevy of cronies to guarantee his fortunes. Tryon secured his men in the courts, legislature, and militia, as well as county sheriffs and local officials. Taxes were levied in a manner that would insure the economic disparities between rural farmers and lowcountry elites as each man paid equal duties regardless of household income. Tryon's opulence and the farmers' patience came to a head at the "legislative appropriation of a stupendous £15,000 to build a palace for [the governor]. In the poorest colony in North America, the money was to be raised by the regressive poll tax, where the richest land and slave owners parted with exactly the same amount as the poorest taxpayers."<sup>39</sup> Men calling themselves Regulators, led by Herman Husband, a former aristocrat who had given up his Anglican membership for the Quaker faith after attending a revival meeting of George Whitefield, rose up in defiance of these measures. Historian Gary Nash tells us that in the North Carolina

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<sup>37</sup> Matthews, *Society in Revolutionary North Carolina*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Matthews, *Society in Revolutionary North Carolina*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking Press, 2005), 78.

backcountry, farmers were stirred by the Great Awakening and developed a sense of equality based on religious radicalism. The so-called Regulators “used religious commitment as a springboard for political insurgency” when they refused to pay various taxes, especially the parish tax to the hated Anglican Church.<sup>40</sup> By the summer of 1768, the courts were filled with accusations and counterattacks until Governor Tryon called out the militia and threatened to “hang, and condemn all those who bear the title of regulators.”<sup>41</sup> However, rather than instilling fear, “[t]he Regulators vowed that, if nothing would ‘propitiate’ the governor ‘but our blood,’ they were prepared ‘to fall like men and sell our lives at the very dearest rate.’”<sup>42</sup>

But Nash incorrectly concludes that this was not an instance of colonists against the empire, but rather hard working American farmers against “fellow colonists in their midst who controlled the courts, credit networks, and distribution of land.”<sup>43</sup> If that is true, then one might as well argue that Governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts represented a local populist organization at odds with their comrades in the Boston mobs. Clearly what occurred in the Regulator crisis was a case of an imperial governor, who represented King George III to his constituents, grossly neglecting his proper duties of office for the purpose of enriching himself at the expense of the populace. However, this should not be construed as a motivation for Revolution. In North Carolina the “motley crew” had no complaints with taxes being levied against them from Parliament rather than here at home. Just the opposite was true. It was the taxes and the unjust distribution of land decreed locally—on American soil, not at Whitehall—to supplement the greed of the governor and his cohorts that led the Regulators to revolt. What

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<sup>40</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 77.

<sup>41</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 78.

<sup>42</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 78.

<sup>43</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 72.

Tryon did succeed in doing for the future rebellion was to prime the Revolutionary engine in North Carolina; to prepare the majority of the colony's residents for a familiarity to violent protest against British authority. Otherwise, the issues at hand in Independence Hall were not so critical to North Carolina's representatives as they were to the others; however, the lingering memories of the past decade's land and tax revolts made the issues under discussion in Philadelphia quite significant as the potentialities for further abuses became ominous.

Land would be the determinant factor in several of the southern colonies, as we have already seen in Virginia and North Carolina, though for very different reasons. It was no different in South Carolina and Georgia; in fact, very little in South Carolina was different from that in Georgia. If any two colonies could be described as doppelgangers of the other it would be these two. By 1752,

[t]he introduction of slavery and the migration of South Carolinian planters into the Georgia low country made the new royal colony a miniature South Carolina, producing rice and indigo on the coastal plantations. With ready investment capital and first crack at choice land, the South Carolinians in Georgia made profits of 25 to 30 per cent on their initial investment.<sup>44</sup>

The role played by South Carolina elites in Georgia's Revolutionary history is outlandish. Rebuked by the South Carolina General Committee for sending no delegates to the First Continental Congress in 1774, Georgia soon learned that a need for the protection of British troops from Cherokee attack paled in comparison to trade embargoes from Charleston. Carolinians lost all respect for Georgians, considering them "unworthy of the rights of freemen."<sup>45</sup> Lyman Hall, Georgia's earliest advocate for associating with the new political platform developing in Philadelphia pleaded with his Carolinian counterparts to deem his home

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<sup>44</sup> Calhoon, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> "In General Committee, Charlestown, S.C., February 8, 1775," *Revolutionary Records of Georgia*, 1:57.

parish as an entity of South Carolina.<sup>46</sup> This was not an inconceivable request when one considers the vast amounts of land under the till in Georgia that belonged to South Carolinian Revolutionary leadership. Other concessions that would benefit South Carolina planter elites had already been arranged: Henry Laurens, who sat on South Carolina's board of trade and had significant holdings in Georgia, made sure that crops harvested in Georgia that were owned by South Carolina planters would not be impaired by the embargo.

But not all of the land-hungry planter elites in Georgia were from South Carolina. In his discussion concerning the generation of American colonists in Georgia who chose revolution rather than continue their fealty to the British Empire, Alan Gallay writes, "They found British interference in colonial government a direct threat to their control over the economic and political life of the colony."<sup>47</sup> Gallay is referring to the Creek and Cherokee land cessions coveted by planter elite and yeoman farmer alike. By the time of the American Revolution Cherokee lands east of the Proclamation Line in North and South Carolina were virtually gone, relegating the once land-wealthy Indian nation to the furthest western recesses of their traditional hunting grounds. By 1775, John Stuart was forced to admonish the great Cherokee chief Attakullakulla for "giving away land to every white man that asks for it."<sup>48</sup> This not only forced the Cherokee west of the Proclamation Line, but also pinned them up against the lands belonging

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<sup>46</sup> "The Committee from St. John's to the Charlestown Committee," February 9, 1775, *Revolutionary Records of Georgia*, 1:59–61.

<sup>47</sup> Gallay, *Formation of a Planter Elite*, 162.

<sup>48</sup> "John Stuart's talk to the Great Warrior, Attakullakulla, the Prince of Cholte Osteneca, Eccuy & all the ruling Chiefs & Warriors of the Cherokee Nation, August 30, 1775," PRO, CO 5/76, f. 189–90, pp. 365–68. Attakullakulla was the father of Dragging Canoe, the leader of the Chickamauga Cherokee who broke from the traditional leadership of the tribe over these large cessions of land. Dragging Canoe and his followers believed that the older tribal leaders had sacrificed the future of the Cherokee people by trading their hunting grounds for trinkets and rum. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, xiv, 259–60.

to the Chickasaw. It was only a matter of time before this confluence of tribal lands created another backcountry Indian war.

Rebel leaders and planter elites, such as William Henry Drayton and Jonathan Bryan, “would play upon the fear of Indians, characteristic of frontier people, and on their desire for Indian land to gain their support.”<sup>49</sup> For it was no secret that the backcountry frontiersmen desired Indian lands beyond the Proclamation Line for multiple reasons, including to guarantee that the increasing influx of new settlers would pass them by in their westward trek and not overcrowd the current established townships and countryside. Other reasons were based upon simple survival instincts: if the Indians are pushed further west, then they are no longer a concern in the current backcountry regions. In short, let the newcomers deal with the Indians, or better yet, move the Indians far enough away to never be of concern again. Thus it should be no surprise that Andrew Jackson, one of the most racist of our nation’s presidents concerning Native American removal, would be the product of these furthest western regions during the Revolutionary era. But to make any of this happen, Georgians needed Governor James Wright to gain more land cessions from the Creek confederacy, and that meant pushing beyond the Proclamation Line.

Governor Wright was a skilled negotiator in his dealings with the Creeks “at a time when peaceful white-Indian relations were essential to economic development; and the British government supported this work with a generous supply of gifts for use in the ceremonies of Indian diplomacy.”<sup>50</sup> But by 1773–1774, Wright was dealing with circumstances that he could not control: the shrinking lands of the southern Indian nations and confederations. At one such

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<sup>49</sup> “William Henry Drayton to Francis Salvador, July 24, 1776,” Robert W. Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution* (1853; reprint, 3 vols. in 1, New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1971), 2:28–30.

<sup>50</sup> Calhoun, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 6.



Congress Wright believed he had negotiated a large accumulation of lands between the Ogeechee and Oconee Rivers from the Cherokee, only to find out that these lands actually belonged to the Creek who subsequently left the congress with all land deals cancelled.<sup>51</sup> William Bartram attended this congress and described the whites in attendance as “principle men and citizens of Georgia, Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania” anxiously hoping for the cession of lands promised by Governor Wright.<sup>52</sup> But Wright would gain only a pittance of the land he promised, and in truth was fortunate to walk away from the treaty with any land at all.<sup>53</sup>

The potential opening of the Ogeechee-Oconee Strip brought speculators and investors in from all over the North American colonies in hopes of accumulating tracts of land large enough to bring them quickly up to par with the lowcountry planter elites. “In Georgia the pull of the plantation negated experiments in town planning.”<sup>54</sup> This is true of much of the South, not just Georgia, and is what distinguishes the colonial South—with the exception of North Carolina—from the northern colonies, especially New England. This desire for great wealth and/or individualism on the frontier is why economics, not “no taxation without representation,” determined loyalism or rebellion. In the South, economics and land grants *became* politics. “People hereabouts...were not so much concerned with British trade policy and taxation as they were about relations with the Indians,” and many believed that it was the Creek reluctance to

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<sup>51</sup> Bartram, *The Travels*, 382.

<sup>52</sup> Bartram, *The Travels*, 382. The number of colonies represented in this congress should clarify any doubts as to how significant the prospect of a royal official, such as the governor of Georgia, negotiating the cession of Native American lands beyond the Proclamation Line. This was the colonial equivalent of a state governor negating a federal law in a region that is technically beyond his jurisdiction. The question such an audacious move would pose is how much beyond his own court was King George III in control of his empire? As we will see in later chapters that involve the war itself, iron-clad decisions made in Whitehall and the Court of St. James lost much of their resolve once in the hands of the empire’s generals.

<sup>53</sup> Bartram, *The Travels*, 54.

<sup>54</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 44.

cede lands at this congress that “launched a chain reaction that led to the American Revolution in Georgia.”<sup>55</sup> While Indian agent George Galphin eventually encouraged the Lower Creeks to cede a small portion of land, it was woefully short of the expectations of those clamoring for acreage.

The main concern in all of this was that Governor Wright aggressively promoted these proposed available lands throughout the British Isles and now had shiploads of Scots and Irish Protestants arriving in Savannah in search of economic salvation. David Hackett Fischer relates that though “remarkably few came in bondage,” these were a people hardened by their dire circumstances back home with nowhere to turn.<sup>56</sup> Transatlantic voyages like those experienced by these people had a “[m]ortality in ships sailing from North Britain approached that in the slave trade.”<sup>57</sup> When the governor failed to deliver on his promises of free land, rebel radicals in Georgia and South Carolina jumped on this opportunity to embarrass the Crown even more than Wright had already accomplished. Not only were these new arrivals expecting what they had been promised in Governor Wright’s advertisements and hand bills, but they were bred by the “incessant violence that shaped the culture of the [Scottish] border region.”<sup>58</sup> These people were historically bellicose and now they were angry—and rightfully so. They had just uprooted whole families from their traditional and cultural homelands to begin anew in the colonies, based upon promises made by a representative of His Majesty’s royal government, only to find that there was but a small token of the available lands rather than the abundance as pledged.

Backcountry people, old and new, were forced into a predicament not of their own doing. They were willing to be loyal as long as the availability of the lands they now found themselves

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<sup>55</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 53.

<sup>56</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 614.

<sup>57</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 612.

<sup>58</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 626.

in desperate need of could be provided by the royal governor, especially given Governor Wright's history for increasing a man's opportunities for quick profits through a lucrative Indian trade. However, "with the dawning perception that the royal government preferred maintaining the [Indian] trade to acquiring land, the people turned to an alternative authority. Perhaps the new Continental Congress would help dispose of the Indians and make the land available."<sup>59</sup> This refutes the argument that East Florida Loyalists only chose allegiance to the Crown because they had not been on the continent long enough to develop Revolutionary feelings and tendencies. Many rural folk in Georgia and the Carolinas, who were historically the most violent in the backcountry civil wars, were situated in their current settings for just as short a span of time. For the Revolutionary combatants of Georgia—whether aristocratic or yeomen—political choices were based upon land cessions and which side was believed capable of providing them.

In a separate work, Edward Cashin notes that these events concerning the Ogeechee-Oconee Strip, or any other efforts of the Georgia officials to mend the proverbial fences, were the breaking point for all involved: "After the October treaty, the settlers became disenchanted with their government."<sup>60</sup> It should not be forgotten that James Wright was not the only government agent involved in this circus of events who played a significant hand in the outcome. "[John] Stuart objected to any change in the 1763 boundary and was supported in this policy by General Thomas Gage."<sup>61</sup> Therefore, it was not simply that Governor Wright was incompetent and could not broker a land deal he had been fine-tuning for the previous three years. Wright was stonewalled in his efforts by two very high-ranking officials in separate branches of the colonial

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<sup>59</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 116.

<sup>60</sup> Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 16.

<sup>61</sup> "James Wright and John Stuart to Lord Dartmouth, October 21, 1774, Ms. *Colonial Records of Georgia*, 38, pt. 1B:335.

structure: John Stuart, whose only motivation might easily have been, as we will see throughout this study, a simple matter of ego—he did not want anyone but himself dealing with the Indians; and General Thomas Gage, who would soon be calling upon John Stuart to encourage an Indian war against these very settlers and investors of backcountry lands.

One interesting note in all of this: on Christmas Day, 1774, Creek war parties attacked those who had settled in the ceded lands of Georgia—part of the lands that they claimed had been illegally traded away by Cherokee tribal leaders. Once the news of continued attacks reached Savannah, and the appearance of a full-scale Creek war loomed on the horizon, Cashin relates almost comically that “[t]he members of the Georgia legislature had never been so loyal to His Majesty as they professed to be in this emergency.”<sup>62</sup> John Stuart believed that the hostilities were indeed the result of the reduced land negotiations; however, he believed that they were caused by white traders who had cut back their supplies to the Creeks because they realized that they would not reap the anticipated profits in the upcoming year that a larger cession of land would have brought. This is a demonstration as to how influences such as land, economics, and trade relations bore as much determination of one’s politics in the South as did discussions of Parliamentary representation in New England. “Governor [James] Wright’s October treaty [for the Oconee Strip] represents a crucial watershed in the history of the American Revolution on the southern frontier.”<sup>63</sup>

On the Gulf Coast, West Florida as an economic enterprise was a bust—which is ironic considering that the empire’s primary goal for the colony was as a commercial interest.<sup>64</sup>

“[People] did not migrate there for political reasons until the tail end of the [British] period...

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<sup>62</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 73.

<sup>63</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 116.

<sup>64</sup> Dewey, “British Trade in West Florida,” 1.

They were motivated by the impulse that lay behind much of American immigration history—the hope for, belief in, and prospect of economic betterment.”<sup>65</sup> Governor George Johnstone arrived in October 1764 and immediately recognized that the dire poverty of the colony could be resolved by friendly trade arrangements to the south (the Spanish in New Orleans) and to the north (the Indian trade). Johnstone’s plan involved bringing hard currency into the colony through Spanish silver and gold mined in Mexico and the colony’s plentiful supply of deerskins and other peltry from Native Americans. Johnstone’s vision was that “West Florida would become a gigantic warehouse” for British manufactures and Indian trade goods.”<sup>66</sup> Of course, the fly in the ointment was the British Navigation Acts, which prohibited any trade with foreign nations that would circumvent the metropole. Johnstone campaigned for the opening of trade with New Orleans from before he arrived until his departure from office in 1767. Even as new governors came and went, the Navigation Acts continued to thwart the economic vitality of the colony.

By 1774 the colony exported a mere £21,504 compared to its imports from Britain of £85,254.<sup>67</sup> With numbers this dismal it is no wonder that most of the colony’s proceeds were obtained through illegal trade up and down the Mississippi River. Regardless of Parliament’s sanctions and stern warnings, the only sensible market for West Floridian goods was not across the Atlantic in England, but across the Mississippi in Louisiana. Unfortunately, these amounts are unrecorded due to the illegality of the transactions, but “in 1776 Francisco Boulogny estimated that Louisiana’s annual trade in indigo, peltry, and lumber was worth a total of

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<sup>65</sup> Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Dewey, “British Trade in West Florida,” 15–16.

<sup>67</sup> Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida*, 177.

[£111,628 sterling] of which [£108,140] fell into British hands.”<sup>68</sup> Such overwhelming figures—97% of the business—involving just these three categories of trade goods clearly demonstrates not only the significant effect trade with New Orleans might have had on West Florida’s economy, but the shattering impact of these transactions on the markets in Louisiana and the Spanish Gulf Coast.

What the people of West Florida did not fully understand was the colony’s strategic value in the Gulf of Mexico. The sheer fact that the Spanish needed the Floridas to maintain their hegemony over the Gulf Coast made the colony valuable to the British.<sup>69</sup> But in spite of the villainous attributes of the Navigation Acts that hindered West Floridians from being good law abiding British citizens, nothing could sway their national loyalties when the subject of an imperial war was broached. For in West Florida it was not a matter of rebellion so much as it was an impending war with Spain. Questions of loyalism and rebel causes did not become an issue until 1778 when an American incursion under the direction of Captain James Willing made its way down the Mississippi wreaking havoc at every British river port between Natchez and New Orleans.<sup>70</sup> Even with this disturbance, every West Floridians’ mind was on Spain and its potential involvement in the war. American rebels seemed of little bother in such a remote location as the Mississippi Valley, but a Catholic Spanish yoke held fears that ran back to the days of the Black Legend.<sup>71</sup> As a result of such options, and the fact that many of the inhabitants of the colony were not even one generation removed from the shores of Great Britain, solidified

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<sup>68</sup> Gilbert C. Din, ed., *Louisiana in 1776: A Memoir of Francisco Bouligny* (New Orleans: Louisiana Collection Series, 1977), 62, in Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida*, 202.

<sup>69</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, vii.

<sup>70</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 77, 228.

<sup>71</sup> As an extreme note of irony, after the war concluded with the Spanish reclamation of West Florida, two-thirds of the British inhabitants preferred staying on the land, though under Spanish rule, than to face removal. Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 237.

the loyalties of many. “They felt a strong sense of loyalty to the mother country they had recently left and had little of the sense of American nationalism so often attributed to the other loyalists. Also, it was easy, if not easier, to communicate with England than with the other colonies.”<sup>72</sup>

One of the economic factors that contributed to West Florida’s loyalism was the simple fact that—like its sister colony of East Florida—“taxation was not an issue; Parliament supported the civil government by an annual grant to the contingent fund.... As for the Townshend Acts, there is no evidence that the West Floridians knew of its existence.”<sup>73</sup> Interestingly enough, however, there is evidence that West Florida, Quebec, and Montreal were the only regions on the North American mainland that managed to collect the Stamp Tax.<sup>74</sup> This could very well be more of a reflection on Governor Johnstone’s bravado in dealing with West Floridians, accompanied by the colonists’ proximity to the Creek Wars and, therefore, the comfort of British troops. Since the official excuse for the Stamp Tax revolved around the financial burden of maintaining a standing army in the colonies, West Floridians preferred not to slap the hand that protected them.

West Florida was truly one of the few colonies that depended upon government troops for its safety from Indian attack in every corner of the colony, and was thus happy to have them close at hand. This provided one of the primary determinants in the colony’s decision to support the Crown during the Revolution when the first rumors of unrest reached Pensacola in 1774. “In proportion to the population, the number of troops at the strategic British posts on the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico was high and had a stabilizing effect on the colony.”<sup>75</sup> In relation

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<sup>72</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 229.

<sup>73</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 232.

<sup>74</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 274n2.

<sup>75</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 233.

to the high ratio of troops to civilians in West Florida, it is often overlooked that while the Proclamation of 1763 was designed to seal off the Indian lands from white settlers, it did nothing to remove Indians from within the colonies of East and West Florida. In these colonies the members of the Native American nations and confederations came and went as they pleased, whether to hunt, trade, live, or make pilgrimage to various places for multiple purposes. The proximity and frequency of such encounters kept the small white populations of the Floridas ever mindful of the king's military provisions.

But in West Florida the decision for loyalty to king and country still came down to land. Regardless of what the official decrees might be concerning trade with New Orleans, the fact remained that such trade did indeed take place (illegally) and on a large scale; therefore, the colonists were able to make an adequate living from abundantly large British grants of land. In 1775, in an effort to secure this loyalty throughout the province, King George III granted additional tracts of land to anyone in the British colonies declaring their undying loyalty to the Crown, thus flooding West Florida with Loyalists. Governor Chester "followed the pattern which had been set by the monarch and popularized the colony as a loyalist refuge.... Hordes of royalists, too many to mention, came from Georgia, Connecticut, South Carolina, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, St. Vincent, and Grenada."<sup>76</sup> In an effort to reiterate the king's decision, "[o]n July 5, 1775, the Earl of Dartmouth wrote Governor Chester, 'That Gratuitous Grants, exempt from Quit Rents for ten years should be made to any persons from the other Colonies, who may be induced...to seek an Asylum in Your Government.'"<sup>77</sup> This not only protected the

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<sup>76</sup> Johnson, *British West Florida*, 142–48, in Dewey, "British Trade in West Florida," 128.

<sup>77</sup> C.E. Carter, "Some Aspects of British Administration in West Florida," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (December 1914–15), 370–75, in Garland Taylor, "Colonial Settlement and Early Revolutionary Activity in West Florida up to 1779," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (December 1935), 355.



lives and prosperities of loyal British citizens from throughout the colonies, but increased the population of West Florida by war's end to between 7,000 and 8,000 dependable Loyalists.<sup>78</sup>

In East Florida the circumstances plaguing governors Wright of Georgia and Chester of West Florida were not absent, they just took on a different look. Land continued to be the primary focus of potential prosperity in East Florida, as in the rest of the southern colonies. But in East Florida the land was divided among the elites long before the frontiersmen ever had the opportunity to consider what opportunities might lie in wait for them south of the St. Marys River. There, as in West Florida, the only western barrier created by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was the Mississippi River, as the Floridas were the intended recipients of the southern flow of traffic created by this boundary. But the only real availability for land in East Florida for the common individual and his family lay in Seminole-held territories, and few dared to venture into those regions. Until 1774, it was the Seminoles who successfully kept white settlement in check due to the pathetically small numbers of whites within the colony. But it would not have mattered if every plantation and every acre of land granted in East Florida had been physically occupied by their owners, the size of the grants—ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 acres each—decreased the potential number of whites who could have physically possessed the colony.<sup>79</sup> Such a situation worked well in the West Indies, even given the large percentage of absentee owners, for the only other inhabitants on the islands were the enslaved and their overseers. But in East Florida a large percentage of the population was indigenous, free, and fearless in battle. Thus, for the first eleven years of the colony's existence the actively operating plantations—

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<sup>78</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 231.

<sup>79</sup> Daniel L. Schafer, "Florida History On-Line," with special acknowledgment to the James Grant Papers and the Florida Claims Commission. On this website Dr. Schafer has plotted the size and locations of every plantation and land grant in the colony of East Florida during the British period. A special thanks for his efforts, for without these graphics and the histories associated with them the waters on this topic would be murky indeed.  
[http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Julianton\\_Plantation.htm](http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Julianton_Plantation.htm)

some of the largest in North America—were dormant and in disarray more often than they were productive due to the slightest rumor of Indian attack. Thus, both East and West Florida were dismal economic failures to the Scottish sons and heirs solicited to inhabit them. But for East Florida that all changed on March 1, 1774, when Lt. Colonel Patrick Tonyn arrived in St. Augustine.

Seventeen seventy-four is perhaps one of the most unheralded watershed years in American Revolutionary history. On June 15<sup>th</sup> the Coercive Acts disrupted the fragile peace in Massachusetts after the Boston Tea Party forced Parliament into a corner. Parliament had no choice but to respond authoritatively or fear losing the colonies all together.<sup>80</sup> Seventeen seventy-four was also the year that protests moved from the streets to the congressional level as the First Continental Congress convened on September 5<sup>th</sup> to form a colonial alliance against the metropole. From the colonial perspective, 1774 brought an “air of near hopelessness; the corrosive feeling that almost nothing worked, nothing would recall Britain to its senses, recall it to the service of the good and the freedom that once filled Anglo-American life.”<sup>81</sup> And yet, in St. Augustine, 1774 brought the long awaited prosperity that had evaded East Florida planters since 1763. For the first time merchants, traders, farmers, frontiersmen, planters, and townsfolk alike could perform their tasks without unwarranted fear, resting in the peace of an affable relationship with the Native American population. Like nowhere else on the continent, 1774 brought an unexpected degree of optimism to East Florida. One can only imagine the absurdity

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<sup>80</sup> To punish the people of Boston for their complicity in destroying approximately £18,000 sterling in tea belonging to the East India Company, Parliament implemented the Coercive Acts. Known in the colonies as the Intolerable Acts, Parliament proposed to: 1) Close the port of Boston; 2) Terminate the colony of Massachusetts royal charter; 3) Move the trial of any royal official accused of a capital crime in the colony to London; 4) Require private individuals to quarter British troops; and 5) The Quebec Act—a separate, but equally intolerable act to American colonists that would allow the French Canadian province of Quebec the right to openly maintain its traditional Catholic rites and beliefs of worship. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 231.

<sup>81</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 239.

with which a whisper of rebellion or independence might have received at this particular point in the colony's history.

Having never served the Crown in a civil capacity Governor Tonyn, it must be presumed, was brought to East Florida for his military background. Rebellion was brewing throughout North America, and, as mentioned earlier, the Floridas would serve the dual role of an anchor of loyalty for the Crown in the southern region, as well as a barricade for the valuable Caribbean colonies against the spread of sedition. What was not expected were Tonyn's capabilities in leading the colony into an economic turnaround of grand proportions. This was not only a feat that escaped his predecessor, but every governor of West Florida as well as. Articles have been written which portray Patrick Tonyn as a despotic tyrant who persecuted innocent men for their private conversations in public places—not an uncommon charge against the British government during the Revolutionary era.<sup>82</sup> But this economic study of East Florida serves a dual purpose, for by understanding Tonyn's military perspective on North American politics and his socioeconomic history, the governor's iron-fisted administrative methods become self-evident, clarifying the political directions in which he led the colony. Thus, an understanding of the economic revival to which he gave birth provides keen insight to the make-up of the man who would direct East Florida's political and military concerns over the next eleven years. Unlike the circumstances in West Florida or the British West Indies, the full impact of the American Revolution was very real in East Florida. Only here do we find a wholly Loyalist colony hosting battlefield confrontations between British regulars, regiments of the Continental army, and militias from both sides, making this the most unique of circumstances in this study. The

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<sup>82</sup> See Charles L. Mowat, "The Enigma of William Drayton," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, Issue 1 (July 1943), 3–33.

decision for loyalism in East Florida was neither convenient, nor safe. East Floridians put their lives on the line repeatedly for their political beliefs and economic fortunes.

From the perspective of those living in East Florida, revolution was an unacceptable concept and economics played a significant role in their thought processes. But to be wholly cognizant of the Loyalists' worldview in 1774, we must recapture their mindset. At this time in European colonial history there was no concept of a United States Constitution, democracy as we know it, or any other political revelations associated with American liberties that our 21<sup>st</sup>-century 20/20 hindsight allows; all that existed was the current state of affairs as understood for centuries by Western European nations. American historians often wax eloquent about the life and death struggle at Valley Forge; the hope of a nation hanging by a thread. But just as there was no assurance at that time that there would indeed be an American victory, there was also no guarantee that any such victory would have positive global ramifications, nor lasting effects. Not then, nor in the future. Therefore—as Loyalists understood it as it was happening at the time—Western civilization, including two-thirds of the British population on the North American continent, was being threatened by a completely unknown entity that offered no immediate solutions for anyone beyond its own aristocracy.

The “constitution” to which Loyalists were so devoted was the Magna Carta, a document viewed today as one of the great milestones in constitutional history, the foundation for the works of James Madison and his contemporaries.<sup>83</sup> By the outbreak of the Revolution the Magna Carta had served Englishmen for 560 years, avowing the rights of the people of England and Great Britain in relation to the responsibilities of their sovereign king. It was arguably one of the most important English documents of its kind. Historian Gordon S. Wood contends that

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<sup>83</sup> As recognized by the American Bar Association in 1957.

“American patriot leaders insisted that they were rebelling not against the principles of the English constitution, but on behalf of them.... By emphasizing that it was the letter and spirit of the English constitution that justified their resistance, Americans could easily believe that they were simply protecting what Englishmen had valued from the beginning of their history.”<sup>84</sup> Just as historian Rhys Isaac describes American revolutionary interests in colonial Virginia as a “gentry-led patriot movement,” so East Florida’s circumstances might be viewed as a gentry-led defense of British liberties.<sup>85</sup> It was never this foundation of British laws that angered the American rebels to revolution, rather what they considered the unjust interpretations of those laws that refused to acknowledge their rights as citizens of the British Empire to be respected as Englishmen. However, more than mere politics were involved in this conflict.

Many East Floridians were driven to Loyalism by circumstances which more closely resembled those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, in spite of their political differences with King George III. From a business standpoint, Revolutionary leaders from South Carolina like Henry Laurens, Charles Pinckney, Arthur Middleton, and Edward Rutledge had more in common with Governor Tonyn or Lt. Governor John Moultrie than with John or Samuel Adams. Unlike the Adams’s, these other men were all wealthy aristocrats in plantation societies. But while rebels could no longer tolerate the negative economic impacts of Parliament’s unsympathetic legislation, East Floridians viewed the Continental Congress as a disruptive organization which threatened the status quo of an economic system that was finally working in their favor.

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<sup>84</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Random House, 2002), 58.

<sup>85</sup> Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 270. This protective spirit of a planter elite class for status quo was not unusual and would be seen again on the North American continent many years after the Revolution, specifically in nineteenth-century South Carolina. Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 165.

Once Governor Tonyn had established a lasting peace with Seminole and Creek leaders, whether it was by mutual respect or a false show of military might, the tenor of the colony relaxed. Agricultural production increased as outlying plantations no longer feared sudden Indian attack. This allowed the governor to focus on more mundane, but highly essential tasks such as lowering the cost of produce—particularly corn—by purchasing large quantities in Philadelphia to flood East Florida’s market.<sup>86</sup> Tonyn also resolved the problem of St. Augustine’s hazardous sand bar which covered the width of the St. Augustine Inlet into Matanzas Bay, the town’s harbor, by purchasing a launch “with 16 oars duple banked.”<sup>87</sup> This craft could function as a tug boat to tow smaller vessels into port or act as a personnel and cargo transport for those that could not enter.<sup>88</sup> There may have been no raucous parties at Governor Tonyn’s home, as with his predecessor, but within weeks of his arrival the economy was rebounding, market produce was once again affordable, the land could be worked safely, and the harbor was capable of handling larger shipments of commerce directly in and out of St. Augustine. These solutions were simple, quickly administered, and inexpensive. For a colony that was established on the premise of bringing large profits to a select few, this was indeed good news in very high places.

Tonyn also demonstrated his diplomatic skills in pacifying Anglo relations with the Seminole leader Cow Keeper. As preposterously comic as Tonyn’s instructions to send an armed

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<sup>86</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, September 16, 1774,” PRO CO 5/554, p. 30.

<sup>87</sup> Meaning a total of 32 oars.

<sup>88</sup> Even with the new tug, only ships of 7–10 feet of draft, depending on the tide, could cross the notorious sand bar—and then only with an experienced pilot as the bar shifted constantly. This, however, served as one of St. Augustine’s primary defensive advantages against attack by sea. Large warships could not enter Matanzas Bay, nor could their cannon reach the town from outside the bar. “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, September 16, 1774,” PRO CO 5/554, pp. 30–31. Wilbur H. Siebert tells us this of St. Augustine’s sand bar: “Ordinarily the bar could be crossed by three channels, often by two only. Admitting nothing but small and light vessels, the channels were narrow and crooked and shifted in stormy weather. Ships were often kept from eight to fourteen days unable to pass the bar on account of wind and weather.” Wilbur H. Siebert, “The Port of St. Augustine during the British Regime, Part II,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Issue 1 (July 1946), p. 92.

regiment on a hastened march around the colony in a false show of military strength might seem to us today, the effects were astoundingly successful. In early 1774, William Bartram told his father that he turned back from his second attempt to journey to Florida because of the Indian hostilities. He learned that the outlying Florida planters had fled to St. Augustine and the Spalding's stores had been plundered. But by May of the same year—just months later—Edward Cashin notes that Bartram and Stephen Egan were now able to continue on to St. Augustine where they “found that the planters in the area, though much shaken by raids and rumors of raids by renegade Indians, felt more secure because Tonyn had recently dispatched British regulars to patrol the area, making ‘an appearance of readiness’ as the governor explained to Lord Dartmouth.”<sup>89</sup>

Nor did the tumultuous years ahead alter this strong Loyalist sentiment, as is evidenced on August 11, 1776, when news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence reached St. Augustine. That same evening a large throng of jeering citizens burned the effigies of John Hancock and Samuel Adams in the town square as a public condemnation by loyal British citizens of all walks of life toward the rebellion.<sup>90</sup> Common folk and elites alike proudly exalted their local chief citizens who refused to join the Revolution as delegates, “though strongly solicited.”<sup>91</sup> Document after document proclaiming the colony's profound loyalty to the King—affirmations penned by the inhabitants, not royal officials—were signed and issued in 1774,

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<sup>89</sup> “Governor Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, May 19, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/554, f. 34–37, pp. 67–74; see also Cashin, *William Bartram*, 90.

<sup>90</sup> Martha Condray Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest in the American Revolution* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 54.

<sup>91</sup> After being warned by Lord Dartmouth of a circular, dated January 4, 1775, inviting men to attend the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Governor Tonyn assures Dartmouth that there are no sympathizers in East Florida. “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, May 29, 1775,” PRO CO 5/555, p. 35; see also John Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants, April 2, 1784*, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1984), 3. The writings of Wells are observed as published primary documents.

1776, and again in 1781 after the formation of the first General Assembly.<sup>92</sup> East Floridian oaths of loyalty rang out with strong sentiments of condemnation for the actions of their rebellious countrymen to the north, such as: “one of the first steps leading to the unnatural revolution, was a refusal of the rebel colonies to acknowledge the supreme right and authority of the British Parliament.”<sup>93</sup> East Florida assemblymen also made declarations that it was their honor bound duty to “recognize our allegiance to the blessed Prince on the throne, and the supremacy of Parliament; and be establishing on the most solid foundation, our constitution, liberties and dependence.”<sup>94</sup> It is an uncanny irony that both the American Loyalists and their rebel adversaries believed in the exact same virtues of sound government—a strong constitution guaranteeing certain liberties—but from opposing perspectives: the sanctity of dependence as opposed to independence.

Few have considered the economic pull that Loyalism afforded East Florida residents and, therefore, several theories arise as to why the citizenry of East Florida were so faithful to the same British authorities that stirred emotions of angst and rebellion in other North American colonies. As previously mentioned, the size of the population of East Florida, due to its infancy, was very small. There were also no taxes to create animosity between the people and Parliament; many of the inhabitants were enjoying a ten year reprieve of quit-rents on any lands received.<sup>95</sup> However, there were other factors involved in the province’s undying loyalty to the Crown that are indefensibly overlooked. Unlike the thirteen colonies in rebellion, East Florida did not have a

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<sup>92</sup> Historians note that such declarations became almost competitive among colonial governors hoping to secure their loyalties—and positions—at this time of rebellion. O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 200.

<sup>93</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 33–34.

<sup>94</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 33–34.

<sup>95</sup> This also applied to refugees. On February 19, 1778, King George III gave permission to Governor Tonyn to break up the large, undeveloped land grants of absentee owners and disperse them accordingly to Loyalists from Georgia and the Carolinas. Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 17.



populace that could trace its roots several generations deep into the history of the region, as could the Byrds, Lees, and Carters of Virginia. Most of the turbulence which created the revolutionary groundswell is said to have resulted from the American colonists' resentment of Parliament's actions and policies after the French and Indian War. The infamous British taxes of the mid-to-late 1760s produced much of this rebellious spirit, but did not affect East Florida as its population had no significant commerce, industry, or size until several years later.

Demographically, East Florida truly was a small province. In 1941, historian Charles L. Mowat cites the total population being at about 3,000 inhabitants at the outbreak of the American Revolution, not counting the garrison.<sup>96</sup> In 1976, J. Leitch Wright specifically lists over 2,000 blacks present in East Florida in 1775, outnumbering free whites by a ratio of two to one.<sup>97</sup> That does indeed add up to 3,000 people, but it has been heavily documented that over 1,400 Minorcan and Greek indentured servants also were brought to East Florida's New Smyrna plantation in 1767. By 1775, however, that number had been reduced to 600. This would bring the immediate pre-war population to at least 3,600 people, much nearer the number of colonists in West Florida. Here is where modern calculations find discrepancy with the primary documents. According to Joseph Byrne Lockey's collection of manuscripts there is a letter dated from London, June 8, 1783, based upon "Observations on East Florida by a person recently arrived who has lived in that region several years" that tallies the 1775 East Florida population at 3,000 whites and 2,500 blacks.<sup>98</sup> Given the racial construction of this list one must presume that

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<sup>96</sup> Mowat, "St. Augustine Under the British Flag," 133.

<sup>97</sup> Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 427.

<sup>98</sup> "'Observations on East Florida,' Inclosure #1 in 'Letter from Bernardo del Campo to Conde de Floridablanca, June 8, 1783,'" Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid. Estado, leg. 4246 Ap 1, pp. 117–27, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 120–21. The point being that exact numbers concerning the population are anything but exact. Fairbanks, *The History and Antiquities of the City of St. Augustine*, 169–70.

it does not include the constant parade of Native Americans in St. Augustine or the 600 Minorcans living near the Castillo. Therefore, by adding in the 600 Minorcans, a safe estimate based upon one who lived in St. Augustine at the time would be 6,100 inhabitants (not including Native Americans for there are no numbers available); two-thirds of the white population, excluding blacks and the New Smyrna colonists, lived in St. Augustine.<sup>99</sup> From 1778 until the end of the war, Loyalists flocked into East Florida in a constant stream of refugees as Savannah and Charleston were lost to the rebels.<sup>100</sup>

Once there were enough free men and slaves inside the colony's borders the plantations nearest St. Augustine could be converted to the production of consumable food. Those plantations farther out continued their production of naval stores, barrel staves, and indigo, while traders and merchants dealt in the procurement of deerskins and hides.<sup>101</sup> As one article states, "[w]hile Washington's troops were starving at Valley Forge, the plantations around St. Augustine were producing over 1,000 barrels of rice, 148 hogsheads of molasses and 13 puncheons of bellywarming rum, in addition to sugar and experimental coffee and cocoa."<sup>102</sup> Combining that effort with Thomas Brown's cattle rustling ventures, expert fishermen from Minorca and Greece working the local waters, and reliable shipments of necessities and farm

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<sup>99</sup> Mowat, "St. Augustine Under the British Flag," 133.

<sup>100</sup> The passage of the confiscation and banishment acts drove Loyalists out of Georgia and the Carolinas through the end of 1778, until the British retook Savannah on December 29, 1778, and Augusta on January 29, 1779. "'Observations on East Florida,' Inclosure #1 in 'Letter from Bernardo del Campo to Conde de Floridablanca, June 8, 1783,'" Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid. Estado, leg. 4246 Ap 1, pp. 117–27, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 120–21; see also Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 1.

<sup>101</sup> Williams, "East Florida as a Loyalist Haven," 471; see also Siebert, "The Port of St. Augustine, Part II," 80.

<sup>102</sup> Albert Manucy, Alberta Johnson, "Castle St. Mark and the Patriots of the Revolution," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 21, Issue 1 (July 1942), 5.

implements from England, the colony was able to feed itself, defend its perimeter, and secure a healthy profit for its investors throughout the remainder of the war.<sup>103</sup>

Another manner in which East Florida prospered from the war economy was when the Continental Congress imposed trade sanctions with the British West Indies. Philip Curtin discusses how the American Revolution “decreased the prosperity of the British West Indies by breaking the traditional tie to the mainland colonies as a source of cheap provisions.”<sup>104</sup> But with all of East Florida’s plantations running at full capacity by 1778, the colony’s planters were able to bridge much of the trade gap caused by the American embargo. As British merchant ships delivered trade goods and farm implements to St. Augustine, they would then be reloaded with food stuffs and naval stores for the British West Indies. From there, the same ships would transport slaves, sugar, and molasses for rum production St. Augustine or Pensacola where they would unload the slaves and complete their holds with indigo, deerskins, hides, timber, and any number of goods and agricultural products. The American Revolution brought the Floridas into the British Atlantic system of commerce more completely than any other event of its time. We see evidence of this as Governor Tonyn explained in one letter to Lord Germain, “the Plantations...employ their Negros in providing lumber and naval stores for the West Indies, having raised sufficient provisions for the ensuring Year, a proof of which is, their purchasing new Negros.”<sup>105</sup>

Thus, we see a blending of colonial identities from the North American mainland and the Caribbean colonies within the framework of East Florida: historically, demographically, and

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<sup>103</sup> Williams, “East Florida as a Loyalist Haven,” 474.

<sup>104</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 153.

<sup>105</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, St. Augustine, October 30, 1776,” PRO CO 5/557, p. 24.

culturally more like the British West Indies; economically East Florida was much more similar to the mainland colonies, in that they were not a monocrop society and, resultantly, did not depend upon the metropole for their economic survival.<sup>106</sup> Just as the rebellious colonies grew to be capable of standing on their own fiscal merits, East Florida was well on its way to proving its competence in that regard from 1774 forward.<sup>107</sup> Now we have a more complete understanding of the uniqueness of East Florida, for the colony was not economically dependent on the metropole at the time of its professed allegiance to the sovereign king. Yet, like its Caribbean counterparts, economics is the reason that East Florida chose loyalty over rebellion.

The economic circumstances in East Florida during Governor Tonyn's administration serve as a microcosm of the larger southern Revolutionary arena. Being more pragmatic than idealistic in their political decisions, Southerners waged the most vicious of civil wars upon one another out of the quest for profits. Along the way they picked up powerful stanchions to undergird their decisions, such as the British deployment of Native American warriors in the southern backcountry, or the cruelties inflicted upon Loyalists in the name of freedom by the Sons of Liberty. While Southerners may have ultimately focused their hostilities on the larger issues and governments at hand, as those in New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies are credited, the initial criteria for demarcations of rebel and Loyalist were motivated by more material concerns. In this sense, all of the southern colonies were more like their counterparts in

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<sup>106</sup> Militarily, West Florida was categorized as such even more so than East Florida. Historian Robin F.A. Fabel notes that "[t]he strategic position of West Florida may best be understood if it is considered not a part of continental North America but rather a West Indian island which happened to be joined to the mainland." Whitehall had no delusions that the protection of West Florida fell to anyone more so than Sir Peter Parker, commander of the squadron at Port Royal, Jamaica. Robin F.A. Fabel, "West Florida and British Strategy in the American Revolution," in Samuel Proctor, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida and the Revolutionary South* (Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1978), 54.

<sup>107</sup> If one should argue that the only reason East Florida survived economically during the Revolution was due to the support of Great Britain, another may also make the same case against the European loans to the United States. The point being that not one of the British West Indian islands—as profitable as they were—had the capabilities of economic stability without the mercantilist markets of the British Empire.

the Caribbean than their sister colonies North of the Chesapeake. Revolution was sanctioned from Virginia to Georgia because a new nation offered economic reprieve from the lending houses of Scotland and an elevated social status based upon commerce, trade, and financial earnings on the western shores of the Atlantic Ocean. East Florida serves as a classic specimen in this economic study due to the collectiveness of the decision throughout the colony. Like its rebellious southern counterparts, East Florida made its decision for Loyalism on the basis of which side in the conflict promised the best hope for a strong economic future. The fine line that distinguished Rebel from Loyalist in the South was drawn in an accountant's ledger, not the tax collector's records. When compared to the rebellious southern colonies, East Florida's unique and extremely young Anglo history sets it apart from the rest of the British Empire. With the reality of earning real profits less than two years old, the concept of rebellion was absurd to East Floridians, and justifiably so.

Unlike West Florida, the decision for loyalism in East Florida was made prior to the arrival of Loyalists from other colonies. Unlike the thirteen colonies in rebellion, East Florida did not harbor a significant pacifist community, or a large contingent of rebels within its borders. But that is not to say that a rebel movement never reared its head.

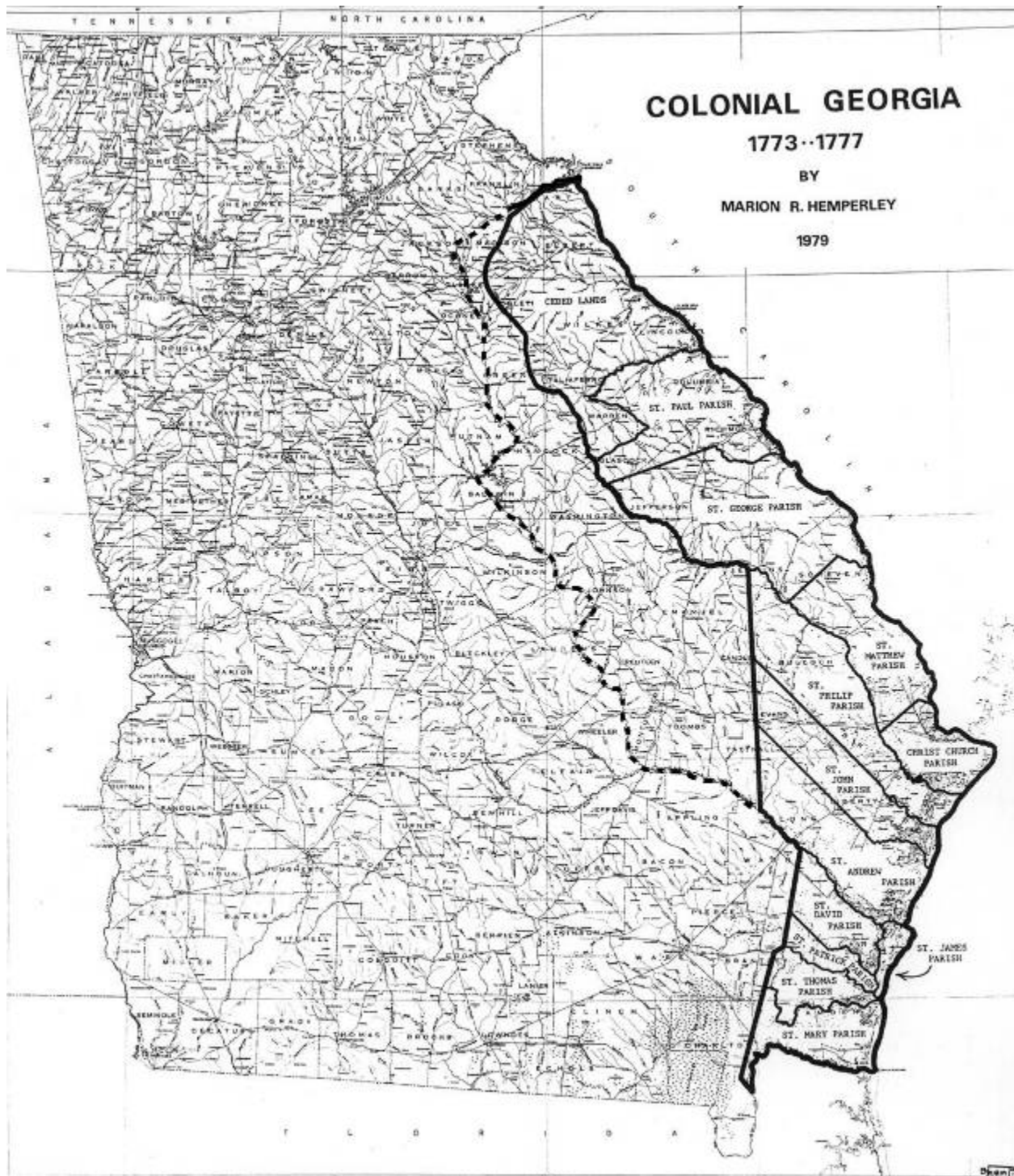


Figure 3-1. Disputed ceded lands of Georgia. The solid black lines represent the white-inhabited colony of Georgia from 1773–1777. The Ceded Lands acquired by Governor James Wright at the Augusta congress in 1773 make up the northern-most tip of the occupied colony. The dotted lines represent the Oconee-Ogeechee Strip Governor Wright failed to acquire at the Augusta congress. Map adapted by author from <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/parishmap.htm>

## CHAPTER 4

### SONS OF LIBERTY, SONS OF ENGLAND

So often in our pursuit of the realities of the American Revolution we focus on the outcome and then trace steps backward from that vantage point to discover purposes, goals, and ideals. But, as with any historical event, one must surely start at the beginning if an accurate analysis is to be performed. For instance, in the beginning of the struggle both sides believed that they “were acting on behalf of the rights of Englishmen.”<sup>1</sup> From the disgruntled farmer in the backcountry of North Carolina to Benjamin Franklin standing in the “cockpit” before Parliament, it was the rights of American colonists as Englishmen that were at stake and rebellious insurgents took up arms in April 1775 to defend those rights. We sometimes forget that the Battle of Bunker Hill was not waged in an effort to gain independence, but rather to re-gain English rights. The verbiage of independence did not creep into the American vocabulary until Tom Paine broached that subject in January 1776—and even then it took Congress another six months to consider the full ramifications before taking such a monumental step. In the earliest days of the Revolutionary era, then, Sons of Liberty and sons of England were not only of the same mother country—they were one and the same sort, standing equally firm for their own interpretations of English liberties for English citizens. And they were not just in Boston.

Sons of Liberty activities in New England have been the stuff of school books, movies, and even a section in a Disney theme park. Yet documented Sons of Liberty activities occurred throughout the southern landscape and beyond. Historian Gordon Wood describes “[t]he struggles of ‘sons of liberty’ in Ireland to win constitutional concessions,” while Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy relates protests concerning the Stamp Act crisis as far south as Montserrat and Antigua in the British West Indies, as well as full-scale rioting and the destruction of public and

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<sup>1</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 76–77.

private property on Nevis and St. Kitts by mobs calling themselves the Sons of Liberty.<sup>2</sup> “The rise of these extralegal bodies was one of the most significant outgrowths of the pre-Revolutionary period, for they not only strengthened the most vociferous elements of the colonial resistance; they also undermined the influence of those who wished to register more moderate protests through recognized governmental channels.”<sup>3</sup> Ironically, their activities also had a tendency to conjure adverse results to their intentions. In Georgia and North Carolina, Sons of Liberty abuses created two of the Crown’s most feared Loyalist militia leaders in Thomas Brown and Edmund Fanning. And Gary Nash tells us that “[t]he Eastern Shore radicals became Loyalists because conservative patriots, with a history of class imperiousness and insensitivity, drove them into the arms of the British. If social justice could not be obtained under the rule of Maryland’s elite, perhaps it could be found under England’s royal banner.”<sup>4</sup>

Some historians, such as Gary Nash, Hiller B. Zobel, and Robert Middlekauff are willing to remove the silk façade from the Sons of Liberty and write of how dangerous an organization they were.<sup>5</sup> This was an extremely hostile group, prone to the utter destruction of public, private, and municipal property, as well severe bodily injury to those whom they opposed. We nod with approval at the political cartoons of the Revolutionary era displaying Loyalists smeared with boiled tar and goose feathers as they are forced to drink tea. But many Loyalists and non-aggressors died or were permanently maimed and disfigured as the result of beatings, scalplings, burnings, and other tortures received from the Sons of Liberty.

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<sup>2</sup> Wood, *The American Revolution*, 61; O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 89–91.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Rebels and Redcoats*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 239–41.

<sup>5</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 59; Zobel, *The Boston Massacre*, 24–59; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 106.



Unlike most other American colonies, there was no Sons of Liberty movement in West Florida even though Governor Johnstone collected Stamp Tax revenues. In East Florida there was even less cause for Sons of Liberty protests during the 1760s. But as change swept the nation in 1774 so, too, were the Sons of Liberty to alter their course and cast an eye toward St. Augustine. Having viewed the political turmoil of the American colonies from across the Atlantic, Patrick Tonyn had every reason to be concerned at the prospect of the Sons of Liberty gaining a foothold in East Florida. Tonyn brought to his office a perspective on the subject that was deeply embedded in British Loyalty. The new governor perceived as his ultimate responsibility “[t]he Good of His Majesty’s service and the protection & defense of this province [as] the main objects I have constantly in view.”<sup>6</sup> Tonyn would exercise little sympathy for those he suspected of sedition, and even less for those against whom he held a personal grudge.<sup>7</sup> Typically, “British officials had become more fearful about their ability to direct the course of history in British America. They began to talk less about the functioning of empire and more about the threats against it.”<sup>8</sup> Tonyn was not one to put political position, or fears, over duty. As a professional soldier political survival had never been his goal in life. During this phase of

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<sup>6</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, St. Augustine, January 19, 1778,” British Colonial Office Records, held at the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History University of Florida (Gainesville: University of Florida, Vol. I & II, 1984), 2:482.

<sup>7</sup> Upon Tonyn’s arrival in St. Augustine, Dr. Andrew Turnbull refused to allow his wife and daughters to associate with Mrs. Tonyn, stating that he knew her in Scotland and claimed she was of questionable virtue. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 85; William H. Drayton would also call Mrs. Tonyn a “whore.” *The Peter Force Collection: William Drayton*, December 1, 1778, Vol. 8D/Item #37, Reel #37 of 112; shelf #17, 137, Library of Congress Manuscript Division. The same name-calling would be utilized by Captain F.G. Mulcaster. Daniel L. Schafer, “...not so gay a town in America as this...’ 1763–1784,” in Jean Parker Waterbury, ed., *The Oldest City: St. Augustine Saga of Survival* (St. Augustine, FL.: The St. Augustine Historical Society, 1983), 110. There is enough evidence to question the official nature of the Tonyns relationship, as several historians like Schafer refer to the governor’s companion as his “mistress” and “his lady,” avoiding the use of “Mrs.” Whatever their relationship, she brought three children to St. Augustine on March 1. 1774, and was expecting a fourth. Schafer, “...not so gay a town,” 108–10.

<sup>8</sup> Lester D. Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 29.

Tonyn's administration an iron-fisted, military minded, authoritarian rule proved an effective check on just such sentiments.

Fully aware that the current mischief in the American colonies toward royal governance was fashioned in part by gentlemen planters and educated lawyers, Tonyn cast a suspicious eye on potential Sons of Liberty sympathizers among the East Florida elites most vocal in their disdain for royal authority.<sup>9</sup> He also focused on those most capable of rousing a mob to violent action, for as Gary Nash reminds us, “[u]pper-class leaders worked hard to get crowds to do their bidding, and lower-class citizens often looked for leaders above them because deference was not yet dead and educated men in the upper ranks had the money, organizational skills, and literary talents vital to mounting successful protests.”<sup>10</sup> But in each region of the country we find the demonstrations of the Sons of Liberty as varied as the people themselves. “In different colonies the Sons emerged in different ways as products of different concerns...their great task was to turn traditional crowd action toward the British question and to generate new political consciousness among ordinary Americans, fusing “imperial issues and domestic problems.”<sup>11</sup>

Even before Tonyn's arrival, there existed in Revolutionary-era St. Augustine what he often later referred to as a “cabal” of dissensionists and agitators—a political luxury that royal governors could tolerate in calm environments, but the American colonies were hardly stable in 1774. Chief Justice William H. Drayton and Dr. Andrew Turnbull, both elite planters, were listed

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<sup>9</sup> Letters to various influential contacts in London virtually poured across the Atlantic to complain of Tonyn's administration—even John Moultrie, Lt. Governor and Tonyn supporter, wrote to former Governor James Grant to tell tales of Tonyn's lack of social skills. While the factions in St. Augustine were divided politically rather than ethnically, Tonyn's persecution of suspected Sons of Liberty is believed to have been motivated by both, as he invariably targeted more Scots in his accusations. In reality, however, there were simply more elites of Scottish descent in the colony, thereby increasing their likelihood of involvement in an anti-Tonyn faction. Galloway, *Formation of a Planter Elite*, 146–51.

<sup>10</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Countryman, *The American Revolution*, 96, 101.

prominently among these men, along with wealthy merchants James Penman and Spencer Mann, Lt. Colonel Robert Bissett, Lt. Colonel Lewis Fuser of the army, and the colony's attorney general, Arthur Gordon.<sup>12</sup> Every facet of East Floridian society—merchants, planters, government officials, and military personnel—lined up to spread disenchantment throughout the colony, or so the governor accused them. Tonyn was intolerant of such factions and anyone who belonged to them, risking his gubernatorial appointment on more than one occasion to rid East Florida of such individuals. To his most vociferous antagonists the governor became a vindictive tyrant, casting them out of the colony by any means possible. To his remaining critics Tonyn chose a highly unexpected method for quieting their disfavor—he filled their purses with money generated by his new fiscal policies.

Though both Drayton and Turnbull's plantations benefitted from Tonyn's economic reforms, as did Penman and Mann's commercial endeavors, they bitterly complained of every action that proceeded from the governor's office. It is no small surprise that Drayton and Turnbull were, therefore, among the first targeted as Sons of Liberty. Prior to Tonyn's arrival, Drayton was removed from office on more than one occasion as the result of recalcitrant political conflicts with acting-governor John Moultrie. Each time, however, he was ultimately reinstated by the London connections of his colleague Dr. Turnbull.<sup>13</sup> One might speculate that Moultrie took great pleasure relating to his new superior the many instances of insubordination and political shenanigans Turnbull and Drayton had inflicted on East Florida's Grand Council.

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<sup>12</sup> Spencer Mann's last name is often found spelled with just one "n." Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:17, 80; see also Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 87. While it is highly unlikely that Lt. Colonels Bissett and Fuser were involved in any Sons of Liberty campaigns in East Florida, they were indeed constantly at odds publicly with Governor Tonyn and courted the favors of their wealthy colleagues. In Tonyn's mind, however, an instigator against the king's appointed leadership was no different than sedition when an entire continent was on the brink of rebellion.

<sup>13</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 170–77.

Drayton made a powerful enemy in John Moultrie, a man deeply respected throughout the province. Moultrie's political alliance with the rigid Tonyn brought a degree of empathy for the people to the administration. But with Moultrie also came his umbrage for anyone suspected of self-serving motives which might weaken the colony's fiber during this time of rebellion. One of the common bonds that Moultrie and Tonyn shared in opposition to their political rivals concerned the topic of colonial assemblies and legislatures.

England was headed to war with its own colonies, and Tonyn believed that legislatures were boiling pots for treason, promoted by men who designed factions against the Crown. From a Loyalist perspective of contemporary colonial events it is hard to deny that such suspicions were not justified, as that is almost precisely what happened in New England and the other insubordinate North American colonies. That there had never been a General Assembly in British East Florida was a major point of contention for Dr. Turnbull and Chief Justice Drayton, who were "advocates of the rights of Englishmen in the colonies"—a position taken by Sons of Liberty throughout the empire.<sup>14</sup> As early as 1768, Drayton "warned that proclamations of the [East Florida] Royal Council were potential violations of English law unless sanctioned by an elective assembly."<sup>15</sup>

As far back as 1652, colonial assemblies were authorized by the Crown as a way of protecting colonial subjects from the Lord Proprietorships and bringing some form of legitimate structure to colonial societies in the Americas.<sup>16</sup> But "[t]he familiar struggles of the colonial assemblies for their rights and prerogatives against Crown and Parliament" was an evolutionary

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<sup>14</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 170.

<sup>15</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 170.

<sup>16</sup> Charles McLean Andrews, *The American Nation, A History: Colonial Self Government 1652–1689* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1904), xiii.

development, and by the 1770s much change had occurred.<sup>17</sup> What was once a protective barrier of justice was now believed by many to be the root of the colonial crisis; but “not merely the rise of the assemblies but also the ascent of economic leaders in America to a measure of political power and sovereignty. Whatever else it may have meant, this growth of the assemblies became the essential means of accommodating colonial interest groups.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Governor Tonyn regarded general assemblies in the American colonies of the 1770s as a “source of sedition, the great bulwark of American liberty,” which only encouraged his belief that Turnbull, Drayton, and their cohorts were Sons of Liberty, sympathetic to the rebels of Boston and Virginia. The governor accused Drayton of being a “Leveler,” and ultimately a traitor; in Tonyn’s mind only those bent on treason would openly argue for the existence of a legislature. Determined to keep such factions from further developing in East Florida, the governor’s first strike against perceived seditious activity came, unintentionally, just seven months after his arrival in St. Augustine.<sup>19</sup>

On October 1, 1774, rebel sympathizers hijacked a shipload of various goods in Charleston Harbor, including two chests of infamous East Indian tea. The proprietor, James Penman, complained vociferously that he was owed for his losses on the grounds that the Crown failed to protect his shipment. But the details concerning the theft made it clear to Tonyn and Moultrie that the ship never reported to the proper customs house, anchoring instead far out into the harbor. East Florida authorities wanted to know why such a valuable cargo was not properly processed, but sat out at such a distance awaiting transfer to a ship heading directly to St.

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph Ernst, “‘Ideology’ and an Economic Interpretation of the Revolution,” in Young, *The American Revolution*, 172.

<sup>18</sup> Ernst, “‘Ideology’ and an Economic Interpretation,” in Young, *The American Revolution*, 172.

<sup>19</sup> Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 85.

Augustine. Tonyn's report to Lord Dartmouth on this affair acknowledged his belief that Penman was attempting to smuggle the goods into East Florida without paying the proper taxes.<sup>20</sup> To Loyalist sentiments, smuggling was no less a criminal offense than those committed by the rowdy mobs of Boston, thus Penman was pegged as a potential threat to the political harmony of St. Augustine. Penman immediately recruited his colleagues, who complained determinedly to their contacts in London, but to no avail. Smuggling became rampant in the American colonies soon after Parliament passed the Townshend Acts in 1767 and was a sore subject among London's elites. Penman avoided prosecution, but was forced to consider the cargo lost. The incident made Tonyn and Moultrie acutely aware of whom their adversaries were.<sup>21</sup>

Just one month later Chief Justice William Drayton attempted to pass a land scheme, developed by Jonathan Bryan of Georgia, under Governor Tonyn's nose. The conspiracy involved bilking the Creek nation out of millions of acres of land in East and West Florida by securing the signatures of lower-ranked Creek chiefs on deeds to the property. Bryan was introduced to Chief Justice Drayton in South Carolina while the magistrate was visiting his nephew, William Henry Drayton. The older Drayton saw the financial opportunities of this venture but knew that he would need the backing of well-placed aristocrats in London—associations that he did not personally possess. But his ally, Dr. Turnbull, was in good standing with several members of the British aristocracy.<sup>22</sup> With this guarantee all but secured, Bryan welcomed Drayton and Turnbull into the world of high-stakes real estate swindling.

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<sup>20</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, October 1, 1774," PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 1–2.

<sup>21</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, St. Augustine, August 1, 1774," PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 1–3.

<sup>22</sup> Dr. Turnbull convinced a small group of prestigious financial backers, including Sir William Duncan, Sir Richard Temple, and former Prime Minister Lord George Grenville, that the Greek and Minorcan farmers were better suited to agricultural labor in the Florida climate, due to their natural acclimation to what was presumed to be similar latitudes in Mediterranean region. Turnbull founded New Smyrna in 1767 with 1,403 of these people signed on as indentured servants. By 1775, the numbers were down to 600, though none of the contracts had matured. Records do

Jonathan Bryan was a well-known planter and sympathizer of the rebel cause. The concept of a new government appealed to him because it would allow him to become an aristocratic figure in the new society, rather than a rough backcountry farmer who hoisted himself up by his own bootstraps. Bryan was audacious enough to intentionally bring attention to himself over this land scheme so that the British would know it was he who had “shaken the royal government of Georgia to its core.” Bryan’s goal was to “elevate his own political status by opening a new area for settlement between the two Floridas, independent of British control,” which would, in essence, make him another James Oglethorpe or William Penn. Bryan hoped to convince a group of lesser Creek chiefs that they held enough political clout among white leaders to speak for the entire Creek confederation; therefore, the land was theirs to do with as they pleased. For a 99-year lease on between 4 to 5 million acres of land, Bryan would pay the Creeks just £100 in presents and an annual rent of 100 bushels of corn.<sup>23</sup>

The political intrigue of Bryan’s lease “extended through three colonies, included two governors, a former governor, two chief justices and an associate justice, the Indian superintendent and his assistants, the councils of East Florida and Georgia, the secretary of state for the American Department in Great Britain, and other officers of empire.”<sup>24</sup> David Taitt, an agent of John Stuart’s, was in a constant state of piecing back together supplies-for-land agreements between West Florida governor Peter Chester and “the duplicitous [Chief]

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not indicate a reason for the plummeting population, but natural attrition due a “seasoning” period may have occurred. However, in eight years one would presume that such an occurrence would have run its course. In 1777, atrocities committed against the indentured population, many of which resulted in death, were reported by escapees from New Smyrna to authorities in St. Augustine. These events will be detailed later in this chapter. Fairbanks, *The History and Antiquities of the City of St. Augustine*, 169–70; see also Schafer, “St. Augustine’s British Years,” 130.

<sup>23</sup> For all quotes in this paragraph see Galloway, *Formation of a Planter Elite*, 128; also on 130–31.

<sup>24</sup> Galloway, *Formation of a Planter Elite*, 133.

Sempoyaffesent and some other Cowetas [who] listened to...Bryan.”<sup>25</sup> What made this scheme so utterly preposterous and dependent upon inflated egos was that neither Bryan, nor Drayton and Turnbull, believed that they would be caught—although it is very possible that Bryan did not care because he was looking to enjoy a position in the new American government once hostilities began.

Bryan later informed Chief Justice Drayton that Governor Wright of Georgia had torn up the Creek leases once it was determined that the signatures were illegally acquired.<sup>26</sup> What Drayton did not know was that Governor Wright had already informed his East Florida counterpart of the land scheme and issued a warrant for Bryan’s arrest.<sup>27</sup> Later, when Revolutionary fighting reached East Florida’s borders, George Washington appointed Jonathan Bryan to command a militia brigade during two of the three invasion attempts against the colony. Tonyn suspected that one of the primary objectives of Bryan’s land scheme was to stir up another Anglo/Indian conflict to divert valuable British troops from the war with the rebel colonies. David Taitt warned John Stuart of this very possibility, sure that Bryan's mission was of two natures: to fill his own pockets, and to set the Creeks at war with the under-manned British troops in East and West Florida, drawing them westward and away from the rebel target of St. Augustine.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, Governor Tonyn described in a letter to Lord Dartmouth how Drayton called on him one night to explain the nature of the speculative land deal. “I made no reply, but silent amazement,” Tonyn wrote, as Drayton, with the assistance of Andrew Turnbull “who said he

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<sup>25</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 169.

<sup>26</sup> “The Turnbull Letters,” Vol. I, pp. 106–07; PRO, CO 5/555, p. 281.

<sup>27</sup> “The Turnbull Letters,” Vol. I, pp. 106–07; PRO, CO 5/555, p. 111; PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 277–81.

<sup>28</sup> Gallay, *Formation of a Planter Elite*, 134.



would join with him, and support it with his interests at home,” presented the land conspiracy as a means of obtaining a finder’s fee from the British government of at least 20,000 acres.<sup>29</sup>

Allowing Drayton enough leeway to orchestrate his own arrest for treasonous activities, Tonyn ordered the magistrate to proceed immediately with a legal injunction against Jonathan Bryan.<sup>30</sup>

Drayton’s next move confirmed Tonyn’s suspicions. The Chief Justice returned to the governor’s office the next morning to discuss the proceedings against Bryan in hopes of convincing Tonyn to reconsider his decision in this matter. Tonyn wrote to Lord Dartmouth that Drayton said “he found this affair, required a good deal of consideration: he advised the proceedings against Bryan, to be put off, for a little time...this affair might be turned to a public benefit, he recommended to me, to adopt Bryan’s plan.”<sup>31</sup> By presuming that this was nothing more than another opportunistic business negotiation, Chief Justice Drayton failed to consider the governor’s overall perspective of the volatile political atmosphere in the colonies—not to mention the enormous amount of work Tonyn had ahead of him in hopes of smoothing relations with the Creeks.

Tonyn’s stance was unmovable, as the governor also considered Drayton’s intentions to be reprehensively illegal. He wrote, “I replied, I never would give countenance to a fellow, that, had the impudence to fly in the face of the Kings proclamation, had daringly violated his prerogative; was doing all in his power to rob His Majesty of his land, and to get into possession of it.”<sup>32</sup>

Upon hearing from governors Wright and Tonyn, Lord Dartmouth proclaimed that the Bryan

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<sup>29</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, November 23, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 53–60; “The Turnbull Letters,” 1:115–16.

<sup>30</sup> Gallay, *Formation of a Planter Elite*, 147.

<sup>31</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, November 23, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 53–60; “The Turnbull Letters,” 1:116.

<sup>32</sup> Tonyn was referring to the Royal Proclamation of 1763. “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, November 23, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 53–60; “The Turnbull Letters,” 1:116.

conspiracy “is big with the greatest Mischiefs, and being subversion of every Principle, upon which the Crown claims a Right to the Disposal of all unappropriated lands, it cannot be too strenuously opposed, and I have the satisfaction to acquaint you, that the King approves every Step you have taken in that Business.” Dartmouth went on to further discuss Drayton’s role in the affair and referred to his actions as “[c]onduct so diametrically opposed to the Duty he owes the King & which his Character & situation required of him.”<sup>33</sup>

This land scheme has no real equivalent in the modern era. The plan was a direct violation of the Proclamation of 1763—an edict, though unpopular with the people, that was still very much in effect at this time.<sup>34</sup> In 1774, a well-understood propriety of land ownership existed in the British American colonies. The land in question belonged to the Creek nation, but only if the British Crown chose not to claim it, whether by negotiation or by attempted force. The ultimate owner of the land, according to the mindset of the metropole, was King George III.<sup>35</sup> Landholders in East Florida, for example, were granted their property and allowed to possess it only by the grace of their monarch. Bryan, Drayton, and Turnbull were behaving as if this land did not belong to the king until after the Indians relinquished it, and only then it would become English soil. The three conspirators then hoped to be rewarded with a sizable portion of the land as a commission for their services.

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<sup>33</sup> “Lord Dartmouth to Patrick Tonyn, Whitehall, May 3, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 124–25.

<sup>34</sup> Mowat, “The Enigma of William Drayton,” 20.

<sup>35</sup> While this concept goes against every notion of Native American land rights, this study is observing the era through a British mindset and must remember how elites in Parliament viewed these lands. If the reader will look again at the 1773 map of Georgia on page 91, one can see that even though only the eastern borders of the colony are occupied by white settlers and divided into parishes, the entire legal perimeter of the colony is defined to reduce future claims against these lands by other colonies or foreign nations. Thus, in the British mindset, these lands belonged to King George III—the Creeks and other Native American nations and confederations were simply being allowed to remain there until future British needs could be determined.

Just as the world had never witnessed the likes of colonial mobs confronting British troops in Boston or defiantly ransacking the houses and property of royal officials who were about the king's business, there was an audacity in Bryan's plot that was abhorrent to eighteenth-century British culture. Drayton hoped to find in Governor Tonyn a sense of ego over duty, as he suggested that this land scheme would dramatically increase the population of East Florida virtually overnight. By Jonathan Bryan's promise, Drayton claimed that there were thousands of eager inhabitants in Georgia awaiting such an opportunity for new lands. That Tonyn would ever "injure a Royal Colony to build up [his] own" was an insult to the governor's integrity and his honor as a servant of the Crown, further fueling Tonyn's repulsion.<sup>36</sup>

Tonyn's case against Drayton suffered a severe blow when Lord Dartmouth resigned his position as Secretary of State of the American Colonies and was replaced by Lord George Germain. A former soldier, Germain (born Lord George Sackville) was disgraced at the battle of Minden during the Seven Years War and banished from the army by King George II. Now, with a new king, and a newly inherited title, Lord Germain would be the East Florida governor's immediate superior.<sup>37</sup> Tonyn gave no indication of animosity toward a man with Germain's stained military reputation, but the new Secretary of the American Colonies was more calculated in his decisions than was the irrepressible Dartmouth. Tonyn's campaign against Drayton sputtered during the first year of Germain's appointment, but the governor's tenacity was relentless as he refused to allow the matter to drop.

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<sup>36</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, January 14, 1776," PRO, CO 5/556, p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> "During the critical phases of the Battle of Minden Prince Ferdinand sent four separate orders to Sackville to attack with his powerful cavalry force. Every time Sackville refused to obey the order. Sackville's deputy commander, the Earl of Granby attempted to lead the force forward but was ordered to halt by Sackville. It has been said that if the British and Hanoverian cavalry had charged the overthrow of the French army would have been complete." <http://britishbattles.com/seven-years/minden.htm>

In the meantime, the earliest opportunity for a council with the head chiefs of the Creek confederation did not avail itself until December 1775. Therefore, the governor found it necessary to keep a lid on any potential disruptions to the delicate relationship with the Indians until then. Tonyn called on Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown for assistance. Brown was the commander of the East Florida Rangers, a special military unit drawn from former Georgia and South Carolina backwoodsmen and small planters—refugees from revolutionary upheaval in their home colonies. Governor Tonyn hand-picked these rugged men for the purpose of performing what would be called today “Special Units” functions, or “Black Ops.” Brown earned a strong reputation with the various Indian nations and eventually became the Superintendent of Southern of Southern Indian Affairs in 1779.<sup>38</sup> Under Brown’s guidance, and General Thomas Gage’s authorization, East Florida civil authorities maintained a strong support of the Native American tribes with gifts of munitions, essentials, and “presents,” which became a synonymous term for rum on many occasions. Both Gage and Brown determined not to repeat the negative Anglo/Indian relations that existed during the French and Indian War, in which the Native Americans enjoyed great benefits from playing one European power against another.<sup>39</sup> Brown utilized the influence of British Indian agents to help organize the Seminoles and Creeks for war against possible rebel incursions into East Florida.<sup>40</sup> Though historians often lampoon this strategy as ineffective, Britain’s goal in East Florida was to exploit the psychological effect that Native American war parties had on the colonists of Georgia and the Carolinas.

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<sup>38</sup> John Stuart was the Southern Region Indian Agent, previously stationed in Charleston until forced to evacuate to St. Augustine in 1775. His sudden death in 1779 allowed Brown to fill the position. Siebert “Loyalists in East Florida,” 1:24, 76.

<sup>39</sup> “Thomas Brown to Patrick Tonyn, May 8, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/555, p. 176; “General Gage to Patrick Tonyn, Boston, September 12, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/555, p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> J. Leitch Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, Issue 4 (April 1976), 431.

After spending the first nine months of 1775 attempting to overcome the political nightmare with the Creeks that Bryan, Drayton, and Turnbull created, Tonyn took the offensive and held a series of small councils with other various Native American leaders. When the brother of the Cupité King, a Creek chief, came to St. Augustine to inquire about an overdue shipment of gunpowder, he learned that one-hundred and eleven barrels of gunpowder—all slated for Creek villages—were stolen from the sloop *St. John* by rebel pirates as the boat lay anchored across the bar from Matanzas Bay. In a moving speech in which Tonyn swore on his life that he would never deceive the Indians, he then instructed them to seek their lost gunpowder from the thieving “Virginians” who stole it.<sup>41</sup> A large council between British officials and Creek leaders was finally arranged on December 6–8, 1775. During this congress Jonathan Bryan’s plot to swindle the Creeks out of their lands was finally exposed. Documentation shows that Tonyn’s address carefully avoided the inclusion of Bryan’s British cohorts, thus safe-guarding East Florida from potential Native American wrath. Tonyn equated Bryan’s devious nature to all rebels who stole British gifts destined for Creek villages. He promised that “[t]he Great King is now sending great armies of his Land and Sea Warriors, like the trees in the Woods, for the guard and protection of His good white subjects, that have not joined with these bad unnatural Subjects...when they are punished it will all be peace.”<sup>42</sup> As a result of this council, Kaligie and The Pumpkin King, both exalted head men of the Creek nation, swore oaths of allegiance to Great Britain. They asked Thomas Brown to orchestrate a council between them and the Seminole chiefs to discuss gifting the land in question to the British as reward for their faithfulness to their Indian allies. The Pumpkin King added, however, that “it cannot be done unless all consent.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “Governor Tonyn to Lord Germain, September 15, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 65–67.

<sup>42</sup> “Address of Patrick Tonyn to Creek Leaders, December 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/556, pp 54–57.

<sup>43</sup> “Address of Creek Chiefs to Patrick Tonyn, December 7–8, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/556, pp .60–61.

By December 18, the East Florida emissaries had not only secured relations with the Creeks, but also authorized the merchant William Panton to meet with Seminole chiefs to determine the best locations for storehouses. Panton was then invited to St. Augustine to organize the first shipments of supplies to these locations. With Seminole and Creek relations smoothed, Governor Tonyn turned his full attention to the men who nearly brought Great Britain to war with both Indian nations.

William Drayton's connections to rebellious factions in South Carolina became strikingly evident as he was investigated more thoroughly. His nephew, William Henry Drayton, was an ardent leader of Revolutionary sentiment in South Carolina, who, as Tonyn commented, "stiles himself, 'A member of the [rebel] Congress, the general Committee, the Council of Safety, the secret Committee, and the Committee of Intelligence, which last acts as Secretary of State [of South Carolina].'"<sup>44</sup> In the meantime, Tonyn also learned that while in a fit of rage Chief Justice Drayton told Captain Frederick George Mulcaster, Surveyor General of East Florida and the illegitimate half-brother of King George III, that "not one of the King's Governors did not deserve hanging...that from the machiavellian Administration of H[aldimand] in the North down to the blundering tyranny of T[onyn] in the South."<sup>45</sup>

In a corresponding event, rebels in Charleston intercepted a royal mail packet in June 1775. After reading Governor Tonyn's official communications from London, William Henry Drayton forwarded the letters to his uncle in St. Augustine, along with a personal letter of explanation dated July 4<sup>th</sup>. When Chief Justice Drayton presented the packet of letters to Governor Tonyn on July 21<sup>st</sup>, he also read aloud a portion of his uncle's message for the purpose of assuring the

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<sup>44</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, July 21, 1775," PRO, CO 5/555, p 50-57; see also "William Henry Drayton to the Honorable William Drayton, July 4, 1775," PRO, CO 5/555, p. 255.

<sup>45</sup> Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 86.

governor that there was nothing in the letter beyond family correspondence. After insisting upon seeing the entire letter, Tonyn discovered a tone rife with rebellious rhetoric, which included, “Georgia shall not be a place of Refuge for any Person whose Public conduct has rendered them obnoxious to the censure of any part of the united Continent.” Though written exactly one year prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the South Carolinian Revolutionary leader boasted that “Peace, Peace, is now, not even an Idea. A Civil War, in my opinion, is absolutely unavoidable—We already have an Army and a Treasury with a million of Money. In short a new Government is in effect erected.”<sup>46</sup> Over three pages of such language filled this document, yet Chief Justice Drayton, a magistrate of his king’s court, concealed them from the appropriate colonial authority, claiming all the while he had not acted improperly.

Jonathan Bryan made a very suspicious political bedfellow for men such as Drayton and Turnbull—men who insisted on being revered as loyal subjects of the Crown. In 1776 Bryan led the American attack on Tybee Island, Georgia, one of the preliminary battles of the first invasion attempt of East Florida conducted by the Continental Army.<sup>47</sup> Later, on March 17, 1777, George Washington wrote a personal letter to Jonathan Bryan saying, “I have wrote to General Howe who Commands in Georgia, to consult with you and the President of South Carolina, the Propriety of making [a second] Attempt on St. Augustine...[t]he good consequences that will certainly result from such an Expedition, if attended with success, are too obvious to escape your notice.”<sup>48</sup> Washington’s confirmation of an individual’s patriotic dependability is hailed as heroic in the United States. Nor can Washington’s promise of “good consequences” for Bryan if

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<sup>46</sup> “William Henry Drayton to the Honorable William Drayton, July 4, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/555, pp. 255–57.

<sup>47</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to David Taitt, April 20, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/556, p. 161.

<sup>48</sup> The George Washington Papers, “George Washington to Jonathan Bryan, Morris Town in Jersey, March 17, 1777.” [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gw070293) (gw070293)

the mission is successfully completed go unnoticed. However, putting this letter in perspective with Great Britain's view of Atlantic world politics, Washington simply corroborated the initial distrust of Bryan by all British authorities involved in the case—except, of course, Chief Justice Drayton and Dr. Turnbull.

Andrew Turnbull's antagonistic relationship with Governor Tonyn was only beginning. The doctor was not the primary landholder at New Smyrna, a large settlement on the Atlantic coast seventy miles south of St. Augustine, though he carried himself throughout the colony as such. The financial connections in London that fed Turnbull's arrogance in East Florida were tied to the peculiar system of absentee land ownership of the era. Turnbull was originally considered a partner in the venture, based upon his pledge to be the on-site overlord of the plantation in replacement of a financial commitment. But Turnbull's capacity for running a plantation—an endeavor he proved hopelessly incapable of handling—floundered from the beginning. Somewhat generously, historian Jane Landers has described Turnbull's incompetence as an enterprise "consumed by bad planning and rebellion."<sup>49</sup> But the truth of the matter is much more egregious than simply bad business and ungrateful indentured servants.

The business plan for New Smyrna called for Turnbull to travel to the Mediterranean to recruit families for a five to seven-year indenture.<sup>50</sup> He was to bring at least 440 people—no more than 600—to New Smyrna each year, for three years. Inexplicably, however, Turnbull recruited 1,403 individuals on this first visit and sent them all to East Florida. Known as the Minorcans, because that was the home of the majority of these people, they arrived to find that it was "doubtful that adequate preparations were made for the expected 500 people, certainly not

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<sup>49</sup> Jane Landers, ed., *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 4.

<sup>50</sup> The Minorcans were promised half of the profits from cash crops and fifty acres per adult, five acres per child, after fulfilling their indenture. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 2:325.



for the 1255” who survived the trip.<sup>51</sup> Not only did this create a provisional nightmare for those having arrived in the mosquito infested swamps of present-day Ponce Inlet between Daytona Beach and New Smyrna Beach, but “necessitated a huge outlay of funds.... The English partners were dismayed as the bills mounted, yet they felt compelled to continue to support the plantation or else suffer the loss of monies already sunk in the endeavor.”<sup>52</sup> Chastisement and a decrease in Turnbull’s interest in the experimental community resulted as the doctor’s reputation in London suffered greatly. With this socially embarrassing demotion, now relegated to the role of just an agent for his financial backers in London and wholly subordinate to their decisions, Turnbull’s only real influence that he truly possessed lay in his promises to reap large profits and incur as few losses as possible. As the result of patrons’ limited options to do much other than back their chosen representatives, men in Turnbull’s position in the colonies still possessed a great deal of clout, by proxy, due to the precarious position they held over their financiers fortunes. This was a formula for certain disaster, as Turnbull not only had no clue as to how to run a plantation, but his self-proclaimed scientific expertise in agricultural matters was quickly exposed as a fraud as well.

Turnbull’s assertion that people of the Mediterranean region would fare better in Florida’s climate proved unsound as “[b]y the end of 1769, about half of the colonists...were dead, with multiple deaths often occurring in one day. As the death rate rose, the birth rate correspondingly fell, with only five babies born and living long enough to be baptized in 1769.” But “seasoning” was not the only hazard to the health of New Smyrna’s Minorcans. Circumstances were so foul on the plantation that a rebellion broke out only one year into the effort. Harsh labor and brutal

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<sup>51</sup> Patricia C. Griffin, “Blue Gold: Andrew Turnbull’s New Smyrna Plantation,” in Landers, *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, 43; see also Raab, *Spain, Britain and the American Revolution in East Florida*, 51–52.

<sup>52</sup> Griffin, “Blue Gold,” in Landers, *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, 43.

punishments were daily strains while “scurvy, starvation, bad water, ‘dropsy,’ fevers, pleurisy, gangrene, and particularly, malaria” wreaked havoc on the workers. An indigo factory in itself offers working conditions so inundated with noxious and poisonous fumes that inexplicable illnesses infected the population for which they had no known cures or treatments. Turnbull also failed to supply the workers with farm tools familiar to their cultural background, grossly diminishing the efficiency, and thus requiring longer work days to fulfill daily quotas. One blacksmith who requested to be released from his indenture at the fulfillment of his seven years of servitude was tortured and jailed, and his wife—who was nursing their six month old child—was sent back into the fields. The blacksmith signed a four-year extension to his indenture in order to protect his family from further abuse.<sup>53</sup>

Turnbull’s delusions of grandeur involving the money of others knew no bounds. To combat a drought, the doctor requested, and received, permission to construct an irrigation system throughout the plantation. But Turnbull’s completed project was “so extensive that a good part of the elaborate network is still visible.” His investors in London only saw the elaborate costs for this project. “In terms of cost/benefit, the installation of this elaborate irrigation system probably was not worth the amount of labor effort expended, compared with increased profits for the owners.” Even with Turnbull’s sophisticated irrigation system the indigo exports from New Smyrna fell from 10,262 pounds in 1773 to 1,633 pounds in 1774—a year when the rest of the colony’s fortunes improved virtually overnight.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> This was not an isolated incident, as will be demonstrated later. “Letter from Governor Tonym to Lord Germain, August 8, 1777,” and “Letter from Colonel Henry Yonge to Governor Tonym, August 8, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 420–22; see also Raab, *Spain, Britain and the American Revolution in East Florida*, 54. For all quotes in this paragraph see Griffin, “Blue Gold,” in Landers, *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, 45; also see 52–53 for events concerning the blacksmith.

<sup>54</sup> For all quotes in this paragraph see Griffin, “Blue Gold,” in Landers, *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, 58–60.

Dr. Turnbull's disdain for the new governor was clear after Drayton's censure by a grand jury on December 20, 1775, concerning his refusal to issue a warrant for Jonathan Bryan's arrest.<sup>55</sup> The grand jury reconvened on February 13, 1776, as the governor brought official charges of treason against Drayton and suspended him from office. This allowed the Chief Justice the opportunity to defend his honor and refute the allegations. Two weeks later, a clandestine meeting took place on February 27<sup>th</sup> at Wood's Tavern in St. Augustine—a locale which catered to men of all stations of life in the small provincial capital. According to Turnbull's later testimony, it was an impromptu gathering of citizens who were concerned about what they considered the despotic leadership of their governor.

One might presume it was no small coincidence that Dr. Turnbull just happened to be in St. Augustine, seventy miles from his home in New Smyrna, on the night of this surreptitious assembly at Wood's Tavern. Turnbull insisted that the crowd prevailed upon him to officially conduct the meeting so that their protests might be brought before King George III. When the people in attendance demanded to know the result of Drayton's trial, Turnbull, who was a member of the grand jury, produced a written declaration of Drayton's testimony which was not yet officially cleared for public access. Turnbull not only revealed the contents of the document, but when asked for his opinion as to whether Drayton sufficiently argued his case, Turnbull replied, "I believe he has."<sup>56</sup> Such a proclamation by one whose status was so much greater than the average patron of Wood's Tavern had a profound impact on the crowd to act out against Governor Tonyn. The result was a written declaration of Tonyn's alleged mismanagement of the government and despotic attitude toward the inhabitants—signed by all seventy-four men who

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<sup>55</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, December 20, 1775," PRO, CO 5/556, pp. 21–24.

<sup>56</sup> "The Turnbull Letters," February 17, 1777, 2:168–77, PRO, CO 5/546, pp. 77–85.

were present that night—to be delivered personally to the king by Dr. Turnbull.<sup>57</sup> On February 28<sup>th</sup> Turnbull called on Tonyn, seeking an authorized passage to leave the colony (a customary requirement at this time in all British colonies). Turnbull was bold enough to inform the governor of his intentions as he presented him with the document signed at Wood’s Tavern the night before. Tonyn was amused at first that a private citizen thought so highly of himself that he could break all protocol by subverting the proper procedures for delivering such a request before the Crown. But when Tonyn asked to see the document and realized that it was a merely a copy which did not include the signatures of the complainants he was outraged at the audacity of the insult and summarily dismissed Turnbull by turning his back—a significant gesture of disrespect in this era.<sup>58</sup>

Less than one week later, on March 4, 1776, Governor Tonyn, with battles already in progress with Penman and Drayton, brought charges of sedition against Dr. Turnbull and sought his suspension from colonial office.<sup>59</sup> Through the years these charges have caused some to label Tonyn as paranoid of any gathering of more than a few people. But again, one must remember that such tavern meetings in Boston produced the Sons of Liberty movement that engulfed the colonies, spreading wildfires of sedition and rebellion. It is plausible that Tonyn, with his European mentality toward the groundswell of independence coursing through the American colonies since the Stamp Act in 1765, was greatly alarmed by the news of such a meeting in St. Augustine at a time of armed rebellion in thirteen of the North American colonies. What choice would any competent administrator have but to presume that the revolt was making its way into East Florida, via Andrew Turnbull and his colleagues? Prior to all of this activity, Tonyn wrote

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<sup>57</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:34; see also “The Turnbull Letters,” 1:127–30.

<sup>58</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, March 22, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/556, pp. 25–28.

<sup>59</sup> “The Turnbull Letters,” 1:126.

to Lord Dartmouth on November 1, 1775, stating that “I am perfectly informed that Doctor Turnbull, Mr. Penman, with a few more of the Chief Justice’s Creatures, are intriguing and endeavouring to raise a Faction...[t]he Chief Justice and Clerk of the Crown [Turnbull] compose the Juries of such men, as always to have a Majority.”<sup>60</sup> The meeting at Wood’s Tavern simply confirmed in the governor’s mind what he already believed to be true: Dr. Turnbull was East Florida’s Samuel Adams, and the governor would have none of that taking place at Wood’s or any other tavern under his watch.<sup>61</sup>

An even more audacious turn of events was Turnbull’s course of defense for his actions. He plainly stated in a letter to the governor exactly what had taken place on the night of February 27<sup>th</sup>, admitted his role in the meeting, and proceeded to inform Tonyn that he had done nothing wrong. Turnbull went on to remind the governor of his connections in London, his importance in the colony due to the size of the project at New Smyrna, and cautioned that Tonyn should “let not the hasty Anger of a Moment counteract his Majesty’s most gracious Intention towards me, nor carry you out of the line of Government.”<sup>62</sup> In short, Dr. Turnbull threatened Tonyn’s position as governor, boasting that he not only had the ear of the King, but the clout to cause unpleasant men like Tonyn to be recalled to London. Turnbull’s ego was clearly out of control, but in this era of patronage and cronyism this did not mean that his financial supporters in London would not back him in order to protect their investments while saving face for selecting

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<sup>60</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, November 1, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/556, p. 39.

<sup>61</sup> As a royal governor, Tonyn was kept abreast of the events of the day by frequent correspondence from Whitehall. As there was no newspaper in the colony until the early 1780s, printed news of colonial events reached St. Augustine via the *South Carolina Gazette*. Given the volatility of that colony, these stories would be inclined to relate news of seditious activities from both views—depending on which army governed the colony at the time of print. Governor Tonyn accused William Drayton of using the *Gazette* to reveal important information to the American Patriots concerning East Florida. Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> “Dr. Andrew Turnbull to Patrick Tonyn, March 15, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/556 pp. 89–93; see also “The Turnbull Letters,” 1:128–30.

Turnbull as their agent in the colonies. However, the eighteenth century was also an era of manners and protocol, where effrontery resulted in duels to the death to defend one's honor.<sup>63</sup> Governor Tonym's response on March 18<sup>th</sup> was basically a verbal doubling of his fists, which let Turnbull know that he was not so easily intimidated.<sup>64</sup> "British officers [such as Tonym] who fought in Germany [during the Seven Year's War] felt set apart from those who had not, felt superior, in fact, to all others."<sup>65</sup> This could have as much to do with Tonym's determination to thwart these men at every step as his military mind-set for king and country. Tonym, as governor and a large landholder in the colony, was Turnbull's social superior in every way and it was just a matter of time before he would exact his pound of flesh.

On March 22, 1776, Tonym officially accused Dr. Turnbull of forming a faction to hinder the government in time of war, but by March 30<sup>th</sup> both Turnbull and Drayton bribed a ship's captain and fled to London without official passes.<sup>66</sup> A multitude of documents in the collection of Joseph Byrne Lockey elucidate Tonym's perspective on the growing strife in St. Augustine—especially considering what was taking place at this time in the other colonies. These documents demonstrate Tonym's fanatical determination to suppress what he considered flagrant disloyalty

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<sup>63</sup> A classic example of this is found in the letter of one Joseph Purcell upon being accused of perjury by Dr. Turnbull, referring to the charge as a "cruel attempt made to destroy the character of one who has but, that precious Jewel to recommend him through life." "Joseph Purcell to Patrick Tonym, May 4, 1778," PRO, CO 5/558, p. 495; see also "The Turnbull Letters," 2:256.

<sup>64</sup> "Patrick Tonym to Dr. Andrew Turnbull, March 18, 1776," PRO, CO 5/556, pp. 97–100; "The Turnbull Letters," 1:132–35.

<sup>65</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 559.

<sup>66</sup> "The Turnbull Letters," 1:143. This is a much more flagrant act of misconduct than it appears. This was an era when only men of means were making such journeys—men who typically held prestigious positions within the colonial governments, such as Drayton and Turnbull. With communications across the Atlantic being so slow, one could only take such a voyage if the colonial governor was aware of his absence and able to take the appropriate measures to compensate for his absence. The presence of such men in the colony was considered important enough that often replacements were named upon their departure.

and challenges to his authority as a royal governor. It should be noted that Dr. Turnbull did indeed bring charges against Governor Tonyn before Parliament, putting Lord Germain in the politically uncomfortable position of arbiter.<sup>67</sup> Germain's next four correspondences with Tonyn on this subject were rife with castigations and rebuke.<sup>68</sup> For Lord Germain this was typical of his relations with his colonial governors and magistrates. At one point "Germain... censured the conduct of [all] the governors in the West Indies [because he] was displeased with Governor Burt's tampering with the patronage right of patent officers."<sup>69</sup> Thus, Tonyn's battles with Germain over his dealings with Drayton and Turnbull were not unusual during Germain's tenure, but would only have the intended effect on a man of weaker disposition than Germain himself. Tonyn was not such a man, but considering that the governor was obstructing the business endeavors of men like Lord George Grenville and Sir Richard Templeton, Tonyn was nonetheless on extremely thin ice. This in turn placed Lord Germain on equally precarious footing, which made him a politically dangerous man indeed.

Turnbull returned to St. Augustine in September 1777, only to find that the Minorcan and Greek indentured servants of New Smyrna brought charges of cruelty and testified of horrific conditions at the plantation. Nineteen affidavits bore the testimony of pregnant women being sexually accosted, brutal whippings, imprisonment and starvation for the slightest offenses—even cold-blooded murder.<sup>70</sup> Tonyn, in bold defiance of multiple, explicit orders from Lord Germain to appease Dr. Turnbull upon his return, used this opportunity to dissolve the plantation

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<sup>67</sup> "Dr. Andrew Turnbull before the British Parliament, February 17, 1777," PRO, CO 5/546, pp. 77–85.

<sup>68</sup> "The Turnbull Letters," 1:151–52, 154, 164, 176–77.

<sup>69</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 191.

<sup>70</sup> "Letter from Colonel Henry Yonge to Governor Tonyn, August 8, 1777," and "Letter from Governor Tonyn to Lord Germain, August 8, 1777," PRO, CO 5/557, pp. 420–22.

at New Smyrna, exposing the scandal to all of London. Though Turnbull returned with orders from Germain to resume his office as Secretary of the Colony, Tonyn also took advantage of the aforementioned scandal to defy these orders and suspend Turnbull once again, on January 30, 1778.

The financial crisis now inflicted upon New Smyrna forced Turnbull's supporters in London to turn their backs on the doctor and sue him in court for their losses.<sup>71</sup> It was a move indicative of Governor Tonyn's fixated tenacity to prosecute—even persecute—any who would defy him in his charge to direct the colony as he saw fit. The end result of the governor's actions was not only to ruin Turnbull financially but to expose the fragility of the doctor's relationships among the aristocracy, the consequence of which was numerous law suits filed by well-placed nobles, including the widow of former Prime Minister Lord George Grenville. Though Grenville was now dead his family had no greater affections for colonial matters than did the former prime minister. This was, after all, the same man responsible for “the attempt to enforce the collection of customs dues by strengthening the system of vice-admiralty courts, originally established in 1697; the 1764 Currency Act, curtailing the emission of independent currencies by the colonies; the American Duties (Sugar) Act; and the notorious Stamp Act of March 1765.”<sup>72</sup> Colonies and colonial agents served but one purpose in the minds of the Grenvilles, and that was to make them money. To lose money on an investment was an acceptable risk; social embarrassment was unforgivable.

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<sup>71</sup> Turnbull's superiors had invested approximately £40,000—an amount estimated in excess of \$6 million dollars in 2001 by Daniel L. Schafer.

<sup>72</sup> J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 305. To further demonstrate Lord Grenville's attitude toward the colonies, in a heated debate in Parliament with Lord Pitt over the topic of colonial unrest, Grenville asked the question “When were the colonies emancipated?” Pitt's response was, “I desire to know when they were made slaves?” Robert Middlekauff describes this brief confrontation as “the central issue of liberty within constitutional order.” Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 113.



Turnbull was forced to await trial in the St. Augustine jail where he stayed for nearly two years, until March 10, 1780. The doctor rightfully complained of the structure of his trial as Tonyn established himself as the judge, chief prosecutor, and primary witness for the prosecution. Tonyn had no intention of seeing Turnbull go free.<sup>73</sup> However, a sudden turn of events must have taken place for on that very same day—March 10, 1780—Josiah Smith records in his diary that Dr. Turnbull and family, William Drayton, and Spencer Mann and family left for Charleston on the Sloop *Swift*, captained by James Wallace, loaded with personal property and slaves.<sup>74</sup> Two years later when the British evacuation of Charleston was completed, Dr. Turnbull and James Penman were unable to remove themselves to St. Augustine with the other British Loyalists and remained under American sovereignty until their deaths. Much to their honor and defense of their station as loyal British subjects, “after the evacuation of Charleston, Dr. Turnbull and Mr. James Penman were required to become [American] Citizens, which they refus[ed] to do,” yet they were allowed to remain in Charleston.<sup>75</sup>

While these men were guilty as charged for being arrogant and unscrupulous businessmen, it cannot be proven beyond doubt that they were ever traitors to their king. But there is an interesting aside in this drama that continues to nag the inquiring mind. On July 1, 1830, Robert J. Turnbull, son of Dr. Andrew Turnbull, was speaking at a “Celebration of State Rights” banquet in Charleston. Turnbull was the current vice-president of South Carolina and addressing the Nullification Crisis taking place at that time. Turnbull’s critics referred to him as a foreigner because he was born in British East Florida. To those comments Turnbull had this to say: “My

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<sup>73</sup> “Andrew Turnbull to Lord Shelburne, May 10, 1780” (from his cell), *The Turnbull Letters*, 2:272–76; 297–98.

<sup>74</sup> Josiah Smith, Mabel L. Webber, ed., “Josiah Smith’s Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.).” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1932), 115.

<sup>75</sup> “Andrew Turnbull to Lord Shelburne, July 3–December 6, 1782” (three letters), *The Turnbull Letters*, 2:331–39.

father, who was amongst the first colonists of East Florida, after its cession to Great Britain, removed with his family from that Province...into Charleston, during the Revolution. He was friendly to the American cause, and his removal was at the instance of the most distinguished patriots of this city, with whom he lived in a close and lasting friendship.”<sup>76</sup> This does not prove anything more than the fact that Robert J. Turnbull was a politician under fire and capable of “spinning” a negative comment into a politically positive circumstance. But it does cast a shadow of doubt upon Dr. Turnbull’s fierce claims of loyalty to the British Crown during his tenure in East Florida if he was indeed “friendly to the American cause.”<sup>77</sup>

Prior to all of this, Chief Justice Drayton had returned to St. Augustine in December 1776, also with orders from Lord Germain to resume his office in the colony. However, once able to fully resume the duties of his office, Drayton began releasing American prisoners-of-war on March 9, 1777—especially any who were personally imprisoned by the decree of Governor Tonyn—according to English laws of Habeas Corpus. He went as far as to arrest George Osborne, to whom Tonyn granted a letter of marque, for “100 damages for carrying off some hogs and a small bit of beef” from Little Tybee Island, Georgia—a rebel settlement.<sup>78</sup> This was Drayton’s obvious attempt to deny the governor the power to issue letters of marque in the wartime defense of the colony—one of the responsibilities historically bestowed upon all British colonial governors. Drayton also jailed a “Mr. Mackie,” the surgeon of the East Florida Rangers and former resident of South Carolina, for reporting Drayton as being “a friend to the cause of

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<sup>76</sup> *Proceedings of the State Rights Celebration at Charleston, S.C., July 1, 1830: Containing the Speeches of the Hon. Wm. Drayton & Hon. R.Y. Hayne, Who Were Invited Guests; Also of Langdon Cheves, James Hamilton, Jr., and Robert J. Turnbull, Esqrs. and the Remarks of His Honor the Intendant, H.L. Pinckney, to which is Added the Volunteer Toasts Given on this Occasion* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, No. 4 Broad-street, 1830), 39.

<sup>77</sup> It also demonstrates that in the 1830s a family’s Revolutionary affiliations and place of birth were significantly more important to one’s political career than a family’s past atrocities committed against helpless indentured servants.

<sup>78</sup> Mowat, “The Enigma of William Drayton,” 28.

America.”<sup>79</sup> Drayton then issued a warrant for Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown’s arrest on the same trumped-up charge as Mackie. Once this news reached London, Drayton’s defenses—and Parliament’s patience—were exhausted.<sup>80</sup> In May 1777 Governor Tonyn, now vindicated on both sides of the Atlantic, suspended Drayton from colonial office a final time. There is no evidence to show that Drayton was incarcerated, in spite of the severity of the charges against him. Turnbull’s arrest was due to indebtedness over the financial law suits that plagued him, not his questioned loyalty to the Crown. More than likely Drayton was paroled and allowed to carry on his business affairs at his plantation, upon his word that he would not leave the colony to avoid prosecution.

Chief Justice William Drayton was most likely the actual ringleader of factious activities in St. Augustine, be they seditious or not; Turnbull’s verbosity simply conferred upon Drayton the appearance of being the doctor’s toady. It was Drayton, not Turnbull, who first became associated with Jonathan Bryan, and Drayton who withheld valuable war-time information from Governor Tonyn in a letter written by Drayton’s nephew, a politically well-placed American rebel. As early as October 25, 1775, Governor Tonyn wrote Lord Germain to explain that he must rely upon the local Anglican minister, John Forbes, to take depositions—a task which would normally fall within Drayton’s job description—because “one cannot let go ones breath, in this place, that a report of it is not made to Rebel Committees of Carolina and Georgia.”<sup>81</sup> It would be easy to make the claim that this was simply evidence of Tonyn’s paranoia; however, Dr. Turnbull, in his accusations against the governor before Parliament claimed to know that

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<sup>79</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, May 8, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 105; see also “Lord Germain to Patrick Tonyn, July 2, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 103.

<sup>80</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, May 8, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 105; see also “Lord Germain to Patrick Tonyn, July 2, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, October 25, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/555, p. 81.

Tonyn was plotting against him: “I was informed of this intention by a man of Truth & Honour,” indicating that there was indeed an informer in Tonyn’s cabinet.<sup>82</sup> Either Turnbull was lying or Governor Tonyn’s suspicion of a mole in his midst was accurate. It should also be noted that in another letter to Lord Germain, Tonyn stated that the entire colony incorporated into the militia, with the exception of Drayton and the attorney general, Arthur Gordon—whom Tonyn referred to as “the image of wax of Drayton and his creatures.”<sup>83</sup>

There is further evidence that implicates William Drayton of rebel sympathies during the war. In the George Washington Papers one can find a letter forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief by General Nathaniel Greene, dated February 2, 1781, from Colonel William H. Drayton, concerning the “enemy’s” [British] capture of Wilmington, North Carolina.<sup>84</sup> There are only three William H. Draytons known to American history at this time: William Henry Drayton, rebel delegate from South Carolina who died in 1779; William Drayton, Jr., son of the former chief justice of East Florida who was only five years old in 1781; and the former chief justice himself, William H. Drayton, who left St. Augustine on the ship *Swift* for a rebel-held Charleston with Dr. Turnbull on March 10, 1780.<sup>85</sup> Since the siege of Charleston did not begin until March 29, 1780, one must ask why these two loyal ministers of the king—claiming only to be escaping Governor Tonyn’s wrath—would bypass a British-held Savannah for a city currently held by

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<sup>82</sup> Turnbull’s attitude on the social classes would not have allowed him to refer to a house servant or commoner as someone of “Truth and Honour.” “The Turnbull Letters,” 2:173; see also “Dr. Andrew Turnbull before the British Parliament, February 17, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/546, pp. 77–85.

<sup>83</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germaine, February 19, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/558, p. 167; see also Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:17.

<sup>84</sup> “Letter from William H. Drayton to Nathaniel Greene, February 2, 1781,” [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mgw3:temp/~ammem\\_FbGA::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mgw3:temp/~ammem_FbGA::)

<sup>85</sup> According to the diary of Josiah Smith, it is a seventy-two hour journey by ship from Charleston to St. Augustine. One can only presume that the trip might even be shorter when traveling south to north with the Gulf Stream. Smith, Josiah, Mabel L. Webber, ed. “Josiah Smith’s Diary, 1780–1781.” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, No.1 (January 1932), 8.

rebel troops. Turnbull and the rest of the cohort remained in Charleston once the British recovered the city, but Drayton turned up eleven months later in North Carolina as a rebel colonel while Charleston and the rest of South Carolina and Georgia were British protectorates.

That Drayton joined the rebel cause is no longer in doubt. And it is quite possible that the former chief justice, who claimed to be adamantly loyal to King George III right up to his departure from St. Augustine, was forgiven his past political associations and acquired a colonel's commission in the Continental army less than one year later. Was not Benedict Arnold placed immediately in command of British troops after leading American rebels into battle against those same redcoats? The real question for this study is: did William H. Drayton's American sympathies formulate before or after his arrival in Charleston? If we are meant to believe that he did not side with the rebels until after his escape from East Florida then we are left with too many questions that have no plausible explanations. The timing is all wrong. Let us look at the timetable for the invasion of Charleston in order to put this into proper perspective: Clinton's fleet arrived from New York at Tybee Island, Georgia, just downriver from Savannah on February 2, 1780; on February 9<sup>th</sup> the fleet sailed for Edisto Island, South Carolina; thus, by the time that the actual siege of Charleston commenced "[m]ore than six weeks had passed since Clinton's troops had stepped ashore."<sup>86</sup> News may have traveled slowly in 1780, but not so slow that word of the war's largest upcoming invasion would not have reached St. Augustine—the nerve center for southern British operations. The arrival of the British fleet with a combined army of over 10,000 redcoats was great news to southern Loyalists who had endured years of butchery at the hands of their foes, and word of this great news would have spread like wildfire.

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<sup>86</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 78.

With this in mind, if Drayton and Turnbull were loyal to King George III, then why would the *Swift* sail past a British-secured Savannah, past an invading army with ships at anchor—arriving literally just days ahead of the British juggernaut—to reach a city that was not only the target of this massive incursion, but occupied by their supposed sworn enemies? One might speculate, and reasonably so, that they were in fact trying to warn the city of the impending invasion. Did not Robert Turnbull in his speech of 1830 say that his father “was friendly to the American cause, and his removal was at the instance of the most distinguished patriots of this city”?<sup>87</sup> If leading citizens of Charleston were responsible for Turnbull and Drayton’s escape, their timing was more than just coincidental. Considering that Turnbull had been imprisoned in St. Augustine since 1778, no one in Charleston seemed to have been overly concerned about the doctor’s circumstances until the British army seized Savannah and threatened their city. I would argue that the people of Charleston were seeking information concerning the destiny of their city from someone who lived behind enemy lines and might have some kind of information, no matter how small.

One must also ask, why Turnbull and Drayton? There were plenty of political prisoners-of-war on parole in Savannah and St. Augustine who were not locked up in a stone fortress, such as Dr. Turnbull. Perhaps the plight of these two was well known in southern circles; a charge of insurrection and possible treason against high-placed colonial officials during a revolution is no small matter. Certainly William Henry Drayton, a chief resident of Charleston before his death, was aware of his uncle’s circumstances and understood better than anyone that he would make a reliable source of military information, especially now that his future in St. Augustine was suspect. It is possible that Chief Justice Drayton was not recruited as a rebel spy by his nephew’s

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<sup>87</sup> *Proceedings of the State Rights Celebration at Charleston, S.C., July 1, 1830*, p. 39.

colleagues until this time, and for these reasons, but then that still leaves the question of his releasing hundreds of rebel prisoners-of-war just weeks prior to a large scale invasion of East Florida. To read the transcripts of Drayton's many defenses of his character—both in front of courtroom juries and the East Florida Grand Council—one is left little doubt of the intelligence of the man and his abilities to think clearly under pressure. It therefore makes it difficult to believe that he would so carelessly commit treasonable offenses by releasing these prisoners simply for the sole purpose of aggravating Governor Tonyn. A larger cause, such as fifth column machinations, is a more plausible explanation.

Lastly, the question of whether Drayton joined the rebel cause before or after he arrived in Charleston must return to the issue of timing. From April 1780 to February 1781, when Drayton is found corresponding with Nathaniel Greene, Cornwallis was plowing through the South with little difficulty and Charleston was safely in the bosom of King George III. Why would Drayton abandon his colleagues in Charleston, thereby refuting his loyalty to the empire that he claimed to hold so dear, when the future of the rebel cause in the South was at its nadir if he were not already in league with the rebels? Some optimists might claim that Drayton, ever a loyal subject of the king as he claimed, sailed into Charleston Harbor as a conquering warrior with the might of the empire at his back. But, seriously, who would have placed themselves in such a suicidal position when the invasion could be safely observed at a distance, such as Savannah? Perhaps what history is hiding from us is that William H. Drayton and his entourage were gallant rebel heroes, who risked their lives against all odds to bring word of the invasion to the people of Charleston. This is one of those matters upon which we may only speculate, but not without seriously considering all of the questions, from all of the angles.

Unlike Drayton's East Florida colleagues, Dr. Turnbull and James Penman, who only stayed in Charleston after American occupation in 1782 due to their inability to return to St. Augustine, there is no record of Drayton preferring to reside anywhere else but Charleston.<sup>88</sup> It is well established that in 1790 this same William H. Drayton became the first Federal Judge elected to represent South Carolina, and his son, William Drayton, Jr., became a U.S. Congressman from South Carolina.<sup>89</sup> Even though Turnbull's son rose to political prominence as South Carolina's vice-president (lieutenant governor), one cannot forget that Turnbull and Penman refused to swear allegiance to the United States under threat of being sent back to St. Augustine and Governor Tonn's wrath.

In the George Washington Papers one may find two separate letters, written in 1789, concerning Drayton's "nomination to the Judiciary," and ultimately of his appointment as the first district judge for the state of South Carolina in letters to Pierce Butler of New York and Edward Rutledge of South Carolina.<sup>90</sup> In a third letter, Washington sends a confirmation of the appointment to Drayton where he uses the following phrase: "The love which you bear our country will, I am persuaded lead you to do everything to promote its welfare."<sup>91</sup> While it was not unheard of for such forgiveness to be shown a former Tory, it must be remembered that Drayton was no ordinary former Tory—he was more recently a colonel in the American army.

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<sup>88</sup> Schafer, Florida History Online, [http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Drayton\\_Island.htm](http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Drayton_Island.htm)

<sup>89</sup> Congressional Biographies, William Drayton, Jr., <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000490>

<sup>90</sup> "Letter from George Washington to Pierce Butler of New York, August 10, 1789," [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mgw6:temp/~ammem\\_FbGA::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mgw6:temp/~ammem_FbGA::); "Letter from George Washington to Edward Rutledge, November 23, 1789," <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/> (gw300424))

<sup>91</sup> "Letter from George Washington to William H. Drayton, November 18, 1789," <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/> (gw300415)



It is highly probable that Drayton, a resident and jurist in South Carolina before moving to East Florida, already held such a commission in the South Carolina militia and was readily accepted back into the fold. But since there is no historical evidence as of yet to verify such a position prior to his leaving for East Florida we are left to presume that he was most likely influenced later by his brash, rebellious nephew as Governor Tonyn claimed. When one considers the information of Drayton's military service after fleeing East Florida and combines it with his habeas-corpus-prisoner-release program just before an American invasion of East Florida, it may well be concluded that William H. Drayton was at the very least a man of fortuitous—if not duplicitous—sympathies during the American Revolution.

Two letters written by Lord Germain on April 2 and April 14, 1776, vindicate Governor Tonyn for his persecution of the Drayton/Turnbull cabal. In the first letter Germain profusely apologized to Tonyn for his harsh stance in previous correspondence concerning the hostilities between the two parties involved. Germain admitted his own assumption that the strife was “more the colour of personal dislike than public delinquency.” However, he then stated that if “there should appear sufficient ground to suspect [Drayton] of disaffection to His Majesty, or want of attachment to the Constitution I shall not hesitate to submit my humble Opinion to the King that he is no longer fit to serve His Majesty as Chief Justice of East Florida.”<sup>92</sup> That “sufficient ground to suspect him” came to fruition once the news of Drayton's freeing rebel prisoners-of-war reached London.

The second letter gave continued warnings to Governor Tonyn of Dr. Turnbull's supporters in England and explained why he pushed the governor so intensely to settle the dispute with Turnbull quietly. Germain feared that Parliament would recall Tonyn to London to

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<sup>92</sup> “Lord Germain to Patrick Tonyn, April 2, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 112.

defend himself, forcing the Secretary of State to send out a replacement—a circumstance which usually resulted in a permanent change.<sup>93</sup> Germain explained that he would not have “the same Reliance as I have upon [Tonyn]. To avoid the Necessity of so disagreeable a Step, I thought it best to endeavour to get rid of the whole Matter.”<sup>94</sup> Unquestionably, Lord Germain had his plate full with the war effort and expected his governors to: 1) follow his instructions without question; and, 2) fear for the loss of their appointments. “The paramount goal of the imperial government was to win the war, even at the cost of political concessions. The governors were out of step with their superiors, who wanted the governors...to avoid unnecessary entanglements.”<sup>95</sup> This was where Tonyn differed from other governors: he was willing to lose his appointment rather than see what he believed to be treason go unpunished simply so that Lord Germain might sleep better at night.

The story of Chief Justice Drayton and Dr. Turnbull reminds us of the significant differences between East Florida’s Revolutionary history and that of the thirteen colonies in rebellion. The Sons of Liberty were formed in the 1760s out of disgust for the lack of political respect being given an entire continent of colonists. For over a decade this disgust grew, generating public outbursts, riots, political actions, and the subversion of royal administrators in the course of their duties. Assemblies were held and official protests arranged by the more aristocratic protesters, while the common folk marched in the streets and threatened the lives of royal officials as they destroyed personal and public property.

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<sup>93</sup> Lord Germain’s concerns were not unprecedented. In 1766 Governor James Murray of Quebec was recalled to London as the result of disturbances in Montreal and general complaints pertaining to his administration. Murray never returned to Quebec, though all charges against him were dismissed. Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 121

<sup>94</sup> “Lord Germain to Patrick Tonyn, April 14, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, pp. 116–17.

<sup>95</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 191.

This was not the case in St. Augustine. Here there was no history of protest over Stamp Tax issues; no riots or demonstrations of any kind. In East Florida the Sons of Liberty movement appeared to have its origins in the parlors of wealthy planters in Charleston over Indian land schemes and the egos of petty politicians who were passed over for gubernatorial appointment. Like the rest of Florida's Anglo history, the Sons of Liberty movement in East Florida was years behind the rest of the British Americas. While Drayton and Turnbull were attempting to subvert Governor Tonyn's local authority for personal gain the rest of the empire was at war over issues of personal sovereignty for all concerned. The Sons of Liberty movement in East Florida lacked the rabid angst demonstrated in Boston by the likes of Samuel Adams or Ebenezer McIntosh. Seventy-four men signing a petition under the cover of darkness in a clandestine tavern meeting is laughable compared to the thousands who turned out elsewhere to tear down buildings and tar tax collectors. During the Drayton/Turnbull ordeal Governor Tonyn faced down the most challenging political attacks of his career and crushed his opposition with relentless, if not unscrupulous, determination. It was this same furor toward rebellion that fueled East Florida's resolve during the three invasion attempts by rebel armies and the constant threat of a large scale Spanish offensive.

In the British mindset, the American Revolution was about honor and loyalty, and Tonyn's actions proved that he believed the rebels possessed neither. What man in his position would? However, in eighteenth-century North America it was the duty of a colonial governor to take whatever measures necessary for the safe-keeping of his charge and to defend the honor of king and country. This was not the first case of individual rights being sacrificed for the sake of a nation's war effort on this continent, nor would it be the last. But Governor Tonyn's attacks on Turnbull bordered on paranoia. Drayton produced the only real threat to Loyalism in East Florida

by releasing American prisoners-of-war prior to the invasion of 1777. What was truly at stake in his battle with Dr. Turnbull was Tonyn's political appointment as the governor of the colony, and this he avoided losing only by his ruthless pursuit of his political enemies under the guise of treason. In fact, it was Turnbull's mismanagement of the settlement at New Smyrna that landed him in prison in 1778, not a cloak-and-dagger attempt to overthrow the government.

But this is exactly why East Florida was so critical to the British effort to quash the rebellion: there was no history in St. Augustine of legitimate grievance against the Crown. No public protests or riotous mobs; no political assemblies to stir up the masses. Geographically, East Florida was central to the British Americas and the fanatically loyal Patrick Tonyn proved that he could control any attempts of subversion with ruthless tenacity. Lord Germain may have inherited in Patrick Tonyn a governor who was nothing short of a political lunatic, but after the Turnbull/Drayton affair Germain could rest easy in that Tonyn was his political lunatic and there was nothing the governor would not do to secure the status of East Florida as dogmatically loyal to king and country. It was this affirmation of bedrock Loyalism that allowed the ministers at Whitehall to entrust St. Augustine with the crucial role of military anchor for the British invasion of the American South.



Figure 4-1. Woods Tavern. This gift shop is located on the site of Wood's Tavern where Dr. Andrew Turnbull was accused of holding a Sons of Liberty meeting. Photograph courtesy of author.

## CHAPTER 5

### A WAR OF DEPENDENCE

Traditionally, the American Revolution is viewed as a New England war, fought principally by Yankee Minute Men and Massachusetts Sons of Liberty. Academically, historians fully understand that blood was shed by men and women—free and enslaved—from every walk of life, in every British colony in North America. But to this day Revolutionary national myth maintains that the war raged predominately in the northern colonies until Sir Henry Clinton sailed into Charleston Harbor on March 29, 1780, thereby moving all military activities into the southern theater from that point forward.<sup>1</sup> Even the Revolutionary War Timeline listed in the Introduction—a blending of three timelines from some of the nation’s most historically prestigious resources—upholds this traditional view that the South was of little concern to the British until the latter half of the war. But I argue that the South was always a concern of the Lords at Whitehall due to its agricultural economic value, both to the metropole and to the British West Indies.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is inconceivable that the British had no plans from the outset of the war to secure southern loyalties, either by strong-arm political maneuvers or by military force. That the southern colonies only became of interest to the ministry’s war strategy as a reserve plan to appease grumblings at home after the debacle at Saratoga is one of the Revolution’s most illogical folktales. I will seek to expose that myth by introducing documentation that verifies the existence of a “Southern Expedition”: a plan formulated in the summer of 1775 and initiated in March 1776, for the purpose of subduing the entire South.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, even the renowned military historian John S. Pancake makes the following claims: “From the summer of 1778 to the latter part of 1779 the war in America lapsed into a kind of limbo”; and “From a purely American view...not much happened in 1778 and 1779.” Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 4, 9.

<sup>2</sup> “Lord McCartney to Lord Germain, June 30, 1776, PRO, CO 101/20, f. 29, in O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 145. For further information on Whiggish sympathies in the British West Indies see page 289n, fn. 31; see also pages 143, 146, 148, 208, and 306n, fn. 64,

On October 19, 1770, as the rest of the American colonies dealt with the fallout from the Boston Massacre, East Florida governor James Grant stated, “We have nothing of the Spirit of Dissention which rages all over America.”<sup>3</sup> But once the turmoil of economic and political unrest evolved into bloodshed and revolution in the colonies to the north, the issues at hand in St. Augustine no longer concerned the rights of Englishmen to establish a colonial assembly, but rather on the rights of Englishmen to remain dependent upon an English king. Therefore, to choose British dependence was just as much a human right as choosing rebel independence, and East Floridians chose to fight for their British rights and British liberties.<sup>4</sup> But the battle for East Florida did not find its naissance on the banks of the St. Marys River or in the quagmire of Alligator Creek. East Florida’s war of dependence commenced at a meeting in Charleston in 1774, when Jonathan Bryan was introduced to Chief Justice William H. Drayton

As mentioned before, land in East and West Florida belonged to the Crown and could not be possessed unless duly authorized by the king. Absentee land owners left millions of acres in East Florida undeveloped prior to the American Revolution. As a result there was only a slight influx of American-born Georgians and Carolinians into the colony from 1763 to 1775. Those who did move down from other colonies, such as John Moultrie, represented some of the wealthiest planters in the region. With the advantage of perfect hindsight, Governor Tonyn took a great deal of pride, not to mention political gain, as he would later recall the Jonathan Bryan land scheme to Lord Germain’s attention. Tonyn believed that a significant number of rebels from Georgia and South Carolina would

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<sup>3</sup> Schafer, “St. Augustine’s British Years,” 169. This of course does not apply to the Canadian provinces. Military historian John S. Pancake reminds us that the French Canadians of Quebec did not follow the route of revolution because they were a separate ancestry from their American neighbors and felt endeared to their new British citizenship having recently received approval to maintain their Catholic traditions as a result of the Quebec Act. Pancake, *1777*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> J. Leitch Wright contends that “[w]hen East Florida had refused to revolt in 1775, it had followed precedents, because loyalty to the mother country was the colonial norm. It was the thirteen colonies who, by rebelling, had broken with tradition.” Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” 435.

have swarmed into East Florida if Bryan had succeeded in securing such a large tract of land. Tonym wrote, “The country, my Lord, would have been settled with the turbulent, seditious, and disaffected”; the governor went on to say that he would bet his life that East Florida would have become an American colony had Bryan and Drayton not been found out.<sup>5</sup> As boastful as that statement might sound, when one considers the evidence that Tonym believed he uncovered against these two men—including Drayton’s own statement concerning the many Georgians that Bryan had ready to move into East Florida—there is enough fact to substantiate the plausibility of the argument.

If this indeed was one of the prevailing motives behind the Bryan/Drayton/Turnbull land scheme—an Anglo/Indian war being the other—then it may well be concluded that southern rebel intentions for a seizure of East Florida were in place as early as the autumn of 1774. Jonathan Bryan already presumed to have secured the land; Chief Justice Drayton was brought in to the plot by his zealous rebel nephew, William Henry Drayton, to shore up legal support in high places on the East Florida Grand Council; Dr. Turnbull could supposedly call upon his aristocratic partners to keep Governor Tonym at arm’s length; all that remained was to fill the colony with staunch backcountry rebels from Georgia and South Carolina to demonstrate their distaste for royal authority when the proper time presented itself. Based on Bryan’s figures, the rebels of East Florida would then have outnumbered the white Loyalist population by a large percentage.<sup>6</sup> Why men like William Henry Drayton and Jonathan Bryan dwelt on land schemes in East Florida

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<sup>5</sup> “Patrick Tonym to Lord Germain, November 1, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/557, pp. 8–9.

<sup>6</sup> In 1772, acting Governor James Habersham of Georgia believed that as many as 3,000 “vagabonds and crackers, the latter an invidious term for half-savage Scots borderlanders” recently crossed the Proclamation Line into Cherokee territory. It is doubtful that this is a fair description of these people, but that is not the issue; rather this demonstrates the elitist attitude of royal authorities toward these immigrants and provides further insight to Governor Tonym’s suspicions of the land scheme aimed at his colony. Cashin, *William Bartram*, 51.



is not difficult to deduce: the vast amounts of unoccupied acreage made the colony suitable for an easy fortune to be made in speculative land investments. There was no guarantee in November 1774 that the colonies were headed to war with the metropole, but South Carolina and Georgia whites were hungry for land and East and West Florida were believed to be ripe for the taking.

However, should hostilities break out, stacking the deck with thousands of backcountry rebels beforehand could easily tip the scales for the conquest of the Gulf Coast and Atlantic passages to the Caribbean by either political takeover or military might. It is not inconceivable that as understaffed as the military was in this region that the fire-breathing William Henry Drayton's longing for revolution might find its spark in just such a situation. The younger Drayton was one of South Carolina's most astute businessmen, but he was also a vociferously outspoken proponent of rebellion in 1774. He no doubt fully understood the implications of this land scheme, as it clearly seemed destined to force Great Britain into a military conflict with either the Creek and Seminole confederations or southern rebel sympathizers. Either way, the former would pre-occupy British troops, thus enabling Revolutionary momentum to escalate unimpeded; the latter would fire the "shot heard 'round the world" from East Florida five months in advance of Lexington and Concord.

Such concepts of East and West Florida as the spark of revolution as early as 1774 are a far cry from the prevailing notions that these Gulf Coast colonies were too isolated and under-populated to be of significance to either side. Supposedly, the colonies could be ignored by the rebel military until after the war when independence would allow the luxury of time and concentration of forces to seize them for the new nation. But the problem with such hindsight analysis is that too little focus is placed on the eighteenth-century

perspective. There is no indication whatever in the primary documents to demonstrate that either colony was viewed as strategically insignificant. In fact, just the opposite is true.

In the George Washington Papers, located in the Library of Congress, there are over eighty references made by the Commander-in-Chief of the American army to St. Augustine and/or East Florida. Washington called for the capture of St. Augustine as early as December 18, 1775, after learning of a large cache of arms and munitions stored at the Castillo de San Marcos: “That the seizing and securing the barracks and castle of St. Augustine will greatly contribute to the safety of these colonies, therefore, it is earnestly recommended to the colonies of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia to undertake the reduction of St. Augustine.”<sup>7</sup> Washington had two motives for such an aggressive action: 1) the rebellion desperately needed such a build-up of war materiel; and, 2) Washington rightly suspected that such an accumulation of arms meant that the British war ministry was planning to launch a southern invasion from St. Augustine. Washington was so specific in the immediacy of this situation that South Carolina representative John Rutledge was sent by Congress to personally oversee the inventory of arms and report back to Philadelphia. One can imagine Rutledge’s consternation when he arrived in Charleston on February 13, 1776, with full expectations that the victory would have been won already, only to find that General Charles Lee had not yet begun the assault.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The George Washington Papers, “George Washington to Continental Congress, Cambridge, December 18, 1775.” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gw070293>

<sup>8</sup> “Martin Jollie to Patrick Tonyn, February 13, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/556, p. 81.

On each of the failed invasions into East Florida in 1776, 1777, and 1778, Washington personally promoted the need to remove such a strategic British stronghold from the young nation's southern borders. Even after the three disastrous offensives Washington had to be dissuaded by French General Comte de Rochambeau from launching another attempt later in 1778, and again in 1780. After the British began their assault of Georgia in 1778 and the siege of Charleston in 1780, Rochambeau felt there were defensive concerns more pertinent to the salvation of the South that must be dealt with first.<sup>9</sup> But Washington recognized that as long as St. Augustine remained under British control the presence of their military personnel would be a threat to the Georgia and Carolina backcountry militias and distract the American Southern Army away from critical northern conflicts. British military officials in St. Augustine, too, were well aware of the thorn East Florida represented to the efforts of the Continental army. In a letter to Lord Germain in 1779, Governor Tonyn applauded his colony's war effort as he asserted "that the depredations by the Loyal Inhabitants of this Province by Sea, and Land, have contributed to sicken the Rebels of their Revolt, and forced them to keep those Troops in the Southern Provinces for internal defense, which could otherwise have strengthened Washington's Army."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kathryn T. Abbey, "Florida as an Issue During the American Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1926), 184–85; see also the George Washington Papers, "George Washington to Robert Howe, Edward Rutledge, and Jonathan Bryan, Morris Town in Jersey, March 17, 1777;" "George Washington to Robert Howe, Head Quts., Camp at Morris Town, July 4, 1777;" George Washington to John Rutledge, Head Quarters, Morris Town, July 5, 1777;" "George Washington to Benjamin Lincoln, Head Quarters, Morris Town, April 15, 1780;" "George Washington to Jean B. Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, and Charles Louis d'Arsac, Chevalier de Ternay, New Windsor, December 15, 1780;" "George Washington to Nathaniel Greene, Head Quarters, Verplanks Point, September 23, 1782." [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw080298\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw080298)); [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw070292\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw070292)); [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw070293\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw070293)); [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw080305\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw080305)); [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw180288\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw180288)); [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw200526\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw200526)); [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/\(gw250217\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/(gw250217))

<sup>10</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, July 3, 1779," PRO, CO 5/559, pp. 443–56.

One factor that Washington did not recognize, nor could he have recognized without personal knowledge of the area or much improved reconnaissance, was that the terrain of East Florida and the defenses of St. Augustine made the provincial capital virtually impossible to conquer. In the town's two hundred years of existence an invading army never successfully subjugated St. Augustine. Surrounded by swamps, creeks, and rivers to the west and south, the harbor to the east, and the Castillo de San Marcos to defend the northern boundary and the harbor's inlet, St. Augustine was impenetrable. Typically, "colonists were not overly confident about their forts, which were often poorly constructed and inappropriately located."<sup>11</sup> Many were still made of wood and highly susceptible to fire and dry rot. But in St. Augustine the Castillo was quarried from local coquina pits, making the structure one of only three stone fortresses in North America at the outbreak of the Revolution. Construction on the Castillo began in 1672, with constant revisions and improvements continuing right up to the cession of the colony to Great Britain in 1763. Built solely for the purpose of securing the countryside and its people from invasion, the British knew only too well of the Castillo's strengths from previous eighteenth-century wars with Spain.<sup>12</sup> The other advantage for Governor Tonyn was that contemporary forts were typically "built with the labor of

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<sup>11</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 199.

<sup>12</sup> During the British colonial period the name was anglicanized to the Castle St. Mark, but the Spanish moniker has remained the local designation. As mentioned in the National Park Service tour of the fort today, one British officer in 1740 compared the resiliency of the Castillo's walls to cheese, as the coquina "will not splinter but will give way to cannon ball." The officer's journal is now kept in the Special Collections Library at the University of North Florida (St. Augustine Historical Society/National Park Service). Luis Rafael Arana and Albert Manucy, *The Building of Castillo de San Marcos* (Ashville, N.C.: Eastern National Park & Monument Association, 1977), 39, 48.

conscripted slaves, which represented an additional cost to the planters.”<sup>13</sup> The Castillo was already built; therefore, slave labor was available to enhance the perimeter defenses of St. Augustine.

In addition to the hazards on land, Matanzas Bay possessed a treacherous sand bar extending the width of the inlet into the harbor. No ship with over seven to ten feet of draft, depending on the tide, could enter therein.<sup>14</sup> Local pilots were necessary to escort even the smaller ships over the bar. War ships attempting to attack St. Augustine were forced by these circumstances to remain out in the Atlantic, unable to reach the Castillo with their cannon and extremely vulnerable to inclement weather.

Bringing an army into East Florida by land was a perilous endeavor, again due to the terrain. In a letter to General William Moultrie, Colonel Charles Cotesworth Pinckney described the toll marches into East Florida had on his troops: “One campaign to the southward is more fatiguing than five to the northward.”<sup>15</sup> The Okefenokee Swamp, which covers a significant portion of the Georgia/Florida border, funneled invading armies into a relatively narrow strip of land between the Atlantic coast and the swamp itself. This corridor was filled with a treacherous topography of quagmires, snakes, alligators, mosquitoes, and few paths or bridges. An army must navigate the St. Marys River, monitored by the recently built Fort Tonym, slip past a sentry outpost, and then cross the

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<sup>13</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 200.

<sup>14</sup> “Patrick Tonym to Lord Dartmouth, July, 1, 1774,” PRO, CO 5/554, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> “Letter from Col. Pinckney, Sunberry, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1778,” in William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution, so far as it related to the States of North and South Carolina, and Georgia* (Vol. 1 and 2; New York: Printed by David Longworth, for the Author, 1802; reprinted New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1968), 1:238.

St. Johns River. The terrain would channel the invaders once again past another outpost, around the eastern edge of John Bartram's "12 Mile Swamp," and Fort Mose, only to proceed directly at the Castillo.

Immediately upon his arrival in St. Augustine in 1774, Governor Tonyn began equipping the Castillo with additional guns, strengthening redoubts, fortifying palisades, and completing a perimeter of earth-works around the city. New barracks were erected on the southern end of town opposite the Castillo to provide a sense of omni-presence to the garrison should St. Augustine be attacked from multiple directions; however, the peninsula on which St. Augustine stood made invasion by land from any compass point but North virtually impossible. Additional defensive structures included small outposts on the St. Johns River to warn of raids from the west, and the large watchtower on Anastasia Island was converted to a lighthouse as a sentinel for southern seaborne attacks, as well as a measure to enhance East Florida's newly realized position of economic vigor in the region.<sup>16</sup> Twenty miles below St. Augustine lay the Spanish-built stone structure of Fort Matanzas, designed to halt any attempt by an invading army to approach St. Augustine from the Matanzas Inlet, which enters the town's harbor from the south.

But even though large warships could not intimidate the defenses of St. Augustine, a myriad of waterway networks throughout northern East Florida gave the British constant concern. The colony depended upon an inconsistent task force of shallow water vessels to provide a naval presence to "reconnoiter East Florida's riverine frontiers (the St. Johns and the St. Marys), and to communicate with

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<sup>16</sup> Manucy and Johnson, "Castle St. Mark," 8.

Loyalist elements in other colonies.”<sup>17</sup> Tonyn employed his Admiralty commission and issued letters of marque in 1776 to Captain John Mowbray of the *Rebecca* to patrol the St. Johns River, and pressed several other private ships into service.<sup>18</sup>

Governor Tonyn also organized and maintained a network of spies throughout Georgia and South Carolina. All of the espionage was coordinated by Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown—a man driven to abject hatred of all rebels after a tar and feathering incident at the hands of Savannah’s Sons of Liberty, on August 2, 1775, cost Brown the horrible injury of burning off three toes.<sup>19</sup> Records are not clear as to whether Brown lost his toes as the result of boiling tar collecting in his boots or when his boots were later pulled off and hot brands put to his feet. Brown was also beaten severely, received four scalping wounds to his head, and a fractured skull as the result of a well-placed rifle butt, “all in the name of Liberty.”<sup>20</sup> Though Brown was fortunate to survive, this brutal assault would burn in his memory for the rest of his life, spurring him on as he became the embodiment of British backcountry cruelty. Today, Banastre Tarleton is more famous in this role because of a single incident at the Battle of the Waxhaws on May 29, 1780, not to mention Mel Gibson’s movie, *The Patriot*.<sup>21</sup> But in reality, Thomas Brown was the name most feared by backcountry rebels.

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<sup>17</sup> Buker, Martin, “Governor Tonyn’s Brown-Water Navy,” 58–59.

<sup>18</sup> Buker, Martin, “Governor Tonyn’s Brown-Water Navy,” 61, 65–66.

<sup>19</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, November 23, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/557, pp. 20–21.

<sup>20</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 134. For more details see Cashin, *The King’s Ranger*, 26–29.

<sup>21</sup> At the Battle of the Waxhaws Tarleton’s dragoons chose slaughter over quarter when Colonel Alexander Buford’s troops attempted to surrender. Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 86–87; see also Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only*, 108, 270. In the movie *The Patriot*, the character of Colonel William Tavington is based on Tarleton.

When the Georgia Revolutionary legislature proposed in 1777 to starve East Florida into submission, Brown, with the aid of backcountry Loyalists still in Georgia, rustled entire herds of cattle and drove them into St. Augustine by way of an intricate network of paths and trailways twisting through the Okefenokee Swamp.<sup>22</sup> Martin Jollie, a Loyalist planter on the border, also supplied St. Augustine with cattle at every opportunity. Brown's detailed accounts of rebel plans for invasions, troop movements and strength, resources and munitions levels, and other intelligence reports proved invaluable to the life of East Florida.<sup>23</sup> Brown and his Rangers were frequently sent on lightning-strike raids into Georgia and the Carolinas. On one occasion the Rangers and their Creek allies captured Fort McIntosh in Georgia, though just for an evening as they needed a place to sleep, before burning it to the ground the following morning. The Rangers then rustled over 2,000 head of cattle as they headed home.<sup>24</sup>

But East Florida was more than just "a resistance center for men who had been driven from their homes."<sup>25</sup> Governor Tonyn "believed that bloody, irregular warfare along the Georgia-Florida border would 'distress...our deluded neighbors' and induce them 'to return to their allegiance,'" thus keeping East Florida's borders safe from invasion.<sup>26</sup> Tonyn fully understood the significance of St.

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<sup>22</sup> "[Brown's] was a foraging and intelligence-gathering organization as well as a fighting force." Gary D. Olson, "Thomas Brown, the East Florida Rangers, and the Defense of East Florida," in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, 19; see also Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, Vol. I, pp. 50–51.

<sup>23</sup> Olson, "Thomas Brown," in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 24

<sup>24</sup> Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years," 202.

<sup>25</sup> Carol Watterson Troxler, "Allegiance without Community: East Florida as the Symbol of a Loyalist Contract in the South," in Calhoon, *Loyalists and Community*, 122.

<sup>26</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalist Perception*, 168.



Augustine as the linchpin for southern British military intervention; thus, he understood that Whitehall was depending upon him to provide a secure military base for southern strategies. Tonyn and Thomas Brown played a significant role in these strategies and would invoke their strong relationships with southern Indian nations and confederations to ensure success.

Native Americans suffered the imposition of Europeans on their lands since sixteenth-century Spanish conquistadors arrived on the Florida peninsula. But nothing prepared them for the permanent encroachment of the English colonists.<sup>27</sup> Siding with the French in the previous war was an easy decision for most of the indigenous nations and confederations, as it was the British who embodied the loss of lives, traditional cultures, and lands in the Indian mind.<sup>28</sup> However, in the American Revolution the decision was perhaps even more black and white. “The continued encroachments of the ‘Virginians’ not only would justify complaints and even occasional raids, but when war came in 1775 these infringements would convince the Indians that the best defense of their interests lay in an alliance with the British.”<sup>29</sup> With such alliances seemingly guaranteed, Thomas Brown proposed a plan that would shake the continent to its fundamental core concerning the future of Native American relations with white “Virginians,” as well as familial ties between the colonies and the metropole. It also demonstrates the lengths Great Britain was willing to go to in order to cling to the southern

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8, 182–88.

<sup>28</sup> Louis Antoine de Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness: the American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756–1760* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 117–21; see also “M. de Moras, Montreal, July 13, 1757,” in E.B. O’Callaghan and Berthold Fernow, eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York...* (15 vols.; Albany: 1853–87), 10:588–90, in Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 25, 26.

<sup>29</sup> James H. O’Donnell, III, “The South on the Eve of the Revolution: The Native Americans,” in Higgins, “The Ambivalence of Freedom,” in Robert W. Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South: Power, Conflict, and Leadership*; Essays in Honor of John Richard Alden (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 66; see also Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 52.

colonies. For the British, who within the last twelve years just barely survived a war against a Euro/Indian alliance, this plan made complete sense. One must also remember that with the exception of the Hessians, Great Britain was isolated from its traditional allies at this time. That they would not recognize the unforgiveable nature of such an alliance further demonstrates how little they understood of life in the colonies, especially along the frontier.

When John Stuart was forced by the new rebel government in South Carolina to leave Charleston for East Florida in the late spring of 1775, he was soon followed by a seething Thomas Brown. Brown had recently pitched his plan for a southern campaign utilizing Native Americans in the backcountry to South Carolina's royal governor Lord William Campbell.<sup>30</sup> By the time Brown arrived in St. Augustine Governor Tonyn was anxious for action and received Brown's plan with great enthusiasm. And why not—the brash Yorkshireman claimed to have the names of four thousand Loyalists from South Carolina and Georgia pledged to the destruction of the rebel movement.<sup>31</sup> The plan involved rallying these backcountry Loyalists who understood the ways of their new-found Native American allies, thus forming an interracial army of rugged frontiersmen and Indian warriors armed with a common hatred of land grabbing “Virginia” colonists. But Brown did not believe that this army would come together unless British regulars presented the southern colonies with a demonstration of strength somewhere along the Atlantic coast. With the rebels focused on a British invasion from the east, the backcountry uprising could sweep through Georgia and the Carolinas like a plague of locusts.

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<sup>30</sup> Cashin, *The King's Ranger*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> “Thomas Brown to Jonas Brown, November 10, 1775,” in possession of Joan Leggett, descendant of Thomas Brown,” in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 209. Six months later, on May 5, 1776, Brown maintained that he could raise 2,000–3,000 Loyalists in just one month's time. “Letter from Thomas Brown Concerning Indian Issues, May 5, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/556, f. 172–80.

In order to raise this backcountry militia, Brown would need to provide a large supply of powder and munitions, which he intended to requisition in Pensacola. Brown's plan required precise coordination—and cooperation—on many fronts: the British army landing on the coast in a timely manner; ground support for the sea-borne invasion emanating from St. Augustine; Creek villages allowing excess powder and shot to pass through their lands in the direction of the Cherokees without raising an eyebrow or demanding more than their share; and most of all, John Stuart's Indian agents piecing together the necessary alliances. Governor Tonyn was so anxious to be in the fray that he signed off on the plan with excited anticipation.<sup>32</sup> From here on, things moved quickly. On September 12, 1775, General Thomas Gage ordered Stuart to encourage all southern Native American allies to "take arms against His Majesty's enemies and to distress them in all their power for no terms is now to be kept with them."<sup>33</sup> General Gage conferred with Governor Campbell of South Carolina in early October concerning the strike; by October 16, King George III officially called for the invasion of the southern colonies. Based on the promise of Loyalist support by North Carolina's Governor Martin, British regulars were to supply the colony's Loyalist militia with 10,000 stands of arms.<sup>34</sup> In a letter to Sir Henry Clinton on December 6, 1775, Lord Germain emphasized the rendezvous location as the mouth of the Cape Fear River. That same month George Washington alerted his general staff that the British would utilize the southern tribes in the conflict, and Congress "resolved...to call on Indians 'in case of

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<sup>32</sup> "Governor Patrick Tonyn to Sir Henry Clinton, February 15, 1776," Sir Henry Clinton Papers, WLCL, in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 215.

<sup>33</sup> "General Thomas Gage to John Stuart, September 12, 1775," Gage Papers, WLCL, in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 189, 227.

<sup>34</sup> "Lord Dartmouth to General William Howe, October 22, 1775," PRO 30/55/1, doc. 83, p. 1; see also Ira D. Gruber, "Britain's Southern Strategy," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 210.

real necessity.”<sup>35</sup> Clinton received his orders in January 1776, and began the mobilization process toward the Cape Fear River. While there are no records available concerning the deployment of troops to East Florida to support the invasion by land, there is a budgetary item found in the Treasury Papers that document the need for funds to “victualize” 1,500 British regulars in St. Augustine on March 28, 1776. That is approximately 1,100 more troops than St. Augustine normally garrisoned.<sup>36</sup>

However, one must not presume from this display of activity surrounding Thomas Brown’s plan that it was easily put into motion—otherwise it would not be necessary to cobble together the entirety of the plan from so many sources, rather we could read of its success in any history text. Let us begin with the British eastern arm of the pincer movement and work our way west. This is the phase of the 1776 plan that today is more familiar: the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge on February 27, followed much later by the presumably isolated attack of Charleston on June 28. The Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge is usually conveyed as an ill-armed Loyalist militia stumbling aimlessly upon a rebel militia; thus a battle ensued, ending in a rousing Loyalist defeat.<sup>37</sup> But this was not some random happenstance. These Loyalists were on their way to the Cape Fear River to meet General Clinton’s fleet and receive the 10,000 stands of arms and munitions for the purpose of playing their role in the invasion. Clinton’s objective was to rendezvous at Cape Fear with the Loyalists, as well as the convoy of arms, troops, and artillery ordered by the king, which were en route from Cork,

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<sup>35</sup> Cashin, *The King’s Ranger*, 32. This is the same timeframe in which Washington called for the first attack on St. Augustine (December 18, 1775), as noted earlier; Ford and Hunt, eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, 3:401, in Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995), 28.

<sup>36</sup> “John Robinson to John Pownall, Treasury Chamber, March 28, 1776,” PRO, 30/55/2, doc. 148, pp. 1–2.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 37.

Ireland, under the command of General Charles Cornwallis.<sup>38</sup> Clinton and Cornwallis were to provide the Loyalists with the much-needed arms, then continue with a landing force that consisted of seven full regiments of British regulars and two companies of artillery—2,500 redcoats in all—to their primary destination.<sup>39</sup> Lord Germain also specified that Sir Peter Parker was to command the fleet and provide naval reinforcements to the expedition, which included “a squadron of warships (two 50-gun two-decker ‘fourth rates,’ four 28-gun frigates and a half dozen other vessels of substantial potency) plus transports...fifty sail in all.”<sup>40</sup> It is at this point that the plan falls apart and historians speculate about what the plan was to be in the first place. Was Cape Fear the primary target, or was it Charleston? For the answer to that particular question one must think beyond where the invasion fleets rendezvoused or ultimately landed; one must look farther down the coast to Savannah.

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<sup>38</sup> Cornwallis was a late addition to this expedition at the request of King George III. When the decision was made to include Lord Cornwallis, his 33<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot was substituted for whichever of the aforementioned regiments General Clinton so chose. “Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, December 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/92, f. 382, p. 784.

<sup>39</sup> In this correspondence, Lord Germain specified that the seven regiments involved were the 15<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, 53<sup>rd</sup>, 54<sup>th</sup>, and 57<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Foot, with the king adding the 20<sup>th</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Foot after they were blown off course by a storm on their way to Quebec. “Lord George Germain to Sir William Howe, November 8, 1775,” PRO 30/55/1, doc. 80, pp. 1–8; “Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, December 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/92, f. 375–82, pp. 759–84; see also Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> The warships ships listed in this letter were the “*Bristol, Acteon, Solebay, Syren, Sphinx, and Deal Castle*, the *Hawk Sloop*, and *Thunder Bomb*.” “Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, December 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/92, f. 375–82, pp. 759–84; see also Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 37. For a full detailed account of battles at Moore’s Creek Bridge and Fort Sullivan (first British assault on Charleston Harbor) see Pancake, 1777, p. 22–25; Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 36–46; see also “May 31,” in Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:140.

Let us not forget whose plan this was. Thomas Brown had spent less than a year in North America when he entered into the conflict.<sup>41</sup> His primary target for the backcountry allied army was his home vicinity of Augusta, Georgia. “The fall of Augusta would ‘distress the rebels beyond measure,’ Brown believed, and would open the Savannah River to the friends of the royal government.”<sup>42</sup> Augusta was one of the largest hubs in the South for the Indian trade business. The Savannah River and roads from the coast linked at Augusta with several traditional Indian walking paths that led to the heartlands of multiple southern tribes. Upon victory in Augusta, Brown’s army could then move down the Savannah River and provide support for Clinton’s invasion of Savannah while Tonyn’s East Florida army moved up to secure the Atlantic coast between Savannah and St. Augustine. To capture Augusta from the West and then Savannah from virtually all sides would allow the British control of the arteries of transportation throughout Georgia and western South Carolina. In the meantime, the heavily armed North Carolina Loyalists would create a diversion in the Cape Fear region before presumably beginning a new pincer movement, sweeping down from the north with Charleston caught between them and Clinton’s allied forces moving up from Savannah.

Some interpretations of the invasion, such as that by John W. Gordon, hold that the Cape Fear River was the original target for the expedition, with Charleston only coming to the fore once the Loyalist defeat at Moore’s Creek Bridge occurred.<sup>43</sup> But there was no

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<sup>41</sup> Brown came to Augusta from Whitby, England, in November 1774, and was attacked by the Sons of Liberty on August 2, 1775. Cashin, *William Bartram*, 134.

<sup>42</sup> “Thomas Brown to Patrick Tonyn, February 24, 1776,” in “Patrick Tonyn to Sir Henry Clinton, June 10, 1776,” Sir Henry Clinton Papers, WLCL, in Cashin, *The King’s Ranger*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> John W. Gordon is a noted military historian and a professor of national security affairs at the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico, Virginia. Before that Gordon was a professor of history and dean of undergraduate studies at the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina.

strategic military target in the Cape Fear region that would explain the need for a fleet of British warships. In fact, in separate letters of correspondence both Lords Dartmouth and Germain were quite specific that the Cape Fear was strictly a rendezvous point.<sup>44</sup> Though Germain preferred to hold to Brown's original plan and land Clinton's forces at Savannah, he adhered to the decision of King George III to allow Clinton the freedom to make the final decision on the location.<sup>45</sup> Germain spent several pages in his correspondence to General Clinton discussing the nuances of every southern colony in the following order: the invasion could occur in North Carolina if so desired, but without being specific Germain was clear that this was not a good option. If Clinton selected Virginia he was to contact Lord Dunmore to gain his insight on the region, and thus share in the glory. Germain was respectful to the preference of his predecessor, Lord Dartmouth, in promoting Charleston as the more favorable point of invasion, but only if there was an outpouring of Loyalists from the city to ensure an easy victory.<sup>46</sup> Germain agreed with Dartmouth's premise that if Charleston fell, being the economic center of the region, the other port cities would follow suit. However, Germain was extremely concerned that if Charleston was securely in the hands of the rebels and thwarted the invasion that other port cities would follow that particular encouragement as rigorously. Thus, Germain strongly—though much more diplomatically than Dartmouth, so as not to defy the king—endorsed landing

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<sup>44</sup> "Lord Dartmouth to Governor Martin, November 7, 1775," PRO 30/55/1, doc. 82, pp. 1–4; "Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, December 6, 1775," PRO, CO 5/92, f. 375–82, pp. 759–84.

<sup>45</sup> "Lord Dartmouth to General William Howe, October 22, 1775," PRO 30/55/1, doc. 68, p. 4. The fact that Lord Dartmouth understood the king's desire in allowing Clinton to make the final decision concerning the site of the invasion and yet instructed General Howe to order the invasion site to be Charleston may explain Dartmouth's exit from office at such a crucial time in history.

<sup>46</sup> In PRO 30/55/1, doc. 83, p. 1, dated November 10, 1775, Lord Germain officially announced his replacement of Lord Dartmouth as Secretary of the American Colonies. This shift in administration was made only three days following Lord Dartmouth's countermanding of the king's instructions to allow General Clinton the option of choosing the landing site for the invasion.

the invasion force at Savannah if Charleston was not friendly. From this point forward in his letter Lord Germain was emphatic on his preference of Savannah. He repeatedly expressed that Charleston was off limits if it was not an absolute, guaranteed, bloodless victory, and that there was no other option more preferred than Savannah if this was the case. Germain believed that of all the choices, Savannah was the only location that guaranteed a Loyalist base. However, since Clinton would already be heading in a southern direction past Charleston on his way to Savannah from the Cape Fear River, a cursory inspection of Charleston's defenses only made sense—but he should then continue on to Savannah. Germain went so far as to pin-point the landing site for the army at Cockspur Inlet in the mouth of the Savannah River.<sup>47</sup>

In reality, Lord Germain was seeking two victories in this expedition: a military victory to end the rebellion in the southern colonies, and a political victory presumably to put his court-martial during the Seven Years War forever behind him. He had inherited a campaign that was considered so crucial to a quick and decisive resolution to the rebellion that it was described as “a measure of so much importance, every Circumstance, that can give facility of Security to the landing of the Forces from Ireland, will deserve attention.”<sup>48</sup> Clearly, Charleston was the choicest pearl in the chain of American port cities under rebel control, but a defeat would have had devastating political ramifications. Even a triumph with similar results to Bunker Hill where the cost of victory was completely unacceptable could bring political disaster in London. Germain structured his orders to Clinton with just enough nuance to secure his own footing while giving the general enough rope to hang himself. It is unlikely that Clinton was not aware of Germain's

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<sup>47</sup> “Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, December 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/92, f. 375–82, pp. 759–84.

<sup>48</sup> “Lord Dartmouth to General William Howe, October 22, 1775,” PRO 30/55/1, doc. 83, pp. 4–5.



political gamesmanship, but Clinton also understood the personal gains to be made with a sweeping victory at Charleston. The general clearly ignored Germain's warnings to avoid the South Carolina capital at all costs if an easy victory was not to be had.

John Stuart was another influence in Clinton's decision to attack Charleston. Stuart arrived at Cape Fear on March 15, just three days after Clinton, to advise him that he had reconsidered the wisdom in bringing the southern Indian alliance all the way to the coast and so far from their unprotected villages. This was, of course, nothing more than Stuart's repositioning of himself as being in charge of Native American matters, not some twenty-five year old aristocrat who had not been in the southern region any longer than Brown.<sup>49</sup>

With Brown's Anglo/Indian alliance doomed before he ever arrived in Creek lands, Clinton correctly surmised that Savannah was no longer a good option since there would be no western army led by Brown coming down from Augusta. Sir Peter Parker, commander of the fleet, believed that Charleston would be even more heavily guarded than Savannah and there was no hope to expect land forces from the interior there either. Revolutionary era tactics typically involved the taking of cities by a coordinated land and sea attack. Ironically, Gordon does agree that "by that point in eighteenth-century warfare, the Royal Navy and the British Army were without peer in their capacity to mount the kind of effort that the situation appeared to call for: a joint operation, amphibious in nature."<sup>50</sup> Gordon's basis for his interpretation of the invasion is Sir Peter Parker's reluctance to move away from the Cape Fear and on to Charleston. Once it became evident that his ships would have no land support in either Savannah or Charleston, Parker rightfully

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<sup>49</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to General Henry Clinton, May 8, 1776," PRO, CO 5/556, 172.

<sup>50</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 37.

attempted to either turn his fleet toward Virginia, given that Germain suggested Lord Dunmore's colony as a safe option, or halt the invasion altogether. If careful notice is taken, after the subsequent British defeat in Charleston Harbor, there is never again for the duration of the war a sea invasion that does not include a corresponding land attack. In fact, historian John Pancake reminds us that the last successful British marine landing without the support of land forces was on July 3, 1776, when General Howe landed an army of British regulars unmolested on Staten Island.<sup>51</sup>

In piecing this puzzle together from the multiple suggestions in the primary documents, I reiterate that the Lord Germain's preferred point of invasion was Savannah. The Loyalist North Carolina militia was meant to wreak havoc in the vicinity of the Cape Fear River with the arms provided from Ireland by Cornwallis. Such an action would draw southern militias and Continental troops to the center of the southern Atlantic coastline and away from whichever location Clinton selected for the invasion. This is why both Dartmouth and Germain were so specific that the rendezvous point was to be at the Cape Fear River, but to land the invasion force in North Carolina was a bad option.<sup>52</sup> Germain knew that Clinton would never share the glory of victory with Lord Dunmore or anyone else, thus Virginia was eliminated by ego. Attacking Charleston while it was heavily fortified was a tactical disaster, as Commodore Parker argued, and it was common knowledge that the city was solidly in the control of one of the most ardent of the rebellious colonial assemblies in North America. Germain made every effort to drive Clinton to Savannah.

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<sup>51</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> In an effort to appease Governor Martin of North Carolina, Lord Dartmouth conceded that "the disembarkation of a small party may be affected." "Lord Dartmouth to Governor Martin, November 7, 1775," PRO 30/55/1, doc. 82, pp. 1–4.

Throughout Lord Germain's tenure as Secretary of the American colonies, the British southern strategies always revolved around a calculated desire to have control of the Atlantic corridor from St. Augustine to the next point of attack, connecting the dots on the map all the way up the Atlantic coast. To sail directly into Charleston with no support from any direction—for any reason other than a fail-safe, guaranteed victory was, as Clinton found out, to stray into a hornet's nest. Lord Germain's mistake was in the respectful manner in which he attempted to promote his own plan over that of the out-going Dartmouth. In effect, Germain was saying of course take Charleston if it is lying in wait, with arms wide open. But since that was highly unlikely, Savannah should be the primary target and Cockspur Inlet was the best place to disembark the troops—all of this done, of course, in a manner that would not defy the king. Clinton could only hope that Thomas Brown and his allied army had adjusted accordingly. Lord Germain was successful in one sense in that it was Dartmouth and Clinton who would bear the burden of this folly for the next four years.

The British war ministry had but one primary goal in this campaign: “to proceed upon an Expedition for reducing to Obedience the Southern Provinces of North America, now in Rebellion.”<sup>53</sup> This was a calculated plan in which the “Object & purpose of this Expedition is to endeavour, with the Assistance of the well affected Inhabitants in the Southern Colonies, to effect the Restoration of legal government.”<sup>54</sup> From this correspondence from Lord Germain to Sir Henry Clinton we have solid evidence that the restoration of a “legal government”—a British government—in all of the southern colonies was the sole focus of the British war ministry concerning

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<sup>53</sup> “Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, Dec. 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/92, f. 375, p. 759.

<sup>54</sup> “Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, Dec. 6, 1775,” PRO, CO 5/92, f. 375, p. 759; see also Gruber, “Britain's Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 211.

this invasion. That could not have occurred simply from a random attack on one city, in one colony, but only from a coordinated campaign of conquest throughout the entire South. There is no tone in this statement that speaks of this “Southern Expedition” as being secondary to events in the North; no indication that the route to a British victory involved cutting off the head of the snake (New England) so that the body may die.<sup>55</sup> This is a completely false misconception that has been perpetuated for centuries. From September, 12, 1775, the war ministry was in full-throttle mode to retake the South.

But coordinating the timing of such a land/sea operation was daunting in the era of wind and sail. No doubt that one of the key factors of the tactical failures of this first southern invasion was the amount of time allowed for its coordination. This plan was conceived, presented as high up the ranks as King George III, and put into motion in approximately six months—that is what occurs when kings become involved in warfare. But the execution of the plan, as a result, was a nightmare. As noted, the Loyalists were approaching the Cape Fear region when they were defeated at Moore’s Creek Bridge on February 27, 1776; Clinton did not arrive with his fleet until March 12<sup>th</sup>. Cornwallis’s fleet was scattered across the Atlantic by a hurricane and did not reach Cape Fear until May 3<sup>rd</sup>—over two months behind schedule.<sup>56</sup> By the time that Clinton and Cornwallis joined forces at Cape Fear and could devise their attack on Charleston in late June, East Florida was facing the approach of a 2,500 man rebel army and needed every available soldier. Thus, Clinton would receive no land support from any direction.

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<sup>55</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 36; see also Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 237.

<sup>56</sup> Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 213.

Understanding the debacle that occurred on the coast makes the western arm of the pincer movement appear even more pathetic. John Stuart was smitten at first with Brown's plan, seeing the large role accorded to the Indians as a feather in his own cap. But the more he contemplated the plan, the more anxious he became over losing any pretenses of authority concerning southern Indian issues.<sup>57</sup> Stuart was a controlling megalomaniac, but even as such, commanded cooperation of the southern Native Americans as none other could. Rumors of a "Stuart-inspired Indian war" alarmed southern rebel settlers as early in the hostilities as June of 1775.<sup>58</sup> When General Gage authorized Stuart to incorporate Native American warriors into the war effort, he simply confirmed the previously false rumors concerning such actions that were considered heinous and treacherous to backcountry peoples. There is a certain irony to this "outrage" as Congress, in presuming that Britain would take such measures, granted Washington the task of either allying Native Americans to the rebel cause or encouraging their neutrality.<sup>59</sup> As late as February 1779, letters concerning Benjamin Franklin's attempts to recruit Indians in the Quebec region are found crossing the Atlantic.<sup>60</sup>

With Stuart now located in Pensacola, West Florida became the nerve center of this pan-Indian western front of the British Southern Expedition of 1776. However, Stuart would not instigate the Indian war as planned, nor would he make any attempt to coordinate the timing of the western front with Clinton's attack on Charleston. In fact, Governor Tonyn did not find out about Gage's

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<sup>57</sup> "John Stuart to Sir Henry Clinton, March 15, 1776," Sir Henry Clinton Papers, WLCL, in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 215.

<sup>58</sup> "By the end of June, South Carolina's Barnard Elliott roamed the Georgia backcountry recruiting Georgians for the new Carolina regiments, playing upon the hatred of Indians and the frontier's fear of a Stuart-instigated war." "Gov. James Wright to Lord Dartmouth, July 8, 1775," K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783* (Colonial Office Series; 21 vols. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972–1981), 9:113–16; see also Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:105.

<sup>59</sup> Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> "Colonel Guy Johnson to Lord George Germain, February 11, 1779," PRO, CO 5/80, f. 125–28.

directive of September 12, 1775, until May 3, 1776, as Stuart purposefully kept Tonyn in the dark in order to keep the headstrong Irishman out of Indian affairs.<sup>61</sup> Such a move guaranteed the failure of Thomas Brown's plan and derailed the first British southern invasion. In his *Memoirs*, General William Moultrie relates:

If the British had set their Indian allies upon us a few month before Sir Henry Clinton and Sir Peter Parker made their descent on South-Carolina, they would have disconnected us very much, by keeping thousands of our back country people from coming down; because they must have staid at home to protect their families from the savages.<sup>62</sup>

Stuart was determined to demonstrate to the British regular army exactly who controlled the Southern Indian Department, regardless of the fallout at Whitehall, because he steadfastly believed that the Crown could not operate in the southern Indian territories without his guidance. Stuart's callous snub backfired as Germain responded with a serious reprimand to the superintendent for risking the safety of thousands of British soldiers.<sup>63</sup> Stuart's inexplicable hatred for Tonyn only deepened.

Unfortunately, given the size of the army Stuart could potentially control, his status in London was not without merit. The southern tribes and confederations in 1775 were estimated to have a combined population of between fifty and sixty thousand people. But British officials enumerated just the warriors in each tribe—they were more concerned with potential numbers of allies or foes on the battlefield. Thus, the total fighting force concerned would depend on the ratio used to estimate the number of warriors to the total Indian population: an inconsistency of ratios from three, four, or five non-combatants to each warrior was utilized, depending on the

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<sup>61</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 227.

<sup>62</sup> Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:185.

<sup>63</sup> "Extract of a Letter from Lord Germain to Mr. Stuart, Esq., September 5, 1776," PRO 30/55/3, doc. 263, pp. 1–4.

Indian agent involved.<sup>64</sup> Even at a ratio of 5:1 in a population of fifty thousand, that is still ten thousand well-armed men with an historic dislike of “Virginia” frontiersmen. What kept the frontier relatively calm for white settlers up to this point was that the various tribes and confederations spent so much time at war with each other, and rarely in a unified front against the colonists. For the past decade the Creek/Choctaw war kept the southern frontier on alert, but always focused primarily to the west and less on encroaching English subjects. West Florida had more to gain with this new strategy, as much of this western Indian battleground lay in the heart of the colony.

John Stuart would begin his own Indian war against the rebels in a vain attempt to flaunt his command over southern Anglo/Indian relations. Discouraging compliance with Thomas Brown’s efforts, Stuart encouraged the Cherokees to form a different alliance. “Delegations from tribes further to the North—Delawares, Shawnees, and the powerful Iroquois nation—had arrived to press the Cherokees to join them in a war that would erupt up and down the length of the frontier.”<sup>65</sup> The Cherokees found early successes during the months of June and July in 1776, raiding from Virginia through the Carolinas and into Georgia.<sup>66</sup> But by August rebel militias attacked the unprotected Cherokee villages and towns, exactly as John Stuart predicted when discussing Thomas Brown’s plan at Cape Fear with General Clinton. But Cherokee innocents were equally put in harm’s way by Stuart’s plan, verifying that Stuart’s only concern was his own reputation and ego. Once Charleston was successfully defended, rebel general Charles Lee brought down

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<sup>64</sup> James H. O’Donnell, III, “The South on the Eve of the Revolution: The Native Americans,” in Higgins, “The Ambivalence of Freedom,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 68. For further information see footnote, page 68n7.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 46.

<sup>66</sup> James K. Swisher, *The Revolutionary War in the Southern Backcountry* (New York: Pelican Publication Company, 2008), 66–67.

Virginia militiamen to invade the Cherokees of the mountain regions while Carolinians decimated the lower towns. William Henry Drayton later wrote, “I have burnt down every town and destroyed all the corn from the Cherokee line to the middle settlements.”<sup>67</sup> Rebel retribution was horrific. The dead were mutilated and scalped, while those taken captive were sold into slavery. Entire harvests were destroyed and towns leveled by fire. The devastation impacted the Cherokee nation so thoroughly that by 1777 tribal leaders signed over all remaining lands in South Carolina.<sup>68</sup> Only the young warriors, led by Dragging Canoe, hung on to continue the fight against the white onslaught by moving south into Creek and Seminole lands.<sup>69</sup>

Loyalists were equally outraged that John Stuart turned loose the Cherokees on the backcountry, feeling that without white leadership—a central factor of Brown’s plan—the Indians would attack Loyalist and rebel alike. This brought many who previously had declared their loyalties to the king into the rebel fold. As a result, Stuart’s interference in Brown’s scheme impacted the Southern Expedition of 1776 so dramatically that history fails to recognize the events surrounding it as a coordinated effort. As a result, the Loyalist movement in the southern colonies never recovered its pre-1777 numbers, and the Cherokee nation came near to annihilation.

In the midst of all of this chaos, it should not be forgotten that for British Loyalists life in West Florida was rife with Revolutionary activity, beginning with their Spanish and French neighbors. For nations that were not yet involved in the war, France

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<sup>67</sup> “William Henry Drayton to Francis Salvador, July 24, 1776,” Gibbes, *Documentary of the American Revolution*, 1:183–84, 196–98.

<sup>68</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 53.

<sup>69</sup> “Dragging Canoe became the leader of the Chickamauga Cherokees, a strongly anti-American faction of the Cherokee Nation, which would ultimately secede from the traditional areas of the nation and withdraw south along the Tennessee River to an area more accessible to British agents coming through the Creek country from Pensacola and St. Augustine.” O’Donnell, “The South on the Eve of the Revolution,” in Higgins, “The Ambivalence of Freedom,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 72.



and Spain were busily about the business of warfare. In a letter from the Conte de Aranda, Spanish ambassador to Paris, and Jeronimo Grimaldi, Chief Minister of Spain, Aranda revealed French plans for the reconquest of Canada by utilizing northern Native American confederations. After turning Britain's Indian allies against them, the future for France in Canada would be to "take only the mouth of the St. Laurence River and its Islands, leaving the rest of the land for a Free State of Farmers and Merchants to govern themselves as they choose, under the sole protection of France, allowing them to become naturalized citizens of that country or France, with mutual free trade with France."<sup>70</sup> While this conversation has little to do with East or West Florida's war of dependence, it demonstrates that early in the war (1776) all sides were taking keen interests in regions other than New England. New England was only the epicenter of the American Revolution as it occurred in New England. Like other wars in America's history, the Revolution had many fronts and many regional scripts that were equally critical to the outcome of the conflict. If Spain could sense France's interests in regaining Canada as early as 1776, then Great Britain certainly would suspect such intrigue as well. It is no small coincidence that the French developed such aggressive plans for Canada so soon after the Americans attempted to invade Quebec and Montreal. Nor had they forgotten the insult of being thrown out of New Orleans, which kept Loyalists in West Florida in an anxious state.

It is no secret that American diplomats called upon the houses of Europe for assistance in the Revolution, but little is divulged on the role played by New Orleans in the larger Atlantic intrigues. In 1776, Congress sent Captain George Gibson and Lieutenant William Linn down the Mississippi River to New Orleans to negotiate for arms and munitions with the Spanish government. With the

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<sup>70</sup> Conde de Aranda to Jeronimo Grimaldi, October 10, 1776, Archivo General de Simancas; Papalas de Estado, Legajo 1736, formerly Archivo Historico Nacional 4506, no. 853, original. An autografa copia is found in A.H.N.; Legajo 4072, in Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally*, 39–40.

assistance of Oliver Pollack, a well-placed Irish-American merchant in New Orleans, the flow of Spanish and French goods made its way up the Mississippi River to Fort Pitt.<sup>71</sup> By October 1, 1776, records of the rebel Committees of Correspondence reveal that a dummy corporation was established by the Comte de Vergennes in Paris to smuggle war provisions and supplies to the American rebels. Working with the code name of Monsieur Hotalez, all correspondence between France and the rebels for supplies took the long journey from Fort Pitt down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, through New Orleans and on to Havana. From there the destination might be St. Eustatia, Martinique, or Cape Francois, before finally heading across the Atlantic, possibly via Holland, to France.<sup>72</sup> There would be extremely long lapses in time from the placement of an order until the shipment was received. The management of this process was crucial, thus General Charles Lee—Washington’s highest ranking subordinate—was charged with its success.<sup>73</sup> To avoid suspicion of the seemingly omni-present British navy, all cargo coming into New Orleans went through Havana on French or Dutch ships where they were then transferred to Spanish ships.<sup>74</sup> British spies reported that once in New Orleans, the cargoes were transferred to river bateaux flying Spanish flags, crewed by Spanish and French sailors, before journeying up the Mississippi River to

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<sup>71</sup> Dewey, “British Trade in West Florida, 1763–1783,” 133–34.

<sup>72</sup> Records of the Committee of Correspondence, October 1, 1776, in Diplomatic Correspondence, *op.cit.*, 2:18–19, in Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally*, 45; see also Wood, *The American Revolution*, 81–82.

<sup>73</sup> “Letter from General Charles Lee to Governor Unzaga [of New Orleans], May 1776”; “Letter from Governor Unzaga to ‘Spain’ [more than likely to Jeronimo Grimaldi], September 7, 1776,” Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Estante 87, Cajon I, Legajo 6, in Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally*, 127.

<sup>74</sup> “Memorial of Robert Ross and John Campbell to Governor Peter Chester of West Florida, September 9, 1778,” PRO, CO 5/117, f. 11–20.

Arkansas. American riverboat men would received the bateaux at the Red River juncture with the Mississippi and continue the journey to Fort Pitt.<sup>75</sup>

Though this seems fantastic in its conjurations, one must remember that by this point in the war, even though the British army did not control one North American port between New York City and St. Augustine, the British navy sealed the Atlantic coast against most traffic. Effectively, the British were forming a circle around the rebellious colonies. They already possessed the vast borders of Canada and the intercontinental water system beginning at the St. Lawrence River; West Florida maintained three forts on the Mississippi River, while Chickasaw allies kept a close eye on the upper Mississippi and Ohio Valleys. British warships also patrolled the Atlantic seaboard from the Bay of Fundy to the Gulf of Mexico. The flies in the ointment were New Orleans and Fort Pitt. If the British could succeed in taking either of these two locations then rebel troops in every colony would be adversely affected. But two things kept the rebel supply system open throughout the war: Britain's inability to focus troops on Fort Pitt; and the international etiquettes surrounding British interference with shipments entering a "neutral" New Orleans under the Spanish flag.

In early 1777, Bernardo de Galvez, the new Spanish governor of New Orleans, began confiscating British merchant ships within his jurisdiction, forcing British merchants to leave the city.<sup>76</sup> By spring, and with a more aggressive Spanish governor as their ally, the rebels at Fort Pitt grew bold. "Colonel George Morgan [the commander at Fort Pitt] sent an enquiry asking Galvez what he thought of a possible attack on British Pensacola. Galvez agreed to support the Revolutionary cause with seventy thousand dollars of munitions,

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<sup>75</sup> "Deposition of Alexander Graydon in Pensacola Concerning His Role in the Ross/Campbell Affair, March 16, 1779," PRO, CO 5/117, f. 28–29.

<sup>76</sup> Dewey, "British Trade in West Florida, 1763–1783," 132.

if the aid could be kept secret.”<sup>77</sup> While Galvez was willing to up the ante concerning Spain’s involvement in the war as he dealt harshly with British merchants, a military expedition against a “friendly” European empire was well beyond his pay grade. But the British did not accept Galvez’s intervention of their Mississippi River traffic without vociferous complaints. Such a move by the Spanish governor flew in the face of the Treaty of Paris, 1763, concerning Britain’s right to the full length of the Mississippi, including the lower portions of the river under Spanish control.

This affront was not taken lightly as letters flew across the Atlantic, around Europe, and throughout the halls of three imperial courts. Scottish merchant George Bruce reported that Galvez seized £16,000 sterling in ships and property just in his immediate vicinity of New Orleans.<sup>78</sup> Bruce traced the fairly large British population in New Orleans back to General Alexander O’Reilly’s tenure as Spanish governor in New Orleans from 1769 to 1770.<sup>79</sup> O’Reilly put down a rebellion of French citizens who remained in New Orleans after the Treaty of Paris, 1763, by executing the heads of many prominent French families. As a result, there was a French exodus up the Mississippi River and as far down the Gulf Coast as modern day Alabama. This created a void that British merchants were more than happy to fill—illegally, of course. After O’Reilly was recalled to another post, the displaced French merchants appealed to Madrid for the right to trade under French colors on the Mississippi. Bruce not only accused the Spanish and

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<sup>77</sup> John Walton Caughey, *Bernardo de Galvez in Louisiana, 1776–1783* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935), 90–92.

<sup>78</sup> The following letter from George Bruce to William Knox is eight pages in length and will be summarized over several pages of this study due to the significance of the information involved. All quotes will be cited specifically, but the overall citation is as follows: “Letter from George Bruce to William Knox, October 16, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/155, pp. 1–8.

<sup>79</sup> O’Reilly was one of the many Irish Catholic mercenaries to join the Spanish military for the sole purpose of fighting against England. Many of these Catholic aristocrats rose to prominent positions within their adopted country.

French of violating the Treaty of Paris, but open “countenance to the subjects of our rebellious colonies” as possible without risking an “open break” with Great Britain.<sup>80</sup>

Immediately upon his arrival in New Orleans, Bruce notes that Governor Galvez openly courted French diplomats and rebel American officers at parties and banquets. New Orleans was laid open to the French, in spite of the restrictions of the Treaty of Paris. If war were to break out between England and Spain, states Bruce, it was “generally believed that it would take thousands [of British redcoats] where hundreds only would have been necessary before [Galvez’s] arrival to make a conquest of the island.”<sup>81</sup> Now that Galvez was seizing British ships there seemed little doubt among those in New Orleans, as well as at Whitehall, that the governor’s orders were coming directly from Madrid—but there was no sufficient evidence. The fact that Bruce was writing such a detailed account of Galvez should indicate the lengths to which Britain’s espionage network would go to gather any incriminating information as leverage against Spanish neutrality.

Galvez also erected forts and military posts as far up the Mississippi as the mouth of the Ohio River for the purpose of assisting the American rebels by supplying 30-oared “Row Gallies” to haul artillery up the Mississippi and courting Native American tribes inhabiting the eastern, British banks of the river. Choctaw and Creek chiefs were paraded as royal dignitaries in New Orleans with little concern that British Loyalists would report their presence. The British merchant/spy believed that only an act of Parliament challenging the legalities of these activities—which could very well lead to war—would be necessary to reverse the impact Governor

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<sup>80</sup> “Letter from George Bruce to William Knox, October 16, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/155, pp. 2–3.

<sup>81</sup> “Letter from George Bruce to William Knox, October 16, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/155, p. 3.

Galvez made on the Mississippi River Valley. It would appear from a twenty-first-century view, with perfect 20/20 hindsight, that war with Great Britain is exactly what Galvez and his superiors in Madrid were hoping to accomplish.

George Bruce also provides an interesting glimpse into the eighteenth-century conception of counter-tactics as he suggested that British merchants should import French wines, either purchased directly from France or from Guernsey—legally navigated via British ships from British ports, of course—to the Mississippi River. Bruce believed that once the inhabitants of the region realize they could acquire French wines from British merchants they would lose interest in all French goods and British merchants would regain their prominence in New Orleans and on the Mississippi River, in spite of Galvez’s Machiavellian antics. From the lack of response by the British ministry to this last suggestion, it must be concluded that Whitehall found the transparency of the merchant’s scheme to be as obvious as it appears today.

The House of Bourbon had other ways to frustrate the British during the American Revolution. By October 1777, Spain was amassing an impressive navy that did not even have to engage in battle in order to complicate matters for the British: “Spain has 113 vessels, completely manned, and of all kinds, together with some others in good condition, to be armed at once. England, knowing this, has her best battle-ships unable to fight the Americans.”<sup>82</sup> At first this may seem boastful, but in reality the Spanish understood the limits of eighteenth-century naval warfare as well as its strengths: “[The Spanish navy] is so effective and powerful a help to the Colonies that if used in an openly declared war could not be as free to be used in such a way because in such a case we should have to

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<sup>82</sup> “Memorial of the Court of Spain to the Court of France, San Lorenzo el Real, October, 17, 1777,” Archivo Historico Nacional; Legajo 3884. Cited also in Yela, *op.cit.*, Tomo 1: Memorial LXX, pp. 130–35, in Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally of the American Revolution*, 65–69.

disperse it according to our own defense, but today it ably threatens England and protects the Americans.”<sup>83</sup> With such an armada distracting British warships, the Floridas had more to concern themselves with than just their borders with Georgia or the Indian territories. These conditions made invasion from New Orleans, New Spain, or Havana every day concerns, but to the British ministry an invasion from these ports were more likely to be aimed at Jamaica or Barbados. As readily available as any ship in West Florida was to defend the British West Indies, it rarely worked with equanimity in the opposite direction. As always, the British West Indies received the lion’s share of protection, while Governors Tonyn and Chester were left to their own devices.<sup>84</sup> In the end this strategy would cost the British Empire all of their North American colonies, save Canada, but they would maintain and hold their primary concern in the sugar islands of the Caribbean throughout the war.

However, American rebel interests in West Florida were not as completely remote as one might think. Henry Laurens in recounting his first day in Congress, January 10, 1777, fully intended to simply observe the proceedings and listen intently to the day’s discussion. Laurens quickly awakened from this fog when a seaborne invasion of West Florida came before the Congress and was on the verge of approval. Not only would the expedition require great stealth to sneak past Chickasaw and Choctaw sentinels as it stole down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, but Congress hoped to include a second, simultaneous attack on Pensacola as well. “Laurens

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<sup>83</sup> “Memorial of the Court of Spain to the Court of France, San Lorenzo el Real, October, 17, 1777,” Archivo Historico Nacional; Legajo 3884. Cited also in Yela, *op.cit.*, Tomo 1: Memorial LXX, pp. 130–35, in Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally of the American Revolution*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 43, 55, 208

could not refrain from telling his colleagues that it was a terrible idea. He listed several excellent reasons, not the least of which was that Congress had no available navy.”<sup>85</sup>

Over the next few months letters between Governor Tonyn and David Taitt flowed freely over this same concern of an American invasion of West Florida. Tonyn initially requested that Taitt incite Dragging Canoe’s Chickamauga Cherokees, now residing in West Florida, to launch an all-out attack on the backcountries of Georgia and the Carolinas; in essence, renewing their efforts from the previous year.<sup>86</sup> Taitt informed Tonyn that the Chickamauga needed to stay close to home because the rebels were hoping to entice the Chickasaw to attack West Florida. Though the Chickasaw incursion never occurred, it became obvious that the Cherokees would not be of much use as they refused to become involved in any further actions that did not include support from British regulars.<sup>87</sup> After so many years of economic insignificance, Governor Chester enjoyed the new-found strategic importance placed upon West Florida, claiming that Pensacola and Mobile were impenetrable to rebel troops—or so his public statements back to Whitehall claimed. In a more discerning and private letter to John Stuart, Chester admitted that he was “properly horrified when he...learned that the rebels solicited the help of Indians against His Majesty’s government.”<sup>88</sup> Regardless of which side of the conflict one stood, even the rumor of attack by Native Americans was enough to chill a seasoned veteran of the western lands.

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<sup>85</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 245.

<sup>86</sup> “Letter from Governor Patrick Tony to David Taitt, Esq., April 20, 1777” PRO, CO 5/593, P. 388, p. 190.

<sup>87</sup> “Letter from David Taitt, Esq. to Governor Patrick Tonyn, May 23, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/593, P.391, p. 193.

<sup>88</sup> “Governor Peter Chester to John Stuart, November 17, 1775” PRO, CO 5/592, pp. 153–56; see also Cashin, *William Bartram*, 190.



In spite of Tonyn's enthusiasm for Thomas Brown's offensive, the East Florida governor found himself stranded in a defensive position from 1776 to mid-1778. The first of three invasion attempts against East Florida commenced in the summer of 1776. Though Tonyn spent great amounts of money and man-power to rebuild the colony's defenses, it was a combination of yellow fever and malaria, poor planning, and rumors of 2,000 Creek and Cherokee warriors threatening the backcountry of Georgia that repulsed the 1776 invasion force of over 2,500 Continental regulars and militia, commanded by Major General Charles Lee, though remote fighting did take place.<sup>89</sup> "The real contribution of the Indians to British success was pinpointed by Lieutenant Walter Scott of the Loyalist Refugees: 'The Talk of their [Cherokee] going to war has certainly answered a very good intention by keeping a great many Rebels upon the Frontier which greatly helped the Troops (Br.) by keeping so many men from them.'"<sup>90</sup> A frustrated George Washington recalled Major General Lee to Charleston before he ever reached the St. Marys River.

The 1777 invasion involved an American army of approximately 1,200 men, including Continental regulars from Virginia and Georgia.<sup>91</sup> By the end of April 1778 a combined army of Major General Robert Howe's Continentals and Governor John Houstoun's

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<sup>89</sup> Edward J. Cashin incorrectly denotes a small skirmish on the St. Marys River on May 29<sup>th</sup> as the first invasion of British East Florida. Then later, on page 238, Cashin attempts to explain away the botched real first invasion attempt as a "grand demonstration" to shock and awe the Creeks from taking sides with the British. "Seldom if ever in American military annals has a parade for the purpose of awing Indians been disguised as an invasion. Lee intended the former; Tonyn interpreted it as the latter." This is a prime example of an historian attempting to redeem a disgraced army by redefining the historical narrative into a fable. Cashin, *William Bartram*, 238; see also David Lee Russell, *The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2000), 101.

<sup>90</sup> Helen L. Shaw, *British Administration of the Southern Indians, 1756–1783* (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Press, 1931), in Clyde R. Ferguson, "Functions of the Partisan-Militia in the South During the American Revolutionary War: An Interpretation," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 255.

<sup>91</sup> Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 88–90.

Georgia militia amassed nearly 2,000 troops on the St. Marys River for a third invasion attempt of East Florida.<sup>92</sup> Unlike the attempt of 1776, both of the later invasions succeeded in breaching the initial lines of British border defenses, both on land and by the intricate system of waterways. According to some historians, it was the rebels' knowledge of five British armed vessels on the St. Johns River that turned back the invasion of 1778.<sup>93</sup> But there was certainly more than rumor involved in this final expulsion of the rebel army from British soil. A sound defeat at the Battle of Alligator Creek Bridge, along with the unremitting hit-and-run guerilla raids of Thomas Brown's East Florida Rangers and allied Native American warriors, proved too much for rebel morale.

But ultimately it was the in-fighting between Continental and state militia leadership that brought a degree of disaster to each of the invasion efforts, far out-weighting Governor Tonyn's built-up defenses or Major General Augustine Prevost's combined forces of British regulars, St. Augustine militia, and East Florida Rangers. It is no small wonder when considering the East Florida landscape, British determination, and the rebel military's lack of cooperation and professionalism that all three invasions fell far short of capturing St. Augustine. The results of the collective American invasions were the tying up of valuable rebel resources in men and supplies badly needed for the campaigns in the northern theaters—exactly what Governor Tonyn boasted to Lord Germain that he was hoping to accomplish.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Smith, "Mermaids Riding Alligators," 459. For the Revolutionary era these armies are of significant size.

<sup>93</sup> Buker, Martin, "Governor Tonyn's Brown-Water Navy," 70.

<sup>94</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, July 3, 1779," PRO, CO 5/559, pp. 443–56.

Dogged determination is the final factor that kept East Florida safe from rebel invasion; the inhabitants volunteered almost to a man to defend the colony. During the invasion of 1777, when British Major General Prevost recommended a scorched-earth policy to keep the outlying plantations from provisioning the invading American army, Governor Tonyn readily ordered the complete destruction of his personal plantation, including two large frame houses, every outlying building and mill, and all 20,000 acres of produce and timber.<sup>95</sup> But that is not to say that every East Floridian had the same resolve to obstruct the invasions at any cost. In a letter to Lord Germain, the governor rightly accused three members of Drayton's cabal of cowardice in the face of the enemy. As the invasion of 1777 gained temporary steam by infiltrating the East Florida border with cavalry, Spencer Mann, James Penman, and Lt. Colonel Robert Bissett came to Tonyn and demanded their right to capitulate to the invading forces. These three even proposed to compensate the Americans financially if "certain properties" went unmolested.<sup>96</sup> Penman declared that he would personally meet the oncoming army with a "flag of truce from the 'Inhabitants,' ignoring the government altogether to arrange terms with the Georgians."<sup>97</sup> This is not the kind of demand one would want to make to an individual who destroyed his own valuable property in order to frustrate the invading army. When the smoke cleared, and the British repulsed the second invasion, the humiliation that followed these three men plagued them for the rest of their existence in East Florida; Lt. Colonel Bissett was particularly targeted.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Schafer, "Florida History On-Line," [http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Colonel\\_Patrick\\_Tonyn.htm](http://www.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline//Plantations/plantations/Colonel_Patrick_Tonyn.htm)

<sup>96</sup> Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 107. This is a significant indicator that the plantations of East Florida were of considerable economic value and operating at a substantial profit.

<sup>97</sup> Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 107.

<sup>98</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, May 8, 1777," PRO, CO 5/557, p. 104.

Frustrated by three years of defensive military posture, Governor Tonyn made his own offensives in any fashion available. In addition to his *mêlées* with Drayton and Turnbull, on April 11, 1776, Governor Tonyn found a new adversary when Major General Augustine Prevost arrived in St. Augustine from Jamaica. Almost immediately Prevost found Governor Tonyn to be a major source of one provocation after another.<sup>99</sup> This time the challenge before Tonyn was on more familiar ground, involving military control of the East Florida Rangers. The dispute boiled down to two enormous egos battling over who would be the ultimate military authority in the colony. Tonyn won the first challenge to arise between the two men because Prevost and Lt. Colonel Lewis Fuser suggested that a Treaty of Neutrality be signed with the American governor of Georgia after the first invasion attempt into East Florida. Since a treaty would require Tonyn's signature, the governor was able to flatly decline the suggestion. Tonyn not only refused but on September 8, 1776, wrote scathing letters of complaint to Lord Germain, Lord Cornwallis, and General Sir Henry Clinton concerning Prevost's lack of resolve.<sup>100</sup> However, the governor quickly learned that Prevost had full command of the regular army, which Tonyn claims to have "allowed" as a form of compromise.<sup>101</sup> But the governor wanted Brown's Rangers as his own private army, and neither Prevost nor the British Ministry of War agreed. By December 1777, the governor had gone so far as to raise a second company of Rangers as an olive branch to satisfy Prevost. But the general drew Tonyn into a heated debate over who would outfit and pay for the new Rangers—the war chest in London or colonial funds in St. Augustine.<sup>102</sup> Tonyn finally erupted in a letter to Prevost stating that as Commander-

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<sup>99</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, April 11, 1776," PRO, CO 5/556, pp. 152–54.

<sup>100</sup> Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 59.

<sup>101</sup> "Governor Patrick Tonyn to Major General Augustine Prevost, May 19, 1778," PRO, CO 5/558, p. 9.

in-Chief of East Florida, “I have...absolute authority.” Tonyn went on to claim that the colony’s officers, Rangers, Creek allies, and militia were simply on loan to the regular army.<sup>103</sup>

Both men had a strong case, with Tonyn indeed being the commander of the colony’s militia and having over thirty years of military experience to draw upon. But this was a time of war and the British regular army always took precedence over militia. There was one other factor that sealed Tonyn’s fate on this issue: as if in an effort to silence Tonyn’s constant complaints on this issue, Prevost was promoted from Lt. Colonel to Major General. He now outranked Governor Tonyn militarily. It would be three more years before Tonyn would receive his promotion to Major General. In the meantime, Prevost was given total command of all combatants in East Florida.

One might conclude that Tonyn foresaw the outcome of this battle in mid-fight, for in that same letter in which the governor declared himself the absolute authority in East Florida he also congratulated Prevost on his promotion. In another letter to Lord Germain, after the foiled rebel invasion of 1777, Tonyn praised General Prevost’s effort: “The success of the Expedition is, in great measure to be ascribed to the Judgments and good conduct of that experienced Officer.”<sup>104</sup> This was an honorable acknowledgment of a comrade in arms, regardless of personal feelings. One should not make too much of this particular quarrel. Georgia’s governor

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<sup>102</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Major General Augustine Prevost, December 20, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/558, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Major General Augustine Prevost, July 5, 1777,” PRO, CO 5/557, pp. 148–49.

<sup>104</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, May 8, 1777,” PRO CO 5/557, p. 131.

James Houstoun and General Robert Howe engaged in the same arguments, just under a different flag.<sup>105</sup> Governor Tonyn had not fallen from Whitehall's good graces, nor had he been chastised for poor administrative performances or military disgraces. The only thing that needed to be checked at this point was Governor Tonyn's ego. Fresh off his victories over Drayton and Turnbull, Tonyn saw Prevost as another member of a "Desperate faction" trying to usurp his authority.<sup>106</sup> On this accusation one can reasonably speculate that Tonyn's posture toward Prevost was generated by the governor's attitude toward anyone who believed that he was of no considerable consequence. In the case with Prevost, Tonyn was simply out of line and it took his superiors in London to make that clear to him. Unfortunately for Thomas Brown, the East Florida Rangers became the proverbial rope in this aggressive game of tug-of-war. After the taking of Fort McIntosh, which Brown and the Rangers managed with very little help from regular army units, Prevost took the opportunity to accuse the Rangers of looting and unprofessional conduct. It was believed by Brown to be an effort to reduce the glory of the Ranger's achievement.<sup>107</sup> But once the turmoil over the command of the Rangers was settled in Prevost's favor, Brown was suddenly finding praise from Prevost, both as a military leader and a gentleman. The Rangers would serve admirably under Prevost until Brown's capture at Augusta in 1781.

In 1778, Prevost moved with his regiment to Savannah and then Charleston as the war progressed into the Carolinas, thus leaving one last player in Tonyn's personal disputes with which the governor must contend. Lt. Colonel Lewis V. Fuser was one of the

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<sup>105</sup> Abbey, "Florida as an Issue During the American Revolution," 28.

<sup>106</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, Vol. I, p. 80.

<sup>107</sup> "Thomas Brown to Governor Patrick Tonyn, December 20, 1777," PRO, CO 5/557, p. 94.

few remaining members of the “Desperate Faction,” though much less antagonistic in his manner, and now named General Prevost’s replacement in East Florida. There is little written by Tonyn of his dealings with Fuser, which leads one to conclude that Fuser was no match for the governor. It was moot, however, for Fuser died suddenly early 1780.<sup>108</sup> Lt. Colonel Beamsley Glazier replaced Fuser, until he was ultimately replaced in October 1782 by Lt. Colonel Archibald McArthur—a man more acquiescent to the governor’s designs for the colony’s defenses.<sup>109</sup> Tonyn’s relationships with Fuser, Glazier, and McArthur were free of the petty struggles experienced during Prevost’s tour in East Florida. However, it should also be noted that the civility of these relationships may have been prompted by Tonyn’s promotion to Major General on November 2, 1781—from that point forward Tonyn outranked all military personnel in East Florida.

After 1778, Governor Tonyn had either driven off his antagonists, disgraced them publicly, had them removed from office and jailed, or watched the war take them elsewhere. He spent the rest of the Revolution maintaining the defenses of St. Augustine and sending battle plans to distant generals. One activity Tonyn enjoyed was that of keeping tabs on those he accused of being factionists who were still in East Florida. A copy of a letter dated June 29, 1778, written by the wealthy merchant and ardent Loyalist Kender Mason to Spencer Mann, was labeled in the Public Records Office in England as “in Governor Tonyn’s files.” Mason was chastising Mann for providing goods to the British army, prisoners-of-war, and the inhabitants of St. Augustine at exorbitant rates—“it is a cruel usage this”; Mann was price gouging in a time of war. Mason implicates Major General Prevost, as well, as he warns Mann that “if the

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<sup>108</sup> Fuser’s death was reported on February 5, 1780, though no date is given for the exact date of his demise. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, Vol. I, p. 113.

<sup>109</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, Vol. I, p. 114.

General obliges you to do it, to make a price for such supply, have good Vouchers to secure the payment at home.”<sup>110</sup> Perhaps Prevost never knew how fortunate he was that the war had carried him away from St. Augustine and Governor Tonyn’s uninhibited vindictiveness.

British military interests in the southern colonies were not prompted by dissatisfaction among the populace in London after Saratoga in 1777. It was the economic importance of the southern colonies’ to the empire that drove the war ministry to focus on reclaiming the South as early as 1775 in order to sustain order in the British West Indies. Of the southern colonies, only in East and West Florida did royal governors hold their posts as their counterparts in Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia scattered to warships at anchor off their respective coasts. Immediately, in 1775, plans were formulated to utilize the strategically located Loyalist bases of St. Augustine and Pensacola to strike deep into the southern backcountry, while General Sir Henry Clinton subdued southern coastlines. Had John Stuart not single-handedly dismantled the Native American contingent of this campaign while foul weather confounded tactical issues of timing and placement of the British fleet in the Atlantic, a massive British invasion to conquer the South would have been followed by Burgoyne’s northern campaign, not preceded.

Perhaps the overall picture of the Southern Expedition of 1776 is lost today on the fact that it depended so heavily upon the efforts of Native Americans in the western backcountry rather than British regulars in bright red uniforms. But modern historical oversight cannot discount the importance of the mainland South to the overarching concerns of the British Empire. Were it not for the implosion of the 1776 campaign, Great Britain’s first major attempt to quash the American rebellion would have been launched from

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<sup>110</sup> “Kender Mason to Spencer Mann, June 29, 1778,” PRO, CO 5/559, p. 167.



Florida, not Canada. Thus it may be argued from an eighteenth-century British perspective, based upon chronological events, that the South was the primary target (the head of the snake), while New England was secondary (the body of the snake). Burgoyne's northern campaign proceeded as planned in spite of Clinton's failure to reclaim the South, due largely to the fact that the northern army was already in place and the war ministry needed a solid victory to overshadow the pathetic debacle in the South. Thus, ironically, it was Burgoyne's invasion from Canada that held the hopes of quieting dissent in London after a failed southern invasion, not vice versa.

From 1775 to 1778, Governor Tonyn's administration in East Florida wholly supported formal plans for the British Southern Expedition of 1776, withstood three rebel invasion attempts, and crushed internal strife in an effort to maintain the colony's dependency upon British liberties and the rights of Englishmen. The time had now come to take the fight to the enemy. Having learned valuable lessons from the failed first southern invasion and his disastrous attack on Charleston, General Sir Henry Clinton would not rely upon egotistical Indian superintendents or complicated Atlantic-driven timetables for military success.<sup>111</sup> He would rely upon British generals, and Major General Augustine Prevost would prove most capable in converting his defensive military skills—finely honed in East Florida over the last three years of the war—into an offensive military machine that would launch Phase One of the second British southern invasion.

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<sup>111</sup> Clinton received his orders to replace General Howe as commander-in-chief of the British army in North America, as well as to begin proceedings for the second southern invasion in the same letter on May 8, 1778. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 410.



Figure 5-1. Close-up of a clipper ship sailing over the treacherous bar which stretches across the St. Augustine Inlet. Photograph courtesy of author.



Figure 5-2. Distant view of St. Augustine Inlet. Same view from the Castillo walls, demonstrating the distance from the entrance to Matanzas Bay to the Castillo and why war ships could not reach St. Augustine with shipboard cannons. The bright spot on the horizon is the same clipper ship shown above. Photograph courtesy of author.

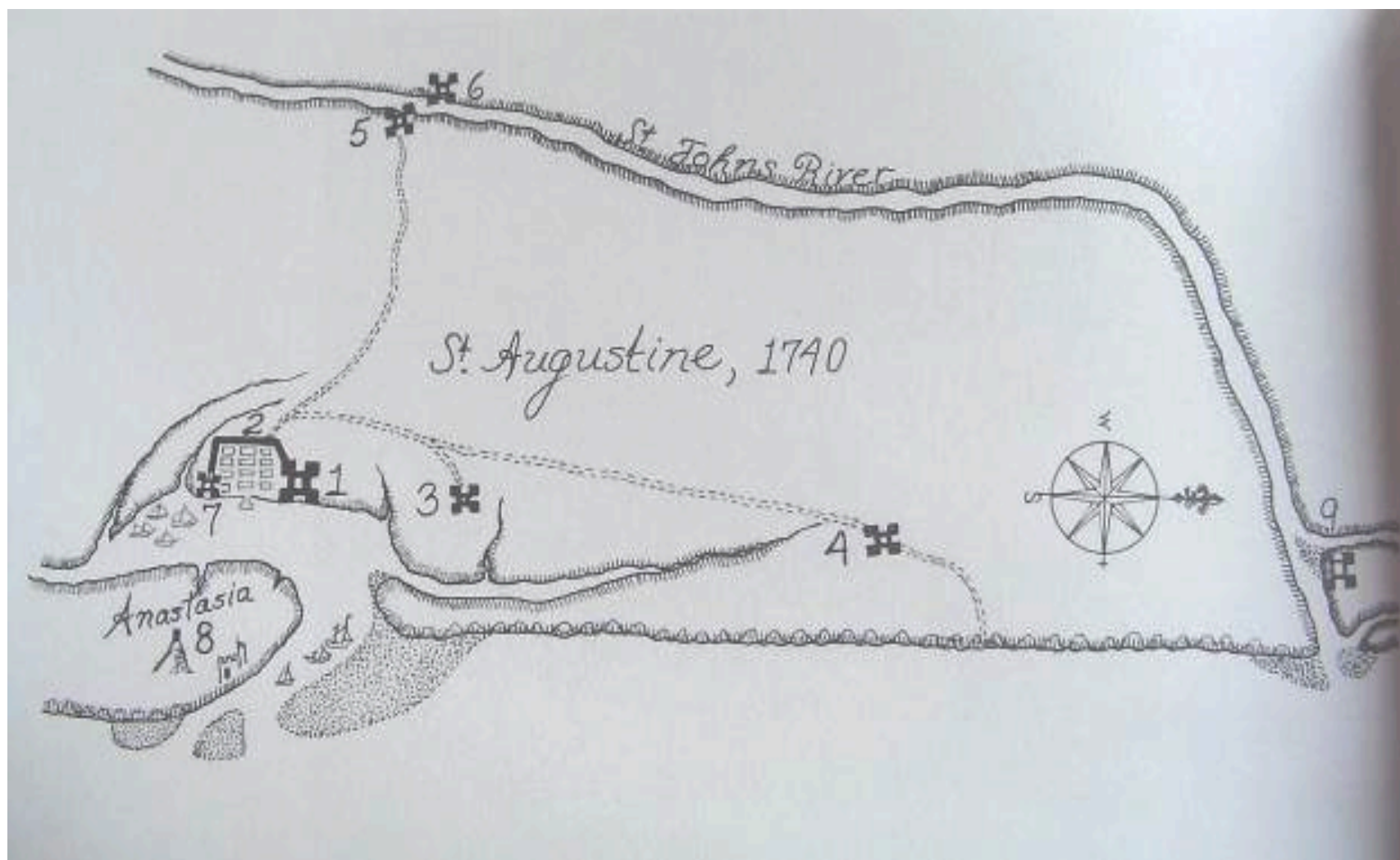


Figure 5-3. Map of East Florida's defenses. This 1740 map shows nine strategically placed defensive positions in and around St. Augustine by the Spanish. Adapted by Elsbeth Gordon after a map engraved by N.H. Toms, London, 1742, British Library 1061.d21. Elsbeth K. Gordon, *Florida's Colonial Architectural Heritage* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 234.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE SECOND SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN

The British southern campaign of 1780 holds a prominent place in American history texts and national folklore, even serving as the topic of a major motion picture unburdened by facts. Depicted by many noted Revolutionary War historians as when “the war moves south,” this campaign is traditionally viewed as the first time in the conflict that major battles took place south of the Chesapeake Bay.<sup>1</sup> But as demonstrated in Chapter 5, the campaign of 1780 involving Lord Cornwallis and Nathaniel Greene was neither the first British invasion of the South, nor—as I argue now—the second southern invasion in its entirety. Sir Henry Clinton’s siege of Charleston in 1780 was but a part of phase two of Britain’s massive second southern campaign, which originated from East Florida in 1778 and was designed to encompass the entire southern and western regions of the North American colonial holdings of Great Britain—

involving armies stationed in New York, East Florida, West Florida, and Fort Michilimackinac in the Michigan region of Quebec. In contrast to the prevailing historical interpretation, I will also argue that southern Loyalists played no part in the British war ministry’s plans for southern conquest, other than as civil authorities and part of the peace keeping effort once the army pacified an area and moved into new regions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Middlekauff, Pancake, Bailyn, Wood, Countryman, and Schama to name but a few.

<sup>2</sup> For this chapter I have altered my methodology to reflect the regionalized nature of how this campaign has been viewed by historians since the late nineteenth century. I have broken the geographic structure of this chapter into two time periods in four separate regions. This is to demonstrate that while there has been a considerable amount of historical examination of each of these areas, all but one (Clinton’s invasion of Charleston in 1780, culminating in the British defeat at Yorktown) has been relegated to regional history. What determines that one segment of a military campaign becomes a famous event of the war and another be shoved into the shadows of local history is often based upon who wrote the national story and when. What I will do in this chapter is utilize the writings of several regional historians who have pursued the less famous segments of this campaign and piece each portion of the larger puzzle into place, thereby offering an illumination of the whole of the British southern campaign in one text.

The year 1777 ended ominously for the British in North America. Saratoga is often cited as the turning point in the war, when a rag-tag legion of colonists forced an entire British army to furl its colors below Bemis Heights, in upstate New York. By the end of the year France was showing a keen interest in military intervention, General Sir William Howe found himself cut off in Philadelphia by the Delaware blockade, and “Washington’s army [was] not only intact, but aggressively seeking out his opponent.”<sup>3</sup> But that is not to suppose that the armies in the South were standing idle, as accounts of the war usually contend. This same year saw British East Florida repulse a second invasion attempt by Continental regulars and state militia, while John Stuart, though still in office in Pensacola, brought about his own political demise in 1776 and remained inconsequential to the war effort until he died on March 21, 1779. The Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine still held the large cache of arms and munitions so feared by George Washington; he knew that as long as that prize remained safe, the southern rebellion would not. The events of 1777 would not devastate the British war machine, in spite of the unexpected setback at Saratoga. Lord Germain entered 1778 with a multitude of military and diplomatic strategies in store for the new year, along with the king’s blessings on each plan. We will observe first the political theater created on the Loyalist front by the Carlisle Commission, then each segment of the second southern invasion, moving chronologically, as well as geographically from east to west.

### **The “Loyalist Front”:**

One of the most prolific myths perpetuated still by historians of the American Revolution is that the basis of the British southern campaign centered on the expectation of overwhelming civilian support from the backcountry—the other prolific myth is that the “traditional” British

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<sup>3</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 218.

southern campaign did not begin until 1780. General Sir William Howe learned in 1777 that civilian support was not dependable when he landed his army outside of Philadelphia. There the supposed “Loyalists” destroyed their crops rather than let them fall into the hands of Howe’s invading army.<sup>4</sup> Lord Germain was apprehensive of a military tactic that relied upon civilian militia then and nothing had changed by 1778 to alter his convictions. “The Loyalists never had a base to launch a counterrevolution,” argues historian John Pancake. “By 1777 any hope that Germain and the ministry may have had for Americanizing the war was at an end.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, Loyalists, rather than undergirding the British war machine, were nowhere to be found when Clinton sailed into Charleston Harbor in 1776, and burning their crops near Philadelphia in 1777. Why would the British war ministry continue to pursue this strategy of relying upon American civilians to lend significant support to the war effort? How many colossal failures should we presume Whitehall would make concerning this approach to the war?

It is almost comical that simply because deposed and politically embarrassed royal southern governors insisted there were tens of thousands of armed loyal constituents at the ready that Whitehall would launch another massive invasion into the South on that premise. Britain possessed the greatest contemporary war machine in the world, and it rarely relied on a civilian population for battlefield advice or victories. Historian Eliga Gould reminds us that Great Britain’s success in European wars of the past depended upon continent-based battlefields that were fought primarily by the armies of allied nations.<sup>6</sup> But even in this reliance upon troops that were not British, the Crown still relied upon professional soldiers. Only in Scotland, during the

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<sup>4</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 167.

<sup>5</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 113.

<sup>6</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2000), 14.



Jacobite Rebellion of 1745–1746, do we find a military strategy that relied upon civilians loyal to the Crown. But those were Scottish Highland warriors who overwhelmed their foes five-to-one, not outnumbered frontier farmers, city shopkeepers, and elite planters.<sup>7</sup>

After Saratoga, Lord North's ministry was indeed ready to sue the American colonies for peace.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that as soon as France declared war on Great Britain in 1778, King George III "immediately relegated the American war to secondary status...suggest[ing] that the government's policy of applying a military solution to the American rebellion was simplistic and shortsighted."<sup>9</sup> With such decisions being made at the highest levels, it is inconceivable that Lord Germain could have pushed through a southern invasion based on discredited royal governors who claimed undying devotion from some nebulous civilian support base. Lord Germain's actions were highly scrutinized by enemies in Parliament after his own court-martial in 1759, and now the humiliation of Saratoga.<sup>10</sup> This was no time for political risks based on unsubstantiated rumors.

But one should not presume that Lord Germain was in a lame duck role at this point in his career. There is a significant difference between the actions taken by a man who is being unceremoniously replaced and one who is fighting for his political survival. Germain was of the latter. Unfortunately for Germain's place in history, Sir William Howe was not the strong commander he was once able to portray. From Howe's correspondence there is no mention of any campaigns post-Saratoga, leaving historians to presume that the ministry was reeling from the blow of Burgoyne's defeat. But it was Howe, not Germain, who rapidly declined in stature

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 137, 139–40.

<sup>8</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 218

<sup>9</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 226.

<sup>10</sup> Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775–1783* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 187.

and emotional fortitude. By January of 1778, Howe was so keen to resign his command in North America—a posture brought on by several factors, but exacerbated by the lack of Loyalist support in Pennsylvania—that he rejected Lord Germain’s proposal for a winter offensive into Georgia and South Carolina from St. Augustine.<sup>11</sup> By this correspondence we may understand that Germain clearly designed a second southern offensive to occur as early as January–February of 1778, with East Florida as the base camp. But consider the date of the letter from Germain to Howe in which these instructions are mandated: “Letter from Lord George Germain to Sir William Howe, Sept. 3, 1777.” Lord Germain posted General Howe’s orders for a second southern offensive two and a half months before the British defeat at Saratoga. Southern campaigns were not only underway prior to Burgoyne’s Northern Campaign of 1777, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, but even before Saratoga Lord George Germain was making plans for a second large scale southern invasion. This was not designed as a face-saving effort to calm shattered nerves at home after Saratoga, but before Saratoga or any conception of a major defeat haunted the British war ministry. We must stop looking at every British action after Saratoga as a resultant reaction to Saratoga. Plans for eighteenth-century military campaigns were not cooked up overnight. They required time to set all the wheels in motion. In September of 1777, Lord Germain had no thoughts of any possibility of losing an entire army in up-state New York and desired to prompt a second front—to strike while the iron was hot, so to speak.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the second southern campaign was not conceived in desperation from out of the ashes of General Burgoyne’s fiasco. The post-Saratoga southern campaign was not an after-thought, nor were the

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<sup>11</sup> “Letter from Lord George Germain to Sir William Howe, Sept. 3, 1777,” C.O. 5/94; Howe to Germain, Jan. 16, 1778, C.O. 5/95, in Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 219.

<sup>12</sup> The one result of Saratoga that is often overlooked has little to do with the subsequent French and Spanish involvement in the war, but rather American identity. “By agreeing to formal terms with General Horatio Gates, the British commander had implicitly granted both Congress and the Continental army many of the attributes of sovereignty so assiduously denied them by the government’s apologists.” Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 194.

southern colonies subordinate in importance to the British war effort. Germain could only hope that once Clinton replaced Howe, the war for the South would regain momentum.

Clinton's first order of business, per his notice of taking command—dated March 21, 1778—was “to include the South in his plans for the ensuing campaign...the primary effort ashore was to be made in Georgia and the Carolinas.”<sup>13</sup> Even as Germain scratched out this order to Clinton, however, the Carlisle Commission was still in London, not to arrive in Philadelphia with their proposal for ending the war with the American colonists until April 12, 1778.<sup>14</sup> It should also be noted that Clinton received his orders to launch this campaign only three weeks after the commission's arrival in Philadelphia on May 8—nowhere near enough time to successfully conduct a peace negotiation of such magnitude.<sup>15</sup> The dating of these orders is critical to understanding that the Carlisle Commission's peace offering of 1778 was a feint to increase Loyalist sympathy in the colonies while Clinton launched a campaign to re-claim the South. These dates clearly demonstrate that Germain's orders for a second southern invasion were initiated prior to the Carlisle Commission's offering of an olive branch of no taxation on the colonies if they returned to the imperial fold.

Whether the peace offering was intentionally worded in a manner that would insure its failure, or there were good intentions wrapped in pragmatic pessimism for a peaceful solution to the war is still fodder for interpretive debates. Historian John Pancake reiterates that any hopes of the Carlisle Commission's objective being successful were doomed from the beginning: “[A]ny

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<sup>13</sup> Gruber, “Britain's Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 218.

<sup>14</sup> The Carlisle Commission was authorized by King George III and Parliament to supposedly negotiate a peace accord with the Continental Congress. The commission consisted of three delegates appointed by Prime Minister Lord North. They were: “Frederick Howard (fifth earl of Carlisle, a young, callow, and politically inexperienced nobleman known more for his wardrobe and gambling losses than any political leadership,” William Eden, and George Johnstone—former governor of West Florida. Keith Karawczynski, *William Henry Drayton: South Carolina Revolutionary Patriot* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 273.

<sup>15</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 410.

proposition that was acceptable to the Americans was sure to meet with violent and indignant protest from the ministry's own supporters."<sup>16</sup> Robin F.A. Fabel contends that "[t]he king doubted, quite correctly...that a peace-seeking mission would achieve anything in America and, anticipating a French alliance with the United States two months before it occurred, communicated his ideas on a new American strategy."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the king had no aspirations that this plan would be accepted by the rebel Congress and he stated as much to Prime Minister Lord North: "the king's pessimistic assumptions that the...peace commission would fail and Spain would be drawn into the war were all justified."<sup>18</sup> In the meantime, Congress's reaction to the Carlisle Commission in the drafting of a "resolution for preventing any correspondence with the enemy" is evidence enough that the proposal of peace was not even remotely acceptable.<sup>19</sup> American men and women who took up the cause of rebellion had already shed blood and gambled financial fortunes on independence. To return to the puppetry of colonial status was repugnant to these people; few did not understand this.

While one cannot doubt the historical evidence that King George III briefly considered offering peace to the rebellious colonies in an effort to focus his war machine on France, this was never an official decree that proceeded as law from the court of St. James.<sup>20</sup> It is presumed that the Carlisle Commission "was authorized to grant the colonies virtual autonomy in their

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<sup>16</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 219.

<sup>17</sup> "Letter from King George III to Lord North, January 13, 31, 1778," Sir John Fortescue, *Correspondence of George III* (London: 1927–1928), 4:17, 30–31, in Fabel, "West Florida and British Strategy in the American Revolution," in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Fabel, "West Florida and British Strategy," in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 53.

<sup>19</sup> Congress went so far as to censure Henry Laurens, president of the Congress, from any attempts to communicate with members of the commission. Karawczynski, *William Henry Drayton*, 275.

<sup>20</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 222; see also Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 407.

domestic affairs.”<sup>21</sup> But while in the colonies from April to November the commissioners met with deposed royal officials in New Jersey, Loyalists in Philadelphia, and military leaders in New York, preaching the restoration of civil authority in the name of the Crown in the British held territories.<sup>22</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell was specifically instructed by the commissioners to prepare Georgia for Loyalist civil authority as soon as the territory was pacified militarily, meaning that these commissioners of peace were fully aware that Campbell was leading an invasion fleet against Savannah in December 1778.<sup>23</sup> For a commission supposedly designed to encourage peace negotiations with the rebels, not much more could have angered Congress than a quasi-legal authority attempting to control the restoration of royal civil authority within the colonies. It was not as though the Carlisle Commission did not accomplish what it came to do; rather it pursued exactly what it set out to accomplish—promote royal civil authority where ever they could, under any circumstances possible.

Historian Eliga Gould takes their mission a step further, proclaiming that the Carlisle Commission did not come begging for peace, but rather to warn of an unchecked approach to the war if America did not desist.<sup>24</sup> Gould also argues that the Carlisle Commission’s ultimate objective was to initiate counterrevolutionary measures to the British West Indies. Freedom from taxation, not imperial authority, was the olive branch offered in the Americas, which though completely unacceptable in North America was a wonderful outpouring of imperial affection for the Caribbean sugar colonists.<sup>25</sup> Evidence that such a counterrevolution had its intended impact

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<sup>21</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 228.

<sup>22</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 376–77, 474.

<sup>23</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 474.

<sup>24</sup> Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 198.

<sup>25</sup> Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 229.

on the British West Indies may be noted in the lack of rebellious activity in the Caribbean during the war. Specifically, for example, the absence of Revolutionary conversation or discussion in any manner in the diary of Jamaican planter Thomas Thistlewood is striking. Thistlewood famously notated virtually every occurrence on Jamaica during his time on the island in specific, often horrendous, detail. Yet during the years of the American Revolution Thistlewood makes no mention whatever of rebellious talk among Jamaica's white population.<sup>26</sup> While the American rebels' struggle for independence is credited with sparking further Atlantic world revolutions, those upheavals only involved French polities. Thistlewood's silence could very well be Gould's evidence that Britain's counterrevolution was indeed factual and effective and, one might argue, the more intended target of Parliament's desire for "peace" in the Americas.

George Washington had a different opinion of the Carlisle Commission. Washington forwarded a packet of letters to Congress from Lord North stating that Parliament was in the process of offering a peace settlement. What Washington found most disturbing was that Loyalists in Philadelphia also had copies of this letter and were distributing them amongst the populace. Believing that the sole intention of the Carlisle Commission was to stir up Loyalists and gain sympathy with the non-aggressors—even with rebels who might be losing their appetite for war—Washington quickly addressed the situation. In a heated letter to Congress, Washington warned that this "insidious proceeding is certainly founded on principles of the most wicked, diabolical baseness, meant to poison the minds of the people and detach the wavering, at least, from our cause."<sup>27</sup> The commander-in-chief left no doubt to his meaning as he added that this proposal brought a "malignant influence" and "urged Congress to 'expose in the most striking

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<sup>26</sup> Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*.

<sup>27</sup> "George Washington to the President of Congress, April 18, 1778," in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (37 vols.; Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931–1940), 11:227–28, in Karawczynski, *William Henry Drayton*, 272.

manner, the injustice, delusion and fraud it contains.”<sup>28</sup> William Henry Drayton took his interpretation even further as he taunted the commission for “ben[ding] their knees” before Congress and the American people; why else, Drayton wondered, would Lord North seek terms for peace when the war was finally in the rebels’ favor.<sup>29</sup>

For too long historians have accepted the mission of the Earl of Carlisle at face value because our national perspective of the war is traditionally viewed from a New England epicenter. Consider this: once France entered the war, Great Britain never again concentrated a significant military campaign in the northern colonies. Whitehall focused on the money by sustaining the defenses of the British West Indies and continuing to pursue the recapture of the mainland South and its agricultural economy from its military bases in Florida. The French understood this philosophy well, as they only utilized northern ports to harbor their fleets out of harm’s way.

### **Phase One: Eastern Theater, 1778**

When Lord Germain put the wheels in motion for the second southern campaign he was not calculating another rebel invasion of East Florida during the summer of 1778, for summer is not a time to send an army into the swamps and estuaries south of the St. Marys River. But on June 28<sup>th</sup> just such an expedition began. General William Moultrie wrote: “It seems to be absolutely necessary for the peace of these two southern states [Georgia and South Carolina], to reduce Augustine.”<sup>30</sup> But by mid-July the remnants of the American army, half-starved and demoralized, dragged themselves out of the swamps, having penetrated the East Florida border

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<sup>28</sup> “George Washington to the President of Congress, April 18, 1778,” in Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, 11:227–28, in Karawczynksi, *William Henry Drayton*, 272–73.

<sup>29</sup> “William Henry Drayton to the Carlisle Commissioner, July 18, 1778,” in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 21, 1778.

<sup>30</sup> “A Letter to Col. Laurens, President of Congress, Charlestown, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1778,” in Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:239.

by just seventeen miles—over sixty miles away from their destination of St. Augustine. Historian Allan Gallay echoes the sentiment of General Moultrie as he notes that the failure of the third invasion of East Florida set the stage for the British invasion of Georgia in December 1778.<sup>31</sup> For General Clinton knew better than anyone that without the British military bastion of St. Augustine on the lower Atlantic coast to launch a land-based assault, a seaborne invasion of Georgia in 1778 would have no more hope for success than his previous failure at Charleston in 1776. Clinton's delay in executing Lord Germain's instructions for an immediate action against Georgia earlier in May might have secured the southern campaign's success; otherwise General Prevost would have marched out of St. Augustine that June right into the cannons of General Robert Howe's Continental troops as they prepared to invade East Florida.

George Washington suspected an attack on Savannah from St. Augustine even before the first British southern invasion in 1776.<sup>32</sup> Having now authorized three failed attempts to capture the war supplies held at the Castillo de San Marcos, Washington began planning the southern army's next attempt for the fall of 1778, to avoid the seasonal difficulties of fighting in East Florida during the summer. "As soon as Benjamin Lincoln was appointed to command the southern army in September 1778, he received disquieting reports that the British might soon launch an attack upon that region."<sup>33</sup> Washington, always labeled as an admirable military leader with only moderate skills, clung tenaciously to his instincts concerning the importance of the

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<sup>31</sup> Gallay, *The Formation of the Planter Elite*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> As Gary D. Olsen writes, "It was obvious that both loyalists and British authorities would seek to use East Florida as a base from which to launch military expeditions aimed at the re-establishment of royal government in the Southern colonies." Olson, "Thomas Brown," in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 15.

<sup>33</sup> John C. Cavanaugh, "American Military Leadership in the Southern Campaign: Benjamin Lincoln," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 102.



British base in East Florida, and rightfully so.<sup>34</sup> Once General Prevost guided the repulsion of the rebel invasion in the summer of 1778, Sir Henry Clinton felt secure in the steadfastness of a fortified base in St. Augustine from which to launch another southern campaign. By pacifying Georgia, Clinton could lay a swathe of Loyalism from St. Augustine to Charleston, facilitating an overland invasion into the upper Carolinas and Virginia.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Congress provided General Lincoln the authority to launch another campaign against St. Augustine. It was a matter of which army would strike first.

In early November, Clinton ordered the abandonment of Philadelphia, sending the 5,000 troops stationed there to assist in the conquest of French St. Lucia.<sup>36</sup> This move was only surprising to the Loyalists of Philadelphia as Clinton was supposed to have already performed this task the previous May. But his timing now was most likely motivated by French Admiral Count d’Estaing’s sailing from Boston toward the West Indies with a large fleet.<sup>37</sup> Clinton then sent another 2,000 troops to bolster the numbers in East Florida.<sup>38</sup> Loyalists in Philadelphia, once the darlings of General Howe and the Earl of Carlisle, now knew the sting of pragmatic imperial concerns as the sugar islands of the Caribbean and a second southern campaign on the mainland would take precedence over a northern prize—even one as haughty as the political capital of the

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<sup>34</sup> Even Washington fully understood his shortcomings: “my Abilities and Military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important Trust.” Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 293.

<sup>35</sup> Cavanaugh, “Benjamin Lincoln,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 102.

<sup>36</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 208; see also Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 432.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (New York: University Publishing Company, 1870), 118.

<sup>38</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 32; see also Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” 220. Pancake states that 3,000 troops were sent to St. Augustine. This is accurate; however, 1,000 of those soldiers continued on by ship to Pensacola. Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 130.

rebellious colonies.<sup>39</sup> On November 27, 1778, General Clinton unleashed Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell with the 71<sup>st</sup> Regiment, two regiments of Hessians, four Loyalist Battalions, and a small artillery company—approximately 3,500 troops aboard a fleet of thirty-seven ships—to lay siege to Savannah.<sup>40</sup> As Campbell’s invasion fleet sailed toward the Georgia capital from New York, General Augustine Prevost stomped out of the swamps of East Florida and into southern Georgia with 2,500 British regulars and East Florida militia, and 160 of Thomas Brown’s Creeks and East Florida Rangers.<sup>41</sup> The initial plan was for Prevost to arrive at Savannah by land roughly at the same time as Campbell anchored off Tybee Island at the mouth of the Savannah River. But Prevost received his orders a month late and was just entering Georgia when Campbell arrived. As Prevost fought his way past the rebel fort at Sunbury, Campbell happened upon a most fortunate incident.

A slave woman approached a British reconnaissance patrol, showing them a little known walking path used by slaves as they traversed from one plantation to another. This path allowed Campbell to secret his army into Savannah from the rear, capturing the town and scattering General Howe’s rebel army with barely a shot fired. The ease with which Campbell took Savannah characterized this phase of the invasion, bringing Georgia under British control in barely a month. Unfortunately for Prevost, Campbell is credited by most historians as the conqueror of the entire state because of the significance of Savannah to the region. Even a

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<sup>39</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 112, 113. The British “regarded the possession of the island colonies as essential for generating the wealth to wage the war and for sustaining national greatness.” O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 208. For more information see page 306n64.

<sup>40</sup> Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 435; see also Cavanaugh, “Benjamin Lincoln,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 105; see also “A Letter from Col. Huger, Savannah, December 28, 1778,” in Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:252.

<sup>41</sup> Prevost’s army increased as they marched through Georgia as many Loyalists took the opportunity to join in the victory. One British deserter reported to rebel General William Moultrie that “about 200 Georgians have already joined the enemy, most of them horsemen.” “A Letter to Col. Charles Pinckney, Purisburgh, January 16, 1779,” in Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:264.

renowned historian like Ira Gruber states that “General Augustine Prevost marched north from St. Augustine to attack Sunbury and to assist Campbell in recovering the remainder of Georgia.”<sup>42</sup> But Campbell himself notes his “supercession,” as it would be implausible for a major general to be prevailed upon to “assist” a lieutenant colonel under any circumstances, in any army.<sup>43</sup> On January 15, 1779, Prevost took command of the combined armies in Savannah and directed the remainder of the conquest of Georgia. Gruber has a keen grasp on the significance of this event as he notes that the reclamation of Georgia deprived the American rebels of a large agricultural base and port, relieved a beleaguered East Florida from further rebel invasions, and advanced the base camp for continued conquest of the southern colonies northward from St. Augustine to Savannah.<sup>44</sup> This is an important observation because it further emphasizes what this study discussed in Chapter 5 concerning the British southern campaigns: the need to have a solid military base on the Atlantic from which to launch a campaign against the next strategic site up the coast—connecting the dots up the Atlantic corridor with foundations of British sovereignty to their backs. This is why Savannah was the original target of the Clinton’s first southern campaign and why Savannah was the first target of the second campaign in 1778. Clinton learned his lesson from the disaster at Sullivan’s Island (Charleston Harbor) in 1776, and was now more patient in order to secure the conquest of the South.

Prevost secured the rural areas of Georgia by sending Campbell with approximately 1,000 troops to take Augusta, which he accomplished with very little effort.<sup>45</sup> However, on February

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<sup>42</sup> Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 221.

<sup>43</sup> Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, 120.

<sup>44</sup> “Sir Henry Clinton to Lord George Germain, Nov. 8,” No. 26, C.O. 5/96, in Gruber, “Britain’s Southern Strategy,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 221.

<sup>45</sup> “Extract of a Letter to Col. C.C. Pinckney, President of the Senate, and Member of the Council of Safety, Purisburgh, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1779,” in Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:261.

13, 1779, Campbell abandoned Augusta in full retreat for Savannah as word of General Benjamin Lincoln's rebel army of 3,600 men poured down from Charleston, with General Ashe and 1,500 men in an advanced position. Prevost did the only thing he could do to save Campbell's army and stop Lincoln in his tracks: he took 2,500 British soldiers north to seize the abandoned city of Charleston while Campbell and Lt. Colonel Mark Prevost fought their way back to Savannah, via Briar Creek.<sup>46</sup> By the time Lincoln heard of General Prevost's maneuver he had no choice but to reverse his army back to Charleston, three days behind the invading British army. General William Moultrie positioned a small rebel army between General Prevost and Charleston but felt it was best to defend the city behind its defenses rather than on open ground. Not having brought proper siege cannons or other provisions for such an endeavor, Prevost contented himself to buy time for Campbell to reach Savannah by drawing Lincoln back to Charleston. Having his bluff called by the superior numbers of Lincoln's advancing army, General Prevost retreated to Savannah, utilizing the coastal sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia. However, Lincoln eventually caught up to Prevost, forcing the British to fight their way most of the journey down the coast.<sup>47</sup> By late June, General Prevost split his army of 2,500 men in two, half of whom returned to Savannah with Prevost as the remainder dug in on Port Royal Island with Lieutenant Colonel John Maitland to maintain a foothold in South Carolina.<sup>48</sup> This foothold was intended to provide Clinton and Cornwallis a safe place to deploy ground troops when they invaded Charleston, but by June 1779 Maitland pulled back to Savannah to assist with

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<sup>46</sup> Lt. Colonel Mark Prevost was General Prevost's younger brother. General William Moultrie considered the British victory at Briar Creek devastating to rebel hopes of successfully staving off the permanent loss of Georgia. Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:321–54.

<sup>47</sup> The accounts of this action may be read in full in Lee, *Memoirs of the War*, 118–27; see also Cavanaugh, "Benjamin Lincoln," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 107–14.

<sup>48</sup> Cavanaugh, "Benjamin Lincoln," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 114.

the defenses of the city. With Prevost's entire army now securing Savannah, Lincoln regrouped his forces and awaited the French.

It is of interest to note that though General Prevost entered Georgia without intentions of advancing on Charleston, he nevertheless almost accomplished with 2,500 foot soldiers in 1778 what Clinton could not with 2,500 men and 50 ships of war in 1776.<sup>49</sup> Splitting southern rebel defenses between Charleston, Savannah, and Augusta was not only the key to successfully invading Georgia, it was a mandatory step for taking Charleston. Charleston might have been the pearl of the southern campaign, but the oyster shell that must first be cracked was Georgia. However, by late July and early August of 1779 it was clear to all concerned that victory in South Carolina depended upon the pacification of Georgia, and vice versa: Georgia could only remain pacified if rebel influences from South Carolina were not allowed to retreat south.<sup>50</sup> We see in this thinking the solidity of southern conquest attempted by the British ministry: invading Georgia was for the purpose of ultimately subduing Charleston. However, subduing Charleston and ultimately South Carolina meant securing Georgia from further rebel outbreaks; it was either a tandem approach or sure failure.

The final step of phase one in the eastern theater was the most critical: holding Savannah. There have been more than enough detailed accounts of the failed Franco/American siege of Savannah as Prevost's defenders successfully repulsed the combined armies of General Lincoln, Admiral d'Estaing, and Poland's Count Casimir Pulaski and his cavalry, a narrative that need not be repeated here. But it should be noted that concerning the siege of Savannah, "[t]he fury of Prevost's resistance had seldom been equaled during the war; not since Bunker Hill, in fact, had

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<sup>49</sup> From dispatches between General Augustine Prevost and royal governor James Wright of Georgia. Cavanaugh, "Benjamin Lincoln," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 110.

<sup>50</sup> Gruber, "Britain's Southern Strategy," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 225.

a battle been fought more furiously.”<sup>51</sup> This was the same general, after all, who defended East Florida against rebel invasions in 1777 and 1778; these experiences prepared his army well for this all-important role in the second southern invasion. Prevost fully understood that the overall success of the invasion depended upon this moment in history.

What is critical to this study is what took place after the rebels were repulsed at Savannah, as Lincoln flew back to bolster the defenses of Charleston and d’Estaing sailed off to the West Indies. Once news of Prevost’s success in holding Savannah reached Clinton in New York, he was able to focus on Charleston, the second phase of the campaign.<sup>52</sup> This is typical of Clinton’s hesitant, political style of conducting the war: let a lieutenant colonel and a foreigner (Prevost was Swiss) risk their reputations invading and holding Savannah. Once Georgia was secure, Clinton could approach Charleston as a conqueror—sterilizing the blemish on his military record from his defeat there in 1776. But the point here is not Clinton’s ego; it is the fact that the invasion of Charleston would not have taken place without Prevost’s East Florida-based army’s successful defense of Savannah. Historian Paul Smith notes that Clinton’s plans for the attack on Charleston were not even completed until he was assured that Savannah would hold: “When Sir Henry Clinton learned that the siege of Savannah had been lifted...he immediately set about completing preparations for the expedition to South Carolina.”<sup>53</sup> And it was not only Clinton who perceived the importance of Prevost’s success. “When Germain learned that d’Estaing had laid siege to Savannah, he merely awaited the outcome of the attack, for the government’s strategy rested upon mounting an offensive against the Carolinas, and the possession of Georgia

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<sup>51</sup> Cavanaugh, “Benjamin Lincoln,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Cavanaugh, “Benjamin Lincoln,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats*, 125.

was essential to that operation”<sup>54</sup> John Pancake re-emphasizes the connecting-the-dots strategy of the southern Atlantic coastal region as he writes that “[n]ews of the repulsed attack on Savannah was not only a welcome note of victory but [Clinton] was now assured of an advance base of operations from which to launch his attack on South Carolina.”<sup>55</sup> There was another factor in the securing of Savannah for the Crown that is often overlooked: “The English have taken possession of Savannah in Georgia, and are extending themselves in that State so as to form a connexion with, and establish an influence over, the Indian Nations that border all that country.”<sup>56</sup> For the southern tribes and confederacies this was an enormous victory as they sensed once again that the British might prevail in North America and this time southern Native Americans would be on the winning side. No more encroachments of their lands by the “Virginians,” as Whitehall would control the frontier and bring peace to the Indian nations. Another factor that served to calm Native American concerns for their future was that the office of the Superintendent of Southern Indian Affairs remained in Pensacola, keeping matters of Anglo/Indian relations further and further removed from the war as battle lines advanced northward.

### **Phase One: Western Theater, 1778**

Discussing western campaigns with Revolutionary War enthusiasts is a quick way to determine who is a purist and who has painted themselves into the corner of regional history. With the exception of George Rogers Clark’s famous march to capture Fort Vincennes in 1779, the concept of western campaigns is more closely associated with Daniel Boone. But that is only because West Florida history is relegated to regional studies rather than the place it deserves in

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<sup>54</sup> Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats*, 125.

<sup>55</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 57.

<sup>56</sup> Thomson, Spain: *Forgotten Ally*, 73.

the overarching Revolutionary War discussion. Once France entered the war Whitehall did not sit idly, waiting to see if Governor Galvez of New Orleans—a military man who was already willing to test the limits of the Treaty of Paris, 1763—would try to gain an upper hand on the Mississippi River. Thus, as mentioned earlier, when General Clinton sent 5,000 troops to St. Lucia, 3,500 to Savannah, and 2,000 more to St. Augustine in November 1778, he also sent “one thousand troops under Brigadier General John Campbell to Pensacola, at the same time that he dispatched...Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell to take possession of Savannah.”<sup>57</sup> At first glance this has all the trappings of a defensive maneuver, which is exactly what Clinton wanted Galvez to think.

In January 1778, Congress sent Captain James Willing on a series of raids down the Mississippi River until he had hit each British river port north of New Orleans. British troops were dispatched from Pensacola, partly to restore order and partly to ensure that the loyal British subjects along the Mississippi Valley remained loyal.<sup>58</sup> But Whitehall had nothing to fear in that regard. Willing’s raids “incensed the inhabitants of West Florida and increased their animosity toward both the Americans and the Spanish... The neutral or pro-American settlers on the Mississippi River turned loyalist in sentiment as they deplored the tactics of the American captain.”<sup>59</sup> Willing became such a problem to Governor Galvez that Oliver Pollack, an American businessman in New Orleans and financier of many of the new nation’s shipments of war supplies up the Mississippi from New Orleans, was finally forced to beseech Congress to withdraw the ill-mannered Willing or face Spanish financial reprisals.

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<sup>57</sup> Siebert, “Loyalists in West Florida,” 472.

<sup>58</sup> Dewey, “British Trade in West Florida, 1763–1783,” 136–37.

<sup>59</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 78, 88.



But Sir Henry Clinton did not have West Florida's defenses in mind when he bolstered the number of troops assigned to the colony. Great Britain was presuming that the Family Pact between the Houses of Bourbon in Paris and Madrid would repeat itself from the 1760s, and thus prepared for a surprise attack on Galvez at New Orleans.<sup>60</sup> As uncharacteristically aggressive as such a plan might have been for Sir Henry Clinton, it was a move not atypical of Lord Germain's Caribbean maneuvers. "Germain encouraged the island governors not only to 'preserve and protect' their colonies 'but to act offensively' against the enemy."<sup>61</sup> But the Caribbean was not the only target Lord Germain had in store for such an aggressive-minded governor and the troops at his disposal: "He even encouraged [Governor Dalling of Jamaica] to consider campaigns in New Orleans and in the Mississippi River."<sup>62</sup> It was not as though Galvez had not taken steps to provoke these actions. In addition to his confiscation of British ships and cargo on the Mississippi River, and prior to Spain's declaration of war in June 1779, Galvez proactively enticed the Choctaw nation to relinquish their loyalties to Great Britain and join in league with his Spanish garrisons that were making preparations for war.<sup>63</sup> In writing of the intended British attack on New Orleans in 1778, Robin F.A. Fabel notes Governor Galvez's concern for the build-up of British ships on the Mississippi River and the weakness of the defenses at New Orleans: "'It is physically almost impossible for me to undertake much defense,' he wrote. The

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<sup>60</sup> Siebert, "Loyalists in West Florida," 475.

<sup>61</sup> "Lord Germain to Governor Lord McCartney, June 25, 1779," *McCartney Papers*, WLCL, in O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 192.

<sup>62</sup> "Lord Germain to Governor John Dalling, October 30, 1780," *Germain Papers*, vol. 19, f. 235, in O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 192.

<sup>63</sup> Siebert, "Loyalists in West Florida," 474.

force which he found so alarming...consisted merely of two sloops of war, the *Hound* and the *Sylph*.”<sup>64</sup>

By the late 1770s Spain was not the formidable foe it had once been in the days of Queen Elizabeth and Sir Francis Drake. Declining in power but bonded by a familial link to France, Spain had two distinct advantages over Great Britain in the battle for the Mississippi River: 1) Spain had but one foe in North America—Britain—while the British faced both Houses of Bourbon and the pesky American rebels; and, 2) Britain’s primary military focus was on protecting the British West Indies and reclaiming the upper mainland South. West Florida was of little concern in the grand scheme of the British war ministry’s plans, other than to serve as a large land barrier between Spain’s vast holdings west of the Mississippi River and Britain’s intended expansion to the great river’s eastern banks. For Spain, however, “the objectives of Spanish arms and diplomacy were to control the Mississippi and to monopolize the Gulf of Mexico by getting back the Floridas.”<sup>65</sup>

This may well explain why the British never launched an attack on New Orleans in the fall of 1778, which was Clinton’s purpose in sending 1,000 reinforcements to Pensacola from New York. If a West Florida invasion of a still neutral New Orleans had occurred the British would have begun the first phase of the southern campaign with a two-pronged attack striking north out of St. Augustine and west from Pensacola. We know of the success General Augustine Prevost and Lt. Colonel Archibald Campbell experienced in Georgia, but what of General John Campbell’s western arm of the offensive? The answer to that question is not found on the battlefields of Louisiana or the war room at Whitehall, but rather in a port city in the Caribbean.

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<sup>64</sup> Fabel, “West Florida and British Strategy,” in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 53.

<sup>65</sup> Fabel, “West Florida and British Strategy,” in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 57.

In her groundbreaking study of the great smallpox epidemic that ravaged North America from 1775 to 1782, Elizabeth A. Fenn pinpoints the failure of the New Orleans invasion of 1778 to events that occurred long before the strike force ever saw the white sands of Pensacola: “a combined force of Maryland loyalists and German Waldeckers...sailed from New York with the intention of reinforcing the British post at Pensacola. Thanks to their years spent in Europe, the Waldeckers were largely immune to the Variola virus, but the Maryland contingent was not.”<sup>66</sup> The Marylanders were so sick by the time they reached Pensacola that they could not disembark their ships until February 22, having lost as many as fifty percent of their ranks in some companies. From Pensacola, Creek traders picked up the virus and spread the deadly disease throughout the Creek and Cherokee lands in Alabama and Georgia, all the way to Savannah, via the trade routes through Augusta.<sup>67</sup> With a smallpox epidemic decimating his rank and file, Campbell made no effort whatever to form an attack on New Orleans and the southern invasion lost its western prong. Against the persistent idea that the Floridas held no strategic significance during the American Revolution, consider the complexion of the southern theater as 1778 melted into 1779 had Campbell been able to march: the entire lower South, from Natchez on the Mississippi River to Savannah, would be in British hands. But it was not to be so.

Governor Galvez wasted no time once Spain declared war on Great Britain and set out from New Orleans for Manchac on the Mississippi River on the morning of August 27, 1779.<sup>68</sup> Galvez understood that New Orleans was in a position of defenselessness by pulling virtually all of his troops from the city and heading up river. But he did not have enough troops to defend the

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<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775–1782* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 114.

<sup>67</sup> Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 114–16; see map in Fenn, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels*, 151.

town from a British invasion regardless, so an offensive seemed the only logical strategy. He was only fortunate that disease among the British troops in Pensacola had spared New Orleans for this length of time.

Manchac was his first target for two basic reasons: 1) it was the first British fort he would encounter; and, 2) it was at the Iberville junction with the Mississippi River at Manchac that the British still hoped to divert the flow of the mighty river away from New Orleans. In Chapter One we observed the British engineering plans to re-route the Mississippi River down the Iberville and Amite Rivers into Lake Maurepas, then on to Lake Pontchartrain and into the Gulf of Mexico. As this plan had been on British drawing boards since the early 1760s, it is inconceivable that the Spanish had no knowledge of these intentions—spying was one of the chief occupations in Revolutionary New Orleans. It was in January 1779 that Governor Chester of West Florida called for a renewal of this project, which meant that Galvez may well have believed that New Orleans was on borrowed time when he launched his invasion of the Mississippi Valley the following August. The consequences for New Orleans if this project were to succeed were much more critical than just the loss of river trade and traffic. If only half of the great river's flow were diverted as planned, the impact on the water levels of Lake Pontchartrain would have been catastrophic as the overflow sought lower ground, trapping New Orleans between the lake and the Mississippi River. For New Orleans this “engineering project” represented the eighteenth-century equivalent of the atomic attack on Hiroshima in 1945.

Thus, Galvez's offensive up the river was also a defensive maneuver to save New Orleans, and it worked: “[General] John Campbell had been compelled to dissipate his scanty forces in a manner that was strategically unsound.” By adhering to the pleas of British inhabitants along the Mississippi River, Campbell thinned his anemic numbers at Pensacola and Mobile in an effort to

canvas the second largest colony in the British Empire. The folly of this maneuver cost the Crown not only the Mississippi River but eventually the Gulf Coast as well. Meanwhile, in a letter dated June 25, 1779—again, prior to Spain’s declaration of war—Lord Germain continued to press Campbell to attack New Orleans, “assuring him that [Sir Peter] Parker was under orders to assist him.” In fact, from 1778 until the fall of Pensacola in 1781, “Germain repeatedly urged the seizure of New Orleans from West Florida.”<sup>69</sup> But this point was moot, as both Campbell and Parker knew that to risk sending ships into the Gulf of Mexico in the heart of hurricane season was absurd; thus, Campbell and what remained of his command hunkered down—split yet again between Mobile and Pensacola.

After subduing Manchac, the Spanish struck next at Baton Rouge, and then Natchez; so swift were Galvez’s victories that General Campbell heard of the attacks before he was even aware that Galvez left New Orleans.<sup>70</sup> While this took place, the American rebel army contributed the northern arm of a two-prong maneuver with their new Spanish allies as George Rogers Clark invaded the area now known as Illinois, thus strangling the Mississippi River from both ends.<sup>71</sup> By the time Campbell considered a retaliatory strike on New Orleans, Galvez was back in the city awaiting reinforcements from New Spain for a raid on Mobile. Though reinforcements from Jamaica did eventually arrive in Pensacola Bay in December 1779, the effort would be no match for the overwhelming numbers of Galvez’s invasion fleet from Havana. Meanwhile, the Mississippi River was lost; Campbell could do nothing but wait.

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<sup>69</sup> For all quotes in this paragraph see Fabel, “West Florida and British Strategy,” in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 58–59.

<sup>70</sup> Siebert, “Loyalists in West Florida,” 475.

<sup>71</sup> Dewey, “British Trade in West Florida, 1763–1783”, 142–44.

## **Phase Two: Eastern Theater, 1780**

On March 29, 1780, General Sir Henry Clinton brought an invasion fleet into Charleston Harbor for the second time in the American Revolution. The commencement of phase two of the second southern campaign was under way, only this time Clinton was better prepared; smarter. Having learned first-hand that the American rebel army, though not pretty, was capable of inflicting serious damage, Clinton made adjustments that were critical to the success of this second venture. He and Cornwallis arrived in the same fleet from New York, avoiding a maritime rendezvous. The invasion force recuperated and re-provisioned in Savannah before sailing back to South Carolina, since Cape Fear offered little comforts and no supplies in 1776. Though Lt. Colonel John Maitland abandoned Port Royal Island in order to assist in the defense of Savannah, Maitland's reconnaissance of the area allowed Clinton's marines to locate a safe landing zone; in 1776 Clinton dumped his land forces on an island surrounded by water too deep to ford, derailing the ground assault on Fort Sullivan. Clinton ordered Prevost to send reinforcements from Savannah and Augusta for the siege of Charleston, where as in 1776 Clinton had no such support due to John Stuart's intervention in Thomas Brown's efforts.<sup>72</sup> None of these alterations to Clinton's original plan would have been possible without a solid base-camp in East Florida from which to control the Atlantic seaboard. As offensive operations prepared to transpire, Clinton was in command of 10,000 troops (8,708 disembarked from the ships so the number coming from Savannah and Augusta was approximately 1,300). Now poised to attack Charleston from a position of strength, unlike his pathetic effort in 1776, Clinton opted

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<sup>72</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 60.

to engage the city from the west, as had Prevost earlier, thus not risking pesky interference from His Majesty's admirals.<sup>73</sup>

Clinton learned all of the lessons necessary to invade Charleston, but he had not learned any of the lessons necessary to pacify the South; a mistaken philosophy that Cornwallis would inherit and perfect beyond even Clinton's imagination. John Pancake reminds us that every British general involved in the American Revolution was blind to what lay beyond their own objectives, and Clinton was no different. For example, Clinton depleted Prevost's forces in Georgia in order to overwhelm—not defeat, but overwhelm—Charleston for the sake of his own vanity for what occurred in 1776.<sup>74</sup> But, as we observed earlier concerns in the dispatches between General Prevost and Governor James Wright, to leave Georgia unprotected for the purpose of re-claiming South Carolina would simply allow the defeated Carolinians to seek refuge back in Georgia, which is exactly what happened.

When observing the various British campaigns of the American Revolution—Clinton's southern campaign of 1776, Burgoyne's northern campaign of 1777, and now the second southern campaign of 1778–1781—the underlying theme for what eventually became rebel victories on all three accounts is not British incompetency, but British arrogance. The Howe brothers, Burgoyne, Clinton, and Cornwallis all had but one primary goal: easy victory on the battlefield and glory at home. The strategy with which each of these campaigns was designed had all the trappings of victory, save one vital detail—rebel determination. The one lesson that should have been learned from the first major conflict at Bunker (Breed's) Hill was the rebels'

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<sup>73</sup> In 1776 Clinton was at constant odds with Sir Peter Parker during the failed attack on Charleston Harbor. Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 62.

<sup>74</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 60.

ability to inflict such loss on British regulars that just a moral victory could sustain the day. This would be the lasting tale of Cornwallis's campaign throughout the Carolinas.

As for the famous "Loyalist strategy" mythologized over the centuries, the British ministry abandoned any concept of utilizing Loyalist militia to facilitate winning the war after Lord Howe's experiences in Philadelphia the preceding year. The southern campaign of 1778–1781 called for the regular army to conquer the land and win the peace. This left Loyalist militias to serve as a peacekeeping force in the pacified regions, allowing the British army to pursue combatant armies.<sup>75</sup> This seems a more likely use of southern colonial forces within the British military system, especially given Cornwallis's attitude toward militias. Loyalists, in spite of their enthusiastic support of the Crown typically faced indifference, lack of respect, and even contempt from professional British soldiers. Thomas Brown's East Florida Rangers are a classic example of a Loyalist regiment treated critically by superior officers, poorly fed, and badly equipped—a behavior that ceased only once General Prevost gained immediate command of the regiment. Given that British officers were generally aristocrats, with the superior officers often being landed noblemen, their overall disdain of provincials flowed downhill through the ranks of the British military system with gusto. Burgoyne, Howe, and Clinton openly expressed a complete lack of faith in the ability of colonial born citizens to conduct themselves as proper British soldiers.<sup>76</sup>

This is why the postulation that the British military invaded South Carolina based upon the supposition of Loyalist militia support is nonsensical. This theory stems from two disconnected

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<sup>75</sup> While this concept looked good on paper it was never realized in the field. Clinton left Georgia virtually unprotected and Cornwallis never succeeded in pacifying the countryside. Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 87.

<sup>76</sup> Considering that the average eighteenth-century British soldier was motivated to service by impressment, the arrogance of such a mind-set seems comical today. Pancake, *1777*, 113.



events that had nothing to do with the second southern invasion: 1) the incorporation of Loyalists in the first southern campaign of 1776—a strategy that failed miserably; and, 2) General Howe’s lamentations at the lack of Loyalist outpouring upon his arrival in Philadelphia. Howe, after all, landed 10 miles outside of Philadelphia, completely unmolested, and marched into the capital city unchallenged. His angst over the dearth of Loyalists at his landing had more to do with glory and parades than military necessity. “The whole rationale for the [southern] campaign was for loyalists to be organized primarily as a defensive force whenever the regular army had gained control of a desired area. Only then could the loyal militia be expected to play a useful and realistic role.”<sup>77</sup>

John Pancake argues a different perspective of counterrevolution during the American War of Independence than Eliga Gould. Gould teaches that it was the British government who instituted a counterrevolutionary movement by instituting the abolishment of all taxes in all British colonies. Thus, the counterrevolution lay in Britain’s pre-emptive strike to ward off the spread of rebellion to the Caribbean. Pancake, however, supports the concept that the presence of British troops was meant to inspire a counterrevolution among the Loyalist faithful, just as Thomas Brown predicted in 1775. But not in the sense of overthrowing rebel armies on the battlefield; rather by replacing rebel governments once the British military pacified a region. Then Loyalist militias could be left behind to ensure the peace. This is consistent with the barrage of comments by British generals concerning their lack of faith in militias on the battlefield. However, this is by no means an attempt to say that Loyalist militias did not participate in British battlefield encounters. That would be counterfactual to the historical record, as militias were utilized—but only when absolutely necessary. However, do not confuse

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<sup>77</sup> “Clinton to Germain, August 25, 1780,” *Clinton Papers*, WLCL, in Smith, *Rebels and Redcoats*, 156–57.

provincial regiments with militias, as the former was a professional military unit organized from colonial ranks, while the latter were colonial volunteers.<sup>78</sup> Provincial regiments were no better considered by British regulars than colonial militias, though they were viewed as being much higher up the proverbial totem pole and utilized in virtually every battle in the American Revolution. The point here is to say that the primary function of Loyalist militias and civil personnel within Whitehall's scheme for reconquest of the South from 1778 to 1781 was in a post-pacification role.

But in his orchestration of this scheme, General Clinton personally activated the unthreading of the fabric that wove this process together by first depleting Georgia of British troops—militia, provincial regiments, and British regulars—and second by vacating the Carolinas long before the task of pacification was complete. General Clinton was obsessed with solidifying his place in history by leading Great Britain to final victory over the French and Washington's American colonists and believed, quite correctly, that the war would culminate in the Chesapeake Bay area. He put his mind to work establishing a base in the region around Yorktown, Virginia.<sup>79</sup> Militarily, no campaign in the southern colonies could hope to be successful without a systematic conquest of the Atlantic coast from south to north: St. Augustine-to-Savannah-to-Charleston-to-Wilmington-to-New Bern-to-Norfolk, like links in a well-constructed chain. But politically, the jewel of the mainland South was Virginia and the Chesapeake.

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<sup>78</sup> Rene Chartrand, *American Loyalist Troops, 1775–84* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 36–39.

<sup>79</sup> Not until the modern-era of technologically enhanced warfare could armies accurately intercept one another. During the Revolution many battles occurred where they did for no better reason than the site just happened to be where the two armies stumbled upon one another. But it was no accident that Cornwallis made for Yorktown because Clinton had set his sights on the area and Cornwallis was determined to be in on the victory. This is also why generals Washington and Rochambeau knew where to find the British army, as secrets of this nature were rarely well kept. Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 87.

One can never deny the political importance of Virginia during this era, given that it was Richard Lee who first broached the suggestion of independence to Congress, George Washington who became the first commander-in-chief of the Continental army, Thomas Jefferson who wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, and James Madison who would soon pen the majority of the U.S. Constitution; the Revolutionary leadership in Virginia was so strong that four of the first five presidents of the new nation were Virginians. With glory on the battlefield leading to great reward at home in England, no greater treasure could be had than to bring Virginia to its knees. Clinton's purpose for wanting to bring the war to a successful conclusion in Virginia was to confirm Britain's military strength on the battlefield while simultaneously curtailing the substantial rebel commerce in the Chesapeake region.<sup>80</sup> It would also allow Clinton to sit quietly in New York while Cornwallis slugged it out in the swamps and piedmont of the Carolinas, then swoop in for the highly celebrated "kill" just as he had done in Charleston after Prevost laid the groundwork in Georgia. Clinton believed that the final blow to the rebellion, at least in the South, would be delivered in Virginia on the Chesapeake, which very well explains Cornwallis's urgency to rid himself of the war in the Carolina backcountry without actually accomplishing his task of pacification: he wanted to be physically present when the presumed final blow to the rebellion took place. This not only explains Cornwallis's hastily orchestrated trek to Virginia with few positive results, but his overall attitude toward the stiff-necked resistance he encountered along the way.

Historians often use the analogy of a mother and child when referencing the relationship of the metropole to its colonies. The Howe brothers' approach to the American Revolution followed that course, as an enabling mother who was willing to discipline a brooding child but not to the

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<sup>80</sup> Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution*, 87.

point of severe punishment. Cornwallis was not that kind of parent. Cornwallis moved into the South like a harsh father dealing with a pubertal, delinquent adolescent—wild, uncontrollable, and filled with the hormones of independence. Neither Cornwallis nor his general staff had any plans of sparing the rod.<sup>81</sup>

In the beginning of the campaign the rebel forces fell with seemingly little effort, providing Cornwallis with a false sense of rapid victory, followed by civil stability. “Within days after the fall of Charleston, Cornwallis occupied Augusta, Ninety Six and Camden and established smaller garrisons at Rocky Mount, Cheraw, and Georgetown.... This display of force seemed to effectively discourage resistance.”<sup>82</sup> But one critical circumstance occurred that reversed the fortunes of war in the Carolinas more than any one thing: Cornwallis’s early success brought Major General Nathaniel Greene to the fore of the American southern army. In no other instance did a change of command, on either side of the Atlantic, make such a tremendous impact on the outcome of the war. Greene’s tactics frustrated Cornwallis to the point of despair—he convoluted the objective of his mission from pacifying the South to reaching Virginia as quickly as possible; resultantly, the latter would not equal the former.

As a result, Cornwallis accomplished little, other than to successfully make his way to Yorktown but at a cost dear in lives, supplies, and morale. This trek northward even managed to dampen Loyalists’ spirits for warfare to the point of paucity. The rebel victory at King’s Mountain, North Carolina, was so overwhelming and severe that it served both as “a sort of climax to the partisan effort, lifting Patriot spirits, but it bit deeply into the British effort to

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<sup>81</sup> The Howe brothers, Admiral Richard Lord Howe and General Sir William Howe, were given command of the British army and navy from the onset of the American Revolution until February 1778. They were dedicated to a concept of colonial capitulation followed by reconciliation to the Crown, even after the Declaration of Independence made such an option virtually impossible. Pancake, *1777*, 39.

<sup>82</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 69.

organize a counterrevolution.”<sup>83</sup> The sloppiness and ineffectiveness of the British campaign through the Carolinas can only be explained by Cornwallis’s haste to be somewhere else. By the time Lord Charles arrived on the banks of the Chesapeake only Savannah and Charleston remained under British control, and that was primarily due to the presence of the British navy. Where Prevost’s East Florida army succeeded in holding the Atlantic corridor from St. Augustine to Charleston, Cornwallis failed to finish the job. Cornwallis was so ineffective in North Carolina that he not only failed to defeat his enemies, he raced through the region so hastily that he never controlled any portion of the colony for longer than three weeks; thus, he never established a civil government or a Loyalist militia to ensure its security.<sup>84</sup> In short, Cornwallis failed at every possible facet of the campaign, rushing to find his place in history at Yorktown where he succeeded in a manner he never hoped to find.

### **Phase Two: Western Theater, 1780**

As Clinton’s invasion fleet approached Charleston, the final prong of the British pincer movement was making its way down the Mississippi River from the northernmost tip of Michigan’s “mitt” toward what we know today as St. Louis. Originally, this campaign was to take place in early 1779, in conjunction with Campbell’s attack on New Orleans and Prevost’s conquest of Georgia. This would have brought to the British invasion of the South in 1778–1779 a complete encirclement of the lower portions of the region; everything southward from St. Louis on the Mississippi River to Savannah on the Atlantic coast. But there were several factors that foiled this plan other than smallpox in Pensacola. Major Patrick Sinclair’s posting as commander at Fort Michilimackinac, as well as his instructions for his role in the campaign

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<sup>83</sup> Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 139.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, *Rebels and Redcoats*, 155.

down the Mississippi, were mandated in time for a January 1779 expedition. But due to contrary assignments in London, sailing schedules, and storms in the Atlantic, Sinclair did not arrive in Quebec until late 1779. At that point frozen and hazardous conditions on the Great Lakes delayed Sinclair's arrival at Michilimackinac almost an entire year after being awarded the assignment. By that time, Galvez and Clark had locked down the upper and lower Mississippi Valley and Campbell was hunkered into a defensive position on the Gulf Coast. While a new strategy would need to be developed for the Mississippi River campaign, Sinclair's orders could remain intact as his participation in the original plan was never exposed.

In this western frontier campaign the British were employing everyone from Loyalists and traders to Indians for "the chance to overcome their ancient enemies, the Illinois tribes."<sup>85</sup> Major Sinclair assigned to Captain Harry Bird the task of confronting George Rogers Clark at the Falls of the Ohio River.<sup>86</sup> The "last operation [of the campaign] was given to a detachment descending from Fort Chicago...centering their attack on the Illinois River."<sup>87</sup> Once again, it was arrogance that brought this arm of the campaign to a screeching halt, giving it no more credence to Revolutionary War historians than Campbell's stymied attack on New Orleans in 1778. Sinclair boasted that "[t]he reduction of Vincennes (St. Louis) by surprise, from the ease of admission of Indians at that place, and from assault from those without, having for its defense, as reported, only twenty men and twenty brass cannon, will be less difficult than holding it afterwards."<sup>88</sup> Now incorporated into phase two of the second southern campaign, Sinclair's western expedition

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<sup>85</sup> "Sinclair Report," *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771–1781*, in Caughey, *Bernardo de Galvez in Louisiana*, 164.

<sup>86</sup> *Michigan Pioneer Historical Collections* (Lansing, 1872), X 395, in James Alton James, *Oliver Pollock: The Life and Times of an Unknown Patriot* (New York, 1937), 206–07.

<sup>87</sup> "Papers from the Canadian Archives, 1778–1783," *Collection of the Wisconsin State Historical Society* (Madison, 1855), XI, 151, in James, *Oliver Pollock*, 207.

<sup>88</sup> "Sinclair to Haldiman, February 15, 1780," *Collection of the Wisconsin State Historical Society* (Madison, 1855), XI, 148, in Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally*, 196.

was believed to be crucial to Cornwallis's success nearer the coast. Think of this campaign in terms of the Civil War and Ulysses S. Grant's incursion into the South, via the Mississippi River at Vicksburg. However, unlike the Union army eighty years later, the British held the advantage of also establishing an extensive beachhead on the Atlantic from St. Augustine to Charleston. The plan called for Cornwallis to pacify the Carolinas South to North in coordination with Sinclair pacifying the Mississippi Valley from North to South. If all went according to plan, Germain still believed that Campbell could attack New Orleans and Clinton would inflict the final blow in Virginia. But all did not go according to plan. In fact, nothing went according to plan.

Governor Galvez's strike up the Mississippi River was so swift that Lord Germain was still under the presumption that New Orleans was defenseless even after Galvez returned; Campbell was going nowhere. Sinclair made his way around Clark in the Illinois country but was easily defeated by the Spanish garrison stationed at St. Louis. The Mississippi River thus remained a Spanish stronghold, deflecting no rebel troops whatever from the southern backcountry war. By the time Cornwallis reached Yorktown no campaign of phase two—in either the eastern or western theaters—found any lasting momentum of success. In fact, in the western theater, the British were fully on the defensive from 1780 on.

Before it is thought that these western campaigns held no serious concerns to the Revolutionary War effort, it is interesting to note that George Washington kept a keen eye on what was taking place along the Gulf Coast and Mississippi Valley, and for good reason. In a letter to Major General Benjamin Lincoln on February 27, 1780, Washington wrote: "Though perhaps it may not be probable it is not impossible, that the British General [Clinton]...on hearing of the progress of the Spaniards in the Floridas may suspend his original plan and turn

his attention that way.”<sup>89</sup> While he was clearly grasping at straws in his hopes that Cornwallis might be deterred, Washington was fully aware of the significance of this arm of the British southern invasion. Washington went on to say, “If the British lose possessions in the South—they will be amply compensated by the full acquisition of Georgia and South Carolina; both of which are so weak as to be in no small danger.”<sup>90</sup> This is a significant comment, in that Washington refers to the Floridas as “the South.” For centuries historians have referred to the Revolutionary “South” as those of the thirteen colonies extending from the Chesapeake down to Georgia. But Washington’s reference demonstrates that the perspective of the 18th-century man applied to geopolitical boundaries that encompassed the whole of the geographical theater of the war, not just the region of the thirteen colonies mythologized in American history.

On February 5, 1780, while Sinclair was making his way down to St. Louis, Galvez began his siege of Mobile Bay. Again, the Spanish victory was swift as the town and fort fell on March 14. Galvez pulled back to New Orleans to regroup, and then sailed to Havana to organize the strike on Pensacola. “An armada of sixty-seven ships carrying six thousand troops left Havana on October, 16, 1780, only to be dispersed by an enormously long and destructive hurricane four days later.”<sup>91</sup> Campbell mistakenly interpreted the absence of Galvez’s ships on his horizon to be a sign of Spanish fatigue and figured to re-take Mobile on January 7, 1781, from the garrison holding the town. But the Spanish troops were anything but fatigued and disposed of Campbell’s

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<sup>89</sup> Washington’s footnote to this letter: “The morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> of September took the [British] Fort of Mantchak by storm. Baton Rouge fort fell Sept. 21 and that of ‘Painmure’ at Natchez was included in the surrender. [British] Prisoners were 550 regular troops, 8 vessels and other boats and 50 sailors.” Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, 18:55–56.

<sup>90</sup> Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, 16:240.

<sup>91</sup> Fabel, “West Florid and British Strategy,” in Proctor, *Eighteenth-Century Florida*, 62.



smaller expeditionary force with ease.<sup>92</sup> Pensacola, however would not be so easy. With the bay's natural defenses and the length of time Campbell had to prepare his defenses, the British were able to fend off the Spanish invasion for sixty-one days, from March 9 to May 8, 1781. Were it not for a direct hit on the powder magazine at the heart of the British defense network, the battle might have raged on indeterminately. Spain now controlled the Mississippi River from St. Louis to New Orleans and one half of their desired possessions on the Gulf Coast. Governor Tonyn of East Florida had no delusions that his colony would be spared by Señor Galvez.

When Spanish invasion forces left Havana for Pensacola in February 1781, a second invasion fleet left at the same time and place for St. Augustine. But the eastern arm of the invasion landed inexplicably on Providence Island in the Bahamas. Even George Washington presumed that St. Augustine and the treasure of gunpowder and munitions kept in the Castillo de San Marcos were the obvious targets of this Spanish attack.<sup>93</sup> From a British and American—both rebel and Loyalist—perspective this was seemingly one of the most monumental blunders of the entire war, for who better than the Spanish would know of St. Augustine's weaknesses? Then again, who better would know the town's strengths? The Spanish already knew what the Americans failed to learn in three invasion attempts. Spain designed and improved the city's defenses for two hundred years; they knew that St. Augustine could not be taken by force. Governor Tonyn, however, was not eager to entrust the safety of his capital—thus his colony—to Spanish ingenuity. In addition to the years spent reinforcing the town's defenses, on February 27, 1781, Tonyn acquired the power of a prohibitory proclamation allowing him to withhold all provisions, gifts, and essentials to the Seminole nation if they did not actively participate in the

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<sup>92</sup> Dewey, "British Trade in West Florida, 1763–1783", 146.

<sup>93</sup> The George Washington Papers, "George Washington to Jean B. Donatien, and Comte de Rochambeau, and and Charles Louis d'Arsac, Chevalier de Ternay, New Windsor, December 15, 1780.  
[http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/ \(gw200526\)](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gw200526)

defense of East Florida against a Spanish threat from the west.<sup>94</sup> But a Spanish invasion of East Florida never materialized as Galvez opted to forgo an assault on St. Augustine. The war had come full circle to East Florida, once the prestigious spearhead of Britain's greatest military campaign the colony now stood alone, bordered by water and foreign armies.

By the end of 1781, the war was virtually over and the second southern campaign a dismal failure on all fronts, in all phases, and in all theaters. Like piecing a puzzle together to gain a more broadly enhanced picture of the entirety of the second British southern campaign we can clarify our understanding of what the British hoped to accomplish and how they went about it. With this new periodization—November 1778 to November 1781—we understand that East and West Florida served as the dual spear-heads for the longest and geographically largest campaign of the war involving multiple, grand scale invasions and an international cast, including men and women from at least five empires, nations, or principalities from New Orleans to the northern tip of Michigan on Lake Superior, Havana to the Chesapeake Bay, and thousands of miles in between. To consider East and West Florida as insignificant to the British war effort in the South, and thus Revolutionary history, is to fail to view the war in its entirety.

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<sup>94</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:89.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE FAÇADE OF BRITISH FREEDOM

The southern British campaign, according to historian Gary Nash, “meant to bring the Americans to their knees, marked the greatest slave rebellion in American history.”<sup>1</sup> Nash’s remarks refer specifically to Cornwallis’s drive across the Carolinas to Virginia from 1780 to 1781. If Nash were to expand his comment to include the earlier dating of 1778, and the wider geographic dispersion of the entire second British southern campaign into the Gulf Coast and Mississippi Valley, then his statement would only be more dynamic. British-encouraged slave rebellions began long before Lord Cornwallis landed in Charleston in 1780. The mass exodus encouraged by Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation in 1775 and General Clinton’s Philipsburg Proclamation in 1779 are viewed as both major foundations of slave agency during the war and the genesis of British morality concerning slave issues. British freedom became a synonymous term with slave freedom. This is a sobering thought, given that the academically praised rebellion of African-American slaves during the American Revolution was politically diametric to that of those we today hold in highest esteem every Fourth of July. Enslaved blacks were running toward the very political entity that many white Americans claimed to be intolerable in its stance for the political rights of colonial subjects. But just how moral were British intentions in these proclamations? We will now observe the actualities of British freedom for enslaved blacks, as well as promises of brotherhood to Native Americans.

Many modern historians have discussed the hypocrisy of the founding fathers’ cries for liberty while holding one group of people in bondage and another on the edge of genocide. The founders’ verbiage, coupled with their actions, is perhaps the greatest example of fraudulence concerning human rights in the modern era. Thomas Paine wrote of this duplicity in late 1774,

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<sup>1</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 339.

pointing out that Americans “complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them, while they hold so many hundreds of thousands in slavery.”<sup>2</sup> Paine reminds us that some Revolutionary leaders questioned this lack of morality, though it would not be enough to alter the hypocrisy. The atrocity was not lost on the British either as “critics of the Declaration of Independence would continue to join with Thomas Hutchinson in condemning the apparent hypocrisy of a people who declared that all men were created equal..., and yet deprived ‘more than an hundred thousand Africans of their rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and in some degree to their lives.’”<sup>3</sup> Even a scholar as conservative in his interpretation of the American Revolution as Bernard Bailyn cannot excuse this double-standard as he notes that “[a]s long as the institution of slavery lasted, the burden of proof would lie with its advocates to show why the statement ‘all men are created equal’ did not mean precisely what it said.”<sup>4</sup>

Much is made of the failures of America’s post-Revolutionary political leaders to treat enslaved blacks and Native Americans with the human decency they themselves demanded before the war. Chiefs like Joseph Brant of the Mohawk nation and Dragging Canoe of the Chickamauga Cherokees led their people against the tide of rebellious sentiments by the “Virginians” who continually encroached on Indian lands. They fought tenaciously for the British because they knew that American independence could only mean a never-ending struggle for the preservation of Indian independence.<sup>5</sup> For as long as white men have been on the North

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<sup>2</sup> “*The Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, March 8, 1775,” <http://www.constitution.org/tp/afri.htm>; see also Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1998), 220.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, *Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia...* (London, 1776), as reprinted in Malcolm Freiburg, ed., *Old South Leaflets*, no. 227 (Boston: Directors of the Old South Work, 1958), 11, in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992), 246.

<sup>4</sup> Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins*, 246.

<sup>5</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 178.

American continent, the circumstances of African slaves and Native Americans have been ominous at best. The experiences of Europeans with non-whites in North America, utilizing them as nothing more than pawns of imperialism, goes back long before the American Revolution—and East Florida played a significant role.

Soon after the first conquistador set foot on the eastern shores of La Florida in 1513, African slaves represented a large percentage of the population.<sup>6</sup> One hundred years in advance of an infamous Dutch slave ship dispensing twenty African captives at Jamestown, Virginia, blacks were utilized in Florida by Spain for the purpose of establishing the first European foothold in North America. But from Ponce de Leon's first visit in 1513 to the end of the colonial era the shifting politics emanating from colonial St. Augustine created an ambiguous sanctuary of existence for the African and African-American slaves who lived there.

European powers struggled against one another throughout the North American continent, using any means necessary to gain whatever benefit they could—which often included allying themselves with various Native American tribes to secure an advantage. In Florida, however, in addition to Indian alliances, black slaves were used as pawns to sway the balance of power in the struggle to gain supremacy in the mainland southeast. Spanish laws toward slaves and the subject of slavery itself relaxed dramatically in comparison to English slave codes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That these slaves were vital to the British economic system in North America was not news to the Spanish as they exploited the opportunity to cripple the Carolina market by actively promoting refugee sanctuary to the British enslaved labor force. Intensified by a dispute over the inclusion of St. Augustine in Carolina's original charter, and Spanish claims on land as far north as Port Royal, South Carolina, Anglo/Spanish animosities ripened

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<sup>6</sup> Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 425

over the next seventy-six years as the issue of runaway slaves rendered the Atlantic corridor from Charleston to St. Augustine a lightning rod for international conflict.<sup>7</sup>

From an eighteenth-century European perspective, other than the Floridas changing hands in 1763, little else between Great Britain and Spain was altered by the time of the American Revolution. Constantly at war, the two Atlantic powers continued to fight over colonial possessions in the Americas, and slaves were still the laborers used to fatten imperial coffers. But for African and African-American slaves, a great deal changed after 1763. Blacks continued to pour into St. Augustine by the thousands, though not as refugees or runaways but as British slaves. Same town, same latitudes, but Florida as a sanctuary for fugitive slaves ceased to exist. A world they came to depend upon had disappeared. The talons of Britannic slavery snared yet more lives within its slave quarters and returned the sale of human flesh to the market in St. Augustine.<sup>8</sup> By joining the French in the Seven Years War the Spanish Crown forfeited the greatest hope of freedom for thousands of British-held slaves in North America, sentencing them to life on a continent with no friendly European borders—only the sea.

But it only took twelve years for the British to learn from their previous Spanish antagonists the value of an enslaved population in a time of armed conflict. In 1775, the governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, proclaimed freedom for any slave in his colony willing to escape their bonds and join the British military in service against their former masters. Dunmore named this new fighting force the Ethiopian Regiment and provided first-rate weapons and dazzling new uniforms to instill pride, honor, and encouragement for their actions. But this attitude toward runaway slaves was not uniform throughout the American colonies by any means, for

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<sup>7</sup> Jane Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687–1790," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, Issue 3 (April 1984), 296; see also Arana, Manucy, *The Building of Castillo de San Marcos*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 426.

throughout the course of the American Revolution many British officers exercised their right to manumit any slaves who fought in the service of the king. East Florida was no different; in fact, Lord Dunmore sent many free blacks to East Florida in 1776, on the same ships as he sent prisoners of war and evacuated Loyalists.<sup>9</sup> Soon the number of blacks in East Florida—free or enslaved—was growing fast enough to give British authorities concern. Governor Tonyn wrote to Lord Germain that in order to frustrate more invasion attempts by the American rebels, he “established and armed the Companies of militia, who may be employed in case of invasion, and will be at all times useful in keeping in awe the Negroes who multiply amazingly.”<sup>10</sup> In addition to runaways seeking British freedom and the slaves of Loyalists evacuating to East Florida, a new source of slaves in East Florida during the Revolution was those taken from American, French, and Spanish ships captured by the British.<sup>11</sup>

Governor Tonyn’s assessment was not completely accurate, however, as far as how many blacks lived in East Florida during the early years of the American Revolution. The demography of the colony was no more skewed than it had ever been, as there was now a war on and the plundering of slaves in East Florida by American rebels was rampant. On July 1, 1776, Governor Tonyn reported that the theft of slaves was a discernable goal of the invading rebel army as “they took upwards of thirty Negroes, and a family” from the first two plantations they reached.<sup>12</sup> Theft of slaves, however, was the business of both sides in the conflict. John Berwick lost seven slaves when regular British troops raided his plantation in mid-July 1776 while he was assisting

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<sup>9</sup> Edgar Legare Pennington. “East Florida in the American Revolution, 1775–1778,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (July 1930), 31–32.

<sup>10</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, October 30, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> “East Florida Commons House Journal, July 20, 1781,” PRO, CO 5/572, f. 41–43, pp. 77–80; see also Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” 433.

<sup>12</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, July 1, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/557, f. 83–86, pp. 165–72; see also Pennington, “East Florida in the American Revolution,” 25.

with the rebel defense of Charleston.<sup>13</sup> Raids from the sea cost many East Floridians their slaves, as well. Spanish privateers patrolled the coasts above and below St. Augustine and in 1778 one such privateer entered the Mosquito Inlet and carried off thirty slaves.<sup>14</sup> One of the benefits of slave raiding utilized by both sides in the war was as a tool for recruiting militia in the backcountry fighting. On the average, one slave for one year's enlistment was the going rate. This was especially effective as it became more difficult to pay soldiers and militia in actual currency. Plundered slaves were also used to carry other items taken from plantations, such as furniture, household goods, food stores, and farm equipment.<sup>15</sup>

The plight of slaves on East Florida's plantations during the three American invasions of 1776, 1777, and 1778 was tumultuous as each offensive had a significant impact on their well-beings, if not their lives. British Loyalists would attempt to rush their slaves into St. Augustine during these invasions in order to avoid losing them to the ransacking and ravaging that took place on their plantations. Regardless, many slaves were captured and taken back to Georgia and some were killed as they chose to protect either their British master's property or one another. Capture by rebels was not always the worst result of these raids. One planter, in an effort to remove his slaves from harm's way, got them lost in the swamps and woods near the St. Marys River. As a result, twenty-four slaves died of starvation in the ensuing weeks of aimless wandering.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Wilbur H. Siebert, "Privateering in Florida Waters and Northwards During the Revolution," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, Issue 2 (October 1943), 67.

<sup>14</sup> Siebert, "Slavery in East Florida," 139.

<sup>15</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 91–92; see also "Sumter's Law" in Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 134, 137.

<sup>16</sup> "The Case and Suffering of Jermyn and Charles Wright to Lord George Germain," PRO, CO 5/116, f. 92–94, pp. 185–88; see also Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 432.



In between invasions it was business as usual on the plantations. As one letter to Lord Germain explained, “the Plantations...employ their Negros in providing lumber and naval stores for the West Indies, having raised sufficient provisions for the ensuring Year, a proof of which is, their purchasing new Negros.”<sup>17</sup> This particular document was written in an effort to demonstrate the security of the colony, in spite of rebel attempts to bring their revolution to East Florida and deprive loyal subjects of their livelihood. It also reveals the economic affluence that East Florida planters enjoyed. As discussed in Chapter 2, the trade embargo imposed on the British West Indies by the Continental Congress opened the door for the plantations of East Florida to fill the need for food stuffs and naval stores to these islands. Unable to compete in this market before the war, East Florida planters enjoyed a rich economy while the economies of the rebellious South floundered. If slaves in East Florida were stolen or killed in the defense of the British way of life, planters had the work load and the means to justify the purchase of more slaves. In this sense, the war kept the British Atlantic economy of Caribbean slaves to the Floridas, plantation necessities back to the British West Indies, and a circulation of island produce to the metropole in exchange for finished goods to both the Caribbean and Gulf Coast regions in perpetual motion. The pilferage of slaves by rebel patrols actually greased the wheels of business.

This cavalier attitude toward the lives of blacks, free or enslaved, in East Florida manifested itself in other forms. As mentioned before, many British officers opted to follow the Earl of Dunmore’s 1775 example of manumitting slaves who fought against their former rebel masters. In 1779, Sir Henry Clinton declared his Philipsburg Proclamation, which was deemed by South Carolina’s blacks as a complete emancipation, absolving them of any sense of

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<sup>17</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Germain, October 30, 1776,” PRO, CO 5/557, p. 24.

indebtedness to their American masters.<sup>18</sup> The difference was that, whereas Dunmore offered freedom to any man who would flee to a British encampment for the purpose of taking up arms and joining the fight against the rebellion, the Philipsburg Proclamation offered freedom to any enslaved person who escaped to British lines. This proclamation transformed the Revolution in South Carolina into a “complex triangular process involving two sets of white belligerents and at least twenty thousand—probably more—black slaves.”<sup>19</sup> But serving in the British army did not always equate with being given absolute freedom. In May 1779, Major General Prevost accumulated numerous runaway slaves as he retreated from Charleston to Savannah, plundering the countryside along the way.<sup>20</sup> Livestock, clothing, and crops of every kind were targeted by small raiding parties. Human beings were no exceptions: “Included in the booty were an estimated three thousand slaves, who either fled or were impressed by raiding parties such as the one led by Major William Gardiner, British commander at Port Royal.”<sup>21</sup>

Lt. Colonel John Maitland was ultimately left in charge at Port Royal as Prevost marched post-haste back to Savannah. Maitland evacuated Port Royal in June to assist in the defense of Savannah, taking only a portion of the black refugees. Many of those abandoned by Maitland were wounded or too sick to travel. Fearing capture, a large number of the remaining blacks tied themselves to the sides of Maitland’s boats rather than be left behind to face the impending punishment of their former masters. The British soldiers used bayonets to cut the former slaves loose, leaving them to drown. Other blacks either swam or rafted to Otter Island where hundreds

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<sup>18</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 118.

<sup>19</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 108.

<sup>20</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> William B. Simms, *The History of South Carolina from Its First European Discovery* (Charleston: S. Babcock, 1840), 154, in Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 91–92.

more died from exposure and disease.<sup>22</sup> Just three hundred of these black refugees survived the ordeal only to later be shipped to the West Indies and sold back into slavery by their British liberators.<sup>23</sup> There were other instances in East Florida of black Loyalists, free and enslaved, who evacuated to St. Augustine during the war, received temporary protection, then were shipped to the West Indies for sale.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, in spite of such callous racism by the British military—the so-called saviors of African-Americans slaves—earlier events in the 1770s had already created a hope among the enslaved population that it was the British monarchy, not the military or the new republic, that would provide freedom.<sup>25</sup> In September 1771, a slave named James Somerset escaped while his master, a ship's captain, was anchored in England. Once re-captured, early abolitionist Granville Sharp orchestrated the slave's release from his servitude on multiple countercharges involving medieval villeinage and case histories in the Common Law on slavery. But it was Somerset's trial lawyer William "Bull" Davy who "made it abundantly clear that counsel for Somerset would maintain that 'no man can be a slave, being once in England, the very air he breathed made him a free man [and] that he has a right to be governed by the laws of the land' on exactly the same basis as any other man."<sup>26</sup> This was one of the most bizarre legal battles in the history of slavery because the judgment by the bench set Somerset free based upon exigencies pertaining to the intricate details of Common Law understood by few in the courtroom. In short, Judge Lord

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<sup>22</sup> Siebert, "Slavery in East Florida," 140.

<sup>23</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 92.

<sup>24</sup> Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida, 1784–1790* (Jacksonville: University of North Florida Press, 1989), 49.

<sup>25</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 50.

Mansfield was under a significant amount of political pressure and found a much-needed loophole.

What resulted from this judgment became the most convoluted reasoning for James Somerset's emancipation. Word spread quickly across the Atlantic that slavery was formally banished in Britain. In 1774 a pamphlet published in Philadelphia notified African American slaves that they could gain their freedom by simply "setting foot on that happy Territory where slavery is forbidden to perch."<sup>27</sup> Overnight the chains of slavery—at least if a slave could make their way to the British Isles—were believed to be breakable. Absentee West Indian sugar barons roared like wounded lions in the halls of Parliament as they pressed furiously for protective legislation to acknowledge their rights as property owners when bringing slaves into England. Abolitionists were just as diligent to ensure that Judge Mansfield's decision was not cast aside due to the avalanche of legal manipulations plotted and hatched in the House of Lords. Indeed, both camps were certain that Lord Mansfield had outlawed slavery, when in fact the judge went to great lengths to ensure that he had not said such a thing. "What he had said was that the power of a master to transport his slave against his will, out of England and to a place where he might be sold, had never been known or recognized under Common Law."<sup>28</sup> But in the court of public opinion, the die was cast, thus the English were considered the greatest hope for freedom in the mind of every slave who heard the rumors. Even when Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, blaming King George III for the institution of slavery in America, African-American slaves "did not see the king that way at all. On the contrary, he was their enemy's enemy and thus their friend, emancipator, and guardian."<sup>29</sup> The release of James Somerset by

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<sup>27</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 5.

Lord Mansfield set into motion a glimmer of hope for enslaved African Americans that the British system of justice held the keys to freedom on both sides of the Atlantic.

But the primary concern of British authorities in St. Augustine was not the manumission of slaves or proclamations of freedom. It was the defense of East Florida. As early as 1775, slaves were utilized as laborers to bolster the military fortifications of St. Augustine by up-grading the defenses of the Castillo, repairing the old defensive lines outside of the city gates, building new earth works on the town's western and southern perimeters, and building redoubts on the St. Johns River and Fort Tonyn on the St. Marys River. Slaves and freedmen alike could be found as East Florida Rangers, garrisoning Fort Tonyn, and even in provincial army regiments.<sup>30</sup> Regular army and militia units in East Florida were 1/7<sup>th</sup> free-blacks or slaves, as blacks enlisted in the East Florida Rangers, and manned Fort Tonyn, thus and protecting the St. Marys frontier from invasion.<sup>31</sup> In 1781, after the fall of Pensacola, Lt. Colonel Lewis V. Fuser requisitioned over nine hundred slaves from the plantations of East Florida in order to make the earthen works defenses ready for the anticipated invasion of Spanish troops from West Florida.<sup>32</sup> As a slave code was being argued in the colonial assembly, ten percent of the colony's slave population was requisitioned to work on the town's defenses; a number that was eventually increased to twenty percent.<sup>33</sup> This was not an extraordinary circumstance, however, as slaves were utilized by the British to build the defenses of Savannah and Charleston, as well. Due to the time frames of each siege and the multiple evacuations of Loyalists, black and white, it is not inconceivable that

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<sup>30</sup> "East Florida Council Minutes, February 2, 1776," PRO, CO 5/571, f. 187-88, pp. 28-29.

<sup>31</sup> "Lewis Fuser to Sir Henry Clinton, September 11, 1779," Sir Henry Clinton Papers, WLCL, in Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 435.

<sup>32</sup> "An Act to entitle His Excellency the Governor or the Commander in Chief to Utilize Slave Labor to Establish Defenses for the Protection of the Province, June 30, 1781," PRO, CO 5/624, f. 41-43, pp. 77-80.

<sup>33</sup> Siebert, "Slavery in East Florida," 141.

many of these slaves may have worked on the defensive structures of all three towns.<sup>34</sup> By putting this large labor force to work on St. Augustine's defenses, civil authorities were also following Sir Henry Clinton's official policy concerning the containment of slave revolts, as issued in South Carolina. It was Clinton's intention to put the healthiest slaves who responded to the Philipsburg Proclamation to work either on Loyalist plantations to keep that economy productive, or in other support roles for the army. Historian Sylvia Frey argues that this strategy was strategic in the prevention of slave rebellions, as these slaves were quickly worn down by oppressively difficult work and inferior food.<sup>35</sup>

The American Revolution held many paradoxes, one of which was that the American rebels of the southern colonies broke with British tradition by not arming their slaves to any great degree during the war. The social structures in place in the Revolutionary South were steeped in a tradition of dehumanizing tactics that would deprive blacks of any semblance of dignity, which would certainly forbid the manly task of carrying arms and defending one's land and political rights. With the rebel commander-in-chief being a Virginia planter, this attitude toward arming blacks is not remarkable. Nor is the southern rebel response to the British furnishing arms and military training to former slaves: "In the world of the slaveholders, nothing demonstrated so well the transformation of royal paternalism into brute despotism as this plot to arm the slaves; there could be no more self-evident cause for revolutionary separation."<sup>36</sup> This action not only affected rebel planters but the political fence-straddlers as well. As British soldiers encouraged

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<sup>34</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 96

<sup>35</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 127, 141.

<sup>36</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 59.

slaves to ‘leave their masters [and] to take up arms against them,’ politically neutral slave owners began to feel the need for a new government.<sup>37</sup>

The Earl of Dunmore, so vilified in American history, was thus acting in a manner that was consistent with traditional British approaches to protecting a colony from foreign invasion. But contrary to popular narration, though Dunmore developed the concept it was the slaves themselves who first put the plan into motion. Dunmore informed Lord Dartmouth in a letter dated May 1, 1775 of his thoughts on this issue, but did not officially enact his famous proclamation until six months later on November 7.<sup>38</sup> But in mid-May General Thomas Gage got wind of Dunmore’s idea and stamped it with his approval. “African Americans around the Chesapeake had no intention of waiting for British policy to solidify. When British troops from St. Augustine began to arrive in Norfolk, that July, lowcountry slaves began to flock toward English lines.”<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile in the York River, Captains John McCartney and Matthew Squire of the *Mercury* and the *Otter*, respectively, welcomed runaway slaves aboard their ships and provided them with employment.<sup>40</sup> Later, on October 15, Prime Minister Frederick, Lord North informed King George III of the dire circumstances awaiting the rebels of Virginia and South Carolina should the black majorities of these two colonies rise up in revolt against their masters.<sup>41</sup> With slaves already putting the concept into action, ship’s captains complying freely, and political approval at the highest level, one can only wonder what Dunmore was waiting for?

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<sup>37</sup> *Virginia Herald*, January 6, 1776, in Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Quarles, “Lord Dunmore as Liberator,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (1958), 496–97; also see Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 69–70.

<sup>41</sup> Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 70.

The truth of the matter was that Lord Dunmore was not concerned with freeing slaves as much as he was with holding radicals in Williamsburg politically hostage for as long as possible.

As early as February 1776, East Florida commanders complied with British protocol in the American colonies as they requested that this traditional role of importance be given to the slaves in time of war. Governor Tonyn strongly advocated to his inner circle that the slave holders of East Florida must report to the military authorities the number of their slaves who could be entrusted with arms.<sup>42</sup> Following Lord Dunmore's precedent when he established the Ethiopian Brigade, four companies of enlisted black soldiers were formed in St. Augustine on August 20, 1776.<sup>43</sup> Major General Prevost was also present in Savannah when two companies of Black Volunteers were formed during the failed Franco/American assault on that city in 1779. In addition to the Black Volunteers, another three hundred blacks were charged with holding the "double-horn" position of Savannah's breast works.

To fully appreciate the actions taking place in East Florida toward free and enslaved blacks it is important to contrast those events with what occurred in other parts of the American South, especially considering that a large number of these individuals who survived the war would escape to East Florida at war's end. Francis Marion wrote to John Matthews on August 30, 1782, that he was attacked at "the affair at Wadboo' ... by a hundred British horse and 'some Coloured Dragoons' led by Major Thomas Fraser."<sup>44</sup> And rumors were wildly rampant in the Goose Creek area north of Charleston in the final months of British occupation as Leslie's Black Dragoons made nightly raids, "committing the most horrible depredations and murders on the defenseless

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<sup>42</sup> Siebert, "Slavery in East Florida," 139.

<sup>43</sup> Searcy, *The Georgia-Florida Contest*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> "Francis Marion to John Matthews, August 30, 1782," in Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 138; see also Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 9.



parts of our Country.”<sup>45</sup> Though it was rare, there were occasions such as the 1779 attempt by Franco/American forces to recapture Savannah that found black Loyalists embattled against several hundred freedmen from Saint Domingue who had accompanied the French fleet.<sup>46</sup> Sylvia Frey notes that the British armed and mounted blacks to capture deserters, while Native Americans had been contracted for years to capture runaway slaves.<sup>47</sup> “The romantic theory of revolution, in which all the lowly united to rise against their oppressors, is embarrassed by the American Revolution’s multiplicity of variously oppressed and exploited peoples who preyed upon each other.”<sup>48</sup> This is one of the primary differences between the American Revolution and other revolutions to follow. The lowly and oppressed referenced above, in the American colonies, ran the gamut from dirt farmers living on provisional homesteads to wealthy planters and shipping magnates. Historian Terry Bouton argues that this wide dispersment of economic stations became the evil genius of the American Revolution: elites purloining the victory of the Revolution from the common man.<sup>49</sup>

But the American Revolution was also one of the most significant historical events in the modern era as far as racial interactions are concerned, influencing these relations throughout the entire nineteenth century and most of the twentieth. Native Americans often associated blacks as just a variation of whites. Blacks were a considerable monetary investment to whites and therefore had significant value; only Indian lands and Indian scalps were of value to whites. To

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<sup>45</sup> “C.C. Pinckney to Arthur Middleton, August 13, 1782,” 38–43–1, Papers of the Continental Congress, in Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 139.

<sup>46</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 330.

<sup>47</sup> Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 137–38.

<sup>48</sup> Jennings, “The Indians’ Revolution,” in Young, *The American Revolution*, 344.

<sup>49</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: “The People,” the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

possess either required the Indians dead or removed. In truth, these two oppressed minorities should have come together against white aggression. False perceptions due to the proximity of blacks to whites often confused this potential alliance, thus keeping the two races at odds. But in reality it was only a perception, because whites never saw black slaves as anything but chattel who would slaughter them as quickly as would an Indian war party.

Thus, the American rebels were much less trusting in their incorporation of blacks into the Continental army. When the American army was hoping to keep Charleston from falling back into British hands in 1780, they impressed over five thousand slaves to build the city's fortifications.<sup>50</sup> But unlike the role many played in the defense of Savannah, few if any, carried arms in Charleston. This is a significant number for a single battle, inasmuch as historian Benjamin Quarles believed that there were but five thousand free blacks serving in the rebel army and navy during the war.<sup>51</sup> This draws a detailed portrait of the demographics of the American army compared to the southern landscape. Benjamin Lincoln's army at Charleston in 1780, totaled between 5,000 and 5,500 men—the third largest American army fielded during the course of the Revolution.<sup>52</sup> Yet, southern planters matched that number in slaves in a matter of days to prepare Charleston's defenses. And though the freedmen in Quarles's tallies are considered soldiers of the U.S. army and not indentured in any way, they were nevertheless rarely allowed to carry arms and served primarily in menial functions as sappers, teamsters, cooks, and orderlies. In short, they served the same functions as the enslaved defenders of Charleston in 1780.

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<sup>50</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 110.

<sup>51</sup> Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), ix.

<sup>52</sup> Pancake, *1777*, 154.

But the carrying of weapons was not the only significant difference between black members of the two belligerent armies. When a former slave was allowed to enlist in a black unit of the regular British army, such as Sir Henry Clinton's Black Pioneers and Guides, he was required to recite the following oath: "I [name] do swear that I enter freely and voluntarily into His Majesty's service and I do enlist myself without the least compulsion or persuasion into the Negro Company...."<sup>53</sup> Who can know the impact of such words and phrases as, "freely," "voluntarily," and "enlist myself" on former slaves as they were ushered back into the human race by the virtue of a simple ceremony. Not since these men first laid eyes on white slavers had they realized such entitlements of free choice or voluntary actions.

Given the historically adverse relationship between slaves and their British masters in the American southeast, it was a strange turn of events that led blacks to partake in the defenses of a British colony. First, Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy notes that when resources were stretched bare due to the commitment of British troops to the Caribbean, Whitehall found the use of black troops in the war against the rebellious colonies "irresistible."<sup>54</sup> More importantly, the oppressive attitudes of southern American rebels toward evacuated and plundered slaves promptly motivated this unusual partnership. One must never presume that black refugees had no say whatever in their relationship with the two combative opponents in this war. "White southerners preferred to believe that the king's men lurked behind servile unrest, but the truth was that politicized black Americans advanced their own cause."<sup>55</sup> Britain needed blacks to bolster their numbers on the mainland, wreak havoc by their sudden absence in the southern plantation economy, and strike fear in the hearts of cruel masters at the thought of a region-wide slave

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<sup>53</sup> Sir Henry Clinton Papers, WLCL, vol. 263, in Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 84.

<sup>54</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 175.

<sup>55</sup> Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 68–69.

revolt—and blacks understood this. It is myopic to presume, as many rebel slave owners did, that it was the British who sparked the idea of insurrection in the minds of the enslaved population of the American South. The 1739 slave rebellion at Stono, South Carolina, among many other examples, clearly demonstrates that freedom lived in the mind of every black slave, and insurrection against their masters was their path to liberty. The British simply provided direction for their determined pursuit of freedom.

But this is not to say that blacks in the British military were always welcome or treated in a manner that allowed them to prefer royal sympathies to rebel. As different as the two armies treated black soldiers, so too did the navies of His Majesty King George III and the United States: “More black than white American sailors opted for prison rather than service against the United States because they had more to gain by getting out of the Royal Navy and more to lose by staying in.”<sup>56</sup> This is a fascinating contradiction to everything we understand about black refugees running to the British military for freedom. It is no secret that the life of a British sailor was a most miserable existence during the age of sail. Impressments, floggings, life-threatening conditions, brutal warfare, scurvy, worm-infested food, fouled water—cataclysm on the high seas. But American sailors during the Revolution were more often privateers, as the new American government owned no warships at the outset of the conflict. Of the first thirteen frigates built for the American navy, eleven were either captured or scuttled to blockade the Delaware River in 1777 when General Howe attacked Philadelphia.<sup>57</sup> Ships, such as the one captained by John Paul Jones, were privately owned and independently manned. As a result,

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<sup>56</sup> W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 115.

<sup>57</sup> These ships were primarily converted merchant ships, lacking the proper design or stamina for warfare on the ocean. The nation’s first true warships were not commissioned until 1794. Ian W. Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 17.

blacks in the American navy were wage earning seamen, equal on board to any man. “Maritime work not only provided wages and allowed widely dispersed black people a means of communication, but also affected the process through which free people of color shaped their identities. Seafaring addressed squarely the duality of being black and American.”<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, this opportunity did not avail itself to these same men once docked in an American port, especially in the South where after the Revolution even black sailors of international ships were subject to enslavement if caught on dry land.

For most blacks, the Americans had already shown themselves to be the greater of the two evils in many ways, but perhaps none more so than the incident following the Battle of the Rice Boats on March 2, 1776.<sup>59</sup> On this date seven British warships ploughed up the Savannah River to capture twenty merchant vessels laden with rice. This would not only provide a great deal of food for the Loyalists of St. Augustine but rob thousands of pounds sterling from the pockets of disaffected rebel planters who were underwriting the cost of the war. During the course of the battle between one hundred fifty to two hundred slaves stole away to Tybee Island on the Atlantic coast in hopes of exchanging their chains for British freedom. When their whereabouts were discovered, rebel Colonel Stephen Bull determined in a dispatch to his superiors that “It is far better for the Public and the owners of the deserted Negroes on Tybee Island...to be shot if they cannot be taken...for if they are carried away, and converted into money...it will only enable our Enemy to fight us with our own money or property.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> The following account of the Battle of the Rice Boats and the heinous actions of the rebel leadership may be found in detail in Cashin, *William Bartram*, 222–24; see also Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 85.

<sup>60</sup> “Col. Stephen Bull to Georgia Council, March 13, 1776”; “Georgia Council to Georgetown Committee, March 15, 1776,” Hamer, Rogers, and Chesnutt, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 11:162–64.

But Bull was unwilling to stain his hands with such a bloody enterprise and recommended that the wholesale killing be done by Creek Indians. “Therefore all who cannot be taken had better be shot by the Creek Indians, as it perhaps may deter other Negroes from deserting and will establish a hatred or Aversion between the Indians and the Negroes.”<sup>61</sup> Just when the scheme could not possibly get more monstrous, Bull justified his decision with typical eighteenth-century racism by hoping to pit blacks against Native Americans in the process. Cashin contends that the slaves were rescued by British redcoats before any harm could be inflicted upon them; thus, the honor of the Georgians in the matter was only upheld by the actions of their enemies.<sup>62</sup> I would disagree with Cashin’s analysis, as the only decorum of honor demonstrated that night on Tybee Island was by the British who took the slaves to safety. Just over one month later, when John Rutledge delivered his inaugural address as the new governor of South Carolina, he blasted the British government’s use of Native Americans to fight in the backcountry as an endeavor “to engage barbrous nations to embue their hands in the innocent blood of helpless women and children.”<sup>63</sup> Yet it was not presumed “barbrous” to have Creek warriors slaughter slaves—men, women, and children—on the wharves of Tybee Island as they waited for British soldiers to rescue them.

In South Carolina and Georgia a slave exodus prompted by the British invasion and occupation—fueled by rumors of, and actual manumissions for service against the American rebels—created a severe labor shortage on southern plantations, virtually destroying the economy. According to Sylvia Frey, the intent of the Philipsburg Proclamation was to turn

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<sup>61</sup> “Col. Stephen Bull to Georgia Council, March 13, 1776”; “Georgia Council to Georgetown Committee, March 15, 1776,” Hamer, Rogers, and Chesnutt, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 11:162–64. This is a primary example of the strain imposed on colonial era race relations, often intentionally as we see above.

<sup>62</sup> Cashin, *William Bartram*, 223.

<sup>63</sup> Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, 1:274–75.

southern society upside-down, disrupting both the social and economic structure of an already fragile existence for British military and political gain.<sup>64</sup> As a result, British intervention in domestic slavery was a crucial factor that drove many southern slave owners and their minions toward independence. As discussed previously, the economics of southern independence played a large role in deciding ones' political associations; therefore, Frey agrees that southern independence was not about taxes and representation, but rather an act of desperation to cling to the hegemony they asserted over their slaves and their society.<sup>65</sup> Many who were familiar with the intricacies of the Somerset case would later remember the prophetic statement of John Dunning, counselor for the prosecution, who hoped to alarm the powerful West Indian lobby in Parliament that if the slave Somerset is set free then slaves from the Americas will "flock over in vast numbers [and] overrun this country and desolate the plantations [from whence they came]." <sup>66</sup>

Dunning's alarm is an excellent reminder that while this shortage of slaves would have a significant impact on rebel economics, it came with a two-edged sword as it severely affected the existing Tory plantations whose slaves also joined the flight to British military camps in search of manumission. In addition, Loyalist efforts to claim abandoned rebel plantations and utilize them for the good of the Crown were equally hindered by the labor shortage.<sup>67</sup> One can only presume that there were policies in place to return the runaway slaves of Loyalists. Gary Nash contends that runaway slaves of southern Loyalists who reached British military camps were regularly taken captive and returned to their owners once the identity of the slave and their owner

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<sup>64</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 119.

<sup>65</sup> Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 326.

<sup>66</sup> "John Dunning, May 14, 1772," King's Bench Court Records, in Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 52.

<sup>67</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 211.

could be determined.<sup>68</sup> But a slave's identity was often a confusing and hard fought discovery, especially if the slave did not want it known that they were the property of Loyalists. It would take the careful examination of scarrings and body types—sometimes under near battlefield conditions—by military personnel who, quite frankly, had more important matters on their minds. To many officers in these circumstances, the runaway slave simply represented another pair of hands digging the defenses, or in some cases, manning another musket on the line. When under a bayonet charge from an opposing army, even the landed nobility rarely challenged the skin tone of the man willing to stand beside him in battle.

Historian Ira Berlin exposes the façade of white supremacy, even under such tragic circumstances as chattel slavery, as he notes that the American Revolution gave slaves an unprecedented amount of leverage in their struggle for freedom. With the British offering freedom to slaves for political and military purposes while southern slave owners chose independence for economic gain, the façade of white unity, and therefore, white supremacy was challenged simultaneously with the institution of slavery itself.<sup>69</sup> Militias for both sides, led by southern planters such as Elijah Clark or Thomas Brown, fully understood the chaos created by the plundering of slaves or providing them with arms. This was the best way to cripple another planter who paid homage to the “wrong” side, and the long-term effect of this tactic was felt well into the nineteenth century. Sylvia Frey dedicates thirty-six pages of her book *Water from the Rock* to the economic factors of the post-Revolutionary South that she believes have received little attention. Ruination, starvation, and chaos marked the southern states as they emerged from the war with a plantation system in ruins, slaves stolen or missing, and a determined mindset to

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<sup>68</sup> Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 331.

<sup>69</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 219.



rebuild exactly what was lost rather than strive toward a fresh beginning without a slave economy. Post-war conflicts between the governors of South Carolina and East Florida are rampant with issues concerning the “theft” of slaves by evacuating Loyalists. But in these situations the British had no intention of manumitting these slaves, as they belonged to Loyalists and, therefore, were not entitled to such benefits. “Few white Americans advocated freedom for anyone but themselves, and the British fought the war not to promote social change but to restore power. Neither side saw any benefit in giving to the African the freedom and equality possessed by other emigrants to British North America.”<sup>70</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the British experienced nearly eighty years of such economic warfare prior to their acquisition of the Floridas. From the 1687 to 1763, Spanish Florida offered sanctuary to runaway British slaves, contravening the unwritten code among English planters that white men bind their loyalties against any attempt to unravel the fabric of the slave economy, for all will be adversely affected regardless of station. Slavery depended upon the unity of the white community, from the planter to the non-slave owner, to rally behind the right of white men to own black slaves, thus defending the institution whether one actually believed in it or not. But even more so than the Spanish had done earlier, the American Revolution rent the fabric of English unity concerning chattel slavery, thus instilling moral integrity to the actions of the slaves themselves.<sup>71</sup> In short, the American Revolution marked the second time on the North American continent that white men turned against one another in wholesale fashion when it came to such racial issues as slave revolts or Native American aggression on the frontier. As a result,

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<sup>70</sup> South Carolina Treasury, *Documents relating the History of South Carolina During the Revolutionary War*, ed. A.S. Salley, Jr. (Columbia Historical Commission of S.C., 1909), pp. 51–55, 61–67, in Higgins, “The Ambivalence of Freedom,” in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 43–44. For further discussion see footnote page 43–44n1.

<sup>71</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 219.

plantations were in ruin and slaves vacated the rural South in any way they could manage; as Gary Nash noted, the largest slave revolt in American history.

But it would be a mistake to presume that every slave in the mainland South ran away to the British lines. Many chose to stay on the plantation, afraid to move in one direction or another for fear of the retribution that would befall them if the rebels did indeed win the war. While this might sound absurd—that a slave given the opportunity to run to freedom would not take the risk—Thomas Thistlewood notes that his own slaves refused to participate in Tacky’s Revolt on the island of Jamaica in 1760, both out of fear of reprisals and concern for losing access to the provision grounds they worked so hard to cultivate.<sup>72</sup> Loyalists who were forced to vacate the backcountry for the safety of East Florida often left families and slaves behind in an attempt to keep plantations financially stable; rebel prisoners-of-war sent to St. Augustine to serve out their paroles often did the same.<sup>73</sup> These slaves were vulnerable to any group from either side bent on retribution or backcountry “justice.” While potentially damned-if-they-do, and certainly damned-if-they-do-not, slaves who chose not to flee their plantation existences faced victimization from either side, depending upon what faction of the war was swarming the countryside at the time. Sadly, there were few decisions a slave might make that offered any hope of a guaranteed outcome.

As a result of the chaotic upheaval of southern society in the rebelling colonies, East Florida’s black population grew daily as the free and enslaved alike fled the killing fields of the backcountry South. “Estimates vary, but historians agree that tens of thousands of adult slaves, along with many of their children, made their declarations of independence by fleeing to

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<sup>72</sup> Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire*, 152–54.

<sup>73</sup> Josiah Smith, Mabel L. Webber, ed. “Josiah Smith’s Diary, 1780–1781,” in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, No.1 (January 1932), 6; see also “Josiah Smith’s Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.),” in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1932), 199.

England's protective flag."<sup>74</sup> Simon Schama reiterates this point as he writes, "during the Revolutionary War there is no question that tens of thousands of Africans, enslaved in the American South, did look to Britain as their deliverer, to the point where they were ready to risk life and limb to reach the lines of the royal army."<sup>75</sup> Though approximately half of East Florida's refugee population did not arrive until the evacuations of Savannah and Charleston in 1782, by 1778 the population had grown to over ten thousand inhabitants—the majority of those being slaves. East Florida's plantations, though affected by raids and some wholesale mischief during the American invasions, were never ravaged en masse as those in Georgia and South Carolina. This surplus of black refugees allowed whites to become even more involved with the military and defensive efforts of East Florida, as the plantations were able to operate at full capacity. But having so many blacks come into the colony in such a short period of time created the need for two major legislative acts. Having only recently instituted a General Assembly in 1781, Governor Tonyn called upon this body to make haste in completing a Militia Act and enacting a formal slave code.

The East Florida Militia Act basically replicated militia laws in other American colonies and took very little effort for both the Upper and Lower Houses of the assembly to pass.<sup>76</sup> Where the greatest variance occurred between this particular act and the militia structures of the newly formed American states was in the fact that an unlimited number of slaves could be drafted and used as a labor force or armed as soldiers. Any plantation managers not providing militia captains with a list of all able-bodied slaves who were fit to serve were fined £50, and slave

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<sup>74</sup> Nash, *The Unknown Revolution*, 426.

<sup>75</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> For all of the following information concerning the East Florida Militia Act, see "An Act for the Establishment and Regulation of the Militia of this Province, June 7, 1781," PRO, CO 5/624, f. 21–40, pp. 37–75; for further discussion see Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida, 435–36.

owners were compensated £1 each month for any slave impressed into the defense of the colony. For any breach of military discipline impressed slaves were flogged rather than fined like their white counterparts, as they had no money. However, for sleeping on duty blacks and whites alike were summarily executed. The one major similarity East Florida's Militia Act had in common with the American states, and greatest deviance from those of other British colonies, was that there was no provision for the freeing of slaves who fought in the war effort. For service above and beyond the call of duty, slaves could receive clothing, money, medals, even time away from the front lines to rest. But in East Florida there were no provisions or opportunities for a slave to win their freedom. Dunmore and Clinton's versions of manumitting slaves who served in the British army were incentives for blacks to leave their rebel masters and take up arms against them. But no such action was needed, nor desired, by British authorities in East Florida. As stated before: this was not an effort to free all slaves—only those who would negatively impact the rebel cause.

A slave code was the second act of legislation that concerned the black population of East Florida and was not as easily determined as the Militia Act. Slave codes throughout the British Empire were as varied as the regions from which they came but all could be traced back to the Act of 1547, which dealt with the enslavement of whites and was considered the blue print for slave codes in the British West Indies and South Carolina. "The enforcement regulations of Carolina spread to other seaboard plantations and inland states after the Revolution. Thus the English tradition of contempt and physical cruelty to society's unfortunates was continued in America with the enactment of slave codes."<sup>77</sup> But, typical of his demeanor, Governor Tonyn

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<sup>77</sup> An Act for the Punishing of Vagabonds and for the Relief of the Poor and Impotent Persons, 1547, in *The Statutes at Large from the Thirty Second Year of King Henry VIII to the Seventh Year of King Edward VI Inclusive* (Cambridge, Eng.: Charles Bathurst, 1763), V, 246–47, 345, in Elisa Govia, "The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century," in Laura Foner, Eugene D. Genovese, eds., *Slavery in the New World: A Reader in*

would not acquiesce to the slave codes of other colonies simply because they were British. He would do what was best for the white population of East Florida, which in turn was surprisingly enlightened for a man with his history of despotism.

As the colony's first assembly tackled such topics as a militia, internal improvements, regulating public houses, collecting small debts, and taxes, arriving at a slave code that would suit the needs and whims of St. Augustine's white voting population took longer—and generated more controversy—than all the other issues combined.<sup>78</sup> Governor Tonyn's frustration over the whole process concerning this singular issue prompted him to dissolve the assembly only six months after its formation. Like the Militia Act, East Florida's slave code had similarities to those of Georgia and South Carolina. Any Negro, mulatto, or Mestezo who could not prove a manumitted status was regarded a slave, with children following the status of their mothers. A silver armband with the inscription "free" was to be worn by free blacks. Slaves were required to carry a pass from their masters if they were found absent from the plantation, as well as a document of permission to carry firearms for hunting purposes. Theoretically, masters were to be fined for cruelty to slaves, though Mrs. Tonyn's cruelty to her own slaves regularly fed the gossip mills of St. Augustine. Owners received monetary compensation from the colony for a slave who was legally executed, and provisions in the law allowed for slave patrols to keep illegal activities under control.

However, East Florida's slave code differed from all other North American colonies in that court cases against slaves accused of any crime must be heard in St. Augustine and tried before a

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*Comparative History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 126; see also Higgins, "The Ambivalence of Freedom," in Higgins, *The Revolutionary War in the South*, 47.

<sup>78</sup> For all of the following information concerning East Florida's slave code see "An Act for the Better Government and Regulation of Negroes and other Slaves in this province, May 31, 1782," PRO, CO 5/624, f. 44–53, 81–98; see also Siebert, "Slavery in East Florida," 143–49, for a full copy of the East Florida slave code; for further discussion see Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida, 436–38.

white, twelve-man jury. Slaves in other English colonies were not afforded a trial by jury and could be tortured to extract information.<sup>79</sup> Such cruelty was not allowed in East Florida courts and the presiding judge could determine, at will, to allow the defendant whatever measure or extent of English law he deemed suitable. Even in the most rural areas of East Florida where trials by justices of the peace were allowed, these proceedings were to be reviewed by the governor and capital punishment administered only by his authority, in St. Augustine. This was a major point of contention between the Upper and Lower Houses of the assembly. Members of the Lower House protested that a trial by jury could potentially keep a working slave, and the witnesses involved, in St. Augustine and out of the fields for longer periods of time than they were willing to concede. Leaders of the Upper House sought to insure that East Florida slave codes would be the “most humane in America and contrast[ed] it to the thirteen colonies where ‘liberty’ was supposed to be flourishing.”<sup>80</sup> Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown armed over 150 blacks—free and enslaved—in the East Florida Rangers during the course of the Revolution and believed that a more lenient slave code would make blacks in the Rangers and the militia more reliable.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to these measures, provisions for a workhouse were made by Governor Tonyn near the end of the Revolution. It was to serve as a jail for runaway slaves, blacks of ambiguous status, and whites deemed worthy of such humiliation by the governor. Most of St. Augustine’s blacks, however, were incarcerated in the jail on St. Augustine’s plaza. Tonyn signed the new

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<sup>79</sup> Parliament introduced the Negro Act in Great Britain during the reign of King George II which stipulated that any slave caught attempting to incite rebellion or participating in such must be tried by “three to five freeholders and three judges, rather than by three royal justices alone.” Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 63. East Florida’s slave code took this alteration in legal procedures a step further by including a jury, be it of white men.

<sup>80</sup> Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” 438.

<sup>81</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 123.

slave code into law in May 1782, less than two months before Savannah emptied thousands of Loyalist refugees and their slaves into East Florida.

But Governor Tonyn, while in some ways demonstrating a certain amount of benevolence on the subject of slavery, was also a large slave holder. The governor's wife had a reputation for extreme malevolence toward her slaves and was accused of murder by Dr. Andrew Turnbull.<sup>82</sup> But such charges in a society as rife with racial prejudices as British East Florida against one so well positioned would never see the inside of a courtroom. Even the clergy of St. Augustine were not without such feelings. Records of the Anglican Church indicate that the needs of black salvation were of considerably less import in East Florida than those of whites. The sole minister in St. Augustine, Rev. John Forbes, was a member of the council, judge of the vice-admiralty court and the court of common law, acting chief justice during the Drayton affair, and the owner of a large plantation and many slaves.

As in most predominantly Protestant North American colonies, blacks in East Florida met their own spiritual needs and provided their own clergy. Johann D. Schoepf, a German traveler in East Florida at the end of the Revolution, "discovered a black Baptist minister preaching to a Negro congregation in a cabin outside of [St. Augustine]." <sup>83</sup> It should be no surprise to see this kind of spiritual activity and in such a formalized setting as an established church. These were dark days and difficult times, and many of the African Americans made unfathomable sacrifices to be in St. Augustine. Once there, their existence may have even been more tenuous than before,

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<sup>82</sup> While such a charge against a royal governor's wife concerning the life of a slave might sound ludicrous, Turnbull's accusations were motivated by Tonyn's disbanding of Turnbull's plantation of New Smyrna after complaints of atrocities against mankind were leveled. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:30; see also "The Turnbull Letters," from September, 19, 1776 through the end of his life in 1792, for innumerable accusations of said events.

<sup>83</sup> Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, [1783–1784], transl. and ed. by Alfred J. Morrison, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1911), 2:230; see also Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 439.

making their spiritual needs great. Given the number of black refugees that filled St. Augustine's streets after the evacuations of Charleston and Savannah, their minister was most likely a fellow evacuee from one of the great early black Baptist churches at Silver Bluff, South Carolina, or Savannah, where significant black Baptist churches were established in the mid-1770s. The identity of this man remains a mystery, for once the British evacuation of East Florida was complete this itinerant preacher disappeared from all known records. But the important thing is that his congregation met. They found their own clergy. They established their own church building. How fascinating it would be to learn of his sermon topics, his advice, and his solace for their troubled lives. Though we have no recorded words, this activity was one of the loudest collective black voices in the Revolutionary South, for there, in that church, it can be assured that blacks—free or enslaved—were expressing their views, sharing their sorrows, and comforting their infirmed. Here, they were once again human beings as a direct result of their will to be so.

Throughout American history students are taught to virtually idolize the Revolutionary generation for their determined will to be a free and independent people. Only recently have scholars viewed the American Revolution from the perspective of those who remained in this land after the war, who were not free; who were not liberated; who were outcasts in their own lands. It is a cruel irony that the same founding fathers and Sons of Liberty who raged against their bondage to British lawmakers believed that their new-found liberties gave them the God-given right to enslave blacks and annihilate Indians.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Jennings, "The Indians' Revolution," in Young, *The American Revolution*, 344.





Figure 7-1. Remnants of the earth works constructed during the American Revolution along the northern, southern, and western perimeter of old St. Augustine (near the corner of Cordova Avenue and Orange Street). Photographs courtesy of the author.

## CHAPTER 8

### “ARE THEY TO DIE IN THE WILDERNESS?”

To fully appreciate the atmosphere in St. Augustine during the final stages of the American Revolution it is necessary to review the circumstances behind the build-up of the population as the war dragged on. The purpose of Chapter 8 is to better understand the realignment of the social structure in the tiny, defensively-sealed provincial capital. Never in St. Augustine's 217 year history had the black population of the town outnumbered its European whites. From 1565 to 1763, St. Augustine was inhabited primarily by the Spanish military and creole merchants, as runaway British slaves found solace either at Fort Mose or among the Seminoles and maroons. Under the British, the black population was overwhelmingly enslaved and lived on the colony's plantations. But from 1778 until the British evacuation began, the population estimates of St. Augustine were neither insignificant, nor constant, as the city swelled with Loyalist refugees of all races. It was ebb and flow as southern urban centers faced capture and re-capture, encouraging some to return home while others put down roots under the less volatile shadow of the Castillo de San Marcos. In order to appreciate the difficulty of these decisions I will begin with a cursory look back at what brought Loyalists to St. Augustine and discover the drawbacks of seeking solace in a provincial capital that was too small to absorb the Revolution's southern outcasts. What these Loyalists experienced as the British Empire faced expulsion from fourteen of its American mainland colonies was unprecedented, with a 1,350 mile chasm between St. Augustine and its nearest North American allies in Montreal. Yet their determination to remain in East Florida only grew stronger.

Looking back toward the early stages of the war, East Florida never seemed so near the geographic center of the American Revolution as when British regulars from Jamaica and Loyalist refugees from Virginia began to arrive in late 1775 and early 1776. With these refugees

came rebel prisoners-of-war and runaway slaves; the population of St. Augustine could never again be referred to as insignificant under the Union Jack. Southern backcountry hostilities created a constant influx of the Loyalist population in East Florida, as refugees flooded into St. Augustine once the civil war in the southern backcountry lost all compunction.<sup>1</sup> When Savannah and Charleston were left to the rebels by the vacating royal governments, urban Loyalists made the trek south as well; however, once General Prevost and Sir Henry Clinton secured these two port cities for the Crown many of the refugees returned home. But many others chose to remain father behind the battle lines in what they deemed their new home under the protection of the British flag.

But this too created its own difficulties. Every plantation, ranging from five thousand to twenty thousand acres each, was within a day's ride of St. Augustine and the protection of the Castillo de San Marcos. Therefore, each time there was a breach of the colonies defenses, whether by raiding parties from Georgia or Continental troop invasions, the entire population of the colony fled to the safety of St. Augustine if possible. To fully appreciate the conditions this would create, one must be cognizant of the actual size of the colonial capital. On the following pages are maps of the provincial capital, circa 1775, accompanied by corresponding photographs of present-day St. Augustine. Given St. Augustine's fortress-like perimeter, due to the town's earth-work defenses, an additional few thousand Loyalist refugees amounted to the beginnings of a population explosion. In 1777 Governor Tonyn brought approximately six hundred Minorcans up from the recently forsaken New Smyrna property. These people were relocated near the Castillo, thus, Governor Tonyn remained true to his word that the Minorcans would receive fair treatment and small lots within the protected walls of the city to build homes.

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<sup>1</sup> Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 639.

But not all of St. Augustine's refugees were loyal to the Crown. The first rebel prisoners-of-war arrived in East Florida in September 1775—the result of the Earl of Dunmore's Virginia campaign.<sup>2</sup> From then until June 15, 1781, St. Augustine became the recipient of approximately two thousand French, Spanish, and American prisoners-of-war from the Carolinas, Georgia, Virginia, and the high seas—including three signers of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary War prison barges have been the topic of discussions on the History Channel and PBS documentaries, but the hospitality shown in St. Augustine is a more gentlemanly side of the subject that sees little footage. Given that St. Augustine provided one of the most unusual prisoner-of-war experiences of the Revolution, it is appropriate that this study takes the effort at this point to draw attention to these circumstances.

At the earliest stages of the war there was a brief attempt to anchor the prison schooner *Otter* out into the Atlantic. However, due to the small size of St. Augustine's harbor in Matanzas Bay and the notorious sand bar, which made the entry of large vessels impossible, the efficient replenishment of victuals for the ship was functionally unsuitable to Governor Tonyn's sense of good form.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Tonyn housed the more hostile prisoners within the walls of the Castillo de San Marcos; those of gentlemanly rank and polite manners were allowed to take their leave in the town itself, providing, of course, they could pay the rent and signed a promissory letter of good conduct. Josiah Smith describes the perimeters of his confinement thus:

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<sup>2</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 87.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Middleton, Edward Rutledge, and Thomas Heyward, Jr. Josiah Smith, Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.)," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 34, No.4 (October 1933), 199. This count of 2,000 P.O.W.s does not include black slaves that the southern American gentry were allowed to bring with them to St. Augustine. Josiah Smith, Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.)," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 34, No.1, (January 1933), 31.

<sup>4</sup> Manucy, Johnson, "Castle St. Mark," 9. Considering the propensity of the British to use prison barges in New York harbor during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, in spite of their barbaric conditions, this was a surprisingly humane gesture.

Not pass to the Southward of the House now occupied by Henry Yonge, Esq. or to pass that lane, extending West of the Bridge near the Church Street.—Not to pass to the West of the Church Street leading to the Parade, from thence to the Barracks.—Not to pass Northward of the lane that leads from the house not occupied by Mr. Man to the Eastward, to the Engineers house formerly occupied by Major Sherdy (?) Not to pass to the Eastward of the Bay.<sup>5</sup>

However, there was a definite degree of insult associated with these boundaries for rebel prisoners, as evidenced in Smith's comments that the American colonists did not fully understand Great Britain's animosity toward them. Spanish and French prisoners-of-war had no perimeters whatever, being allowed to roam the entire town freely because they were considered more honorable, traditional European enemies as opposed to traitorous rabble in rebellion.<sup>6</sup> In Eliga Gould's discussion of prisoners-of-war he refers to Spain and France as Britain's "natural enemies," as opposed to Governor Tonyn's reference to the rebels as "unnatural" in their disaffections toward the Crown. During Josiah Smith's incarceration in St. Augustine three houses were made available to rebel prisoners from Charleston. "One house was a stone house on the northwest corner of the Parade, belonging to John Forbes; one was a large wood house near the river on the northeast corner of the Parole Limits, belonging to Spencer Man; the third group stayed at the unfinished State House."<sup>7</sup> The irony is not lost on those who would recognize that one of these houses was the urban home of Spencer Mann, one of Governor Tonyn's suspected Sons of Liberty.

The build-up of prisoners was slow but steady as Tonyn repeatedly refused to negotiate any exchange of prisoners-of-war. He believed that in demonstrating his humanity by allowing

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<sup>5</sup> Josiah Smith, Mabel. L. Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, No.1 (January 1932), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Josiah Smith, Mabel. L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.)," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1932), 101.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary," XXXIII, No.1, 11–12.

the detainees to enjoy the comforts of life outside a prison barge, he inadvertently exposed the town's defenses to the scrutiny of the enemy.<sup>8</sup> Tonym's concerns here were more than just paranoia as Josiah Smith suggested in his diary. One of the methods that prisoners utilized to secret concealed letters containing military intelligence outside of the colony was the false bottoms in crates filled with oranges and marmalade, sent home to beleaguered families in South Carolina.<sup>9</sup> One of the most serious breaches of conduct while a prisoner-of-war in St. Augustine was to write letters of encouragement to anyone still actively sympathetic to the rebels, including family.<sup>10</sup> Correspondence was believed to be a privilege and as gentlemen the prisoners were to conduct themselves accordingly, thus the need for hidden compartments in crates.

The prisoners paid for their food items and other supplies through agents, such as James Fisher and John Blake in Charleston who would purchase the items needed through family connections and ship them to St. Augustine. Otherwise, the prisoners would have to live on either whatever the garrison provided, or the food being sold by local vendors. Minorcan fishermen were a quick study of the situation and raised prices significantly for the prisoners-of-war.<sup>11</sup> At the end of his diary Smith made a special note of thanks to merchant Jesse Fish for his continuous supply of large amounts of oranges, as well as the hospitality of merchant Francisco Sanchez. Sanchez was later accused by Governor Tonym of being an accomplice to an outlaw gang plaguing the outlying plantations during the evacuation process and Fish provided the

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<sup>8</sup> Manucy, Johnson, "Castle St. Mark," 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary (cont.)," Vol. 33, No. 2, 111.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary," Vol. XXXIII, No.1, 4–5.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary," Vol. XXXIII, No.1, 17, 21.



oranges whose crates contained false bottoms used to smuggle military intelligence to Charleston.<sup>12</sup>

Though the rebel prisoners-of-war were not allowed to venture beyond their perimeter, it is evident in Smith's writings that town folk had no such restrictions on venturing inside this boundary. On more than one occasion Smith's house was robbed, emphasizing a lack of guards due to the eighteenth-century standards of chivalry and decorum concerning paroles, but it also represented a lack of protection for the rebels.<sup>13</sup> One anecdote Smith particularly enjoyed recounting occurred just before the arrival of prisoners captured at the Battle of Camden, South Carolina. Governor Tonyn disallowed the American rebels from conducting church services in their homes because he resented their praying for God to support their cause while living in his town. Tonyn invited them to attend the local Anglican Church or not worship at all.<sup>14</sup>

On June 15, 1781, Lord Cornwallis authorized a wholesale exchange of all prisoners-of-war in St. Augustine.<sup>15</sup> Forced to comply, Tonyn arranged the exchanges, which provided a temporary respite to some of the congestion woes within the town. This reduction in the population was not enough, however, to offer a permanent reprieve to the on-going problem of overcrowding. The increased flow of refugees from southern back-country fighting swelled the white civilian population to approximately 4,500 by late June 1782; the black population and Minorcans (presuming no natural increase among the Minorcans from 1777 to June 1782, for the

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary," Vol. 34, No.1, 32. Fish and Sanchez were two of the very few remaining citizens in the colony from the previous Spanish period. p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Josiah Smith, Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 33, No.2 (April 1932), 81.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, Webber, "Josiah Smith's Diary," Vol. 33, No.2, 84–86.

<sup>15</sup> Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 106.

purpose of erring on the side of caution) tallied at approximately 4,600.<sup>16</sup> These figures do not include the deluge of over 7,000 British loyalists from Savannah and Charleston that arrived in St. Augustine from July 12 to July 25, 1782.<sup>17</sup> Nor do they include another 3,826 Loyalists from Charleston that sailed into Matanzas Bay in late December.<sup>18</sup> I break these numbers down in this manner in an attempt to demonstrate the overwhelming crush of humanity that befell St. Augustine in short bursts; the numbers listed here consist only of those refugees who arrived by ship. There is no means of knowing the number of refugees who drifted into the province on foot after June 1782, or the number of blacks who sought shelter with the Seminoles, and were thus never counted. In any case, by Christmas 1782 the city limits were bursting with a minimum of 19,900 civilians.<sup>19</sup>

But the tally does not end here, as these totals do not include the British garrison stationed in St. Augustine at the end of the war, or troops evacuated from northern assignments—the South Carolina Royalists (456), the King’s Rangers (302), the Royal North Carolina Regiment (volunteers) (265), and an indeterminate number of the North Carolina Highlanders.<sup>20</sup> Nor do these numbers allow for the natural progression/regression of a population due to birth and death

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<sup>16</sup> “‘Observations on East Florida,’ Inclosure #1 in ‘Letter from Bernardo del Campo to Conde de Floridablanca, June 8, 1783,’” Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid. Estado, leg. 4246 Ap 1, pp. 117–27, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 120–21. Though these figures are generalized, they would be part of an historical record to an inhabitant of East Florida who was noting them one year after the fact. For the post-June 1782 numbers of refugees entering the colony I will rely upon Wilbur H. Siebert’s time-tested figures, as even one year later, in June of 1783, the odds of gaining an accurate count would be difficult for a contemporary person. However, I do not agree with Siebert’s total count.

<sup>17</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:7.

<sup>18</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:7. The number of refugees listed in Lockey for the Savannah and Charleston evacuations totals 3,500 whites and 5,000 blacks. However, as mentioned in footnote 16, Wilbur H. Siebert’s figures on the evacuations have withstood scrutiny for almost one hundred years and I will adhere to his accounts for the post-June 1782 figures for the number of refugees entering the colony.

<sup>19</sup> Lockey, *East Florida*, 120–20; see also Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 1.

<sup>20</sup> All but the North Carolina Highlanders are listed by both Troxler, and Siebert. Siebert alone lists the Highlanders. The South Carolina Royalists numbers represent the entire regiment. By early 1784, 340 of their members opted to become discharged from the military while in East Florida rather than risk assignment to the West Indies or Nova Scotia. Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 6; also see Siebert, “The Legacy of the American Revolution,” 20.



rates. Wilbur H. Siebert listed the population in St. Augustine at this time to be exactly 17,385—but on which day? People were straggling in and out of town hourly, military personnel were deserting their ranks and melting into the country side in order to avoid being shipped to the West Indies, people died, and babies were born. Native Americans are never included in the town's population figures, but their presence in St. Augustine during the war was continuous and often numerous. Exact numbers are virtually impossible due to the lack of precise information available. For instance, in a letter to Thomas Townshend (the future Lord Sydney) on May 15, 1783, Tonyn remarks that over 12,000 refugees had sought protection within the province. But we do not know for certain if Tonyn is referring to the number of refugees to find haven in St. Augustine since the war began, since the evacuations of Savannah and Charleston, or in addition to all other refugees flocking to East Florida after January 1783. Since the specific figures for refugees were not being recorded until after the evacuations of Savannah and Charleston it may be presumed that this number is post-June 1782. That would increase that influx of refugees from 10,826 to over 12,000. However, with there being no better accounting of these circumstances, I prefer to keep the count simple and err on the side of caution. Therefore, counting the December 1782 population of the city, which includes the primary influx of refugees from Savannah and Charleston, military personnel, and the ebb and flow of Native Americans estimated as conservatively as is reasonable, it is plausible that St. Augustine may have held between 21,000 to 22,000 inhabitants on any given day by mid-December 1782.<sup>21</sup>

One could immediately question whether this many people actually stayed within the confines of such a small space for any length of time. Governor Tonyn immediately requested,

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<sup>21</sup> A glance back at the graphics on pages 2–5 of this chapter will remind the reader of the diminutive size of the city in 1775. As a point of reference the land area of present-day St. Augustine is 8.37 square miles and had 12,404 residents in July 2008; the land area for the original “Ancient City” is .101 square miles and on January 1, 1783, held between 21,000 to 22,000 people.

and was granted, the right to divide and distribute unimproved land grants belonging to absentee owners. Newly arrived refugees in East Florida would receive five hundred acres per head-of-household for the purpose of alleviating the population explosion in St. Augustine. However, due to British attitudes toward property rights and land ownership it was a slow process.<sup>22</sup> Tonyn learned from the mistakes made in Jamaica where planters occupied more land than they were able to use, forcing small planters to either leave the island or seek employment on the plantations.<sup>23</sup> By sectioning the massive undeveloped grants among the refugees, Governor Tonyn hoped to avoid this fate, as well as remove the population strain from the tiny provincial capital.

But there is one factor that might support the conclusion that these inhabitants did indeed remain as close as possible to the protective defenses of St. Augustine, if not immediately inside its walls. Just one week after the final convoy of refugees arrived from Charleston in mid-December, a delegation of over 6,000 Native Americans, representing Indian nations and confederations from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, arrived in St. Augustine to affirm their loyalty to Great Britain through the Superintendent of the Southern Indian Department, Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown.<sup>24</sup> Historian Colin Calloway points out that this was not an unusual gesture in Native American culture as two separate precedents for such activity occurred at the conclusion of the French and Indian War. In July 1763, chiefs from nearly a dozen southern Native American nations, including the Choctaws, poured into New Orleans to express their

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<sup>22</sup> Lockey, *East Florida*, 10; see also Siebert, "The Legacy of the American Revolution," 8–9.

<sup>23</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Siebert, "The Legacy of the American Revolution," 10. It is not known at this time if this number included the families of these emissaries

loyalty to the French.<sup>25</sup> In July and August of 1764, 2,000 Native Americans from twenty-four nations congressed at Niagara Falls with William Johnson, British Indian Superintendent of the Northern Region. The Indian delegates to that particular congress traveled from as far west as the Mississippi River, east from Nova Scotia, and north from Hudson Bay.<sup>26</sup> With the outcome of the American Revolution fundamentally determined at Yorktown and peace talks being common knowledge, it was a significant gesture for these people to align themselves with the British at this point. The proof of their sincerity was in the distance they traveled in the dead of winter to reach St. Augustine.

This pledge of loyalty is a monumental testimony to the relationship that British East Florida built with the various nations and confederations throughout the southeast, especially considering the callous attitude of the British witnessed toward Native Americans. This contingency of delegates evidences the good-faith reputation Thomas Brown and Patrick Tonyn earned with their Native American allies as word of their honorable intentions spread far across the North American continent. East Florida contributed over £1,000 in food and provisions to the Seminoles and Creeks during the winter of 1779–1780, when near-famine conditions in the back countries threatened the lives of these people.<sup>27</sup> It is quite conceivable that news of this generosity reached countless Native Americans. It may also be presumed that Native Americans collectively knew that their war with the “Virginians” would never be over and they hoped that the British in East Florida would continue the fight, as promised in 1774. We may never fully understand why delegates from the Great Lakes region traveled all the way to St. Augustine rather than seek General Haldimand in Quebec, other than the good reputation earned by the East

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<sup>25</sup> Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 135.

<sup>26</sup> Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 97.

<sup>27</sup> Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 80.

Floridian administrators as compared to Native American experiences with other British officials.

Regardless of their reason for coming, the people within the town's defenses woke up one morning to find what must have appeared to be an army of at least 6,000 Native American chiefs and delegates settled in a make-shift community just beyond the perimeter of the city's earthen works from late December 1782 until March 1783. Could anyone be completely sure of their mood or intentions? What if their frustrations boiled over as Thomas Brown's presents became in short supply, or traditional blood feuds among the various tribes found an outlet as this large collection of people were in such close proximity to each other. Venturing out to the plantations and outlying farms could very well have been perceived as a perilous risk if tempers became inflamed over any small details of camp life outside the city walls. Though this method for pledging loyalties was a culturally accepted means of communication among the Native Americans, as Calloway points out, that does not mean that the people of St. Augustine understood the passivity of their congress. Now, St. Augustine was not only bursting at the seams, but alleviating the problem by moving outside the city's defenses was risky at best.

One final element that must be considered in the demographics of this enormous population increase is the number of blacks, free and enslaved, included in these figures. Brigadier General Archibald McArthur calculated that of the more than 21,000 people in St. Augustine, three-fifths of that number, or 12,000–13,000 souls, were black.<sup>28</sup> Eighteenth-century slaveholding communities lived in perpetual fear of an armed revolt, thus a significant number of white inhabitants in St. Augustine became concerned with the close proximity of the free blacks

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<sup>28</sup> Siebert, "The Legacy of the American Revolution," 9.

to their slaves and the animosities that might occur.<sup>29</sup> Many of the free blacks in St. Augustine at this time were either former slaves who purchased their freedom prior to the war, slaves who attained their freedom by joining the British army, runaways from rebel plantations, or those who simply became lost in the shuffle and had no idea where their owners were. With the population pushing the city's facilities to fantastic limits it was virtually impossible to verify the identity of each individual black person and their relationship to the whites around them.

In summary, by late winter of 1783, the immediate vicinity of St. Augustine exploded with a transitory population of at least 27,000 people—exponentially more if the tally of 6,000 Native Americans only included men and not the families that must surely have accompanied them. Even though supplies from London by this time were heavily strained, Lt. Colonel Brown managed to continue distributing provisions and presents of rum, dry goods, and munitions to the Native Americans in hopes of bringing a quick, but diplomatically correct, conclusion to the Indian conference. Still unaware at this time of the pending retrocession of the colony to Spain, East Floridians must have understood the magnitude of such an alliance on their doorstep. As frightening as this Indian presence may have been, it may have also provided the citizens of St. Augustine with a certain degree of confidence in the potential longevity of the colony as a British foothold in the North American underbelly. But officials in London who were already aware of the colony's political future felt concern about the attitude of the Native American population once they learned of the intended cession of this region to Spain.<sup>30</sup> Governor Tonyn anguished over those very concerns once the news of the retrocession broke, but from a much closer

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<sup>29</sup> Siebert, "The Legacy of the American Revolution," 9.

<sup>30</sup> Siebert, "The Legacy of the American Revolution," 10.

proximity than his superiors at Whitehall, as he later expressed his concern that the planters “will not think themselves and Negroes safe in the Country.”<sup>31</sup>

In February 1783, Whitehall issued orders to Thomas Brown to empty the storehouses of all presents to friendly Indian nations and then withdraw all traders as there would be no more gifts from Great Britain. Fortunately, this news did not arrive in St. Augustine until after the delegation of 6,000-strong Native Americans returned to their home lands. Brown realized, of course, that these orders must be followed; emphasizing even more that once news of the cession became public knowledge throughout the American southeast there would be need for a quick evacuation. The bulging provincial capital would be indefensible to a hostile indigenous uprising. A Native American assault on St. Augustine would find the natural barriers of the town’s western defenses much more accessible than a European-style army. It was at this time that Brown, Tonyn, and General Archibald McArthur met with many of the chiefs of the smaller tribes on May 15, 1783. Many of these leaders were the same chiefs who accepted Governor Tonyn’s word in 1775 that the Great King’s armies would defeat the “Virginians,” and now they wanted to be taken away on ships with the British as they feared the inevitability of American and Spanish retributions.<sup>32</sup> Having feared the worst, the worried population of St. Augustine heartily received the news of Native American sympathies. However, it was also understood that the pledges of alliance proclaimed in January might now be temporary at best, and possibly turn hostile, once the Indians fully realized the effect of the broken promises and abandonment by the British government.<sup>33</sup> There was still justifiable reason for the inhabitants to be concerned with a

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<sup>31</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Thomas Townshend, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO, 5/560, pp. 583–616.

<sup>32</sup> “Substance of Indian Talks Delivered to Patrick Tonyn, Thomas Brown, and Major General Archibald McArthur, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/110, pp. 1–3.

<sup>33</sup> “Thomas Nixon to Evan Nepean, October 22, 1783,” PRO, CO, 5/560, pp. 843–50. Evan Nepean was Governor Tonyn’s representative to the Board of Treasury.

sudden outbreak of hostilities, even with such a sizable assortment of British troops concentrated in the city. However, this protective shield of British military strength was soon to be in question as well.

After the fall of Yorktown in 1781, decisive battles gave way to backcountry skirmishes as peace negotiations dominated the remainder of the war years. For British Loyalists the summer and fall of 1782 was dominated by the question of evacuation. The British army still occupied New York City when the Treaty of Paris was initially signed in November 1782, but Savannah and Charleston were either fully evacuated or in the process. North American port cities under British control emptied their inhabitants into the waters of the Atlantic, while the inland Loyalists clogged the back roads near the borders of Canada and East Florida. Nova Scotia, Quebec, the Bahamas and West Indies, England, and Central America became ports of call for this loyal band of emigrants.

But in St. Augustine, the smallest provincial capital in North America, an unprecedented event took place from 1782 to 1785. For most southern Loyalists the Canadian climate was presumed utterly unsuitable for planter society and the slave ownership that made them prosperous. Southern Tories saw East Florida as a sanctuary where they could rebuild their lives without leaving the warmer regions of the continent to which they were accustomed.<sup>34</sup> The West Indies, in addition to being known as a white man's graveyard due to the impact of yellow fever and malaria, were brimming with plantations and maroon hide-outs; the thin, sandy soil of the Bahamas was referred to as "mere rocks, fit only for fishermen."<sup>35</sup> A general pattern of

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<sup>34</sup> Common thinking at this time was that African slaves were not capable of tolerating cold climates. Also, the types of crops that these planters had become proficient in raising needed a southern climate. Still, almost 30,000 Americans evacuated New York City and Charleston for Nova Scotia. Another 7,000 made their way to Quebec and Ontario during the winter of 1783–1784, without assistance from London. North Callahan, *Flight From the Republic: The Tories of the American Revolution* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967), 34, 72.

<sup>35</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Thomas Townsend, May 15, 1783," PRO, CO, 5/560, pp. 583–90.

evacuation after the war quickly developed as slave owning Loyalists sought the warmer climates of the West Indies and the Bahamas while those with few or no slaves went to Europe or Nova Scotia.<sup>36</sup> However, this was not the first time that Charleston and Savannah changed hands. Even after Yorktown, most American Loyalists firmly believed that it was simply a matter of time before the United States became crippled economically and/or militarily. Therefore, they wanted to remain close to their former land holdings in Georgia and the Carolinas in order to reclaim their property as quickly as possible, just as they had after previous evacuations during the war.<sup>37</sup> It has also been said that refugees now in East Florida endured a great deal more than Loyalists in other American colonies due to the ferocity of the backcountry war these loyal émigrés suffered and what might be perceived as the insensitivity of Parliament toward them.<sup>38</sup> Most of these people had already experienced one forced evacuation—two, for those refugees from Savannah who went north to Charleston in July 1782, rather than south to St. Augustine. It would not be their last.

In a perverse déjà vu, Loyalist dreams of a British safe haven in East Florida came to a mind-numbing halt on April 24, 1783, when Governor Tonyn received a special envoy from London announcing the retrocession of East Florida to Spain. The shock was so great when Tonyn announced this edict to the combined Houses of the Assembly that they dismissed all protocol and dispatched a letter of lamentations directly to King George III. John Moultrie and William Brown represented the sentiments of both elected Houses in a similar response to

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<sup>36</sup> Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 21.

<sup>37</sup> This was not an idle thought, as J. Leitch Wright tells us that “[Lord Dunmore] believed, as was commonly assumed in Europe, that the United States would soon break up” after gaining her independence. J. Leitch Wright, “Lord Dunmore’s Loyalist Asylum in the Floridas,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 49, Issue 4 (April 1971), 377.

<sup>38</sup> J. Leitch Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1975), 131.



Governor Tonyn, as they wrote, “we bitterly deplore the dire necessity, which compelled our parent state to multiply the accumulated distresses of many of His Majesty’s most faithful subjects, who had taken refuge under the promise of a permanent asylum in the Province.”<sup>39</sup>

These legislators were devastated that their king sacrificed them so casually when the war never successfully crossed East Florida’s borders nor gave firm root to any disloyal sentiments or participation.

Through his letter to Thomas Townshend on May 15, 1783, Governor Tonyn reminded Parliament that the “Planters have invested large sums of money, remained loyal in times of rebellion, and were feeling comfortable in these surroundings.”<sup>40</sup> Thoroughly loyal, these refugees had already overcome their losses in other provinces and rebuilt again in East Florida. Loyalists in St. Augustine believed they had earned the right to remain in this corner of the North American continent by repeatedly defending their new home on the battlefield. More importantly, they believed that King George III should honor their loyalty—demonstrated by their sacrifices and shed blood—by protecting them from the political intrigues of international diplomacy.

That this was an era when political maneuvers did not materialize quickly, making the remainder of the Loyalists’ stay in East Florida all the more stressful. The Treaty of Paris, 1783, was first signed on November 30, 1782 by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay, as well as David Hartley of Great Britain. French representatives signed the treaty in Paris on

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<sup>39</sup> In November 1775 Governor Tonyn began promoting East Florida as a sanctuary for refugees of Georgia and South Carolina. In a bulletin dispatched to Charleston and Savannah, Tonyn offered land with ten year quit-rents to any Loyalists who relocated to East Florida. John Moultrie, speaker of the Upper House and William Brown, speaker of the House of Commons in East Florida, were reminding the king of those promises. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, Vol. I, 24; see also “Address of Both Houses to the King, April 30, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 599–602.

<sup>40</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Thomas Townsend, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, p. 585.

January 20, 1783. United States representatives re-signed the treaty on September 3, 1783—the official date in American history books. The American Congress then ratified the treaty on January 14, 1784. King George III ratified the document a final time on behalf of Great Britain on April 9, 1784, thus formally ending the war. Just the signing of the treaty, from beginning to end, was a process that took over sixteen months to complete.

These dates are critical to understanding the dire circumstances involving the population of St. Augustine. Unlike New York, Charleston, Pensacola, and Savannah, St. Augustine was not located in a colony that had been overthrown by combative forces; therefore, there was no liberation accompanied by immediate occupation. Since the cession of East Florida to Spain was the product of a treaty, there could be no official directive in St. Augustine—no evacuation—until the treaty was signed and ratified by all parties. Unlike the occupation of a conquered territory by a physically-present military force, this process was slow and deliberate as it literally took months to simply deliver official documents to each delegation.<sup>41</sup> From the date of the treaty’s original signing, it would be sixteen months before British inhabitants received a directive of embarkation; thirty-six months before the last British ship would leave East Florida. Governor Tonyn was quoted in one letter dated October 22, 1783—six full months after the announcement of East Florida’s retrocession to Spain in St. Augustine—that “[No] Measures have been adopted for their removal.” The author of the letter, Thomas Nixon, wondered, “Are they to die in the Wilderness?”<sup>42</sup> All the while these loyal subjects were unremittingly hopeful that further negotiations would somehow reverse the decree. What they would never understand was that East Florida was nothing more than a bargaining chip for the British Crown. The

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<sup>41</sup> It was common practice during this era for armies in the field to continue efforts to solidify—even increase—territorial gains during peace negotiations. Many historians believe that this was the purpose behind the British attack on New Orleans in January 1815.

<sup>42</sup> “Letter from Thomas Nixon to Evan Nepean, October 22, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, P. 843–44, p. 1–2.

primary interest in all of the bartering of colonies that took place between the thrones of Spain and Great Britain after the Revolution was Gibraltar. Spain was determined to get the tiny, but strategic position on the Iberian Peninsula back from British control. It took months of negotiations before the Spanish realized that Britain was willing to concede almost any other protectorate in order to maintain its domination of the narrow opening to the Mediterranean Sea.

Trade, not people, was the ultimate catalyst in a world governed by mercantilist economics. Gibraltar regulated traffic into the vast riches of Mediterranean trade, not to mention the western entrance to the overland trade routes into the Indian subcontinent. Thus, East Florida was easily discarded. To add insult to injury, Governor Tonyn received a taunting letter from Benjamin Guerard, the new American governor of South Carolina, and one-time prisoner-of-war on the prison ship *Torbay*. Guerard informed Tonyn that the *Charleston Gazette* made public the details of the new treaty to the people of South Carolina on April 17, 1783—one week prior to Tonyn receiving official news from London.<sup>43</sup> Guerard then warned Tonyn that even though the treaty did not specifically prohibit British refugees from evacuating slaves or other property taken out of South Carolina, there would be dire consequences if such actions were attempted.<sup>44</sup> East Florida's new-found insignificance in international events was never more pronounced, nor were the insults concluded.

In May 1782, Sir Guy Carleton replaced Sir Henry Clinton as the ranking British official in North America and began the proceedings for the evacuation of New York City. But there was a problem in that there was a shortage of ships available for a swift evacuation of the city. The evacuation took a full eighteen months from the time Carleton arrived in New York in May 1782

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.)." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (October 1932), 282.

<sup>44</sup> "Benjamin Guerard to Patrick Tonyn, April 17, 1783," PRO, CO 5/560, p. 661.

until the final departure on November 25, 1783. The ramifications of this situation for the people of St. Augustine were two-fold: first, the shortage of available ships meant that East Floridians were going to have to wait at least until the evacuation of New York City was completed; and, second, Sir Guy Carleton was officially made aware of the outcome of the war and the basics of the treaty a minimum of eleven months prior to Governor Tonyn. It was not unusual that a man in Carlton's position would receive this information ahead of a royal governor, but it demonstrates Carlton's lack of regard for East Florida as a whole that he allowed eleven months to pass without forwarding such critical correspondence.

This passage also implies that, as noted historians such as Simon Schama and most American textbooks teach, November 25, 1783, was the final evacuation date for all British refugees in North America—two full years prior to the last British ship leaving East Florida on November 13, 1785. In July 1782, Carlton originally called for the evacuation of St. Augustine rather than Charleston. When he later reversed that decision it was believed by the people of East Florida, as well as Governor Tonyn, that the loyalty of St. Augustine was being rewarded and this was a positive step toward East Florida remaining a British colony regardless of the outcome of the war. The real reason for the delay, as mentioned, was a lack of available tonnage for multiple removals, both civilian and military. Carleton told General Alexander Leslie, however, that the residents of East Florida needed to prepare themselves for eventual evacuation. East Florida authorities never received this information from General Leslie, as is evidenced by their reaction to the news of cession on April 24, 1783.<sup>45</sup>

On September 9, 1783, Governor Tonyn received two letters from Admiral Robert Digby with orders to withdraw all British troops from St. Augustine prior to the evacuation of the

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<sup>45</sup> Linda K. Williams, "East Florida as a Loyalist Haven," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, Issue 4 (April 1976), 472–73.

civilian inhabitants. At this point the people of East Florida, feeling forgotten and overlooked, had no idea what to presume from Whitehall in the form of aid.<sup>46</sup> As Tonyn expressed in his response to former British Prime Minister Frederick, Lord North concerning this matter, “We are perfectly in the dark my Lord, what assistance to expect for the faithful inhabitants, upon His Majesty’s instructions for the dissolution of the civil Government or surrendering to the Spaniards.”<sup>47</sup>

The people of St. Augustine were in a unique diplomatic quandary as they were not viewed as refugees because their removal from St. Augustine was not considered militarily motivated. Even those forced by the war to move to the capital from other locations where they *were* refugees were no longer classified as such. There was no conquering horde crushing in to annihilate them at a moment’s notice, as was portrayed in other North American cities. Peace had been negotiated; therefore, the Spanish army was not arriving for the purpose of pillage and plunder. To the aristocracy of London there were more expedient demands, such as the evacuation of New York.

The disposition of black Loyalists was a crucial point of dispute, as South Carolina governor Guerard’s letter to Tonyn demanding the return of “stolen” American property indicated.<sup>48</sup> The South Carolina governor was of course referring to slaves. Guerard compounded the insult by sending a representative, William Livingston, to personally collect the fugitives and supervise their return. In a letter filled with his famous aptitude for smugness, Tonyn promptly

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<sup>46</sup> Callahan, *Flight From the Republic*, xi, xii, 29.

<sup>47</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord North, September 11, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 685–88.

<sup>48</sup> Governor Guerard’s motives were less than stellar, as he lost forty-seven of his own slaves to abduction and absconding. Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 92. The charge of stealing slaves by American planters was not a simple matter. Americans wanted to declare any slave, whether Loyalist owned or rebel owned, taken to East Florida as stolen property. The British laid claim to their own slaves as personal property and the removal of American owned slaves as plunder, or spoils of war (the purpose for placing the word “stolen” in quotations is the author’s emphasis to demonstrate the disagreement concerning the suspect classification of these people).

snubbed Livingston and told Guerard that he would wish for a different choice in representatives as “Mr. Livingston rendered himself obnoxious to several here, that I might have had an opportunity of shewing him every civility.”<sup>49</sup> Another representative from South Carolina came to St. Augustine to negotiate the return of plundered slaves and was arrested at once, not being permitted to communicate his circumstances back to Charleston.<sup>50</sup>

This is not to say that the evacuees from Savannah and Charleston were not guilty as charged for taking slaves into East Florida—Colonel James Moncrief of the Royal Engineers brought eight hundred slaves from the engineer and ordnance departments in Charleston with him to St. Augustine in 1782.<sup>51</sup> The question involved here was whether the taking of these slaves was an illegal action. While it was true that Loyalist refugees in East Florida absconded with slaves other than their own, they felt that slaves were “the most salvageable form of wealth” to compensate them for their loss of real estate in the liberated colonies.<sup>52</sup> Governor Tonyn may have felt Sir Guy Carlton set a legal precedent in the evacuation of blacks from New York. Simon Schama provides evidence that by 1783 there was a “Somerset Effect” influencing the actions of many British officials due to the misinterpreted court decision of Judge Mansfield.<sup>53</sup> Carlton’s “Precis Relative to Negroes in North America” added that all slaves—men, women, and children—who ran away from rebel owners to British-held lines, towns, or encampments were declared free: “the British Constitution not allowing of slavery but holding out freedom and

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<sup>49</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Benjamin Guerard, June 10, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, p. 668.

<sup>50</sup> Siebert, “Slavery in East Florida,” 153.

<sup>51</sup> Siebert, “Slavery in East Florida,” 153.

<sup>52</sup> Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 1.

<sup>53</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 427n16.

protection to all who came within.”<sup>54</sup> A loose interpretation of the “Precis” was not beyond Tonyn’s methodology for dealing with his American adversaries.

By autumn 1782, in addition to the official evacuation of Charleston, large numbers of slaves were finding their way to East Florida by their own volition. British General Alexander Leslie attempted to block the efforts of another British officer, Brigadier General Archibald McArthur, to return any of these blacks to Charleston. Many sequestered blacks were evacuated from Charleston on British military transports and, therefore, were deemed spoils of war rather than runaways.<sup>55</sup> In another case, Dr. James Clitherall, a Loyalist from South Carolina residing in Florida, was hired to recover slaves for their former South Carolinian owners. Governor Tonyn refused to allow any restoration of slaves to rebel owners due to his stance on the confiscation and banishment laws of Georgia and South Carolina.<sup>56</sup> The East Florida Council supported Tonyn’s efforts to confound the return of slaves to Charleston or any other location in the new American nation and sought ways to obstruct any reclamation efforts. Some former owners from South Carolina claimed that their slaves were willing to return with them, but East Florida authorities would not allow them to take the slaves away or even verify their case in a court of law.<sup>57</sup>

Black refugees were undoubtedly used like poker chips in the never-ending struggle for compensation after the war as Governor Tonyn refused to negotiate the return of any slaves until

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<sup>54</sup> “Precis Relative to Negroes in North America,” PRO, CO 5/8, pp. 112–14; see also Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 151.

<sup>55</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 175.

<sup>56</sup> North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia passed banishment and confiscation laws that declared all abandoned Loyalist property in those states as confiscated spoils of war. They also passed laws banishing thousands of Loyalists from ever entering their borders again, many on pain of death.

<sup>57</sup> There are no documents available to verify that the refugees indeed agreed to return willingly to their former Carolinian owners. As dreadful as the British had been historically to their slaves, the Americans were clearly deemed a worse option. Siebert, “Slavery in East Florida,” 152.

the banishment and confiscation acts in the Carolinas and Georgia were repealed. Tonyn clearly equated slaves with real estate in an effort to gain monetary settlements for the faithful East Florida refugees.<sup>58</sup> In the meantime, blacks in East Florida—many of whom built the defenses of St. Augustine and bravely helped to defend its borders—did not know if Governor Tonyn would indeed trade them back to the Americans in a quid pro quo for confiscated plantations in the Carolinas, or whether he was just cruelly using them as part of a bluff. Either way, circumstances for slaves in East Florida were extremely tenuous during the entire British period and could only improve once the Spanish regained power. Or so they thought.

When the Spanish re-claimed power in St. Augustine on July 12, 1784, they brought only five hundred soldiers of foot. Spanish governor Manuel Vicente de Zespedes was initially allotted only 40,000 pesos to run the colony—an amount so insufficient that he could not afford to purchase horses in order to mount his dragoons. Though the Spanish represented a victorious army in North America, their physical presence in St. Augustine was not sufficient to properly protect the colony from local outlaws—referred to in official correspondence as banditti. The news of East Florida's retrocession to Spain created new concerns for control the enslaved population of the colony and encouraged the banditti to raid plantations for slaves and other easily transportable property. Property disputes over the ownership of slaves persisted into the 1790s, troubling not only the departing British but the incoming Spanish administration. Americans would continue to accuse the officials of both empires of having stolen their slaves, which they considered rightful property of the United States.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 10; see also Wright, "Blacks in British East Florida," 440.

<sup>59</sup> Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary," 303.



To compound the issue, hundreds of regular British troops terminated their service to the Crown, legally or not, while still in St. Augustine rather than risk deployment to the West Indies where the fear of contracting malaria or yellow fever was more often a reality. Most of these men were Scots, Hessians, and French-speaking Swiss conscripts who felt no compassion for the beleaguered civilians of East Florida.<sup>60</sup> These troops were Europeans who found themselves in North America involuntarily and, to their way of thinking, all Americans were equally responsible for their current lot in the British army. Banditti gangs offered these men employment and an opportunity to continue the good fight—but this time they would fight for spoils rather than king and country.

The East Florida banditti's leaders were Daniel McGirtt, Lt. Colonel Thomas Brown's second-in-command and personally commissioned by Governor Tonyn; his brother James, a former captain in the Rangers; and John Linder, Jr. Due to Daniel McGirtt's heroics in the defense of the colony during the war, his influence among the people was powerful enough to enable him to conduct business—both legal and illegal—while incarcerated in St. Augustine. When Governor Tonyn ordered McGirtt's property seized, the banditti leader protected his net worth by selling forty-six slaves to the merchant Francisco Sanchez from the confines of his cell in the Castillo de San Marcos.<sup>61</sup> The banditti were motivated by outrage at the British government for ceding East Florida to Spain after so many of them put their lives on the line in service to King George III during the war.<sup>62</sup> Governor Tonyn conveyed to London that he raised

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<sup>60</sup> Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 105.

<sup>61</sup> Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 40.

<sup>62</sup> McGirtt testified that his life of crime began the day he was told of the colony's cession to Spain. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, Vol. II, 329. For more references to the Banditti see Lockey, *East Florida*, 14–18, 157, 175, 195–96, 214–15, 220–21, 231, 235–36, 248, 290, 298, 321, 333–38, 346–47, 353–57, 368–71, 373, 388–95, 401–04, 443, 446, 526, 585–93, 607, 653; see also, Lockey, “The Florida Banditti, 1783,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 24, Issue 2 (October 1945), pp. 87–107. To list each of the primary documents from Lockey's *East*

two troops of Light Horse for the purpose of protecting the inhabitants of St. Augustine from the banditti. But in two letters to Governor Zespedes, Tonyn freely admitted that the Light Horse was raised for the purpose of protecting certain outlying plantations from having their slaves stolen—one of those plantations being his own.<sup>63</sup> Much to Tonyn's chagrin, Governor Zespedes sought to control the banditti through an alliance, which galled the British governor until the day he left the continent.<sup>64</sup>

One of the local known confederates of the banditti who managed to keep himself just enough on the proper side of his legal battles to avoid jail was the merchant Francisco Sanchez, a resident from the first Spanish period who continued to live in East Florida after the British gained control of the colony in 1763. Sanchez earned Governor Tonyn's ire after his business dealings with Daniel McGirtt's gang came to the governor's attention. Not surprisingly, this was the same Francisco Sanchez who received so much praise in Josiah Smith's diary. In a letter to McGirtt's wife on July 1, 1784, which was intercepted by British authorities, Sanchez instructed the woman to relay to her husband a plan to rob a ship on the St. Marys River of its cargo of slaves. The plan called for ten to fifteen men in a "Good large cunnoo" to board the ship at night and steal all of the blacks onboard. There is no mention as to how many blacks were targeted, or their status as slave or free.<sup>65</sup>

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*Florida* that pertain to the banditti would be so voluminous as to detract from the text. Therefore, I have opted on this occasion to list just the page numbers in Lockey that correspond.

<sup>63</sup> Lockey, *East Florida*, 220, 247.

<sup>64</sup> Many things about these two men annoyed the other. Tonyn was an Irishman in an English army, while Zespedes was from the peninsular Spanish region of Castile. "In a rank-conscious society, these distinctions were more valuable than monetary wealth." In the Spanish army, Irishmen were more or less mercenaries and Tonyn did not strike Zespedes as being more than that. Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 3; see also Waterbury, *The Oldest City*, 128.

<sup>65</sup> Lockey, *East Florida*, 216–17.

Only two days after his arrival in East Florida, Governor Zespedes decreed that he would appoint two British residents, John Leslie and Francis Philip Fatio, as judges in a court of arbitration to preside over any disputes involving British residents.<sup>66</sup> John Leslie, of Panton, Leslie, and Company, proved himself worthy of his appointment as he sought to protect his reputation in the colony as a fair businessman. Francis Philip Fatio had other aspirations. On June 7, 1784, Fatio, claiming to represent the wealthy “Planters, Merchants and other Inhabitants of the Province of East Florida,” declared his loyalty to King George III, Great Britain, and Governor Tonyn. Considering that Fatio then applied for Spanish citizenship immediately upon Governor Zespedes’s arrival only thirty-five days later, his motives for this pledge of loyalty become suspect.<sup>67</sup> Governor Tonyn complained to Lord Sydney, the new Secretary of State, of Zespedes’ selection of Fatio “who assumes a jurisdiction of a very extensive nature, styling himself Judge over His Britannic Majesty’s Subjects.”<sup>68</sup> According to Tonyn, the Swiss-born Fatio “has a very imperfect knowledge of the Laws, Language, and constitution of Great Britain, and is an obnoxious Character in the Community.”<sup>69</sup> Tonyn also accused Fatio of determining his judgments based upon decisions of cases that “originated in another Country, and had been heard in a British Court of Justice.”<sup>70</sup> Because Fatio was never embraced by British East Florida’s elite society Tonyn accused the new magistrate of rendering personal retribution on the

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<sup>66</sup> Lockey, *East Florida*, 633.

<sup>67</sup> Lockey, *East Florida*, 204.

<sup>68</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 28. Lord Sydney is the namesake for the city of Sydney, Australia; also known as Thomas Townshend, brother of Charles Townshend of the infamous Townshend Act imposed on the American colonies in 1767. Prior to 1783, Tonyn’s letters to Lord Sydney are addressed to Thomas Townshend, as Townshend’s barony was not bestowed until January 1783.

<sup>69</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 30.

<sup>70</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 28.

British inhabitants: “he prejudices Causes, and decides by whim and caprice.”<sup>71</sup> All was for naught, for neither Tonyn, nor his superiors at Whitehall, had jurisdiction in Fatio’s appointment; thus, they could not override Zespedes’ decision.

Issues concerning slave ownership and slave theft soon choked Panton and Fatio’s court dockets, convincing Governor Zespedes that the black population was a serious threat to civil order in the colony. McGirtt’s banditti were not the only inhabitants of East Florida who saw slaves as valuable, transportable property. Throughout the American Revolution, both sides pilfered and plundered blacks, free and enslaved, in an effort to either cripple the economics of the plantation agricultural system or to simply profit from the selling of stolen “goods.”<sup>72</sup>

On July 26, 1784, just two weeks after his arrival in St. Augustine, Governor Zespedes set off a chain reaction of events concerning all blacks in the colony that even he could not likely have foreseen. Article Five of the Treaty of Paris, 1783, decreed:

His Catholic majesty guarantees that the British inhabitants, or others, who may have been Subjects of the King of Great Britain in Florida may retire within a time prescribed, in full security and liberty where they shall think proper, and may sell their Effects as well as their persons without being restrained in their Emigration under any pretence whatsoever, except on Account of Debts or Criminal prosecutions...His Britannic Majesty shall have the power of removing all the Effects which may belong to him, whether artillery or otherwise.<sup>73</sup>

In short, what belonged to British subjects could not be arbitrarily taken from British subjects, by order of King Charles III of Spain. Being an enlightened ruler, the Spanish emperor considered British citizens in East Florida as his guests.

Governor Zespedes’ proclamation of July 26, on the other hand, stated that any black who could not verify their free status by producing a deed of purchase or a certificate of manumission

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<sup>71</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 48–49.

<sup>73</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 47.

would have twenty days to present themselves to Spanish authorities to receive a permit to work. Any black not complying with this decree would be re-enslaved as the property of King Carlos III of Spain.<sup>74</sup> This was a very peculiar declaration, given the long history of the Spanish government for offering sanctuary to runaway British slaves. Governor Zespedes claimed that his only intention was to curb the lawless stealing of blacks by banditti and other whites by forcing a determination of ownership on all people of color within the colony. He believed that this would also greatly reduce the numerous vagrant blacks “roving this City robbing and even breaking open houses” and declared that he would bring an end to this civil disruption.<sup>75</sup> Zespedes then removed all doubt as to who would be affected by his proclamation as he categorized every black in the colony into four classes:

The first are blacks absolutely free, the second are them who deserve their liberty by virtue of different proclamations ordered to be published to British Generals during the War; the third belong to British subjects known to be their owners; and the fourth are Blacks, who have no Owner, and are strolling about this Town and province—this last class of Blacks whenever they will present themselves within [twenty days] shall by virtue of the proclamation be considered as free, but them that after that time...did not come and present themselves should be considered...as vagrants.<sup>76</sup> In reality, Governor Zespedes held very little compassion for the

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<sup>74</sup> “Proclamation of Governor Zespedes, July 26, 1784,” *East Florida Papers* [b40], in Lockey, *East Florida*, 241; see also Siebert, “Slavery in East Florida,” 159.

<sup>75</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Patrick Tonyn, August 6, 1784,” enclosure no. 3 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 70; see also Landers, “Spanish Sanctuary,” 312.

<sup>76</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Patrick Tonyn, ‘Remarks on James Hume’s Opinion,’ St. Augustine, August 6, 1784,” enclosure number 2 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 80, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 340. As inhumane as these categorizations may sound, Zespedes showed a relatively enlightened approach to blacks as human beings, who also happened to be property. The normal perception of this era was “the brutal absurdity of racial classifications that derive[d] from and also celebrate[d] racially exclusive conceptions of national identity from which blacks were excluded as either non-human or non-citizens.” Paul Gilroy, “The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity,” in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 6.

black population, as he wrote, “The term of twenty days were held out merely in terrorem which the very stupidity of the Blacks rendered necessary.”<sup>77</sup>

Governor Tonyn and Chief Justice James Hume vociferously denounced the proclamation as a violation of the Treaty of Paris, 1783.<sup>78</sup> “Tonyn had surrendered no more of the plundered slaves to their Carolina masters than he could help, and did not intend to be more generous to the Spaniards.”<sup>79</sup> Exacerbating the situation was the large quantity of presumably free-blacks in St. Augustine who were manumitted en masse by either Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, the Philipsburg Proclamation, or at will by any British field officer who determined that a slave performed an exemplary service in battle. In many cases, British officers manumitted entire groups of black camp-followers, making it virtually impossible for them to personally identify each black they liberated. None of these people possessed proper documentation to verify their manumissions and were therefore in violation of Governor Zespedes’ decree. Chief Justice Hume interpreted Article Five of the treaty to include “every individual, black as well as white, Slave as well as freeman that was under the protection of the British Government at the arrival of His Excellency Governor De Zespedes.”<sup>80</sup> The chief justice believed that five out of six blacks in St. Augustine would be adversely affected by this new law.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Patrick Tonyn, ‘Remarks on James Hume’s Opinion,’ St. Augustine, August 6, 1784, enclosure no. 2 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 82.

<sup>78</sup> James Hume replaced William Drayton as Chief Justice of the colony in 1780. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 80.

<sup>79</sup> Siebert, “Slavery in East Florida,” 159.

<sup>80</sup> “‘Remarks on James Hume’s Opinion, August 2, 1784,’ enclosure number 1 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 48.

<sup>81</sup> “‘Remarks on James Hume’s Opinion, August 2, 1784,’ enclosure number 1 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 47–48.

Hume first drew a line in the sand by accusing the Spanish of conspiring to illegally confiscate British property. He then maneuvered his interpretation to include British subjects of all colors, of all stations in life, to be under the protection of the treaty. But the chief justice concluded his interpretation of this portion of the proclamation with a bombshell that could not be ignored by anyone in London, Madrid, or St. Augustine: “all persons of the above description, who do not pay obedience to the Proclamation...shall be seized, declared, and held Slaves to His Catholic Majesty.”<sup>82</sup> Hume admitted that the treaty clearly made allowance for the incarceration of any British subject guilty of a crime that an international court would declare to be *malum in se*, such as murder. A crime such as failing to register the known whereabouts of a person of color, whether free or enslaved, would fall into the category of *malum in prohibitum*, a minor offense that no international court would deem punishable by permanent enslavement. Hume appealed to the jurisdiction of international law as he wrote:

Surely when the Treaty mentions criminal Prosecutions, it must mean crimes that are *malum in se*, crimes that are universally understood by the Law of Nations to be bad...otherwise it might be in the power of the Spanish Government, to make the smallest omission criminal, and consequently a sufficient cause to justify the detention of any British Subject in the Province.<sup>83</sup>

Chief Justice Hume’s opinion of Governor Zespedes’ proclamation and the Spanish courts now in place in St. Augustine held many concerns. But as a magistrate himself, Hume was completely astounded at a legal system “altogether unknown in the British Constitution” that would allow “that the presiding judge, being made a party, by receiving a part of what is condemned.”<sup>84</sup> This added to British suspicions of Fatio’s disingenuousness in his rulings. Since

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<sup>82</sup> “‘Remarks on James Hume’s Opinion, August 2, 1784,’ enclosure number 1 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 47–48.

<sup>83</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO CO 5/561, p. 49

<sup>84</sup> “‘Remarks on James Hume’s Opinion, August 2, 1784,’ enclosure number 1 in ‘Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,’” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 51.

the majority of these cases involved slave ownership, theoretically Fatio became wealthier with every decision.<sup>85</sup> In a letter to Lord Sydney, Tonyn referred to Zespedes' administration as an "inquisitorial office...established, to compel the British to unfold and disclose their titles, to the bulk of their fortunes...Negroes emancipated by the engagements held out them...were aimed at, to be made slaves to the King of Spain."<sup>86</sup> Governor Zespedes refused to admit that his proclamation was issued in error of the law or that it might be unfavorably interpreted, unless maliciously so:

The Spanish Government did not wish to meddle with Blacks who had owners or Masters nor with those who had a right to freedom; but it did does and will look out for those who not being free nor having a right to freedom nor belong to any acknowledged owners or Master are in every sense of the word vagrants, and a pest to the publick Tranquility—a vagabond, and particularly a Black one is and ought to be considered in every Nation, and by every Law not only a Malum prohibitum, but likewise a Malum in Se.<sup>87</sup>

By declaring vagrancy, and conspiring to aid anyone to commit vagrancy, to be the crime in question, Zespedes believed that "by their not presenting themselves it is plainly seen they wished to continue in that bad way of Life which ought to be prevented, being not only pernicious but also Malum in se."<sup>88</sup> The response astounded British authorities and petitions flew across the Atlantic to Parliament. That vagrancy could be determined a precursor to a more vicious crime, such as murder, and therefore punishable in an equal manner was mind-numbing. Historian Jane Landers located 251 declarations of free status by blacks in her research, but freely admits that there is no evidence to support how many blacks in East Florida were capable

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<sup>85</sup> "'Remarks on James Hume's Opinion, August 2, 1784,' enclosure number 1 in 'Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,'" PRO, CO 5/561, p. 51.

<sup>86</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> "'Remarks on James Hume's Opinion, August 2, 1784,' enclosure number 2 in 'Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,'" PRO, CO 5/561, p. 80.

<sup>88</sup> "'Remarks on James Hume's Opinion, August 2, 1784,' enclosure number 2 in 'Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,'" PRO, CO 5/561, p. 84.



of providing the proper documentation, nor how many were actually re-enslaved by the Spanish. But those 251 declarations came from throughout the East Florida countryside as well as from St. Augustine, indicating that word of the proclamation spread adequately to the colony's black community.<sup>89</sup> One thing these declarations suggest is that the individuals "presented [themselves]" to the proper authorities, signifying an autonomous action in doing so.<sup>90</sup>

In the span of just two years—from July 1782 until August 1784—the British population of St. Augustine experienced a lifetime of social upheavals. A Loyalist sanctuary was realized, then given away by those whose lives were least affected by the transaction. Freedom for the majority of blacks was received, eventually threatened by both European occupants of the colony, and all the while Americans from Georgia and the Carolinas threatened to reclaim them as stolen property. Financial fortunes were salvaged, improved, and then forfeited at the expense of international diplomacy. In December 1782, slaves-owning white British inhabitants of St. Augustine co-existed with slaves, free blacks, black of indeterminate status, Minorcans, and Native Americans in the most densely populated urban center in the western world—approximately 21,000–22,000 inhabitants per .101 square miles, with another 6,000 people camped outside the city. Slave codes and a Militia Act unlike any others in the British Empire addressed this most unusual social structure in an attempt to maintain order as humanely as conceivable in the eighteenth century without negatively affecting the individual property rights of slave owners. It also was a remarkable time of redistribution of wealth as the Minorcans, formerly indentured to British proprietors, formed one of the continent's most historically under-appreciated commercial fishing enterprises while former planter elites faced financial ruin.

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<sup>89</sup> Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary," 305

<sup>90</sup> In this article Landers offers a detailed breakdown of the demographics of the people who declared their right to freedom under the Spanish proclamation of July 26, 1784. Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary," 305–07.

Perhaps in no other location in the British Empire would Lord Cornwallis's swan song at Yorktown, "The World Turned Upside Down," ring more true than in St. Augustine in August 1784.

After less than three weeks of Spanish rule in East Florida, only one thing could be certain: the evacuation of British East Florida had very little chance of going smoothly. In a rare instance of losing his composure with a superior, Governor Tonyn wrote Lord Sydney that British subjects faced "perpetual Imprisonment in a foreign Country, without the chance of retrieving their affairs by future exertions."<sup>91</sup> Governor Tonyn had no idea how prophetic his words would seem as the evacuation commenced. For many blacks, there would be no evacuation at all, but they did not necessarily deem that lack of opportunity to be a bad thing at the time.

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<sup>91</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 29.

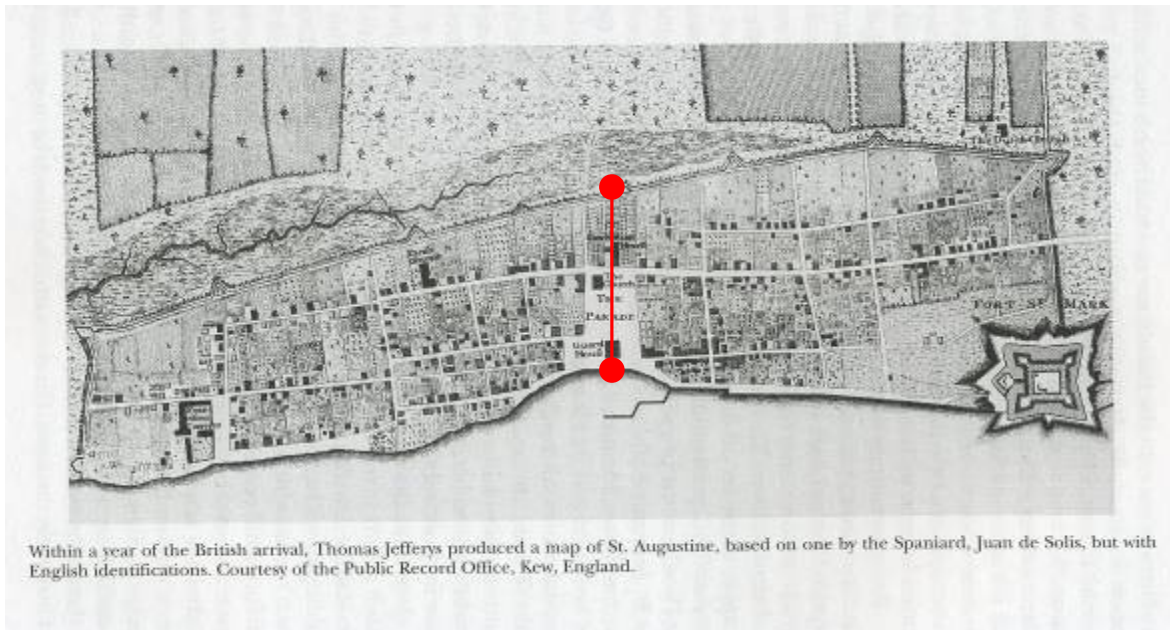
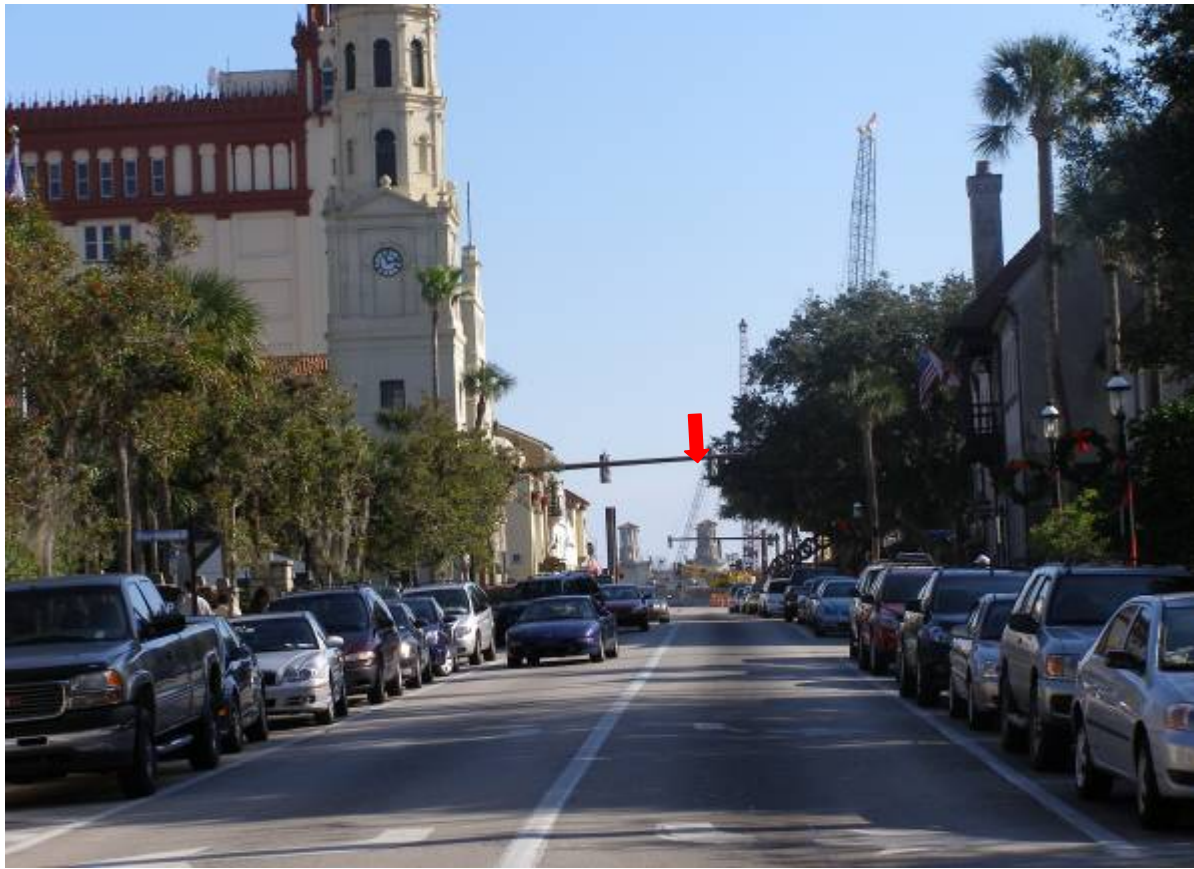


Figure 8-1. View of St. Augustine from the western perimeter to the bay. Arrow points to the water's edge. See map above for 1775 reference points. Distance = 1056 feet. Map adapted by author from Daniel L. Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years, 1763–1785," *El Scribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History* (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, Vol. 38, 2001), 55. Photograph courtesy of author.



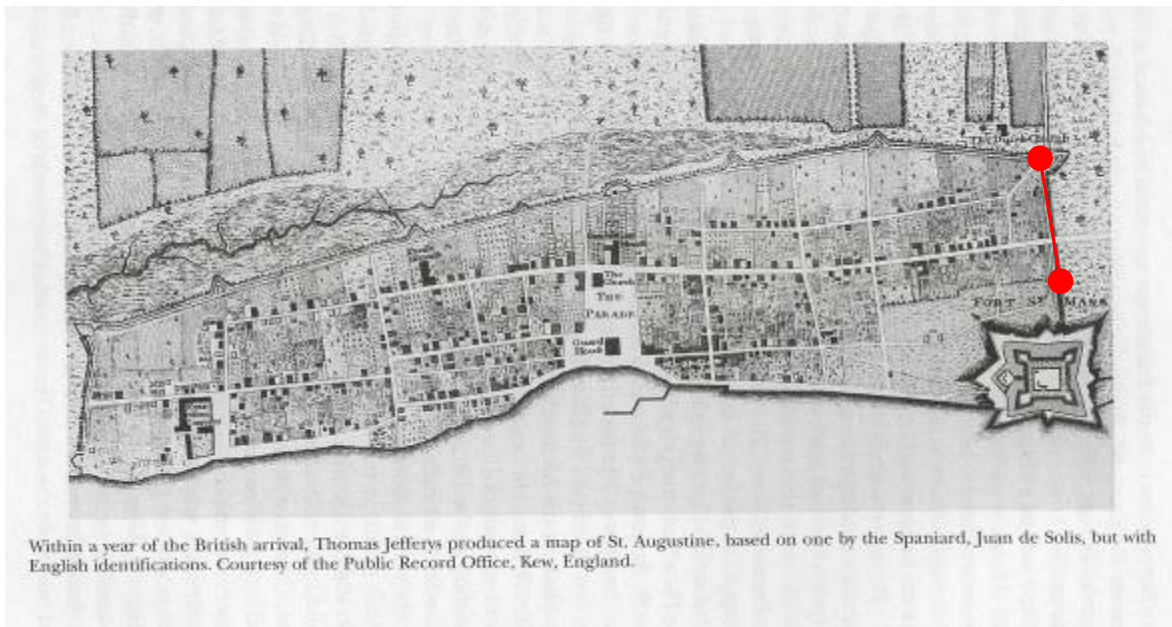


Figure 8-2. View of St. Augustine from the northwestern corner of the perimeter (present-day Orange Street) to the Castillo de San Marcos. Arrow points to old city gate. See map above for 1775 reference points. Distance = 374 feet. Map adapted by author from Daniel L. Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years, 1763–1785," *El Scribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History* (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, Vol. 38, 2001), 55. Photograph courtesy of author.

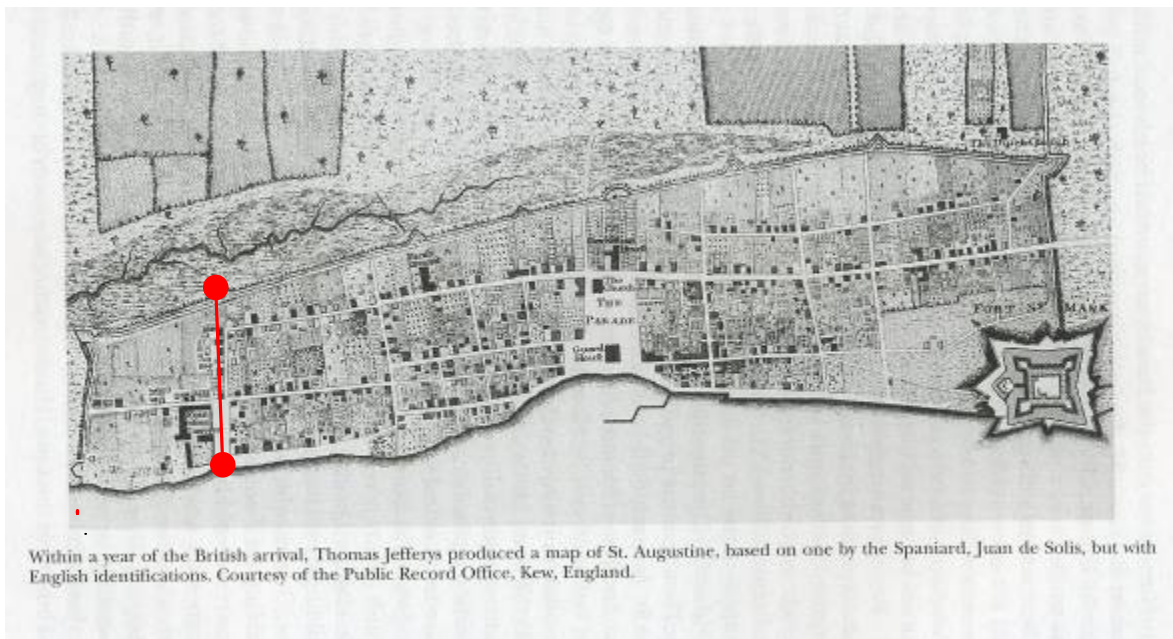


Figure 8-3. View of St. Augustine from the southwestern end of the perimeter toward the bay. This street (St. Francis Street) marked the end of the civilian section of St. Augustine. See map above for 1775 reference points. Distance = 1164 feet. Map adapted by author from Daniel L. Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years, 1763–1785," *El Scribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History* (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, Vol. 38, 2001), 55. Photograph courtesy of author.



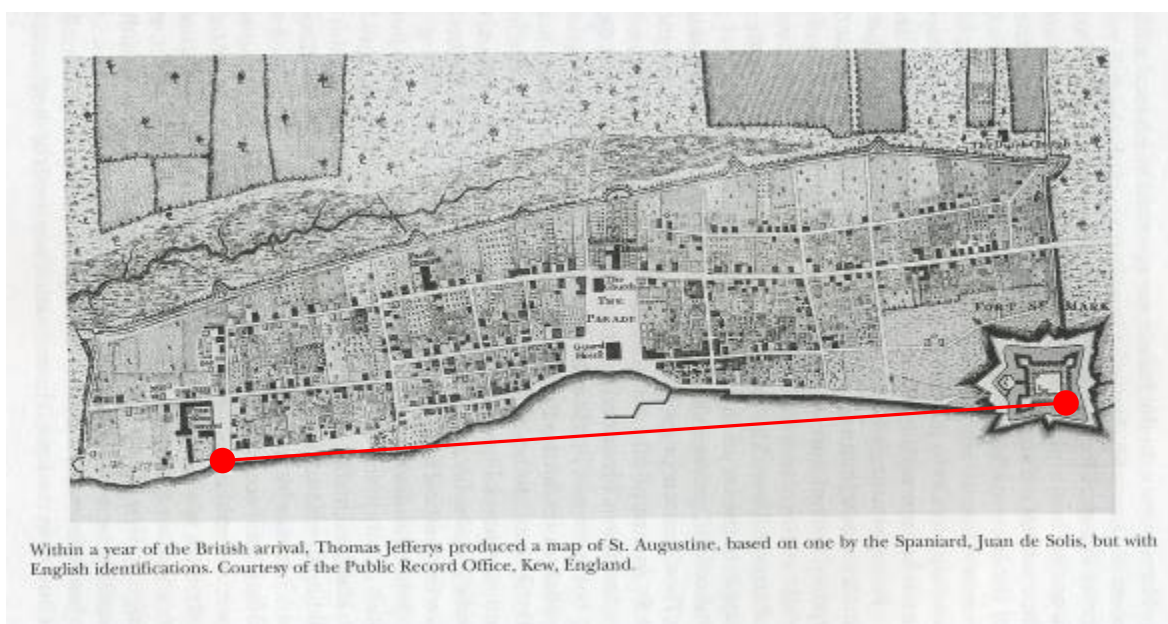


Figure 8-4. View of St. Augustine from the southeastern corner due north toward the Castillo de San Marcos. Arrow points to the watch tower on the northeastern corner of the Castillo wall. See map above for 1775 reference points. Distance = 3696 feet. Map adapted by author from Daniel L. Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years, 1763–1785," *El Scribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History* (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, Vol. 38, 2001), 55. Photograph courtesy of author.

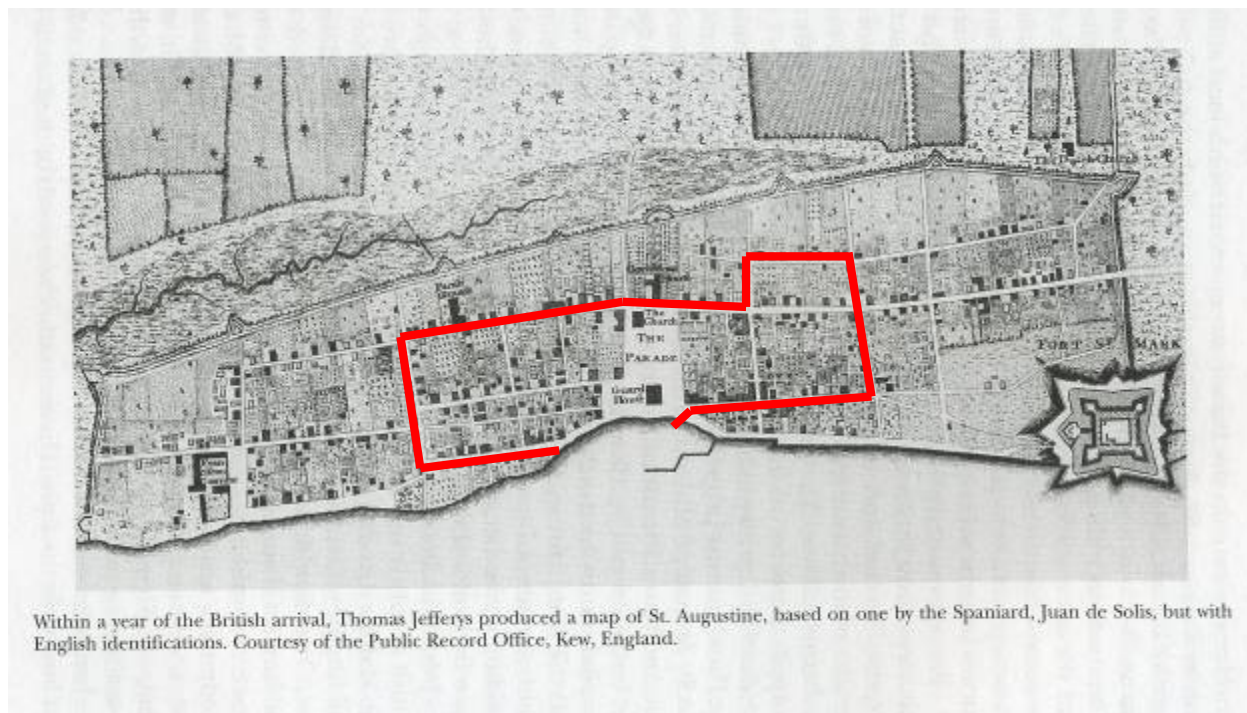


Figure 8-5. Perimeter of American prisoner-of-war boundaries in St. Augustine. Map adapted by author from Daniel L. Schafer, "St. Augustine's British Years, 1763–1785," *El Scribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History* (St. Augustine: The St. Augustine Historical Society, Vol. 38, 2001), 55. Outline in red courtesy of author.

## CHAPTER 9 THE “LONG EVACUATION”

By the end of 1783, after eight years of war, the only North American port cities to remain under the Union Jack were Halifax, Nova Scotia and St. Augustine, East Florida. Pensacola fell to the Spanish on May 8, 1781, and Savannah was evacuated in the face of rebel army in July 1782; Charleston in December 1782. New York City would be next. New York was captured by General Sir William Howe on September 15, 1776, and remained under British control throughout the war. On November 25, 1783, the city saw the last of approximately 30,000 Loyalists sail away while a swarm of angry American rebels hooted their retreat. Two months earlier, on September 30, the St. Augustine garrison was ordered to embark for Nova Scotia to prepare and assist in the resettlement of these people. To the well placed Loyalist nobles of the Hudson Valley and Manhattan this was a sensible redistribution of troops. Conversely, to the people of East Florida it held all the appeal of a death sentence. New York had proportionately fewer evacuees than St. Augustine and was not heaving from severe overpopulation. It may be argued that New York remained loyal during the war only as long as there was a British army present to insure the city's politics. St. Augustine, on the other hand, remained loyal out of desire and dedication; the town never sustained so much as a rebellious demonstration—setting aside Governor Tonyn's disposition on the antics of William Drayton and Dr. Turnbull. To East Floridians this was a monumentally important point that no one at Whitehall seemed interested in hearing. Their loyalty needed to be worth more than they were being credited, but their pleas would fall on deaf ears. The evacuation of St. Augustine would go down as one of the most poorly orchestrated efforts by the British government in the empire's history; which is probably why it has received so little press. A closer examination of this fiasco reveals the chaotic



disorganization plaguing the British at the end of the war, and provides insight into the apparently callous attitude of the imperial administration toward its Loyalist allies.

While British troops under General Sir Guy Carleton protected the evacuees in New York as the East Florida garrison prepared for their safe arrival in Nova Scotia, Governor Tonyn busily wrote letters to Carleton protesting the abandonment of St. Augustine. Tonyn's letter on September 11, 1783, evidences an imminent concern for the town's safety as he attempted to convince Whitehall that the garrison must remain in St. Augustine.<sup>1</sup> September was the time of the annual Creek confederacy Green Corn Feast, which, when concluded, would find the beleaguered provincial capital flooded with thousands of celebratory Creek Indians. Upon finding the city abandoned by the British army Tonyn feared that the Creeks would assume the inhabitants to be Spaniards or American rebels, both of whom they hated equally. Once American Indian traders spread word into Georgia and the Carolinas that there was no British military presence in St. Augustine, both Native Americans and "Virginians" would begin an onslaught of incursions into East Florida.<sup>2</sup>

Without a military defense, East Florida faced untold dangers, as is expressed in Governor Tonyn's response to Admiral Digby's orders to evacuate the St. Augustine garrison ahead of the civilian population: "This measure has thrown the Province into the utmost consternation as the Inhabitants will be thereby exposed to be pillaged by rapacious, lawless and abandoned men...who are checked only by the awe of the Troops."<sup>3</sup> Americans from Georgia and the Carolinas raided the outlying plantations and patrolled the coastal roads as highwaymen,

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<sup>1</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Sir Guy Carleton, September 11, 1783," PRO, CO 5/111, pp. 49–55, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 154–56.

<sup>2</sup> "Substance of Indian Talks Delivered to Patrick Tonyn, May 15, 1783," PRO, CO 5/110, pp. 71–74.

<sup>3</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Robert Digby, September 10, 1783," PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 697–700.

constantly harassing the inhabitants of East Florida.<sup>4</sup> Many of these marauders sought plunder in the form of captured British slaves, claiming they were stolen property from Savannah and Charleston.<sup>5</sup> Livestock, munitions, rum, and animal skins were the other valuable items for which East Floridians could lose their lives to gangs of banditti. As alluded to earlier, once the Spanish arrived in July 1784, Governor Tonyn accused Governor Zespedes of engaging many of these gang members as his henchmen, making their depredations more difficult to avert than ever before.<sup>6</sup> By 1785, piracy infected the waters near Matanzas Bay. Governor Zespedes was able to describe several instances, and name villains, in his correspondence with General William Moultrie. Zespedes, who liked and respected Moultrie, informed the American leader of intelligence reports that ships designed “for the purpose of making depredations on the coasts of this province and the Bahama Islands” were “fitted out in North American ports.”<sup>7</sup> Piracy and the wanton destruction of vessels were of particular concern due to the stealing of slaves from several coastal plantations and the overwhelming call for Minorcan fishermen to assist in feeding the swollen population of St. Augustine.

It was no small irony that the most egregious threat to civilian safety was from the banditti, many of whom were former members of the East Florida Rangers and other British military units that found themselves in St. Augustine at war’s end. These former guardians of the colony were no longer under military supervision, far from homes to which they could never return, and well

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<sup>4</sup> “Memorial of Grey Elliott, July 5, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 801–03.

<sup>5</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Thomas Townshend, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 583–616.

<sup>6</sup> The two most notorious gangs, the Banditti and the John Linder Gang, became so unabashed in their crimes that eventually Governor Zespedes took measures against them. “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 25–41; see also “Letter from William Young to Patrick Tonyn, August, 5, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 140–41.

<sup>7</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to William Moultrie, January 25, 1785,” *East Florida Papers*, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress [EF:b108, D9], in Lockey, *East Florida*, 442–43.

aware of Admiral Digby's edict. Again, in his letter to Sir Guy Carleton, Tonym bemoaned "the licentious disbanded Soldiers who have discovered intentions of rapine and plunder are most of all to be dreaded."<sup>8</sup> Many of these men were seasoned veterans of the backcountry civil wars in the Carolinas and Georgia, completely void of compunction in their commission of crimes against non-combatants. But up to this point the banditti kept the criminal aspects of their activities outside of St. Augustine. Once the army was gone it was feared that there would be no protection against them.

Lastly, the British inhabitants feared the Spanish army. News of conquests in West Florida spread quickly throughout the colony, and always seasoned with reminders of the mythical "Black Legend." Many a West Floridian already experienced the prisons of New Orleans and dungeons of Havana during the war and wrote of their dire conditions.<sup>9</sup> With no friendly military force to counteract Spanish might, the throngs in St. Augustine were at the complete mercy of an incoming army. Governor Tonym repeatedly wrote to Whitehall pleading for some form of alteration to the edict removing the British army. But as a further demonstration of the lack of urgency that the Lords of Whitehall felt for these subjects, East Florida was not only forced to relinquish its garrison but the colony was denied a replacement company. London needed troops in the West Indies to maintain order during these troubled times, and the killing fields of plantation sugar colonies replenished the coffers for wars of the past and wars yet to come. St. Augustine would have to wait.

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<sup>8</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonym to Sir Guy Carleton, September 11, 1783," PRO, CO 5/111, p. 50, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 154.

<sup>9</sup> "Letter from John Campbell and Robert Ross to Commander John Ferguson of the H.M.S. *Sylph*, 'Memorial Concerning their sufferings and losses by the persecution of Governor Galvez.' June 27, 1778," PRO, CO 5/117, f. 1-10; "Memorial of Robert Ross and John Campbell to Governor Peter Chester of West Florida, September 9, 1778," PRO, CO 5/117, f. 11-20; "Deposition of Alexander Graydon in Pensacola, April 16, 1779" PRO, CO 5/117, f. 27-30; "Deposition of Little Page Robertson in Pensacola, September 9, 1778," PRO, CO 5/117, f. 31-33; "Letter from a Prison in New Orleans, John Campbell and Robert Ross to Commander John Ferguson of the H.M.S. *Sylph*, April 15, 1779," PRO, CO 5/117, f. 1-5.

No one can say how miserable the lives of St. Augustine's loyal multitudes became on September 30, 1783, when the garrison sailed out of Matanzas Bay. Nor can anyone imagine their rapture twenty-four hours later when British warships appeared on the horizon and distributed three companies of the 37<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot.<sup>10</sup> Due to the irregularity of communications, civil authorities in St. Augustine were never informed of the arrival of these troops until the day they anchored outside the entrance to the St. Augustine inlet. Though this occasion was as joyous as ever experienced in the tiny provincial capital, the twenty-four hours of dread were the ominous beginnings of what Governor Tonyn would later refer to as the "Long Evacuation."<sup>11</sup>

Fear has many faces, and uncertainty is one of its ugliest. Few elements on earth create more uncertainty than the contemplation of a crucial event which has no set date. Thus, in August 1783, the issues at hand in St. Augustine began to revolve around time. How long before the army leaves for Nova Scotia? When will the Spanish arrive? How long will the Creeks and Seminoles maintain a peaceful existence? How long before the banditti bring their scandalous activities into St. Augustine? How much longer will it be before evacuation ships sail up to Matanzas Bay? For some of the residents of St. Augustine, these questions evidently became too much to bear as a plot to overthrow Governor Tonyn's regime in May 1784 was uncovered just prior to the arrival of the Spanish army. Refugee John Cruden of Charleston made all the necessary arrangements with unmentioned "connections and correspondents in the American

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<sup>10</sup> Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 143.

<sup>11</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, 'Reasons for the Long Evacuation,' July 3, 1786," PRO, CO 5/561, P. 833, p. 1. It must have been confusing to the ministers at Whitehall why Governor Tonyn was requesting troops when they were clearly on their way to St. Augustine; thus Whitehall's "refusal" to send troops was actually a refusal to send *more* troops.

States” to take by surprise “the fort, galleys, and troops of the King” with “about 200 refugees in the city...and a large number of the same sort at St. Johns and St. Marys.”<sup>12</sup>

Cruden’s plan was to topple Tonyn’s lame-duck command and prepare the defenses of the town against the incoming Spanish garrison, thereby impressing King George III into reconsidering his position on retroceding East Florida to Spain.<sup>13</sup> Governor Tonyn’s method for foiling this plot could have succeeded only in an age where honor was so vital to men of distinction. After banditti attacked a British patrol, killing its captain, Tonyn assigned Cruden to lead the next patrol to search out these cutthroats. Though tempted to take advantage of the opportunity to “turn the tables” on the governor, Cruden—well known as an honorable man, if not a little overzealous—carried out his assignment as promised. Cruden’s reputation as a man wholly committed to the overthrow of the local authorities was permanently damaged and the rebellion ended before it began, even though no banditti were located by Cruden’s patrol.<sup>14</sup> Had Governor Tonyn handled this situation another way the consequences could have been tragic.

Cruden’s plot has been misinterpreted by some historians as part of a grander scheme of militant Loyalist participation in the war effort, such as that my Robert Calhoon: “The ideological finale of this militarization of loyalist thought appeared in the desperate attempts by East Florida loyalists in 1783–1784 to block cession of the Floridas to Spain and secure for themselves justice from a monarch they had served faithfully.”<sup>15</sup> This thought is a continuation of the idea that the British were determined to use Loyalists as a crucial branch of the military,

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<sup>12</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney,” PRO, CO 5/561, P. 4. p. 5; “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Archibald McArthur, May 21, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, P. 4, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Archibald McArthur, May 21, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, P. 4, p. 4; see also Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 9.

<sup>14</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, St. Augustine, June 14, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, P. 4. p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Calhoon, *The Loyalist Perception*, xvii.

an argument which I refute throughout this study. This potential uprising of Loyalists in East Florida against the mandates of the Treaty of Paris showed an abject, yet justified, contempt for Great Britain's decision to trade away the place where these people chose to live. It was an outpouring of their frustration at having won their war from beginning to end, only to lose it to concessions that bore no justification to individuals in St. Augustine. The manner in which this coup d'état was proposed and ultimately failed demonstrated that the disgruntled Loyalists had no desire to be a part of the new independent nation, nor did they wish to remain in East Florida as subjects of Spain. They were willing to protect their recently acquired homes and businesses to the point of threatening insurrection. Governor Tonyn's handling of this situation demonstrates his empathy for their frustration, as he too lost his entire fortune in a cause with which he was more personally involved than any other in the colony. John Cruden's revolt was nothing more than a desperate cry for help by people who had no intentions toward sedition once their bluff was called. This was perhaps one of the saddest portraits painted by Loyalist frustrations after the war.

Not surprisingly, Cruden's community of disappointed Loyalists was not just a concern for Governor Tonyn. On August 27, 1784, Jose de Galvez notified Governor Zespedes that "Mr. Pinckney, a member of Congress from South Carolina" informed Galvez in a letter "that the inhabitants of St. Augustine in Florida had taken up arms to resist the delivery of Spain of that plaza and province, fortifying themselves in the city and castle."<sup>16</sup> Though Pinckney's report was exaggerated, the Americans made it clear that they wanted these Loyalist troublemakers off the

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<sup>16</sup> "Jose de Galvez to Bernardo de Galvez, August 27, 1784," Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2660, pp. 1-5 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockety, *East Florida*, 262-63.

continent. Zespedes was well aware of Cruden's presence as he had already reported the man's activities to Bernardo de Galvez:

In addition to the highwaymen [banditti] there are between the St. Johns and St. Marys rivers numerous restless persons, natives of the United States, who, having attached themselves to the royalist cause, were expelled and cannot return, they refuse to go to Nova Scotia or to Providence, as Great Britain desires, nor can they be compelled to do so without risking open resistance; for they would probably have the help of some fifty or sixty desperadoes who live with them in the swamps and thickets between the aforesaid rivers.<sup>17</sup>

John Cruden and the banditti who resided in the wedge of land between the St. Johns and St. Marys rivers would not go away quietly for Governors Tonyn or Zespedes. Zespedes was always suspicious of Tonyn's motives for any suggestion or directive the British official attempted to employ. Tonyn felt betrayed by the leaders of the banditti; men like John Linder, Jr., who was "formerly a captain in the British militia," who Tonyn felt should be protecting the colony from highwaymen from Georgia, not employing them to terrorize the people.<sup>18</sup> Zespedes, on the other hand, cared little for Tonyn's sense of wounded nationalism considering that John Cruden plotted the overthrow of two colonial governments—first Tonyn's administration, then the incoming Spanish regime. In one letter, Zespedes referenced Tonyn's account of 12,000 Loyalist refugees from rebellious colonies in addition to the approximately 4,000 residents still residing in East Florida—16,000 potentially riotous inhabitants. What he did not know was how much influence John Cruden might have over them. "Upon these last named the notorious John Cruden founded his hopes (I doubt whether with more than tacit support on the part of Tonyn) of

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<sup>17</sup> "Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, July 16, 1784," Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2660, pp. 1–10 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 231.

<sup>18</sup> "Letter from Manuel de Zespedes to Arturo O'Neill, October 25, 1784," (microfilm) section 29, reel 43, *The East Florida Papers*, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History and Special Collections at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida (hereafter known as PKYL); see also Lockey, *East Florida*, 298.

being able to oppose the entrance of the Spaniards into the province.”<sup>19</sup> In Zespedes mind, Cruden was more notorious than banditti leaders John Linder, Jr. or Daniell McGirtt, and he evidently believed that Governor Tonyn was in some respect supportive of Cruden’s attempted revolt. What Governor Tonyn saw as a brilliantly thwarted coup that was broken before its inception, Zespedes saw as a continuous plot to further keep Spaniards from settling back in St. Augustine. Cruden’s presence was, therefore, dangerous to Spanish tranquility in the retroceded colony.

Just two weeks after taking office in St. Augustine, Governor Zespedes sent troops into the region to assess the situation concerning the banditti: “I have sent out Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Fernandez with a small force, consisting mainly of the scoundrels who are under the suspicion of the governor.”<sup>20</sup> One can only imagine Governor Tonyn’s reaction to the idea of accused villains making up the majority of the force searching out the accused villains of the area. But Zespedes did not believe these men to be anyone’s problem but Tonyn’s. “The British governor, it seems to me, is going to be troublesome. He is a bit contrary, due to his suspicion that the bad element among his own people will steal his Negroes and horses and destroy his own plantation and the two others which he is looking after for residents of London. Consequently, he invents difficulties.”<sup>21</sup> Zespedes blamed the heightened problems with the banditti on Tonyn’s distorted sense of justice. Tonyn was appalled by the character and actions of these men because so many of them were former British soldiers—many of whom were hand-

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<sup>19</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, November 12, 1784, ‘Letter and Report of Nicolas Grenier, November 10, 1784,’” Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2530 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 457.

<sup>20</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Luis de Unzaga, July 29, 1784,” Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Papeles procedentes de Cuba legajo (bundle) 1336, pp. 366–67, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 242.

<sup>21</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Luis de Unzaga, July 29, 1784,” Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Papeles procedentes de Cuba legajo (bundle) 1336, pp. 366–67, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 242.



picked by Thomas Brown and sanctioned by Tonyn himself. He knew these men personally and, as a result, took their actions personally. Governor Zespedes, however, saw the actions of the banditti as personal reproaches against Tonyn, as he states that they inflict more injury on the former governor's plantation and the two plantations he is charged with looking after more than any others.<sup>22</sup>

Governor Zespedes received a much-needed confirmation of his actions concerning the banditti from Madrid in late October 1784, which would forever place Governor Tonyn in the role of annoying nuisance, at least in Zespedes' mind. Jose de Galvez remarked that "of the insincere treatment to which Your Honor was subjected by the English ex-governor, Patrick Tonyn, His Majesty is pleased to approve Your Honor's acts respecting these events [involving the banditti], and is awaiting word of the results."<sup>23</sup> Zespedes now knows that he is fully backed by King Charles III and may govern as he sees fit, without fear of geopolitical recrimination from Tonyn and the British. But Zespedes's enthusiasm to foil any attempts by the out-going British administration to continue a measure of worth within the colony's policies would eventually cause the Spanish governor much frustration. In early November 1784, Zespedes sent another emissary, Nicolas Grenier, into the St. Johns/St. Mary's region and this report would read much differently than that of Lieutenant Colonel Fernandez's in July: "I estimate the number of people living on the mainland between the town of St. Johns and the St. Marys to be sixty families... [The banditti] are men without God or king, men who would only serve to

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<sup>22</sup> "Letter from Manuel de Zespedes to Jose de Galvez, October 20, 1784," *The East Florida Papers* [EF:b323, A], in Lockey, *East Florida*, 286.

<sup>23</sup> "Jose de Galvez to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, October 26, 1784," Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2660 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 299.

destroy the public tranquility; men, in short, capable of the greatest atrocities.”<sup>24</sup> Zespedes is now hearing from his own people what Tonyn had been saying all along.

In the meantime, John Cruden’s arrogance and sense of self importance knew no bounds. Cruden and his cohort petitioned King Charles III directly, asking “That your Majesty may be pleased to grant us the Fee Simple, the Iurisdiction (sic), and the sole descetion (sic) of the internal Government of that Country from with Your Majestys Troops are now withdrawn, lying betwixt St. Johns and St. Marys River in this Province, including the Islands on the Sea Shore.”<sup>25</sup> Cruden pledged to pay a tribute and defend the province with his life against “Every power but our Mother Country.”<sup>26</sup> One can only imagine the combination of audacity and humor King Charles III must have felt at such a request. One can also imagine Governor Tonyn’s great relief to have John Cruden and his cohort become someone else’s problem. Preparations for the evacuation proceeded as planned.

The Treaty of Paris, 1783, allowed the inhabitants of St. Augustine eighteen months from the official ratification date of the signing of the document to evacuate the city. This gave the evacuees until March 19, 1785, to either leave East Florida or apply for Spanish citizenship. Both Britain and Spain perceived the deadline of eighteen months as a worst case scenario. Even though Governor Zespedes and his army did not arrive until June 26, 1784, Whitehall firmly believed that the evacuation would be concluded no later than September 19, 1784. Therefore, the British army departed on July 27, 1784, and this time with no replacements. Whitehall never

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<sup>24</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, November 12, 1784, ‘Letter and Report of Nicolas Grenier, November 10, 1784,’” Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2530 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 307.

<sup>25</sup> “Petition of the Loyalists to the Spanish King, October 28, 1784,” (microfilm) section 45, reel 82, item 1784–51, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL; see also Lockey, *East Florida*, 302; see also Troxler, “Allegiance with Community,” in Calhoon, *Loyalists and Community*, 121.

<sup>26</sup> “Petition of the Loyalists to the Spanish King, October 28, 1784,” (microfilm) section 45, reel 82, item 1784–51, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL; see also Lockey, *East Florida*, 302.

imagined that there would be need of an extension—much less two extensions—in order to complete the evacuation. Two sets of circumstances dominoed into this calamity: the selling of personal possessions, the sailing schedule—neither of which could be blamed on the refugees.

One of the primary reasons that the treaty allowed the masses in St. Augustine eighteen months to evacuate the colony was for the settling of affairs: harvest crops, sell what possessions they could, and settle all debts prior to embarkation. Only the wealthiest planters had the resources to simply board a ship and sail away from East Florida without liquidating as many of their assets as possible, or leaving their affairs with an agent to do so for them.<sup>27</sup> A great majority of the inhabitants previously experienced just such an eviction from the Carolinas and Georgia and considered themselves fortunate that they were able to start life over so close to their former homes. Unlike the manner in which Madrid handled the Spanish evacuation of St. Augustine in 1763, Parliament had yet to offer financial compensation for personal losses in East Florida. For the majority of the population, selling out lock, stock, and barrel was the only hope to begin new lives abroad. The Spanish, however, did not bring enough people—civilian or military—to make adequate purchases to mark a significant reduction in British possessions or debts.<sup>28</sup> Only later did Tonyn realize that Zespedes imposed a policy on his garrison of boycotting many British goods, and what few purchases the Spanish made averaged only 25% of the item's worth.<sup>29</sup>

With no sufficient outlet for the sale of their commodities, British inhabitants selected the only available option—they took as much with them as possible and those that could, liquidated

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<sup>27</sup> Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 13–14.

<sup>28</sup> In addition to the 500 man garrison, families from the first Spanish period of St. Augustine returned to their homes. Lockey notes that in 1786, there were fourteen families that reoccupied East Florida, totaling 132 people in that year. "Raymundo de Onis to Jose de Galvez, June 19, 1784," Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2530 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 213f1.

<sup>29</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784," PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 31–32; see also "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Hawke, November 30, 1784," PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 337–44.

their possessions in other markets. Personal assets were but a small part of this cargo. When the British came to St. Augustine they utilized a tongue-and-groove construction process on most of their houses that did not require use of iron nails in order to prevent corrosion damage to the wooden structures. Therefore, these abodes could be disassembled into huge stacks of building materials. As part of the agreement that they could ship anything they were unable to sell, a large number of dismantled homes were piled up on the shore of the St. Mary's River and loaded into the holds of British ships. This enormous increase in the estimated bulk and tonnage of cargo immediately created a shortage of available transports, slowing the evacuation process to a crawl. It also created a shortage in comfortable accommodations as these now homeless people were then forced to live in tent communities on the banks of the river as they anticipated the loading of each ship. Had the ministers of Whitehall simply opened the treasury and made reparations for civilian losses the evacuation would have been completed as scheduled.<sup>30</sup>

Of course, loss of property meant much more than losing one's land, home, or personal possessions. With blacks outnumbering whites in East Florida three-to-two, the potential for financial ruin due to the loss of slave property was genuine and legally muddled. One of the clearest illustrations of the legal ambiguity concerning the East Florida slave population during the evacuation is identified by the potential judicial debacle created if British slave owners tried to evacuate directly to England with their slaves. The Somerset decision in 1772 created a degree of uncertainty among slave owners concerning the legal status of their foreign-born slaves once

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<sup>30</sup> Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1:177; see also Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 62. To emphasize the strain that this situation put on the British evacuation effort from East Florida, 30,000 Loyalists were evacuated from New York City in eighty-one sailings from May 1782 to November 1783. Conversely, 10,000 Loyalists were ultimately evacuated from East Florida, from April 1784 to November 1785, in thirty-three sailings—an 8% increase in sailings necessary to transport two-thirds fewer people due to the exorbitantly bulky cargo. Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 4; see also Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," appendix I, 27.

they arrived in England.<sup>31</sup> In order to insure the continued ownership of their property, many slave owners chose to relocate to Jamaica, St. Lucia, or the Mosquito Coast of Central America. The largest numbers of slaves evacuated from East Florida were taken to the Bahamas. Those who were experienced sailors, and free, returned to the sea. Some remained in East Florida under Spanish rule, while an undetermined number took control of their own destinies and ran away just as their masters were busy boarding ships, many finding refuge with the Seminoles.<sup>32</sup>

As mentioned earlier, British Loyalists filed claims for loss of property, which included many slaves. Much is learned from these claims of the arbitrary system of values assigned to various people and their occupations, as there was no uniformity to the methodology of filing claims for compensation after the war. Wilbur H. Siebert tells us that field hands were generally valued at £10 annually, though some owners tried to ask anywhere from 20s (shillings) a month to £15 annually. General Robert Cunningham listed the value of his field hands at 2s a day. Carpenters were listed at 6–7s a day. “The value of slave labor seems to have risen considerably during the latter part of the war when refugee loyalists were coming rapidly and taking up lands for settlement.” One claimant listed four slaves at £25 each, another twenty-eight slaves at £35 each, and one male slave at £45, but provided no more details than that to account for how the differentiation in their sex, age, education, or the status of their health consequently affected their values. “One expects that [young] craftsmen will be listed at high figures” as carpenters, coopers, and sawyers might list from £70 to £100 each. “A ‘compleat servant’ is also rated at £70, and a house wench, who served both as cook and washerwoman, is valued at £60.” Another scale of human values that was found ran strictly according to the age of the individual slave: “for a

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<sup>31</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, p. 427n. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, “Blacks in British East Florida,” 441.

‘young fellow’ £56, for a man forty years old £50, for a woman of forty £40, for a boy often £30, and for an old woman £15.” As one can imagine, in such a world of imprecise bookkeeping the more obscure the claim and the higher the estimated value, the better the recompense.<sup>33</sup>

Compensation claims became such a common issue among the Loyalist refugees in St. Augustine that printer John Wells published “The Case of the Inhabitants of East Florida” in 1784 in an effort to present their case en masse before King George III. Wells raised the question: “Can the Subject be divested of his property, under the British Constitution, by the King, or by the Legislature, or by any man or set of men without receiving a recompense or equivalent of it?”<sup>34</sup> Pleading their case of absolute loyalty during the Revolution, the inhabitants of East Florida hoped to prove that refugees were entitled to protection of their real property, which included slaves, based on

the feudal relationship binding king, subject, and land: ‘Protection and allegiance are reciprocal duties...A fundamental principle in the Feudal Law was, that...the Lord should give full protection to the Vassal, in his territorial property; and the Vassal was to defend and support his lord, to the utmost of his power, against all enemies. All lands held by British Subjects, are derived, mediately or immediately, from the Crown; and the oath of allegiance...ran nearly in the same words as the Vassal’s oath of fealty. They are called our liege Lord and Sovereign.’<sup>35</sup>

Wells cited every known circumstance in British legal history that might benefit the property owners’ case. From citations of their feudal relationship to the king, which included “rights and privileges, acquired by being born within the King’s allegiance,” which could not be surrendered by “distance of time or place,” to Clause 39 of the Magna Carta, to Thomas Coke’s language that “lands, tenements, goods and chattels shall not be seized into the King’s hand nor

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<sup>33</sup> Information for this paragraph was found in Siebert, “Slavery in East Florida,” 155–57.

<sup>34</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 5; see also Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 4.

may any man be...dispossessed of his goods and chattels contrary to this great Charter.”<sup>36</sup> Wells allowed that Parliament had the right by law to deprive individuals of their personal property for the “good of the entire British community. But more than East Florida representing a common community of displaced partisans who fought for this toehold on the North American continent, the inhabitants believed that East Florida was their “contractual reward and their bittersweet consolation.”<sup>37</sup> That no longer being an option, Wells then listed several examples of “deprivation-and corresponding compensation” that occurred in the recent past. In short, “they declared that His Majesty gave up his province of East Florida for the good of the British nation; but since in so doing he deprived individuals of property, the nation must pay for that property.”<sup>38</sup> Wells was tenacious in that the rights of the Loyalists were guaranteed by legal contract and therefore must be recompensed for failure of the empire to hold to its contractual agreement. Unfortunately, these claims dragged on for years and were rarely, if ever, settled for the amounts specified.

The physical act of evacuating the colony went no smoother for the haggard Loyalists and their slaves than did the compensation process. When Governor Zespedes arrived in East Florida he was forced to unload his fifteen ships at the harbor on the St. Marys River due to the shallow sand bar in St. Augustine.<sup>39</sup> Zespedes wrote that he estimated it would take two months to

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<sup>36</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Troxler, “Allegiance with Community,” in Calhoun, *Loyalists and Community*, 122.

<sup>38</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, 5; see also Troxler, “Loyalist Refugees,” 4.

<sup>39</sup> Governor Zespedes cited that preference of the St. Marys River for the loading and unloading of heavy cargo, even though it is of a greater distance from St. Augustine, due to the fact that “The St. Marys River, seventeen leagues from [St. Augustine] (the St. Johns, though it is only twelve, being unsuitable because it also has a shallow bar).” “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Luis de Unzaga, July 22, 1784,” Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Papeles procedentes de Cuba legajo (bundle) 1336, pp. 361–65, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 238. Nicolas Grenier reported “The St. Marys Bar, generally so called though its real name is Amelia Bar, is considered as one of the best and least dangerous in North America. Ships of five hundred tons burden can enter it.” “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, November 12, 1784, ‘Letter and Report of Nicolas Grenier, November 10, 1784,’” Archivo

complete the process, and that was with the assistance of five hundred Spanish soldiers.<sup>40</sup> For thousands of British civilians the process would take much longer, and for several reasons other than those previously mentioned. One being that many British merchants were reluctant to leave until money arrived from Havana to pay off Spanish debts. But there were other motives that were less vulgar. Rumors abounded throughout the evacuation period that Great Britain was on the verge of reclaiming East Florida. The Cruden conspiracy temporarily halted the evacuation process in May and June 1784, due to the hope it inspired that the Loyalists might remain in East Florida.<sup>41</sup> Many Loyalists who were named in the confiscation and banishment acts delayed their evacuations, lingering at every opportunity in hopes of hearing of a change in their status.

Another reason for the slow evacuation was that slave owners were in constant search of runaway and stolen slaves. Charges of slave theft were directed at the Spanish, as Captain Don Basquez, commander of the Spanish brigantine *San Matias*, was accused of enticing slaves to flee from British ships.<sup>42</sup> Apparently there was some evidence of justification of these charges as the *San Matias* was boarded several times by British officials with relatively little indignation emitting from Governor Zespedes.<sup>43</sup> For the slaves, escape did not guarantee freedom. Unlike the era of Spanish sanctuary, now blacks were safe from Spanish re-enslavement only if they could prove that they were free; which, if that was indeed the case, they would not have needed to

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General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2530 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 306.

<sup>40</sup> Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 33.

<sup>41</sup> Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 13.

<sup>42</sup> "Memorial of John Fox, July 25, 1785," enclosure no. 17 in "Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, December 6, 1784," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 669–70; see also Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 24. It is most likely that the Spanish captain's name was Vasquez, as this was a common mistake in such memorials. Troxler notes the name as "V\_squez." However, since there is nothing in Fox's letter to state otherwise, I will leave the spelling of the captain's name in its original form as Fox spelled it.

<sup>43</sup> Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 62



runaway. Even legally freed blacks faced the constant threat of seizure during the evacuation and were often held by the Spanish until false claims of ownership could be rooted out.<sup>44</sup> Loyalists and their slaves were under constant duress while living in encampments at the St. Marys harbor awaiting evacuation, as banditti and other brigands raided the camps sporadically.<sup>45</sup>

Many Loyalists hoped to sell their slaves in the United States or the West Indies where they felt they could fetch a better price. But this was a very risky and speculative option. Between the banditti and unknown fluctuations in slave values in distant markets, slave owners could devastate their fortunes by making an incorrect choice. A few examples may be noted: in December 1784 John Graham sent over 200 slaves to Beaufort, South Carolina, to capture a higher price than what was rumored in Jamaica. Elias Ball, who was listed on the banishment lists in South Carolina, took advantage of the fact that his cousin was not. Ball sold 140 of his slaves to his cousin, who in turn sold them profitably in South Carolina. Judith Shivers, on the other hand, misjudged the market completely as she paid a hefty price to transport her slaves to Dominica, only to sell them for less than half what she could have realized in East Florida.<sup>46</sup>

During the twenty-year British period, slave owners in East Florida proved themselves no more advanced or enlightened in their attitudes toward blacks—free or enslaved—than in the seventeenth century. It is clear that the evacuating Loyalists were angered, though not for humanitarian reasons, by Governor Zespedes' proclamation which unfairly categorized black people. It was the potential loss of property and unwitting complicity in criminal activities that irked the white population. As for the free blacks who faced possible re-enslavement, it was the subjugation of British citizens—an issue of nationalism more than the protection of former

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<sup>44</sup> Tanner, *Zespedes in East Florida*, 49.

<sup>45</sup> Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 24.

<sup>46</sup> Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees," 15.

slaves—that drew the ire of Governor Tonyn and James Hume. While many blacks who stayed in East Florida after the British evacuation may have hoped for a return to the lenient Cédulas of old, Governor Zéspedes approached the second Spanish era in a manner that caused a great amount of trepidation.

The second major impact on what Governor Tonyn referred to as the “Long Evacuation” involved the functionality of the relocation arrangements mentioned above. In short, it looked good on paper. The British Crown allowed transportation to several destinations so the move had to be highly organized to make the best use of cargo space, tonnage, and sailing time. The winds dictated the itineraries of the vessels as much as the passengers’ preferences. But simply loading the vessels was a monumental feat in itself. As Governor Zéspedes experienced when his fleet arrived in East Florida, the shallow and dangerous inlet of Matanzas Bay would not allow the loading of the large British evacuation ships either. It became necessary, therefore, to transport all cargo by small boats some sixty-five miles up the intricate system of waterways to the shores of the St. Marys River on the Georgia border. There was no simpler solution, given the enormous volume of personal effects being removed from the colony in such a relatively short amount of time. This forced these loyal British refugees of a long and bitter war to travel directly toward their American antagonists in a most vulnerable condition, and with a very thin line of military protection. The need for some form of reprieve from London concerning the private possessions of the refugees became paramount. Tonyn lamented to Lord Sydney that “[t]he greatest embarrassment my Lord, in this business was, the very great property to be removed, from hence...to the shipping at the port of Saint Marys; principally owing to a want of Spanish Purchasers.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tony to Lord Sydney, April, 4, 1785” PRO, CO 5/561, p. 362.

Tonyn went on to say that property sales had amounted to “less than a tithe of their real value,” but this may have as much to do with the condition of the properties. “It is shocking, my Lord, to behold a Country once in a flourishing sate now in desolation—a once beautiful City lying in ruins.”<sup>48</sup> Ever the politician, Tonyn omitted that the primary reason for the deplorable condition of the colony was due to the Loyalists allowing their properties to fall into ruins rather than provide easy profits to American investors in the new Spanish economy. By the time Zespedes arrived, British planters had reaped their last profits from their plantations and were now letting them go to waste. When the Spanish refused to pay top price for the dilapidated houses and plantations, Tonyn shifted into a more melodramatic tone in his correspondence to Lord Hawke: “These, my Lord, may be compared to my own misfortunes, and those of a deserving, considerable Loyal People, who from a condition of happiness and affluence seldom so generally and extensively attained are by a cruel reverse in human affairs reduced to indigence and affliction.”<sup>49</sup>

Governor Zespedes was not impressed with Tonyn’s dramatic overtures, nor were his immediate superiors in the Americas acquiescent to a British definition of good form. According to historian W.N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, Spain was in no mood for geopolitical niceties by 1784, due to their treatment at the Treaty of Paris: they lost any hope of regaining Gibraltar resultant of the negotiating skills of their supposed allies, the French (Vergennes made it happen, though Aranda took credit); Spain only gained what it earned in battle—West Florida and Menorca (their only real gain was East Florida, but that was at the expense of Gibraltar); they lost the Bahamas; and their American “allies,” whose independence was secured significantly

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<sup>48</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Hawke, April 4, 1785,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 468–69.

<sup>49</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Hawke, April 4, 1785,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 468–69.

through Spanish funds and goods, were claiming entitlement to the whole of navigation on the Mississippi River while favoring trade with Great Britain.<sup>50</sup> Thus, it is not difficult to understand Governor Zespedes' impatience with Tonyn's antics. Zespedes had every reason to believe he was to govern one of the most profitable colonies in North America, only to arrive and find East Florida destitute and wasting away. Fairly or not, he would blame Tonyn.

"There is need for general repairs of the fortress, barracks, and guardrooms; for a new hospital; a church, powder magazines, and a wall of hewn stone to serve the part of the city facing the sea, on account of high tides in winter. I believe the forts scattered through the province are in the same condition."<sup>51</sup> Were it not for Tonyn's own laments at the condition of the city, one might think Governor Zespedes a thespian as well. But the dire conditions of St. Augustine affected Zespedes in a very personal way, beginning with his own home: "This house is nearly in ruins... The same is true of all the houses of this city without exception, for the English being persuaded that all might fall to the Americans, left them, as well as everything else, in a state of abandonment."<sup>52</sup> But arriving to find buildings and homes that leaked during every rainfall was just the inauguration of Spanish financial woes in St. Augustine. In addition to the disrepair in the colony, there were no funds available for the Spanish to instigate a renaissance of any kind. "Since we left Havana on June 19, we have had no news from there, and the desire to hear is increased by our necessity; for if we are not succored with more money than

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<sup>50</sup> W.N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *Eighteenth-Century Spain, 1700–1788: A Political, Diplomatic and Institutional History* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), 138.

<sup>51</sup> "Letter from Mariano de la Rocque to Luis de Unzaga, July 30, 1784," Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Papeles procedentes de Cuba legajo (bundle) 1336, pp. 409–11, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 244.

<sup>52</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, September 16, 1784," (microfilm) section 14, reel 20, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL; see also Lockey, *East Florida*, 276–79.

the 40,000 pesos which we brought.”<sup>53</sup> Zespedes goes on to complain that “we shall find ourselves hard pressed and unable to make the necessary repairs in the fort and pavilions, provide ourselves with our own boats for various purposes, and a supply of firewood; for we have nothing of our own to make use of, not even menial labor to save expense to the royal treasury.”<sup>54</sup>

Spain’s financial woes during the eighteenth century are well documented, even though the reign of Carlos III was often stated in decades past by historians such as Rafael Altamira as an era of enlightenment and financial rebound.<sup>55</sup> However, even in this apparently affluent era in Spain, the national debt escalated from one billion reales during the reign of Philip V, Carlos III’s father, to seven billion reales during the reign of his son, Carlos IV.<sup>56</sup> It was simply costing more to maintain the empire than the treasury could collect, regardless of the long term financial gains of Carlos III’s reign. Historian Laura Nater helps clarify the entangled intricacies of Spanish colonial finances in an essay on Cuban tobacco:

At least once a year New Spain’s viceroy received an exhortation from Madrid to make an effort to remit the tobacco *situados* on time. But *situados* always arrived with delay, sometimes accumulating for several years (mainly in wartime). The continual lack of capital carried serious consequences for the *factoria*.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Arturo O’Neill, September 12, 1784,” (microfilm) section 29, reel 43, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>54</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Arturo O’Neill, September 12, 1784,” (microfilm) section 29, reel 43, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>55</sup> Altamira, *A History of Spain*, 282.

<sup>56</sup> The reigns of Philip V to Carlos IV covered from 1700–1808. Richard Herr, “Ebb and Flow, 1700–1833, in *Spain: A History*, Raymond Carr, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 173.

<sup>57</sup> In 1760, the Havana *factoria*, or raw material supplier, for Cuban tobacco was established in conjunction with a distribution and export center in Seville. *Situados* were predetermined, fixed quantities of tobacco established by the Spanish treasury and paid for with silver from New Spain. Laura Nater, “The Spanish Empire and Cuban Tobacco in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in Peter Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 252, 265, 273.

Though Cuban tobacco did not directly affect Spanish East Florida it provides a classic example of the tangential effects other colonial products could have on the remainder of Spain's interests in the Americas. When war caused delays in moving the tobacco from Seville, delays in payment to the growers in Cuba were the end result. These delayed payments from the treasury in Madrid often led growers to prefer to sell their products to smugglers who paid up front in hard currency. "Multiple documents allude to these problems. Good examples are the repeated exhortations of the ministers in the Indies to New Spain's viceroys: the ministers begged for punctual remission of the *situados* because the lack of funds carried disastrous repercussions for imperial interests."<sup>58</sup> With the factoria utterly dependent upon the silver of New Spain, the entire system became vulnerable to weather, pirates, war, and ineptitudes. Such weaknesses reflected the vulnerability of the Spanish Empire itself, which was managed by the principle that silver from the Americas solved all problems.<sup>59</sup>

Spain was determined to regain its hegemony on the Gulf Coast and Gulf Stream shipping lanes. Such a monopoly would cut down on much of the inherent problems in transporting Mexican and Peruvian silver to Spain. The American Revolution was an opportunity for Spain to accomplish this very thing, but it must first endure the negative effects of war on an already fragile financial system.<sup>60</sup> In the case of the American Revolution, Spain was facing a British navy nearing the zenith of its rich historical strength, utilizing Jamaica as a fleet base to strangle any movement in or out of the Gulf region. But this was not Spain's only drain on her tentative resources, as she was also involved in an undeclared war with Algiers and able to flex few

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<sup>58</sup> Nater, "The Spanish Empire and Cuban Tobacco," in Coclanis, *The Atlantic Economy*, 269.

<sup>59</sup> Nater, "The Spanish Empire and Cuban Tobacco," in Coclanis, *The Atlantic Economy*, 273.

<sup>60</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *Eighteenth-Century Spain*, 135.

military muscles elsewhere at this time.<sup>61</sup> This accounts for Spain's inability to recapture Gibraltar in spite of overwhelming strategic and tactical advantages over the embattled British defenders. When Governor Zespedes arrived in St. Augustine, there were few resources available, as Madrid was in desperate need of funds in more strategic arenas. With the Gulf Coast and Gulf Stream regions safely secured by the Treaty of Paris, leaky roofs in East Florida were a small matter.

But comfort was not Governor Zespedes' focus; survival became the larger issue. Zespedes won the hearts of the Creeks and Seminoles, gaining their acceptance as the new European trading partner based on several issues, the first being "[t]hat the governor had made them a talk like that of one brother to another, like those the English used to make."<sup>62</sup> Zespedes was a strong diplomat and did his homework concerning how to respect the Native Americans as allies. But Zespedes also knew that this new alliance was no stronger than his ability to supply quality trade goods at a fair price. For this to succeed, the new governor needed funds to purchase the necessary items. Since no money was forthcoming from Madrid, Governor Zespedes had no choice but to rely upon a resource so undesirable in his mind that his own ego nearly caused him to pass on the opportunity. But eventually Spanish East Florida would receive its salvation in the matter of Indian trade goods from the British trading house of Pantón, Leslie and Company—recommended by none other than Governor Tonyn.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *Eighteenth-Century Spain*, 139.

<sup>62</sup> "Reply [of the Creek Indians] to the Talk of Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, December 8, 1784," (microfilm) section 29, reel 43, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>63</sup> "Memorial of Pantón, Leslie and Company, July, 31, 1784," Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, Estado. Photographic reproductions lent by the Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, legajo (bundle) 3901, Inclosure No. 2, p. 1., in Lockey, *East Florida*, 257.

Tonyn saw no conflict of political interests in this step whatever, as he sought to assure that British trade continued where British sovereignty could not. Though it took Governor Zespedes some time to determine if a recommendation by someone like Tonyn could be trusted, it worked out quite well in the long run. "I have obtained assistance of the English, who still retain a business house here with stores distributed in different parts of this province and at Apalache for the exchange of their goods for the skins and furs of the Indians."<sup>64</sup> Zespedes went on to admit that the English were much better at this trade than the Spanish, and his main concern was not Spanish pride but keeping out the Americans "who are making the greatest efforts to attract [the Creeks] to their side rather than permit them to remain in a state of anxiety regarding the conditions indicated."<sup>65</sup> In spite of the Spanish governor's ongoing feud with Governor Tonyn, the lack of money, and Britain's extension for the evacuation expired, Pantón brought another fifty tons of supplies on credit from New Providence, Bahamas, into St. Augustine.<sup>66</sup> Zespedes fully understood the bad position he would have been in if not for the hospitality of this group of British businessmen: "I having come from Havana with nothing but brandy, honey, and tobacco, which alone are insufficient gifts for the Indians."<sup>67</sup> It would not be an exaggeration to state that Pantón, Leslie and Company single-handedly removed the threat of Indian concerns for the Spanish government in the Floridas at this critical juncture.

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<sup>64</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, September 16, 1784," (microfilm) section 14, reel 20, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>65</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, September 16, 1784," (microfilm) section 14, reel 20, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>66</sup> "Letter from Arturo O'Neill to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, September 30, 1785," (microfilm) section 29, reel 45, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>67</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Arturo O'Neill, September 12, 1784," (microfilm) section 29, reel 43, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.



Another barometer for how miserable the developing economic circumstances became for the Spanish was within the Minorcan community. In October of 1784, Governor Zespedes communicated to Jose de Galvez that “[a]mong the [Minorcan] traders there are some who have a capital of from one thousand to eight thousand pesos, and some own sloops and schooners.”<sup>68</sup> This was an amazing testimony to the industriousness of these people who, only seven years earlier, were dying of starvation and abuse in the fields of New Smyrna. The need to feed a provincial capital bulging with political refugees, combined with the Minorcans’ adept fishing skills, proved most profitable for these previously beleaguered people. However, just nine months later Governor Zespedes was found remarking that the Minorcans, who were so affluent during the British period, “moved by the impossibility of earning a living where no money is in circulation, have already gone. The conditions of poverty...have come to such a state, I have learned to my great sorrow, that there are days when, though the plaza be filled with produce, not one real’s worth can be sold.”<sup>69</sup> Pages later, in the same correspondence, Governor Zespedes took one more opportunity to reiterate that the Minorcans had left for Georgia and the garrison was without food.<sup>70</sup> Such reminders became a favorite tactic of the Spanish governor, as he would write, for example, of the hanging of a pirate who broke into the house of merchant Jesse Fish as an excuse to remind his superiors—one more time—that he had no money with which to run the colony.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Jose de Galvez, October 20, 1784,” *The East Florida Papers* [b323, A], in Lockey, *East Florida*, 285.

<sup>69</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, July 29, 1785,” (microfilm) section 7, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>70</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, July 29, 1785,” (microfilm) section 7, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>71</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, February 9, 1785,” (microfilm) section 14, reel 20, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

In a letter dated September 30, 1785, Zespedes related that he finally received 84,778 peso *fuertes* from New Spain, but most of that went to agents of British inhabitants and merchants.<sup>72</sup>

There was a callousness in the attitude of those in New Spain with which Governor Zespedes was dealing, as the original amount to be sent him was an even 100,000 peso *fuertes*. But, even though his needs were dire, the powers-that-be in New Spain withheld 15,222 pesos that were included in his original advancement of 40,000 pesos in Havana. In addition, the currency sent was in the form of peso *fuertes*. “The American-minted peso fuerte (silver peso) was equal to four peizas of two reales each, while the peninsular-minted one was equal to five piezas. Therefore, it was quite lucrative to introduce Spanish pesos into the colonies and take the American ones.”<sup>73</sup> Not only were these coins worth twenty percent less than an Iberian minted peso, but one can begin to understand the convoluted Spanish colonial monetary system. It is not difficult to see how the Spanish could mine so much silver and continuously be in debt, when two sides of the same treasury system were at odds to gouge each other on exchange procedures.

In a last ditch effort to make someone in Spain understand the seriousness of the circumstances in East Florida, Governor Zespedes attempted to express himself in more apocalyptic terms:

If money is not sent...before the end of the year, this will be the situation: God without a temple, the troops without barracks, the sick exposed to the open air, the provisions without warehouses, and I without shelter; for all the buildings, as well as the underground compartments of the fortress because of the bad state of its terreplein, are in danger of falling in ruins.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, September 30, 1785,” (microfilm) section 14, reel 20, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>73</sup> Nater, “The Spanish Empire and Cuban Tobacco,” in Coclanis, *The Atlantic Economy*, 268.

<sup>74</sup> “Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, September 30, 1785,” (microfilm) section 14, reel 20, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

In addition, Zespedes spelled out that the troops were owed a combined 58,507 pesos.<sup>75</sup> In a letter dated November 22, 1785, Bernardo de Galvez continued to claim that the treasury in New Spain was in no condition to offer relief.<sup>76</sup> More than this we do not have on record.

The plight of Governor Zespedes and his financial straits shed light on the fate of British Florida because anything adversely affecting the Spanish governor would potentially have negative ramifications for the British governor; that is basic human nature when it comes to the impact of financial stress. The fact that Governor Zespedes's counterpart in Governor Tonyn was anything but deferential in his dealings with the victorious Spaniards only added to this stress. Indeed, the relationship between Governors Tonyn and Zespedes may mark one of the most bizarre circumstances of the American Revolution. In no other colony do we find colonial administrators of two separate European empires possessing the same colony at the same time. Tonyn refused to take a lame-duck position and he constantly barraged Zespedes with incidences of protocol and political formalities. Zespedes, on the other hand, was quite open with his superiors that Tonyn well understood he had no decision making power whatever, but "I gather from [Tonyn's] conduct that he wants to have these English believe his authority to govern them has not yet expired."<sup>77</sup>

This is a very telling comment on what Zespedes believed to be the disingenuous nature of the British governor. In fact, in too many letters to note, Zespedes refers to Tonyn as the British "ex-governor"—a term Tonyn would have never accepted in a face-to-face conversation.

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<sup>75</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bartolome Morales, October 10, 1785," (microfilm) section 2, reel 8, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>76</sup> "Letter from Bernardo de Galvez to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, November 22, 1785," (microfilm) section 6, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>77</sup> "Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, August 9, 1784," (microfilm) section 7, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

Virtually from the beginning of his acquaintance with the “pugnacious Irishman” Zespedes attempted to take the high road regardless of his personal dislike for the man: “I shall cultivate good relations with this gentleman, as long as his interests are not opposed to those to which I am bound by duty, overlooking as far as I can his lack of sincerity.”<sup>78</sup> Interestingly enough, they both accuse the other of bogging down their communication pipeline with refusals to hire interpreters.<sup>79</sup> In the case of Zespedes’ officer corps from the Hibernian Regiment—Irish Catholics who joined the Spanish military for the sole purpose of fighting British Protestants—one can understand the reluctance of an Irish Protestant such as Tonyn to rely upon their interpretations and translations on matters of geopolitical import.

In the very beginning of Spain’s reoccupation of East Florida, when the discussion of the two British companies of Light Horse arose, Governor Tonyn was quite forthcoming in two separate letters that the primary purpose of these military units was to protect outlying plantations from vandalism and villainy by the banditti. But when Governor Zespedes realized that the plantations in question all had a tie to Tonyn’s personal fortunes, the Spaniard began to question Tonyn’s integrity on virtually every issue.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps Zespedes would have been more sympathetic to Tonyn’s position on the matter had he known that Tonyn destroyed his entire estate during the rebel invasion of 1777, and was most likely attempting to protect what was left of his financial future at all costs. Now nearing sixty years of age, the British General had but few other options.

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<sup>78</sup> Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 60; “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, August 9, 1784,” (microfilm) section 7, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>79</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, August 9, 1784,” (microfilm) section 7, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>80</sup> “Thus his militia is entirely useless; though I do not object to his having it for the protection of his own and the other plantations in his charge.” “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, August 9, 1784,” (microfilm) section 7, reel 16, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

In a letter to Lord Sydney Tonyn relates that two Irish priests arrived in St. Augustine to serve the new Catholic community and claimed that they had warned Minorcan women that anyone leaving with the English would have to leave their children behind to be raised Catholic.<sup>81</sup> For Governor Tonyn to relate such gossip to the Secretary of the American Colonies, he obviously believed it to be true. Of course, there is no account of any such actions taking place. That Tonyn would spread such an unsubstantiated rumor to the inner circles of the Court of St. James might best be explained as evidence of Tonyn's eagerness to believe even the most preposterous tale, casting aspersions on the Spanish governor's reputation; another example of the determined existence of a Black Legend.

The reasons for the "Long Evacuation" are numerous, indeed; not to mention prickly in nature. A lack of available shipping, entire neighborhoods disappearing as homes were dismantled and hauled up to the St. Marys River to be loaded on ships; financial straits—not only of the outgoing British inhabitants, but the incoming Spaniards as well; brigands and banditti enjoying a somewhat celebrated status under Zespedes after Tonyn's despotic rule. This was a most contentious time in the history of the region. After Spain granted one eighteen-month extension already, it is hard to imagine the thoughts that ran through Governor Zespedes mind as Tonyn requested an additional six months.<sup>82</sup> The Spanish had very little sympathy for what was taking place in the British camp because they had experienced their own evacuation of East Florida just twenty-one years earlier, and it entailed few of the complications bogging down the process now.

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<sup>81</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, April 4, 1785," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 360.

<sup>82</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, February 15, 1785," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 423.

For one thing, in 1763 Spain strongly encouraged its citizens to evacuate by offering compensation and property if they relocate.<sup>83</sup> When Governor Grant arrived in East Florida only three people in the entire colony had roots to the previous Spanish occupancy. General Augustine Prevost, whose history in East Florida was quite colorful and easily as contentious in his relationship with Tonyn as was Zespedes, was also the representative of the British government who delivered the terms of surrender of West Florida to the Spanish governor on August 6, 1763. It only took the Spanish until September 2, 1763 to evacuate the colony. This helps in understanding why Zespedes was so frustrated with the current events in East Florida.<sup>84</sup> In an effort to be civil, yet establish the proper tone of authority, King Carlos III extended the evacuation date by only four months, rather than the six months requested. In June 1785, Governor Zespedes issued a hard-line stance on the issue:

I shall consider all real property of the British not legally disposed of before the 19<sup>th</sup> of next month [July] as forfeit to His Majesty (excepting only the property of Catholics or of those desirous of being converted to said holy religion, and also the house of Panton and Leslie, who are awaiting the royal decision on the memorials which I inclosed to the Conde de Galvez with my recommendation.<sup>85</sup>

On June 6, 1785, Governor Tonyn left St. Augustine to reside at the St. Marys River until he could sail.<sup>86</sup> One can only imagine the weight lifted from Governor Zespedes' shoulders, at least until the first mail packet arrived from St. Marys with this urgent message from his junior officers stationed there: "Dear Sir: I regret to have to inform you that since Governor Tonyn

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<sup>83</sup> Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 152.

<sup>84</sup> Dewey, "British Trade in West Florida," 5–6.

<sup>85</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Jose de Galvez, June 22, 1785," *The East Florida Papers* [b153, J2], in Lockey, *East Florida*, 565.

<sup>86</sup> "Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Jose de Galvez, June 6, 1785," Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo (bundle) 2660 (photostats lent by the Florida State Historical Society), in Lockey, *East Florida*, 552–53.

came to St. Marys, we are more unfortunate than before.”<sup>87</sup> Governor Tonyn was so disgusted with those British subjects choosing to remain behind that he was actually holding court on the St. Marys River—even going so far as to imprison one man. One of the Spanish officials, an Irish officer from the Hibernian Regiment, attempted to reproach Governor Tonyn, but to no avail: “[T]he practice of sending armed people through the country and of taking possession of the property of peaceful inhabitants without judicial inquiry, is an unheard of procedure among civilized people.”<sup>88</sup> It would also appear that, in addition to targeting the disaffected themselves, Governor Tonyn targeted “removable property,” or slaves. A cursory glance at a map of East Florida shows that with Tonyn occupying the farthest-most northern position within the colony—the banks of the St. Marys River—that the nearest region for Tonyn to send armed troops would be the wedge of land between the St. Marys and St. Johns rivers occupied by the banditti. Without question, Governor Tonyn was hoping to exact one last pound of flesh from all those who incurred his wrath while in office. This would also include Governor Zespedes.

On July 29, 1785, Governor Tonyn crossed a diplomatic “Rubicon” when he sent Governor Zespedes a 115-page letter re-hashing every minor incident and confrontation he experienced with the Spaniard; crossing the Rubicon, so to speak.<sup>89</sup> Tonyn included this tome in his next correspondence with Lord North, which could very well explain why Tonyn never again received appointment to a gubernatorial position within the empire. Even as badly as Lord Cornwallis botched the second phase of the southern campaign, he later served as the colonial governor of India. For Patrick Tonyn there would be no more such opportunities. In fact,

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<sup>87</sup> “Letter from Henry O’Neill to Carlos Howard, July 3, 1785,” (microfilm) section 32, reel 44, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>88</sup> “Letter from Henry O’Neill to General Tonyn, July 3, 1785,” (microfilm) section 32, reel 44, *The East Florida Papers*, PKYL.

<sup>89</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, July 29, 1785,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 549–664.

Governor Zespedes' response to the British administrator's voluminous letter of complaint speaks plainly of the rest of the world's attitude toward Patrick Tonyn. Zespedes stated that "if these Excesses continue, and if all Foreigners in Arms do not retire from the Banks of the River, and harbour of St. Marys, I will have to change my maxim, and to send a detachment, capable of making them obey my dispositions."<sup>90</sup> Tonyn, not to be cowed easily, reminded Zespedes that those who remain beyond the deadline were still owed money by the Spanish government.<sup>91</sup> Zespedes could not argue this point but he reiterated, "I will give immediate notice to my Court, using in the mean time those means, which are in my power to repress every future disorder with Chastisement, and from these consequences I cannot do less than to inform, that the responsibility will fall upon Your Excellency."<sup>92</sup>

In what must have been one of history's most deserving cases of karma, Governor Tonyn's last malicious epistle to Governor Zespedes would return to the Irishman ten-fold. On September 10, Tonyn's evacuation ship, the *Cyrus*, finally set sail to complete the British evacuation of North America. But contrary winds blew the *Cyrus* back onto her own anchor, damaging the ship so badly that it was forced to sit for three months at the mouth of the St. Marys River, as the repair process was tediously slow. Tonyn informed Lord Sydney of his plight and admits that "from the substance of my last correspondence with the Spanish Governor we cannot return, and into Georgia we cannot go."<sup>93</sup> In truth, however, Governor Zespedes was a gracious man and, in spite of all that has been said, offered to allow the stranded victims to come back to St. Augustine. Tonyn politely refused, saying that they would be sailing in a matter of days, but it

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<sup>90</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Patrick Tonyn, July 27, 1785," PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 681–82.

<sup>91</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, August 6, 1785," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 686.

<sup>92</sup> "Letter from Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Patrick Tonyn, August 4, 1785," PRO, CO 5/561, p. 735.

<sup>93</sup> "Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, September 15, 1785" PRO, CO 5/561, p. 778.



would be another two-three weeks before they set sail.<sup>94</sup> Zespedes could not resist one last parting salvo, as he wrote Bernardo de Galvez that “the British ex-governor” finally sailed on November 13, 1785, “having lost all hope of obtaining the governorship of Providence.”<sup>95</sup>

The evacuation of St. Augustine inched along painfully slow for the thousands of people who were unfortunate enough to find themselves stranded in East Florida in 1782. Of the eclectic ensemble that made up St. Augustine in the British post-war era, the prisoners of war were the first to leave in 1781. Another 5,000 Loyalists could not endure their options and filtered back into the United States, hoping not to be recognized as former Tories.<sup>96</sup> For many, capture resulted in imprisonment or worse.<sup>97</sup> Laws such as the Confiscation Act of 1782 banished certain Loyalists from the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina on pain of death.<sup>98</sup> Of the British soldiers and militia who were re-deployed in 1783, approximately 1,500 soldiers ended up in Nova Scotia or the West Indies, while 3,500 former soldiers and civilians remained in East Florida and either accepted Spanish rule or became outlaws. Ultimately, under a great deal of duress, over 10,000 loyal British subjects, of all occupations and classes, eventually found their ways to distant British shores.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Vicente Manuel de Zespedes, October 31, 1785,” *The East Florida Papers*, box 208, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 735.

<sup>95</sup> “Vicente Manuel de Zespedes to Bernardo de Galvez, December 24, 1785,” *The East Florida Papers*, box 43, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 746–47.

<sup>96</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Evan Nepean, May 2, 1786,” PRO CO 5/561, pp. 813–24.

<sup>97</sup> “Josiah Smith’s Diary, 1780–1781 (cont.).” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (October 1934), 194–99.

<sup>98</sup> Robert S. Lambert, “The Confiscation of Loyalist Property in Georgia, 1782–1786,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., Vol. 20, No. 1. (Jan., 1963), 82.

<sup>99</sup> “Letter from Patrick Tonyn to Lord Hawke, November 30, 1784,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 337–44, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 11.

But that is not to suggest that their troubles ceased upon leaving St. Augustine. Governor Maxwell of the Bahamas turned away some of the East Florida refugees who evacuated to Providence Island; others he refused even the opportunity to re-provision their transports before continuing to other colonies. Many East Floridians who were allowed to live in those islands were denied the opportunity to pursue their trades. Though Lt. Governor Powell of the Bahamas stepped in to assist those with needs, he requested that East Florida authorities send “backwards” refugees to Nova Scotia, stating that such “Arabs” would not fit into proper Bahamian society.<sup>100</sup> This was a cruel blow, as a large number of refugees determined that the Bahamas were the most likely destination for anyone hoping to acquire enough land in a warm climate to retain their planter-elite status.

Governor Tonyn was bitterly embroiled with Governor Zespedes on many levels during the evacuation, as Tonyn was never one to see himself in a lame-duck role regardless of the circumstances. As mentioned earlier, any British subject in arrears on an outstanding debt or convicted of a criminal offense would not be allowed to leave St. Augustine, but forced to face a Spanish tribunal. As a result, Governor Tonyn was relentlessly embattled in court decisions motivated by the personal vendettas of Frances Philip Fatio. While it may seem that Tonyn thrived on such conflicts, he should be credited for his devotion to duty, as he was entrusted with the safety of every British soul in East Florida amidst one of the most chaotic events in early modern history. Ultimately, these disagreements and heated debates escalated to the point that Governor Tonyn was eventually banished to his evacuation ship, the *Cyrus*, on July 19, 1785, and forced to perform all official British functions from his cabin. It was only possible for Governor Zespedes to get away with such actions because the British eclipsed their official

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<sup>100</sup> “Letter from Lt. Governor Powell to Patrick Tonyn, June 9, 1785,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 721–25.

extension to leave the colony and the Spanish no longer needed to concern themselves with protocol.

Historian Eliga Gould reminds us that while the British government always claimed to hold the Loyalists' needs as a top priority, their actions did not necessarily reflect their words: "the government's willingness to conduct business with both Congress and the Continental army produced a corresponding tendency to treat even those colonists who retained their allegiance to the king as members of a separate political society."<sup>101</sup> For some, this offers an acceptable explanation for the lack of respect shown the East Floridians who remained loyal throughout the entire war. More pragmatically, Gould is reminding us that an eighteenth-century perspective would dictate that such loyalty was expected and therefore not hailed as an extraordinary circumstance to be rewarded. However, if by observing East Florida during this era teaches us nothing else about eighteenth-century British expectations of loyalty under extraordinary circumstances, we should have learned that even the most adamantly faithful citizens of the empire were also human beings. As such, they cried out against personal and financial loss, and railed against their abandonment by those they served. To the power mongers in Parliament, East Florida was but a collection of words on a map and Gibraltar offered more clout in their political holdings in the international community. But East Floridians were not just pegs on a board; they were people. They were people who were betrayed by king they served faithfully. Today, such governmental abuses of trust might seem commonplace; certainly not shocking. But this was a different era and the fact that over half of the Loyalists in East Florida at war's end were willing to either turn to lives of crime and banditry, alter their religious affiliations and embrace a foreign king, or filter back into the very regions where many faced potential imprisonment and

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<sup>101</sup> Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, 196.

even death sentences speaks volumes to the damage created in the hearts and minds of these people by this betrayal.

Perhaps none were betrayed more than Patrick Tonyn, who ordered a torch set to all his worldly financial holdings during the rebel invasion of 1777. There would be no hero's welcome for a job well done when Tonyn returned to London; rather he found himself enmeshed in a mountain of paperwork and red tape, as he was pressed by Parliament to defend his management of the "Long Evacuation."

## CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

In a letter to Lord Sydney, written from Portsmouth, England, on January 11, 1786, Patrick Tonyn informed the Secretary of the American Colonies that the evacuation of East Florida was finally complete.<sup>1</sup> On May 2, 1786, Lord Sydney compelled Tonyn to put in writing for Parliament the details of the “Long Evacuation.”<sup>2</sup> The last significant correspondence from the former governor, according to the British National Archives, was dated July 3, 1786, when Tonyn harangued Lord Sydney for back-pay owed the East Florida officers of administration, James Hume, David Yeates, and Peter Edwards. These men were not paid for more than twelve months—since June 24, 1785—though they performed an invaluable service to the Crown during the entire evacuation calamity.<sup>3</sup>

During much of the ordeal there was an appalling lack of concern at Whitehall for the evacuees’ wellbeing. A classic example of this disregard centers on the well documented fact that from 1782 to 1785 shockingly few physicians came to St. Augustine during the southern migration of refugees from Charleston and Savannah to East Florida. Military surgeons accompanied the army but they were woefully far too few to handle what can only be imagined as cruelly overcrowded circumstances. When Savannah was evacuated in July 1782, almost the entire medical community stayed behind to tend to wounded soldiers and those sick from a small pox outbreak.<sup>4</sup> We know from Spanish correspondence that Governor Zespedes brought only one

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<sup>1</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, January 11, 1786,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 801–04.

<sup>2</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, May 2, 1786,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 849–52.

<sup>3</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Lord Sydney, July 3, 1786,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 825–29.

<sup>4</sup> Lambert, “The Confiscation of Loyalist Property,” 90.

physician/surgeon and one pharmacist.<sup>5</sup> Yet with all of the packet ships carrying correspondence back and forth across the Atlantic during this period, Whitehall did not send one physician to East Florida. Civil leaders pleaded repeatedly that funds from the Board of Treasury be used for the needs of the people regarding such rudiments, and to supply a Light Horse militia to replace the army from October 31, 1783 to November 19, 1785. Meanwhile, normal costs of medical supplies, clothing, and the essentials of life rose higher as the evacuation dragged on.

Conversely, Whitehall relocated troops and moved political mountains to enhance the evacuation of New York City. The greatest insult to East Floridians was, of course, the removal of the garrison stationed at St. Augustine to do so—not to provide military protection to those loyal British citizens in New York escaping the ire of incoming American rebels, but to provide assistance with their arrival in Nova Scotia, protecting them from no one but themselves.<sup>6</sup> Underscoring Whitehall's lack of concern, on December 4, 1783, Frederick, Lord North dictated a letter to the East Florida governor explaining that while cleaning out the office of the "late Secretary of State," North came across the copy of the definitive Treaty of Paris intended for Tonyn, signed the previous September.<sup>7</sup> Without apologies, Lord North continued to explain the various details and nuances of the document.<sup>8</sup> Tonyn—who relentlessly argued for his colony's rights to be respected equally with other entities of the British Empire facing similar dilemmas at war's end—had been waiting since April 1783 for these specifics in an effort to comfort and quiet his restless and frightened population. Leaders in East Florida could have salved some of

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<sup>5</sup> "Juan Ignacio de Urriza, Employees for the Hospital at St. Augustine, June 1, 1784," *East Florida Papers* [b54, B5], in Lockey, *East Florida*, 198–99.

<sup>6</sup> "Patrick Tonyn to Evan Nepean, October 1, 1783," PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 717–19.

<sup>7</sup> Lord North was succeeded as secretary of the American Colonies, known after March 27, 1782, as the office of the Home Secretary, by the Earl of Shelburne (March 27–July 10, 1782), Lord Sydney (July 10, 1783–April 2, 1783), and Lord North (April 2–December 19, 1783; December 23, 1783–June 5, 1789).

<sup>8</sup> "Lord North to Patrick Tonyn, December 4, 1783," PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 721–36.

the concerns and answered many questions raised in St. Augustine had Whitehall forwarded the definitive treaty in a timely manner. Instead, as a result of Whitehall's callousness, this information was not conveyed to Governor Tonyn until March 1784. To exacerbate the situation, Lord North further dictated in this same letter of December 4, 1783, that Sir Guy Carleton "provided for the removal of the Troops [in East Florida], and I hope the Public Stores; But, if any, or either should still remain, you will cause them forthwith to be Transported to [the Bahamas]." <sup>9</sup> Whitehall's negligence involving the affairs in St. Augustine shone brightly in its oversight to send Governor Tonyn a copy of the treaty post-haste. But to order the embattled colony to empty its public stores—provisions of food, munitions, and necessities needed to survive—fourteen months ahead of the last evacuation transport's embarkation adds a charge of unfathomable incompetence.

It should not be said that there were no sympathetic voices in all of England concerning the appalling circumstances in East Florida. On July 24, 1783, responding to pressure from the London press, members of the Prime Minister's Cabinet held a special meeting for the purpose of seeking some method for expediting the relief effort to the large number of Loyalists stranded in East Florida. Newspapers in London reported that Whitehall received statements of abandonment from over 5,000 inhabitants of St. Augustine, but that there was no discernable end at that time to their dilemma. Despite Parliament's woeful sentiments and seemingly good intentions, there is no evidence that they provided any financial aid for East Florida's Loyalists until 1786, long after the evacuees resettled. <sup>10</sup> The British Empire, once again redeemed at the expense of its citizens, could move forward from this ugly business.

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<sup>9</sup> "Lord North to Patrick Tonyn, December 4, 1783," PRO, CO 5/560, pp. 721–36.

<sup>10</sup> Siebert, *The Legacy of the American Revolution*, 45.

Lost in all of this is the disposition of the black population in East Florida. As the war shifted in favor of the American cause and American rebels returned to their devastated, often completely abandoned properties, southern elites struggled to resurrect the labor-deficient plantation system. Revolutionary-era planters and merchants firmly believed that the restoration of the plantation agricultural system, complete with chattel slavery, was essential to the speedy economic recovery of the South.<sup>11</sup> Historian Francis Jennings laments that “Americans began the building of their empire with an inheritance of ethnocentric semantics...out of the strange proposition that invasion, conquest, and dispossession of other peoples support the principles that all men are created equal.”<sup>12</sup> One can sense the tension in the region during the postwar era as American planters attempted to scrape their former existences back into being by importing massive numbers of slaves to rebuild the collapsed economy. The pursuit of abducted and runaway slaves in East Florida was perceived as an avenue for a quick accumulation of labor at little to no expense. American planters enacted repressive slave codes and a new ideology that included a deadly concoction of patriarchal principles, revolutionary ideals, and Biblical authority. This allowed planters to introduce a new concept that chattel slavery in southern society was ordained by God, creating a religiously racialized society framed within the bounds of a shared culture.<sup>13</sup> Unquestionably, the new American nation was now the greatest of evils to southern slaves in search of freedom.

Though slaves and free blacks were oppressed by their white counterparts, they were not without their resources for doing as much as they could with what opportunities they had. Slaves often capitalized on the disorder created by the chaos of the war, especially in the southern

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<sup>11</sup> Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Jennings, “The Indians’ Revolution,” in Young, *The American Revolution*, 344.

<sup>13</sup> Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 211.



backcountry. Their response to the Philipsburg Proclamation was so massive that they confounded every preconceived response the British contemplated for the manipulation of the situation—but their response was not one of blind faith. Blacks learned to view any British offer of freedom with caution, especially after witnessing Cornwallis's systematized use of terror throughout the South.<sup>14</sup> Many slaves went into Savannah and Charleston in an attempt to lose themselves in the larger populations during the confusions of the various invasions. But not all slaves ran away, though not out of loyalty as their returning masters would boast. Neutrality served many slaves as a survival mechanism just as it did whites who attempted to remain uninvolved in the war. Slaves who were familiar with the backcountry terrain were often armed and mounted by the British to hunt down and capture deserters.<sup>15</sup> These people found ways to live to see another day when their opportunities for freedom might be more easily attained. The confusion of the British evacuation brought many such opportunities.

Blacks who stayed in East Florida with hopes of enjoying the Spanish sanctuary of old encountered unfavorable legislation from Madrid. Governor Zespedes developed a distaste for these people and became concerned that it was simply a matter of time before American planters began invading his borders to retrieve their property. Spain always enjoyed antagonizing its British counterparts on the North American continent by offering sanctuary and refuge to runaway slaves, but the newly formed United States was an unfamiliar entity. The Americans lacked the decorum and traditions of civilized warfare to which Spain was accustomed with England and France. Officers on both sides of the war were appalled at the barbarity in the southern backcountry, as one American officer recounts a macabre system of savage one-up-

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<sup>14</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 113–14, 117, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 137–38.

man-ship where atrocities of every nature were inflicted on the civilian population. Many southern American rebels harbored a mounting hatred for runaway slaves, accusing them of propagating British terror tactics in the backcountry.<sup>16</sup>

Not only did the Americans demonstrate an audacity in their sheer existence as a nation, they demonstrated a determination to hold tenaciously to their hard-earned lands and the property rights of its citizens. American slave owners threatened border raids in order to reclaim their slaves, and Spanish authorities in St. Augustine feared that such raids might eventually include federal assistance and American troops. Andrew Jackson would fulfill that prophecy in 1817. Thus, the only thing to be gained by encouraging American slaves to run away to St. Augustine as they had with the British was another colonial war. In spite of its victories in West Florida, the Spanish military was in decline and understood there was little chance of dislodging their new American neighbors by force. What began as a local proclamation by Governor Zespedes soon after the Spanish re-occupation of East Florida became a royal edict on May 17, 1790, as King Carlos IV of Spain abandoned the position of slave sanctuary in Florida.<sup>17</sup>

Once again, the plight of most blacks on the North American continent was relegated to that of human chattel, but that does not mean that they did not have their victories. For one, American slaves continued to flee to the maroon camps and Seminole villages of Spanish East and West Florida, far outside the reach of the authorities in St. Augustine and Pensacola. Also, and more germane to this study, of the 12,000–13,000 black refugees who came to East Florida officially—a figure which does not include those who settled in maroon camps or with the Seminoles—only 3,589 left for the slave plantations of the Caribbean, and another 2,561 were

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<sup>16</sup> Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 133.

<sup>17</sup> Landers, “Spanish Sanctuary,” 310–13.

taken back into the United States.<sup>18</sup> Two hundred free blacks filed for Spanish citizenship, one-hundred fifty-five left for Nova Scotia, and thirty-five departed for Deptford, England.<sup>19</sup> One then must ask: what happened to the other 5,500–6,500 free blacks and slaves who are completely unaccounted for?<sup>20</sup> We may never know for sure, but most likely they filtered back to the more familiar backdrops of Georgia and the Carolinas. Such a massive influx of people as determined to gain their freedom and individual rights as these no doubt influenced the fabric of the American landscape for generations to come.

The circumstances involving the treatment of Native Americans by the new government of “Virginians” in the post-Revolutionary period are narrated extensively. But little is noted concerning the abandonment of Native Americans by the British, and perhaps there is no greater insult by the British to native tribes, nations, and confederations than what took place in Paris in 1783. Loyal Indian allies were “thunderstruck” to learn that Britain forfeited their lands to the United States after the war without one Native American representative present at the peace talks.<sup>21</sup> Lands that America’s indigenous population occupied for centuries were tossed about like islands in the Caribbean as victors divvied up spoils that did not belong to either side in the conflict. The Revolution also ended all British peace accords with Native Americans, like the Proclamation of 1763, initiating the unencumbered rage against any who stood in the way of the American quest for continental imperialism. All present on the North American continent found new identities as the new American nation quickly became to the Indians what the British had

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<sup>18</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Evan Nepean, May 2, 1786,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 801–09.

<sup>19</sup> “Patrick Tonyn to Evan Nepean, May 2, 1786,” PRO, CO 5/561, pp. 801–09.

<sup>20</sup> It must be noted that no free or enslaved blacks are listed by Governor Tonyn as captured or re-enslaved by the Spanish, as he most assuredly would have done, as the result of Governor Zéspedes’ proclamation—an indication that the proclamation may have been just a manipulative threat.

<sup>21</sup> Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*, 169.

been to them—only much more harsh and cruel in their conduct. After the Revolution, the American victors took advantage of their monopoly of the eastern portion of the continent and sought to destroy Native American culture and steal their lands. For these people the outcome of the Revolution was radically worse, for the Europeans never sought to dominate them so completely for the purpose of empire. With the ink barely dry on the Treaty of Paris, 1783, the American government enacted policies that Chief Joseph Brant knew all along would occur if the British lost this war. By October 1783, just weeks after the Treaty of Paris, the American Congress declared United States hegemony of all lands “east of the Great Miami and Maumee rivers from Lake Erie to the north and the Ohio River to the south—a great part of the unconquered lands of the Delaware, Wyandot, Miami, and Shawnee.”<sup>22</sup>

While the large Indian confederations and powerful nations prepared for their own war of independence—a war fought in order to retain that which was theirs already, and had been for many centuries—many smaller southern tribes requested to be transported away from their ancestral lands alongside their former British allies. On May 15, 1783, Governor Tonnyn, General Archibald McArthur, and Southern Indian Superintendent Thomas Brown conducted a congress with the leaders of several of the smaller Creek tribes to discuss an evacuation plan for their people. Chief O Kaiseigige of the Flint River tribe reminded the British delegates that the Creek warriors from these smaller tribes took up the hatchet against the Spanish on their behalf and had given up land in their efforts for the British cause.<sup>23</sup> What would happen when the Spanish reclaim these lands? Chief Fine Bones, king of the Cowetas and a delegate of the Upper Creeks agreed with O Kaiseigige: “We cannot take a Virginian or a Spaniard by the hand—we cannot

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<sup>22</sup> Nash, *The Unknown Revolution*, 382.

<sup>23</sup> “Substance of Indian Talks Delivered to Governor Tonnyn, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/110, p. 1.

look them in the face.”<sup>24</sup> Fine Bones lamented his feelings of abandonment by the British—not just by those he calls friends, but flesh and blood. His sentiments for the British as his brothers and King George III as his white father were not taken lightly. Fine Bones requested ships to take them away rather than be left to their enemies.<sup>25</sup> This is a far cry from Alexander McGillivray saying that to part with the land was like parting with their blood.<sup>26</sup> Relationships between Native Americans, colonial authorities, and the British government were rarely, if ever, conducted with the best interest of the indigenous population at heart. Notoriously convoluted, most agreements were rife with misrepresentations of actual white intentions. But at the end of the Revolution I would argue that the only real misunderstanding involved Native American trust in their British allies; they fully understood what the new American nation was about.

Both enslaved blacks and Native Americans understood that the United States emerging victorious from the Revolution spelled disaster for any hopes of equality, or even the desire to be left alone. Both groups invested their hopes and trust in the British monarchy and came away sorely disappointed. But their disappointment was a bitter two-prong spear in both the realities of a rebel victory as well as British disingenuousness. Once again, what could have been an honorable stance by a European nation was in reality nothing but a continuation of geopolitical chess, with human beings as pawns.

The American Revolution has always been a legend-filled narrative of liberty, patriotism, thirteen united colonies, heroic founding fathers, victory against all odds, freedom from tyranny, “no taxation without representation,” and the dawn of a new nation. But that is the traditional American perspective; a view strictly from within the confines of the original thirteen colonies.

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<sup>24</sup> “Substance of Indian Talks Delivered to Governor Tonyn, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/110, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> “Substance of Indian Talks Delivered to Governor Tonyn, May 15, 1783,” PRO, CO 5/110, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> “Alexander McGillivray to James White, April 8, 1787,” in Nash, *The Unknown Revolution*, 437.

When the conflict is considered from a British Loyalist point of view—from a map that includes all fifteen British colonies that comprise the present-day U.S. Atlantic seaboard and Gulf Coast—the war becomes about loss of liberties, defeat, disunion, shattered loyalism, refugee status, uncertainty, financial devastation, and the end of life as they knew it. And that is what took place just within the confines of North America. Stretch that same Atlantic map of the British Americas from Grenada in the south to Nova Scotia in the north and the war becomes about economic power bases and who will control them. This study demonstrates the dramatically altered perspective between British history and American tradition. When viewed from a British perspective, the American Revolution no longer rests on the laurels of Yankee Minutemen and New England Sons of Liberty, but clearly reveals a southern focus in the British war ministry's efforts on the North American mainland.

The American Revolution may have been sparked by “political slavery” and other such catch-phrases, but Great Britain's strategy wholly revolved around safeguarding West Indian sugar and those mainland colonies that kept its slave force fed and clothed. This is what David Armitage labels circum-Atlantic history, as it is mobile and connective, tracing circulations about the Atlantic world.<sup>27</sup> In this study we follow the money and resources from the Floridas in the form of naval stores and food stuffs to the Caribbean, and the movement of slaves back to the Floridas; sugar and molasses from the Caribbean followed skins and indigo from the Floridas back to the metropole in return for finished goods and trade items. But we also witnessed the constant ebb and flow of Loyalist refugees in and out of East Florida as Revolutionary events altered the political climate of the southern colonies in such a dizzying manner that people lost track of which political movement controlled which county or parish.

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<sup>27</sup> David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, Second Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 18–20.

Unlike the American Civil War of the 1860s, which drew loyalties often on no more than geopolitical boundaries, the civil war in the southern colonies during the American Revolution had no such luxuries. Counties, towns, even homes, were torn asunder by heinous violence, perpetrated by those who might switch loyalties the very next day. Caught in the midst of this mercilessness were women and children of all ages and backgrounds, representing all three sides in the conflict—rebel, Loyalist, non-aggressor—and every one of them an American citizen living in a British American colony. This is the one fact more overlooked and underappreciated than any other when discussing Loyalism and the American Revolution: Loyalists also were American citizens in British American colonies. Many of them were born in North America and many were those whose heritage extended back several generations. Loyalists were passionate in their “allegiance” to the nation’s war-time leadership, the “supremacy” of their elected congress, and the establishment of their “most solid foundation, our constitution, liberties and dependence.”<sup>28</sup> Due to their political views, tens of thousands of these American-born citizens were forced to abandon every hope and dream they possessed as their world came crashing down in the midst of revolution. The new American republic, built upon the principle of E Pluribus Unum, had no charity for those whose loyalty never faded from its point of origin.

The most surprising absence of historical events uncovered by this study is the military history of the British Southern expedition and the Second British Southern Campaign. The United States is a nation build upon military defiance and victory against all odds, and the two British southern debacles are rife with such tales. This discussion fills gaps in the heroic legend that is the American Revolution in a manner that finally brings a semblance of common sense into the conversation. For over two hundred years we have just accepted the idea that Sir Henry

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<sup>28</sup> Wells, *The Case of the Inhabitants*, pp. 33–34.

Clinton stumbled in Charleston Harbor in 1776, while the war raged only in the northern colonies. We begrudgingly admit that the Floridas were indeed British colonies in 1775, and when cornered we will even allow that they made conscious decisions to remain loyal to the British Crown. But acknowledging their participation in the war, much less a participation as significant as that of St. Augustine, and we are instantly overloaded with mind-numbing facts that threaten to subvert our national myth. Official documentation on both sides of the Revolution confirm the significance of the role played by East Florida throughout the American Revolution for the cause of British Loyalism in the rebellious American colonies. Additionally, because of this bastion of British military presence in the region, the reclamation of the southern colonies became a primary focus for the war ministry in Whitehall throughout the entire conflict, from 1775 to 1781. There may be no more prolific example of historians missing the proverbial forest—the larger picture of the entire British southern effort—by looking only at the individual “trees” as nothing more than a scattering of skirmishes and conflicts too far removed from New England to be of importance.

Just as the southern campaigns of the American Revolution are grossly misdated, with entire regions overlooked, the predicament of Loyalists in East Florida is perhaps even more invisible. Open any textbook which discusses the American Revolution and the Floridas are rarely found in the geography of the war, even though George Washington continually ordered military incursions into the region. Historically, even the southern British campaign of 1780 is viewed initially from north to south as Clinton and Cornwallis sailed down from New York, landing not at the southern tip of the colonies in St. Augustine, but in Charleston. And why Charleston? Because General Augustine Prevost had already taken control the Atlantic corridor from St. Augustine to Charleston, allowing Cornwallis to begin his campaign at a point much



farther north. With this southern strip of the Atlantic coast in British control, and only inland Augusta as an American holdout, Cornwallis was able to turn his army's back to the south and focus only on what lay before him—which was exactly what Washington feared in his letter to Congress on December 18, 1775.

Most historians note that Florida once again became part of the Spanish Empire in either 1783, at the conclusion of the American Revolution, or in 1784, when the Spanish governor actually arrived in St. Augustine. But little or no mention is found of November 13, 1785, when the last British refugee transport was finally able to sail from East Florida; from North America. Oddly, many of the historians whose works were used to support various aspects of this study do not acknowledge the calamity of East Florida's evacuation. In one such classic example, Simon Schama writes, "the peremptory liquidation of British America generated rage and panic amongst the beleaguered loyalists holed up in Savannah, Charleston, and New York, islands of British allegiance in a tidal surge of American patriotic euphoria and recrimination."<sup>29</sup> Savannah, Charleston, and New York—no mention of St. Augustine.

Paul Gilroy reminds us that "[w]e live in a land where the past is always erased and America is the innocent future in which immigrants can come and start over, where the slate is clean. The past is absent or it's romanticized. This culture doesn't encourage dwelling on, let alone coming to terms with, the truth about the past."<sup>30</sup> The efforts of this small Loyalist colony offer a fresh perspective on the American Revolution, redrawing the map as the southern theater is moved into even more into the central discussions of the struggle. The sacrificial loyalty displayed in East Florida repaints a two hundred and twenty-five year old portrait of American

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<sup>29</sup> Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 132.

<sup>30</sup> Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 222.

Loyalists and their spheres of influence: of steadfast Native American loyalty to Great Britain in its defeat; of Loyalist values and their commitment to what they believed to be right; and of the deplorable status of blacks, once again caught up in the global postures of British Atlantic world slave politics. The poorly orchestrated evacuation of St. Augustine reminds readers that British politicians and monarchs did not deserve the loyalty shown them. Many historians adhere to the purported theories of St. Augustine's insignificance as a colony, or refute its impact as a strategic military base. However, the British war ministry and George Washington knew well the military significance of a British-held East Florida.

Historians have an obligation to present what happened, not just what legend and myth purport to have taken place. And though it is presumed to be an unwritten rule that there should be no love lost for British Loyalists of the American Revolution, the British colonial period is an integral part of the history the Revolution, and thus the city of St. Augustine, the state of Florida and, therefore, the United States. It will be our loss if we allow it to remain a forgotten era, repeatedly relegated to an historical no-man's land. It is important to bring the memory of what happened in Florida to the forefront because it reminds Americans of what the war was truly about—equality. American rebels achieved a level of nationalism that cried out for recognition. They never considered negotiated compromises which would have gained them their rights but kept them gripped within a colonial system of empire. In winning their independence, Americans broke the fetters of deference and expendability. They fought for their right to become equals. British colonists, regardless of the fervor of their convictions, would never amount to anything more than second class citizens in the larger scheme of British Atlantic world politics. This was proven by the Treaty of Paris, 1783. Even though East Floridians earned the right to remain on the American continent, the retrocession of East Florida to Spain and the calamity of the St.

Augustine evacuation demonstrate that the rights of colonists were expendable to the superior designs of the empire.<sup>31</sup>

Very little of what the British war ministry hoped and planned for during the American Revolution came to fruition. Throughout the course of the conflict they had but one constant on which they could count: East Florida. The colony withstood invasions from without and political turmoil from within; tested, tried, and proven as solidly loyal to king and country. Because of Florida's geographical location within the empire, Great Britain could launch its massive southern invasion while simultaneously barricading the British West Indies from rebellion and sedition. Unfortunately for the loyal population of East Florida, the colony was indeed more steadfast against American independence than was the empire itself. As the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, the Union Jack still waived over the provincial capital of St. Augustine and would be furled only upon political mandate. The war for American independence was won and lost in the southern colonies of North America, and East Florida was the bedrock for the British effort in that conflict.

Gary Nash reiterates that the quandary of these unknown patriots is similar to that of present-day historians who have written radical accounts of the Revolution, only to be "leached out of the nation's history, replaced in the core narrative by a partially mythic and incomplete version of the Revolution."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the historical omissions that have left the memory of Florida and the evacuation of St. Augustine relatively unknown are inexplicable, yet not surprising. Circumstances in St. Augustine, Savannah, Charleston, and the backcountries of all three regions were heavily intertwined and congruous in the shaping of southern Revolutionary events. The

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<sup>31</sup> As Robert M. Calhoon reminds us, "[Loyalists] were nothing but pawns in a world where allegiance placed absolute obligations to obedience and acquiescence on subjects and where rulers axiomatically protected the interests of their faithful supporters." Calhoon, *The Loyalists Perception*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> Nash, *The Unknown Revolution*, xxv.

plight of Loyalists and blacks in Florida is no less a part of the American narrative than those of other southern colonies, especially considering how many of those Loyalists, free-blacks, and slaves from the traditional southern colonies found their way farther south in a time of refuge.

Florida did not “bob” like a cork to the surface of the Atlantic Ocean at some mysterious moment during the nineteenth century. Florida possesses the oldest European-based history within the United States and played a significant role in many aspects of this continent’s history prior to its “emergence” as a Confederate state—specifically, bifurcated as two distinctively separate British colonies during the American Revolution. The question we are left with is what to do with this information: do we continue the myth, or has the time finally come to tell the whole story?

## APPENDIX CATEGORIZATIONS

Letters of the Colonial Office are categorized by a numeration system peculiar to the Public Records Office section of the British National Archives that is chronological and alphabetically repetitive. One may locate broad categories encompassing an entire hemisphere (CO 5: America and West Indies) to regions within the hemisphere (CO 318: West Indies) to areas within the regions (CO 152: The Leeward Islands) to specific locations within the areas (CO 101: Grenada). 1170 categories in all; neither the United States, nor former British colonies within the United States, are designated a specific category other than the generalized CO 5. The following categorizations and their descriptions apply specifically to this study and are taken from the British National Archives on-line services,  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/about.asp?j=1>:

CO 5/	Records of the Board of Trade and Secretaries of State: America and West Indies, Original Correspondence, 1606–1822.
CO 30/	Colonial Office and Predecessors, Barbados, Original Correspondence. Acts, Ordinances, and Proclamations.
CO 101/	Colonial Office and Predecessors, Grenada, Original Correspondence. Correspondence in the colony, entry books and registers of correspondence.
CO 152/	Colonial Office and Predecessors, Leeward Islands, Original Correspondence. Correspondence in the colony, entry books and registers of correspondence.
CO 318/	Records of the Colonial Office and Predecessors: West Indies, Original Correspondence.
CO 391/	Records of Board of Trade responsibilities for colonial affairs before 1801.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Roger Smith was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1958. Smith graduated high school in 1976, the nation's bicentennial birthday, thus generating a keen interest in the American Revolution. Choosing marriage and raising three daughters over education, thirty years passed between high school diploma and a Bachelor's degree in History at the University of Florida, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 2006. Smith earned a Masters degree in History at the University of Florida in 2008, focusing on American history from the colonial era to modern day topics. He will receive his Doctor of Philosophy in History at the University of Florida on April 29, 2011, focusing on Early American History and Atlantic World Studies. Smith is also the first student in the history of the University of Florida to qualify for a newly developed program of Certificate of Scholarship in Museum Studies.