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## The Occupation of Pensacola Bay, 1689-0698, Part II

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THE OCCUPATION OF PENSACOLA BAY,  
1689-1698  
Part II

Upon the return to Vera Cruz of the Pensacola expedition (May 13, 1693) Siguenza forwarded his journal to the viceroy and drew up in addition a paper in which he summarized his work and presented his recommendations. He thought that fortifications should be erected both at Punta de Siguenza and the Barranca de Santo Tome. The best site for a settlement, he said, would be found on the beautiful Rio del Almirante. He thought it probable that this river took its rise far towards the north, probably in one of the lakes of Canada. It doubtless flowed through a rich country. Siguenza believed that the place called El Robledal, on the Rio Jordan, would also be a good place for a settlement, as communication could easily be opened up with Apalache and the rest of Florida from that point.<sup>1</sup>

Admiral Pez in his report called especial attention to the great size of Pensacola Bay, and its strategic position on the Gulf. He believed that it was absolutely necessary to fortify the bay. The cost of the necessary supplies would be very moderate, only a little more than 13,000 pesos.<sup>2</sup>

On June 1, Siguenza made another report, pointing out specifically the danger that would result if Pensacola was not at once occupied. He praised the Bay of Santa Maria de Galve in most extravagant terms.

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<sup>1</sup> Siguenza to the viceroy, May 15, 1693.

<sup>2</sup> Pez to the viceroy, June 1, 1693. Pez evidently referred to supplies only, for an estimate of the expense of occupying Pensacola presented to the Junta de Guerra in 1691 gave the total cost as 197,700 pesos. This included the pay of 200 troops.

It was the finest jewel that the king possessed, not only in America, but in the whole empire, because it combined all of those advantages which, taken singly, made other bays famous. Ships of no mean size could approach its very beach without difficulty. Anchor could be cast at almost *any* spot within its area of approximately twenty-two square leagues, It could shelter with ease all the armadas of the universe. It had a capacity for more than one hundred ship-yards, and could furnish lumber and masts of all dimensions. A bay with such attractions was certain to be coveted by foreign nations.

Although the land expedition under Governor Torres had not yet been completed and no report had been received concerning it, the viceregal government felt that it was in a position to take definite action. It was therefore resolved that temporary fortifications should be erected at Pensacola until a full report could be sent to the king, and the necessary assistance obtained from Spain for placing the new establishment upon a secure and permanent footing. A committee consisting of Pez, Siguenza, and the *factor*, Sebastian de Guzman, was appointed to decide upon the best methods of procedure.

A conference brought no agreement and each one submitted a report. Siguenza urged that fifty men be sent at once to Santa Maria de Galve. Establishing their camp on the Rio Jordan, they should first locate the village of the Panzacola Indians, and win the aid and favor of the natives with suitable gifts. The governor of Florida should be instructed to send a number of settlers, with supplies of fresh provisions, and cattle and horses. The principal settlement should then be made on the Almirante River. The main fort should be located at the Barranca de Santo Tome

and should have a garrison of eighty to one hundred men.<sup>3</sup>

The factor, with his more intimate knowledge of the resources of the viceroyalty, said that it was useless to attempt to colonize Santa Maria de Galve from New Spain. The occupation of Pensacola was too urgent a matter, however, to permit of delay. It would be possible to hold the bay temporarily until reinforcements were sent from Spain. Twenty-five soldiers could be sent from Florida and an equal number from Vera Cruz. The aid of the settlers of Apalache and of the Indians could be secured, and a small fort built at the mouth of one of the rivers flowing into the bay.<sup>4</sup>

Admiral Pez was opposed to any such makeshifts as Siguenza and Guzman had suggested but counselled delay until a report could be made to the king, and the necessary aid secured.<sup>5</sup>

The recommendations of Pez were obviously dictated by motives of self-interest. If his original plans were carried out, he would remain the dominant figure in the movement. His great influence with the viceregal officials made it a foregone conclusion that his plan would be adopted. The *fiscal* examined the three reports and advised that Pez be sent to Spain to make a personal report, and to perfect all arrangements for the occupation of the bay.<sup>6</sup> A junta general of June 8 definitely authorized such action. Pez was voted a salary of 2,500 pesos per year while absent on his mission, and was to be furnished a credit of 20,000 pesos by the viceroy to be drawn upon in case it proved impossible to secure funds in Spain.

The viceroy in his formal report said that the

<sup>3</sup> Siguenza to the viceroy, June 4, 1693.

<sup>4</sup> Sebastian de Guzman to the viceroy, June 4, 1693.

<sup>5</sup> Pez to the viceroy, June 5, 1693.

<sup>6</sup> Respuesta fiscal, June 5, 1693.

careful exploration which had been made fully established the fact that Santa Maria de Galve was as important as had been claimed, and that it should be occupied as soon as possible ; he was therefore sending Admiral Pez to Spain to secure the necessary men and supplies. He trusted that the king would approve of his action, and would authorize the enlistment, of two hundred troops, as well as the purchase of the supplies in the list to be presented by Pez.<sup>7</sup>

*The land expedition under Laureano de Torres y Ayala, 1693.* - Before passing to a consideration of the next stage in the development of the Pensacola movement it will be necessary for completeness to trace briefly the results of the land expedition sent out by the viceroy under the command of Laureano de Torres y Ayala. Sailing from Vera Cruz on February 24, he arrived at Havana on March 7. With a force of twenty-five soldiers furnished by the governor of Havana they arrived at Apalache on May 15. Reinforcements and a number of Indian guides were provided, and on June 8 the march to Pensacola was begun. The vessel was sent to reconnoiter the coast and to await the land forces at Pensacola Bay. After a tedious march over a rough and unknown country Torres and his men arrived at the bay on July 2. With the aid of the guides they at once found the site of the Panzacola village. Only the deserted houses of the village were to be seen, for the tribe, according to the statements of the accompanying Indians, had finally been exterminated through the long war which they had been forced to wage with the Mobilas. The ship was found anchored in the bay. Torres then began to examine the locality in the same careful fashion as Pez and Siguenza had done two months previously.

On August 5 Governor Torres was ready to take

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<sup>7</sup> The viceroy to the king, June 9, 1693.

up his march to St. Augustine. He wrote letters from "La Gran Baya de Panzocola" to the king and the viceroy. He described Pensacola as a good port, capable of being fortified with ease, but lacking in building stone and uninhabited by native tribes.

*The royal order of 1694, and continued procrastination.* - The viceroy's dispatch of June 9, 1693, with Siguenza's journal and map, reached Spain in December following: There was no longer any active resistance manifested by the Junta de Guerra. Indeed, as a result of its recommendations a *cedula* was issued on June 13, 1694, instructing the viceroy to begin without further delay the occupation and fortification of Santa Maria de Galve Bay, according to the specifications which the military engineer, Jaime Franck, might have prepared. While the preliminary occupation was being carried out from New Spain the king would make arrangements to send the two hundred troops that had been asked for, as well as all supplies that would be necessary to place the new establishment on substantial basis. In accordance with the viceroy's suggestion, the Consulado of Seville had been asked to advance the 20,000 pesos. The king trusted to the intelligence and zeal of the viceroy to place the bay in a condition to withstand any attack that might be made upon it by foreign enemies.<sup>9</sup>

Having definitely authorized the occupation of Pensacola Bay, the Junta de Guerra apparently dropped the matter, and made little effort to see that its recommendations, as embodied in the royal *cedula*, were executed. Pez himself returned to America and no one in Spain seemed to be sufficiently interested to push the project. The permission given to the viceroy to begin the occupation of the bay did not materially advance the enterprise. In answer to the *cedula*

<sup>8</sup> Torres to the king Aug. 5, 1693.

<sup>9</sup> Real *cedula*, June 13, 1694.

of June 13, the Count de Galve replied, a year and a half later, that lack of resources would prevent any action until the desired assistance should be sent from Spain. The death of Galve early in 1696 removed one of the most enthusiastic advocates of the movement. His letter served, however, to call the matter to the attention of the Junta de Guerra again ; and in December, 1696, an investigation was instituted to learn why the troops and supplies which had been authorized two and one half years before had not been sent to Pensacola. It was discovered now that the *Consulado* of Seville had refused to advance the 20,900 pesos, and that consequently nothing whatever had been done in the matter. Upon receipt of this surprising intelligence, the Junta decided to make an attempt to raise the required funds through an *asiento* with private individuals, and some person was sought who would agree to finance the undertaking. The governorship of the new post was offered as an inducement, and other special favors were promised." <sup>10</sup>

This belated outburst of energy proved to be merely a flash in the pan. Private as well as royal resources had been exhausted by the long war with France. Another year of procrastination was to ensue before further action was taken in regard to Pensacola. During that interval the warring nations of Europe paused for a breathing spell before renewing the struggle. No sooner had peace been declared than the old fears of French aggression were revived in Spain. The period of inaction was at an end.

*The final order for the occupation of Pensacola.* - Early in 1698 trustworthy reports were received by the Spanish government that Louis XIV was preparing to carry out the old plans of La Salle and found a colony on the Gulf of Mexico. It was said that four

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<sup>10</sup> Minuta de consulta, Dec. 13, 1696.

vessels were being fitted out in France to occupy some port on the Gulf - presumably Pensacola Bay. After hurried action by the Junta de Guerra a royal *cedula* was issued on April 19, 1698, which made the founding of a presidio at Pensacola the most urgent business of the whole empire.

In order to make sure of forestalling the French, the viceroy, now Jose Sarmiento de Valladares, Count de Montezuma, was commanded to begin immediately the preliminary occupation of the bay. He was authorized to make use of any available resources whatsoever for this purpose. As many men as possible were to be sent to take possession of Pensacola, and the engineer Jaime Franck, was to accompany them in order that work on the fortifications might be gotten under way without awaiting the arrival of the expeditionary forces from Spain. Copies of the *cedula* were addressed to the viceroy, the governor of Havana, and the *corregidor* of Vera Cruz, and were hurried to America on a special ship.<sup>11</sup>

Not content with the steps taken by the Junta de Guerra to meet the threatened danger, the Council of the Indies began to devise additional measures for anticipating the French. Just at this time a great deal of anxiety prevailed in Spain in regard to the safety of the galleons from South America, which were long overdue. The safe arrival of these galleons with their store of treasure was a matter of vital importance to the whole nation. The merchants who were most interested had therefore resolved to send out a relief expedition to ascertain the causes of the delay. Two vessels were being made ready at Cadiz for this purpose, having been placed under the command of a prominent naval officer, Martin de Aranguren Zavala. One hundred soldiers had been

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<sup>11</sup> Real *cedula*, April 19, 1698.



requested by the *Consulado* of Seville in order that discipline might be insured during the voyage. The Council of the Indies, ever on the watch for relieving the royal exchequer of additional strain, saw in this enterprise a chance to take further precautions against the designs of Louis XIV in the Gulf region. Zavala was given secret instructions to govern his actions in case he found on his arrival in Havana that the galleons were safe and had already continued the voyage to Spain. In the event of such good fortune he was authorized to proceed to Vera Cruz at once and join his forces to the expedition which was to be sent out by the viceroy to Pensacola Bay. As Admiral Pez was then under suspension on account of alleged neglect of duty,<sup>12</sup> Zavala was formally commissioned as commander-in-chief of the combined expedition.

Still another precautionary measure was adopted by the government. Secret instructions were also given to Captain Juan Jordan, who was now in Spain, to embark in Zavala's fleet. Upon arrival at Havana he was to deliver to the governor of the port a royal requisition for a frigate, fourteen cannon, one hundred men, and necessary supplies, including lumber for the building of a redoubt. He was then to proceed to Santa Maria de Galve Bay and hold it against the enemy until the main expedition from Mexico should put in an appearance.<sup>13</sup>

There were thus three distinct plans formulated by the home government for the occupation of Pensacola. The energy that was now manifested was in strong contrast to the indifference of previous years.

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<sup>12</sup> Pez was accused of cowardice and neglect of duty in connection with a combat with pirates off the coast of Cuba in 1697. Although supposed to be suspended from his post his services were too badly needed to be dispensed with and he was still in command of the windward squadron. He was not cleared of the charges until 1701.

<sup>13</sup> Instruction que ha de observar el Capn Juan Jordan, April 28, 1698.

Once more it had required the threat of foreign encroachment to awaken the inefficient royal government. But Spain was to show that she could still accomplish something when fully aroused to the necessity for action.

*The founding of the presidio of San Carlos de Austria.* - The royal *cedula* reached Mexico on July 14, 1698, and was promised the customary obedience. As the king's orders admitted of no delay the machinery of the viceregal government was instantly put into operation. The viceroy first called upon Siguenza and a prominent naval officer, Andres de Arriola, for expert advice as to the proper measures to be employed. Arriola had visited Pensacola in 1695 and thus had personal knowledge of the region. He was henceforth to occupy as prominent a position in the later phase of the Pensacola enterprise as Pez had done in earlier years. He had been in the royal service for twenty-four years and had successfully performed many important missions.

Siguenza advised that a force of one hundred and fifty men be sent from Mexico, reinforced by troops from St. Augustine, Havana, and Apalache. Three ships would be required for the transportation of the men and supplies. The landing should be made at Barranca de Santo Tome, and the first defences erected there. He urged great haste lest the French should arrive first.<sup>14</sup>

Arriola's recommendations differed little from those of Siguenza. He thought the following necessary: Two hundred soldiers, three ships with crews of forty men each, a number of skilled workmen, and supplies for six months. He supposed that the presidio would have to be built of wood, as he had seen no stone on his visit to the bay in 1695. Fortifications

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<sup>14</sup> Informe de Don Carlos de Siguenza, July 16, 1698, in Testimonio de Autos ejecutados.

should be built on each of the points at the entrance of the channel. As the distance between them was about three thousand varas, it might be advisable to stretch a wooden chain in the center, so that the artillery would be able to command the channel on each side.

Arriola's report was adopted in preference to Siguenza's, and the actual work of preparation was begun.<sup>15</sup> The factor had already estimated the cost of the expedition at 39,000 pesos. The chief items were three ships, twelve cannon, two hundred soldiers, one hundred and twenty sailors, nine artillerymen, three priests, three surgeons, twelve carpenters, six brickmasons, and four smiths, all with their helpers, making a total of 357 individuals.<sup>16</sup> Arriola was appointed commander-in-chief and governor of the new post. Francisco Martinez, who had been conspicuous in the early expeditions to Texas, was made sergeant-major and second in command. Jaime Franck, the military engineer, was detailed to superintend the building of the fortifications. Recruiting progressed very slowly. Special inducements in the way of extra pay were offered. A proclamation was issued ordering all men who had served in the windward squadron to enlist, under penalty of being declared deserters. Numbers of beggars and convicts were also pressed into service. The preparations were continued during August and September and well into October, for there were countless details to be looked after in typical Spanish fashion. For three months Vera Cruz was the scene of bustle and activity seldom witnessed in the Spanish dominions.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Respuesta fiscal, July 28, 1698, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Regulacion de gastos, July 17, 1698, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> The detailed autos are *ibid.* The three priests were Fathers Rodrigo de la Barrada, Alfonso Ximenez de Cisneros and Miguel Gomez Alvarez. On Sept. 18 the viceroy sent the king a report.

Arriola's instructions were dated September 16. The three ships were to keep together and sail directly to "Santa Maria de Galve, commonly called Pensacola". If no signs of settlement were seen, the expedition was to enter the harbor, with great caution however, leaving one vessel outside on sentinel duty. The troops should disembark under good military discipline, the supplies should be landed, and work on the fortifications begun at once. Franck was to draw up the plans of the presidio, and was to have general supervision over all matters connected with its construction. The Indians might be utilized in this task, but were not to be forced to labor against their will. In the event that the French were already settled at the bay, Arriola was to bring about a general engagement with them. If the enemy was too strong to be attacked, the expedition should retire to Vera Cruz, where further measures would be decided on.<sup>18</sup>

The three vessels set sail from Vera Cruz on October 15. They were beset by stormy weather and contrary winds, and did not reach Pensacola until November 21. The bay was found to be already occupied, but happily not by the French. Just a few days before, Capt. Juan Jordan had taken possession of the region in the name of the king. Zavala's fleet had arrived at Havana on October 13 and the welcome news was received that the galleons were safe. Jordan at once presented the royal order to the authorities of the port and was given such assistance as their meagre resources permitted. Only fifty men were furnished instead of the one hundred which the king had commanded. Two small vessels were made ready, with six cannon. Jordan left Havana on November 6, and reached Pensacola on the 17th. Zavala had remained at Havana two weeks and in accordance with

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<sup>18</sup> Instruccion dada al Mre de Campo D. Andres de Ariola, idem.

his secret instructions had continued his voyage to Vera Cruz, where he arrived more than a month after the departure of the forces he had been ordered to join and command. So Captain Jordan had the honor of being the winner in the race, and the first to begin the formal occupation of Santa Maria de Galve.

Upon the arrival of the main expedition operations were begun in earnest. The troops and supplies were landed at Barranca de Santo Tome, timber cut and hauled, and temporary quarters erected. Franck at once selected a site for a fort, and within six days a battery of six guns was in position. The presidio was given the name of "San Carlos de Austria". It was built of pine logs in the form of a square, one hundred varas on each side, and with four bastions.<sup>19</sup> Although the king had ordered fortifications to be erected on both sides of the entrance to the bay, it was decided to be impracticable to build a fort on the eastern point, called "Punta de Siguenza", on account of its low and swampy nature.

Both Arriola and Franck were unimpressed with the isolated region to which they had been exiled, and Franck thought it useless to fortify Pensacola, when there were several other bays in that region which the French might occupy at their pleasure. Arriola's dissatisfaction is clearly revealed in various letters which he wrote to the king and to the viceroy shortly after his arrival. He had only words of condemnation for the whole enterprise. In his opinion the only justification for holding the bay would be the conversion of the few natives who lived in the vicinity.<sup>20</sup>

There was no thought of abandoning the project, however. As soon as work on the presidio was well under way, the shallop was put together and the im-

<sup>19</sup> A plan of the fort is in Archivo General de Indias. A small reproduction may be found in P. J. Hamilton's *Colonial Mobile*, p. 48 (ed. 1910).

<sup>20</sup> Arriola to the king, Dec. 1, 1698.

mediate region about the bay was explored. The Rio del Almirante was followed to its source. It proved to be an inconsiderable stream, instead of the mighty river which Siguenza had believed it to be. The Jovenazo was also navigated for two days, but the intense cold caused the explorers to desist. None of the other streams flowing into the bay was deemed worthy of examination.<sup>21</sup>

The construction of the presidio progressed as well as could have been expected in face of the many difficulties that were encountered. The unusually cold weather and the lack of suitable clothing and shelter entailed severe hardships upon the troops. The unruly disposition of the recruits caused trouble from the first. Some forty of the transported criminals deserted in a body, although most of them were later recaptured. The camp was split into rival factions and quarreling and fighting were of frequent occurrence. Food was poor and scarce. Petty thievery became a veritable pest. On the night of January, 3 a fire broke out and consumed eight buildings, including the chapel, the quarters of Captain Jordan, and the chief storehouse of provisions. The danger of starvation was now added to the growing list of misfortunes. On the 4th one of the vessels was dispatched to Mexico with an appeal for succor, and at this time the unfavorable reports of Arriola and Franck were remitted to the viceroy. A few days later an incendiary fire was discovered just in time to prevent another disaster.<sup>22</sup>

Under such adverse conditions was brought into being the new establishment by means of which Spain

<sup>21</sup> Arriola to the king May 9, 1699. A map of the Pensacola region, in colors, is with this. It is reproduced in *Hamilton's Colonial Mobile, p. 44.*

<sup>22</sup> Jaime Franck gives a grimly humorous account of conditions at Pensacola in a letter to the secretary of the Council of the Indies, written February 19, 1699.

hoped to maintain her claim to the whole Gulf coast and lower Mississippi valley.<sup>23</sup> Its efficacy was soon to be tested by the speedy materialization of the danger which the expeditionary forces had been sent to counteract.

WILLIAM EDWARD DUNN.

*(The narrative of Arriola's settlement of Pensacola will be continued in an early issue of the QUARTERLY.)*

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<sup>23</sup> Attention should be called to the old mistake in the date of the founding of Pensacola. It has usually been given as 1696, doubtless through Barcia's *Ensayo Cronologico*, p. 316). Although the correct date may be inferred from the French sources in Margry, vol. 4, most American historians have persisted in perpetuating the old error contained in early Spanish works.