

1932

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Recommended Citation

Siebert, Wilbur H. (1932) "How the Spaniards Evacuated Pensacola in 1763," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 11 : No. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol11/iss2/6>

HOW THE SPANIARDS EVACUATED PENSACOLA IN 1763 ¹

In the spring of 1763, after the treaty had been signed between England and Spain, by which the latter received back Havana in exchange for Florida, Don Julian de Arriaga, the chief minister of the Spanish monarch, wrote to Don Diego Ortiz Parrilla, the governor of San Miguel de Pensacola, that Lieutenant General Count De Ricla had been commissioned to the high command of the whole island of Cuba to receive Havana and deliver up Florida, including Pensacola, to the British commissioners. In effecting these transfers the king's orders and De Ricla's instructions were to be punctually obeyed. ²

Early in July De Ricla sent several communications to Parrilla relating to the evacuation of Pensacola by the Spaniards and its delivery to the British. One of these was a copy of the instructions to be observed in carrying out the program. In articles 19 and 20 of the final treaty it had been agreed that the Catholic king might withdraw his artillery and other effects, and that such of his subjects as wished to change their habitations might sell their property to the incoming British and freely depart within a period of eighteen months from the signing of the instrument. Parrilla was therefore to lose no time in making an inventory of the artillery and in collecting and embarking it. He was also to admit to the ships of his transport service without charge the Spaniards and their families who wished to leave. All costs would be borne by the king. The troops, convicts, and slaves,

¹The documents on which this article is based are all contained in Folder 228, General Archives of the Indies, Seville (Santo Domingo, Louisiana and Florida, 86-7-11).

²De Arriaga to Governor Parrilla, Apr. 19, 1763.

if there were any of the last named, were likewise to depart; but precautions were to be taken to see that none of these three classes of persons deserted. If any did get away, even to the British, they must be recovered. According to the royal orders, both passengers and freight were to be conveyed to Vera Cruz, except in case of adverse winds or some accident rendering that plan impossible, when they would be carried to Havana. The evacuation was to be executed as quickly as possible and with quietness, good faith, and harmony.³

Parrilla was informed that the restitution of Havana had already taken place, and that as soon as the king's order should be presented to him by the person designated by the British commander, William (i. e., Augustus) Keppel, the delivery of the presidio to that commissioner and the evacuation were to be accomplished. Parrilla was further notified that De Ricla was sending in advance Don Joseph Bernet and Don Lazaro Alberja to assist him in the tasks at hand. As an artillery officer, the latter was to make an inventory of the ordnance and its equipment and promote their embarkation. The former was to give his attention to such other services as he might render, but without interfering or assuming authority that belonged to the governor. In case the British commissioner caused trouble, Parrilla was to adjust it with him if possible; otherwise he was to enter a formal protest in writing and leave the settlement of the complaint to the Spanish court. If it should be impossible to remove all the inhabitants and effects in the first embarkation a reliable person was to be left in charge of whatever remained for transportation by the second one. The natives were to be persuaded tactfully to withdraw to Vera Cruz, thus avoiding the contin-

³De Ricla to Parrilla, Jul. 6, 1763 (two letters and a set of instructions).

gencies of a new dominion and an antagonistic religion, while receiving compensation from the king for their losses in Pensacola.⁴

Three frigates and a sloop under the command of Don Miguel de Cabrera, a lieutenant of the navy, set sail on the voyage from Havana to the presidio to bring Bernet and Alberja with their instructions as assistants in the evacuation, De Cabrera being entrusted with the sum of fifteen hundred pesos for Governor Parrilla, who was to apply it in paying the extraordinary expenses of the service and employ the vessels as transports. De Cabrera was again to be in charge of navigation.

On August 5 the British commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel Augustin Prevost, arrived at Pensacola with three hundred and fifty men of his regiment, the 60th or Royal American. He had been in the siege of Havana, whence the English and American troops sailed on July 10. His four transports promptly separated themselves from the rest of the fleet and headed for Pensacola under convoy of the frigate Richmond, the voyage occupying nearly four weeks. He brought with him three thousand livres for the support of his battalion and for unforeseen expenses. He had been informed that there were less than three hundred people in the presidio to which he was going, but overstated the actual number by more than four hundred when he wrote that the population was twelve hundred. Perhaps he counted in his own force, which would have made it somewhat more than eleven hundred. He noted that the fort was in very bad condition, and also that its armament consisted of forty-four pieces of artillery of different calibres.

Ten days after the British ships had entered the bay the Spanish vessels arrived, but it was soon discovered that they would not nearly accommodate all the

⁴De Riela to Parrilla, Jul. 15, 1763.

emigrants, their portable possessions, and the royal ordnance and stores. This problem was ultimately solved, as we shall see later, by employing four English vessels that happened to be in port. The possibility of a shortage of shipping had been anticipated by De Ricla, who had ordered Parrilla to provide himself with any additional transports he might require, whether under the Spanish or a foreign flag.⁵

Meanwhile, the Indians from the northward, including parties of Tallapoosas, Apiskas, Creeks, and Chickasaws, visited Pensacola, received some small presents from Colonel Prevost, and were assured by him of the protection of the British king. These visits seem to have impressed the commissioner with the menace of having woods so close to the fort, and he decided to have them cleared up at once. He had brought with him some sutlers, cannon, powder, and other equipment, besides a supply of provisions; but he needed more artillery. Hence he borrowed six cannon from a merchant and hoped to obtain others from the frigate *Richmond* and from a Captain Douglas, who had promised him some. Two leagues south of Pensacola was another fort, at one end of Rose Island, which was a long sandbank. This outpost served to show the entrance to the port and signaled vessels at sea. The island had been used as a place of banishment for Spanish convicts.

Apart from wondering how long he and his battalion would be kept at Pensacola, Colonel Prevost had a few matters to worry him. Although he had an ample store of provisions, he was dissatisfied with the bread, which he described as "only another Thing consisting of a mass of Dust filled with Insects." While he was on board of the frigate and another officer was in command on shore, the latter was insulted by a drunken lieutenant, who was doing guard duty.

⁵De Ricla to De Arriaga, Sept. 24, 1763.

When Prevost returned he found that the lieutenant had been placed under arrest, and, though he exerted himself to reconcile the two, he failed and therefore reported the case to General Amherst. A more disturbing situation confronted him in the fact that the term of service of half his men had expired, and that they had been promised their discharge by the commander in chief and by General Keppel. However, under the existing circumstances their colonel did not see how he could fulfill those promises.

Many of the inhabitants of Mobile had come over to see Prevost and had manifested marked impatience because a British force had not taken possession of that place, from which Pensacola procured its fresh provisions.⁶

There was within the limits of the presidio of Pensacola the pueblo or village of Punta Rasa, which was occupied by a little colony of Christian Indians. These red men had been dispossessed of a former pueblo in 1761 by a superior force of Tallapoosas and had been allowed to settle close to the Spaniards and under their protection. They were now in consternation at the prospect of being deserted by their white friends. Hence they petitioned to Governor Parrilla to be permitted to accompany the other inhabitants to Vera Cruz. They claimed that on various occasions they had maintained a firm defense of the Catholic religion against the infidel Tallapoosas, and that if taken along they would keep their faith and gladly sacrifice their lives under the protection of the Spanish king. However, should they be obliged to remain behind they would suffer extreme persecution at the hands of the infidels. To this petition was appended a list of nineteen families and twenty-one individuals, totaling thirty-eight men and seventy women and chil-

⁶Prevost to Amherst, Aug. 31 and Sept. 3, 1763.

dren. The governor took pity on their distress and granted their request.⁷

On first arriving at Pensacola, Prevost had presented to its governor a letter from De Ricla along with the royal order of April 19 received from the same official, at Havana, authorizing the transfer of Pensacola, its bay, and dependencies. Without more explicit directions, Governor Parrilla realized that promptness of action in making preparations for the evacuation was expected of him and set to work at once. He was soon fully enlightened, however, by the instructions brought by Bernet and Alberja and by several informative letters from De Ricla. It was made plain that the two officers from Havana had been sent to expedite arrangements, Bernet being authorized to make suggestions of whatever in his opinion would be conducive to that end. He was also to exert his influence in inducing the inhabitants to remove from 'the danger of British rule, which might not harm the religion of the parents but would furnish an example that might lead their unwitting children astray. In case some of the people could not be taken in the first embarkation the older ones were to be left, so that they might sell their property. Further, Bernet was to do what he could to hasten the departure of the troops, prevent desertion, and aid in navigation. Alberja was to attend to the shipment of the artillery and its accessories and be responsible that nothing of any kind in the presidio or its storehouses should be lost. When they had performed their duties, the two assistants were to return directly to Havana.⁸

One of Bernet's tasks was to make an enumeration of the troops and other people for transportation to

⁷Petition of the Catholic Indians to Parrilla, no date.

⁸De Ricla's Instructions to Bernet and Alberja, Jul. 6, 1763.

appraisal prices ranged all the way from sixty pesos up to fifteen hundred, the average being three hundred and forty-five. However, more than half of the properties ranged considerably below the average.⁹

On September 2, the day before the little fleet of eight vessels sailed away, Parrilla wrote to De Ricla that the sale of the houses within the stockade had not been effected, and that the only reason why the British officers had occupied them was because they were without other decent accommodations. He requested his correspondent to take the necessary steps to afford relief to the owners of those buildings. But Colonel Prevost was acting under the representation that the houses within the precinct were the property of the Spanish monarch and were therefore to be surrendered without purchase as a part of the fort. As the domiciles outside were not subject to this objection, they and other possessions of their owners had been sold without difficulty to the officers and soldiers of the British camp.¹⁰

Parrilla also explained to De Ricla why he had not been able to secure an earlier sailing of his vessels, despite his industry, efficiency, and experience of the country. He was retarded by a number of difficulties. There was the lack of bread and the poor provision for making it in a short time. Then there was the scarcity of vessels for water and the insufficient number of transports for all the passengers at a time when a long voyage was in prospect and at a season when calms and contrary winds were to be expected on those coasts. Although the British officers had considerably furnished some water vessels and provisions, it had required time to prepare the many more needed. The extra transports for the emigrants and moveables had been obtained by chartering several vessels and

⁹Parrilla's orders for appraisals, and the report of the appraisers, Aug. 17, 18, 19, 1763.

¹⁰Parrilla to De Ricla, Sept. 2, 1763 (two letters).

buying a frigate, which were paid for with the surplus flour, unfit for export, in the royal storehouses. Another cause of delay had been the superabundant supply of provisions, which had come on June 30 in the last shipment from Vera Cruz by order of the viceroy of Mexico, and had been intended for the relief of the garrison of Pensacola and that of Apalachee. Including all the items of provisions, ordnance, ammunition, small arms, etc., which belonged to the crown, there were more than three thousand pieces of average size and weight. There were also the seven hundred and seventy-two passengers themselves with their accumulation of military and civilian baggage. All of these were beyond the capacity of the three frigates and the sloop brought by Naval Lieutenant De Cabrera, in company with Messrs. Bernet and Albarja. The sloop had already sailed for Havana with the two latter, the convicts, and some families who were not going to Vera Cruz. Another sloop had set out for the other destination, but on what mission is not stated. Bernet was carrying with him plans of the coast, bay, and its entrance. All the other people were to be taken to Vera Cruz. The three chartered vessels were being employed for the conveyance of provisions. In his letter to De Ricla detailing all these arrangements and explanations, Parrilla enclosed a plan of the presidio of Pensacola showing its situation and its few buildings, nearly all of which had been built without architect or conveniences of construction during the two years of his command.¹¹

The only Spaniard who remained at Pensacola after its evacuation was Don Carlos Ricardos, who was detained as the custodian of the cargo of a sloop that had grounded on the coast. The goods it had carried had been collected and entrusted to him by Don Juan

¹¹Parrilla Parrilla to De Ricla, Sept. 2, 1763 (third letter) ; list of war equipment, provisions, etc., no date.

Joseph Hamedi, an inhabitant of the place, who was to send for them.

On September 24 De Arriaga wrote to De Ríca that he had communicated to the king the arrangements the latter had made in advance for the transfer of Pensacola and Florida to the English commissioners and the prompt organization and dispatch of the embarkations, all of which merited the particular approbation of his majesty.

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