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THE FIRST AMERICAN ROAD IN
FLORIDA
PAPERS RELATING TO THE SURVEY AND CON-
STRUCTION OF THE PENSACOLA-ST.
AUGUSTINE HIGHWAY
PART I.

INTRODUCTION

By MARK F. BOYD

In these days of paved highways and of swift private transportation, accounts of early efforts to improve communications have a great interest. After American occupation of the territory of Florida, the inaccessibility of the only centers of population to each other soon attracted interest. This resulted in the projection and construction of the old Pensacola-St. Augustine highway, today an abandoned and almost forgotten route across the state, but interesting as the first instance of American road construction in Florida, as well as the fact that the eastern half would appear to follow one of the early Spanish routes from St. Augustine to Apalache.

The story is presented in the reports submitted by Capt. Daniel E. Burch, Quartermasters Corps, U. S. A. to his superior, Brig. Gen. Thomas S. Jesup, Quartermaster of the U. S. Army. Burch played an important part in offering suggestions for a route, actually made the survey, personally directed the construction of the western half, and was intimately associated with the construction of the eastern. The narrations of Capt. Burch are to some extent supplemented by letters from other persons in Florida. The originals of all are preserved in the archives of the Quartermaster General at Fort Myers, Virginia.

The construction of this road was authorized by an act of the 1st session of the 18th Congress, approved 28th of February, 1824. It is essentially as follows :

Acts of the 1st Sess. 18th. Con. U. S. Chap. 22. An Act to authorize the laying out and opening certain Public Roads in the territory of Florida.

(Sect. 1) Be it.....that the President of the United States be and he is hereby authorized to cause to be opened, in the territory of Florida, a public Road from Pensacola to St. Augustine, commencing at Deer Point, on the Bay of Pensacola, and pursuing the old Indian Trail to the Cow Ford on the Choctawhatchy river; thence direct to the Natural Bridge on the Econfinan river; thence to the Ochese Bluff on the Apalachicola river; thence in the most direct practicable route, to the site of Fort St. Lewis; thence, as nearly as practicable, on the old Spanish road to St. Augustine, crossing the St. John's river at Picolata; which road shall be plainly and distinctly marked and shall be of the width of twenty-five feet.

(Sect. 2) And be it further enacted-That the President be and he is hereby authorized. to employ the troops of the United States, stationed in Florida, in such manner as he may think proper, in the completion or assisting in the completion of said r o a d

(Sect. 3) (Appropriates \$20,000.)

(Sect. 4) (The President authorized to cause to be surveyed and marked out, the direct and practicable, route for a public road from Cape Sable passing by Charlotte Harbor and the bay of Tampa, to the point: where the Suwanney river will be intersected by the road to be opened from Pensacola to St. Augustine, and to cause to be surveyed and marked out the route for a public road from Cape Florida to St. Augustine.)

(Sect. 5) (Appropriates \$3,000.)

Of recent years much is heard of a Caminho Real by which overland communication was supposedly maintained during Spanish days between the outpost at St. Augustine and the vice-regal authority at Mexico City, as well as with the intermediate points of Apalache, Pensacola, Mobile, New Orleans, Nacogdoches and San Antonio. The existence of such a highway is claimed by Myers (I), and the idea is frequently reiterated by writers of the romantic literature prepared for the edification of tourists. From these statements it might reasonably be assumed that if such a road ever actually

existed, it was a widely known route over which traffic passed with frequency if not regularity, the passage of which was facilitated by the removal of some at least of the natural obstacles to travel. The writer is not aware of the existence of any authentic documentary evidence that such a path of land communication between Florida and Mexico occurred subsequent to the extraordinary journey of Cabeza da Vaca. However, the existence of well defined routes from Mexico to various points in Texas cannot be contested, which were later extended to New Orleans after the cession of Louisiana to Spain, and likewise the existence of one or more routes from St. Augustine across the Florida peninsula to the fertile region of Apalache is incontrovertible.

The necessity for, and the advantage arising from, the opening of a road between St. Augustine and Apalache were apparent to the Spanish authorities as early as 1686, in which year the Governor of Florida, Don Juan Cabrerias pointed out the desirability of such construction to the king. A later governor, Don Antonio de Benavides, in a letter (11) written to the king, refers to the road as follows:

“The nine settlements of Timuquan Indians located on the Royal Road which goes from “la florida” to the limits of the before mentioned province (Apalache) are distant one from the other 28, 8, 2, 6, 1 and 5 leagues. They are la Florida, Santa Fe, San Franco, Santa Catalina, Ajuica, San Juan del Rio, San Pedro, Machaba and Asile.” St. Augustine is probably referred to by the appellation “la Florida”.

Apart from the lack of data substantiating the existence of a Caminho Real, except as above described, the circumstantial facts oppose the idea. Spanish authorities exhibited but little interest in

the northern Gulf coast before the French arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi. They subsequently established Pensacola as an outpost to limit this expansion, as well as to serve as a center from which the influence of the French and English traders among the Creek Indians could be combatted. But the presence of the French on the Mississippi and Alabama rivers interposed a barrier to land communication between Florida and Mexico. Administratively, Florida officials would have little occasion for such communications, as their prescribed channel lay through the Captaincy-General of Cuba. Transportation of articles of commerce, agricultural products, military supplies and men to points between St. Augustine and Pensacola would be most economical and efficient by water. Obstacles to convenient transportation by sea were the threats of piratical attacks from the Caribbean buccaneers, as well as the hazards of navigation encountered in the difficult Florida channel. These circumstances probably actually lead to the construction of the road across the Florida peninsula.

These animadversions, however, do not deny the existence of a network of aboriginal paths connecting village sites in the Creek and Choctaw country which were later linked with paths radiating from the trading posts at Charleston, St. Augustine, St. Marks, Pensacola and Mobile. Such routes were passable to men on foot or horseback. It does not appear that there was much if *any* regular communication by land between St. Marks and Pensacola. Romans (9) in his large map of the Creek and Choctaw country does not show any trails eastward from Pensacola in 1775. The routes described by Pittman (2) between these points appear to be regarded as inferior to the sea route. Indeed, J. L.

Williams going from Pensacola to keep his appointment with Dr. Simmons at St. Marks, went by sea rather -than by land.

While such pathways served many of the functions of roads, yet being chiefly of local significance, serving a small and irregular foot traffic and without improvement, we do not believe they are entitled to the appellation of roads. Furthermore, the absence of a well defined land route between St. Marks and Pensacola makes a belief in the existence of a Caminho Real between St. Augustine and Mexico difficult for all except the credulous.

The frequency of communication and the necessities of transportation between St. Augustine and Apalache in the latter part of the XVIIth and early part of the XVIIIth centuries, lead to the development of several routes, at least one of which appears to have been considerably improved, probably sufficient for the passage of ox carts (10).

From St. Augustine these routes appear to have had a common course to the Alachua region. The southern-most trail as described by Pittman (2) appears to have passed westward through Suwannee Old Town, from thence going northwestwardly a short distance inland from the gulf coast to St. Marks. This trail was observed and described by Bartram (3). The exact course of the other route is preserved to us in the course of the Tallahassee-St. Augustine road hereafter described. The act of Congress authorizing the construction and appropriating funds for that purpose, directed that it should be laid out on the old Spanish road from Fort San Luis to St. Augustine.

It appears that in the second decade of the XIXth century, impressive traces of this road were still

visible. Thus Young (5) speaking of the Apalache settlements and of his observations in 1818 says:

“The highway connecting these different settlements is yet to be seen in many places where the Indian routes through the country cross or run along with it. The upper Sahwannee path is parallel with the great road for a considerable distance, and one of its paths is crossed by the path from St. Marks to Assilla. The deep indentation will preserve the road visible for centuries. At the crossing place of Assilla creek, the remains of a bridge and extensive causeway of cabbage tree logs evidences the industry of the Spaniards.”

Similar traces were observed five years later by Williams in his excursion with Dr. Simmons to select the seat of government. In his *View of West Florida* he states:

“Great roads were the first objects which caught the attention of the traveller while the country was yet uninhabited Three years ago (1823) they might be easily traced on both sides of the Ochlochny river, for fifty miles, nearly in a straight line, east and west. The prominent ridges, which they crossed, were dug down, and causeways were constructed over the swamps. The principal highway, running through the site which is now the seat of government, was often crossed at right angles, by other roads; near Tallahassee these were very frequent. At a little distance southeast of the town, however, the minor roads crossed at very acute angles. It is remarkable, that although the Indian paths often cross this great road, they never follow it, but wind away from it, with almost a religious caution.”

In his *Journal* (7), submitted to the Legislative Council, he writes in practically the same language.

It is evident therefore that Capt. Burch, whose survey was made shortly after Williams's visit, in compliance with the Congressional instructions to locate the road along this route, would not encounter great difficulty. He himself, after brought to it by his guide, speaks of the clarity with which it can be traced.

Unfortunately, Capt. Burch did not submit a plat of his survey. As might be expected it is not shown in Vignoles's map (1823). It is represented on Williams's maps of 1827 and 1837 in a schematic, distorted fashion. It is perhaps best represented in Searcy's map (1829), in the compilation of which the available land survey data were presumably utilized. We had hoped to accurately check its course from the township plat books of the land survey, but inspection of these shows that it is not represented in the plats of many townships it actually crossed, so that checking of the entire course is impossible. In the preparation of the accompanying diagrams we have largely followed Searcy, corrected from the meager information given by the plat books and other sources. The representation of the portion between the Cow Ford on the Choctawhatchie river and the Ochese Bluff is perhaps the least accurate.

The Cow Ford on the Choctawhatchie river is approximately where state highway No. 10 crosses the river. The Natural Bridge over the Econfina river of Bay county has long since disappeared, and recollection of its location appears to no longer linger in the memories of the inhabitants of the vicinity. Indeed, Williams (6) states "The Econfina river passes under a similar natural bridge, but it is narrow. The United States road from Pensacola' to St. Augustine crosses this bridge; but an addition

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- 6) Williams, J. L. A View of West Florida, Phila. 1827, p. 32
- 7) Williams, J. L., Journal, Fla. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, July 1908, p. 19
- 8) Woodward, A. L. (Quoting J. K. McLane, pioneer of Gadsden Co.) Fla. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, Apr. 1908, p. 17
- 9) Romans map of 1775 (Photo in Library of Congress of original in Colonial office. London, No. 52).
- 10) Wood, Abraham. The Journeys of Needham and Arthur. p. 219. Alvord, C. W. and Bidgood, L., The First Explorations of the Trans-Alleghany Region. Cleveland, 1912.
- 11) Benavides, Don Antonio de. to the King, San Marcos de Apalache, Feb. 8, 1732. Buckingham Smith MMS, Robertson No. 1945.
- 12) Searcy, I. G., Map of Florida, Baltimore, 1829.
- 13) U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service. Map of Choctawhatchee National Forest, 1929.

REPORTS OF CAPTAIN BURCH TO GENERAL JESTJP WITH ENCLOSURES

To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, Jan'y 30, 1823

I enclose herewith copies of a letter from Colonel Walton, two extracts from letters of the secretary, and the estimate furnished the Colonel. I think the estimate sufficiently large to cover the expenses of opening the road. It will be chiefly through pine-barrens or oak lands in which there is scarcely any undergrowth. Forage can be procured on the Apalachicola at a low rate also in the vicinity of Fort Crawford, and the commissary can procure beeves at both places much lower than here. The greatest difficulty will be in supplying the troops from the Mickasukee Towns until the Suwannee is crossed.

(Enclosed with the above)

Geo. Walton, Sec. & Acting Gov. of Florida to Capt. Burch.

Pensacola, Jan'y 30, 1823

Governor Duvall in a letter addressed to the secretary of war on the 18th July last suggested the propriety of employing the United States Troops in

of timber is now added", an indication that in 1827 it must have been disintegrating. It would appear that it was situated somewhere near the Bay-Washington county line, as above this point, the geological exposures along the river are of a character that renders such a formation an unlikely occurrence.

It would not appear that the western section ever was travelled as extensively as the eastern, which remained a prominent highway until traffic commenced to go via Jacksonville and through the northern tier of counties, some time in the fifties. Excepting the stretch of the western division immediately to the east of Deer Point, which has been improved into a link in a modern highway (Nos. 53 and 10), it is probable that most of this section has been abandoned. Of the eastern section, many stretches are still in use, either as local roads or in part as modern highways. It is observable in portions of Gadsden county, throughout Leon county, at Tallahassee being incorporated in route No. 19 through Jefferson county to Lamont, and continues as a local road in Madison county. It forms a portion of the line dividing Clay and Putnam counties. Locally it is still known as the Spanish trail, although more generally referred to as the Bellamy trail, and is sometimes erroneously attributed to General Jackson as an accomplishment of the Seminole campaign. (8,13)

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- 1) Myer, Wm. E., Indian Trails of the Southeast. 42nd An. Rep. Bur. Am. Ethnology, 192425, p. 828
- 2) Pittman, Lieut. Ph., Apalache during the British Occupation Fla. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, xii (1934) p. 113
- 3) Bartram, Wm., The travels of, (Reprint of "Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida") New York 1928, p. 197
- 4) Simmons, Dr. W. H., Journal Fla. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, Apr. 1908, p. 28
- 5) Young, Capt. Hugh, Topographical Memoir on East and West Florida with itineraries. Fla. Hist. Soc. Quarterly XIII, 16, 82, 129

opening a road between Pensacola and St. Augustine. In reply to this communication Mr. Calhoun in a letter bearing date the 19th August acknowledged the importance of the road and that the military force of Florida might be usefully employed in such a work "but as it would be attended with considerable expense it cannot be done without the authority of Congress". In a subsequent letter of the 28th August addressed to the Governor of Florida the Secretary at War remarks, "Since my answer to you of the 19th inst., in relation to your proposition for opening a road between Pensacola and St. Augustine, I have thought it probable that the expense of merely opening the road would not be great, and if you will transmit to me an estimate of the probable amount of the cost, including the extra pay of soldiers (an estimate which you may obtain from the Quarter Master) I will decide upon the subject, and apprize you of the decision."—

Until your arrival in this place within a few days past no opportunity has been afforded of opening a correspondence with you on this subject, or for obtaining the estimate referred to in the letter of the Secretary at War. Not being minutely advised myself in relation to the topography of the country through which it is contemplated to open the road, and having learned that you are acquainted with a considerable portion of it from personal observation you will confer a favor by communicating to me at an early period as practicable all the information you possess in relation to this important undertaking. I should be glad to procure from you also such an estimate as is mentioned in the letter of the Secretary at War, together with a particular des-

cription of the country through which the best and most practicable route can be obtained.

Estimate. (Enclosed with the above)

Estimate of the probable expense of opening a road from Pensacola to St. Augustine by the labour of the troops.-

For their extra 15 cents per day	\$ 6,930.00
For their Do gill of whiskey	924.00
For the expense of the necessary teams to accompany the troops	4,000.00
For the transportation of provisions and other supplies to different points of deposit on the route	7,000.00
Amount	\$ 18,854.00

From Pensacola via Fort Crawford to the Choctawhatchee there is a waggon road, a distance of 172 miles, requiring only the repair of the causeways and two or three small bridges, from thence the road should be opened direct to the Ochesee Bluffs on the Appalachicola, thence until it intersects the old Spanish road (now grown up) near the Mickasukee towns, leaving St. Marks about 20 miles to the south, and continuing on it to St. Augustine, crossing the St. Johns at Fort Picolata, from whence there is a road to St. Augustine. It is about 200 miles from the Choctawhatchee to St. Augustine making the whole route 462 miles, in which distance there would be about 240 miles new road to open, provided this route is approved, and I will here take occasion to remark that it is the nearest practicable route ;-From this place to the Suwannee I have a personal knowledge of it.

In making this estimate I have calculated the road will be opened only wide enough for a waggon to pass with ease and experience proves that such roads, being shady, are most proper for a southern climate.

The provisions for the troops ought to be transported by water and placed in deposit at Fort Crawford, at the crossing of the Yellow Water, Pea River and Choctawhatchee, and Appalachicola, at Fort St. Marks and at the crossings of the Suwannee and the St. Johns.-

Dan'l E. Burch

* * *

To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, June 5, 1823

I have consulted with the commanding officers here, pursuant to your order, respecting the survey for a road to St. Augustine. Both Colonels Fenwick and Brooke decline recommending an officer for that duty. I have myself a personal knowledge of most of the country through which this road must necessarily be made, but more particularly between this and the Appalachicola. There can exist no doubt as to the point where it should cross that river, namely, at the Ochesee Bluff. It is the lowest place (and in fact the only position on the river) where there are high banks on both sides of the river. Two routes to this point present themselves, -first by the way of Fort Crawford and on "Gaines Road" to the Choctawhatchie and thence to Ochesee, -The second, to cross the head of Escambia Bay at "Beeler's Ferry" and thence, crossing the Yellow Water River at the "Scotch Settlement" and the Choctawhatchie at the lower ferry to Ochlesee. Between this and Fort Crawford there are three difficult ferries and some extensive swamps to cross, and after that there is the Conecuh, Yellow Water, Pea River, Clay Bank creek and the Choctawhatchie requiring to be ferried, besides several creeks on the route fordable only in the dry seasons, these last however can be bridged without much difficulty. On

this route it is about 260 miles to Ocheese. In my estimate of the probable expense of opening this road, I recommended this route to Ocheese, merely because it was already opened and had been a wagon road, and I thought it probable the Government would choose to avail itself of any road already cut, tending in the proper direction, although it might be somewhat circuitous, but at the same time I was of the opinion that the nearest route ought to be preferred even if a new road was necessary to be cut, and I am informed by a gentleman, a practical man, who has recently travelled it, that this road will now require as much labor to repair it as to cut a new one by "Beeler's Ferry". The first and only difficulty on this route is Beeler's ferry itself, it is nearly four miles wide, it is however very shallow and, can generally be crossed early in the mornings or late in the evening and. if the weather is calm, at all times, and although so wide it is in some measure protected by marshy Islands. The chief difficulty is, there being no ferry-house at present on this side, but if it was made a public road one would doubtless be established by the proprietors. On the east side is a small town called Florida. Eight miles from this is another ferry over what is called cold water bay, after which is the Yellow Water and the Choctawhatchee Rivers to be ferried. It is believed that on this route there will not be found any creeks, but such as are fordable at all seasons. A ferry could be established above Beeler's, but the swamps there are wide and when the river is high, impassable even if causewayed, and besides the distance would be increased. It is about 150 miles on this route to Ocheese. Both of these routes lie chiefly across pine barren or oak uplands and clear from undergrowth but the ad-

river it is true was marked on the map, but if it had been correct, Gaines road would not cross it at all, whereas I have been ferried over it, on this very road, where it was a broad and rapid stream. A mistake had been made in tracing the headwaters of Pea River for those of the Yellow Water which I have endeavored to correct. On this map I have traced also an old Indian trail via Beeler's ferry to Fort Mitchell, which I consider quite as important for the Government to open for a mail route to this place, as the road to St. Augustine. It passes on a ridge the whole distance and crosses no rivers or difficult creeks and is daily travelled, as it now is, by people on horseback, and sometimes with wagons. It could be improved by the troops at a small expense and I have no doubt that then, a contract would be taken to bring the mail from Fort Mitchell here, at nearly as low a rate as from Fort Claiborne here.—The distance from this to Fort Mitchell would be about 140 miles—now it is 100 miles to Fort Claiborne and from thence to Fort Mitchell 200 miles more—this is the present mail route. I enclose a small map, laid down from actual survey, on which I have traced thus . . . the trail followed by Gen. Jackson's army as far as the map extends and thus = the probable course of the road east of the Appalachicola. My information of the country east of this river is not so perfect as west of it, but having been with Gen. Jackson's army throughout the Seminole war, I acquired a general knowledge of it as far as the Suwannee. I am of the opinion that the road after leaving Ocheese should be run in a south-easterly direction until it intersects the old Spanish road leading from St. Marks to St. Augustine, which it would do about eighteen miles north of Fort St. Marks at the site of the old fort,

vantages of distance and of ground are so decidedly in favor of the route by Beeler's Ferry, I think it ought to be preferred and adopted. St. Augustine is in a latitude south of this place, hence it is evident that, if the local character of the country will permit, no nothing should be made in the route, this alone is a sufficiently strong argument in favor of running it by Beeler's ferry. I have understood that it is the opinion of Governor Duval, the road should pass by Fort Gaines, but I think a slight inspection of the map will convince you to the contrary. For public convenience and for general purposes a road between this and St. Augustine ought to be in the shortest line possible.—I enclose you a map of Alabama comprehending west Florida. On it I have traced thus = the road from Fort Crawford via Fort Gaines to Fort Scott and thus . . . the route by Beeler's ferry, and in the same manner where it would turn off from Gaines road to Ochee-see, if that route should be preferred.—This map is very incorrect as it regards the water-courses, drawn only I presume from the fancy of the map maker. I have crossed with red ink such streams as do not exist and have sketched some that were wholly omitted, for instance the Choppoola. There is on the map a river called "St. Andrews or Chatuhuchy." No such river exists except to the extent where I have crossed it. It is a fact that from the ferry on the Choctawhatchie to the "natural bridge" on the Choppoola, the country is so dry as scarcely to afford a drink of water, and it would seem by the map that there is on the route a large stream of water to cross. In like manner the yellow water is made to head a great distance up the country, where the cross I have made on it, is its utmost limit. I have also sketched the Pea River. This

heading both the Wockhulla and St. Mark's rivers, and thence on the best ground to the same point on the Suwannee where the road crossed it, and thence to Fort Picolata on the St. John's river. Gen Jackson's army marched from Fort Scott to Fort Gadsden (70 miles) thence to Mickasukee (80 miles) thence to St. Marks (30 miles) and thence to Suwannee on what is called the lower trail (being the one nearest the sea-coast) 110 miles. The route to Suwannee from St. Marks on this trail is low, with ponds but the army was accompanied with a 6 pounder and an ammunition cart and which did not delay our march materially, although these ponds were frequently for 5 or 600 yds. wide near waist deep, they were not however, miry or boggy. We met with no streams for the 110 miles but what were fordable although it was then the wet season of the year. I was informed at the time by the Indians and by Hamby that the upper trail was not more than 10 or 15 miles north of us and parallel to the one we were marching on, also that it was on a more elevated country. The whole of this route is pine barren. To go direct from Ochee-see to the Suwannee, the distance would be about 180 miles. It will be necessary to cut a road from St. Marks to intersect the road to St. Augustine.—

The expense of opening this road will greatly depend upon the selection of the officers to command the parties to work on it, also upon the manner in which it is cut. In opening a road of this kind, it is altogether unnecessary to dig or cut off the stumps level with the ground, unless occasionally when one happens to stand directly in the route, nor is it necessary to cut it through the open woods wider than for one wagon to pass with ease, through swamps the causeways would of course be made wide

enough to allow wagons to pass each other if they chanced to meet on it. Pine timber is continually falling hence if a road was entirely cleared of stumps it would not long be of use for the fallen trees would frequently force the traveller to turn out of the original path. It will be very easy and cheap to furnish supplies to the troops at work on this road, on account of its crossing so many navigable rivers. Provisions can be sent up the Yellow Water Choctawhatchie and Appalachicola rivers, and to St. Marks at a small expense. From Mickasukee to the St. John's river will be the greatest difficulty in furnishing the provisions. It would be best on this part of the route to depend chiefly on driving cattle for the meat part of the ration. The Suwannee is shoal at its mouth, but small vessels drawing four feet water can enter it and it would be practicable to deposit provisions on this river for the troops. It is a fine stream for barge navigation, being broad and deep and not rapid. The most proper time to commence the survey will be about the first of October, and although not much of a mathematician, yet as I am a tolerable theoretical as well as practical surveyor, I believe I could venture to engage to mark out the road as far as Ocheeese, in a very short time. If I should receive your orders to do so, provided, however that my health and strength be fully re-established, which will certainly be the case by October next or never. I am daily gaining strength and the dropsical symptoms which have so long afflicted me are fast disappearing.

* * *

To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, October 3rd, 1823

I had the honor to receive this day your letters of the 21st August and 9th of September last, also

special order No. 75 of the latter date issued from general headquarters.

I shall make immediate arrangements for surveying the roads as ordered. The only instrument that I shall require is a surveyor's compass and even that will be used but seldom, to run a straight road through any part of this country is wholly impracticable, but I shall never deviate from the general direction prescribed, any great distance, and then only to avoid swamps or obtain good ferriages across rivers. I have ascertained already, anticipating that I should be ordered on this service, that I can obtain Indian guides on the Appalachicola river perfectly acquainted with the routes and country. The point you have directed at which the road to St. Augustine should commence had not escaped my observation and I know of no difficulty after ferrying the Bay, until the road reaches the Choctawhatchie. There is an old Indian trail on this route intersecting the one I marked on the map at or near the Choctawhatchie, being the same point where you supposed the two routes would intersect. The ferriage over the Bay is the only obstacle, and I am persuaded that no pains will be spared by the people of the town, and settlers opposite to make the ferry as safe as practicable, but the bay is four miles wide and the wind blowing strong from any quarter raises a considerable sea. This route will shorten the distance to the Choctawhatchie upwards of 20 miles. There is one thing however to be observed that there are at present no settlers along this route west of the Choctawhatchie, and also that it will not confer as many local advantages as that by Beeler's ferry, although it will answer better the general and

chief object of connecting St. Augustine and Pensacola by a road, in as short a distance as practicable.

* * *

To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, October 21, 1823

I have the honor to report that I shall commence my march to St. Augustine on or before the 23rd inst.* I shall probably be about until the middle of January and in the mean time shall not be able to furnish monthly summary statements as heretofore. So soon as I return I shall render my accounts for the 4th quarter in this year.-

* * *

To Jesup from Burch

Ockalockony River, November 7, 1823

I have the honor to report myself thus far on my march to St. Augustine. I have been much embarrassed on the subject of guides. The one who accompanied me from Pensacola proved to be totally ignorant of the country east of the Choctawhatchie, and I was in fact his guide to the Ocheesee at which place I dismissed him. The Indians east of the Appalachicola are stated to be unfavorable to any road passing through their country and not well satisfied with the treaty lately concluded.--On consequence of which I could not get any of the Indians on the Appalachicola to be my guides or even to go as an interpreter there 'was but one at the Choconukla Town who could have interpreted and when I sent for him, fearing he might be forced to go off with me he went off from the town. I had fully

*Pensacola *Floridian*, Oct. 25, 1823: "Capt. Burch of the Q. Master's Dept. accompanied by Lieuts. Allen and Triplett and about 20 privates of the 4th Reg. of U. S. Inf. set out on Tuesday last Oct. 21 to explore and survey the route of the contemplated road from this city to St. Augustine."

calculated on Blount, the Indian chief, who is better acquainted with the country than any other in Florida, but he declined going, stating that he feared if he did that the Indians would kill him, he also believes they will attempt to stop my party. I have prevailed upon Mr. Richards, the interpreter for the nation, to go with me however and he takes with him two Indians well acquainted with the routes and besides he has himself travelled it recently, on the trail which the Indians say is the best. The Tallahassee town is directly in my route, I shall reach there tomorrow and shall state to E-ne-he-e-mat-la, the chief of the Seminoles, my object in marching through the country and require from him guides and information touching the routes, and then, whether he furnishes them or not, shall continue my route. From Pensacola to this place, I have obtained all the information necessary to enable me to blaze out the road on the nearest practicable route. From Pensacola to the Choctawhatchie, the country is very broken and intersected with a great number of small branches and swimming creeks, which caused great delay and difficulty to me, but a good road can be made along it. Between the Choctawhatchie and this place the country is very favorable for a road. From Pensacola it is about 180 miles to this river and I judge about 200 more from here to St. Augustine.

* * *

To Jesup from Burch

St. Augustine, Dec. 1, 1823

I have the honor to report my arrival at St. Augustine on the 25th ultimo, having marched 445 miles since the 22 October last.

I experienced no difficulty on the march from the Indians, on the contrary they proved to be very

friendly, and more particularly so at the Mickasukee towns where I was informed they would be most unfriendly. The route I have chosen for the road, commences at Deer Point and follows the old trail to the Cow ford of Choctawhatchie, thence direct to Ocheesee Bluffs on the Appalachicola river, crossing the Iconfinan at a Natural Bridge on that creek and the Chippoola about fifteen miles south of the natural bridge of that river,-from Ocheesee on the most direct practicable route to the site of Fort San Luis, and thence as nearly as possible on the old Spanish road to St. Augustine crossing the St. John's at Picolata. I spent two days in the vicinity of San Luis endeavoring to trace out this road, but found it impossible and I could not procure a guide at any of the neighboring towns to pilot me along it, the Indians pretending to be ignorant of it, thought they stated it had been used in former years but was then grown up. The Mickasukee chief however furnished me with a guide, when I arrived at his town, who was perfectly acquainted with it. The Indians it appeared had kept up a trail on this road until within a few years, otherwise it would have been impracticable to follow it, as but few traces of it remain, and then only in the vicinity of the old Spanish stations or posts, a number of which are yet plainly to be found. That part of Florida between the Ockolockony and Suwannee Rivers, appears to have once sustained a dense population, as the forest is entirely of second growth wherever the lands were susceptible to cultivation. There are also appearances of the lands having been cultivated in several places east of the Suwannee.

The proposed road will pass wholly through Pine Barrens excepting for short distances between the Appalachicola and Suwannee where it occasionally

crosses oak uplands. The good lands are chiefly north of the road. The richest lands known in Florida are I believe on the Chippoola River, being about twelve miles east to west on both sides of the river and thirty-five miles from north to south. - There is also a district extending from east to west along the Georgia line between the Suwannee and Appalachicola, being about twenty miles wide and one hundred in length, of first rate oak and hickory lands. - These tracts are the only extensive bodies of fertile lands between this city and the Perdido and north to the territorial line.-

The route designated for the road is much better than I had reason to suppose from the information I had formerly received. From Deer Point to the Choctawhatchie it will require considerable labor to make a good road, but it can be effected, by bridges over the numerous creeks with which it is intersected and ditching and throwing up the road through the low pine glades and cypress ponds. From the Choctawhatchie to a point 56 miles east of the Suwannee the land is chiefly high pine barren and very favorable for making a road, in this part of the route there is not more than. twelve miles of the low wet glades, besides the swamps of the Toologia and Ausillee rivers which will require long causeways to each, from that point to St. Augustine the country is lower and more level and the glades nearly equal in proportion the high lands.-It will be necessary to erect a bridge over St. Sebastian's river one and a half miles from this city. It is fordable at low water only, and when the tide is full extends for a considerable distance over the mudflats on each side of the main channel.-

The road does not pass through any of the Indian towns or settlements, and as all those that are now

settled east of the Appalachicola are shortly to be concentrated in a district of country, pursuant to the late treaty, the northern boundary of which will be more than eighty miles south of the road there will be none in its vicinity even, excepting those few who are allowed reserves on the Appalachicola river and at the Topulgee village.-

I do not deem it to be either necessary or expedient to establish any posts on this route as the Indians are very friendly disposed, and if they were not, their number is inconsiderable and the troops employed on the road will afford ample protection to both settlers and travellers, and also by that time the road is completed the Indians will have been removed. I however, consider it to be indispensably necessary to the present security of the frontier that Fort St. Mark be occupied until the Indians are removed or the troops actually engaged on that section of the road north or north-east of it, and also that two companies be located at Tampa Bay, so soon as the Indians occupy the district of country allotted to them.-

The road or rather trail could be travelled very well at present by persons on horseback provided there were ferries over the large rivers. This difficulty I have endeavored to obviate as far as practicable by encouraging those persons settled near them to establish regular ferries at the different crossing places and promising that I will solicit for them the right of continuing their ferries when the road is opened so long as the lands are public, on condition, however that they should keep up good ferries and charge reasonable rates. - I hope that the promises I have made them may not be disapproved, for I thought it would not only meet the views of the Department to have ferries established

on the road by private individuals, but be an immediate accommodation to travellers, and I have no doubt but that most, if not all of those who have spoken to me on the subject will build flats and put them in forthwith, trusting that they will not be disappointed.-

I enclose as estimate of the probable expense of opening the road, founded upon the supposition that it be cleared thirty feet wide, that proper and strong bridges be constructed over all the small creeks and streams, that it be ditched and thrown up through the low glades and ponds and that permanent causeways be laid down through all boggy swamps or other grounds requiring to be causewayed, and in fine, so well finished that loaded wagons or pleasure carriages may pass it at all seasons of the year. Though I have estimated for so large a sum, still a tolerably good road (far better than the main road leading from Georgia to Alabama) can be opened on this route for the amount of the estimate I made last January, a copy of which was forwarded to your office. -

The distance from Pensacola to St. Augustine by this road is 367 miles, 30 miles less than myself or any other person had supposed it possible to get a road. By calculation I found it to be $362\frac{1}{2}$ miles in a strait line, provided the latitudes and longitudes were correctly laid down, which however is evident, could not have been the case.-

I was unable to cross my pack-horses over the St. John's river and left them and the detachment opposite to Picolata. So soon as I can get my supplies of provisions and corn to that place I shall return to Pensacola. There is no road from this to Picolata, as I had always been informed, hence the delay and difficulty in getting my supplies out. I shall prob-

ably march on the 5th inst. As soon as practicable after my return to Pensacola, I shall transmit to your office a protracted map of my route here, also of the road.-

(Enclosed with the above)

Estimate of the probable expense of opening a military road from Deer Point opposite to Pensacola W. F., to St. Augustine, E. F.

From Deer Point to Choctawhatchie

River is-85 miles

For ex. pay to soldiers	\$5,737.00	
Transp. of subs.	4,780.00	
Transp. generally	3,000.00	
Forage	1,240.00	\$ 14,757.00

From Choctawhatchie to Ocheesee

is-45 miles

For ex. pay to soldiers	\$ 675.00	
Transp. of subs.	562.00	
Transp. generally	650.00	
Forage	510.00	2,397.00

From Ocheesee to the Ockolockony

River is-35 miles

For ex. pay to soldiers	\$2,100.00	
Transp. of subs.	1,750.00	
Transp. generally	500.00	
Forage	420.00	4,770.00

From Ockolockony to Aussillee

River is-41 miles

For ex. pay to soldiers	\$ 922.00	
Transp. of subs.	768.00	
Transp. generally	700.00	
Forage	600.00	2,990.00

From Ausilla to Souwannee River			
is-31 miles			
For ex. pay to soldiers	\$1,080.00		
Transp. of subs.	870.00		
Transp. generally	1,000.00		
Forage	320.00		3,270.00
<hr/>			
From Souwannee to Weechee-			
tookonee Creek is-32 miles			
For ex. pay to soldiers	\$ 480.00		
Transp. of subs.	400.00		
Transp. generally	300.00		
Forage	320.00		1,500.00
<hr/>			
From Weecheetookonee to Santa			
Fe river is-12 miles			
For ex. pay to soldiers	\$ 180.00		
Transp. of subs.	150.00		
Transp. generally	200.00		
Forage	125.00		655.00
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From Santa Fe to St. John's			
River is-69 miles			
For ex. pay to soldiers	\$3,105.00		
Transp. of subs.	2,587.00		
Transp. generally	2,000.00		
Forage	1,500.00	\$ 9,192.00	
<hr/>			
From St. John's to St. Augustine			
is-17 miles			
For ex. pay to soldiers	\$1,410.00		
Transp. of subs.	1,175.00		
Transp. generally	500.00		
Forage	700.00	\$ 3,785.00	
<hr/>			
Total distance 367 miles			
For the purchase of teams and wagons		\$ 5,000.00	

For the purchase of tools and materials	3,000.00
	<hr/>
Total expense	\$ 51,316.00
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Recapitulation, viz :-

Ex. pay to soldiers	\$ 15,689.00
Transp. of subsistence	13,042.00
Transp. generally	8,850.00
Forage	5,735.00
Teams and wagons	5,000.00
Tools and materials	3,000.00

Total	<hr/> \$ 51,316.00
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To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, Feb. 20, 1824

General :

As I have never met with any account of the country across Tampa Bay, I thought perhaps the enclosed would not be uninteresting to you. It is a (private) letter from Colonel Brooke which I will thank you to return to me after reading it-also the map-of which last, however, if you desire it, you can cause a copy to be taken as I shall have no immediate use for it-I intended before this to have furnished you with a map of the route I marched to and returned from St. Augustine, but the duty of my office has necessarily delayed it, in truth it is a serious job to protract a route of such a length on a scale sufficiently large to admit of noting locality of the country-and I thought too it was unimportant as you was already in possession of my report and estimate which contained all the material facts I had to communicate-besides there are too few men here now to commence the road to advantage and if put to work they are not sufficient

in number to make any impression on it before the commencement of warm weather when they would necessarily leave off and return to their quarters * * * * * It is for this reason mainly that I conclude the road would not be commenced before the 20th of September next * * * * *

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Wm. P. DuVal to John. C. Calhoun, Sec. of War.

Tallahassee, Sept. 1, 1824

I have the honor to inform you that last evening John Bellamy, Esq. late a member of the Legislative Council arrived at this place and has desired me to inform you that he will undertake to make a good road from Pensacola to St. Augustine under the direction of person you may appoint for 23,000 dollars the sum appropriated by law for this object, and he will give ample security to complete the work in one year. An advance only of \$5000. will be required by him. Mr. Bellamy is a man of wealth, enterprise and of strict honesty, if he makes any contract it will be fulfilled to your satisfaction. This gentleman has a number of slaves and could do the work principally with his own force. I believe it would be greatly to the interest of the United States to make such a contract it would save much expense and leave the military force to be used for other objects. I do not know whether the President of the United States is vested with power by the act of Congress to make such a contract but if he is he will no doubt do so.

Mr. Bellamy resides in Florida and has a settlement near the Mickkeesukkee Towns. I know him intimately and do not hesitate to recommend him as a man who may be confidently relied on.

* * *

To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, September 10, 1824

I had the honor to receive by yesterday's mail

your orders of the 12th and 18th ultimo. The road will be commenced as soon as practicable and opened in strict conformity to the law, and to your instructions. And in order that nothing may be wanting on my part to do so with effect and economy, I shall be most of my time on the road, returning to Pensacola as often as necessary to attend to this office, in which my arrangements will be such that no interruption or delay can possibly take place when I am absent, in furnishing promptly to the troops and posts heretofore dependent upon it for funds and supplies, all of either that may be required for.

The dispersed state of the 4th Regt. however will prevent the commanding officer from detailing as many men as will enable me to proceed as rapidly as you will have a right to expect considering the number of companies supposed to be attached to the Headquarters of the Regiment-any detail from cantonment Brooke is I presume from the tenor of the order not intended.-One company was ordered to New Orleans in July last and is now at Bay St. Louis, hence no detail can be made from it. The company, or rather the skeleton of one, is at Barrancas and as a guard is necessary there for the preservation of the public property, a very small detail only can be had from it. One company is at St. Marks, but this it is understood will be dispensed with by the Governor of the Territory on the last of this month and will return to Cantonment Clinch agreeably to the orders heretofore given to it from the Adjutant General's office. At cantonment Clinch there are now stationed nearly three companies, two nearly full and one a dead company. -Under these circumstances a detail of sixty men at most is all that can be expected, but if the six companies properly belonging to the Head Quarters

of the Regiment and its dependencies were at the station and filled, a detail of 200 men might be made with convenience, and that number would enable me to commence and prosecute the work with vigor and economy.

The disposal of the public lands in Florida will be facilitated and their value greatly enhanced by this road, hence I suppose it is the wish of the Government to have it completed as early as possible. It will become the great leading road of the country and the inhabitants are already marking out and opening roads in various places and directions to intersect and cross it—one of which, from Chippoola to St. Andrews Bay a distance of 40 miles, had employed on it a short time 100 citizen laborers—this road crosses the trail a few miles east of the Iconfinan creek and another has been marked out and in part opened from the Choctawhatchie Big Spring, crossing the trail a short distance west of the Iconfinan to the same bay. It is of primary importance to open that part of the route between Pensacola and the Choctawhatchie as early as possible, for then a horse-back communication can be had direct with St. Augustine and the mail could commence its route without delay. At present the route to the Choctawhatchie is very circuitous, near double the distance of the intended route, and the latter trail is not practicable to travelers in its present state. If the company now at St. Marks was expected to remain there, I should, pursuant to your order, employ a detail from it near the new seat of Government. But I beg leave respectfully to remark that no benefit to the Government or Territory could result from the labor of 15 men, these the most the company could furnish at present, and it would cost as much to furnish sup-

plies for that small detachment as if it were 100 men laboring at the same place, but let this detail be added to the party at Deer Point and not one cent would be expended the more in consequence, and their labor would be equally felt. Besides I should not be well satisfied at being held responsible for the economy, diligence and industry of a party laboring at so remote a point as to preclude my visiting it as often as I might deem advisable.

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To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, September 30, 1824

I have the honor to report that having made arrangements for the necessary transportation, tools, &c on the 21st inst I applied to the Commg. Officer at Cantonment Clinch, Major Donoho of the 4th Infy. for the detail, to work on the road-he had previously allowed me all the advantages of men &c I could desire or ask to expedite the preparations-but a continued storm of rain and wind until the morning of the 25th prevented all crossing to Deer Point. The detail was then made and the men and stores have since been crossed over ready to commence which will be done forthwith. Sixty nine men is the strength of the present detail and is I believe as many as the posts of Cant. Clinch and Barrancas can possibly furnish until the arrival of recruits or the return of some of the absent companies. Believing it to be the intention of the department that I should use the means in this work that were at my disposal in the Q. masters department without making new vouchers, I have taken from the stores on hand a quantity of tools & two four-mule teams-other purchases on account of the road specially will of course be yet necessary, I shall leave here in a day or two more as it is

necessary I should be with the detachment as much as possible, more especially in the commencement.

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To Jesup from Burch

Camp on the Military Road,
October 9, 1824

I have the honor to report that I commenced work on the road on the morning of the 4th inst. I have progressed twelve miles. By close attention to the country, the road has been kept on the dividing ridge between the bay and sound and avoids the extensive swamps and ponds that appeared to offer so much obstruction. This part of the route proves to be much better than I expected although I was personally acquainted with the country. My force at work is seventy men and I regret that it should be so small on account of the expense. It requires as much hire of boating, as many hands detached for blacksmith work, care of the tools and commissary's stores &c as if the force was greater. I cannot calculate upon much assistance from the company at St. Mark's before December as the Governor will retain them there until the Indians are actually removed which will not be before the middle of November. By a letter received last night I am informed that the company is very sickly and that nine of them have been sent by the Florida (just arrived from there) to Cant. Clinch. Under these circumstances I deem it to be for the public interest not to set so small a number of men as it would give at work near Tallahassee, but wait its return to Pensacola.

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To Jesup from Burch

Pensacola, October 30, 1824

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of

your letters of the 23rd ultimo and 1st instant relative to the width of road &c to St. Augustine.

The reduction from 25 to fifteen feet will greatly expedite the work and will be in my opinion sufficiently wide for all practical and useful purposes.- No road could be opened wide enough to prevent trees from falling across it, and in the open woods, especially in the pine barrens, these can always be avoided by turning out. Many of the roads in this country have been made by people moving with their carts and wagons into it, along the old trails or newly blazed trails, without being out the trouble and cost of opening them regularly. This however can never be the ease on this road, because the route being from west to east, it intersects the numerous creeks and small streams with which the country abounds and which require immense labor in bridges and causeways to render them passable for carriages of any kind, or even for people on horseback.

The road is now opened near 35 miles, 20 of which is at the full width of 25 feet, and hereafter should it be deemed advisable when the troops are on their return march it can easily be opened to the full width provided for by the law. About five miles from where the detachment is now at work the creeks commence, after which the road will for some time progress very slowly, there being six considerable bridges to build in eight miles of distance with causeways to each.-It is expected that the company now at St. Marks will be here in about fifteen days when all the men in it who can labor will join the detachments on the road, and as there will not be more than one hundred men at work, I shall keep the whole in one camp under my immediate direction. At all events, I beg leave to assure the General that I shall employ the men to the best possible advan-

tage according to my judgment, both for effect and economy.-

I have with me but few carpenters and neither of them such as I think competent to direct the building of a large and permanent bridge, and in case I should find it necessary, will I be authorized to hire citizen carpentry to superintend and assist in the construction of some of the larger bridges?-

I have no doubt but that the appropriation will be exhausted before the road is completed., and in that case will you be pleased to inform me whether my arrangements ought to be such as to continue the work on account of the Quartermaster's department?-I suppose that any deficiency will be made out by additional appropriations.-That part of the appropriation vested in teams will of course be so much on hand according to their value even after the money is expended, though not available as funds unless realized by a sale.-

My receipt for \$5000. is enclosed.

*(The publication of these papers will be concluded in the next number of the **QUARTERLY.**)*