

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 18
Number 2 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 18,
Issue 2

Article 4

1939

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Recommended Citation

Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1939) "Emerson's Little Journal at St. Augustine, January, February, March, 1827," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 18: No. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol18/iss2/4>

**RALPH WALDO EMERSON'S LITTLE JOURNAL AT ST.
AUGUSTINE, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, 1827***

Mem. for Journal

St. Augustine

Jan. 16 [?] 1827

The colonies observe the customs of the parent country however ill they may be adapted to the new territory. The Dutch cut canals in Batavia, because they cut canals in Holland, but the fierce sun of the E. Indies stagnated the water and slew the Dutch. In like manner the Spaniards & the Yankees dig cellars here because there are cellars in Madrid & Boston ; but the water fills the cellars & makes them useless & the house unhealthy. Yet still they dig cellars. Why? Because there are cellars in Madrid & Boston.

Over the gate of the Fort is an inscription wh. being in Spanish & in an abbreviated character I was unable to read. After many inquiries in town I cd. not find an individual who had ever read it or who knew anything about it. Mr. Gay the public interpreter took the card on which I had written what letters were not defaced of the inscription & succeeded in decyphering the following record.

Regnando en Espana el Senor Don Fernando Gobernador y Capitan General de esta plaza de San Agostino de la Florida y su provincia el Mariscal de Campo Don Alonzo Fernandes d'heredia se concluiu esta Castillo el ano de 1756 dirigiendo las

*None of the verses following, nor the greater part of the remainder of the journal, have been published heretofore.

obras el Capitan Yuceniero Don Pedro de Brozas y Garay.

Which runs in English thus.

“Don Ferdinand VI being, king of Spain, and the Field Marshal Don Alonzo Fernandez d’Heredia being Governor & Captain General of this place of St. Augustine of Florida, & of its province, this fort was finished in the year 1756. The works were directed by the Captain engineer Don Pedro de Brozas of Garay.”

It is commonly said here that the fort is more than a century old. It seems there was an old one of much earlier date standing on the same site wh. was the foundation of the present erection.

I am an exile from my home; heavily
And all alone I walk the long seashore
And find no joy. The trees, the bushes
talk to me
And the small fly that whispers in my ear.
Ah me I do not love the look
of foreign men.
And wo is me that I forsook
My little home my lamp my book
To find across the foaming seas
This cheerless fen.

I care not though it should be said
By lords & grooms
That nature in my land is dead
And snows are scattered on her head
Whilst here the fig & citron shed
Their fragrant blooms-
And dulcimer mosquitoes in the woods
Hum their sly secrets in unwilling ears
Which like all gossip leave a smart behind.

To be a mammoth ant, a large sweet feeder
Might I hope to win
Bards' best reward an universal grin.

There are two graveyards in St. A. one of the Catholics another of ye Protestants. Of the latter the whole fence is gone having been purloined by these idle people for firewood. Of the former the fence has been blown down by some gale, but not a stick or board has been removed, -and they rot undisturbed such is the superstition of the thieves. I saw two Spaniards entering this enclosure, and observed that they both took off their hats in reverence to what is holy ground. In the Protestant yard among other specimens of the Sepulchral Muse, the following epitaph is written over the body of Mr. Happoldt "a native of Germany."

Rest in this tomb raised at thy children's cost
Here sadly summoned what they had & lost
For kind & true a treasure each alone
A father, brother, & a friend in one ;
O happy soul if thou canst see from high
Thy large & orphan family.

oldest town of Europeans in North A. 1564 ; full of ruins, chimneyless houses.

[A thumb-nail sketch of a shack with porch follows]

Lazy people, horsekeeping intolerably dear, & bad milk from swamp. grass because all hay comes from the north. 40 (?) miles from here is nevertheless the richest crop of grass growing untouched, why? because there is no scythe in St. Augustine, & if there were no man knows how to use one!

masking in carnival

heard the roaring on the beach long before we saw land, and the sea was full of green twigs & feathers.

The Minorcans are very much afraid of the Indians. All the old houses have very strong walls & doors, with apertures thro' wh. a musket can be discharged. They are delighted to find that under the American flag the Indians are afraid of the whites. Some of them however do not like to venture far out of the town at this day. "But what are you afraid of? Don't you know Gen. Jackson conquered all the Indians?" "Yes, but Gen. Jacksons no here now." "But his son is, for, you know, the Indians call Col. Gadsden his son." "Ay, ay, but then the Indians, for all that."

I saw by the city gates two iron frames in the shape of a mummy with iron rings on the head. They were cases in which the Spanish governor had hung criminals upon a gibbet. There is a little iron loop on one side by the breast in which a loaf of bread & a vessel of water were contained. Thus provided the wretch was hung up by suspending the ring over his head to a tree & left to starve to death. They were lately dug up full of bones

[A thumb-nail sketch of a gibbet with the frame hanging from it is drawn here.]

The people call the place Botany Bay & say that whenever Presidents or Bishops or Presbyteries have danglers on their hands fit for no offices they send them to Florida.

In Charleston I like well the decoration of the Churches with monuments. It no doubt has a powerful tendency to attach.

When the woods are burned tis said they set the rivers in Florida on fire.

The negroes in Charleston have a new theory of the seasons viz. that the number of people from the North bring the cold with them.

A fortnight since I attended a meeting of the Bible Society. The Treasurer of this institution is Marshal of the district & by a somewhat unfortunate arrangement had appointed a special meeting of the Society & a Slave Auction at the same time & place, one being in the Government house & the other in the adjoining yard. One ear therefore heard the glad tidings of great joy whilst the other was regaled with "going gentlemen, going!" And almost without changing our position we might aid in sending the Scriptures into Africa or bid for "four children without the mother" who had been kidnapped therefrom. It was singular enough that at the annual meeting of this Society one week after, the business shd. have been interrupted by an unexpected quarrel of two gentlemen present, both, I believe, members of the Society, who with language not very appropriate to the occasion collared each other, & were not without difficulty separated by the interference of some members. There is something wonderfully piquant in the manners of the place, theological or civil. A Mr. Jerry, a Methodist minister, preached here two Sundays ago, who confined himself in the afternoon to some pretty intelligible strictures upon the character of a President of the Bible Soc. who swears. The gentleman alluded to was present. And it really exceeded all power of face to be grave during the divine's very plain analysis of the motives wh. probably actuated the individual in seeking the office which he holds. It fairly beat the "Quousque Catilina."

Feb. 25.

I attended mass in the Catholic Church. The mass is in Latin & the sermon in English & and the audience who are Spaniards understand neither. The services have been recently interrupted by the imprisonment of the clergyman.

The worthy father of the Catholic Church here by whose conversation I was not a little scandalized has lately been arrested for debt and imprisoned in St. Marks. This exemplary divine on the evening of his arrest said to Mr. Crosby, "If you can change ten dollars for me I will pay you the four which I owe you." Crosby gave him six which the father put in his waistcoat pocket, & being presently questioned, stoutly denied that he had anything from him. But Crosby was the biggest & compelled him to restore the money. I went yesterday to the Cathedral, full of great coarse toys, & heard this priest say mass, for his creditors have been indulgent & released him for the present.

I met some Indians in the street selling venison. I asked the man where he lived? "Yonder." Where? "In the big swamp." He sold his haunch for 5 bits. The purchaser offered him one bit & a bill worth half a dollar & counted on his fingers this, *one*, & this *four*. "You lie," said the Indian-which I found was his only word for *no*. I gave him a half bit for "piccaniny." Indian notions about the creation & three pairs & three boxes.* Col. Humphreys Indian agent.

*Emerson undoubtedly refers to a Seminole story of the creation of man which he apparently got from Col. Gad Humphreys, and which was made famous in the Florida of that period by Governor DuVal.

See, *Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, XI, p. 115 (Jan. 1933) where it is copied from a letter of 1829. Later it was repeated by Washington Irving (in *Wolfert's Roost*) who got it from DuVal. The earlier version is: The Great Spirit first made the black man, but did not like him; He then made the red man, but was not fully satisfied: He then made the white man and was well pleased with him. Then He summoned all three in his presence. Near Him were three great boxes, one containing hoes, axes and other agricultural instruments; in another were spears, arrows, tomahawks, etc.; and in the third books, maps, charts, etc. He called the white man first and made him choose. He advanced, attentively surveyed each of the boxes, passed by that containing the working implements and drew near that in which were tomahawks, spears, etc.; then the Indian's heart sunk within him. The white man, however, passed it by and chose that with the books etc. Then the Indian's heart leaped for joy. He was summoned next to choose, and without hesitation chose the box with the war and hunting implements. The other box was therefore left for the poor black man. Thus their destinies were fixed.

I explored

The castle & the ruined monastery
Unpeopled town, ruins of streets of stone,
Pillars upon the margin of the sea,
With worn inscriptions oft explored in vain.
Then with a keener scrutiny I marked
The motley population. Hither come
The forest families, timid & tame
Not now as once with stained tomahawk
The restless red man left his council fire,
Or when, with Mexique art, he painted haughtily
On canvas woven in his boundless woods
His simple symbols for his foes to read.
Not such an one is yon poor vagabond
Who in unclean & sloven apathy
Brings venison from the forest, -silly trade.
Alas! red men are few, red men are feeble,"
They are few & feeble, & must pass away.-
And here,

The dark Minorcan, sad & separate,
Wrapt in his cloak, strolls with unsocial eyes
By day, basks idle in the sun, then seeks his food
All night upon the waters, stilly plying
His hook & line in all the moonlit bays.
Here steals the sick man with uncertain gait
Looks with a feeble spirit at things around
As if he sighing said, "What is't to me?
"I dwell afar;-far from this cheerless fen
"My wife, my children strain their eyes to me
"And oh! in vain. Wo, wo, is me! I feel

*Though they seemed few and feeble, within a decade these Indians withstood for near seven years the greatest efforts of the United States Army to subdue them, though at one time nine thousand men were pitted against them, though the best officers in the Army were sent in succession to Florida, though twenty thousand volunteers were raised to fight them and twenty million dollars spent, and fifteen hundred men lost their lives.

"In spite of hope, these wishful eyes no more
"Shall see New England's wood-crowned hills
again."

Tallahassee a grotesque place, selected 3 years since as a suitable spot for the Capital of the territory, & since that day rapidly settled by public officers, land speculators & desperados. Much club law & little other. What are called the ladies of the place are in number 8. "Gov. Duval is the button on which all things are hung." Prince Murat has married a Mrs. Gray & has sat down in the new settlement. Tallahassee is 200 miles west of St. Aug. & in the journey thither you sleep three nights under the pine trees. The land in its neighborhood is rich. Here is the township of Lafayette. I saw here a marble copy of Canova's bust of Queen Caroline of Naples Murat's wife. It did not strike me as at all wonderful tho' Canova's busts of the Buonapartes are said to be his finest works.

I attended a meeting of the Bible Society. March 1. I found here a gentleman from N. Carolina who gave me some account of the monstrous absurdities of the Methodists at their Camp Meetings in that state. He related an instance of several of these fanatics jumping about on all fours, imitating the barking of dogs & surrounding a tree in which they pretended they had "treed Jesus."

St. Augustine

For fifteen winter days
I sailed upon the deep, & turned my back
Upon the Northern lights & burning Bear,
And the cold orbs that hang by them in heaven,
Till star by star they sank into the sea.
Full swelled the sail before the driving wind,

Till the stout pilot turned his prow to land,
Where peered, mid orange groves & citron boughs,
The little city of Saint Augustine.
Slow slid the vessel to the fragrant shore,
Loitering along Matanzas' sunny waves,
And under Anastasia's verdant isle.
I saw St. Mark's grim bastions, piles of stone
Planting their deep foundations in the sea,
And speaking to the eye a thousand things
Of Spain, a thousand heavy histories.
Under these bleached walls of old renown
Our ship was moored.

-An hour of busy noise,
And I was made a quiet citizen
Pacing my chamber in a Spanish street.
An exile's bread is salt, his heart is sad.
Happy, he saith, the eye that never saw
The smoke ascending from a stranger's fire!
Yet much is here
That can beguile the months of banishment
To the pale travellers whom Disease hath sent
Hither for genial air from Northern homes.

Oh many a tragic story may be read,-
Dim vestiges of a romantic past,
Within the small peninsula of sand.
Here is the old land of America
And in this sea-girt nook, the infant steps
First foot-prints of that Genius giant-grown
That daunts the nations with his power today.
Inquisitive of such, I walk alone
Along the narrow streets, unpaved & old,
Among few dwellers, and the jealous doors
And windows barred upon the public way.

THERE LIEST THOU, LITTLE CITY OF THE DEEP,
AND ALWAYS HEAREST THE UNCEASING SOUND
BY DAY & NIGHT, IN SUMMER & IN FROST,
THE ROAR OF WATERS ON THY CORAL SHORE.
BUT SOFTENING SOUTHWARD IN THY GENTLE CLIME
EVEN THE RUDE SEA RELENTS TO CLEMENCY,
FEELS THE KIND RAY OF THAT BENIGNANT SUN
AND POURS WARM BILLOWS UP THE BEACH OF SHELLS.

FAREWELL; & FAIR BEFALL THEE, GENTLE TOWN!
THE PRAYER OF THOSE WHO THANK THEE FOR THEIR LIFE,
THE BENISON OF THOSE THY FRAGRANT AIRS,
AND SIMPLE HOSPITALITY HATH BLEST,
BE TO THEE EVER AS THE RICH PERFUME
OF A GOOD NAME, & PLEASANT MEMORY!