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BARCIA'S HISTORY OF FLORIDA

by ALBERT C. MANUCY

*Barcia's Chronological History of the Continent of Florida.*

Translated for the St. Augustine Historical Society by Anthony Kerrigan. University of Florida Press, 1951. (pp.lx, 426, index. \$15).

*(This article is more than a book review. Because Barcia's history is the most important work on Spanish Florida and its translation makes it available to every Floridian, the QUARTERLY asked Mr. Manucy, who had so large a part in the inception, the planning, and the translation itself - in fact, the production of the work - asked him to tell us of the whole project. Ed.)*

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WHAT IS BARCIA?

This volume is a translation of the noted *Ensayo Cronologico, or Chronological Essay on the General History of Florida, Containing the Discoveries and principal events which came to pass in this Vast Kingdom, touching the Spanish, French, Swedish, Danish, English, and other Nations, as between themselves and with the Indians whose Customs, Characteristics, Idolatry, Government, Warfare, and Stratagems are described; and the Voyages of some Captains and Pilots through the Northern Sea in search of a passage to the Orient, or the Union of that land with Asia.* As this inclusive title indicates, the book is a detailed history of international exploration and colonization of the North American continent and its waters. It is organized in chronological form, and covers the period from 1512 through 1722.

Patriotic Floridians are sometimes chagrined to learn that Florida was not one of Spain's most valued possessions. It was, so to speak, merely an outlying province of rich Mexico: a buffer against northern enemies, a coast-guard base - and a great nuisance to practical-minded fiscal officers. Hence the paucity of Spanish books on Florida.

In a field where manuscripts were unavailable to most Florida historians, and book sources scarce as hen's teeth, Barcia's essay demanded attention. It was not only the area's comprehensive history of its day, but it was available, inasmuch as the

1723 edition had been reprinted in 1829. Of the more than one hundred sources used in his compilation, Barcia cites less than six Spanish books solely on Florida. True, a dozen others had specific chapters on Florida, but Barcia, like today's scholar, had to depend largely upon manuscripts. He indicates some ten documents or collections of documents that were essential to his work.

Most of his other citations are foreign works on exploration; and since, as Barcia conceded, "to seek among foreigners for accounts of Spanish deeds . . . is a waste of time," his use of such works was quite restricted to gleaning therefrom the trials and tribulations of the "foreigners."

As a historical narrative, the Barcia work is perhaps less important to the scholar today than it was fifty years ago, but its value to the historical hobbyist or the more casual student is undiminished. Indeed, to the average reader, the rich archives of Spain are still cryptic; and while the archivists have duplicated thousands of Spanish papers for repositories of the United States, the language and paleographic hurdles in these acres off paper are still vexing obstacles to all except the best trained students.

*For the historian, Barcia has a value far beyond the historical text. Other histories of our broad land may be greatly superior in every way but one: none is written from the viewpoint of a Spanish contemporary. Barcia, less than brilliant as writer or historian, may yet achieve lasting fame as an interpreter of Spain's view on North America of the colonial era.*

It is a unique quality worthy of preservation, for the modern scholar can never attain the viewpoint of a Barcia!

This urge to interpret events in terms of one's own thinking is common to all writers. One could, in fact, wish that Barcia had been able to digest more of his material. He himself states,

however, that his first objective was preservation of the fame of the "enterprising knights" who were the principal actors in the American pageant. With becoming modesty he suggests that his work may "serve to inform the great writers concerning the affairs which have come to our attention."

Actually, like Arredondo's later *Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia*, Barcia has written justification for Spanish claims to the northern continent. It is most important for the reader to understand that even as late as Barcia's time the limits of this continent were not clearly understood. Throughout the author's scholarly discussion of Florida's boundaries, this geographical ignorance is painfully clear.

His study of foreign writers alarmed Barcia. They "push their pretension to the discredit of the Spaniards, desirous of concealing, under newly coined designations, places already known and bearing the ancient names given to them by the Spaniards who were the original discoverers and title-holders. The former place names have now been forgotten, since the *French, English, Dutch, Danes, Swedes* and *Norwegians* affixed whatever designations suited their fancy to the seas and the regions they had reached, or thought they had reached. . . . The name *America* must . . . perish, having been unreasonably imposed by *Amerigo Vespucci* . . ."

Thus, while he does not assert it so, Barcia's intent was to set forth Spain's case. What he actually accomplishes is something entirely different: an account of tragic disintegration, forced by virile competition of powerful rivals. Despite his words on Spanish achievement here, it soon becomes obvious that the "Continent of Florida" was merely on the periphery of the Empire; it was to the warm lands in the south that Spain brought lasting culture and a significant history.

A glance at Barcia's life and times helps explain why he was impelled to write about Florida. Andres Gonzalez de Barcia Carballido y Zuniga (1673-1743) was born toward the end of Spain's

golden age, and in times when inept leadership was bringing his nation toward domination by France. It was doubtless the pressure of contemporary events which led him to a study of the historical background for the North American colonies. He was in his teens when the War of the English Succession (King William's War) focused attention on the Caribbean and Canada; he was still a young man when France founded Biloxi on the Gulf coast - driving a sharp wedge into the approximate center of the coastline connecting Florida with Mexico. In the next decade, the War of the Spanish Succession (Queen Anne's War) brought conflict even more widespread in the New World. Nor did it end with the Treaty of Utrecht: the capture of Pensacola was still a matter for conversation when the *Chronological Essay* was printed.

In the midst of national turbulence, Barcia was one of those who founded the Spanish Academy, dedicated to saving the Spanish language. Within a decade the first volume of the Academy dictionary was issued - and in England, lexicographer Johnson was still but a stripling. Historian Barcia was also a playwright, but he is best known as editor and jurist, a circumstance which shows that he is no Cervantes. Perhaps Ticknor sums him up best as "a man of literary distinction, much employed in affairs of state."

#### THE TRANSLATION

Why should a *local* historical society become involved with a book of international scope like Barcia? Well, for one thing, Miss Emily Lloyd Wilson, senior historian of St. Augustine, had long urged the translation, and there was a growing desire amongst members of the St. Augustine Historical Society to honor the sincere and unselfish labor of Miss Wilson in some significant way; also, a young linguist named Anthony Kerrigan had made his appearance as a local newspaperman, and indicated his availability as translator.

Neither of these considerations was the deciding factor, how-

ever. The thread of St. Augustine history runs throughout the book; it is the continuity holding the essay together; certainly the St. Augustine portion should be translated (and perhaps published) by the Society - but why mutilate the famous work by extracting only the local passages? Why not retain the broader perspective that Barcia gave it? Translated, and published or not, it would still be useful in the library of the Society.

The decision to undertake the full translation came some three years ago. Few of the members realized that it was the beginning of a tedious and expensive job that would require two years and more of unremitting work. Yet, in any case, the decision would have been the same.

Supervision of the translating was entrusted to the Society's publications committee, a small group headed by Librarian J. T. Van Campen. E. W. Lawson and Albert Manucy, experienced historical translators, were asked to work with Kerrigan. Operating procedure was simple, if painful at times. Kerrigan would submit a draft to Lawson for a meticulous line-by-line accuracy check against the Spanish. Next the copy went to Manucy for a similar check, after which the trio conferred on moot questions.

In these critiques, Barcia was collated with standard accounts, and in certain instances the opinions of botanical, medical, theological and other specialists were secured, all of which resulted in such volume of textual notes as would exceed even the bulk of the translation. Resultantly, the committee early decided against inclusion of comments except as necessary for textual accuracy or understanding. Besides, too close a scrutiny of Barcia's work raised more controversies than could be settled.

So a reasonably accurate translation was achieved. But the committee was not satisfied with the result. In the quest for accuracy, the workmen had too slavishly followed the involved and interminable sentence structure of the original. Everybody who looked at this wordy and stiffly-phrased version agreed that

nobody would willingly read it. Consequently, a rewriting contract was concluded with Kerrigan, and Manucy worked closely with him in an attempt to develop a style that was clear and readable by modern standards, without losing too much of the flavor. Those who know 18th century writing in any language will appreciate the size of the task, and condone our shortcomings. Once the style was worked out, Kerrigan showed his remarkable writing facility by adhering to it consistently. By contrast, he consciously styled the translator's introduction in the 18th century tradition - involved syntax, leisurely digression - albeit shortening his sentences somewhat.

Several presses were interested in the manuscript, but the Society voted to contract with the University of Florida Press. In turn, Director Lewis F. Haines of the Press welcomed the opportunity of readying this major work in Florida history for the printer. The Press assumed the editorial work incident to publication, and agreed to share the printing costs with the Society. Translator Kerrigan kept on with the Society, tying up the loose ends of the job. Lawson compiled the sensible index, which this writer so far finds faultless.

We can only guess the extent of the editorial contributions by Director Haines, his wife, and their associates, since your reviewer was happily not involved in the hectic task of laying out the work with the printers. But from the Cross of Santiago on the cover to the clever "Laus Deo" tailpiece, the finished volume attests a rare combination of editorial planning and printing craftsmanship. For St. Augustinians, it was a matter of satisfaction that the noted Record Press, of St. Augustine, did the excellent presswork.

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### THE BOOK

Barcia is not an easy book to "get into." Spanish practice of the day placed some thirty pages of dedication, censor reviews, license, copyright, tax statement (this book was taxed at eight

maravedis per sheet), and a learned and lengthy introduction combining the author's views on geography with a critical essay on sources. In the translation, this tantalizing procedure is even bettered, by prefacing the prefaces with 30 pages more. Let it be said, however, that the eminent Herbert E. Bolton's perspective-giving foreword is concise and authoritative; and Kerri-gan's introduction, if discursive, is entertaining and sets a mood for the reader.

Once past the introductions, the plan of the work becomes clear. Barcia's chapters are called "decades," since each covers a ten-year period. Under each chapter head is a summary of the decade, then under each year is set down a relation of the year's happenings. As the title *Chronological Essay* suggests, the text is much more than a mere listing of events. Withal, the chronological plan is carried through quite successfully, with a minimum of what might be called "filler" copy (e.g., in 1551 "the seas swarmed with French pirates"), for those years when Florida records seem to have been elusive.

Barcia's writing practice of jumping without notice from Florida to Canada, Virginia, or Hudson Bay, tends to confuse the casual reader, but in the translation this irritation is minimized by use of a printer's mark to denote such changes of subject.

In general, the writing is matter-of-fact, but quite racy in spots, depending somewhat upon the source whence it came. The Matanzas affair of 1565, for instance, is directly from Meras, a methodical eyewitness. Elsewhere, the writing of the French explorers is quite recognizable through the veil of Barcia's paraphrases. Obviously, Barcia seldom entertains with scintillating detail as does the Inca, for the scope of his work does not permit it. But he is not above noticing such strange things as the Men With Tails. Said tails were some eight inches long, and holes were bored in the seating benches to accommodate them. (Rumor has it that archeologists still find such holed benches in

our hinterlands!) As Barcia opined with tongue in cheek, "when they died, their race came to an end, and the truth of the matter died with them."

Our essayist is more credulous in other matters equally wonderful, such as the "beads of Santa Elena" (American potato bean), reportedly a specific for countless ailments and conditions; the body-warming tobacco discovered by Cartier among the Indians in 1535; and a remarkable tree whose leaves and bark were a sure-fire cure for the plague.

In a chronological presentation, one hardly expects a historian's history, nor does Barcia surprise us. He makes little effort to separate the wheat from the chaff. Nevertheless, the virile epic of America unfolds under his pen as he tells of Frobisher, Heignensen, Gilbert and the other searchers for the Northwest Passage; of Cartier's determined leadership; of the miracles (and tortures) that befell the friars; of the achievements of the knights traversing woodland and desert with the banners of France and Spain; and always in the background is the picture of a new and vast wilderness, peopled by men jealous of their freedom. ("We were born free; we remain free; we are dependent on no one," said Grangula, the Iroquois.)

From our vantage, it is difficult to understand why beginning Jamestown rates the barest of mention ("Christopher Newport . . . after locating a suitable site, founded the city of Jamestown"). Of greater interest to Barcia, however, was the English crown's endorsement of the project: "The King saw that no possible harm could be done the Kingdom as a result of this act [of founding Jamestown], for if he made grants, he granted what was not his. So they secured his approval." Likewise, the year 1620 was notable, not for the new Plymouth colony, but because Virginian and Bermudan Britishers sailed to Yucatan and harassed the treasure fleet! Plymouth, in fact, does not appear in the text at all, while considerable space is devoted to the obscure exploits of a Dane named Johann (Jens) Munck.

To one versed in the English historical tradition, such disregard of "accepted" history is disconcerting, even if it brings exciting stories and informative details not usually encountered in the standard textbooks. Munck sailed to Hudson Bay in 1619, where he trafficked with the natives. "One Indian took hold of a mirror, saw his reflection in it, and hastily concealing it in his bosom, ran off thinking he carried a treasure. The Danes laughed heartily . . . " Later, their humor died with them in the cruel cold. Even the "finest strong liquor" solidified and split the butts; it "had to be broken with axes and warmed at the fire before it could be drunk." Under such conditions, only three of the sixty-four men lived to see their homeland.

Despite neglect of such English colonial beginnings as Plymouth, Charleston, *et al* (although Charleston does make a casual appearance in the text for 1687, some seventeen years after its founding), there is much British material in the book. That there is not more may perhaps be attributed to the age-long hostility between Spain and England, and to the Spanish contempt for such failures as the Grenville and Raleigh colonies. For on the basis of England's 16th century record, Jamestown was not seriously regarded by the Spanish as a threat.

On the other hand, the rapport between France and Spain during Barcia's time has produced a wealth of French material. There is, of course, coverage of other European effort as well, but Spanish and French affairs receive by far the majority of our writer's attention. Some 71 pages, for instance, are devoted to the La Salle explorations alone, and though St. Augustine and the later Pensacola are rather fully treated, Coronado gets but two pages, Luna and 16th century Pensacola only ten. Soto's advent is noticed only in passing, with the comment that the Inca's record of this major exploration will suffice for the reader.

More than a third of the book is given over to the work of Pedro Menendez and St. Augustine. Once past the date of Menendez' death (1574), the intervening years are rather cur-

sorily treated until the 1670's, when Barcia works out a detailed narrative of the exploits of La Salle and the French movement down the Mississippi, together with the Spanish counter-moves led by that "Ornament of Spain," Andres de Pez, which brought the permanent establishment of Pensacola. The book concludes with information of Spanish-French-English-Indian matters in the Southeast, such as the Yamassee rebellion, the fortification of Apalache, and the capture and recapture of Pensacola.

The student of Spanish Florida history will find strange omissions. Thus, while Juan de Ayala's voyage to Spain to secure help against the Carolina threat of 1702 is fully treated, along with all the "improvements" proposed for Florida by royal decree, our writer overlooks the devastating raids on the western Florida missions. As we have pointed out, however, Barcia often delights the reader with unfamiliar material, such as the miracle related by Fray Marcos. For the color, drama, and mystical simplicity typical of the best 16th century Spanish reports, this is one of the most intriguing:

### ***The Fray Marcos Tragedy***

In 1553 Fr. Marcos and other Dominicans left Mexico for Spain. The prediction by one of them that the fleet would be destroyed came to pass, as most of the ships were wrecked on the Florida coast. Some 300 of the 1,000 souls managed to get ashore. Fortunately, a pair of crossbows also washed ashore, and with these long-range weapons the savage Indians were kept at a distance until, crossing a river, a thumb-fingered cleric managed to dump the crossbows overboard. From that point, the Indians harassed the castaways constantly.

The last of the women and children died at Rio Palmas, and here two of the padres left to seek a friendly village. Such a place was not to be found; but like a forest nymph, a naked negress put in an appearance and found herbs for them to eat, until she too was dispatched by the fiendish savages. The main

company resumed its starvation march along the Gulf shore, living on roots and shellfish.

Meanwhile, the harassing Indians had left to replenish their supply of arrows. Just as the Spaniards reached the river Tanipa, the canoes of the returning Indians were sighted. Fearfully, the Spaniards hid in the high grass. But the grass "was alive with ants so ferocious and malignant that they ate the Spaniards by the mouthful." The tormented men threw themselves into the water, and the Indians finished them off.

Only Fray Marcos, wounded by seven arrows, eventually reached Panuco - borne there in the canoe of two unarmed Indians who were, the good padre asserted, angels in disguise.

Barcia vivifies for us some almost-forgotten aspects of colonial history, not the least of which were the tortures perpetrated by the aborigines. The experience of Fr. Isaac Jogues among the Iroquois in 1642, as detailed by Barcia, requires a strong stomach on the part of the reader. But as it suggests that savagery was a normal part of aboriginal civilization, it also helps explain two conflicting views of the Europeans: (1) here are mission fields white for the harvest; (2) the only good Indian is a dead one.

So there are many things here for the reader, no matter what his interests.

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Perhaps fewer *errata* exist in the translation than in the Spanish editions; the typographical errors noticed seem to be minor ones. Possibly the most seriously-felt omission in this book, as in the original, is the lack of illustrative material - particularly a map. Admittedly, the price of the volume is high enough already; but a less elegant edition, with illustrations, would have increased the value of the book to the student. The tan paper used throughout the book has been criticized, and rightly so. In well-kept original editions, the two-century-old paper is still snow-white; it is inconsiderate to impose a spurious (even if

esthetically desirable) off-color page upon the already over-worked vision of the student.

Notwithstanding the importance of this volume and its translation and publication, this writer is not partial to translations; rather he leans toward the school which requires the student to cross language barriers himself. Anyhow, foreign archival fields relating to America are as vast as the waving pampas of Argentina, and sufficient translation appears impracticable. On the other hand, serious students are few, and some materials certainly deserve dissemination beyond the little circle of scholars. Barcia is a noteworthy example.