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## The Trials of Captain Don Isidoro de Leon

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THE TRIALS OF CAPTAIN DON  
ISIDORO DE LEON

*Translated and edited by LUCY L. WENHOLD, with an introduction and additional notes by ALBERT C. MANUCY*

**F**EW HISTORIANS can tell you what Florida was like in 1745. Yet those were the days when the governor of the province spoke of “the terror men feel when they even hear the name of Florida,” and swore to defend it “to the last drop of my blood.”

The War of Jenkins’ Ear had brought massive British attacks upon the Spanish Caribbean and northeast Florida, followed by a Spanish push north into Georgia. By 1743 this conflict had merged with the War of the Austrian Succession and France joined Spain against Great Britain. On this side of the Atlantic, the actual theater of war shifted upcountry to Cape Breton and the St. Lawrence.

Nevertheless, in the Southeast each of the three nations was striving continually for advantage. Spain’s Florida was now little more than the towns of St. Augustine and Pensacola, plus a few friendly Indian villages. A British regiment was within 100 miles of the St. Johns River. In the back country, other representatives of King George - traders and frontier diplomats - were forever at work to win the Indians away from Spanish ties by means of guns, food and “other briberies.” French settlement and trade, pushing eastward from the Mississippi and the Gulf, were also a threat to Spanish sovereignty, although France was for now an ally of Spain.

The Indian’s allegiance could mean the difference between success and failure to colonial ambitions. Apalache, near present-day Tallahassee, was strategic Indian country. To counter the effectiveness of British and French traders, the Spanish set up a trading post at Apalache. In addition, Florida officials still nursed the dream of a farm colony there, peopled with Spanish immigrants.

But the most pressing need was to hold and expand Indian friendship as a defense against foreign encroachments. This was the task given to Captain Juan Isidoro de Leon.

He seems to have come to Florida as an officer with the infan-

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try reinforcements of April, 1738. In 1745 his company of about 40 effectives was sent from St. Augustine to take its turn as a frontier garrison, and strengthen the fort of San Marcos de Apalache on the river of St. Marks.

It is rare indeed when a soldier has both a facile pen and a lively gift for observation. Don Juan Isidoro de Leon was such a rarity. That his Castilian verve is not lost in its transfer to English is due to the unusual ability of the translator. Through Dr. Lucy L. Wenhold, our Spanish captain gives a graphic picture of life on the troubled Florida frontier.

## I

A letter from the Commandant of Apalache, Captain de Leon, addressed to his chief don Manuel de Montiano, Governor and Captain General of the provinces of Florida. Witnessed and corrected [Archivo de Indias 58-2-13/19.]

Apalache, May 21, 1745

My Dear Sir:

I notified you through don Juan Durana of my arrival at this fort, of the taking over of it and of the condition of everything taken over, both as regards foodstuffs and as regards munitions, furnishings, implements and artillery. Now I am further informing you concerning the state in which I found the fort and in which it now is.

With the glories of the new work those of the old were entirely forgotten.<sup>1</sup> I find myself at present without either new or old, the new because of a complete lack of anything with which to carry it on, and the old in the entire uselessness of its exterior defenses and its warehouses and dwellings of officers and soldiers for in the case of all these, the water has shown us the extreme need of roofing, as there is no place nor spot where it does not rain in.

With regard to the basic construction of the fort, the wood which was used for walls and basions is still serviceable, but the weight of the bastions has so warped it that it has been neces-

<sup>1</sup> The captain has here made use of a cynical Spanish proverb: *con las glorias se acaban las memorias*, "Present successes make one forget the past." The application at this point is somewhat strained.

sary to shore up the two bastions of the sea bridge on both faces of each one as quickly as possible, and timbers are in readiness for doing the same with the others and for part of the curtains.

The most necessary of the palisades or stockades which protect the curtains from bastion to bastion have been gradually renewed both with stakes and with stringers, particularly the one which overlooks the river Tagabona.<sup>2</sup> This one, besides having its stakes in very bad and rotted condition, had two stakes in every six nailed and four loose, and the place is the most dangerous of the entire fort by reason of the few or no guns which defend this curtain.

Finding the stockade of the advanced moat in ruins with only a few stakes left, and the parapet in the same condition, converted into paths by which the Indians might enter to beg liquor at whatever hours of the night pleased them, and not being able to remedy this state of affairs without a tumult, and it being impossible of execution without evident risk to the fort and garrison,<sup>3</sup> I decided to send out and have long stakes cut. When it appeared to me that there were enough of these, I began to make a stockade on the outer moat which is the one most completely without stakes on its entire front, with only some barrels of earth at intervals. This moat has remained, in my opinion, quite good; and at the end of the stockade which looks on the River Guacara I began another, which ends at the ravelin which forms a little palisade at the land gate of the fort. I took away some stakes which projected at that place at low tide, opening the avenue entirely to the guns of the bastion of the Guacara, that entrance being closed.

Finding it very desirable for protection against being assaulted by way of the two lower cannon embrasures which are in the small bastion at the kitchen of the captain's barracks, from the point of the lower bastion to that of the upper I threw out a stockade which defends that entrance without obstructing the use of the cannon.

As regards the repairing of dwellings and the cascara warehouses, I see no way, for from May on is the time for stripping

2. Never, in any other Spanish colonial Florida record, have I seen the name Tagabona applied to the St. Marks. Yet the casual way in which it is here used leads one to conclude that its application to that river must have been current in the eighteenth century, at least for a time.
3. Exactly what the captain means to imply at this point is not altogether clear.

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the bark. However, according to the information in my possession I shall not risk sending either convicts or troops to the forest.<sup>4</sup> The most regrettable thing is that the flour storehouse leaked so that it was turned into a pigsty. I consulted with one of the Frenchmen who are here, and as I informed you, we floored it on thick puncheons of evergreen with corresponding joists of the same, instead of flooring with round logs which could support the weight of a mountain. Thus the flour is preserved from the dampness from below, though for the present it cannot be preserved from that from above. Fortunately the powder magazine does not leak.

I have lived until now in the hope that a ship would soon come with supplies of all sorts, meanwhile entertaining the multitude of Indians who have come here, with the two barrels of liquor and one of cane syrup (which, as I informed you, I had taken from the storehouse) and have gone on entertaining them with tobacco and pipes which I took from the storehouse. But as they do not get all they wish, and as for a month past there has been nothing of any sort in the storehouse, I am harassed and do not know what to say to them without paying attention to their insolences. For when I think them most quiet they break out saying: "King of Spain no good. English good, gives much, much. Captain Tuluague does not give what el Mica sends."<sup>5</sup>

They say no captain has come here who has not brought much, much liquor, maize and some of everything, and that I am keeping it. And as they do not know that I alone have been distinguished in scarcity and want, in a manner they speak the truth; for the abundance that Alfaro and Durana had cannot, in their estimation, be lacking in the new captain. All are of this opinion . . . and anyhow (they say), let them be given what they ask for.<sup>6</sup>

4. The expression which I have translated forest is *el monte* which in American Spanish refers very generally to any uncultivated area regardless of what grows on it. In the Spanish of Florida the reference is usually to forested areas.

5 A note on the margin on the ms. explains that *Mico* means Governor, *Tuluague*, no good.

6. This entire passage, indeed, the whole document, is a vivid picture of the demoralization of the Indians by the rivalries in trade and colonial policies between English, French, and Spanish, rivalries in which the English had the advantage because of their more abundant trade goods.

{The deletion indicated here is a passage difficult to put into English. The sense seems to be: "They refuse to be disabused by the statements made to them about {lack of supplies in} the warehouses." - Ed.}

And as I find no reply to make to anything the flour has been supplying and still supplies the lack of maize and other things, and it has come to the point where they throw it away because it appears to them too little.

As the stay of the Indians here is considerable, so also is the consumption of flour. The cause of all the trouble is that there is nothing in the warehouse which they can buy with their furs, of which they have brought in so many that except for overstocking the store there could have been taken in during March and April more than 800 skins. The result is, that all that has been gamed in the way of good feeling has been converted into mortal hatred against the Spaniards. The Indians go back furious into the provinces and God only knows what the results will be.

In brief, when the Indians lack liquor there is lacking also friendship, union, quiet, and then opportunity to find out from them in their drunken sprees what goes on between them and the English, and of learning which are the ones who have gone out to kill and have killed and imprisoned Spaniards. It was in that way that I found out how many those were who took part in the cavalry battle, that they were 90 in number and were recruited from all the villages of the provinces. One of them was here, telling the whole story with great boldness and without any compunction, and he related that they carried away five prisoners but killed one, the trumpeter, because he was not able to walk, and according to their signs they took away prisoners the ensign and the son of Quintela.

Hither came the son of the chief Yesqueo and six others, saying they came from the hunt of San Juan, that they were passing by and only came to see the new captain. After I had entertained them with what was available, they conversed for something like four hours with twelve others who had come that day. These latter told the Savacola woman that they were taking with them two Spanish prisoners whom they had captured near St. Augustine in sight of a fortress; that though these they had captured were three in number, they had killed one on the road, a tall, heavy man, and that they left the two others tied at the Cape of Casina, Antonio Savacola and another Indian remaining there to guard them.

Six days ago the young chief of Salacarlíche arrived here and I spoke to him to the effect that if he could bring in these two

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prisoners I would give him for each one a barrel of flour and three bottles of liquor. He said he would consult a brother of his and another relative to see whether they could bring them, and he asked me for a paper which he might give them so that they would not be distrustful. He took it and has not returned although I have now learned that they took them {the prisoners} to San Simon with other deserters. The English wanted to take Durana's Negro but the Indians opposed it, and no one is willing to offer to bring him in though I have offered them 50 pesos. They say they are from Captain Tuluque.<sup>7</sup>

I am informing you that the barrels of meat which were on the report are still intact, no meat having been distributed except in the month of January, and that was thrown away at it was useless and putrid. In this scarcity some barrels have been opened to see whether anything usable would come out of some one of them. It was not possible to endure the stench, and as the weather had turned warm and the odor was intolerable I ordered them buried before they should give us a pest. I did not allow them to be thrown into the river, in order not to infect the water and the fish. The others remain until a ship comes, so that its captain and crew may be witnesses of their disposal or else take them back to Havana.

As a result of this, it has been necessary for me to give to the soldiers and the convicts half an *arroba* of flour of the better quality since the month of February, to enable them to buy meat from the Indians, supplying in this way the lack of meat and vegetables of which there are none since the beginning of March. Consequently, with this great expenditure, of flour on the Indians and the better grade for the troops and convicts, I am forced to send the pirogue to the Keys with letters to senores of Guemes and Arostegui<sup>8</sup> unless a ship comes in this month of May or in June, as there are left only 24 barrels for May. Not being able to conjecture the cause of this delay in the arrival of the vessel, in a place such as this where there is no recourse except to Heaven, I lay the blame on my destiny, which would not be complete if the

7. The meaning here seems to be that the offer of 50 pesos coming from the man they call "Captain No-good" can have no expectation of fulfillment.

8. Lt. Gen. Juan Francisco de Guemes y Horcasitas, governor of Havana, and Martin de Arostegui, an official of the Royal Company of Havana, suppliers for Apalache. - Ed.

scarcity had been only in the first month. [It is] a circumstance to make the most prudent act the fool.

I found here a family, mother, daughter, and son, with another Indian woman named Agustina whose husband the Indians killed. They remain here because they do not wish to leave the Spaniards. The formerly resident missionary padre left them here, and if it were not for the want of a priest they would now be Christians, for with that intention the mother sent in search of another daughter whom she had in the Indian village, but as the daughter had married, the other sister came back without her. It appeared to me to be the Royal Service to give for the four two *arrobas* of flour a month since the month of February.<sup>9</sup>

These Indian women are of considerable help here, for they are constantly making pots, pans, jars, and other necessary things of clay, and sieves. By this means they support themselves with the help of potatoes and oysters which they gather.

This woman called Savacola (because she was the wife of the Chief Savacola) came at the beginning of April, I should say of March, with the *atiqui*,<sup>10</sup> and through him she informed me that I should be careful because many Indians were coming, incited by the English, to burn her village and that of Salacarliche and afterward this fort; that she would know in time what they were plotting and would inform me of everything and would herself retreat to the fort.

This news has made me anxious, for when the young chief of Salacarliche went away on {my} request for the prisoners, he said to me that after the middle of April I should not send anyone to the forest; and that I should be watchful for four tribes of Indians that were coming, instigated by the English. Estiche went away with his family to hunt, and he said the same thing to me. Afterward Yufala and his family and the boatman and his family went away to hunt and they gave me the same warning.

In consequence of all these admonitions I made haste to put up the stockdale on the River Guacara, to repair with stakes and girders the curtains of both parts, to shore up everything that

9. The *arroba* equals 25 pounds, and the two - *arroba* allowance per month gave each of the four scarcely more than a quarter of a pound of flour a day. Doubtless potatoes and oysters filled a very vital need.

10. *Atiqui*, interpreter. The word seems to have been taken into the Spanish of colonial Florida at an early date and used without translation, as a general rule.

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needed it, to open embrasures at the front at the water gate, and (there being no lower guns on the bastions there), to close with liners the entire front of the water-gate, as there were apertures three or four inches wide between the timbers which serve as a wall, through which could be seen from outside all that went on inside. A pier was made with tall stakes; the gun carriages were examined, and two being useless were replaced; and all were given a coat of tar.<sup>11</sup>

Handspikes, gunners' ladles, rammers and new sponges were made, for everything was ruined by weather. A supply of canister shot was made from broken cauldrons, nail heads, and other old iron which serves for mitraille. I also had<sup>112</sup> *machetes* made for clearing the country and for whatever need might arise. I inspected the hand grenades and the carasses. There is only one box of grenades with fuses that will serve and those are the ones that came here in Durana's time. The others, of which there are plenty, have the explosives of the fuses ruined by weather. As for the bullets, you will see from the inventory the small quantity there is for this sort; and this is one of the things that have contributed most to put the Indians out of temper, they not having been given as many as they wanted, and consequently gun-flints.<sup>12</sup>

I furnished the soldiers with ammunition and gave arms and ammunition to some of the convicts. While I was engaged in these preparations Quilate arrived on March 28, with his sea-captain<sup>13</sup> and three others. I received him with the accustomed honors and showed him a friendly and pleased face. I took him to my quarters, and after he had refreshed himself and dined on bread and syrup which was then being served them, and had smoked his tobacco in new pipes, he asked me through the atiqui what news I had.

I told him what I have written you here. He answered that on that account he had come to wait for runners whom he had sent to the provinces for information as to what had resulted from

11. A lack of grammatical agreement at this point intimates that the tar was applied both to gun carriages and to pier pilings.
12. The elliptical phrase must mean either that there was a shortage of gun-flints, or that the Indians did not get as many as they wanted. Possibly it means both.
13. Chief paddler or steersman, probably. [Quilate was chief of the Apalachicola Indians. - Ed.]

the council which the English were seeking to have with the chiefs, and the facts with regard to a war drum which they had brought, along with some clothing, and had deposited in a house in Caveta to distribute among the chiefs and caciques of the villages. Today, May 3, they have not yet come.

Six days ago he sent out two of those who came with him, to investigate the delay of the runners whom he is expecting, to bring in what news they could gather, and to request the return of a convict named Simon who went away April 17 with a brother of the halfbreed. For some time he {Simon} had been bringing in meat regularly and had won confidence, and Quilate had him prepared to go on a scouting expedition with Antonio the Apalachian. I shall give you whatever information the runners bring. One of them is the young cacique of Salacarlliche.

Antonio is an Indian who went on a scouting trip to Florida, and took a soldier named Flores, setting him free because the enemy would have killed him as they did the others who went on that occasion. Durana left this soldier here, and he has not been willing to go elsewhere. Whenever the troops and the convicts go to the forest he goes with them, reconnoitering the country. Since the middle of January I have been giving him for his maintenance a loaf of bread daily, besides which he dines and sups with the drummer.

The two Indians whom Quilate sent out have just arrived with the news that the chiefs were not willing to unite, and the inference is that they are not pleased with the English because of a fort which the latter intend to build in Caveta. Quilate thinks it would be practicable to make this fort the beginning of a break between the Yuchi and the English, for the former will not permit fortifications and will only allow a guardhouse for clothing and trade goods, but if the English try to put up an armed fort they will fall upon them.

The scouts also brought the information that the chiefs deliberated on taking to you the two prisoners made by the son of Yesqueo and Antonio Savacola; but the latter objected, saying it had cost them their effort and that they wanted to take them to San Simon, as in fact they did. The sergeant Raymundo is in Gualquini.<sup>14</sup> The Indians killed Rivas' soldier named Games be-

14. San Simon and Gualquini refer to the British settlements on St. Simons Island, Ga. - Ed.

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cause he took away a musket from them and went away with it. They carried away the convict Simon to Caveta, with what intention is not known.

Quilate, seeing that the runners he was expecting did not come, and that (according to the information brought by the others) nothing unusual was happening, decided to return to his village, which he did on the seventh, taking with him Antonio the Apalachian and telling me that if there should be any new developments either he would return or else he would send a runner to inform me fully.

The old Salacarlache sent to tell me that until a ship should come he would not come down to see me, but that I should be on guard because several bands were coming to take scalps from Apalache. The two whom Quilate sent brought the same information, and said that five days before, eight had gone out from the village of Yufale; and that all the bands that were setting out for this place and for St. Augustine are from that village, which is made up of malcontents and therefore thickly populated and the refuge of every evildoer.

Quilate came March 28 and went away May 7. I expended upon him and his companions half an *arroba* of flour for porridge every 24 hours, four loaves of bread daily, a decanter of liquor (because they knew there was not much of it), a pint of cane syrup, and six bundles of tobacco during their stay and two which they took for the road. Consequently, maintaining them six days longer would have finished up everything I had been reserving to entertain those who keep on coming: for there remain only two flasks of liquor and some settlings of cane syrup for emergencies which, thanks be to God, have arisen up to now only in case of the convicts: for excepting these, few are sick.

I am of the opinion that Quilate was satisfied with the attention shown him, for besides what I have just mentioned he breakfasted and dined with the lieutenant and myself; and as he is a sensible Indian he knows the scarcity of provisions in this fort and that he was entertained with more than there was to spare, for when the soldiers brought in fish the first that was set aside was for Quilate and his family.

Recognizing the fact that the two bastions that face the sea, *las Animas* and *San Francisco*, if once the enemy gets in below,

will have no defensive apparatus except grenades and carcasses, and that they could be demolished with axes, I decided that after they were shored up on both fronts I would surround them with a stockade. That I have now done, availing myself of the help of Quilate and two Indians, brothers, who live here with their families.

They all went out with the soldiers and convicts during four days to bring in stakes and girders. The bastions are now as well reinforced and defended as they have probably ever been, to the small lower bastion where I had put up a stockade for the defense of the lower cannon embrasures. The palisade on that side being very bad, all is covered, bastions and palisade. From the last stake, which is at the lower tide level of the River Tagabona and comes out of the stockade of the land moat, I have constructed in diamond shape a section of stockade which ends on the inner moat. This is a precaution in case it should become necessary to mass troops between the two moats, that they may not be surprised by the enemy at low tide.

There remains {to be made} only the new gate on the water side; the present one is so unstable that a new and strong one is necessary. It will shortly be made by one of the two Frenchmen who is a skillful ship's carpenter and very quick. It was he who floored the warehouse.

The stakes have been set without the reinforcement of palisading to serve as curtains. {There are} new, unbroken girders, props for the bastions and more where girders are necessary; there are 2080.

There have been used for nails 12 machetes, axes, a large number of adzes, chain-links, fish gigs, other small articles intended for the Indians, seven bars of iron (not to mention the sets of nails), pikes, shovels, spades, [and things] without number, as everything has been used without reserve, even useless barrel-hoops. Consequently only five bars of iron are left, and very little steel, of which considerable has been used. I am informing you of it in order that you may take such action as seems to you to be to the King's service and for the restoration of this fort.

Today, May 20, the chief Topesico, with a son and two companions came from a scouting expedition in the provinces; he was

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one of the scouts for whom Quilate was waiting. After having given him for breakfast bread and cane syrup, there being nothing else, I asked him from where he came and what news there was in the provinces.

He replied that he came from Casista where there had been held a council for the chiefs, and that he was nominated by all to come to bring the feathers of friendship and good feeling toward the Spaniards, the [feathers] which signify the peace they have made and their determination to give no aid to the English, because they are now disillusioned concerning the intentions of the latter; that if these have deceived them until now in many things, now their eyes are opened, and that if [the English] desire war with the Spaniards, let them understand that it is between white men; that I shall give this information to you and to [the French at] Mobile.

This request that I inform Mobile is, I think, the result of the chiefs having answered the summons of that governor who made them some threat if they did not cease persecuting Spaniards at the instigating of the English. He [Topesico] gave me to understand something to that effect, but as the atiqui is so dull and does not know how to explain what they say or what is said to him, it is hard to make out much by conjecture.

Answering various questions that I put to him, he said that the war drum which they [the English] had brought was to call them to the *cassina*<sup>15</sup>, theirs being broken; that it is not true about the fort, nor about the clothing for the caciques and chief; that there is no news of any sort; that two canoes which had gone out with warriors had returned, and that now there are out the 36 men from the village of Yufala who went to the coast, and about whom I wrote you that they would reach St. Augustine.

He also said that there are seven Indians of Yufala who started out for this fort; that the majority of the Indians of the provinces are in their cultivated fields or busy taking *bacas*.<sup>16</sup> He

15. The black drink of the Indians, used at their gatherings and on special occasions.

16. I have no meaning to offer for the word *bacas*. If it is a mis-writing of *vacas* (b and v having the same sound in Spanish) it may possibly mean that the Indians were hunting buffalo. However I am aware that that is not a likely translation, especially as the verb used is not the one ordinarily applied to the hunting of big game.

[On February 25, 1745, Montiano wrote the Crown of the abundance of cattle and horses (*vacas y cavallos*) in the Florida woods. They were, he said, difficult to "apprehend" and herd into captivity. (AI 58-1-32). - Ed.]

ended by saying that I should advise you and Havana not to let the store fail, for then it would be necessary for the Indians to go with their furs and skins to the English; that there should be in it some of everything.

All this I am passing on to you for your information and in order that you may provide whatever means you think wisest for the preservation of this friendship which they are manifesting through this emissary, whom I shall not be able to entertain during the time he spends here with more than some flour, a daily loaf of bread, pipes from the store, and good words; for now there is nothing else in the fort and the hopes of all hang on the coming of the ship. And indeed it will be necessary that it bring much if there is to be enough to content so many creditors.

I have not found in this fort more than seven oars, among defective ones, for the pirogue. The sampan had 12 in the rough, and 18 which I had brought. Twenty-four had been made and two small canoe-paddles which serve to steer the sampan. The sampan ran aground at the time don Juan Durana's belongings were shipped, it being heavily loaded and the afternoon very windy; and it was stranded so completely that it could not be brought in until four days later.

As it is the only means we have of transportation to the forest, and there being here no calker nor carpenter, I laid hands on a soldier called Galves the Carpenter to make for it five *rumbos*,<sup>17</sup> five flat boats and three rowers benches, and to calk it. Another soldier who has talked it twice, Chepe de la Rosa by name. . . .<sup>18</sup> [I employed] to floor the warehouse, open embrasures and mend the main gate, all of this at a cost of 28 pesos and 4 reals in flour and 8 1/2 reals in tobacco and goods from the store. All [is] included in the total, for which I have given a receipt for what I

17. I cannot identify the word *rumbo* in any use such as it has here.

18. The omitted phrase is *q. con onze cavos de hachas*. It might be translated "who, with 11 sappers, [I employed] . . ." Sappers were soldiers trained to build fortifications. The Apalache axe experts (*cavos de hachas*) may not have been rated officially as sappers, but after cutting 2080 palisade posts, they could hold their own with any regular company of sappers. - Ed.

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have received from the store to spend upon the Indians, as you will see from the enclosed statement.<sup>19</sup>

The surgeon, Pedro Careno, died on April 12, and this fort now has neither chaplain nor surgeon.

The above is all there is at present to communicate to you. I remain loyally at your command, beseeching our Lord to keep you many years.

Most sincerely your servant

don Juan Isidoro de Leon

II

Copy of a letter from don Juan Isidoro de Leon, captain of one of the eight companies of reinforcements of this Post St. Augustine, and commander of the fort of San Marcos de Apalache. [Archivo de Indias 86-7-21.]

Senor don Manuel de Montiano                      Apalache, June 26, 1747  
Dear Sir:

Philip, the son of Salacarliche, arrived at this fort on June 21, and although he is sick he says he is going to St. Augustine in search of information concerning his brother, who had said to him that he would return in two months and who has not yet appeared. I am taking the opportunity thus offered of informing you that the young chief went out from this fort sometime in February, sent by the garrison with a petition to you, and with a letter from me in which I told you partially of the stir produced in this garrison by the news of the postponement of the exchange of troops, from which news has resulted much unpleasantness to me. This latter circumstance must be passed over in silence, being too long a story, and I go on to inform you about the Yuchi provinces and their chiefs.

On May 19 the chief Topasico arrived here sent by the chiefs. In order that he might deliver his message and carry out his com-

19. An involved sentence by which the writer doubtless means that he has included in one total everything taken from the store. [An appended, witnessed statement made by Simon Basques, government notary, states that this letter is a copy of an original shown him by the Governor, the copy made and witnessed by the Governor's verbal order in the city of St. Augustine. He calls attention to certain passages marked on the margins, which relate to the urgent and desperate needs in the Fort of San Marcos de Apalache.]

mission, the chiefs who were here were called together, namely, Quilate, Chocato, Cuchivay, and Chumayche. With the aid of Captain don Bernabe he gave this message from the chiefs: that as a result of their deliberations they were declaring themselves vassals of the King of Spain; that they were communicating the fact to me in order that I might be informed and might inform you of their decision; that at the time of the harvest dance, the chiefs would come with the band to go from here to Florida [St. Augustine] to do homage to Spain, and to discuss and settle with the Governor some points concerning the vassalage they promise to the King of Spain, and at the same time to learn from me whether they would be well received there.

I replied to the effect that the Yuchi knew very well that in the midst of their bad reciprocity toward the Spaniards and the constant harm they did, both in this fort and in St. Augustine, in Pensacola and the other territories of the King of Spain, they had been well received and entertained and feted. That without exception, all those who had gone to St. Augustine had ample proof of that fact; to which witness was born by those who were captured in Mose who, in spite of the fact that they were imprisoned because of their activities in defense of the English and against the Spaniards, had probably informed them of the good treatment and assistance they had received from the Governor of Florida. Accordingly I reassured them and offered them in your name the favorable reception and entertainment which is proper in the case of chiefs, assuring them also that they might come when they chose, and I would give them letters to you. At this Topasico turned and said that it did not require more than a three days' stay.<sup>20</sup>

On May 2, Pancho the Yamas arrived here with the news that the Yuchi were at War with the Chalaque and the Talapuzes; and that a mounted Indian had passed, warning the villages to go out against the Chalaque; that they had threatened the few Yamassee there are, unless they went out to join the Yuchi; that

20. Precisely what Topasico meant to imply is not clear, but as the tarryings of visiting Indians in St. Augustine were usually prolonged, the remark would seem to have had some significance. [The following spring the Indians did visit St. Augustine, and stayed considerably more than three days. Don Juan's previous comment on Mose seems to refer to the capture by the Spanish of British and Indian besiegers encamped at Fort Mosa near St. Augustine in 1740. - Ed.]

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the Yamasee had their canoes ready to come with their families to this fort in case they found themselves hard pressed; and that I should write you that if this thing happened, the King would surely have to maintain them in this fort or else they would have to go with their families to St. Augustine. I am informing you so that in case of such a contingency you may command the measures that shall be taken as regards these families. Since then I have learned from other Yamasee that the greater part of the family of the father-in-law of the mestizo went away to Pensacola.

On the third, Chocato arrived here as a scout sent by the chiefs, with the information that the Chiquele had gone out with some chiefs and a band of men against the Chaluque; and that the French had sent gunpowder, bullets and muskets to the Yuchi; and that the Chatos Indians of French affiliation had gone out in force against the Chalaque and in favor of the Yuchi, also that the Chatos were going by a different route from that of the Yuchi. He said that the intention of the French was to defeat the latter nation to prevent its union with the allies of the English, and that the forts which had been built in the villages of Casista and Caveta had been an expedient of the French.

It is my opinion that the French either have orders from their sovereign for this assistance to the Yuchi or are trying to win their favor in order that they may establish trading posts among them and take away that advantage from the English. Luis, who heard the account given by Chocato, will give a more detailed explanation of this commission.

With the letter I sent you by the young chief, I included a communication from the Governor General of New Orleans, sent here by means of a runner who came from the Commandant of Pensacola. Now I am informing you of the great concourse of Indians with their families who continually have come down to this fort. In all the time of the fort's existence it has never before experienced such an influx of Indians; men, women, old persons, and hungry *pecuatas*.<sup>21</sup> It has caused us much amusement to see the freedom with which the Indian women, married

21. *Pecuatas*, slaves, inferior vassals. A word surviving from the language of the ancient Florida aborigines. For this information I am indebted to Dr. John R. Swanton, formerly of the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution.

and single, *pequatas* and *pecuatitas*, came to the quarters of the soldiers and the convicts to beg food, for although they were constantly being given food from the storehouse, the children were so numerous that what was given them from the store did not satisfy them.

Later it was discovered that the concourse had resulted from the fact that they came here alarmed by the news they had concerning the Chalaque, the villages being without men because so many bands had come down to the coast. In consequence of the circumstances I have just mentioned and of the retreat of the bands that came down to the coast, all of whom came to this fort, the people who gathered here were so numerous that I was not able to count by families those who were encamped at the entrance to the forest . . . <sup>22</sup> for the road swarmed at all hours with people coming and going, and it was impossible to distinguish these new ones who came because of their fear, from those of the other families.

We always had 10 or 12 chiefs to dine and to breakfast. As a result the expenditure of food has been so great, particularly this year, that added to the consumption of it by the innumerable rats and the damage done the storehouses by hurricanes and rain, the half and more of the provisions have been consumed. Consequently this fort is without seed grain, with only a three months' supply of flour and that so bad and bitter that with the intolerable heat and drought I fear that the garrison and the few convicts will fall ill. God send us rain, for the lack of it is very serious.

Although in my other letters I have kept you informed of the shortages there are in this fort, I do so again in this letter with the greatest urgency concerning everything, for time consumes all and the more one tries to repair an old house, the more damage one discovers. Thus all the iron has been used for nails, wedges, and axes, and with the expending of it on the Indians (which is all too much), it has been necessary to use barrel hoops, pikes, shovels, and old spades for whatever need arose. Steel is scarce, and what there is of it is bad, which is the cause of so much breakage of axes. This scarcity, with the lack of bullets and gun flints, is serious; and as no supply of tools of any sort

22. Deleted are two words, *y Nayca*, which may be a copyist's error for a phrase signifying "and neighborhood." - Ed.

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has come to this fort in a long time, what is here is simply nothing.

As regards the pirogues, the *bongo*<sup>23</sup> and the skiff, there have been mending and repairs and the expense of their upkeep, and there is no longer any pitch and very little tar and no oakum whatever. Because of this lack the sampan has been stranded for many months though it is of major importance for the forest and for unloading cargo. Tallow, ropes for kedge anchors and sails for the *bongo* are wanting; and as for the pirogues, there is only one that is more than half serviceable. Boards have been necessary for the repair of the pirogues, the *bongo* and the skiff. I sent out to collect some canoes which the Indians told me were stranded on Point Cassina and which, being in bad condition, became boards for repairs.

A fortification in this state of destitution is not even half good. The use of the pirogues at the forest is constant; and being old and having been often mended without a ship's carpenter or a calker, there results constant expenditure of pitch and oakum and tar; and always the work is bad, so that if there arises the need of sending to Pensacola or the Keys there is not one fit for the voyage.

I am informing you of it in order that you may take whatever action you see fit to the end that this may not be so destitute of the barest necessities, for otherwise it cannot be maintained. And since the King has in Havana an abundant supply of pirogues and launches which serve for nothing except to be an expense to those who take care of them, you can appropriately ask for the King's property for the service of the King.

I am mentioning to you again the necessity for sending rope for the pirogues and the *bongo*, for already, without there having been any storm, two anchors are in the river for lack of ropes; for as the ropes are of sisal they do not endure weather conditions as do those of hemp, and are forever having to be replaced.

If when this runner arrives a vessel should be leaving for Havana, urge don Martin de Arostegui<sup>24</sup> to send to this fort without loss of time a shipment of food stuffs, before we find ourselves in another stringency like the former one. And warn him

23. A bongo is a large, rough boat, or canoe.

24. An official of the Royal Company of Havana, contractors furnishing supplies and trade goods to Apalache. - Ed.

not to send beef, but plenty of pork; for up to this time we have not been so fortunate as to have any beef arrive in usable condition. That which came in the shipment of last February is still unused except for one item,<sup>25</sup> and that the troops could not use; and that of the later shipment is still packed, along with that which was already bad. I wrote this very thing to don Martin, that he should send only a very little beef, and he replied that he would do as I said; but in the next shipment it came, as if he had not been advised.

In order not to pile up sheets of paper I am not informing you in detail of what we have had to spend this year on the chiefs and their families, over and above what is usual, as I have already said.

One of those most constantly here has been Cuchivay with his family; and he, in addition to breakfasting and dining with the other chiefs, has received flour, maize and kidney beans for his family, sugar and syrup, kneaded bread, bottles and more bottles of brandy, and tobacco continually; and beside all this expense were the things he said and his impudence when drunk. Only my patience could have borne with such madness. Although the others were a trial it seemed that even when drunk they had some understanding; and recently when he returned here with his family in May, at a time when there was no brandy, he was very rational, remaining here 28 days.

This concourse of Indians, which has been bad for the storehouses, has been of benefit to the trading post. In little more than three months there have been consumed four casks of brandy, a barrel and one hundred decanters of rum, sugar and syrup in abundance, and in this time Solana has barreled 1600 deer skins; and now the trading store has left only a little syrup and sugar and no tobacco, which last named want is the greatest discomfort and annoyance of the soldiers.

As to the convicts, there are only 10, including the blacksmith and the carpenter; and of these, Juan Espejo (crippled, as I have already informed you), the carpenter Joaquin de Peralta, and Juan Antonio Monge (who is a marine) will be time-expired the middle of July. Manuel de Anaya and Manuel de Celis de la Puebla have 18 months more. Quilate and Cuchivay are urgent

25. A barrel, no doubt, which the captain thinks of as one item on the account.

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with me to give Manuel Celis a furlough. When I told them that I had no authority to give it without an order from you, they replied that you might grant him the furlough. I promised that I would take him with me when my transfer arrived, and that you would grant him the furlough. I am mentioning it so that you may be informed of the promise, although I think that Quilate is one of those who have been appointed to go to Florida [St. Augustine] with the other chiefs.

Leaving out of question the motives you may have had for keeping this fort and garrison during three years without a priest, without relief for the troops, destitute, and for a longer time than has recently been customary, I must bring to your attention the fact that the soldiers are in ill humor, and according to some indications they will endure only until the end of November at longest. In the contrary case there will be insubordination detrimental to their persons and their service. I have some information to that effect and delay will be fatal. And though I am aware that much space lies twixt word and deed, nevertheless I am bringing the matter to your notice so that you may be pleased to take some action and relieve me of the greatest of those troubles which I have borne in this year and which have arisen from the postponement of the transfer.<sup>26</sup>

The lack of everything is general in this fort. There is want of medicine and of a qualified surgeon who understands its use; and for that reason I am again reminding you that the new detachment ought not to come without bringing purges, for they are most essential in this climate and there is sore lack of them.

I remain at your orders with the greatest devotion with which I pray our Lord to guard you the many happy years which I desire for you.

Your servant,  
don Juan Isidoro de Leon

26. In a letter written to accompany the copy of don Juan Isidoro's letter which the governor sends to the Crown, Governor Montiano explains that the miserable circumstances at Apalache result not from neglect, but from (1) the fact that English pirates have possessed themselves of the Florida Keys and block the way to supply ships between Havana and Apalache; and (2) from the unfortunate shipwreck of the expedition conveying the relief detachment to Apalache. Don Juan Isidoro complains justly, says the governor, of the condition in which they are left. We, reading these complaints, wonder when and how the remedy came.