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THE ENGLISH INVASION OF SPANISH
FLORIDA, 1700-1706

by CHARLES W. ARNADE

THOUGH FLORIDA had been discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513, not until 1565 did it become a Spanish province in fact. In that year Pedro Menendez de Aviles was able to establish a permanent capital which he called St. Augustine. Menendez and successive executives had plans to make St. Augustine a thriving metropolis ruling over a vast Spanish colony that might possibly be elevated to a viceroyalty. Nothing of this sort happened. By 1599 Florida was in desperate straits: Indians had rebelled and butchered the Franciscan missionaries, fire and flood had made life in St. Augustine miserable, English pirates of such fame as Drake had ransacked the town, local jealousies made life unpleasant. Spain threatened to dismantle St. Augustine. The viceregal dreams were rapidly vanishing and to maintain the status quo was now the greatest ambition in order to preserve the very existence of Spanish Florida. ¹

Exactly one hundred years later things had improved little or none, according to our mid-twentieth-century notion of progress, but when judged in accordance with Spanish Florida standards the "provincias de las Floridas" were far better off in 1699 than in 1599. AS a matter of fact, St. Augustine, its environs, and the other regions under actual Spanish occupation, were in the midst of a "golden age" never equalled before and hardly ever achieved again under the Spanish flag. ²

The Franciscans had revitalized their sixteenth-century missions and bravely marched west into populous Apalache. Here and along the trail to Apalache they founded many missions,

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1. The story of Florida at the end of the sixteenth century and the efforts to dismantle St. Augustine is told by Charles W. Arnade, *Florida on Trial* (Coral Gables, 1959).
 2. The emergence of the golden age and its relation to the creole landed aristocracy that was coming into being mostly made up from St. Augustine citizens, is sketched by Charles W. Arnade, "Cattle Raising in Spanish Florida, 1513-1763," to be published in the *Journal of Agricultural History*.

thriving by mid-century.³ Under the government of the energetic but unethical Pablo de Hita y Salazar (1675-1680), settlers were sent into Apalache.⁴ When Hita y Salazar arrived in St. Augustine, the stone fortress, a dream of every governor since Pedro Menendez de Aviles, was in full construction. With the near completion of this fort St. Augustine changed from a miserable village to a respectable city.⁵ The acid Father Alonso de Leturiondo, a true St. Augustinian and parish priest at the end of the century, tells us that it was "a magnificent fort of modern construction of such great capacity that it can, on occasions, shelter within its walls all the people of the city." Leturiondo told the King that this fort was "beautiful, it is a very pleasing sight to the eye. Its entire structure is haughty and powerful." The very presence of this fort had changed the style of living of St. Augustine and this in turn of all of occupied Spanish Florida.⁶

Since 1650, a proud citizenry of Florida creoles had come into being. Many of them were army personnel stationed in the fort. It had been the desire of the Spanish Crown since the foundation of St. Augustine to man the Florida fortifications with about 350 men, mostly from Spain.⁷ As time went on a custom developed to enroll the native sons in the St. Augustine garrison. By mid-century a proud *criollo* military tradition tied to St. Augustine had developed. The leading families supplied men and officers to the garrison. The Crown fought a rear action to avoid this and in 1692 even issued a royal cedula "that native-born criollos are not to hold more than forty *plazas* of the garrison."⁸ This was never possible to enforce. Only the

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3. For a short summary of the emergence of the Apalache missions see Herbert E. Bolton, *Arredondo's Historical Proof of Spain's Title to Georgia* (Berkeley, 1925).
 4. Hirachuba and Andres, *caciques* of Apalache, to the Governor of Florida, San Luis [in Apalache, Florida] February 12, 1699, 4 folios, Stetson Collection, University of Florida, AGI: 54-5-19-38.
 5. See Albert Manucy, *The Building of the Castillo de San Marcos* (Washington, 1942).
 6. *Memoria del Bachiller Alonso de Leturiondo* [written in Spain about 1700 and handprinted in St. Augustine], Stetson, AGI: 58-2-3-14, 31 pp.
 7. Cf. Luis Arana "Infantry in Spanish Florida, 1671-1679," seminar paper University of Florida, 1958. Available in the library of the Castillo de San Marcos, St. Augustine.
 8. Royal Cedula, Madrid, Feb. 18, 1693, 4 folios, Stetson, AGI: 58-1-22-26.

governorship remained beyond the reach of the local families with vested interests.⁹ These families such as the Hitas, Horruytiners, Mexias, Solanas, Ponce de Leons (not descendents of the famous conquistador), Primo de Riberas, and many others had grown respectable but very narrow-minded during this last century.¹⁰ The emergence of the beautiful and powerful fort had finally given them a *raison d'etre*.

Why did this fort exist? Certainly not to justify a local military citizenry. It was built because of the ever-increasing international challenge to Spain's vital shipping route which skirted along the Florida coast. This danger had existed as far back as the sixteenth century; it was, after all, the main reason that Spain kept Florida.¹¹ In 1668 the English freebooter, Robert Searles, with or without tacit approval from his Sovereign, attacked St. Augustine on May 29, causing much damage and confusion.¹² Only two years later English colonists in a most daring move established Carolina with Charles Town as its main settlement. It was the beginning of a long age of conflict between Spain and England, bringing war to Spanish Florida and sharp diplomatic hassles in European capitals. The great Herbert Bolton called it the fight over the "debatable land."¹³

The various skirmishes that began with the founding of Carolina culminated in the full-fledged invasion of Florida in 1702. The Carolinians from the very beginning felt an intense hatred for Catholic Spain. Coupled with this was a feeling of superiority; they regarded the Spaniards of Florida with utter disdain. They were sure of an easy final victory as soon as they had consolidated their new province. But by 1700 France had

9. See John TePaske, "The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1959.

10. Interesting is the letter of Governor Diego de Quiroga y Losada to the Crown, April 1, 1688, in which he complained in no uncertain terms about the unbeatable nepotism of the Florida garrison which made his executive duties extremely difficult (4 folios, Stetson, AGI: 54-5-12-53).

11. "Informacion de orden de S. M. sobre el estado general de las provincias de la Florida y si conviene o no desmantelar el fuerte de San Augustin," St. Augustine, 1602, 170 folios, Stetson, AGI: 86-5-24.

12. Royal Officials of Florida to the Crown, St. Augustine, June 30, 1668, 10 folios, AGI: 58-5-14-134, North Carolina Spanish Records, reel 3; Royal Officials to the Crown, St. Augustine, 1671, 38 folios, Stetson, AGI: Escribania de Camera, legajo 155, no. 22.

13. Bolton, 1.

completed sovereignty over the Mississippi with the establishment of Louisiana. While to the south of Protestant Carolina lay Catholic Spanish Florida completely determined to oppose English expansion, to the west emerged an even stronger line of resistance manned by Catholic France. And while the Carolinians underestimated the Spaniards in their disdainfulness they feared the French. Some thoughtful minds in Charles Town pondered over the possibility of a French-Spanish alliance which would encircle Carolina.¹⁴ Then in 1700 the King of Spain died childless and Louis XIV claimed the throne for his Bourbon grandson. If there was consternation in Europe over the union of France and Spain there was near panic in Carolina.

Even before the news of the War of the Spanish Succession reached America, Carolina was ready to march on Spanish Florida. Substantial rumors had reached Charles Town that the French were ready to attack and use Spanish St. Augustine as a main base. The Carolinians elevated the ruthless James Moore to the governorship of Carolina. This man, "active, ambitious and aggressive," was an "impecunious planter," a high church man and a heartless slave dealer. There was in him one-half honest dedication to the cause of Carolina and Protestantism and another half to personal advancement by whatever means; in short, a saint and a devil. He was shrewd but reckless.¹⁵ As a fire-eater of the worst type he convinced the colonial legislature to organize an expeditionary force to advance on St. Augustine.¹⁶ Disdainful as ever of the Spaniards, Moore was careless in his preparation and failed to obtain proper intelligence about the military strength of St. Augustine. He misjudged the great fort at St. Augustine, a true powerhouse. Moore's counterpart, the Spanish governor of Florida, had arrived in St. Augustine in 1700 but immediately understood the true value of the fort. Governor Joseph de Zuniga y Zerda made a fast survey of his garrison and came to the conclusion that an open battle was dangerous; he decided to retreat inside the great

14. Verner W. Crane, "The Southern Frontier in Queen Anne's War," *American Historical Review*, XXIV (1918-1919), 379-395.

15. David Duncan Wallace, *The History of South Carolina* (New York, 1934), I, 157; Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Ann Arbor, 1929), 40.

16. A. S. Salley, ed., *Journals of the Common House of Assembly of South Carolina for 1702* (Columbia, S.C., 1932), 107 pp., *passim*.

fort with all the inhabitants of St. Augustine and surrounding areas.¹⁷

Moore and his men lashed into coastal Florida and Georgia in November, 1702, destroying Spanish outposts on Amelia Island and along the waterways of the mouth of the St. Johns River.¹⁸ Whenever they conquered such posts, which usually had a church with a Franciscan friar as the spiritual protector, the English leveled the settlement by fire. Such procedure first adopted in November, 1702, was continued through the whole war until 1706. This shows the English aim of destruction rather than actual occupation or conquest.

By mid-November Moore and his soldiers and sailors had captured the city of St. Augustine without a battle and were laying siege to the fort. He admitted that he had been unaware of the size and power of the fort and that he had failed to bring the right weapons to capture this castle. He dispatched an aide to get more powerful artillery from Jamaica. A long siege ensued which has recently been described in great detail.¹⁹ It suffices to say that Moore failed to capture the fort and Spanish reinforcements from Havana arrived before the anticipated English help from Jamaica. Moore hastily retreated after completely burning the town. Moore's retreat was orderly and not a rout.²⁰ Zuniga wanted to pursue the enemy but his men, besieged for two months, were exhausted and the relief contingent refused to obey further instructions of Zuniga once their mission had been accomplished.

The Spanish had won a Pyrrhic victory and Moore was thoroughly discredited. He lost his governorship but not his influence with the emotional legislature and soon regained it with the new executive. Moore was given permission to have a second

17. Governor Zuniga to the Crown, St. Augustine, March 15, 1702, with enclosures, AGI: 58-1-27, North Carolina Spanish Records, reel 9.

18. See Charles W. Arnade, "Piribiriba on the Salamototo. A Spanish Fort on the St. Johns River," *Papers* (The Jacksonville Historical Society), IV (1960), 67-84.

19. Charles W. Arnade, *The Siege of St. Augustine in 1702* (Gainesville, 1959).

20. John Oldmixon, *From the History of the British Empire in America, 1708* in A. S. Salley, Jr., ed., *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650-1708* (New York, 1911), 317-373.

try but without governmental financial support.²¹ Naturally he was most anxious for vindication. And the Carolina government was also desirous to try again, because they hated Spain emotionally and feared French might. Louisiana was becoming every day stronger and better established, and between mighty French Louisiana and the powerful Spanish fort at St. Augustine lay the fertile and fairly densely populated lands of Apalache, spotted with small Spanish missions attached to weak guard houses. San Luis of Apalache, today's Tallahassee, was the administrative center of Apalache. No powerful fort protected the region. Indians were more abundant than in any other part of Florida and were of a higher civilization; they were of uncertain loyalty to Spain. A fairly good trail connected San Luis with St. Augustine through some cattle country along today's Gainesville area.²² Communications with Spanish Pensacola just due east of French Louisiana were semi-adequate.²³

Moore realized that a march into Apalache was to everyone's advantage and was foolproof. First, there was no fort to conquer; second, the Spanish military garrison was weak and ineffectual; third, direct communication between the French and the Spanish colonies would be interrupted; fourth, intertribal warfare between English-dominated Indians and those of Apalache could be started; fifth, the Apalache Indians could be easily weaned from Spanish rule: sixth, many missions, hated symbols of Catholicism, could be destroyed to provide a victory for Protestantism and emotionalism; seventh, the Apalache Indians could provide a new market for the Carolina traders; eighth, valuable cattle ranches would provide a good war bounty; ninth, the main Spanish road system would fall into English hands; tenth, mighty St. Augustine would be completely isolated; eleventh, Moore, always interested

21. A. S. Salley, ed., *Journals of the Common House of Assembly of South Carolina for 1703* (Columbia, S.C., 1934), 140 pp., see index.

22. Crown Collection of Maps of North America, Series III, Public Records Office (London), Colonial Office, 700: North American Colonies, Florida, nos. 125 *et seq.* Cf. Mark F. Boyd, "The First American Road in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XIV (October, 1935-January, 1936), 73-106, 139-192.

23. "Demanda Puesta Por Los Senores Juezes Oficiales de la Real Hazienda . . ." [part of the *residencia* of Governor Zuniga]. St. Augustine, 1707, fols. 12941-12936, Stetson, AGI: 58-2-8. Cf. Mark F. Boyd, "A Map of the Road from Pensacola to St. Marks, 1778," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XVII (July, 1938), 15-23.

in Indian slaves for his plantations, would be able to double or triple his slave supply. The attack on Apalache was the only logical plan of a renewed attack on Spanish Florida.

The Carolina legislature in September, 1703, approved permission for Moore to support the friendly Indians and attack Apalache with them, but refused to pay one cent for the expedition.²⁴ Moore was convinced that he would have financial gain by plunder and slave hunting. He immediately gathered a relatively small army of abundant Indians and about fifty whites which reached Apalache in January, 1704.²⁵ From then until at least 1706 Moore and his band rampaged through Apalache, burning buildings and committing atrocities of all sorts besides hunting Indian slaves. The Moore trail of destruction through fertile Spanish Apalache during the Queen Anne's War is one of the most difficult to reconstruct in its details.

Moore and his men apparently followed no rigorous military procedure, as indeed few colonial armies in America did, and therefore left no written records for the future. The Spaniards, especially the executive command in St. Augustine, were unable to ever find out exactly what was going on in Apalache, only knowing that Moore was on the rampage. Often the situation in Apalache during those crucial years as known in the governor's office in St. Augustine was more vague than what we know today. Consequently the Spanish records leave much to desire in reconstructing the Apalache campaign of the Carolinian Moore.

Dr. Mark Boyd several years ago gathered some data about the campaign²⁶ and has made a chart of the various missions in Apalache with their probable dates of destruction at the hands of the Moore raiders.²⁷ Additional data from Spanish sources is coming to light at a snail's pace. For example, most printed sources state that the largest military engagement of the Moore campaign occurred at the beginning of the campaign on January 25, 1704, when he attacked the village of Ayubale. Yet, recently found documents speak of another large engagement on September

24. Salley, *Journals, 1703*, see index: Moore.

25. Crane, *Southern Frontier*, 79-80, 21n.

26. Mark F. Boyd, Hale G. Smith, and John W. Griffin, *Here They Once Stood* (Gainesville, 1951); Mark F. Boyd, ed., "Document: Further Considerations of the Apalachee Mission," *The Americas*, IX (1935), 459-479.

27. Boyd, *et. al.*, *Here They Once Stood*, 11-13.

3, 1705, at an unmentioned location, possibly in the Gainesville area. In this skirmish the Spaniards were decimated and lost some of the most trustworthy officers of the St. Augustine garrison, all respected citizens of St. Augustine.²⁸ Anyhow, enough primary material has been unearthed to state that by August, 1706, the Carolinians had destroyed everything in Spanish Florida from the Apalachicola to the St. Johns River. Only St. Augustine and its immediate surroundings was still under effective Spanish tutelage. While not actually occupying north central Florida, the English had successfully neutralized Spanish Florida.

It is pertinent to try to determine in a few lines the reason for the Spanish semi-collapse in Florida under the impact of the Moore invasions. As stated, Florida since its beginnings was always in a precarious position. Beginning with 1680 a period of strong citizenry and economic prosperity developed. But Moore brought this golden age to an abrupt end. First of all, the prosperity was based solely on military increments and did not extend into the provinces, especially to the missions and natives. It was localized in St. Augustine; more specifically it gyrated around the fort.²⁹

While the Spaniards had strengthened their military material they failed to improve the social and related conditions. Their Indian policy, the basis of which was the mission, was utterly rigid even in the face of English competition. The English offered the Indians all kinds of goods, including firearms and liquor, while the Spaniards promised them eternal life in heaven. They treated them with a stern paternalism.

The results of this whole Spanish policy of increasing mili-

28. Junta de Guerra [of the Council of Indies] to the Crown, Madrid, May 9, 1709, 4 folios, Stetson, AGI: 58-1-23-397; Consejo de Indias to the Crown, Madrid, June 6, 1709, with enclosures, 16 folios, Stetson, AGI: 58-1-20-790. These two documents are requisitions for permanent pensions for the widows of the victims of the battle of September 3, 1705. The widows were: Josepha Dominguez, widow of Juan Manuel; Anna Maria Lopez, widow of Juan de la Guardia; Lorenza de Garcia, widow of Juan Domingues; Isabel de Leon, widow of Luis Entonado; Isabel Lopez, widow of Diego Nunez; Maria Morales, widow of Bernardo Martin; Juliana Ponce, widow of Joseph Gomez; Maria de la Concepcion, widow of Francisco Vasunto; Mariana Gutierrez, widow of Thomas de Santiago; Maria de los Reyes, widow of Manuel Solana.

29. See the excellent study, based solely on primary records, by Luis Arana, "The Spanish Infantry: the Queen of Battles in Florida, 1671-1702," Master's Thesis, University of Florida, 1960.

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tarism and paternalism when attacked by the English were natural and obvious. Moore failed before the military power of the fort but he was victorious when he attacked in the open space where the missions stood.³⁰ Spain's policy of relying in Florida solely on a military organization, which included the missions, proved to be the most important cause of English success and Spanish failure.

30. Charles W. Arnade, "The Failure of Spanish Florida," *The Americas*, XVI (1960), 271-281.