

# Florida Historical Quarterly

---

Volume 46  
Number 2 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 46,  
Number 2

---

Article 4

1967

## British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During the War of 1812

Frank L. Owsley, Jr.



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Owsley, Jr., Frank L. (1967) "British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During the War of 1812," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 46: No. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol46/iss2/4>

## British and Indian Activities in Spanish West Florida During the War of 1812

by FRANK L. OWSLEY, JR.

WHEN BRITAIN lost control of Florida in 1783 to Spain, many English merchants and public officials, especially the governors of Jamaica and New Providence, did not consider the loss of Florida as permanent. They continued an extensive legal and illegal trade with the Indians in Florida and the southern United States. The mouth of the Apalachicola River and the area around it comprised one of the main seats of this commerce, especially the illegal part. In line with their objectives of regaining control of Florida, these various British officials and merchants sent such filibusterers as William Augustus Bowles, who plotted to create an independent Indian state or possibly to reannex the area to Britain.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to halt the illegal trade and to prevent seizure of the area, the Spanish constructed a fort at Apalachee. The forces of Spain, however, were spread far too thin to man the post properly, and there is little evidence that the existence of the fort had much effect on the trade.<sup>2</sup>

This rivalry between Britain and Spain in Florida made it difficult for the two countries to cooperate against the United States, which, by 1812, had become the greatest menace to Florida. By this time both Britain and Spain had reason to desire a weaker United States as part of their efforts to protect themselves. Britain was, of course, at war with the United States, but Spain had perhaps more actual grievances against the Americans than did the British.

Since Spain was first actively engaged in opposing the United States, it is necessary to start with an examination of the Spanish position. The North American forces had in 1810 annexed Baton Rouge by a successful revolution and filibustering expedition. On April 14, 1812, the United States Congress arrogantly claimed

1. J. Leitch Wright, Jr., "British Designs on the Old Southwest: Foreign Intrigue on the Florida Frontier, 1783-1803," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLIV (April 1966), 265-84.
2. Baron de Carondelet to Luis de las Casas, May 23, 1793, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, legajo 1447. Cited hereafter as AGI, Cuba.

Mobile and West Florida as far as the Perdido River, a year in advance of the actual seizure of Fort Charlotte at Mobile by American forces.<sup>3</sup> They were also directly or indirectly engaged in filibustering expeditions both in East Florida and in Spanish Texas.<sup>4</sup>

Faced with numerous intrusions, the Spanish authorities of West Florida were understandably anxious to check or damage the United States. As a result of the Napoleonic wars, Spain was in a state of chaos, and there was unrest throughout most of the Spanish empire. The situation made it impossible to send a strong force into West Florida, or even adequately to supply the small force of 400 or 500 soldiers stationed there.<sup>5</sup>

Spain had supported the Creek and Seminole Indians as a barrier to United States expansion, gaining influence among the Indians by means of trade and the distribution of gifts. Spanish-Indian policy usually had been to keep the Indians strong and at peace with the United States because a fight would probably have led to their destruction. Spain wanted to maintain the Indians as a force in being.<sup>6</sup>

1812 and 1813 were critical times in the Gulf coast area and in Florida for both Spain and Britain. The weakened Spanish, attacked on all sides, seemed certain to lose all of Florida bit by bit. The British were interested in the Gulf coast as a possible

3. Hubert Bruce Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida, Its History and Diplomacy* (Cleveland, 1906), 185-86, 199. See also facsimile edition with introduction by Weymouth T. Jordan (Gainesville, 1964). James Wilkinson to the officer in command of the Spanish garrison in the town of Mobile, Mississippi Territory, April 12, 1813; and David Holms to Mauricio de Zuniga, April 30, 1813, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1794.
4. Jose L. Franco, *Politica Continental Americana De Espana En Cuba 1812-1830* (Habana, 1947), 39-46.
5. I. J. Cox believed that the West Florida garrison, which for the most part was located at Pensacola, numbered only 288 men, much smaller than 400 or 500 soldiers. However, several reports indicated that there were at least 400 men in the town or at the Barrancas fort. Cox probably failed to count the troops of Colonel Jose DeSoto which had been sent from Cuba after the fall of Mobile. Report of the Louisiana regiment, May 1813, and Don Mattio Gonzales Manrique to Juan Ruiz Apodaca, May 15, 1813, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1794; A. Campbell to Homer V. Milton, May [June ?] 7, 1814, enclosure in Thomas Pinckney to the secretary of war, July 2, 1814, Letters to the Secretary of War, Record Group 107, National Archives.
6. Frances Kathryn Harrison, "The Indians as a Means of Spanish Defense of West Florida, 1783-1795" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1950), *passim*.

area from which to attack the Americans. When Tecumseh aroused the Creek and Seminole Indians to war with the United States, the Indians immediately appealed to the British and Spanish for help.<sup>7</sup> This situation provided the British with the opportunity they needed to launch either a diversion or a major attack on the United States. Although the British officials had been observing the activities of the southern Indians, the London government had made no advance preparations to help them, and it was some time before supplies could be sent.<sup>8</sup>

The Spanish, though critically short of supplies themselves, believed that the United States was preparing to annex all of Florida and that the Indians were potentially their best allies. The Spanish were also concerned with the possibility that the Indians might turn their hostility against Florida in the event that they were refused help. With this in mind, Governor Don Mattio Gonzales Manrique of Spanish Florida provided the Creeks with all the munitions he could spare.<sup>9</sup> Despite the usual Spanish policy of avoiding a confrontation with the United States, Manrique's superior, the Captain General of Cuba, Juan Ruiz Apodaca, approved arming the Indians. The subsequent destruction of Fort Mims by the Creek Indians and the massacre of a large number of Americans caused some Spanish officials alarm because they feared that Pensacola would be captured in retaliation.<sup>10</sup> Although he was concerned with the danger to Pensacola, Apodaca apparently believed that the American attack would come in any event and that the only proper course was to prepare as good a defense as possible. In fact, some months before, Apodaca had dispatched Colonel Jose DeSoto and part of his regiment from Havana to reinforce Pensacola, and he continued to encourage

- 
7. Franco, *Politica Continental Americana*, 39-46; Merritt B. Pound, *Benjamin Hawkins-Indian Agent* (Athens, 1951), 211-20.
  8. Alexander Durant *et al* to his Excellency the Governor of Providence, September 11, 1813, and Charles Cameron to Earl Bathurst, October 28, 1813, in Public Record Office; Colonial Office 23/60. Cited hereafter as PRO:CO. Bathurst to Cameron, January 21, 1814, PRO: CO 24/17.
  9. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, July 27, 1813, quoted in Elizabeth H. West, "A Prelude to the Creek War of 1813-1814," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XVIII (April 1940), 249-60; Apodaca to the minister of war, October 1, 1813, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856.
  10. Apodaca to the minister of war, August 6, 1813, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856; Luis de Oris to Pedro Labrador, October 8, 1813, Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, Spain, Estado legajo 5639.

the governor of West Florida to arm the Indians.<sup>11</sup> An examination of the correspondence between Manrique and Apodaca in 1813 and early 1814, indicates that this show of force in Florida was a departure from the usual policy of avoiding all conflicts. However, except for supporting the Indians, an operation he considered necessary, Apodaca acted so that Spain would be able to obtain a retrocession of all her lost territory, through good diplomacy.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Spanish were the first to furnish supplies to the Creek Indians who were fighting the United States, initial British aid came several months later. The British were keenly interested in the situation regarding the Indians. Governor Charles Cameron of New Providence, who apparently had some knowledge of the hostile intent of the Creeks, sent a British ship to Pensacola in September 1813, to determine the status of the southern Indians. The captain, Edward Handfield, met a delegation of Creeks and Seminoles there and received letters from them asking for help in their war with the United States. The Indians appealed to the British for arms and troops to train and lead them, and they asked that the aid be sent to their base of operation at Apalachicola.<sup>13</sup> Governor Cameron forwarded the letters from the Indians to Earl Bathurst, secretary of state for war, and a short time later he sent Bathurst a report from an unidentified person who was supposed to have a good knowledge of the Gulf coast Indians. This report, which was strongly endorsed by Cameron, proposed to arm the Creek and Seminole Indians and to furnish a force of British officers to lead them. It was believed that eventually most of the southern Indians would join the British, giving them a force of around 15,000 warriors. Properly supplied, these Indians were expected to divert at least that many American troops from Canada or from other duties. The proposal suggested that the Spanish, in all probability, would not object to the British supporting the Florida Indians or to their

---

11. Apodaca to the minister of war, June 16, August 6, 1813, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856; Manrique to Apodaca, June 13, 1813, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1794.

12. Franco, *Politica Continental Americana*, 21-23; Apodaca to Manrique, December 10, 1813, and Apodaca to the minister of war, June 6, 1814, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856.

13. Alexander Durant *et al* to the governor of Providence, September 11, 1813, and Cameron to Bathurst, October 28, 1813, PRO:CO 23/60.

using Pensacola as an anchorage from which they could maintain a tight blockade of the Mississippi.<sup>14</sup> The plans were laid out in detail. Bathurst's answer was enthusiastic, and he ordered Cameron to give all support possible to the Indians. He also directed British naval forces in North America to aid the Indians.

Contrary to the belief expressed in some accounts that the actions of Tecumseh and some Canadian officials were already fully known in England, this letter from Bathurst indicates that Cameron's report was the first knowledge that London had on the activities of the southern Indians.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the slowness of communications caused a long delay in British response to the Indian request of September 11, 1813. It was not until April 1814, seven months later, that Admiral Alexander Cochrane ordered Captain Hugh Pigot of HMS *Orpheus* to Apalachicola. Before sailing, Pigot held conferences with Cameron and with several merchants that he had recommended to learn what they knew about the Gulf. These men suggested an attack on New Orleans and Mobile since the garrisons there were extremely weak and the capture of the cities was expected to be an easy matter.<sup>16</sup>

Upon his arrival on May 10, Pigot discovered that the most war-like element of the Creeks had suffered a series of reverses in engagements with the Americans and had sustained a shattering defeat at Horseshoe Bend. About 900 of the most hostile surviving Creeks had taken refuge around Pensacola, where they were starving and without arms.<sup>17</sup> The Indians at Apalachicola were also so short of food that it was impossible for them to concentrate a large force there unless the British shipped in provisions.<sup>18</sup> Before leaving Apalachicola, Pigot appointed George Woodbine, a former Indian trader, as British agent to the Creeks. After a few weeks, Woodbine removed his headquarters to Pensacola.

14. Cameron to Bathurst, November 30, 1813, and enclosures, PRO:CO 23/60.

15. Bathurst to Cameron, January 21, 1814, PRO:CO 24/17.

16. Hugh Pigot to Alexander Cochrane, June 8, 1814, in Public Record Office: Admiralty 1/506. Cited hereafter as PRO: Adm. Pigot to Cochrane, April 13, 1814, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland.

17. Pigot to George Woodbine, May 10, 1814, and Edward Nicolls to Apodaca, November 9, 1814, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers; Juan Ventura Morales to Alexandeo Ramirez, November 3, 1817, *Boletín del Archivo Nacional*, XII (January-February 1914), 14-15.

18. Woodbine to Pigot, May 25, 1814, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers.

In his report to Admiral Cochrane, Pigot, who had been thoroughly briefed and had been given guides and maps by Governor Cameron at New Providence, enthusiastically repeated the governor's ideas as if they were his own.<sup>19</sup> Admiral Cochrane was in complete agreement, and as a direct result of the report and much communication with Cameron, he recommended a plan of attack against the southern parts of the United States. Cochrane's scheme, like Cameron's, called for the full use of the Indians to secure all the back country; it also suggested that Mobile and New Orleans could be secured with 2,000 or 3,000 British troops to reinforce the Indians.<sup>20</sup>

In London, the British home government was already considering a plan to make a massive attack on the Gulf coast area. It was assumed that the capture of New Orleans would neutralize the states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, a turn of events which would be disastrous to the American war effort.<sup>21</sup> Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, Cochrane's predecessor, proposed in November 1812, to First Lord of the Admiralty Viscount Melville, that a Gulf coast offensive be undertaken. His suggestion was very similar to the plans of Cameron and Cochrane except that it envisioned a much larger operation. Warren, like Cochrane, probably was influenced by Governor Cameron. His idea for an expedition called for a major offensive rather than simply a diversion for the Canadian attack which was being readied by Britain. By the spring of 1814, with preparations for the Canadian offensive in the final stages, the London government started serious planning for a massive Gulf coast campaign to be commanded by Lord Rowland Hill. Perhaps because of war weariness or fear that the expedition would be too costly, it was later decided to abandon the project.<sup>22</sup> However, when Cochrane's proposal arrived, calling for the southern offensive to be conducted with a much smaller

---

19. Pigot to Cochrane, April 13, 1814, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers; Pigot to Cochrane, June 8, 1814, PRO:Adm 1/506.

20. Cochrane to John Wilson Crocker, June 20, 1814, in Public Record Office: War Office 1/142. Cited hereafter as PRO:WO. Cameron to Cochrane, August 2, 1814, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers.

21. Harry L. Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago, 1965), 202-21; John K. Mahon, "British Command Decisions Relative to the Battle of New Orleans," *Louisiana History*, VII (Winter 1965), 53-61.

22. John K. Mahon, "British Strategy and Southern Indians: War of 1812," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLIV (April 1966), 285.

force, the government accepted his plan with enthusiasm.<sup>23</sup> After all, Cochrane's plan came well recommended; from all appearances, Cameron, Pigot, and Admiral Warren had all independently suggested approximately the same scheme.

This proposed campaign, an outgrowth of Cameron's recommendation, was an elaborate example of British peripheral warfare and the use of irregular troops. As the first part of the operation, Cochrane sent Major Edward Nicolls with a force of Royal marines to assume command of the British in West Florida and to reinforce Woodbine at Pensacola. They were expected to raise a large force of Indians to attack the Georgia frontier and the settlements along the Alabama River. As a part of his mission, Nicolls was ordered to recruit runaway slaves and to form them into regiments to fight their former masters, a situation expected to cause panic and terror throughout the South. In addition to his plan to arm Negroes and Indians, Cochrane asked for a force of around 2,000 to 3,000 men for an attack against either Mobile or New Orleans. His primary plan was to move against Mobile and then, using flat boats mounted with naval guns, to push up the Alabama River destroying the various wooden forts that had been built by the United States. After the enemy's garrisons were destroyed, Cochrane expected the army to advance overland to Baton Rouge, cutting the Mississippi at that point.<sup>24</sup> Cochrane also planned to have Admiral George Cockburn, with a force of marines, raid the Georgia and South Carolina coasts. Cockburn was to raise a force of Negroes from among runaway slaves also. The Cockburn raids were expected to prevent Georgia and North and South Carolina from sending large reinforcements either to the Gulf coast or Canada. Similar raids were to be conducted in the Chesapeake Bay area, in the belief that fear of raids on Washington and Baltimore would keep large forces on duty there and away from the action in other parts of the country.<sup>25</sup>

Another segment of the plan called for the recruitment of Jean Lafitte and his force of Baratarians, supposed to number some 800 men. It was presumed that Lafitte's force would readily join the British cause since they had been badly treated by the

23. Crocker to Cochrane, August 10, 1814, PRO:WO 6/2.

24. Cochrane to Crocker, June 20, 1814, PRO:WO 1/142.

25. Expedition against New Orleans (undated memorandum), PRO:WO 1/142; Cochrane to Bathurst, September 2, 1814, PRO:WO 1/141.



Americans. Thus it came as a surprise when Lafitte rejected the British offer; the English had failed to realize that the Baratarians would lose a large part of their revenue if they became their allies since they would have been compelled to stop raiding Spanish commerce.<sup>26</sup>

Even without Baratarian support, the British formulated their basic plan of attack on the Gulf coast. The main objective was always New Orleans, but the point of attack was switched at the last minute from Mobile to New Orleans itself.<sup>27</sup> The campaign began when Woodbine and Nicolls were dispatched to West Florida. Shortly after their arrival, Spanish Governor Manrique, believing that an American attack was imminent, requested British help in the defense of Pensacola. Almost as soon as Nicolls arrived on August 14, 1814, he assumed virtual command of the town and proceeded to recruit nearly all the local slaves for his Negro regiment. He drilled the Negroes and Indians in the town and established a strict passport system to control all travel. These activities enraged the local citizens who were often abused by Nicolls' troops, but as long as the British seemed able to defend Pensacola against the Americans, Manrique was perfectly willing to aid them and to allow them a free hand.<sup>28</sup> When the overconfident Nicolls attacked Mobile Point with a naval squadron supported by only 252 Indians and marines, he lost the frigate *Hermes* and was defeated. This turn of events unquestionably caused Manrique to have grave doubts concerning British ability to defend Pensacola.<sup>29</sup>

Nicolls' decision to consider the John Forbes Company, a trading agency owned by British citizens, as enemies and traitors and his efforts to abduct numbers of their slaves proved to be a serious blow to cooperation between Britain and Spain in Florida.

26. Jane Lucas de Grummond, *The Baratarians and the Battle of New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, 1961), 37-48.

27. Bathurst to General Ross, September 6, 1814, PRO:WO 6/2; Mahon, "British Command Decisions," 69.

28. John Innerarity, "Narrative of the Operation of the British in the Floridas," ms. dated 1815, Heloise H. Cruzat Papers, Florida Historical Society Library, University of South Florida, Tampa (transcript in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida); Nicolls to Cochrane, Report August [12-] November 17, 1813, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers.

29. Nicolls to Cochrane, November 17, 1814, ms. 2328. Cochrane papers; Nicolls to Lord Melville, May 5, 1817, PRO:WO 1/144; Apodaca to the minister of war, October 9, 1814, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856.

The company was very influential among the Creeks and Seminoles, and it was probably the largest producer of revenue for the Spanish in West Florida.<sup>30</sup> Nicolls looked upon the company's partners, James and John Innerarity, as traitors since they had tried to prevent a Creek Indian war by refusing to sell the Indians guns and ammunition. Nicolls also correctly believed that they were spying for the Americans.<sup>31</sup>

The British forces at Pensacola dealt harshly not only with the Forbes Company but also with Spanish citizens and even government officials. When Manrique refused to make adequate preparations for the defense of the town, James Gordon, British naval commander, threatened to level the city with gunfire.<sup>32</sup> He did not carry out his threat, but he did blow up the Barrancas and move the fort's 200-man Spanish garrison to Apalachicola as virtual prisoners. Some of these men, mostly Negro troops from Cuba, were held captive and were used at Apalachicola as a work force until the end of the war.<sup>33</sup> This was done in spite of numerous appeals by Spanish officials for their release.<sup>34</sup>

Most Spanish officials blamed the damage to Pensacola and the destruction of the Barrancas on Governor Manrique, who, on his own authority, had asked the British to assist in the town's defense. Although Captain General Apodaca had encouraged Manrique to assist the Indians, he had had serious doubts about

30. Marie Taylor Greenslade, "John Innerarity, 1783-1854," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, IX (October 1930), 90-95; Adam Gordon to James Innerarity, February 17, 1817, Forbes Papers, Mobile Public Library, Mobile, Alabama.

31. In order to protect their property, the Innerarities obtained Spanish citizenship in October 1812. By doing so they did not lose their British citizenship since they had permission from the British government "to reside, and uniformly receive the necessary facilities from His Majesty's government, to enable them to carry on under any flag best suited for the purpose." James L. Potts to Bathurst, November 22, 1815, PRO:WO 1/143; certificate of citizenship recorded by Don Joseph E. Caro, keeper of the Public Spanish Archives of West Florida, October 6, 1812, Greenslade Papers, Florida Historical Society Library (transcript in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History); Nicolls to Cochrane, March 1, 1816, PRO:WO 1/144; John Innerarity to James Innerarity, June 9, 1814, and James Innerarity to John McKee, June 16, 1814, in miscellaneous files of secretary of war, Letters of the Secretary of War.

32. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, November 7, 1814, "Letters of John Innerarity," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, IX (January 1931), 127-30; Vicente de Ordozgoitti to Apodaca, September 21, 1814, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856.

33. Gordon to Cochrane, November 18, 1814, PRO: Adm 1/505.

34. Manrique to Cochrane, January 25, 1815, Cruzat Papers.

letting the English defend Pensacola.<sup>35</sup> Considering the losses of property and harsh treatment by the British, the captain general's fears were well founded. After the British evacuated Pensacola, the Spanish governors were ordered to refuse permission for any foreign troops to land in Florida.<sup>36</sup>

The treatment of the Spanish by the Americans under Andrew Jackson, who drove the British out of Pensacola, was in great contrast to that of the English. The Spanish were pleased with the good behavior of the Americans, and Manrique from this time on followed a policy of friendship toward them. Spanish protests after the capture of Pensacola were relatively mild.<sup>37</sup> The Pensacola and Mobile operations of Nicolls and his Indians gained nothing for the British except the Spanish enmity. Moreover, thousands of dollars in damage claims had to be paid by the British government, including \$20,000 to the Forbes company.<sup>38</sup>

Through good intelligence information Jackson was aware of the British plan to attack New Orleans, and he raised an army to repel the onslaught. Because of this action and major British tactical errors, the New Orleans attack was a complete failure. Other aspects, however, of the Gulf coast campaign were fairly successful, and the various British diversions caused some changes in the alignment of American forces. While Nicolls and his Indians did not make any significant raids on the Georgia frontier, the fact that he was located at Apalachicola caused 2,500 Georgia militia and friendly Indians to be diverted from other activities.<sup>39</sup> Also, Admiral Cockburn's raids, although later in getting started than had been anticipated, succeeded in diverting a substantially large force to the Atlantic coast.<sup>40</sup>

35. Gordon to Cochrane, November 18, 1814, PRO:Adm 1/505; Nicolls to Cochrane, August 4, 1814, ms. 2328, Cochrane Papers; Apodaca to the minister of war, October 9, 1814, AGI, Cuba, legajo 1856.

36. Sebastian Kindelan to Don Fernando de la Puente, January 11, 1815, *American State Papers, Foreign Affairs*, 38 vols. (Washington, 1832-1861), IV, 488.

37. Manrique to Andrew Jackson, December 1, 1814, Jackson Papers, Library of Congress; Luis de Onis to James Monroe, December 10, 1814, Notes from the Spanish legation, Record Group 59, National Archives.

38. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, May 10, 1815, and Jose Urcerllo to Manrique, January 23, 1815, Forbes Papers.

39. Benjamin Hawkins to James Winchester, December 27, 1814, Winchester Papers, Tennessee Historical Society, Nashville, Tennessee; *Augusta Chronicle*, December 30, 1814.

40. John Floyd to Mary H. Floyd, December 28, 1814, in John Floyd letters to his daughter, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia.

After their repulse at New Orleans in early 1815, the British turned again on Mobile where they captured Fort Bowyer at Mobile Point, and they were preparing to attack the city when news of the war's end arrived. In deciding to attack Mobile, Cochrane had intended to revert to the original plan: to capture the town and attack New Orleans from the rear by way of Baton Rouge. He expected to use his Indians to screen the back country.<sup>41</sup> After seizing the defenses of Mobile Point, the British would have had little difficulty in capturing Mobile with the support of naval gunfire. If they had not wished to attack the city itself, they could have instituted a blockade and the American army would either have had to surrender or evacuate since its supplies were nearly exhausted. Mobile and Pensacola had been supplied mainly with food from New Orleans; these goods had been brought through the Mississippi Sound, which the British did not block until just before the New Orleans attack. Once the Sound was blocked, however, Mobile almost immediately ran out of supplies.<sup>42</sup>

The overall British Gulf coast campaign was clearly not the sole invention of Admiral Alexander Cochrane, but was in fact developed over a long period of time by several individuals. Probably the influence of Governor Cameron was as important in the formulation of the plan as that of Admiral Cochrane. This fact alone seems to set aside the opinion of the Duke of Wellington and historian J. W. Fortescue that the whole idea of an attack on New Orleans was conceived solely to obtain plunder for Cochrane and his friends.<sup>43</sup> Fortescue and Wellington were probably overinfluenced in their judgment of the campaign by the tactical blunder of the army at New Orleans which they blamed, perhaps rightly so, on Cochrane. Cochrane was the senior British officer at New Orleans, and he had already persuaded the army commander to land his troops below the city before the arrival of Sir Edward Pakenham, the commanding general. Pakenham

---

41. Cochrane to Lambert, February 3, 1815, PRO: WO 1/143.

42. Manrique to Winchester, January 24, 1815, and C. Clark to Winchester, February 12, 1815, Winchester Papers; Winchester to Jackson, February 16, 1815, Jackson Papers, Library of Congress.

43. Mahon, "British Command Decisions," 65-67; J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 13 vols. (London, 1899-1930), X, 151-81.

was reported to have been displeased with the position in which he found the army, but the time had passed when changes could be made.

That Pakenham was the Duke of Wellington's brother-in-law and close friend doubtlessly colored the Duke's attitude toward Cochrane; likely he considered him responsible for Pakenham's death.<sup>44</sup> To get to the heart of the problem, most of the senior British commanders at New Orleans had been at the Battle of Bladensburg and had complete contempt for American forces. It is doubtful if Nicolls would have attacked Fort Bowyer with only 252 men, including Indians, or that Pakenham would have made a frontal assault on Jackson's army if the British commanders had had due respect for American fighting ability. In contrast, the second attack on Fort Bowyer at Mobile Point was carefully executed and was completely successful.

The Gulf coast plan was fairly sound, and except for serious British blunders, should have been successful. There were several alternate ways of attacking New Orleans, each offering a better chance of success than a foolish frontal assault on a well entrenched army.<sup>45</sup> The British made another mistake which affected the campaign, and this had to do with their dealings with the Spanish. While Spain could not have provided Britain with much military help in Florida, the bad judgment of the British at Pensacola ended all cooperation in Florida between the two countries. This break made it more difficult for the British to supply their Indian allies, and it also encouraged people in West Florida to provide even more intelligence information to the Americans. The latter occurred with the tacit approval of the Spanish officials. Also, the example of the bad treatment of the supposed friends of the British at Pensacola was not lost on the citizens of Louisiana, and it was likely one of their reasons for not joining the British against the United States. Poor security was another serious mistake the British made in their Gulf coast campaign. The British collected their main force for the New Orleans attack at Jamaica, where they hired boats and gathered supplies from all over the Caribbean. Merchants, especially the supposedly neutral ones at Pensacola, supplied Jackson with nu-

44. Mahon, "British Command Decisions," 64-66.

45. Coles, *War of 1812*, 211-20; "Expedition against New Orleans," PRO:WO 1/142.

merous accurate accounts of British activities. From the mass of information available it was not difficult to determine the British plan.<sup>46</sup> That the English intended to attack Mobile first was apparently known by Jackson, who seemed to have been equally well informed of their change of plan. Jackson was waiting in New Orleans with all the force he could muster to halt the British attack.<sup>47</sup> It is fair to suppose that had it not been for the excellence of Jackson's intelligence the British plan would have succeeded admirably at New Orleans, and then with the river open to their navy, the area could have been held for as long as the English wished.

- 
46. Jane Lucas de Grummond, "Platter of Glory," *Louisiana History*, III (Fall 1962), 316-58; Jackson Papers, *passim*.
47. Historian Henry Adams, along with many of Jackson's contemporaries, believed that a British attack on Mobile was improbable. The British records clearly show that the Mobile attack was seriously considered and was not abandoned until around November 1814. Since this is almost exactly the time that Jackson moved his headquarters to New Orleans, it seems likely that there was a relationship. From the various intelligence reports it is clear that he had access to the newspapers of Cuba, Jamaica, and the entire Caribbean. He probably obtained much more data and possibly positive oral information during his brief occupation of Pensacola. See de Grummond, "Platter of Glory"; Jackson to Blount, August 27, 1814, *Augusta Chronicle*, October 7, 1814; Henry Adams, *History of the United States*, 9 vols. (New York, 1890), VIII, 330-32; Jackson to Monroe, December 13, 1814, and Jackson to Monroe, February 10, 1815, in Letters of Secretary of War; "A Report of a Spy in Pensacola," copied by Colonel Robert Butler, August 21, 1814, in miscellaneous files of secretary of war, Letters of Secretary of War; Hawkins to Winchester, December 27, 1814, Winchester Papers; Hawkins to John Armstrong, June 15, 1814, *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, Indian Affairs*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1832), I, 859; Butler to Willie Blount, Jackson Papers, Tennessee State Library, Nashville, Tennessee.