

# Florida Historical Quarterly

---

Volume 50  
Number 3 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol 50,*  
*Number 3*

---

Article 8

1971

## John Bull's Stinginess in East Florida

Claude C. Sturgill



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

Sturgill, Claude C. (1971) "John Bull's Stinginess in East Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 50: No. 3, Article 8.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol50/iss3/8>

## JOHN BULL'S STINGINESS IN EAST FLORIDA

by CLAUDE C. STURGILL\*

**T**HERE IS NO DOUBT that in the British imperial heaven the scheme of things after 1763 called for the Floridas to become to the American South what Lake George and Quebec were to the American North. A brief study of British regiments in St. Augustine in the eighteenth century demonstrates how military units were assigned to East Florida.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the article brings into print once again, although this time through omission, what is proving to be the myth of the financial plight of the Floridas during the period of English occupation. Professor Charles Loch Mowat's writings also accepted the theory of the near bankruptcy of the English administration. Hence he wrote:

This cooperation [between civil-military authorities] stands out in connection with the finding of quarters for the troops in the cramped little capital . . . . Grant offered the Franciscan church and convent for barracks . . . . As a result, the work, begun in August, 1767, was not completed until May, 1771 and Gage, harried by a frugal-minded government, had grounds for complaining, "I hope St. Francis Barrack is finished. I was drawn into a Scrape in that affair, first by Coll. Taylor, and Afterwards by Genl Haldimand, and I want no more of it."<sup>2</sup>

The scholars' monographs which accept this possibly unintended slur are in tune with the more popular type of historical writing. A check of many other volumes in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History and the Graduate Research Collection at the University of Florida reveals that the generally accepted view of imperial economic policy after 1763 is that the British were bent on extracting every last possible penny from the English in North America to apply toward reduction of their 140,000,000 pound sterling national debt and to provide tax

---

\* Mr. Sturgill is associate professor of history, University of Florida.

1. "British Regiments in St. Augustine, 1763-1784," *El Escribano*, St. Augustine Historical Society, VII (April 1970), 41-48.
2. Charles Loch Mowat, *East Florida As A British Province, 1763-1784* (Berkeley, 1943), 30.

relief for the English at home. Yet, there seems to be little credence given to the possibility that the British were literally pouring money into the colonies for their defense and well being. Apparently the instances in Professor John Shy's book, *Toward Lexington*,<sup>3</sup> that detail the construction of frontier military posts are meaningless except as proof of a rather shortsighted imperial policy to limit westward expansion. Actually the best example of this "truism" in our century is the widely disseminated work, Henry S. Williams (ed.), *Historians' History of the World*.<sup>4</sup> Even Sir John Fortesque's work on the *History of the British Army* does not connect military expenditure in the North American colonies with colonial economic well-being.<sup>5</sup>

However, none of these offer historical proof for this generalization that the government was frugal-minded to the point of stinginess or to the point where the defense of any colony might be adversely affected. The fiscal accounting records in the Haldimand Papers belie this generally accepted supposition.<sup>6</sup> For the period 1769-1770, the "paid-out" ledgers for East Florida show a total of: (a) 13,375. 7¾ Spanish dollars (3,216 pound sterling)<sup>7</sup> dispensed in the cash disbursement account; (b) 12,517.0½ Spanish dollars (3,123 pound sterling paid by treasury warrants drawn on General Thomas Gage's headquarters in New York; (c) 913.6 Spanish dollars (213 pound sterling) dispensed from General Haldimand's contingent account. Of this total outlay of 26,806.4¼ Spanish dollars (6,552 pound sterling), 233,956.2¼ Spanish dollars (5,059 pound sterling) were spent on the renovation of St. Francis Church and convent in St. Augustine so that it could be converted into a barracks for the troops.

When the following ledgers are compared with similar documents from General Haldimand's fiscal records for West Florida,

3. John Shy, *Toward Lexington* (Princeton, 1965).

4. Henry S. Williams, ed., *The Historians' History of the World*, 25 vols. (London, 1965), XXIII, 230-31.

5. John W. Fortesque, *A History of the British Army*, 8 vols. (London, 1930), III.

6. Haldimand Papers, Canadian Archives, Ottawa, B16; P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, microfilm copy 59B.

7. The conversion factor for Spanish dollars is four shillings, 8 pence equals one Spanish dollar. The problems involved in any attempt to convert the buying power of the 1770 pound sterling into the buying power of the 1971 pound sterling and then to convert the current pound sterling into the 1971 American dollar are too difficult to be realistic.

Sturgill: John Bull's Stinginess in East Florida

294

FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

3

AN ACCOUNT OF MONEY DISBURSED AT ST. AUGUSTINE BY BRIGADIER GENERAL HALDIMAND COMMANDING HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NORTH AMERICA BETWEEN THE 24TH DAY OF MARCH 1769 AND 24TH DAY OF MARCH 1770.

Date of Payment	To whom paid and on what account		Sums paid in Dollars a 4/8
1769	K <i>Publick Works</i> and for Building the St. Franciscan Barrack		
August 17	To Lieut Smith's acct. as acting Engineer for Materials etc.	1	3,948. 7½
October 15	To Lieut Smith's acct. as acting Engineer for Materials etc.	2	2,293. 9
1770			
March 31	To Lieut Moncrieffe Engineer acct for Materials etc.	3	4,614
	To John Allen, Carpenters receipt for 33 days.	4	33
			10,889.6½
1769	L <i>Mustering the Troops</i> To Mr. James Stewart Depy. Commissary of Musters, his passage from Pensacola to Mobile twice & returning to Muster the 21st. Regiment at 5 Sterling p. Trip.	1	42.9
	To Mr. James Stewart Depy. Commissary of Musters, his passage from Pensacola to Mobile twice to muster the 21st. Regiment & returning at 5 Sterling p. trip.	2	42.9
	To Mr. James Stewart Depy. Commissary of Musters, his passage from Pensacola to St. Augustine & Charlestown to muster the Troops, 840 Miles	3	64.3
			150.1
1769	M <i>Stores &amp; Provisions</i> To Mr. Henry Cunningham Depy. Commissary of Stores & Provisions p. his account	1	99.4
September 4	To Mr. Henry Cunningham Depy. Commissary of Stores & Provisions p. his account	2	87.7

		Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol. 50 [1971], No. 3, Art. 8		
1769	N	<i>Embarkation &amp; Marching of Troops</i>		
September 9	To Mr. Ross, his accot. paid for Postage	2	74. 3	
	To Lieut. Landford's accot. for a Boat, Landing Troops	2	30. 4	
Nov.	To Corporal McFarlane for Horse hire to Apalachia	3	4	
	To Corporal Laskey for ditto. do.	4	4	
	To paid Capt. Rainsford Passage of Men from Pensacola p. rect.	5	49. 4½	
	To paid Mr. Houckman for a Boat, Landing Troops	6	36. 6	
	To paid Arthur Graham Horse hire from Savannah to St. Augustine with a party of the 21st. Regiment	7	71. 6	
Decemb. 30	To Major Chisholms accot. paid Robert Harris for two Trips over the Bar, Landing Troops	8		
Jan 13	To John Heitman for Landing Troops & sundry other article p. accot.	9	20. 5¼	
	To George Williams, 5 Days hire of a launch for landing Baggage, Stores, etc.	10	16	
			<hr/>	348. 8¾
1770	O	<i>Contingencies</i>		
March	To Mr. Haileys accot. paid for Postage	1	32. 4	
	To paid John Mason for his Room for a Court Martial	2	4. 2	
	To paid John Spencerman for House Rent	3	214. 2	
	To paid Serg. Stanton Royal Artillery employed Writing Monthly returns & Copying Genl. Orders in the year 1769	4	39	
	To Lieut Francis Hutheson's accot. for Sundry expenses between the 24th. March 1769, 24th. March 1770. 102.2.6 Sterling	5	437. 6½	
	To hire of Clerks to Write in the Publick Office between the 25th. of March 1770, 1 year at 5/Sterling p. day p. receipt	6	386. 8	
	To Expence of mine & Family's Passage from Pensacola to St. Augustine in the year 1769.		[Blank in the Manuscript.]	
	To hire of an Office, Stationery, Firing & Candles between the 25th. March 1769 and 24th. March 1770	7	518. 3	
	To Engineer by his Excellence General Gage, being extra allowance to him	8	167. 5	
			<hr/>	1,800. ½
				13,375. 7¾

## Sturgill: John Bull's Stinginess in East Florida

LIST OF BILLS DRAWN UPON HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL GAGE BY BRIG. GENERAL HALDIMAND ST. AUGUSTINE 1769, 1770

296

FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Setts	Number	Dates	In Whose Favour	Sums	On What Account
		1769			
3	1	June 22	Messrs. Hawkins & Powell	341	For Shingles for the Barrack at St. Frans. Convent
3	2	July 15	Adam Backhop	104	For Freight of Do. for Do.
3	3	Do. 22	Lieut. Smith of the 9th. Regiment	82. 5	For his Pay as overseer of the Works at Ditto
3	4	Augt. 17	Richd. & Caleb Carpenter	832	For to Pay the Artificers & Labourers at Ditto
3	5	Ditto	Thomas Hanna	130	For Materials for Ditto
3	6	Ditto	William Weir Mason	91. 1	For Ditto for Ditto
3	7	Ditto	Leonard Patterson Carpenter	160. 3½	For Work at Ditto
3	8	Ditto	George Laidler & Son (Say Wm. Angus)	103	For Lime for Ditto
3	9	Ditto	George Laidler & Son	229. 3½	For Lime for Ditto
3	10	Ditto	Ditto	97	For a large Boat
3	11	Ditto	William Wilson	862.	For Sctanlin & Plank for Ditto
3	12	Ditto	Jesse Fish	500	For timber for Ditto
3	13	Ditto	Robt. Ross	105. 7½	For Ditto for Ditto
3	14	Ditto	Fraser & Richardson	308. 6	For Nails, Pitch & Tar for Ditto
3	15	Ditto	Jones & Blackwell	300	For the Public Service Southern District
3	16	Sept. 5	Nath. Brown & Co.	602. 7	For boards Shingles etc. for New Barrack
3	17	Do. 9	Capt. Wm. Fuller	84	For Thos. Lamb, Mason's time for Ditto
3	18	Do. 9	Robt. Ross	75	For Mayr Chissolms Order for landing pt. of 21 Regt. last January
3	19	Octr. 10	Robt. Ross	356. 5	To Sundry. Supplied for the use of the Barrack at St. Frans. Convent.
3	20	Do.	Thomas Hanna	86. 2	For Work at Ditto
3	21	Do.	William Weir	60. 3	For Ditto at Ditto
3	22	Do.	John Allen	87. 1	For Ditto at Ditto
				<u>5600. 3½</u>	

3	23	Do.	David Letsom	56. 1	For Work at the New Barrack at St. Francis Convent	
3	24	Do.	John Harris	38	For Do. at	Ditto
3	25	Do.	John Harris	38	For Do. at	Ditto
3	26	Do.	John Lochill	48	For Do. at	Ditto
3	27	Do.	Mathew. Andrews	43. 4	For Do. at	Ditto
3	28	Do.	Jones & Blackwell	8 4	For Sundrys supplied	Ditto
3	29	Do.	John Allen	150	For Work	Ditto
3	30	Do.	George Ladlier & Son	174	For Lime	Ditto
3	31	Do.	Lieut. Smith	28. 6	For his pay as overseer of Work at Do.	
3	32	Do.	George Ladlier & Son	49. 6	For Lime	Ditto
3	33	Nov. 28	Spencer Man	500	For the Publick Service carrying on in the Southern Dist	
		1770				
3	34	Feby. 13	Jones & Blackwell	360		Ditto
3	35	Feby. 14	Robert Ross	660		Ditto
3	36	Mar. 31	Thomas Hannay	181. 2	For Work at the New Barrack at the St. Franscan Convent	
3	37	Do.	William Lochill	197. 4		Ditto
3	38	Do.	William Weir	195		Ditto
3	39	Do.	Thomas Hannay	593		Ditto
3	40	Do.	Robt. Gowen	224. 4		Ditto
3	41	Do.	John Allen	323		Ditto
3	42	Do.	George Laudler & Son	79		Ditto
3	43	Do.	Ditto	288		Ditto
3	44	Do.	Ditto	177. 1		Ditto
3	45	Do.	Uria Oakes	500	For the Public Service carrying on in the Southern Dist.	
3	46	Do.	Henry Cunningham	187	For his Account as Depty. Commissary of Stores	
3	47	Do.	Spencer Man	213. 6	For the Public Service carrying on in the Southern Dist.	
3	48	Do.	Spencer Man	522. 7	For Sundrys for the New Barrack at St. Frans. Convent	
3	49	Do.	Jessey Feash	488. 7	For Do.	at Do.
3	50	Do.	Robert Ross	397. 7	For Do.	at Do.
3	51	Do.	Spencer Man	115. 7	For Do.	at Do.
				<u>6916. 7</u>		

7

*New Account of Money disbursed at Augusta  
by Brigadier General Stoddard Commanding His  
Majestys Forces in the Southern District of North  
America between the 24<sup>th</sup> Day of March 1769 and  
24<sup>th</sup> Day of March 1770.*

<i>Date of Payment</i>	<i>To whom paid and on what account</i>	<i>Sums paid in Dollars &amp; Cts each</i>
1769	<i>Publick Works paid for Building the St Franciscum Barracke</i>	
August 17	<i>To Lieut Smiths acct as acting engineer for Materials &amp;c.</i>	1 - 3,948 7/8
Sept: 15	<i>To Lieut Smiths acct as acting engineer for Materials &amp;c.</i>	2 - 2,293 9
1770 March 31	<i>To Lieut Moncrieffe Engineer acct for Materials &amp;c.</i>	3 4,614 "
	<i>To John Allen Carpenters receipt for 35 Days.</i>	4 33 "
		10,889 6/8
	<i>Carried forward.</i>	10,889 6/8



a picture of defense expenditure in excess of 61,000 Spanish dollars (14,233 pound sterling) appears for 1769-1770, and this year is not exceptional. The magnitude of such an expenditure is translated into late eighteenth-century buying power, by a statement attributed often to Charles Dickens: "One hundred pound Sterling income per year makes a gentleman of any man!"

Exact copies of the texts are presented. Although, for example, Jesse Fish and Jessey Feash appear to be the same man, there is no evidence that two such men were not on the royal payroll in 1769-1770. Spelling and punctuation have not been altered.

CONTINGENT ACCOUNT AT ST. AUGUSTINE FOR YEARS 1769 & 1770

1769	To Mr. Stewart Muster Travel expense 3 years	150
Sept. 9	To Robert Ross Accot. of Expences landing troops	74. 3
	To Lieut. Landford Accot. for a boat Stove	30. 4
Nov. 1770	To Corpll. Mcfarlan horse hire	4
March 31	To Captn. Rainsford passage he pd. for 3 soldiers 9th. Regt.	49. 4½
Do.	To Henry Cunningham Depy. Commiss. Accot.	99. 4
Do.	To Ditto D i t t o	87. 7
Do.	To Hickman's Accot. for hire, etc.	36. 6
Do.	To Heallie Pst Master's Account	32. 4
Do.	To Arthur Graham horse hire from Savanah	71. 6
Do.	To In. Mason hire for his Room for Genle. C. Martial	4. 2
Do.	To Corpl. Lashey for horse hire for a sick man	4.
Do.	To Spencer Man for house Pent p. Rect.	214. 2
Apr.	To John Hawton boat builder for Work p. Bt.	16
	To Lt. Hutcheson Rect pd. Stanton for Writs & Returns	39
	Charged Genl Gage folio (9)	913. 6

This last document is a summary list of the foregoing account. The importance to the civil population and the economic well being of the colony is indicated by the sum of 10,889.6½ Spanish dollars or 2,541 pound sterling authorized for "Publick Works." Most of this however went for the construction of St. Francis Barracks to house the British garrison in St. Augustine.

RECAPITULATION OF THE FOREGOING ACCOT. OF MONEY DISBURSED AT ST. AUGUSTINE, AS ABOVE, BETWEEN THE 24TH. MARCH 1769 AND 24TH. MARCH 1770.

	Dollars at 4/8 each
To Amount of the Publick Works	K 10,889.6½
To Mustering the Troops	L 150.1
To Stores and Provisions	M 187.1
To Embarkation and Marching of Troops	N 348.8¼
To Amount of Contingencies	O 1,800.0½
	<u>13,375.7¼</u>
By a list of bills drawn at St. Augustine on his Excellency General Gage from Number 1 to 51.	12,515.7½
	<u>12,515.7½</u>