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EAST FLORIDA AS A LOYALIST HAVEN

by LINDA K. WILLIAMS*

WHEN THE American Revolution broke out, East Florida, a British colony since 1763, supported the mother country and offered refuge to those in other American colonies who were loyal to the crown. East Florida became a loyalist haven when George III ordered Governor Patrick Tonyn to issue a proclamation in November 1775 inviting them to come to St. Augustine. Tonyn was also authorized “for the encouragement of such persons as may under these cruel Circumstances be induced to seek a happy Asylum in the Province, to make out for them gratuitous Grants of Land exempt from Quit Rents for Ten Years”¹ Copies of this proclamation were distributed in the southern colonies and posted in Charleston and Savannah.²

Encouragement to flee to St. Augustine came not only from Florida, but also from the rebel governments. South Carolina’s assembly passed an act requiring all free male inhabitants to swear allegiance to the state; those refusing were to sell their property and emigrate within a month.³ Georgia and North Carolina enacted similar legislation, aimed at encouraging those who might still be undecided to join the patriot cause, or to leave, since they were considered a hostile threat.

For some who tried to fight for Britain, the patriots utilized tar and feathering, lynching, and other appropriate treatment. Men such as Thomas Brown of South Carolina and Georgia, who had experienced tar and feathering, scorplings with hot irons, and burnings that resulted in the loss of toes, believed that East Florida could serve as a base for offensive operations against the southern colonies.⁴ By the time of the signing of the Declaration

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1. Proclamation by Patrick Tonyn, November 2, 1775, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Colonial Office, 5/556:68.
2. Wilbur Henry Siebert, ed., *Loyalists in East Florida, 1774-1785: The Most Important Documents Pertaining Thereto, Edited With An Accompanying Narrative*, 2 vols. (DeLand, 1929), I, 24.
3. *Ibid.*, 61.
4. Tonyn to George Germain, January 7, 1777, CO 5/557:96.

of Independence, loyalists from the Carolinas, Georgia, and other colonies, were already leaving their homes, lands, and much of their personal property in order to flee to East Florida.

There is no simple reason why approximately twenty per cent of the white Americans decided to remain loyal to Great Britain.⁵ There were loyalists in all the thirteen colonies, and they could be found in every social and economic class. Some, like John Alsop of New York, actively fought for colonial reform as "long as a door was left open for a reconciliation with Great Britain."⁶ Others were crown officials or in positions that made them politically or financially dependent on colonial ties with the mother country. Religious groups, with the exception of Jews and Catholics, who constituted only a small percentage of the population, tended to remain loyal.⁷ Also, those whose former nationality was non-English, generally supported the King.⁸ Basically, however, loyalists made up a conservative minority that was unwilling to disallow its allegiance for possible independence.⁹

Besides Thomas Brown, other early refugees to East Florida included Daniel McGirth of Georgia and Moses Kirkland of South Carolina, who originally had been active supporters of the rebel cause.¹⁰ John Stuart, superintendent of Indian affairs for the Southern District, arrived in St. Augustine in 1775, as did Allan Cameron of South Carolina, whose role in the unsuccessful loyalist attempt to separate the southern colonies from the north had landed him in a Philadelphia jail.¹¹ Among those who emigrated from Georgia were some "families of note," members of the council, attorneys, civil officials, and merchants.¹² Poor farmers and some plantation owners, bringing their slaves with them, also began arriving. When it became apparent that the conflict would not end quickly, the number of loyalists moving to Florida increased. In April 1778 Governor Tonyn informed George Ger-

5. Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, XXV (April 1968), 261, 269.

6. Catherine S. Crary, ed., *The Price of Loyalty: Tory Writings from the Revolutionay Era* (New York, 1973), 6.

7. William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford, 1961), 90.

8. *Ibid.*, 89.

9. North Callahan, *Royal Raiders: The Tories of the American Revolution* (Indianapolis, 1963), 43.

10. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, I, 26-27.

11. *Ibid.*, 25, 28-29.

12. Tonyn to Germain, May 19, 1776, CO 5/556:287.

main that some 400 loyalists, "that have been mostly forced to shelter in the Woods in Carolina and Georgia, have by the assistance of our Rangers arrived in this province."¹³ The flight into Florida was not a simple undertaking. One group of refugees, arriving at St. Augustine on August 28, 1776, woke the next day to find that the vessel that had brought them, probably still containing most of their belongings, had been captured by patriots.¹⁴ Those traveling to Florida from the Georgia backcountry and the Carolinas had to be concerned with possible rebel attacks.

Many refugees, bringing with them their slaves and plantation tools, hoped to secure land which they could cultivate. Land had always been easy to obtain in the colony, even by those who held it only for speculation. However, when the loyalists began arriving in the 1770s, most of the valuable land had already been granted, or it was possessed by the Indians. Noting that much of the granted property had never been cultivated, forty-nine Georgian refugees in 1776 petitioned the government for grants of these unsettled lands. After considering the request that winter, the Board of Trade authorized Governor Tonyn to begin issuing up to 500 acres of land from the unsettled tracts to the refugees. Those who owned the properties were given six to twelve months to show cause why the acreage should not be transferred to the emigres.¹⁶ With the increasing number of refugees, more and more land was needed, and in 1781 the East Florida Assembly was again discussing the problem of securing acreage for these loyalists.¹⁷ Apparently many large landowners in 1776 had been able to retain their uncultivated properties. Refugees living in St. Augustine occupied houses that had been left behind by the Spanish when they moved out in 1763. They could also petition the council for town lots to build on. Most were dependent upon the benevolence of the government to help them get settled in their new surroundings.

13. Tonyn to Germain, April 28, 1778, CO 5/558:128-29.

14. Tonyn to Germain, September 8, 1776, CO 5/556:390.

15. Of the 1,438,000 acres granted in East Florida by 1777, only 222,000 acres were settled, leaving 1,216,000 acres of granted land uncultivated. CO 5/557:22-23; Georgian refugees to ?, November 1, 1776, CO 5/557:22-23.

16. Board of Trade to Tonyn, March 25, 1777, CO 5/563:509-13.

17. Commons House of Assembly, June 6, 1781, CO 5/572:112-14. Microfilm copies, Florida State University, Tallahassee.

Although loyal to the crown and anxious to maintain the integrity of the empire, East Floridians were primarily concerned with the safety of their own colony. In the summer of 1776, Governor Tonyn, with approval of his council, summoned the inhabitants to a meeting at the state house, at which time he proposed the formation of a militia for the defense of the province.¹⁸ Floridians strongly supported the proposal.¹⁹ The refugees, however, were not only concerned about the defense of their new home, but also about the fighting in the colonies they had left behind. For instance, 350 refugees from Carolina did not wait for the governor or anyone else to form a provincial corps. They sent a memorial to Brigadier General Augustine Prevost, who then forwarded it to General William Howe, demanding to be a part of two battalions of provincial troops and be allowed to join the king's forces.²⁰ Howe was in the process of turning over his command to Sir Henry Clinton, and it was the latter who approved the formation of the South Carolina Royalists in 1778.²¹ Colonel Alexander Innes, former secretary to Governor William Campbell of South Carolina, was given command, Joseph Robinson was made lieutenant colonel, and Evan McLaurin, major of that corps.²²

The South Carolina Royalists was the second major corps of provincial troops organized in St. Augustine. In June 1776, Tonyn authorized Thomas Brown to form a loyalist regiment, the East Florida Rangers, to help defend the province.²³ Brown had been commissioned lieutenant colonel.²⁴ Later the Royal North Carolina Regiment and the St. Augustine Grenadiers were also organized.²⁵

Many loyalists not in the provincial corps looked for other

18. Council Minutes, August 15, 1776, CO 5/571:202.

19. Tonyn to Germain, August 21, 1776, CO 5/556:370.

20. Augustine Prevost to William Howe, April 24, 1778, Great Britain, Public Record Office, British Headquarters (Sir Guy Carleton) Papers, 1124:2. Hereinafter cited as BHQP. See also Memorial of George Dawkins and Edward Lane to Prevost, BHQP 1125:2. Microfilm copies, Florida State University.

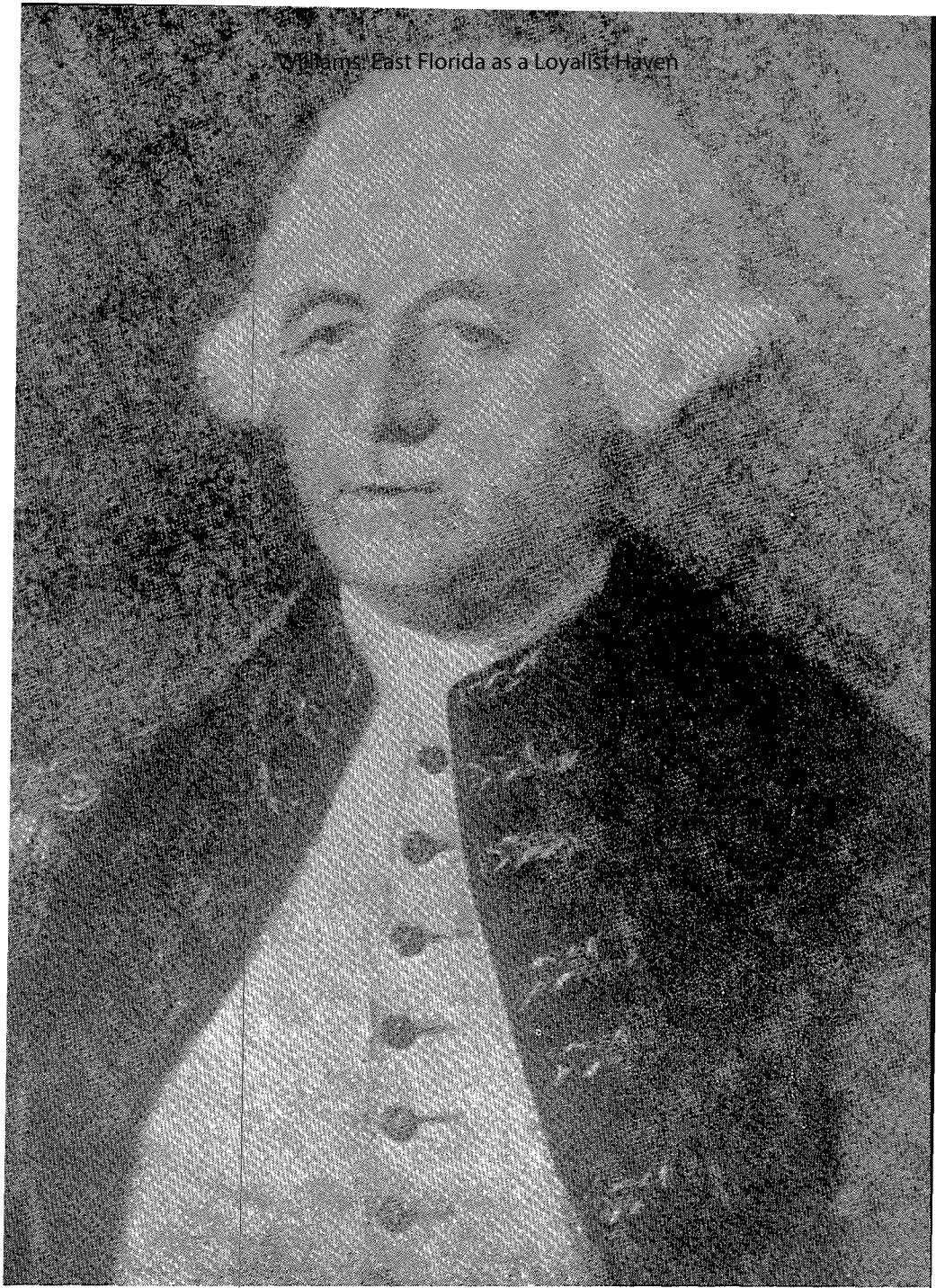
21. Henry Clinton to Prevost, June 3, 1778, BHQP 1203:1.

22. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, I, 52-53.

23. Gary D. Olson, "Loyalists and the American Revolution: Thomas Brown and the South Carolina Backcountry, 1775-1776," Part II, *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 69 (January 1968), 54.

24. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, I, 38.

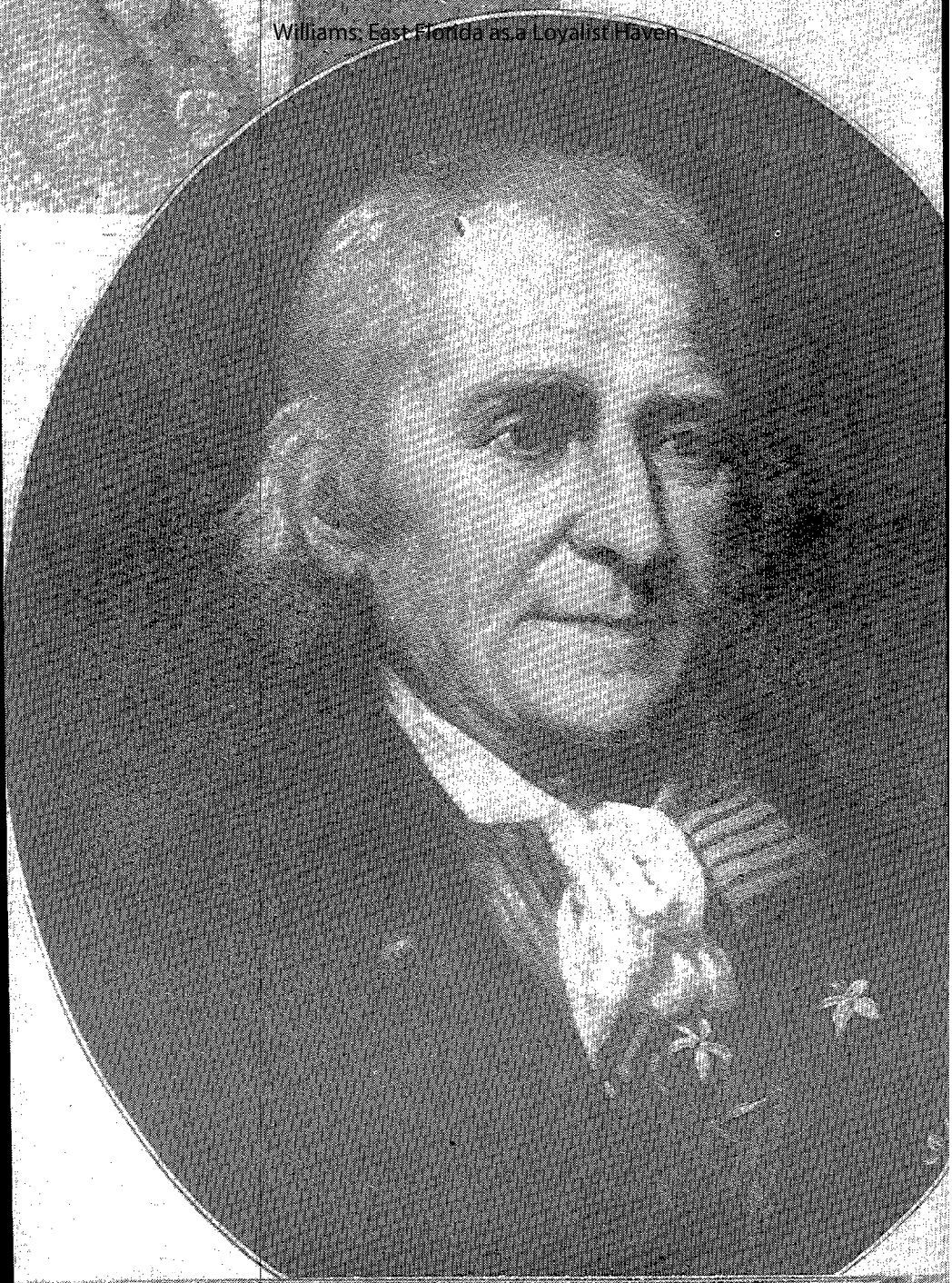
25. Burton Barrs, *East Florida in the American Revolution* (Jacksonville, 1932), 39.



General Augustine Prevost, veteran of the Seven Years' War and commander of Britain's Sixtieth Regiment in East and West Florida. From Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, opposite p. 96.



Patrick Tonyn, Governor of East Florida, 1774-1784. From J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Florida in the American Revolution* (Gainesville, 1975), opposite p. 96.



William Bartram, naturalist, traveller, and author who described the British Floridas in his works. From a reproduction in the P. K. Yonge Library.



Andrew Turnbull, founder of the New Smyrna settlement approximately seventy miles of St. Augustine. From a reproduction in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.

means to provide for themselves and their families. Those who petitioned for land, planned to begin new plantations. Others, not accustomed to farm life, had more difficulty. In his letter to John Stuart requesting that he move to St. Augustine, Prevost felt that superintendent's residence there "would enable you to procure a Number of White people for the purposes mentioned in Sir Wm. Howes letter . . . many of the frontier inhabitants of this Province who have been drove from their settlements and many refugees from the revolting Colonies would be happy to be employed."²⁶ Governor Tonym also tried to find employment for refugees. In 1780 he wrote to Clinton about John Martin, "a very respectable Gentleman who took refuge in this Province about four years ago, leaving considerable property in Georgia," who was deserving of employment.²⁷

During the early war years, with the threat of invasion from Georgia and the constant arrival of refugees, East Florida continued to be dependent upon Britain. Realizing this, the Parliament increased the colony's contingent fund in the 1776-1777 budget by £1,000.²⁸ While most of this money went for the purchase of provisions, the needs of the colony were only temporarily relieved.²⁹ In 1778 Prevost realized that the increasing population "renders it absolutely requisite to receive a supply of provisions."³⁰ The St. Augustine government from June 1777 through December 1778 spent over £2,363 to meet expenses of refugees and prisoners, an amount larger than the funds allotted in the budget. Tonym had to request an additional £1,200.³¹

By 1780 the colony was adjusting to the demands of its burgeoning population, as evidenced in Tonym's report to Germain: "The Planters have been successfully employed in raising Grain and making Naval Stores. The season has been remarkably rainy, the Crops have turned out well, and the Inhabitants have enjoyed perfect health . . . the Inhabitants were formerly supplied with Grain from Carolina and Georgia, this year they have raised sufficient for our consumption."³²

26. Prevost to John Stuart, June 14, 1777, BHQP 585:3.

27. Tonym to Clinton, June 7, 1780, BHQP 2817:1-2.

28. Germain to Tonym, April 12, 1777, CO 5/557:53.

29. General account of contingent expenses, June 30, 1770, CO 5/557:291-92.

30. Prevost to Howe, April 27, 1778, BHQP 1124:2.

31. General account of expenses, February 1779, CO 5/559:63-64; Tonym to Germain, April 28, 1778, CO 5/558:129.

32. Tonym to Germain, December 9, 1780, CO 5/560:50-51.

Tonyn also reported on exports: "40,000 barrels of naval stores have been shipped in the course of last year; and I flatter myself next year will give a considerable additional increase, as I look for several refugee families [*sic*] from the neighboring colonies, who shall receive every encouragement and protection in my power."³³ Florida's growing population now seemed to be beneficial to the colony.

Prior to the Revolution, loyalists had enjoyed the benefits of an elected assembly, and when they arrived in Florida they helped raise desires there for a similar form of government. The first indication of this is found as early as June 1775, in the presentments of the grand jury for the province of East Florida. The need for an elected assembly was based on the idea that having one would "induce many to seek that Assylum [*sic*] among us they cannot now enjoy in older Provinces."³⁴ Nevertheless, hundreds of loyalists fled to East Florida during the early war years, despite its lack of a representative body. The demand for an assembly, however, increased along with the population. In a letter, Tonyn commented that "there prevails in America a thirst for power, and a desire of consequence unknown among the lower class of people in Europe: This perhaps more the foundation of the cry for a provincial legislature than the . . . want of local laws, and a security of their property in Negroes."³⁵ Tonyn also noted that the colony was still too poor to contribute to the expenses of government.³⁶ This, along with his fear that an elected assembly may suggest hints unfavorable to true constitutional principles," deterred him from calling for elections until March 1781.³⁷ Of the nineteen members elected at that time, only four—Robert Payne, George Kemp, Jacobus Kepp, and Francis Levett—were in the colony early enough to be included in "A List Of the Inhabitants of East Florida, Their Employs, Business and Qualifications in Science from 1763 to 1771," drawn up by De-Brahm.³⁸ At least five—John Mowbray, William Moss, John

33. *Ibid.*, 51.

34. Grand jury to ?, June 21, 1775, CO 5/556:3.

35. Tonyn to Germain, December 9, 1780, CO 5/560:52.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. William Gerard De Brahm, *De Brahm's Report of the General Survey in The Southern District of North America*, ed. Louis De Vorse, Jr. (Columbia, 1971), 180-86.

Martin, Benjamin Lord and Peter Edwards— came to St. Augustine after the war had started. Many refugees seemed willing to become politically active in East Florida.

Even before the news of Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown reached St. Augustine, conditions were improving for its inhabitants. British victories had removed the threat of patriot attacks, and the fear of the Spanish was lessened by the defense programs. The colonists now numbering around 10,000, were beginning to produce enough goods for their own needs, as well as naval stores and indigo for profit. Finally, the people had achieved a voice in government when the assembly began meeting in 1781. The loyalists also felt secure in the regard of the mother country and when news of the vote in Parliament to seek a peaceful settlement with the United States reached St. Augustine, few probably realized how involved their future was in that decision.

The resolution to end the war passed Commons February 27, 1782. Early in April, Sir Guy Carleton, the new commander in chief of the British forces in America, was on his way to New York with orders to withdraw the troops from that city as well as the garrisons in Charleston and Savannah.³⁹ Prior to his arrival, his predecessor, Sir Henry Clinton, informed Lieutenant General Alexander Leslie in Charleston to prepare for the evacuation of troops from the whole Southern District, which included East Florida.⁴⁰ Carleton supported these orders, and on May 23, 1782, he informed Leslie to expect transports for the evacuation of Savannah and St. Augustine, to carry troops, provisions, and those loyalists who wished to depart.⁴¹

For the next month Leslie, Carleton, and even King George III were bombarded with arguments against the evacuation of the troops in St. Augustine, the sure step to the downfall of the entire colony. The East Florida landowner and merchant James Penman, who learned confidentially of the planned evacuation, was the first to voice his protest. In a letter he stressed the economic reasons against the decision: loss of naval stores produced

39. Charles Loch Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* (Berkeley, 1943; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 135.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Sir Guy Carleton to Alexander Leslie, May 23, 1782, BHQP 4636:1.

in the colony, lack of employment for Negroes, and the loss of the £250,000 already spent on East Florida by Great Britain.⁴²

Penman was not the only Charlestonian to protest the removal of troops from St. Augustine. Apparently resigned to the loss of their own colony, South Carolina loyalists sent a memorial to Leslie, which supported Penman's arguments, but also stressed the value of East Florida as an asylum for refugees.⁴³ Leslie received another memorial two days later, this one from South Carolinians who owned land in East Florida.⁴⁴ They and others who were to follow pointed out the fact that "East Florida has been held out by Governor Tonym in Several Proclamations as an Asylum for Refugees," and now they wanted to make use of that condition.⁴⁵

The strongest protestations came from East Floridians through their newly-formed assembly. In June 1782, the legislators sent an address to the governor and drew up resolutions, presenting arguments against the military evacuation, and requesting that more troops, arms and ammunition, and provisions be sent into the province.⁴⁶ In addition, the Florida assembly dispatched a message to the King, thanking him for the "Paternal Care and Royal Bounty which we have so fully and effectually experienced from the Cession of this Province to Your Majesty's Crown and Dominions," secondly expressing their loyalty and astonishment at the news of the evacuation.⁴⁷ They implored George III "to extend his immediate aid and protection to Men who trust they are still deemed Subjects of the British Empire."⁴⁸

Before these petitions and memorials were ever composed, and in fact only four days after he had sent the orders to Leslie, Carleton decided to postpone the evacuation of St. Augustine. This was not occasioned by any special value that East Florida might have, but was simply due to the lack of tonnage available for troop removal.⁴⁹ Leslie thus informed Tonym, who reported it

42. James Penman to Leslie, June 5, 1782, BHQP 4739:1-7.

43. Inhabitants of South Carolina to Leslie, June 12, 1782, BHQP 9984:3.

44. Memorial of proprietors of lands in East Florida to Leslie, June 14, 1782, BHQP 4793:1-3.

45. *Ibid.*, 1.

46. East Florida Assembly to Tonym, June 19, 1782, BHQP 4810:1-3; Resolutions of the assembly, June 20, 1782, BHQP 4816:1-3.

47. East Florida Assembly to George III, June 21, 1782, BHQP 4824:1.

48. *Ibid.*, 2-4.

49. Carleton to Leslie, May 27, 1782, BHQP 4667:1.

to the assembly in July 1782.⁵⁰ East Floridians believed that their loyalty and value to Britain were the basis of this decision. In a letter to Carleton, Tonym noted that the people of East Florida "flatter ourselves that the affection due to Subjects so distinguished for their loyalty, as these are, and the very commodious asylum this Province will prove . . . will induce His Majesty to continue it under his royal protection, and that time will evince the wisdom of such measures, and the importance of this colony to the trade and Commerce of Great Britain."⁵¹ The assembly expressed similar sentiments, thanking Tonym, Leslie, and Carleton for allowing the colony to remain under British protection.⁵²

In fact, when Carleton informed Leslie that St. Augustine was not to be evacuated along with Charleston and Savannah, he indicated that this action probably would take place the following winter or spring, and he hoped that the inhabitants would begin preparing for that eventuality.⁵³ It is unknown whether or not Leslie passed this information on to Tonym or to anyone else, but if so, the news went unheeded.⁵⁴ To the refugees the loyal colony of East Florida appeared to be the perfect asylum.

In the summer of 1782 the evacuation of British troops and loyalists from Georgia and South Carolina began. In order to determine how many were coming to East Florida and to supervise the distribution of provisions, John Winniett and several assistants were appointed. Their records indicate that 2,925 whites and 4,448 blacks emigrated to East Florida during the Georgia-South Carolina evacuation.⁵⁶ As a result, the population in 1783 increased to between 16,000 and 17,375.⁵⁷

Once in East Florida these loyalists, like their predecessors,

50. Tonym to East Florida Assembly, July 23, 1782, BHQP 5133:1.

51. Tonym to Carleton, July 31, 1782, BHQP 5174:2.

52. East Florida Assembly to Tonym, August 16, 1782, BHQP 3321.1-3.

53. Carleton to Leslie, May 27, 1782, BHQP 4667:1-2.

54. A great many loyalists had doubts about moving to East Florida. Although not worried about the possible evacuation of East Florida, men in both Georgia and South Carolina realized that provisions were scarce in that colony and decided to move with their slaves and other property to Jamaica. Leslie to Carleton, July 19, 1782, BHQP 5104:1-3.

55. Archibald McArthur to Leslie, October 30, 1782, BHQP 6036:2.

56. Returns of refugees, December 23, 1782, BHQP 6475:1; April 20, 1783, BHQP 7468:1.

57. Wilbur H. Siebert, "The Dispersion of the American Tories," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, I (September 1914), 195; Mowat, *East Florida*, 137.

needed assistance, and land was granted without quit rents.⁵⁸ The refugees also needed provisions. In letters to various officials, Tonym stressed the needs of the loyalists, who had been “driven from their Homes, [and have] arrived in this province, without provisions, money, cloathing, or implements of agriculture.”⁵⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Archibald McArthur, military commander in St. Augustine, also wrote to Carleton noting the desperate need for supplies in East Florida.⁶⁰ Even the loyalists themselves were petitioning for help.⁶¹ As a result, beef, pork, butter, rice, oatmeal, and peas were supplied by Great Britain and rationed out to the refugees and their slaves.⁶²

Upon their arrival, most refugees congregated either in St. Augustine or near the bluff on the St. Johns River, at least until arrangements could be made for new lands and farming tools. St. Johns Bluff became a major commercial center. By the spring of 1783 the town had 300 houses, a public house, dry goods store, two taverns, and a livery stable. An Anglican missionary was there to conduct religious services, and the town had both a physician and freemasons lodge.⁶³ More importantly, St. Johns Bluff was another port through which products could travel to and from East Florida.

Those who acquired lands settled down to a life not unlike that which planters and farmers had been leading in the colony since 1763. The chief crops were still indigo, rice, and corn; naval stores and lumber were among the chief exports, and blacks provided the main work force.⁶⁴ Some men found East Florida a disappointing replacement for their previous holdings, like James Butler, a Georgian refugee, who bitterly complained of the unhealthy climate in East Florida.⁶⁵ Most were content to make the best of their new homes, however, and to plea for redress from the mother country for their losses.

St. Augustine also experienced a rapid growth in population because of the evacuation of Savannah and Charleston. Since most

58. Carleton to Tonym, March 20, 1783, BHQP 7172:1-2.

59. Tonym to the Earl of Shelburne, November 14, 1782, CO 5/560:235.

60. McArthur to Carleton, January 9, 1783, BHQP 10049:1.

61. Georgian refugees to Carleton, January 4, 1783, BHQP 6708:1-3.

62. Return of provisions, June 25, 1783, BHQP 10128:1.

63. Barrs, *East Florida in the American Revolution*, 40.

64. McArthur to Carleton, May 23, 1783, BHQP 7750:1-3.

65. Robert S. Lambert, “The Flight of the Georgia Loyalists,” *Georgia Review*, XVII (Winter 1963), 440.

of the lots and houses already in the town were occupied, later emigres built cabins out of thatched palmetto leaves on the outskirts of town.⁶⁶ In addition to the loyalists, there were regular soldiers, provincial troops, Indians, and slaves living in St. Augustine.⁶⁷

The increasing number of people, however, brought new activities to the colonial capital. Among the refugees was David Zubly from Savannah, who in 1783 printed John Tobler's *Almanack* on a press in his own home. It was the first book to be printed in British East Florida.⁶⁸ Another loyalist, Dr. William Charles Wells of South Carolina, established the first newspaper to be printed in the colony, the *East-Florida Gazette*, in the name of his older brother John.⁶⁹ This paper was printed from February 1783 to April 1784. Two books, *The Case of The Inhabitants of East-Florida* and an edition of Samuel Gale's *Essay II. On The Nature and Principles of Publick Credit*, were also printed in 1784 under the name of John Wells.⁷⁰

Social life in St. Augustine increased with the population. Taverns and bars were popular, and plays were performed in the statehouse. *The Beaux Stratagem*, *Miss In Her Teens*, *The Entertainment of Barnaby Rattle*, and *Douglas, A Tragedy* were staged with all-male casts to entertain the inhabitants and "for the benefit of the distressed Refugees."⁷¹

In April 1783 the news reached St. Augustine that the colony was to be returned to Spain. Along with the dispatches came assurances to the loyalists from Carleton that "they shall have every assistance that may be in my power to furnish them with, for removing to such places as they are desirous of going to."⁷² The East Florida Assembly responded graciously, noting their con-

66. Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation, [1783-1784]* transl. and ed. Alfred J. Morrison, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1911), II, 231.

67. Charles Mowat, "St. Augustine Under the British Flag, 1763-1775," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XX (October 1941), 149.

68. Calhoun Winton, "English Books and American Readers in Early Florida," in Samuel Proctor, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida and the Revolutionary South* (forthcoming from the University Presses of Florida, Gainesville).

69. Douglas C. McMurtrie, "The Beginnings of Printing in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (October 1944), 63.

70. *Ibid.*, 66-67.

71. *East-Florida Gazette*, February 22-March 1, May 10-17, 1783.

72. Carleton to McArthur, April 5, 1783, BHQP 7327:4.

fidence in Great Britain and in the belief that "everything will be done for alleviating our distresses"⁷³

Privately, however, the news was received with little enthusiasm. The colony was made up of settlers who had remained loyal to the crown before and during the Revolution, of refugees forced out of their homes and businesses by rebel troops, of men who had fought alongside British soldiers against fellow Americans, and of inhabitants who had already suffered the trauma of being evacuees. That the king and Parliament did not see the value of East Florida, which the loyalists had so thoroughly described in their petitions and memorials, was difficult for the inhabitants to accept.

One indication of the sentiments of the people of East Florida is in a letter written by Mary Stout, who with her husband Joseph, had settled in Florida before the American Revolution. In 1783 she described the impending upheaval as "the worst thing that could have hapened. . . . We know not what to do nor whear to go all our property being hear and very littell of it can be moved. . . . Nobody hear but what are dissatisfied to the Last degree [*sic*]."⁷⁴

A stronger note of dissatisfaction is revealed in a letter written by John Mullryne Tattnell, a refugee from Savannah who was in St. Augustine when news of the retrocession of East Florida to Spain arrived. He wrote that the peace terms were "the severest Shock our Feelings have ever had to struggle with."⁷⁵ Tattnell and other loyalists believed themselves to be deserted by their country and king, and unrewarded for their loyalty and service: "It's no small Comfort tho' 'That it's not our crimes, but our Virtues that have distressed us.' With Respect to myself . . . I have nothing which I can reproach myself, with regard to my Conduct during the War. The Part I acted was uniform, adhering to the Cause in which I first engaged— But that assails me not — We are all cast off; some few indeed recommended to the Mercy

73. Upper House of Assembly to Tonym, April 25, 1783, in Joseph Bryne Lockey, ed. and transl., *East Florida, 1783-1785: A File of Documents Assembled, and Many of Them Translated*, ed. John Walton Caughey (Berkeley, 1949), 101-02.

74. Mary Stout to her brother, April 28, 1783, in Barbara Gorely Teller, "The Case of Some Inhabitants of East Florida, 1767-1785," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIII (October 1954), 102.

75. John Mullryne Tattnell to Sheet [?], May 30, 1783, CO 5/560:1.

of a merciless People: I shall ever tho' remember with Satisfaction that it was not I [that] deserted my King, but my King that deserted me."⁷⁶ George III alone was not to be blamed for the fate of the people. "Oh Englishmen where is now your National Honor? nothing but Bribery, Corruption & Treasons prevails in your Senate, who promised Protection & then . . . betrayed."⁷⁷

Not only were the preliminary peace agreements the reason for these bitter sentiments but also the treaty between Britain and the United States, by which "the real British Subjects are to be recommended by Congress to the different States to be taken out of the Confiscation Act but we, who have born Arms, exposed our Lives and Sacrifice our Properties . . . are particularly Thrown out in a most severe & pointed manner, instead of being the first provided for."⁷⁸ Tattnell and other loyalists in East Florida began even to question whether being Englishmen was worth the price they had paid. If a situation should occur like that which they had already experienced, or "Should England be engaged in another war . . . let her not expect that, out of thousands of us Refugees, there will be one who will draw a Sword in her Cause."⁷⁹

If these words expressed the private sentiments of the majority of the refugees, outwardly most remained loyal English subjects willing to accept the provisions and protection the mother country supplied. Once plans for evacuating the colony were formulated, the loyalists were dependent upon the government for transportation to Jamaica, England, Providence, Nova Scotia, and other British territories. Without this aid, evacuating East Florida would have been almost impossible, and few loyalists wanted to remain in the province.

The evacuation of East Florida took over two years to complete and the difficulties involved in it became ever more apparent. The dangerous St. Augustine bar, which had caused problems throughout the entire British period, encouraged many loyalists to embark instead from Amelia Harbor near the mouth of the St. Marys River.⁸⁰ Slaves were loaded promptly since their

76. *Ibid.*, 2.

77. *Ibid.*, 6.

78. *Ibid.*, 3.

79. *Ibid.*

80. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, I, 156.

owners feared they might run away.⁸¹ Those who hoped to sell their lands and houses directly to the Spanish soon abandoned this idea since few Spaniards were coming to East Florida in the spring of 1784, and those who did were able to purchase property for a quarter of its value.⁸² Tonym decided to send the fire engine, bell, and church pews to the Bahamas because he could not find a Spanish buyer for them.⁸³ Finally, many loyalists were forced to leave some of their belongings behind since space for everything could not be found on board the transports.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, when Johann David Schoepf visited the colony in the spring of 1784, he noted that "all the preparations are making for the transfer, and ships are continually going out, with goods and passengers, to the West Indies or Nova Scotia."⁸⁵

On August 10, 1785, Governor Tonym reported that the evacuation of East Florida was completed.⁸⁶ Around 1,000 remained, 3,000 had returned to the American states, and another 4,000 were settling on lands along the Mississippi River.⁸⁷ The other loyalists traveled to British territories such as Jamaica, Nova Scotia, the Bahamas, and England.⁸⁸ Only a fraction of the East Floridians submitted claims to the British government and 372 received compensation for their losses, totaling just over £170,351.⁸⁹

Those who did submit claims represented only a few of the men and women who had suffered because of the American Revolution and the cession of East Florida to Spain. Probably the loyalists of East Florida agreed with John Mullryne Tattnell when he wrote to his friend expressing his "warmest wishes that you & [your] family may never experience the Calamities of war nor the Distress that we have so long had for a constant Companion."⁹⁰ For East Floridians, scattered all over the world by 1786, that was the price of loyalty.

81. Thelma Peters, "The Loyalist Migration from East Florida to the Bahama Islands," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XL (October 1961), 136.

82. Mowat, *East Florida*, 145.

83. Peters, "Loyalist Migration from East Florida," 134.

84. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, I, 155.

85. Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, II, 240.

86. Tonym to Lord Sydney, August 10, 1785, Lockey, *East Florida, 1783-1785*, 574.

87. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, I, 174.

88. Lockey, *East Florida, 1783-1785*, 11.

89. Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, II, viii.

90. Tattnell to Sheet [?], May 30, 1783, CO 5/560:8. For more on this general subject, see Linda K. Williams, "Loyalism in East Florida, 1763-1785" (M.A. thesis, Florida State University, 1975).