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BRIGADIER FREDERICK HALDIMAND— THE FLORIDA YEARS

by ROBERT R. REA*

THE BRITISH COLONIES of East and West Florida were the fruits of one war and fell from the grasp of George III as the result of another. Throughout their brief history runs a common theme: both were part of a military frontier and to both the presence of British army units was of prime importance—economically, administratively, and socially. Their civil governors were men of modest competence at best. Trade never developed as profitably as merchants hoped, nor did immigrants rush to claim their untilled soil. But the army provided a degree of stability, as well as security, in spite of the petty bickering that so often absorbed the energies of civil and military officials alike. The real contribution to colonial history made by the much-maligned British soldier has seldom been admitted, yet his was the one effective, all-encompassing imperial arm in America.

The Floridas were exceptionally fortunate in falling under the guardianship of one of the finest military administrators in North America. Of all such men in the king's service, observed the leading authority on the subject, "only two Swiss officers, Haldimand and Bouquet, displayed notable vigor, honesty, and good judgment."¹ First to Henry Bouquet and then to Frederick Haldimand, General Thomas Gage assigned responsibility for the Floridas when lengthy explanatory orders from New York and meticulous instructions from Whitehall failed to relieve the birth pangs of British authority at St. Augustine and Pensacola. The death of Bouquet shortly after he reached Pensacola in 1765, frustrated Gage's initial effort. It was not until 1767 that the Floridas received the brigadier who would combine the elements of strength and moderation necessary to transform discord into harmony, who could preserve the lives of his troops and popu-

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1. John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, 1965), 290.

larize the army's presence, who could himself survive the climate and the frustrations of his assignment— for West Florida in particular was a graveyard of reputations as well as redcoats— and by so doing win appointment to the highest military place in North America. This exemplar of imperial and martial virtues, Frederick Haldimand, began his career as a Swiss mercenary, and ended it as lieutenant general and Knight of the Bath. Long recognized as a great figure in the history of Canada, he deserves as much honor for his accomplishments in eighteenth-century Florida.

Frederick Haldimand, younger son of middle class parents of Yverdun, Neuchatel, Switzerland, was born August 11, 1718. He received a good basic education before seeking a career, as did many young Swiss, in foreign military service. At about the age of twenty-one he is reported to have entered the Sardinian or, perhaps, the Dutch army. When the Austrian Succession War broke out in 1740 he attached himself to the forces of Frederick II of Prussia— a master from whom a young officer could learn self-discipline as well as the arts of war. At the end of hostilities in 1748, Haldimand found employment in the United Netherlands and secured a commission in the Stadholder's Swiss Guard at The Hague. There he served with his compatriot, Henry Bouquet, and made the acquaintance of the British ambassador, Sir Joseph Yorke, upon whose recommendation he and Bouquet owed their transfer to the army of George II.

In the autumn of 1755, Britain began recruiting foreign Protestant officers for a regiment to be known as the Royal Americans. Haldimand was commissioned lieutenant colonel in the new 62nd Regiment (which became the 60th in 1757), on January 4, 1756, and six months later he set foot on American soil at New York. His first task was to raise his own troops among the recent European immigrants in western Maryland and Pennsylvania. In 1757 a field command was offered by General Abercrombie, and the next year found Haldimand marching against the French at Fort Ticonderoga. He commanded the grenadiers in support of Abercrombie's ill-fated assault and escaped with only a superficial wound. Captain Thomas Sowers subsequently attested to Haldimand's gallantry under fire, crediting Haldimand with saving his life when he fell with a severe head wound. The campaign was a failure, but Haldimand remained in New York

in command of Fort Edward on the Hudson River. He was charged with rebuilding the fort at Oswego in 1759, and he saw action with Sir William Johnson at Niagara. Summoned thence when Sir Jeffrey Amherst concentrated British troops against Montreal in 1760, Haldimand was present at the surrender of the last citadel of New France and remained in Canada after the end of hostilities.

On February 19, 1762, Haldimand was promoted to colonel (a rank he had held in America since January 17, 1758), and in the spring he was named district governor at Three Rivers, halfway between Montreal and Quebec, where he displayed considerable administrative ability. While in Canada, he acquired, in conjunction with Bouquet, certain properties on the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and on Shepody Bay, Nova Scotia. With the end of military government in Canada, Haldimand's future became entwined with the advancement of his old companions-in-arms Thomas Gage and Henry Bouquet.²

Gage became commander in chief in North America in succession to Amherst, and he quickly recognized the desirability of having a brigadier in the southern colonies. He first thought of Deputy Quartermaster General James Robertson, who had visited the Floridas in 1763, but he dropped that idea, much to Robertson's relief.³ Gage then selected Bouquet who was appointed brigadier in April 1765, sailed from Philadelphia in June, and reached Pensacola at the end of August, only to succumb to fever.⁴ By November, Gage had received word of Bouquet's death and named Colonel John Reed to act as brigadier, but as Reed

2. This sketch of Haldimand's early years is based upon the Haldimand Papers in the British Museum, London, and transcripts of those papers located in the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Hereinafter cited as HP. See also Francis J. Audet, "Sir Frederic Haldimand," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, XVII (Section I, 1923); A. Latt, "Un Vaudois gouverneur general du Canada, Sir Frederic Haldimand," *Revue Historique Vaudoise*, XLI (1933); Jean N. McIlwraith, *Sir Frederick Haldimand* (Toronto, 1926).

3. Robertson to Gage, January 24, 1765, Gage to Secretary of War, January 24, 1765, in Great Britain, Public Record Office, War Office Papers 1/6: 112, 114. Hereinafter cited as WO. For a general account see Charles L. Mowat, "The Southern Brigade: A Sidelight on the British Military Establishment in America, 1763-1775," *Journal of Southern History*, X (February 1944), 59-77. On Robertson, see Robert R. Rea, "Lieutenant Colonel James Robertson's Mission to the Floridas, 1763," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LIII (July 1974), 33-48.

4. Henry Bouquet Papers, British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 21637/105, 109.

wandered off into the Illinois country instead of remaining at his post on the Gulf Coast, Gage settled for the moment on Colonel William Tayler.⁵ The commander in chief's choice for permanent assignment as brigadier went to Frederick Haldimand, and on December 12, 1765, secretary at war signified His Majesty's wish that Haldimand "should succeed his deceased countryman" Bouquet as brigadier for the Southern Department.⁶

Nearly the whole of 1766 dragged out in slow communications. Haldimand, who was visiting in Philadelphia, had yet to learn of his promotion as late as June. The recent death of his old friend Bouquet and that of his favorite nephew, Lieutenant Peter Haldimand, in Canada bore heavily upon his spirit. Nor, when it came, was his new assignment a matter for universal rejoicing. When Thomas Mills, Haldimand's brigade major in Canada, heard of his chief's new honor, he hastily begged that he might be excused from accompanying him and offered to pay for a substitute to take his place. Such an arrangement was concluded, and Captain Francis Hutchinson undertook the office which he filled to Haldimand's great satisfaction throughout the Florida years.⁷ Not until December was Haldimand able to embark at New York aboard H.M.S. *Cygnét*. He was far from uplifted by his prospects, for Colonel Tayler's dispatches from Pensacola indicated that "disunion reigns there more than ever."⁸ In March 1767, Tayler rejoiced to advise Gage that Haldimand was reported at Jamaica in February; and finally, on March 24, 1767, the new brigadier landed at Pensacola.⁹

The scene upon which Frederick Haldimand now entered gave promise of endless labor. His predecessors had done little to refurbish the old Spanish fort, a mere log stockade whose timbers were rotten, and the huts in which the troops were barracked kept out neither rain nor cold. Brigadier Tayler had suffered the same discomforts in the commandant's quarters. "You may imagine," Haldimand wrote, "How I was surprised at my

5. Gage to Secretary at War, November 8, 1765, WO 1/6: 299, 333.

6. Secretary at War to Gage, December 12, 1765, WO 4/988. Mowat, "Southern Brigade," 64, states that Haldimand received his appointment in January 1766.

7. Haldimand to James Murray, June 26, 1766, Mills to Haldimand, October 4, 1766, Haldimand to Mills, November 29, 1766, Mills to Haldimand, January 3, 1767, HP.

8. Haldimand to Mills, November 30, 1766, HP.

9. Tayler to Gage, March 4, 1767, Haldimand to Gage, March 25, 1767, HP.

first entering this place, to see the misery people lived in, being pent within high rotten Palisados built for Spanish convicts; deprived of air and particularly of the sea breeze, the only comfort Nature seems to intend for this place." Huts covered with bark and streets paved with the same inflammable material posed a frightening fire hazard, though one steadily diminished by the elements. As Haldimand observed, "Each storm destroys a few more huts and we will soon be out in the open."¹⁰ Military energies had chiefly been expended in violent quarrels with Governor George Johnstone which had produced enough correspondence to have papered the whole town. Fortunately for Haldimand, Johnstone had returned to England before his arrival, and Lieutenant Governor Montfort Browne seemed well disposed. For the moment all was quiet, Haldimand reported, although "the spirit of party" hung heavy in the air.¹¹

The new brigadier immediately set out to remedy the circumstances of his long-suffering troops. Within two weeks he had laid plans to relocate and construct the stockade and the buildings of the fort, and by the end of April 1767, that work was well advanced.¹² Lumber was readily available, but labor was in short supply, there being few carpenters or craftsmen to supplement the efforts of the small and sickly garrison. It was obvious to Haldimand that part of his problems arose from the local water supply, which came from a sluggish stream at the edge of the swamp behind the town. The drinking water looked as bad as it tasted, being "yellow as saffron" for days after a rain.¹³ By June, Haldimand had a crew of twenty-five blacks working under the direction of a white overseer, but he found slave labor costly and inefficient. Five white carpenters drawing exorbitant wages could accomplish more than the blacks, and Haldimand felt that the results would justify the greater expense.¹⁴ If General Gage would only send him a few more skilled workmen, the job of renovation would move rapidly.

Gage, although greatly pleased by Haldimand's vigorous approach to his problems, was concerned by mounting expenses. In letter after letter he observed that the cost of repairs was running

10. Haldimand to Tayler, October 5, 1767, HP.

11. Haldimand to Gage, March 25, 1767, HP.

12. Haldimand to Gage, April 6, 1767, HP.

13. Haldimand to Gage, April 31 [*sic*], 1767, HP.

14. Haldimand to Gage, June 6, 1767, HP.

excessively high and warned the brigadier that no new construction might be undertaken without specific approval from London.¹⁵ Haldimand assured Gage that he was doing his best to keep expenditure low, but alleviation of the frightful conditions of the garrison and the acquisition of accurate information concerning the vast area of his command took both time and money.¹⁶ The force of Haldimand's arguments succeeded in persuading Gage to acquiesce in his plans, and even to dispatch to Pensacola a master carpenter, six journeymen, and two boat-builders who arrived before the end of November 1767.¹⁷

In the course of a very hot and busy summer which made him "yearn for the ice of Canada," Haldimand had accomplished much.¹⁸ The stockade had been relocated a considerable distance from the buildings within the fort, storehouses had been erected, and a large piece of ground had been cleared and planted in gardens from which the troops could supplement their meager diet. A hospital had been built, as well as magazines and sheds, and workmen had begun "a ditch to drain the swamps behind the town, and bring fresh water into the Garrison." Haldimand took satisfaction in seeing that "sickness diminishes every day," though he had yet to complete proper barracks for the men.¹⁹ The work had been exhausting, but, as he proudly noted, "His Majesty certainly didn't send me here with the rank of Brigadier General just to preside at the funerals of his brave troops."²⁰ And to a friend in New York he wrote, "Had we only the necessaries of life in some degree of plenty and goodness, we would be able to enjoy them in some comfort."²¹

For himself, Haldimand found lodging at first with Robert Ross, from whom he was the recipient of "many civilities." The commandant's quarters proving inadequate, he secured a house in the town for £500. He purchased the Tayler's furniture, though

15. Gage to Haldimand, May 8, 1767, HP.

16. Haldimand to Gage, June 15, 1767, HP.

17. Gage to Haldimand, September 7, October 4, 1767, Haldimand to Gage, November 28, 1767, HP.

18. Haldimand to Gage, June 16, 1767, HP.

19. Haldimand to Captain Ross, August 6, 1767, HP.

20. Haldimand to Gage, November 28, 1767, HP. This was not merely a figure of speech. Between July 25, 1765, and July 10, 1767, the 31st Regiment at Pensacola lost 6 officers, 190 men, 28 women, and 44 children to various diseases. Robert R. Rea, "'Graveyard for Britons,' West Florida, 1763-1781," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVII (April 1969), 353.

21. Haldimand to Hugh Wallace, November 30, 1767, HP.

one bureau was returned to Mrs. Tayler in St. Augustine, as the brigadier judged. it "too fine for a man."²² Haldimand had brought his personal gear with him, of course, but by the summer of 1768 his china was almost gone, and he commissioned a friend to send him twenty-four plates and other pieces.²³ His agents in New York, Hugh and Alexander Wallace, were asked to provide such items as grindstones, plaster of paris, linen shirts, cheese, poultry, and nuts. The Wallaces were also the source of much of Haldimand's wine. "I really believe your good Madyra has been the best preservatif I could have wished," he wrote to Hugh Wallace. "I am sorry it is almost gone as well as the other pyp of sherry and several . . . of claret and vin de Graves. Doctors say that wine is the best liqueur for this country."²⁴ But it was the native New York wine which Haldimand declared he preferred "to any others."²⁵

To a considerable degree the exchange of gifts made life on the Gulf Coast more bearable. From various naval officers sailing between Pensacola and Jamaica, Haldimand received limes, yams, cigars, rope, and old canvas, and the latest London pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers. His friend and former companion Thomas Sowers sent apples and "two dozen of my old Madeira," along with a "reeding glass," while Mrs. Sowers forwarded a "large collection of good pickles." General and Mrs. Gage dispatched two barrels of apples, two pieces of beef, and two bottles of gravy, but the apples disappeared en route and the beef did not survive the voyage from New York to Pensacola. In return, Haldimand sent the Wallaces "a fine turtle," and to the Gages went flowering plants, jasmine seeds, and those of the best watermelon Haldimand had ever tasted. The isolation of Pensacola was evidenced by the gift Haldimand presented to the former French governor at New Orleans in 1769— a copy of the latest available *Annual Register* — that for 1766!²⁶

In spite of his own efforts, and those of kindly friends, Frederick Haldimand looked upon Pensacola as a sort of purgatory.

22. Haldimand to Tayler, October 5, 1767, HP.

23. Haldimand to Captain Marsh, August 12, 1768, HP.

24. Haldimand to Wallace, November 2, 1767, HP.

25. Haldimand to Wallace, March 3, 1768, HP.

26. Sowers to Haldimand, February 16, 1773, October 10, 1771; Gage to Haldimand, November 17, 1767; Haldimand to Gage, May 26, 1768, November 29, 1767; to Aubry, January 10, 1769, HP.

“The scorching heat of last summer and the severity of this winter,” he wrote in 1768, were “intollerable.”²⁷ Official duties occupied much of his time but seldom provided much real satisfaction. He complained to Hugh Wallace: “It would have been more advantageous to me to idell about St. James, than to ruin my fortune & constitution in this inhospitable part of the world;— if I ever get anything God knows, it will not have been all favour, I will have deserved part of it.”²⁸

The long-delayed court martial of Major Robert Farmar plagued Haldimand from the moment of his arrival. Former Governor George Johnstone and Lieutenant Philip Pittman had levelled such a host of charges against the first British commandant at Mobile that Gage had agreed to a general court martial which Haldimand must convene. Johnstone had retired to England, but Haldimand could not escape Major Farmar’s personal solicitations, nor the complaints of Lieutenant Pittman. There was endless bickering over witnesses and for Haldimand the problem of collecting (and keeping alive) a sufficient number of army captains to form a court. “Everything seems to work against this ‘malheureuse’ court martial,” Haldimand complained to Gage, and he besought his commander in chief to reduce the charges and move the trial away from Pensacola, which seemed “destined to be the seat of disorder and confusion.” Not until April 1768 did Haldimand have the satisfaction of convening Farmar’s court martial and clearing the record of a most troublesome case.²⁹

The distribution of the few troops allotted to West Florida also concerned Haldimand. He proposed and carried out the abandonment of the small fort on the Tombeche River and, recognizing the impracticality of the post at the Iberville, he suggested an establishment at Natchez or Baton Rouge. Having built a hospital at Pensacola, Haldimand took a long, hard look at the sickly condition of Fort Charlotte and was led to reassign medics to Mobile and propose a drastic reduction of that garri-

27. Haldimand to Thomas Willing, April 20, 1768, HP.

28. Haldimand to Wallace, July 5, 1768, HP.

29. Haldimand to Gage, November 28, December 21, 1767, April 20, 1768, Lieutenant General Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Hereinafter cited as GP. See also my introduction to Philip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (London, 1770; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1973), xxxv-xxxix.

son.³⁰ The recovery of the numerous deserters from British expeditions which had passed through New Orleans on their way up the Mississippi to the Illinois also absorbed Haldimand's attention. His efforts met with reasonable success, but having wooed the delinquents with fair promises, he quickly shipped them off to the West Indies where they could trouble him no longer.³¹

Then, on August 8, 1768, Haldimand received orders from New York to abandon all outlying posts and withdraw all but three companies of troops to St. Augustine.³² The concentration and reassignment of British forces in North America delighted him, but the disappearance of Pensacola's most reliable source of revenue appalled the civilian population. Lieutenant Governor Montfort Browne protested the military decision to the brigadier, complaining of dangers from Indians and loss of trade, foreseeing eventually the loss and destruction of the liberty and property of every colonist. Haldimand tartly replied that he believed the withdrawal would actually benefit the colony by forcing the settlers to turn their minds to agriculture, whereby they would be more useful to themselves and to the Mother Country. The pay of the troops, upon which Pensacola merchants fattened, only induced idleness. Honest trade could better be protected by a provincial sloop patrolling the inland waterways and lakes than by any post or garrison, and the Indians would cause no trouble if backwoods traders were properly regulated— a task which troops could not accomplish in any case.³³ To Gage, Haldimand pointed out that the concern of the colonial authorities over the troops' departure was based solely on their fears of pecuniary loss. Bitter was his criticism of "our good English merchants." The very real possibilities for American colonial development, he thought, were being blighted by the greed of men for whom "Liberty and Property" had become cabalistic terms which covered the narrowest sort of self-interest.³⁴

The movement of the troops from West Florida required extensive efforts and the collection of considerable shipping. The

30. Haldimand to Gage, November 30, December 6, 1767, May 1, 1768, HP.

31. See Robert R. Rea, "Military Deserters from British West Florida," *Louisiana History*, IX (Spring 1968), 123-37.

32. Gage to Haldimand, June 27, 1768, HP. The West Florida garrison was increased to six companies. Gage to Haldimand, January 6, 1769, HP.

33. Haldimand to Browne, August 15, 1768, HP.

34. Haldimand to Gage, August 14, 28, 1768, HP.

21st and 31st Regiments were not strong in manpower, but together they mustered 151 women, thirty of whom were pregnant, and 127 children. The Mobile garrison all had fever, and Haldimand complained that he had "more trouble and difficulty embarking two or three hundred men here than I would have embarking 3000 at Philadelphia." By the end of October 1768, the troops were beginning to depart Pensacola, but it took nearly two months for the transports to make the round trip to East Florida. Not only was shipping in short supply, but only shallow draft vessels that could clear the bar at St. Augustine could be employed. Lack of transportation delayed Haldimand's own departure and caused him to cry, "The first month of 1769 has passed, and I'm still in this lousy country!" Ultimately he seems to have made part of the trip by land (probably from Apalachee) and was in St. Augustine by the last day of April 1769.³⁵

St. Augustine provided more solid comforts than had Pensacola, but Haldimand's problems remained much the same. At his new headquarters he was fortunate enough to rent a house from Captain Jenkins of the departing 9th Regiment for the annual sum of £50, but he was only able to close the deal in September. Hoping to enjoy some comfort in the more sociable surroundings of St. Augustine, he proposed to put a piazza around part of his new home.³⁶ More pressing were the usual problems of barracks and magazines; supplies were dear and labor short. Before long Haldimand was convinced that St. Augustine was the worst possible place to station a major body of troops.³⁷ Given the choice, he would not have maintained troops in either East or West Florida, but having to conform to his superiors' plans, he would have preferred Pensacola to St. Augustine.³⁸ To meet the problem of overcrowding, Haldimand concentrated his attention upon the construction of St. Francis Barracks, a large building designed for the hot climate with plentiful windows for circulation and porches for shade even a cupola and a weathercock.

35. Haldimand to Gage, September 16, 29, October 30, 1768, February 7, July 1, 1769, HP. Major Thomas Whitmore to Gage, April 30, 1769, GP.

36. Rental agreements, September 23, 1769, HP.

37. Haldimand to Gage, October 13, 1769; to Robertson, November 30, 1769, HP.

38. Haldimand to Elias Durnford (private), January 1, 1770, HP.

39. Charles Loch Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* (Berkeley, 1943; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 30-31. See also Charles L. Mowat, "St. Francis Barracks, St. Augustine: A Link With the

Little had been accomplished, however, before Haldimand and his troops were ordered back to Pensacola. Fears of Spanish strength at New Orleans led to Gage's instructions of February 26, 1770, to put Pensacola and Mobile "in a state of defence as shall discourage or disappoint any sudden attempt to distress or break up our infant settlements." Haldimand, who had been hoping for permission to return to New York, received these orders on March 20, and prepared to move at once, although he was downcast by the turn of events and saw, all his efforts and advice gone for nought. His health would not allow him to proceed by land, and contrary winds which made the bar at St. Augustine impassable delayed his sailing until April 26. By mid-May he was back at Pensacola, then off to survey the condition of Mobile's deserted defenses before sketching the location of new batteries which he proposed for the defense of the harbor.⁴⁰

The army's return was signalled with great rejoicing in Pensacola. "Our friends here are so happy," wrote an early arrival, "that nothing but feasting and drinking has gone on since ever we came among them."⁴¹ Haldimand was advised that his house—which had been rented by Montfort Browne and used for public offices and a church by Governor John Elliot—was in good repair, and the prospect of his presence (and the military payroll) "reanimates the minds of the people in general."⁴²

Nervousness aggravated by the Spanish military presence at New Orleans (the result of a revolt by French residents in 1769) and the growing threat of war with Spain over the distant Falkland Islands forced serious consideration of the strategic and tactical circumstances of West Florida upon British authorities. The European war which spread to the Gulf Coast in 1779 might easily have broken out in 1770 and its consequences have fallen upon Brigadier Haldimand. In light of the loss of the region during the American Revolutionary War; his views are of particular interest and significance.

Having surveyed and renewed the defenses of Pensacola, and

British Regime," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXI (January 1943), 266-80.

40. Gage to Haldimand, February 26, 1770; Haldimand to Gage, March 21, April 12, May 31, 1770, HP; Haldimand to Gage, June 27, 1770, GP.

41. N to Haldimand, March 12, 1770, HP.

42. James Jones to Haldimand, March 11, 1770. See also Elias Durnford to Haldimand, March 9, 1770, HP.

having seen enough of the local Indians to judge their capacity, Haldimand was of the opinion that the citizens of Pensacola were in no danger from Indian attack, even should Superintendent John Stuart's diplomacy fail to hold their loyalty and should Spain provide them with gunpowder—something which France had not been able to do in the last war. The occasional Indian outrage was usually attributable to provocation caused by illicit traders who ought to be subjected to civilian regulation and who could not, in any case, be deterred by a marching regiment. By the same token, distant detachments and companies assigned to the Mississippi River borders of the province were no more than hostages to the Spaniards at New Orleans. There being no practical route to their support by way of the lakes and the Iberville River, in spite of the dreams of successive engineers and governors, such isolated posts merely drained off British manpower for no military purpose.

The only threat to the security of Pensacola and Mobile was from the sea, but neither place, in Haldimand's opinion, could be defended against seaborne assault, once it developed. The defense of the Gulf Coast must depend upon British men-of-war, those of the Jamaica squadron in particular. Vast sums of money and many years would be required to erect fortifications that could withstand attack by European troops, and Haldimand was too much a realist, too experienced an officer, to believe that these would be forthcoming or available. With this evaluation General Thomas Gage was in complete agreement.⁴³

What might be done on the spur of the moment, Haldimand undertook promptly. Together with Lieutenant Governor Elias Dunford, himself an army engineer and a naval captain, he selected sites for batteries at the tip of Santa Rosa Island and at the mouth of Pensacola Bay. These, he hoped, might stop small vessels from entering the harbor, but only warships could provide an effective off-shore line of defense. Observing that Mobile's brick fort was in ruinous condition, Haldimand and Durnford agreed upon razing three of its four bastions in order to make the remaining one serviceable.⁴⁴ However, Gage's warning of imminent hostilities, in February 1771, saved Fort Charlotte from

43. Haldimand to Gage, February 11, March 21, 1770; Gage to Haldimand, March 23, 1770, HP.

44. Haldimand to Gage, February 12, 1771, HP.

destruction, even though the general's own engineer, Captain Sowers, agreed that it was militarily useless— a conclusion in which Elias Durnford would be forced to concur nine years later when he surrendered it to Bernardo de Gálvez.⁴⁵

Spain's prospects of seizing British West Florida, early in 1771, rested upon a slender force of 350 men at New Orleans and another 100 scattered elsewhere in the province. According to Haldimand's information, 500 more troops were shortly expected from Havana. With further support from Cuba, the Spaniards boasted, they would seize West Florida if it came to war, but at the same time they seemed extremely nervous about their own fate should the British strike first.⁴⁶

General Gage had urged Haldimand to take the initiative in case of a rupture: "Better to attack, than wait to be attacked in West Florida"; and he had condemned the folly of scattering the colonial forces "in posts it is impossible to support," as the civil authorities so ardently desired. When the British attack was ready to be launched, Indians should be employed in raiding the borders of Louisiana and drawing off the defenders of New Orleans. Recognizing that the proximity of Havana posed a real threat, Gage foresaw that it would be difficult to draw assistance for West Florida from Jamaica as that island "will have enough to defend itself."⁴⁷

During his first tour of duty in West Florida, Haldimand had scoffed at its military potential. While Pensacola Bay might serve as a refuge for frigates and privateers, the troops in the colony were too few to attack the Spaniard on the Mississippi; the supposition that West Florida might serve as a base for offensive action was a "chimera." If New Orleans were to be attacked, it must be by a British force sent from the north, coming down the broad highway of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.⁴⁸

The brigadier now believed that Louisiana might be taken by 2,000 regulars supported by 200 or 300 Indians. He contemplated a diversionary thrust westward along the lakes toward New Orleans while the main body of troops struck up the Mississippi, making use of British naval resources. The shallow-draft

45. *Ibid.*

46. Haldimand to Gage, February 13, 1771, HP.

47. Gage to Haldimand, November 30, 1770, March 29, 1771; to Stuart, February 5, 1771, GP.

48. Haldimand to Gage, December 6, 21, 1767, HP.

vessels used to convey the regiments from St. Augustine to Pensacola would be suitable for going up the Mississippi, but he would need three or four frigates as escorts and wanted a naval squadron to protect his rear by keeping an eye on Havana. His most critical shortage, however, was artillery. That in the colony dated from the Seven Years' War, and, besides being nearly unserviceable, it was of too small calibre to be of use in defending the entrance to Pensacola harbor.⁴⁹

An alternate plan for attacking New Orleans was submitted to Gage by Lieutenant John Thomas, an artillery officer and erstwhile Indian agent on the Mississippi. Thomas offered to take New Orleans with a force of 150 regulars and thirty artillerymen. Embarking his expedition from Fort Pitt in ten batteaux of twenty oars, two with a pair of four-pounders at their prows, Thomas proposed to pick up 150 Chickasaw and Choctaw braves at the mouth of the Yazoo River or at Natchez. His project claimed to have the support of Indian Superintendent John Stuart, and its concept was strikingly similar to that of the raid which would be carried out by James Willing in 1778— with the significant difference, of course, that for Willing, New Orleans was a sanctuary rather than a target, and the British on the Mississippi were his intended victims.⁵⁰

The crisis passed quickly, however. By July 3, 1771, Haldimand was advised of the relaxation of international tensions.⁵¹ Nonetheless, defense considerations continued to interest him and even more the new governor of West Florida, Peter Chester, whose military ambitions (he had held a commission during the last war) and security measures ran counter to Haldimand's better judgment. Chester wanted a government house inside the fort at Pensacola. It could only be "an apple of discord," in Haldimand's opinion, but Gage advised his subordinate to let the governor have his way in order to avoid greater trouble. Chester was willing, it seemed, to support Haldimand's wish to abandon "what they call the Fort of Pensacola" and station all his troops at the Red Cliffs at the harbor mouth. The defenses depended upon those batteries, and more gunners were needed to man them effectively. The town merchants "would remonstrate endlessly"

49. Haldimand to Gage, February 13, 1771, GP.

50. Thomas to Gage, March 26, 1771, GP.

51. Gage to Haldimand, May 17, 1771, HP.

at the loss of business upon which they made 100 per cent profit, Haldimand wrote to Gage, but as Chester and Durnford would stand to clear a large sum by the move, they could be counted on to support it.⁵²

While Haldimand assured Chester and the townsfolk that the local defense system of Pensacola would suffice to protect the place against any imaginable Indian foray, a young engineer, Lieutenant John Campbell, launched his own attack on all Haldimand had done and proposed the construction of a new fort upon Gage Hill, above the town. Campbell's suggestion, which would be carried out a few years later, was condemned in 1772 by Governor Chester who at least partially recognized the validity of Haldimand's arrangements: a fort on Gage Hill could not provide a place of security for the townspeople and their goods in the event of an Indian attack. That it was also the wrong place to try to defend the city against a Spanish assault he had yet to learn.⁵³

While Pensacola was headquarters for the Southern Brigade and home to its commander, Frederick Haldimand saw something of the rest of British West Florida. In the fall of 1768, he spent a month at Mobile— and determined never to return because of the miserable weather. Three weeks of continuous rain and thunderstorms turned the countryside into a morass and made the roads nearly impassable.⁵⁴ Again, in December and January 1771-1772, Indian affairs required his presence at Mobile, and when that business was concluded Haldimand sailed westward along the coast as far as the Pascagoula River. Stopping briefly at the plantation of Hugo Krebs, whose friendship he enjoyed, he made his way some fifteen leagues up the river.⁵⁵ The return voyage to Mobile was made by way of the off-shore islands: Round, Corn, and Dauphin, but neither these nor any other part of the coastal

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52. Haldimand to Gage, May 1, 14, 1772, HP; to Gage, May 11, 1772, GP. The weakness of the batteries at the Red Cliffs was later noted by Major Alexander Dickson who observed that they "would never hinder any ships from coming into the Harbour with a fair wind." Dickson to Gage, April 22, 1775, GP.
53. Haldimand to Chester, November 9, 1772; Sketch of Observations on the Fort at Pensacola by Lieutenant John Campbell, Engineer, 1772; Chester to Haldimand, November 13, 1772, HP.
54. Haldimand to Gage, December 14, 1768, GP.
55. Krebs to Haldimand, December 20, 1768, HP.

plain greatly impressed him. He saw much swamp and sand, he informed Gage, but only one French habitant.⁵⁶

Like most who found themselves in West Florida for an indefinite period, Haldimand secured some temporary grants of land in the western parts of the colony. Five hundred acres on the Amite River he disposed of to an unsuccessful planter from the West Indies named Maubec; at one time Haldimand intended to settle some tenants on the remaining land, but he seems to have taken no action toward that end.⁵⁷ Another 500 acres on the Mississippi Haldimand gave to his friend Thomas Willing of Philadelphia.⁵⁸ Such distant properties were easily secured and lightly disposed of, although Haldimand had some regrets that he never "improved the time I was in Florida" to see the Mississippi River.⁵⁹

Haldimand was not tempted to settle his family or sink his small fortune in West Florida, although he had retained properties in Canada and in Maryland. He brought a young nephew, Pierre, to Pensacola in July 1768, rather more for company than for any other reason. Pierre was a tall, well-educated, and promising youth, and his uncle proposed to assist him in a military career. A commission was solicited from General Gage, but it would have cost Haldimand £400, and that he could not afford. Pierre soon headed north with an eye to entering trade, and he temporarily settled upon his uncle's farm in Maryland.⁶⁰

If he could not advance his family's interest in West Florida, Haldimand could at least raise a memorial to his old comrade Henry Bouquet. In 1770 he saw to the construction of a simple gray brick marker at a corner of the fort at Pensacola, not far from the grave of former Governor John Elliot.⁶¹

The later years of Haldimand's tenure at Pensacola passed quietly enough once the Anglo-Spanish military crisis ended. At first Haldimand had some differences with the new and ambitious Governor Peter Chester who, like his predecessors, wished to assert his authority over the regiments at Pensacola, argued over

56. Haldimand to Gage, February 19, 1772; HP.

57. Haldimand to Evan Jones, July 2, 1773; Chester to Haldimand, October 8, 1773, HP.

58. Haldimand to Thomas Willing, June 2, 1775, HP.

59. Haldimand to Major Alexander Dickson, November 30, 1773, HP.

60. Haldimand to Wallace, July 5, 1768; to [?], June 28, 1769; Samuel Holland to Haldimand, September 8, 1769, HP.

61. Certificates of John Volla, February 1, 3, 1770, HP.

protocol, sought to send troops to the Mississippi, and wished to enjoy both the status and security of a house within the stockade. But Haldimand was both conciliatory and firm; he succeeded in retaining his rightful command while satisfying the governor's sense of proprieties.⁶²

The care of his troops was a constant burden. At one time he had personally to arrange the purchase of bread for his men, locate fresh provisions, and then pay the victualling agent a penny a pound profit for selling them to the troops.⁶³ Later, fire destroyed a considerable number of the huts in which the married soldiers lived, and Haldimand's earlier efforts to provide housing had to be repeated.⁶⁴ Deservedly, his unflinching endeavors won him the highest praise from Quartermaster General James Robertson: "You are both a friend to the troops and a good manager of public money."⁶⁵ Such officers are rare in any army.

Yet none of this was calculated to improve Haldimand's view of West Florida or significantly advance his career. He had been grievously disappointed at his failure to get a regiment after the Seven Years' War, and he was concerned that it might now be supposed that he was profiting financially from the command of the Southern Brigade. In fact, both his fortune and his constitution were impaired daily, he told a friend in England. He was occasionally plagued by sore throat, which he blamed on temperatures as low as 17° in the winter of 1768, suffered so from piles that he could scarcely sit or walk, and was by no means immune to the summer's fevers.⁶⁶ He observed that the colonists continued their lackadaisical ways. No one was planting or sowing; all trusted to commerce or engaged in lawmaking of which, he remarked, Solon would have been jealous.⁶⁷ When he attempted to assist newcomers like James Willing, brother of his Philadelphia correspondent, he encountered the same desire for instant wealth without earnest effort. Haldimand's cordial relationship with James Willing provides an ironic touch to these years. Willing

62. See for example Haldimand to Gage, August 16, 25, 1770; Chester to Haldimand, August 23, 1771; Haldimand to Chester, August 29, 1771; Gage to Haldimand, February 17, 1772, HP. See also Shy, *Toward Lexington*, 286-87.

63. Haldimand to Edward Codrington, June 11, 1770, HP.

64. Haldimand to Gage, February 21, 1772, HP.

65. Colonel James Robertson to Haldimand, April 4, 1771, HP.

66. Haldimand to Gage, January 28, 1768; to Marsh, August 12, 1768, HP.

67. Haldimand to Gage, June 22, 1770, HP.

briefly settled property on the Mississippi, which the brigadier made available to him, and christened the place Haldimand Cliffs. He sent Haldimand gifts of nuts, oranges, and claret which were secured at New Orleans from Oliver Pollock, and he later offered the brigadier snuff and buffalo tongue. He arranged to purchase other properties on the river in which Haldimand was interested, although he broke the agreement when he returned to Philadelphia in 1774. Like any settler, Willing urged that troops should be posted along the Mississippi to provide protection for British lives and property. Willing seems to have spent more time in New Orleans than at Haldimand Cliffs, however, and he showed more interest in the sort of commercial activity in which his friend Pollock was engaged than in becoming a Mississippi planter.⁶⁸ Haldimand witnessed neither his departure nor his return to West Florida, however, for in 1773, a happy turn of fate called the brigadier north.

After ten years of responsibility for the British military establishment in America, General Thomas Gage was granted leave to visit England in 1773. As his successor in temporary command at New York he chose Frederick Haldimand whose competence and seniority had won him promotion to major general in May 1772. On March 27, 1773, Haldimand received the welcome order to proceed to New York "with all convenient speed." By mid-April he was ready to embark on the schooner *Mercury*, and he sailed within a short time, leaving his house and property interests to be disposed of by his friends and agents.⁶⁹ That which he most cherished he probably took to New York with him.

Frederick Haldimand's private life is not prominently displayed by his reports to Gage or in his surviving personal correspondence. He was a bachelor, a senior officer of foreign birth, assigned to a dreary, isolated command. His expressed attitudes toward both civil and other military officers make it clear that he maintained a formality appropriate to his station, but that he also possessed a warmth of character which won lasting friend-

68. Haldimand to James Willing, July 30, 1772; to Thomas Willing, June 2, 1775; James Willing to Haldimand, January 3, July 6, November 11, 1772, April 10, 1773; Oliver Pollock to Haldimand, December 1, 1772; J. Stephenson to Haldimand, August 15, 1774, HP.

69. Gage to Haldimand, February 20, 1773; Haldimand to Lieutenant John Campbell, April 14, 1773; Major Alexander Dickson to Haldimand, May 19, 1773; Chester to Haldimand, January 2, 1774; J. Stephenson to Haldimand, February 4, 1774, HP.

ships. His grief at the deaths of a young nephew and an old companion was deep and poignant. At the same time a modest improvement in his circumstances could cheer him mightily, and his correspondence betrays a touching appreciation of the simplest kindness. Mrs. Gage and Mrs. Tayler were good friends to him, and with Mrs. Tayler he could be positively frivolous. To her he announced his decision to eschew his native French and henceforth conduct his correspondence in English (which he obviously spoke fluently), but it was another woman among the officers' and civilians' wives at Pensacola who caught Haldimand's eye. Mrs. Henry Fairchild's husband was a merchant, often absent on business in the interior and on the Mississippi at Natchez where he was engaged in trade with John Bradley. The circumstances are hidden, but the charming Mrs. Fairchild became a widow; Frederick Haldimand became her protector and she his companion.⁷⁰ Although Haldimand could be stern with his junior officers when they formed awkward relationships with the ladies, he could also appreciate that some human relationships could not be fitted into the normal pattern, and so he seems to have viewed his own liason with Mrs. Fairchild. There was no marriage, but she would accompany him throughout his later career and be recognized as his lady.

From 1773 General Haldimand was increasingly occupied with the affairs of American colonies moving rapidly toward armed revolt. Although West Florida was never a hotbed of independence, Haldimand had seen there something of that quarrelsome, self-seeking, irresponsible attitude which elsewhere would be called patriotism. As early as 1768, when he was hoping to return to England, he feared that "these riotous Oliverians will be the cause of my remaining upon this continent longer than I wish."⁷¹ He was, of course, aware of the disturbances in the northern colonies, and he blamed them upon the ill-temper of thoughtless and greedy men too shortsighted and too narrow-minded to recognize either the blessings or the obligations of the British imperial system. With Thomas Willing, the sage Pennsylvania banker-colleague of Robert Morris, he exchanged views—and hopes and fears. As revolution blazed up in Boston, he wrote sadly to his old friend: "I see with uneasiness that so fine a

70. J. Stephenson to Haldimand, February 14, 1774, HP.

71. Haldimand to Maar [Marsh?], November 14, 1768, HP.

Continent as this is threatened to be plunged in all the horrors and calamities of a civil war by the rashness and imprudence of these people who by their conduct will prevent what moderation, equity and temper are much more probable to attain when perhaps a little more attention to the injustice of destroying the property of their fellow subjects and an equitable compensation made in time might have restored that mutual confidence between Great Britain and the Colonies which alone can render both flourishing and happy."⁷²

A few months later, General Haldimand joined General Gage in beleaguered Boston. Once more his mind turned to the defense of British North America, and he feared for the security of St. Augustine, he recalled how Americans were establishing themselves on the Mississippi at Natchez, and he contemplated the threat of joint Spanish-American action against West Florida. Happily for Frederick Haldimand, duty called him elsewhere. He sailed from Boston the day before the battle for Breed's Hill, and he would return to America in 1778 as governor-general of Canada.⁷³

72. Haldimand to Thomas Willing, September 14, 1774, HP.

73. Allen French, "General Haldimand in Boston, 1774-1775," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LXVI (1936-1941), 88, 90. On Haldimand's career in Canada, see Gustave Lanctot, *Canada and the American Revolution, 1774-1783* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967), 172-77, 182, 185-89, 190, 191, 193, 208, 209, 222, 198-206 passim.