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D. Lorne McWatters



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A NEW GUIDE TO SOURCES OF SPANISH FLORIDA HISTORY

by D. LORNE MCWATTERS, BRUCE S. CHAPPELL, AND
MICHAEL GETZLER-EATON

RESearch into Spanish Borderlands history received major impetus from a recent National Endowment for the Humanities grant to the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.¹ In August 1977, the Endowment awarded \$127,000 to the Yonge Library to initiate a three-year project to prepare a guide to the Florida Borderlands collection.² The Spanish Florida Borderlands Project represents the first concerted effort to organize and make these materials accessible.

The collection, containing 560,000 pages on microfilm or photostats, has been assembled in the Yonge Library and is the most complete documentation for the history of the Florida Borderlands in the western hemisphere. It records the social, cultural, political, economic, military, and religious presence of Spain in the Florida Borderlands. Geographically, it provides primary source material for the Florida area and related areas in the Caribbean, Mexico, and the southeastern United States. The documentation is contained primarily in three major divisions: East Florida Papers-175 reels of microfilm; The John B. Stetson Collection-150,000 pages of photostats contained in 7,600 bundles; and the *Papeles Procedentes de Cuba* - 210 reels of microfilm.

* Messrs. McWatters, Chappell, and Getzler-Eaton are historians employed by the Spanish Florida Borderlands Project of the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

1. The Spanish Borderlands are defined as the interface of the Spanish colonial empire with unsubjected or partially assimilated native American peoples and with the hegemonies of the other European colonial powers. The North American Borderlands ranged from the Atlantic to the Pacific and extended in time from the Spanish arrival in 1510 to the emergence of independent nations, circa 1821.
2. The Florida Borderlands are defined as the area of Spanish hegemony based in the Florida Peninsula, with a shifting northern boundary with the unsubjected native Americans and with the Anglo-American settlements. Administrative control exercised by either the Gobierno of St. Augustine (1565-1763) or the Comandancias of Pensacola and Apalache (circa 1700-1821) extended at times as far west as the Mississippi.

The East Florida Papers contain the complete archives of the Second Spanish Administration of East Florida (1784-1821). This collection is unusually complete because in 1821, when the American government assumed sovereignty in East Florida, the confusion produced by various interpretations of the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 caused United States authorities to seize the Spanish archives to prevent their shipment to Havana. Furthermore, the archives remained virtually intact during the turbulent nineteenth century and were not finally transferred to the Library of Congress until 1906. The great quantity and diversity of materials make this collection unique among Spanish Borderlands sources and particularly useful for intensive research into the whole spectrum of Borderlands topics defined in a relatively short period of years.

The Stetson Collection contains over 150,000 photostats of documents drawn from the various Spanish archives and relates to all phases of Spanish activities in the borderlands of the American Southeast from 1518 to 1819. The bulk of the material documents communications between Spanish Borderlands officials and crown officers and the king. An important part of the collection, however, deals with the more candid correspondence between provincial officials, including those in Havana and New Spain. Among the topics recorded are the voyages of exploration and settlement of eastern and western Florida, religious and clerical interactions with the indigenous populations, expanding English and French presence, and the development of Negro slavery.

The Papeles de Cuba, a section of the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville, contain the records of Spain's colonies in the Caribbean and on the North American continent. While the Papeles include documentation from the mid-seventeenth century on into the nineteenth, they are particularly rich for the period from ca. 1760 to 1821. Although the details of their contents remain largely unknown, the Papeles are an important complement to the Stetson and East Florida Collections because they contain the records of the Spanish posts on the northern rim of the Gulf of Mexico.

Since adequate guides to the collections did not exist, a decision was made in 1974 at the University of Florida to initiate a project to produce a calendar of the holdings. Supported by the NEH, the Library employs a selected staff, all of whom are pro-

ficient in Spanish, French, Portuguese, and English. Each document is described on an individual card, which is divided into three sections. The first section includes the date of the document and its location within the collection; the second lists place of origin, author, and if a letter, the addressee, with indication of the type of document and its length; and the third is a summary in English of its contents, noting all topics covered and proper names mentioned. To date, 150,000 exposures of East Florida Papers, 4,100 bundles of Stetson, and 116 reels of Papeles de Cuba have been calendared.

The Project is also committed to an acquisitions program. Under the direction of Dr. Eugene Lyon, presently in Spain, this program will extend First and Second Spanish period holdings. Completion of the Project Guide is projected for 1980.