

1978

## Rebellion in East Florida in 1795

Janice Borton Miller

 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

Miller, Janice Borton (1978) "Rebellion in East Florida in 1795," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 57 : No. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol57/iss2/6>

## THE REBELLION IN EAST FLORIDA IN 1795

by JANICE BORTON MILLER \*

SOON AFTER East Florida was returned to Spain by the British following the American Revolution, a governmental structure was established with headquarters in St. Augustine. The first governor of this second Spanish period, Don Vizente Manuel de Zespedes, carried out the complex process of transferring jurisdiction. Thus by 1790, when the second governor, Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, arrived in the province most of the English settlers had emigrated and Spanish institutions-government, trade, church, and school-were operating. St. Augustine was a town of approximately 1,862 persons, of whom 450 were in the military and about 412 were slaves.

The St. Marys River constituted the northern border of East Florida, and between it and the St. Johns River to the south, a distance of about thirty miles at the mouths, was a frontier area occupied by an estimated 300 settlers. Most of these settlers were American or English who had been attracted into Florida by the offer of large land grants, and had taken an oath of loyalty to Spain, thus becoming its subjects. They brought their families with them, and were developing sizable plantations and hoping to establish profitable trading ventures.

There were many problems facing Governor Quesada during his administration. Among the most serious were the continuing threats of invasion from Georgia during the last three years of his term, 1793-1796. In June 1793, Spain and Britain agreed to an alliance and declared war on France. The declaration of war was posted throughout the province with a manifesto ordering French settlers living in the province to leave within ten days. Word spread that French sympathizers were enlisting troops and commissioning officers in Georgia and South Carolina. This, along with rumors of conspiracy and disloyalty in the province, created turmoil in St. Augustine. In the United States those

---

\* Ms. Miller is a member of the history faculty at Tallahassee Community College, Tallahassee.

sympathetic to the French Republic supported plans to seize Spanish and British lands along the American borders.

Among the settlers living along both the Georgia and Florida banks of the St. Marys River and those between it and the St. Johns were many who stood to gain by the overthrow of the Spanish government in Florida. Some wanted to be under French control, others hoped for revolution to establish a republican government, a few dreamed of independence from all nations.<sup>1</sup> The government in St. Augustine indicted a number of these settlers for treason, forwarded their cases to Havana, and awaited that court's final decision.

When, as a result of President Washington's demand, the French Minister Genet and the French consul in Charleston were recalled, prospects for stability and peace promised to improve. Instead, indications increased that Americans living in south Georgia near the Florida border, joined by Spanish subjects, were preparing to invade the province. The French established a base on Amelia Island at the mouth of the St. Marys River which the Spanish had abandoned the previous year for lack of means to defend it.<sup>2</sup> General Elijah Clarke, formerly an American Revolutionary officer, had put together a force of men, and thinking that he could further his own interests by supporting the French, planned aggression in coordination with the insurgents. Jean H. Fauchet, the new French minister to the United States, considered it permissible to aid rebellious activity which he considered this to be.<sup>3</sup>

The government of St. Augustine believed that the French intended to use the port of St. Marys as a place to bring and sell prizes and to equip their own ships. Should this happen they feared that the French would quickly spread into the surrounding countryside and that the coastal area would become populated with Frenchmen from the United States and elsewhere,

- 
1. Bartolomeo Morales to Luis de las Casas, June 27, 28, 1795, East Florida Papers, roll 9, bundle 26M2, microfilm, Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Hereinafter East Florida Papers are cited as EFP.
  2. Juan Nepomuceno Quesada to las Casas, May 27, 1795, EFP, 9:26M2.
  3. Adet to minister of foreign relations, February 9, 1796, *American Historical Association Annual Report, 1903* (Washington, 1904), II, 827, quoted in Richard K. Murdoch, *The Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1793-1796* (Berkeley, 1961), 96.

who would live “without king, without law, or religion” and would be a constant threat to the safety of East Florida.<sup>4</sup>

In November 1794, the court in Havana ordered that for lack of evidence the Spanish subjects charged with treason and held in Moro Castle in Havana and the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine be freed. The judge acknowledged the seriousness of their crimes and instructed Governor Quesada to continue to observe their conduct.<sup>5</sup> Their release proved to be a costly mistake to the Spanish government, and their return to East Florida in December posed an immediate threat to the province.

These men had come into Florida from Georgia and South Carolina. All owned property in East Florida and one had a business interest there. Richard Lang had been magistrate for the Spanish in the St. Marys district, captain of one of the companies of dragoons on that river, and he owned a plantation in the area. John MacIntosh had a plantation, *Serro Fuente*, on the St. Johns River near the Spanish customs port of San Nicolas. William Jones owned a plantation along the south bank of the St. Johns near the San Nicolas post. John Peter Wagon, who had entered the province in 1791, had twenty-four slaves, some horses and cattle on his land, and he owned a house in St. Augustine. William Plowden was a trader and owned a large house in St. Augustine. Their relatives and friends lived in East Florida and Georgia and could be relied on for support. It would be impossible to prevent them from returning to the Florida frontier and reinitiating designs against the Spanish government. This time there would be support from Elijah Clarke and his associates.

Released from prison in January 1795, the men who had been held in Havana joined those in St. Augustine and headed for Georgia and locations on the St. Marys River-Coleraine, Temple, and Newton (St. Marys).<sup>6</sup> It was not long before they began to make demands on Quesada and to issue threats if their requests were not fulfilled. Some wanted compensation for their “oppressed innocence” and threatened to make “all possible efforts to be freed of the yoke of despotism and extend the breadth of liberty and freedom which God has given to all human beings.”<sup>7</sup>

4. Morales to las Casas, May 27, 1795, EFP, 9:26M2.

5. Julian France Campos to las Casas, November 13, 1794, Archivo General de las Indias, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, legajo 1498.

6. Quesada to las Casas, January 15, 1795, EFP, 9:26M2.

7. Richard Lang to Quesada, February 27, 1795, Lang to the Governor of

Disturbances along the border increased with such frequency that Colonel Carlos Howard, commander of the Spanish frontier, believed that they were deliberately intended to foment discord among citizens of Georgia and the settlers of East Florida.<sup>8</sup> The revelation that Elijah Clarke was in the vicinity reinforced this conviction. Howard learned of a secret communication written by Plowden which disclosed plans for a Florida invasion.

United States troops commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Henry Gaither were sent to St. Marys to assure American neutrality. Gaither, aware of threats to East Florida from within the United States, dispatched a message to Colonel Howard offering, in the interest of peace between the United States and Spain, to notify him of any unauthorized plotting against Florida, particularly by the "Clarkinos." From Augusta, Georgia, Governor George Matthews promised Quesada that he would use the militia against Clarke and his band.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, in St. Augustine supplies had become dangerously low, and the arrival of a brigantine from New York bringing grain was anxiously awaited. Tension increased when it was reported that two corsairs were blockading the entrance to the bar and preventing the ship from making port. It was also known that a vessel had disembarked five men on Matanzas, just south of St. Augustine, where they were able to get supplies. Word also reached St. Augustine that artillery and arms had been unloaded on Amelia Island.<sup>10</sup> Quesada was working desperately despite illness from recurring fever. By May he was forced to transfer his authority to Colonel Bartolomeo Morales, commander of the Third Battalion of Cuba assigned to East Florida. Quesada remained in constant consultation with the interim governor.<sup>11</sup>

Morales and Quesada knew that if Clarke and his followers entered East Florida by way of the St. Marys River and the

---

East Florida, May 10, 1795, Plowden to the Governor of East Florida, June 19, 1795, John Wagon to John McQueen, November 15, 1795, EFP, 83:196A16.

8. Translation of a letter by Carlos Howard to Commander Don Abamiel Nicolls dated September 16, 1794, and translation of the letter in which the undersigned magistrates of Newton St. Mary replied to a letter of Howard to Nicolls dated September 17, 1794, EFP, 83:196A16.

9. Howard to Quesada, September 19, 1794, EFP, 83:196A16.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Morales to las Casas, May 2, 1795, EFP, 9:26M2.

French corsairs held Amelia Island, they would control not only the island and port but also the land in between it and the St. Johns River. Thus communications, both sea and land, with the United States would be cut, and imports of meat and other commodities would be impossible.

On June 1, 1795, unknown to the Spanish, Richard Lang with his two sons assembled a group of twenty Georgians at a point on the St. Marys River. They crossed the river into East Florida where they were joined by Spanish subjects including some fifteen militiamen who had been garrisoning the Spanish post of Juana for over nine months.<sup>12</sup> A total of seventy-two men moved south toward the St. Johns River.<sup>13</sup>

On June 27, they approached their first target, Fort Juana, which lay six miles north of the Spanish fort of San Nicolas on the St. Johns River.<sup>14</sup> They captured the commander of the post, Ensign Isaac Wheyler, the garrison, twelve other militia, and a group of prisoners. They also seized 114 head of cattle, several horses, a Negro belonging to Francisco Felipe Fatio, a Spanish subject, and sent guards with the men and animals off to Georgia. They then burned the post and two days later moved out toward the St. Johns River. Their goal was the fort at San Nicolas.<sup>15</sup>

The only person at Juana whom the rebels left behind was the mess steward who managed to notify Carlos Howard of what had happened. Howard quickly dispatched Captain Nathaniel Hall with twenty-four dragoons in pursuit, but when they failed to find the rebels they returned to the base. Macintosh appeared before Howard, "well mounted and armed," and pretending innocence, requested permission to go as a volunteer in the pursuit. Peter Wagnon acted out the same role, appearing before Captain Hall.<sup>16</sup> At the same time Howard received word that Amelia Island had been taken and that the French flag was flying there.

When news of the attack reached St. Augustine the members of the council of war persuaded Quesada to resume his command. At a meeting on July 7, the members brought the governor up to date on all matters regarding the invasion. They heard a report

12. Francisco Felipe Fatio defending Daniel McGirtt, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

13. Quesada to las Casas, July 5, 1795, EFP, 10:26M2.

14. Fatio defending eight prisoners, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

15. Fatio defending Juan Faulk, December 14, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

16. Quesada to las Casas, July 5, 1795, EFP, 10:26M2.

from Andres Atkinson, captain of the militia dragoons, who had just returned from Georgia. He gave an account of a dinner he had attended with the magistrates of St. Marys where he found himself in the company of a number of French and some partisans of Richard Lang.<sup>17</sup> There was to be an invasion of Florida with 300 men. Elijah Clarke had traveled through Georgia and South Carolina enlisting troops, offering them a brilliant fortune in the conquest of the province. He promised that within a few days he would be on the south bank of the St. Johns River where he had many followers and friends. The plan was to enter the Nassau River with a boat capable of holding sixty men and to take the Spanish launch, *Nuestra San Agustin*. Then with both boats they would ascend the river as far as San Nicolas, overpower the battery, join with partisans of East Florida waiting there, and take possession of the entire province. The operation would conclude with an attack on the plaza of St. Augustine. Atkinson added that sixty men had already gone to Amelia Island under Lang and others were being sent to reinforce them.<sup>18</sup>

The council began to plan measures for defense. The three urban militia units, organized earlier by Quesada to defend St. Augustine, were ordered to the St. Johns River.<sup>19</sup> Amelia Island was to be reoccupied, all free Negroes enlisted, Indians and auxiliaries assembled, and forty men of the regular force sent to the St. Johns. The posts along the St. Johns River were to be reinforced by men from the garrison in St. Augustine. The enemy camp installed inside of Spanish territory must be seized. A battery was to be constructed at the bar of the St. Johns River. The magistrates of St. Marys and the governor of Georgia were to be petitioned to aid in preventing attacks.<sup>20</sup>

All of the inhabitants of the St. Johns River must take up arms for their own defense and be ready to prevent the rebels from crossing to the south side of the river. They were to move their cattle south of the river for public use and to prevent their being captured by the enemy. Goods and furniture of value should also be moved south. All artillery on the banks of the St.

---

17. Juntas de Guerra, July 7, 1795, EFP, 129:294P12.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. Quesada to las Casas, July 5, 1795, EFP, 10:26M2.

Johns were to be fixed for defense in case the enemy crossed the river. The help of the English brigantine corsair, already on the St. Johns, should be solicited.<sup>21</sup> Because of the difficulty of getting mail to Havana, John Leslie of Panton, Leslie & Company, offered a small balandra to be used to carry mail out from Tampa Bay.<sup>22</sup>

Quesada described the situation in the province as one of "anguish: blockaded by sea, attacked by land by numerous enemies . . . with few garrison, without money to pay August expenses, without means to pay the militia or of satisfying the Indians who could act as auxiliaries . . . and surrounded by settlers' dissatisfaction with all monarchical government."<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, patrols were established along the St. Johns to guard the frontier. Carlos Howard took the first company of urban militia and a group of free Negroes and mulattos to a position farther down the river to San Vicente Ferrer (St. Johns Bluff) closer to the entrance of the St. Johns. Captain Nathaniel Hall, commander of the second company, guarded the seven miles of frontier between San Nicolas and the house of Fatio. Lieutenant Timothy Hollingsworth was second in command under Hall and Lieutenant Ignacio Lopez commanded the battery itself.<sup>24</sup>

The night of July 9 was dark and rainy as patrols took up their guard. Hollingsworth sent Sergeant Ruben Hogan with two men to guard the three miles of river from the battery to the house of a settler, William Lane. He also sent five militia to patrol the mile from the house of settler James William Lee to the battery, a point of strategic importance. Hollingsworth then went with Lieutenant Summerlin, four militiamen, William Lane, and his son Pierce to Lane's house where there were a number of men present including Lieutenant Daniel Hogan of the militia.<sup>25</sup>

The men were all having coffee when Lane's brother-in-law, a soldier of the Spanish militia, entered and announced that all were prisoners. William Lane and his son Pierce joined him, saying if all did not surrender they would be killed. Armed men began appearing at the door, a number later estimated at about

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Fatio defending Hollingsworth, 1797, EFP, 129:295.

25. Ibid.

seventy, all led by Richard Lang himself. They drew their swords, entered the house, and took the occupants prisoner. At three in the morning Lang ordered all of the captives to accompany fifty of the rebels to the battery of San Nicolas. Not far from that post the rebels and prisoners met a large assembled group ready with plans to seize the battery.<sup>26</sup>

Among them were John MacIntosh, John Peter Wagon, William Plowden, and William Jones, all of whom had been indicted earlier for treason and released the previous year. There were other Spanish subjects, including James William Lee, William Lane, his son, and the five men of the militia sent by Hollingsworth to the house of James William Lee. Also among the group were ten men arrested by Lee himself. All together there were about 100 armed men including some mercenaries whom Lang had hired. Supplies had been provided by the French consul in St. Marys.<sup>27</sup> When the insurgents arrived at the St. Johns River they were met by seventy-one Spanish settlers and militia assembled there ready with canoes to take the men across.<sup>28</sup>

Once on the south side the rebels dispatched one of their group, who spoke Spanish well, to the fort, some 300 yards away. Met by four lookouts, this emissary announced that he had brought militia of Florida to reinforce the post. By the time that Lopez came out, all of the rebels had arrived on the scene and began quickly to disperse over the entire fort. Lopez ordered his troops to take arms, but before they could do so, the enemy fired upon them, killing two soldiers. They then seized Lopez and the thirty-five troops of his command.<sup>29</sup>

While the battery was being overrun, William Lee directed the seizure of the Spanish launch, *San Simon*, which was guarding the river pass.<sup>30</sup> The rebels ordered the commander Manuel Otero and his twelve crewmen to surrender, and after an attack of fire at close range the Spanish colors were lowered.<sup>31</sup> William Lee then turned over the launch to the rebels, crying out "*viva la*

---

26. Ibid.

27. Bartolome de Castro defending John Jones, September 23, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

28. Rafael Saavedre de Espinosa defending William Lane and Cornelio Rain, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

29. Junta, July 11, 1795, EFP, 129:294P12.

30. Fatio defending George Cook, December 19, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

31. Santiago Mella regarding Otero, EFP, 129:294P12.

*libertad.*"<sup>32</sup> Shortly thereafter Lopez surrendered the whole battery.

Peter Wagon ordered the prisoners taken first to Temple and then to Amelia Island where they were to construct a battery.<sup>33</sup> All the prisoners, including twenty-two soldiers of the regular troops, were forced to sign a paper which, unknown to many of them, indicated that they were joining the rebels.<sup>34</sup>

At the time of the seizure of San Nicolas it was believed that the enemy was taking the whole East Florida province, they had control of both rivers, and that they were being directed by General Clarke.<sup>35</sup> Lang announced that he would be in charge of the entire province and that reinforcements would arrive momentarily.<sup>36</sup> It was believed that Colonel Howard was retreating from San Vicente Ferrer to St. Augustine and that all the roads into the city were held by the rebels.<sup>37</sup>

The rebels spread information, much of it false, that the battery at Santa Isabel, the posts of San Vicente Ferrer, Two Sisters, and the rest of the St. Johns River were in their possession. It was thought that the regular Spanish troops, militia, and officers, were prisoners. As help had not arrived from St. Augustine the stories sounded believable.<sup>38</sup> The rebels freed Lieutenant Ignacio Lopez who pledged that he would not take up arms. He needed his freedom so that he could inform Governor Quesada at St. Augustine of the fall of the battery.<sup>39</sup>

When Lopez reported the capture of San Nicolas, Quesada feared that the enemy might also take St. Augustine. In an emergency meeting the council of war drew up plans to defend the city. The troops would make a stand at a line extending from the Castillo de San Marcos, while the cavalry would guard the main streets. All males who could physically carry arms would be enlisted regardless of class. Women and children would embark in boats, which would anchor in the shelter of the castillo. Those who found this impossible would seek shelter in one of the vaults of the fort. Under no circumstance would there

32. Petition of William Lee, December 23, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

33. Lorenzo Yanes defending William Rain, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

34. O'Kelly defending Nabit Davies, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

35. Swining, December 22, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

36. Petition of Lee, December 23, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

37. O'Kelly defending Davies, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

38. Fatio defending Faulk, December 14, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

39. Junta, July 11, 1795, EFP, 129:294P12.

be any exchange of prisoners taken by the rebels, as the latter had already proposed.<sup>40</sup>

The revelation of the numbers of Spanish subjects who took part in the rebellion or actively cooperated with it, increased apprehension in St. Augustine. Quesada declared that his major care was “not the declared enemy but the hidden and domestic one.” He now suspected many of the settlers. He even began to distrust some he had considered loyal, such as Francisco Felipe Fatio, who had offered to help the government in general terms, but when it came to particulars “he excuses himself with a thousand pretexts.” Fatio had to provide some maize, but Quesada noted that “it was worm eaten and of little usefulness.”<sup>41</sup>

On July 12 the Spanish forces, reinforced by the English brigantine corsair, arrived at San Nicolas.<sup>42</sup> The enemy was put to flight so quickly that they were forced to abandon many Spanish soldiers and some weapons and supplies. They also left behind, perhaps deliberately, the list of signatures implicating them as joining the rebels. Significantly the list did not contain the names of those known to be rebels. Three of the enemy were apprehended—William Lane, his son, and James William Lee. John MacIntosh, John Peter Wagon, William Plowden, Richard Lang, and William Jones escaped.<sup>43</sup>

Following the recovery of the battery, a Spanish brigantine reached Amelia Island in time to assist Commander Hall and his 120 troops in an attack which freed twenty Spanish prisoners and put the rebels to flight.<sup>44</sup> General Clarke, who had entered the province, was among those forced to flee.<sup>45</sup> The infamous Daniel McGirtt, distrusted by both Georgians and Spanish, was captured and charged with serving as Clarke’s pilot.<sup>46</sup> The rebels returned to the neighborhood of Temple. Passing through St. Marys, they publicly boasted of their action, and Richard Lang declared that he would always be a thorn in the side of the Spanish.<sup>47</sup>

By the first of November the scene had changed. The ma-

---

40. Ibid.

41. Quesada to las Casas, July 13, 1795, EFP, 10:26M2.

42. Fatio defending Faulk, December 14, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

43. Proceedings on the seizures relevant to the Rebellion of 1795, 1795-1799, by Quesada, July 17, 1799, EFP, 129:294P12.

44. Fleming defending Summerlin, 1797, EFP, 129:294P12.

45. Francisco Rovira defending Ricardo Malpas, deceased, EFP, 129:294P12.

46. Fatio defending McGirtt, EFP, 129:294P12.

47. Junta, July 11, 1795, EFP, 129:294P12.

jority of the men who had come to join Clarke had deserted. Not more than thirty remained, and these were discontented. Even Richard Lang was ready to leave, Atkinson reported, and "the rest know clearly that they have been destroyed in their designs. In reality all are so fed up with the business that I believe that they will not return to commit equal offenses."<sup>48</sup>

Starting with the reoccupation of San Nicolas the Spanish authorities began to arrest all suspected of treason or collaboration with the enemy. The government ordered the seizure of the abandoned plantations, properties, and goods of prisoners or those who escaped to Georgia. The responsibility for making an inventory of goods and transporting them to St. Augustine was assigned to Bernardo Sequi, captain in the urban militia, and several of his assistants.

Land, buildings, furniture, farm equipment, animals, and produce were confiscated. Included were gilded mahogany and walnut tables, chests of drawers, desks, plates, glassware, soup tureens, copper jars and pots, kitchen utensils, books, both male and female clothing, tools, a mill stone, boats, pistols, guns, rifles, bullets, 800 pounds of raw cotton, several acres of corn, sweet potatoes, and maize, lumber, herds of cattle, large numbers of sows, horses, chickens, ducks, turkeys, and of course slaves. At least twelve plantations along the St. Johns River were seized, as well as Wagon's property and goods in St. Augustine.<sup>49</sup>

These commodities were taken by boat to St. Augustine where they were placed in the custody of the general depositor, Miguel de Ysnardy.<sup>50</sup> Since there was no public corral, the cattle and hogs were housed with a private settler "to his great inconvenience." A knowledgeable person was appointed to value the goods at a "just price," and they were then put up for auction. The sale was announced by a drummer of the Battalion of Cuba and a Negro slave who called out the sale in a "loud and intelligible voice." When a number of people had gathered, the bidding began. These sales were carried on for several months. The money received was left in custody of the court. Slaves not

48. Nathan Atkinson to Howard, October 24, 1795, Atkinson to Howard, November 1, 1795, EFP, 83:196A16.

49. Goods seized from some rebels, July 22, 1795, Members of the San Juan Militia who were fugitives and gone with the Americans whose goods were seized and sequestered, October 31, 1795, EFP, 129:294P12.

50. Ysnardy to Quesada, April 5, 1796, EFP, 129:295.

sold became public charges and caused many problems. It was claimed that they would not work, feigning illness, and in the case of women, claiming the necessity of caring for their children.<sup>51</sup>

The prisoners were first sent to the Castillo de San Marcos, but there were not enough dungeons to hold such a large number. Arresting those known to be rebels was simple, Quesada noted, but implicating those only suspected was a "delicate operation . . . the cause up to now has been handled with little care and exactitude." Quesada was concerned that many innocent people might be arrested: "Accusations reach me every minute. . . . The province is in an extraordinary commotion, everyone suspicious of one another."<sup>52</sup>

The Spanish arrested all who were at the battery after its recovery, those who had worked for the enemy while in capture, those who had been treated with friendliness or recognition by Lang and his friends, those whose names were on the list signed by prisoners, all who had been arrested at the house of James William Lee and the eight at William Lane's house who were taken to the San Nicolas battery, anyone who had left St. Augustine without a pass, and all prisoners of the rebels on Amelia Island and those who worked for them. Sixty-eight cases were brought before the court, including thirty-five persons who had escaped to Georgia. Among the latter were Richard Lang, John MacIntosh, and John Peter Wagon. Twenty-eight were present in court when charges were made. One man was incarcerated in the castillo and it was feared that he had lost his mind, and four of the rebels had died while imprisoned.<sup>53</sup>

The trial began in St. Augustine in January 1796. Enrique White in the meanwhile had become governor of the province, succeeding Quesada. The court was presided over by Francisco Enzinoso de Abreu, advocate of the Royal Audiencia and Chancellery of Mexico and Santa Domingo. Lieutenant Ignacio Lopez appeared as military advisor before the court and in the presence of the officers of the court and the prisoners, sixty-four persons all together, he read the declaration of charges.<sup>54</sup> Each

51. Goods seized from some rebels, July 22, 1795, EFP, 129:295.

52. Quesada to las Casas, July 29, 1795, EFP, 10:26M2.

53. Castro y Ferrer defending Francisco Goodwing, 1798, EFP, 129:294P12.

54. Testimony of criminal decrees formed against the rebels that invaded this province in said year 1795, EFP, 129:294P12.

person had been assigned a defender, none of whom were advocates. The trial lasted two years and one month, during which time all of the prisoners were held in the castillo unless they became ill enough to be taken to the hospital.<sup>55</sup>

The trial was finally concluded at the beginning of 1798. On February 22 Governor White came before the court to pronounce the sentencing. None of the prisoners were present. "For the crime of high treason perpetrated against the King, this city, and its province, in the rebellion which was subdued in the past year of 1795, and death which was given in the attack on the San Nicolas post to one corporal of artillery and two soldiers of the light infantry I declare the penalties against those before cited." The first sentencing was against the thirty followers of Richard Lang, all of whom had escaped. Wherever each might be found a rope was to be placed around his neck so he could be dragged by the tail of a horse to the plaza and pavilion, there to be hanged on the gallows. The town crier was to proceed the criminal, calling out the nature of the offense. The criminals would remain on the scaffold for three days when they would be lowered by the executioner and publicly quartered. "The heads and arms, will be fixed proportionately in the vicinity of the post of San Nicolas and the pass of the St. Johns River to serve as a farning to others." All of their goods were to be confiscated and their children prohibited from any inheritance, dignity, or public office. Should any person venture to impede or save the victim, Governor White warned, the punishment would be execution and confiscation of all his goods.<sup>56</sup>

Timothy Hollingsworth, William Lane, and James William Lee, all being held in the castillo, would receive similar penalties of death and quartering, their goods confiscated, and their children denied the right of inheritance, dignity, or public office. Included also in this group was the deceased Jorge Aarons.

Fifteen others who were prisoners in the castillo, including Daniel McGirtt, thirteen year old William Rain, another illiterate boy, and three members of the urban militia, were sentenced to ten years at hard labor with rope and shackle on their feet, and to rations without pay. Of the fifteen, five would work on the fortifications of the city of Havana, five on those at

55. Fatio defending eight prisoners, EFP, 129:294P12.

56. Rebellion of 1795, February 24, 1798, EFP, 129:294P12.

Pensacola, and five in St. Augustine. Anyone violating his sentence would suffer death. Nine others were freed with the stipulation that they leave St. Augustine within fifteen days, moving their possessions to an area south of the city. There they would be given acreage equal to what they had owned in St. Augustine.<sup>57</sup>

That same afternoon at four o'clock the government secretary certified that he, the public interpreter, and the officer of the guard had Hollingsworth, Lane, and Lee, guarded by soldiers with rifles and in the presence of their respective defenders, brought out of their cells to hear their sentences read. They were then returned to the dungeons where a blacksmith affixed chains on their feet. The officials then proceeded to the next group, informing them of their sentence to ten years at hard labor. The last group was set at liberty.<sup>58</sup> There is no evidence to show that any of the rebels were ever executed. Those still living in East Florida by the of the century, only three years later, were pardoned. Those forced to leave St. Augustine complied, but received lands to their satisfaction.<sup>59</sup>

Thus ended, after nearly three years, the rebellion, the trial, and the meting out of punishment to those who were still in custody. With it also ended the valiant hopes of Governor Quesada for developing the province of East Florida into a growing and prosperous part of the Spanish Empire in America.

---

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*