

1980

Spain's Sixteenth-Century North American Settlement Attempts: A Neglected Aspect

Eugene Lyon



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.

Recommended Citation

Lyon, Eugene (1980) "Spain's Sixteenth-Century North American Settlement Attempts: A Neglected Aspect," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 59 : No. 3 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol59/iss3/3>

SPAIN'S SIXTEENTH-CENTURY NORTH AMERICAN SETTLEMENT ATTEMPTS: A NEGLECTED ASPECT

by EUGENE LYON*

A SOMEWHAT neglected aspect of Spanish colonial aims and deeds in eastern North America was the settlement impulse. Due to historical hindsight and cultural stereotyping, the colonizing powers have often mistakenly been categorized: the English as settlers-farmers and artisans; the Spaniards as exploiters-bullion-seekers; and the Dutch and the French as traders devoted primarily to the Indian trade. In fact, comparative investigation would likely disclose more similarities than differences among the colonizing efforts in North America, given the varying cultural and institutional bases of the European powers.

The purpose here is to delineate somewhat the sixteenth-century Spanish settlements in the area defined as Spanish Florida: those vast lands in the conquerors' *asientos* stretching from Pánuco eastward along the Gulf shoreline, around the Florida peninsula and the Keys, and thence northeasterly to Newfoundland, including the wide territories inland from those coasts.

What then was the content of the Spanish settlement of Florida? For what reasons and in which ways did Spaniards attempt to confront, master, and exploit the eastern continent and its peoples? Why did they fall short of their purposes?

There were seven major sixteenth-century attempts to settle Florida: Juan Ponce deLeón, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, Pánfilo de Narváez, Hernando de Soto, Tristan de Luna-Ángel de Villafañe, the second Ayllón in 1563, and Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1565-1577.¹ Their crown contracts, or, in 1559, the enabling vice-

* Mr. Lyon is a consulting historian and writer. This article was read as a paper at the annual meeting of the Society for the History Of Discoveries, University of Florida, November 18, 1978.

1. See a provision of Doña Juana, Valladolid, September 27, 1514, from Archivo General de Indias (hereinafter cited as AGI) *Indiferente General* (hereinafter cited as IG) 419-Ordinances for the settlement of Bimini and Florida. See also the following *asientos*: Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, Valladolid, June 12, 1523; Pánfilo de Narváez, Granada, December 11, 1526; Hernando de Soto, Valladolid, April 20, 1537-all from AGI IG 415.

regal instructions, all demonstrate a consistent purpose to settle the land.² All were admonished to populate; in most cases, the numbers of settlers and livestock required were specified.

The jurisdictional framework of the Florida conquest was generally one of the licensing of contractors, required by their agreements to pacify, settle, and implant the civil, religious, and juridical institutions of Castile in the conquered lands. Except for the De Luna-Villafañe expeditions, this was to be accomplished at the entrepreneur's cost. The circumstances which arose after the signing of the Menéndez contract—the belated discovery that the French had built Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River—led to a joint-venture conquest, in which both crown and conqueror invested heavily.³ The costs of the sixteenth-century Florida conquest and settlement attempts were substantial, probably exceeding 1,000,000 ducats for all parties.⁴

The basic grant of authority for the expeditions of 1559-1561 is a letter from the crown to Viceroy Luis de Velasco, dated at Valladolid, December 29, 1557, from AGI *Justicia* (hereinafter cited as JU) 1,013. The contract for the second Vázquez de Ayllón was issued on June 4, 1563, and is found in AGI *Contratación* (hereinafter cited as CT) 3,309, together with that of Pedro Menéndez de Aviles, March 20, 1565. The Menéndez contract is also found in many other places in AGI.

2. The attempts of the Verapaz group of missionaries, led by Father Luis Cáncer de Barbastro, which resulted in his death in the Tampa Bay area in 1549, is not considered here as a major planned conquest effort.
3. For analyses of the privileges and obligations of the sixteenth-century adelantados, see Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida* (Gainesville, 1976), 2-5, 24-25, 43-55, appendices I and II.
4. Ponce de León's fiscal agent estimated that he had spent 6,000 ducats at one time on the Florida outfitting, and "much more afterward." See the testimony of Pedro de Mata, AGI JU 1,000, No. 1, ramo 2. The fortune amassed in Peru and Nicaragua by Hernando de Soto and his partner Hernando Ponce was largely invested in Soto's Florida venture, this, according to the estranged partner in his lawsuit (AGI JU 750 A and B). The adelantado left substantial properties in Cuba and had some crown annuities in Spain, but the bulk of his funds, estimated at 120,000 to 130,000 ducats, were probably spent in the Florida expedition. Velasco's efforts in Florida cost the New Spain treasury more than 300,000 pesos from 1557 to 1561. See Tristán de Luna to the crown, 1561, Plonza, AGI JU 1,013, No. 2, ramo 1. No totals for the two Ayllón expeditions or that of Pánfilo de Narváez have been found. By 1568, Menéndez had already spent approximately 75,000 ducats; his heirs later claimed that he had expended 949,000 ducats from 1565 to 1574 on the Florida conquest. See Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*, 183, and the claims in AGI *Escribanía de Cámara* (hereinafter cited as EC), 1024-A and (under date of November 1671) in AGI *Santo Domingo* (hereinafter cited as SD), 231. Crown expenditures in Florida during 1565-1568, which exceeded 200,000 ducats, have been detailed by Paul E. Hoffman in "A Study of Defense

From the standpoint of the conquest entrepreneurs, what incentives could justify such expenditure of funds, not to mention properties, reputations, and lives at hazard? An opportunity for looting, of course; the possibility of another New Spain or Peru was never completely absent from their minds. There was, however, more than that. The agreement between Soto and his partner Hernán Ponce describes the scope of a conqueror's hoped-for gains: "All which our work and industry might acquire—profits of any kind: gold and silver bullion, silverware, ships, *bergantines* and caravels, *juros* and any other profits in Castile . . . *encomienda* Indians in these parts; white, black and Indian slaves and Indian trade; grants, salaries and other payments from His Majesty, in Florida as in other places; all kinds of cattle and beasts; horse, mule and ass farms; hogs, houses and lots; cloth, silk, chests; all kinds of goods and inheritances; farm-land, cattle ranches, furniture."⁵

In their attempts to build their estates, the would-be conquerors of Florida never failed to stress one primary element: land. The conquest agreements all made specific mention of the acquisition of lands; the conquerors themselves were to receive large royal grants of from twelve to twenty-five leagues squared in size. The first Allyn asiento (1523) promised him "your own land; fifteen leagues squared-to farm, to raise live-stock; for your own and for your heirs, with all its pastures, woods, meadows, waters and rivers."⁶ What the adelantados hoped to build was the kind of profitable personal empire that Hernando Cortes erected in his New Spain marquisate granted in 1529, with the title to match; to become, in short, a New World titled noble if not a grandee. Implied in such a dreamed-of estate would be a small army of vassals, servitors, and slaves, and a viable economic base.⁷

Costs, 1565-1585: A Quantification of Florida History," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LI (April 1973), 401-22.

5. AGI JU 750 A, fol. 57.

6. FN 2, Lucas Ayllón Asiento, June 12, 1523.

7. Cortés describes his own vast domain in a letter to Francisco Nuñez sent from New Spain on June 25, 1532, and reproduced by Jorge Fernando Iturrigarria in *Oaxaca en la historia* (Mexico City, 1955), 64-65. See also France V. Scholes, "The Spanish Conqueror as a Business Man: A Chapter in the History of Fernando Cortes," *New Mexico Quarterly*, XXVIII (Spring 1958), 6-29.

All the lieutenants of an expedition, the leader's soldiers, and the settlers had a similar, if more modest dream-land of their own. The adelantados all possessed the crown-delegated power to grant such lands to their loyal followers. After the Castilian municipal institutions, the *concejo* with its governing *cabildo*, were established, an ongoing apparatus would exist for the continued granting of town and rural lands.⁸

Conditions in sixteenth-century Castile, particularly in rural areas, helped to engender the desire for land in a new continent. While the owners of sizable properties might have no particular wish to emigrate, the smaller landowners, and especially the renting, share-cropping *labrador* class, were driven by a fierce land-hunger. In the 1560s, for instance, recruiters for Pedro Menéndez were easily able to fill their quotas of Florida settlers among the *labradores* of Estremadura and Andalucía.⁹

What these men and their families aimed to reproduce in America was the rough healthy husbandry of Castile: the traditional *meseta* economy of wheat, wine, and olive oil; the raising of goats, sheep, horses, cattle, and hogs; and the careful nurture of the fruits, legumes, and vegetables of the *vegas* and the valley garden spots. Thus the North American explorers eagerly sought out and enthusiastically described any lands they found which appeared to resemble those of Iberia. They reported, at times erroneously, the presence of olive-like trees, grapevines, fruits, and nuts like those of Castile. The Spanish crown consistently encouraged its conquerors to establish the raising of silkworms. Fitting naturally into existing channels of trade between the metropole and the Cuban and Hispaniolan ports were the raising of sugarcane and the breeding of cattle for hides. The establishment of a productive agricultural economy would not only mean self-sufficiency, but export production from which the crown would realize customs and sales tax

8. Legal basis for the founding and functions of the *cabildo* in new territories are in the royal orders "Ordenanzas sobre descubrimiento nuevo e población," issued at Segovia on July 13, 1563 and in *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista, y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los Archivos del Reino y muy especialmente del de Indias*, 42 vols. (Madrid, 1864-1884), 14, No. XLIII, 501.

9. Power of attorney and contract with settlers, Menéndez to Dr. Francisco Zayas, Madrid, November 17, 1567, AGI JU 980, No. 2, ramo 3.

revenues when the settlers' exemption periods had expired.¹⁰ The crown and its conquerors, the missionaries and the settlers alike, recognized one imperative: settlement. Religion could never be secured, royal or private profit never assured without establishment upon the land.

Hernando de Soto violated his specific royal instructions, which required him to treat the Indians well; his expedition never became more than a wandering looting excursion, except in one regard.¹¹ Although it never generated any enduring settlements, the expedition had provided vital intelligence about the lands, waters, and native peoples, about the fruits, forests, and the pathways across Florida and the southeastern continent. De Soto particularly advised that the region around Coosa, in present-day north-central Alabama, was a rich land for agriculture and settlement.

When New Spain viceroy Luis de Velasco, following orders from Philip II, commissioned Tristan de Luna y Arellano to undertake a major effort to settle in Florida in 1559, the information provided from the de Soto expedition was essential and influential. The viceroy sent de Luna a description of Soto's route, and later sent him another Soto relation which described a "settled and provisioned country" for settlement.¹² Velasco made sure that de Luna fully understood his mission. He was not to make his primary settlement on the Gulf of Mexico; of greater strategic importance was Santa Elena on the Atlantic, which had been named by Vázquez Ayllón in the 1520s. It had become a vital location by 1559.

-
10. The first Ayllón asiento remarked that the land around Santa Elena was "fertile, rich and fit for settlement," featuring "many trees and plants of those of Castile." The second Ayllón was asked to raise "sugar-cane, cassia fistula, vineyards and olive trees." Lucas Ayllón asiento, June 12, 1523. The Jesuit missionary Juan Rogel noted that a kind of wild olive grew well in the country surrounding Santa Elena. See letter to Francisco de Borja, written from Havana on July 25, 1568, in Felix Zubillaga, *Monumenta Antiquae Floridae* (Rome, 1946), 317-28.
 11. Attached to the contract of Hernando de Soto was a royal order, Granada, November 17, 1526, forbidding him to maltreat the Indians, and requiring the Spaniards to pacify the land without "death and robbery of the Indians." See AGI JU 750 A, fol. 286-87.
 12. Velasco to Tristan de Luna, Mexico, September 15, 1560, AGI JU 1,013, No. 2, ramo 1, fol. 170-73. The Soto relation he sent may have been the "Cañete relación," a fragment of which, describing the heavily settled Coosa area, was found in 1975 in AGI *Patronato* (hereinafter cited as PAT) 19, No. 1, ramo 15.

After the last of the sixteenth-century Italian wars, the main antagonists, Spain and France, were nearly exhausted. The peace negotiations at Cateau-Cambrésis failed, however, to produce definitive agreement on the right the French claimed, to make settlements in North America, which Spain considered her own by dynastic right and Papal donation. After the Luna expedition had landed at its base on the Gulf, Philip II sent its leader an order mandating a settlement at Santa Elena to protect the Indies shipping routes homeward and to preempt the land against French colonization there.¹³ Thus Luna was ordered to proceed from his beachhead to the Coosa area, anchoring his route with a Spanish town there. From thence he was to travel overland to Santa Elena and forge a chain of settlements across the southeastern continent.¹⁴

The men behind the 1559 expeditions recognized that New Spain and its Gulf, the southeastern hinterlands, and the Atlantic coast were one. Their settlement design included the use of the Mississippi and its tributaries to supply Coosa. As one historian notes, "It was no haphazard set of uncoordinated wanderings animated by lust of gold, but a conscious aim at building a great northern colonial empire."¹⁵ To implement the conquest, Velasco proposed a concrete settlement plan: each city should have 140 town lots, with plaza, church, and stronghouse. Local government would operate through that bulwark of ancient Castilian municipal liberties, the *cabildo*, whose powers and deliberations would be governed by ordinance. Spanish and Tlascalan Indian families were sent to become the basis for the settlements and to provide a labor force for the development of profitable agriculture.¹⁶

Despite great expenditure, the expedition of Tristán de Luna and the associated voyage of Ángel de Villafañe to Santa Elena came to naught. Poor leadership and internal dissension had

13. Crown to Tristán de Luna, Toledo, December 18, 1559, AGI JU 1,013, No. 2, ramo 1.

14. Velasco to Luna, Mexico, August 20, 1560, AGI JU 1,013, No. 2, ramo 1.

15. See Herbert Priestly, ed., *The Luna Papers*, 2 vols. (Deland, 1928), I, xiv. Velasco described the strategic location of Coosa with regard to the Mississippi in his letter to Luna, Mexico, on May 6, 1560, in AGI JU 1,013, No. 2 ramo 2.

16. Viceroy and audiencia of Mexico to Luna, Mexico, April 3, 1559, AGI JU 1,013, No. 2, ramo 1, and Velasco to crown, Tlaxcala, May 25, 1559.

ruined the colonizing effort, but other problems affecting settlement had surfaced as well. While the emissaries sent to Coosa had found open savannahs for grazing and some rich river-bottom land, it was evident that forest growth was generally heavy and that large-scale land clearing would be necessary if colonies were to succeed. The climate, also, posed difficulties; the heaviest rains came at seasons different from those of Castile, and the temperature ranges were not the same as in Iberia.¹⁷

The French threat to North America became reality when Jean Ribaut built Charlesfort at Port Royal in 1562. Although his colony did not endure, word of its planting spurred Philip II to license another would-be Florida conqueror—the second Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón. In addition to providing a preventive settlement to offset the French, as Spain had planned and the Council of the Indies had suggested in 1541 to counter Cartier's plans, the usual emphasis were stressed in the Ayllón asiento of 1563.¹⁸ Indian conversion and agricultural enterprise at Santa Elena were its foci. Although he outfitted an expedition in Spain, Vázquez de Ayllón became involved in financial difficulties in Santo Domingo and never sailed for Florida.¹⁹

Even though, when he signed the next Florida conquest agreement with Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, Philip II did not yet know of the new French incursion at Fort Caroline, the private and royal purposes of the contract were similar to those which had been expressed in previous asientos.²⁰ Menéndez, an Asturian shipowner, privateer, and fleet general, thus became the inheritor of all the continental intelligence so painfully gathered by his predecessors.²¹ Hoping to avoid their mistakes, the new adelantado formed clear aims for his North American settlements. His strategy ranged as widely as the territories under his contract

17. Fray Domingo de la Anunciación to Luna, Coosa, August 1, 1560, AGI JU 1,013, No. 2, ramo 1, fol. 104-08.

18. The June 10, 1541, *consulta* of the Council of the Indies was furnished to the author by Paul E. Hoffman and is in Buckingham Smith, *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida y tierras adyacentes* (London, 1859), 109-11. See also, Lucas Ayllón Asiento, June 12, 1523.

19. Licenciado Echegoyen to the crown, August 10, 1564, AGI SD 71.

20. For comparison of sixteenth-century conquerors' asientos, see Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*, appendix II, 220-23.

21. An introductory note indicates that the "Cañete relación" fragment was prepared to give information about the Soto journeys to Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.

-from Newfoundland to the east Gulf coast. Menéndez' aims were to build a settlement on fertile lands near Santa Elena, thus anchoring the vital Bahama Channel fleet route, and to tap directly the New Spain trade and perhaps that of Asia as well. A fortified settlement at Coosa would fulfil Luis de Velasco's design. Menéndez also hoped to discover a cross-peninsula water route to avoid the dangerous keys passage for the New Spain ships. Most of all, he hoped to find the storied passage he believed led from the Chesapeake region to New Spain and to the South Sea.²²

Menéndez' plans, deferred by the need to expel the French in peninsular Florida, were resumed after their defeat. He built eight forts from southern Florida to present-day South Carolina, founding the city of Santa Elena seven months after the establishment of St. Augustine. His lieutenant, Pedro Menéndez Marqués, explored the east coast to Newfoundland and the Gulf westward to Pánuco. Menéndez sent Captain Juan Pardo from Santa Elena on two lengthy continental explorations which touched the Appalachians and penetrated beyond Coosa to Trascaluz in western Alabama. Pardo found and reported on rich fertile lands in the Carolina Lowcountry and Piedmont.²³ In 1566, the adelantado dispatched a sea-borne expedition to the land of Jacán, in the Chesapeake region. After the mission failed to reach beyond the Carolina Capes, he sent a Jesuit foundation in 1570 to the Chesapeake.²⁴

22. Menéndez stated his overall strategy in letters to the crown dated at St. Augustine on October 15, 1565, and October 20, 1566, AGI SD 231. His geographic knowledge is discussed by Louis-Andre Vigneras in "A Spanish Discovery of North Carolina in 1566," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XLVI (October 1969), 398-414.

23. The first Pardo journey is described in the report of Francisco Martinez, Santa Elena, July 11, 1567, AGI EC 154-A, (separate piece) fol. 1-5vo. See Eugenio Ruidiaz y Caravia, *La Florida: su conquista por Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1893-94), II, 474-80. The second journey was described in a report by Juan de la Bandera, Santa Elena, on January 23, 1569, in AGI CT 58. It has been reproduced by Edward H. Lawson in "Letters of Menéndez," 2 vols. (typescript, St. Augustine, 1955), II, 345-51. See also Ruidiaz' *La Florida*, II, 465-73. Pedro Menéndez Marqués described his Newfoundland voyage in a affidavit, Madrid, January 29, 1573, AGI EC 1024-A.

24. Contemporary accounts of the Jesuit foundations are found in two narratives: Brother Juan de la Carrera to Father Bartolomé Ruiz, Puebla de los Angeles, March 1, 1660, and "Martyrdom of the Fathers and Brothers . . .," Potosí, 1600, from Zubillaga, *Monumenta*, 534-604. See also Michael Kenny, *The Romance of the Floridas* (New York, 1934), *passim*.

Pedro Menéndez' major emphasis in Florida was settlement, and this interest centered in the area of Santa Elena. He hoped to build his own empire on the lands surveyed by Juan Pardo. There, on royally-granted properties totalling twenty-five leagues squared, he would settle as Marquis of Oristan. Lacking male heirs after the death of his son Juan, the adelantado founded an entailed estate and buttressed his Florida enterprise with dower agreements with his two sons-in-law, to assure the colony's continuance. His major vassals in Florida would be noble kinsmen and associates from Asturias, who would aid in "the population of the provinces of Florida with persons of noble blood." To stiffen his effort, Menéndez depended upon a network of relatives and friends drawn from his native region in Spain.²⁵

Spanish Florida in the 1560s was expected to be economically viable through the production of sugar and hides, the extraction of naval stores, and shipbuilding. Occupying a hopefully advantageous place from which to master the New Spain trade, it would become profitable for its adelantado, its settlers, and the merchants who would invest there. Since both crown and conqueror expected to reap large revenues, Florida could more easily be defended against any enemy of Castile.²⁶

The Menéndez contract required him to transport 500 settlers to Florida, 200 of whom had to be married farmers, but the adelantado could not fulfil this mandate immediately. He did, however, bring twenty-six married men with their wives and children on the first expedition. The soldiers he carried in 1565, moreover, had been promised rations and land in Florida in lieu of pay. Menéndez' agreement with them read: "I promise in the name of His Majesty . . . to give them in the said coast and land of Florida rations, land and properties for their plantations,

25. Menéndez described how he planned to build his Florida colony around a framework of noble lieutenants and their wives and children in his letter to Philip II, Matanzas, Cuba, December 5, 1565, AGI SD 115. The network of associated families involved in the Florida conquest is discussed in Lyon, *Enterprise of Florida*, 71-77, and in appendix III, 224-25.

26. Menéndez' most explicit economic plan for Spanish Florida yet found was detailed in a letter to Philip II received by the Council of the Indies in Madrid, in November 1569, and found in envío 25, H, No. 162, Archivo del Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid (hereinafter cited as AIVDJ).

tillage and stock-breeding . . . land-allotments in conformity with their service."²⁷

By 1566, after the expulsion of the French, the adelantado contracted with one Hernán Pérez, a Portuguese, to furnish 200 families from the Azores to settle in Florida. Menéndez promised each family a bull and twelve cows, oxen for plowing, mares, sheep, goats, hogs, and chickens. He agreed to build each settler family a house, provide a shepherd boy, a male and a female slave, and vine shoots.²⁸ This scheme, Menéndez advised Philip II, should eventually lead to a prosperous land with thriving cattle and sugar haciendas, vineyards, and large fields of grain.

When his Azores arrangements fell through, Pedro Menéndez licensed recruiters to seek out Castilian settlers. One agreement, signed at Madrid in 1567, permitted the enrollment of 100 farm families, as well as fifty farmer-artisans-sawyers, carpenters, wall-builders, masons, and smiths. As in the previous agreements, the adelantado would bring the settlers to Florida at his cost and furnish them with food for one year, houses, and livestock. From their first fruits from the land, the colonists were to repay Menéndez all his expense, share-cropping half and half until this was done. What Pedro Menéndez held out to his recruited settlers, and to others who chose to come at their own expense, was land-town lots and farm lands. If they served well and governed themselves properly, these, together with the honors due the first conquerors of a land, would be theirs.²⁹

Although the basic rationale for the Florida conquest was the conversion of the Indians to the Catholic faith, and the king ordered it to be carried out "in peace and Christianity," little was said in the Menéndez contract about the Florida Indians. Menéndez' enterprise was carried out under the 1563 settlement ordinances, which permitted *repartimiento* and *encomienda* under certain limiting conditions.³⁰ As he proceeded with the expansion of Spanish settlements in Florida, Menéndez and his lieutenants negotiated tribute and vassalage treaties with the

27. Pedro Menéndez' agreement with the soldiers was dated at Seville, May 25, 1565, AGI JU 879, No. 3, piece 1.

28. Menéndez to crown, St. Augustine, October 20, 1566, AGI SD 115.

29. The 1567 agreement was made with the settler recruiter, Dr. Zayas, and is found in AGI JU 980, No. 2, ramo 3.

30. "Ordenanzas . . .," D. I., Vol. 8 (encomienda); No. LVIII, 505; No. CXLIX, 536; (repartimiento); No. LXI, 506, and No. CXLV, 535.

Indians.³¹ The Jesuits, working after 1566 in Florida, their first New World mission field, began the difficult task of bringing the Florida Indians to Christianity from their own religions. It had long since been obvious, however, that no large tractable mass of Indians, such as the Spaniards had found in New Spain and Peru, existed in Florida to provide services for the conquerors.

Thus, the Spanish design for the settlement of Florida in the 1560s relied upon neither bullion nor Indian labor for its fulfillment. Its basic thrust was agricultural and commercial, and its labor force was to be Iberian farmers and the 500 Negro slaves for whom Menéndez had obtained license from Philip II.

In 1568, Pedro Menéndez began the serious colonizing of Florida. Despite difficulties with the *Casa de Contratación*, which refused to permit his ships to sail at first, Menéndez gathered the settler families at Cadiz and finally obtained royal permission to depart.³² At the same time, the crown agreed to extend the expiring Florida contract and to underwrite a basic Florida garrison of 150 soldiers, leaving Menéndez free to devote his resources to colonization.³³ On April 15, 1569, 273 settlers arrived at St. Augustine; 193 of these went on to Santa Elena, selected as the primary colony. By the end of October of that year, 327 persons resided at Santa Elena.³⁴

Florida underwent a crisis in 1570, related to the adelantado's inability to finance his colony unaided and to the uncertain nature of promised royal support. Finally, after the garrisons were denuded, forcing the issue, the crown approved a regular

-
31. For examples of the treaties of peace and tribute, see "Traslado de ciertos papeles . . . de servicios que el Capitan Tomas Bernaldo (de Quirós) . . . presentó en el Real Consejo de las Indias," July 19, 1584, from AGI SD 125, No. 150 D.
 32. The royal approval for the colonist's departure is contained in "Informacion ante Abalia," Cádiz, July 12, 1568, AGI IG 2,673, and an order from Philip II to Antonio de Abalia from El Pardo, August 17, found in AGI *Contaduría* (CD), 548.
 33. The crown promise to support a 150-man Florida garrison was apparently decided upon by the Council of the Indies in May 1568. See envío 25, H, No. 164, AIVDJ. A royal order confirming this was issued on July 15, 1568, and is referred to in a later order dated June 17, 1568, found in AGI *Contaduría* (CD), 548.
 34. The arrival of the ship *Nuestra Señora de la Consolación* in Florida in April 1569, is described in the certification of Esteban de las Alas, Seville, January 1, 1573, AGI EC 1024-A. The Santa Elena population at the end of 1569 was sworn to by Pedro Menéndez Marqués in his testimony in AGI JU 980, No. 3, ramo 1.

continuing subsidy, to be paid from the New World.³⁵ On the strength of this support, Pedro Menéndez began his greatest settlement effort. He installed his son-in-law Don Diego de Velasco as governor. Menéndez' wife, Dona Maria de Solís, arrived with his household and personal goods from Asturias. The seat of government and of the Menéndez family would be Santa Elena. By 1572 it had been reconstituted and 179 settlers lived there.³⁶

At St. Augustine and at Santa Elena, Pedro Menéndez had established in North America microcosms of Castile: the settlements demonstrated a wide range of the institutions, social characteristics, trades, crafts, and professions of the metropole. As the legal cases disclose, the Spaniards resident in Florida had also brought with them their proud, litigious nature, together with the whole apparatus of civil and criminal justice.³⁷

Pursuant to his contract, Pedro Menéndez had imported livestock from Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico—more than 1,500 hogs, thousands of chickens, and numbers of horses and mares, calves, goats, and sheep. He had brought in quantities of tools for agriculture, carpentry, and wood-cutting. The towns had forges, parish churches, wooden forts for their defense, houses, and taverns. Kitchenware and church furnishings, arquebuses and chamber pots, material culture items from several regions of Castile had been brought also to the new land.³⁸

After they had established themselves in their houses with their wives and children, the settlers planted fruit and vegetable

-
35. See the crown investigation upon the coming of the Florida forces to Spain in 1570 in AGI JU 1,001, No. 2, ramo 1. The formal establishment of the subsidy was in the royal order issued at Segovia, November 15, 1570, to the royal officials of Tierra Firme, SD 235.
 36. See the list of settlers, Santa Elena, August 2, 1572, AGI EC 1,024-A.
 37. Several of the civil and criminal cases have been reproduced in part or completely in the so-called "Menéndez residencia." AGI EC 154-A.
 38. Menéndez' initial shipments to Florida are described in "Despachos que se hicieron," from AGI EC 1,024-A. Lists of chicken and livestock, as well as other supplies sent from Havana from 1566 to 1574, are in AGI CD 1,174. For a list of supplies, tools, and weapons brought into Florida from Spain for the initial conquest, see "relación de los navíos, gente, bastimentos, artillería, armas, municiones . . . que lleva el Adelantado Pedro Menéndez de Avilés . . .," AGI EC 1,024-A. Later shipments from Havana are also described in AGI JU 817, No. 5, piece 6. Pedro Menéndez Marqués certified that from 1565 to 1571, he personally brought into Florida 311 goats, 1,304 hogs, twenty-seven calves, 3,660 chickens, and eighty-seven horses and mares (certification, Madrid, January 31, 1573, AGI EC 1,024-A). Hog shipments from Puerto Rico were mentioned in AGI JU 1,001, No. 4, ramo 2, fol. 25.

gardens; their pastures and cornfields expanded into the areas immediately surrounding the towns. The colonists helped to enliven that most significant of Hispanic organisms—the *cabildo*. The Santa Elena *cabildo* became the focal point for a community power struggle; some *alcaldes* and *regidores* were identified with the *adelantado* and his faction, and some with the settler interest. In 1569, the settlers in *cabildo* petitioned the *adelantado* for redress of wrongs; in 1573 and 1576, their complaints reached the Council of the Indies. At one point Alonso de Olmos and Francisco Ruiz, leaders of the settler faction, defied the governor's order to work on the demolition of the old fort. Although they called upon their rights as citizens under royal patronage and referred to their contracts with the *adelantado*, they were in the end forced to go to work.³⁹

Surviving legal cases and personal property inventories in the Florida documents point to the strict class nature of society there. Governor Velasco allegedly insulted two women in religious processions for having the temerity to step above their station. One of those, María de Lara, daughter of the tailor Olmos, had dared to use the honorific “Doña” before her name.⁴⁰ At one end of the social scale, Pedro Menéndez, his chief lieutenants, and their wives possessed rich clothing and household furnishings, while ordinary soldiers and sailors at the other end had little or nothing in the way of material comforts.⁴¹

Although royal subsidy funds, interrelated with the *adelantado*'s own capital, provided the economic motor of the colony, there was also an active private commercial life in Spanish Florida. Men sold meat and fish and loaned money; taverns and boardinghouses operated in the towns; and Spaniards practiced

39. See “Memorial of the settlers and Cabildo of Santa Elena,” July 15, 1569, AGI CD 941. *Cabildo* members were itemized in AGI EC 154-A, fol. 143vo-144. The Olmos-Ruiz dispute with the Spanish governor was described by Alonso de Olmos in his testimony in AGI EC 154-A, beginning with fol. 1054.

40. AGI EC 154-A, fol. 467-505.

41. Belongings left by deceased soldiers and sailors are listed in AGI EC 154-A, fol. 782-97vo. Some of the goods of Governor Don Diego de Velasco were described in AGI EC 154-A, fol. 641-46vo, while the clothing of Pedro Menéndez' noble associates Juan and Hernan de Quiros, Lope Bernaldo, and Juan de Aranda were listed in AGI JU 817, No. 5, piece 6. The rich furnishings, including bedclothings, tableware, carpeting, saddles, and kitchenware of the *adelantado* himself, were listed in the same place.

the crafts and professions of smith, carpenter, sawyer, charcoal-burner, and barber.⁴²

By the late 1560s, mutual agricultural interchange had taken place between North America and Iberia. Fruits and vegetables from Spain and the Canary Islands—oranges, figs, squash, and other items—had been successfully introduced. Sugar cane did not thrive. Both wheat and wine grapes had been established in Santa Elena, but neither spread widely. To take the place of imported wheat and cassava, corn became Spanish Florida's primary crop. Soon large harvests were reported from St. Augustine and Santa Elena, and corn began to figure as importantly in Spanish diets as it long had in those of the Indians.⁴³

The Spaniards depended upon the vast North American forest resources for fuel and construction material. They produced pitch and shipped logs and planks of Florida cedar abroad for sale. Commercial shipbuilding had also begun in a modest way; Philip II had contracted with Menéndez to build eight fast *fregatas*. One, possibly two, of these, was built near St. Augustine.⁴⁴

The bark of the sassafras root, a product introduced to the Spaniards both by the French and the Indians, was believed to have valuable medicinal qualities. By 1572 it had become a commercial enterprise; initial exports of sassafras to Cádiz presaged later larger-scale shipments.⁴⁵ Like the collection of cochineal

-
42. Andrés de Eguino described the sale of royal supplies in private taverns in St. Augustine in AGI PAT 257, No. 3, ramo 8. A trading company is described in AGI EC 154-A, fol. 798.
 43. Successful introduction of fruits and vegetables into Florida from the Metropole and the Atlantic islands is mentioned by Pedro Menéndez Márquez in his letter to Philip II, St. Augustine, April 2, 1579, from AGI SD 168. Father Juan Rogel's letter to Borja of July 25, 1568 described the wheat and thriving vineyard he had seen at Santa Elena. Substantial corn production is noted in the Florida accounts of Gaspar Fernández Perete, AGI CD 948.
 44. The export of cedar-wood from Florida in the 1570s is described in AGI JÜ 1,000, No. 2, fol. 5vo. Turpentine production is mentioned in AGI JÜ 1,001, No. 4, ramo 2. Pitch extraction is described in payments to Alonso Escudero in AGI CD 948. Pedro Menéndez' contract to build eight *fregatas* is detailed in AGI CD 548; it was authorized by the Council of the Indies on November 22, 1569 (AIVDI, envío 25, H, No. 164).
 45. After initial experimental shipments of sassafras, a regular trade began. See the arrangements made by Bernaldo de Valdés and Pedro Sanchez, filed in the Protocolo of Martín Calvo de la Puerta, Archivo de Protocolos de la Havana.

insects in New Spain, however, the gathering of sassafras root was tedious, a task best performed by Indian labor. This, however, was difficult to arrange, for Indian relations remained problematical. As the 1570s advanced, they reached a point crucial to the success or failure of Pedro Menéndez' North American colonization.

The wholesale use of Indians in an economic sense, as in *encomienda*, was not feasible; the mutual relationship remained a wary, arms-length one. The Spaniards gave the Indians gifts—beads, cloth, knives, hatchets—to encourage them to treat for peace and vassalship. Under the agreements, tributes of corn, fresh-water pearls, furs, and Indian money were paid, often grudgingly, to the Spaniards. Episodes of peace alternated with times of war, and often the whole treaty-making process had to be repeated over and over again.⁴⁶

After a six-year effort, the Jesuits gave up in 1572 on their hopes of evangelizing the Florida Indians. Their experience, which had ranged over the whole of Florida from the San Antón mission in the extreme southwestern coast of Florida to the disastrous foundation in Jacán, had been costly to the order. It had furnished them with a number of martyrs, but few converts. To explain their failure, the Jesuits pointed to the hostile, nomadic state of the natives, which had made settled *doctrinas* impossible. They also blamed the greed and cruelty of the Spanish soldiery towards the Indians. Only in an atmosphere of Christian love and family settlement, they believed, could Florida's Indians ever be brought to the Catholic faith. Although the Franciscan order was eventually to fill the gap left by the Jesuits' departure, it was not until later in the century that their efforts began to bear substantial fruit.⁴⁷

In 1573, the Indian question came to a head. Settlers at Santa Elena complained to the king that they could not tend their fields, that they had to consume their livestock instead of breeding it for increase, and that they could not expand their plantings into the more fertile inland areas without better pro-

46. For examples of such continuing difficulties in Indian relations in one area of Spanish Florida, see Eugene Lyon, "More Light on the Indians of the Ays Coast" (typescript, Gainesville, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida history, 1967).

47. See Rogel to Borja, July 25, 1568.

tection from hostile Indians.⁴⁸ In that same year, Pedro Menéndez traveled to Madrid to complain of the warlike acts of Indians from the Florida keys to Santa Elena, which he said seriously impeded Florida's colonization. Menéndez and his chief lieutenants took a hard-line approach, quite opposite to that adopted by the Jesuits: they asked the Spanish crown to permit them to capture all the warlike Indians and sell them as slaves to the Caribbean islands.⁴⁹ The king's decision on the Indian question reflected the long, intense debate in sixteenth-century Spain over the nature and rights of the Amerindians. Philip II refused Pedro Menéndez' request to enslave the Indians, even those taken in "just war." But, in spite of the royal commands, some Indian slaves were used for agricultural and household labor at Santa Elena and in St. Augustine.⁵⁰

After the death in 1574 of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, Indian relations and the settlement of Florida began to unravel. The governors that succeeded Menéndez neglected the regular giving of gifts to the Indian *caciques*. Governor Velasco and his deputy Solís had two Indian chieftains hung and cut off the ears of others. They wrung tribute payments from unwilling Indians by force. Stung by this cruel treatment, the Indians of Guale began a rebellion in 1576. Three Florida treasury officials and a contingent of soldiers, carrying a payroll to Santa Elena, were ambushed and killed. A foraging party of thirty-nine Spaniards, led by Sergeant Moyano, was caught north of Santa Elena by Indians, and only one man escaped the massacre.

Huddled in Fort San Marcos at Santa Elena, the small remaining garrison and the settler families awaited the final assault of the Indians. Finally, the new governor, Hernando de Miranda, inexperienced and frightened, gave the order to evacuate Santa Elena. The Spaniards buried their heavy cannons, brought all they could carry of personal and royal property, and, in August 1576, sailed away.⁵¹

48. "The settlers of Florida," Madrid, April 27, 1577, AGI SD 231, Document 19.

49. "Daños de los Indios de la Florida," AGI PAT 257, No. 3, ramo 20.

50. The Indian slaves of 1576 were listed in AGI EC 154-A, fol. 65-68vo.

51. The Indian troubles in Guale and Santa Elena are described in "Probanza de las cosas de la Florida," Havana, October 28, 1576, AGI EC 154-A. 335-70vo.

NORTH AMERICAN SETTLEMENT ATTEMPTS 291

Santa Elena was to be rebuilt before its final abandonment in 1587. Spanish Florida itself would survive, and would experience later expansions into Guale and Apalache. By the late eighteenth century, it would even realize a degree of demographic increase and prosperity. But perhaps the best opportunity to build prosperous colonies through settlement in the Carolinas-to forestall the later English occupation of the continent-had come in the sixteenth century. In spite of great expense and sacrifice, in denial of all the personal and dynastic hopes inherent in the North American enterprise, that chance for Spain had been irretrievably lost.