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## A Swiss Settler in East Florida: A Letter of Francis Philip Fatio

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## A SWISS SETTLER IN EAST FLORIDA: A LETTER OF FRANCIS PHILIP FATIO

by WILLIAM SCOTT WILLIS

**A** LETTER written by Francis Philip Fatio, who settled in East Florida in 1771 and remained there until his death in 1811, was recently discovered among some papers in a desk given to The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Florida for use in the Ximenez-Fatio House in St. Augustine. Written by Fatio from New Switzerland, his plantation on the St. Johns River, to his wife in St. Augustine, the letter is dated October 18, 1800. It provides not only intimate glimpses of life on an East Florida plantation during the Second Spanish Period and information on the crops being grown, but also some personal perceptions of the troubled years following the American Revolution, in par titular the rebellion in East Florida in 1795 and the threat of invasion by William Augustus Bowles, self-styled director-general of the State of Muskogee, and his followers in 1800.

Mr. Fatio was seventy-six years old when he wrote this letter.<sup>1</sup> Born in Vevey, Switzerland in 1724, he was the second son of a prominent and prosperous family whose Swiss ancestors dated back to the sixteenth century. After initially studying law, Fatio decided upon a military career. Joining the Swiss Troops in service to the king of Sardinia, he fought with the Sardinian forces allied with England against France in the War of the Austrian Succession. While on leave in Nice, the young officer met Marie Madeleine Crispell, and they were married in 1748. Leaving the military service, Fatio bought property near Nice

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- I Three books written by descendants of F. P. Fatio contain detailed information about the Fatio family: Susan L'Engle, *Notes of my family and Recollections of my early life* (New York, 1888); Gertrude L'Engle, *A Collection of Letters, Information and Data on Our Family*, 2 vols. (Jacksonville, 1951); and Margaret Seton Fleming Biddle, *Hibernia: The Unreturning Tide* (New York, 1947).

which contained "sweet orange trees . . . lime trees . . . choice fruit trees . . . olive trees . . . and vineyards." He also took pride in its system of irrigation: "a large well supplied with water and a pump worked with a wheel to fill a large stone cistern or basin, from which the rows of orange trees are watered in the summer by canals running alongside."<sup>2</sup> This early experience in cultivating the soil was undoubtedly of benefit to Fatio when he settled his Florida plantations some twenty years later.

Leaving his property near Nice in the care of an overseer, Fatio moved to Geneva in 1756 with his wife and young son. Five years later, he took his family to London where they spent the next ten years. It was then that the reports being circulated by the British about the advantages of settling in their newly-acquired Florida province began to fire his imagination. He formed a partnership with four others to acquire land there which he agreed to manage. In 1771 Fatio chartered a ship and set sail from England with his wife, their five children ranging in age from nineteen to three, and their household possessions.<sup>3</sup> Arriving in St. Augustine, Fatio prospered, both as merchant and planter. It is reported he was soon able to keep a vessel "constantly plying between the New and Old World, carrying the products of the one and bringing back comforts and luxuries from the other."<sup>4</sup> A grant of 400 acres near Mill Cove on the south side of the St. Johns River was obtained by an agent for the partners. This tract (known today as the Fort Caroline Club Estates), together with some 350 adjoining acres which Fatio later purchased, was named Newcastle.<sup>5</sup>

It was here that William Bartram visited in 1774: "stop't at Monr. Facio's who has a very large Indigo Plantation, on a high

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2. Power of attorney written by Fatio and published in G. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, I, 22.

3. All the children (Louis, Francis Philip, Jr., Louisa, Sophia, and Philip) reached adulthood. They and their descendants continued to play a prominent role in Florida history. Many still live in Florida, although none bear the name of Fatio. Fatio's great-grandson, Francis Philip Fleming, served as governor of Florida from 1889 to 1893 and was the president of the Florida Historical Society from 1906 until his death in 1908.

4. S. L'Engle, *Notes of my family*, 10.

5. Works Progress Administration, Historical Records Survey, *Spanish Land Grants in Florida*, 5 vols. (Tallahassee, 1940-1941): III, Confirmed claim F 12. The New Castle plantation (named after Neufchâtel in Switzerland) included several small islands, one of which still bears the name. There is also New Castle Creek which flowed through the Fatio property.

Hill on Et. side of the River. This very civil gentleman showed me his improvements. his Garden is very neat & contains a greater variety than any other in the Coliny, he has a variety of European Grapes imported from the Streight, Olives, Figs, Pomgranates, Filberts, Oranges, Lemons, a variety of garden flowers, from Europe &c. we dined with him, then continued up the River. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Fatio also obtained a land grant of 10,000 acres on the east side of the St. Johns, with a river front of twelve miles, which he named New Switzerland (site of the present town of Switzerland). Located about thirty miles north of St. Augustine, this became the country residence of the family, and it was here that Fatio spent most of his time as planter.<sup>7</sup>

When the American Revolution broke out, East Florida remained loyal to the British crown and became a haven for the Loyalists forced out of the colonies to the north. Fatio shared their hope that the British would not give up the province. To help make sure this would not happen, he wrote in 1782 a lengthy report, significant for its commentaries on forest conservation as well as for its emotional appeal, entitled "Considerations on the Importance of the Province of East Florida to the Empire (on the supposition that it will be deprived of its Southern Colonies) by its Situation, its produce in Naval Stores, Ship lumber, & the Asylum it may afford the Wretched & Distressed Loyalists."<sup>8</sup> When the province was retroceded to Spain in 1783, Fatio was among the few who decided to remain. All his children and virtually all his property were here; he was too deeply rooted in the East Florida soil to leave. Thus his interests and those of the Spanish government became one. By 1785 the Spanish governor would recommend him in these terms: "Since the beginning of His Majesty's rule he has exerted himself enthusiastically in the Spanish interest, not only by words but by deeds, supplying the ordinary rations to the detachments stationed on the banks of the St. Johns River, to say nothing of other effects of benefit to the royal service made necessary by the lack of money with which to procure them. He, as well as

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6. William Bartram, "Travels in Georgia and Florida, 1773-74: A Report to Dr. John Fothergill" American Philosophical Society *Transactions* (Philadelphia, 1943), 145.

7. *Spanish Land Grants in Florida*, III, Confirmed claim F 13.

8. G. L'Engle, *Collections of Letters*, I, 188-89.

his son, Lewis, continue to carry out to my satisfaction the commission which I entrusted to them of exercising primary jurisdiction in quarrels originating among British subjects."<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Fatio saw clearly the potential, as well as the danger, inherent in the conditions then in existence in East Florida. In a document entitled "Description of East Florida," remarkable for its candor and prophetic vision, he informed the Spanish government in March 1785 that the evacuation of the English had caused the province to become a desert guarded by Spanish troops, that the few Spanish subjects who had come were not tillers of the soil, that the government should encourage more settlement and undertake the revival of maritime trade in order to export the wood of all kinds available, as well as tar, rosin, and turpentine. He warned that troops from the new American republic could easily invade the back country of the Spanish provinces and that the Indians would renew their pillages if strong measures were not taken.<sup>10</sup> That conditions quickly worsened is evident in the letter the governor sent to the Condé de Gálvez, captain-general of the province, shortly thereafter. Speaking again of Fatio and his son Lewis, he wrote: "I must add here that, considering the usefulness and worth of these men, I have thought it proper to place a guard consisting of a sergeant and eight men on Fatio's hacienda (the only one left in the province) on the St. Johns River, in the hope that their industry and intelligence will serve as an inspiration to others to imitate them."<sup>11</sup>

The Spanish decided somewhat belatedly in 1790 to offer land grants to new settlers without requiring them to become Catholics. A few of those who came however, primarily from Georgia, soon got the notion of taking over the province and making it into an independent Republic of Florida. Some of their actions are alluded to in Fatio's letter which follows. The

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9. Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes to Bernardo de Gálvez, February 28, 1785, East Florida Papers, reel 16, bundle 40 [hereinafter cited as EFP, with appropriate reel and bundle numbers], microfilm in Library of Congress, Washington, and the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. See John W. Caughy, ed., *East Florida, 1783-1785. A File of Documents Assembled and Many of Them Translated by Joseph Byrne Lockey* (Berkeley, 1949), 461-62.

10. This document was forwarded by Zéspedes to Condé de Gálvez under date of March 18, 1795, EFP, reel 16, bundle 40; Caughy, *East Florida*, 479-82.

11. Caughy, *East Florida*, 572.

letter is written in French, the language Mr. Fatio and his wife commonly used in writing to each other.

Addressed to:

Mrs. Fatio  
St. Augustine

care of Davy  
New Switzerland

October 18, 1800 Saturday

My dearly beloved Marion,

I intended to write you yesterday and send my letter this morning replying to your sweet letter of the 15th and 16th. After dinner we saw a boat with two sails coming up that turned out to be Patron Estacholy,<sup>12</sup> who was carrying provisions to the detachment at Picolata.<sup>13</sup> From him we learned that on the 15th the troops of the King, commanded by Capt. Castilla,<sup>14</sup> had set out with our Militia Dragoons under the command of Capt. Macqueen,<sup>15</sup> Atkinson,<sup>16</sup> Hall,<sup>17</sup> etc. in order to go to St. Marys<sup>18</sup>

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12. Probably Domingo Estacholy, master of the schooner *Santa Catalina*, which was used to transport ammunition to the St. Johns battery, or his father, Francisco Estacholy, skipper of the post office canoes of the St. Johns and St. Mars rivers, who had moved to San Vicente Ferrer from St. Augustine in 1789. See White to Juan McQueen, September 12, 1801, EFP, reel 85, bundle 201 F 16; *Spanish Land Grants in Florida*, IV, Confirmed claim K 21; 1793 Census Return, St. Augustine, EFP, reel 148, bundle 323 A.
  13. Fort on the east bank of the St. Johns just west of St. Augustine.
  14. Manuel Castilla, captain in the Spanish troops garrisoned in St. Augustine, had been appointed commander of the joint troops in the expedition against Bowles by Governor White. See White to Castilla, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11. A list of Spanish officers by rank and name appears in Morales to White, April 9, 1801, EFP, reel 67, bundle 160 D 13.
  15. John McQueen was then commander of the militia on the St. Johns and St. Marys rivers. See the correspondence exchanged in 1800 between Governor White and McQueen, EFP, reel 53, bundle 135 E 11. For information on McQueen, see Walter Charlton Hartridge, ed., *The Letters of Don Juan McQueen to his Family: Written from Spanish East Florida 1791-1807* (Columbia, SC, 1943), xxi-xxxiv, 1-84.
  16. Andrew Atkinson settled in Florida following the royal order in 1790. He was active in a number of military expeditions against the Georgia rebel invaders between 1793 and 1796. Las Casas, governor general in Cuba, recommended in 1795 that both Atkinson and McQueen be accorded recognition for their outstanding efforts. See Las Casas to Camp Alange, Archivo General de Indias, Santo Domingo, legajo 2564. White appointed Atkinson commander of the militia in June 1800, McQueen to White, June 18, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11. See also Richard K. Murdoch, *The Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1793-1796: Spanish Reaction to French Intrigue and American Designs* (Berkeley, 1951), 63-64, 108-09, 124-25.
  17. Nathaniel Hall was already a captain in the rural militia at the time rebel forces seized the small outpost of Juana in June 1795 (see notes 26-31).

and join there a militia detachment from Georgia and encounter Bowles and the Indians.<sup>19</sup> This news has given me much satisfaction, being the best plan that one could devise to stave off those looters and stop them in their scheme.<sup>20</sup>

Estacholy told us that Mr. Macqueen was in high spirits, as were all the troops, that they had fifteen days of provisions— little ammunition because the launch had not arrived.<sup>21</sup> If the Americans side with us, as I hope, and if our troops don't fall into some ambush, we shall soon be delivered from all danger. They have jailed in Newton one of Bowles's partisans who I hope will not escape like Bob Allen.<sup>22</sup>

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McQueen called Hall "a plain honest Man." Hartridge, *Letters of McQueen*, 68.

18. St. Marys, Georgia; the inhabitants of East Florida habitually referred to it as New Town or Newton. See McQueen to White, July 4, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11; Murdoch, *Georgia-Florida Frontier*, 4.
19. McQueen notified the Spanish government in September 1800 of word he had received "from our confidential correspondent at St. Marys, advising us of Bowles's intention of paying us a visit, and from every circumstance, I am induced to believe we shall hear of him in a few days on the banks of the St. Marys, where he expects to be united by the rebels from Florida." McQueen to Morales, September 27, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11. A short time later McQueen accepted appointment to the command of the militia. McQueen to Morales, October 10, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11. Governor White then drew up a formal set of instructions containing twenty-five articles on how the expedition against Bowles should proceed and how the troops were to coordinate their efforts with the American detachment from Georgia. See White to Castilla, October 11, 1800, EFP, *ibid.* Spanish agents in Georgia helped frustrate the designs of Bowles. One, William Ashley, alerted McQueen that Bowles planned to camp on the south side of the St. Marys on October 16, Bowles to Ashley, October 16, 1800, *ibid.* Another, David Garven, hearing that money had been deposited in St. Marys to purchase powder and ball for Bowles, went to the different stores in the town and bought up all available powder, McQueen to White, November 9, 1800, *ibid.*
20. Before he was captured and imprisoned in Havana, Bowles hoped that with the aid of discontented whites in Georgia, a motley assortment of Indians, and Spanish rebels, he could take possession of East Florida. His plan was "to plunder the plantations and burn the Town of Augustine, by which means to drive the inhabitants into the Fort and so starve them out." See Seagrove to McQueen, January 31, 1801, EFP, reel 55, bundle 136 F 11.
21. The armed launch, *San Agustin*, was used to transport supplies and ammunition to the troops at the various outposts. See White to Castilla, October 11, 1800, EFP, reel 85, bundle 200 E 16. Its sailing from St. Augustine was delayed because of contrary winds, so rations for eight days were sent by horseback, Morales to Clark, October 17, 1800, *ibid.*
22. In addition to being an elusive prisoner, Alien was a recruiter for Bowles and a notorious horse thief. He escaped from Seagrove's party from Geor-

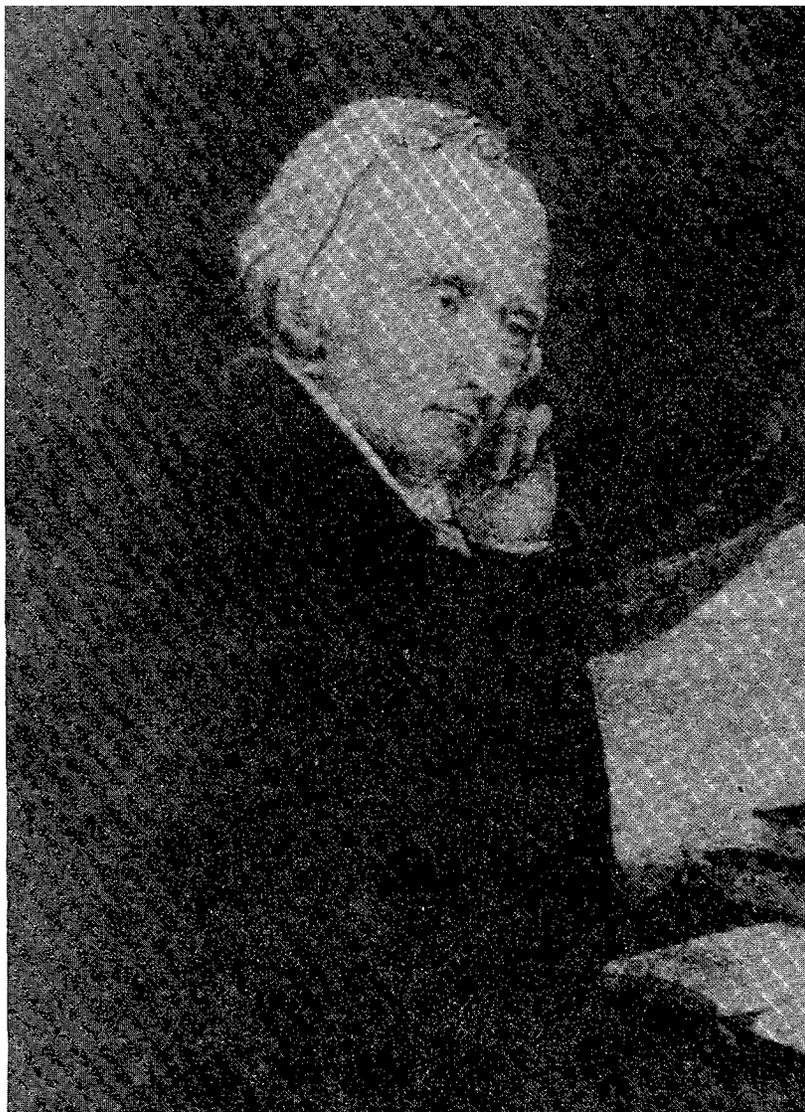
Dr. Travers is mistaken when he says that the Indians in Bowles's party are not from among those of the territory ceded to the Americans.<sup>23</sup> It is an assorted pack from all the nations—Chiahas, Cowetas, Hitchitis and a number of High Creeks, who are American, as well as those of Alachua. Even some kinsmen of Paine and some Mickasoukies, who are Floridian.<sup>24</sup> In the proclamation of the Governor of Georgia which I have at hand, he acknowledges that the United States is obliged by the fifth article to join in common cause with us and by the decrees of Congress to prevent any Citizen or other inhabitant from joining with Bowles unless he is so authorized by the English or is acting as a vagabond: those are its terms. The proclamation is dated July 8th and there is no doubt that there are orders from the President for sending troops to join ours in order to go and attack Bowles.<sup>25</sup>

We were expecting Estacholy for dinner on his way back and to learn more news from Piccolata, but the wind is blowing so strongly from the west, which is directly against him, that he would not be able to get down the river. NB: He got down after I went to bed. I assure you my dear Friend, that this news has greatly calmed our fears. If Quesada<sup>26</sup> had acted in the same

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gia after being captured along the St. Marys with twelve horses he had stolen, Seagrove to McQueen, June 28, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11.

23. Dr. Thomas Travers, a native of Ireland, had been stationed in East Florida as an army surgeon under the British. He also remained there after the cession of the province to Spain. His home in St. Augustine was on Hospital (now Aviles) Street. See Census Returns, St. Augustine, 1793, EFP, reel 148, bundle 323 A. The Fatio residence was on Marine Street, now the site of a wax museum.
24. Payne was the principal chief of the Alachua group of Seminoles. Payne accompanied Francis P. Fatio, Jr., to Miccosukee in 1801 to try to obtain the return of some of his father's slaves who had been stolen. Bowles treated Fatio with civility, and they recognized each other as having been in garrison together in New York in 1783, when Bowles was a provincial officer. Not only were the slaves not returned, the Miccosukee Indians also stole Fatio's horses. See Fatio to White. November 12, 1801, EFP, reel 83, bundle 197 B 16.
25. Proclamation of Governor James Jackson, Louisville, July 8, 1800. Fatio may have had a copy of the Savannah newspaper, *Columbian Museum & Savannah Advertiser*, which published the proclamation on July 15, 1800. See copy in EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11. This refers to the Pinckney Treaty of 1795. Its fifth article stipulates that both parties "shall maintain peace and harmony among the several Indian nations" and that no treaty of alliance "shall be made by either party with the Indians."
26. Juan Nepomuceno Quesada had replaced Zéspedes as governor in 1790. Fatio's relations with Quesada were not as cordial as those with Zéspedes.



FRANCIS PHILIP FATIO

Original oil miniature on display at the Ximenez-Fatio House, St. Augustine.  
Photograph courtesy of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America  
in the State of Florida.

way when Lang<sup>27</sup> came to attack Cowford,<sup>28</sup> after his party had captured Wheeler<sup>29</sup> and burned the redoubt at Juana<sup>30</sup> on June 26th 1795, they would not have come to take Cowford on July 10th.<sup>31</sup> May God inspire our leaders and give success to our expedition which will decide our fate.

We have had rain every day since Fleming's<sup>32</sup> arrival, except

Fatio had offered to help the government during the 1795 rebellion, but due to the number of Spanish subjects who took part in the rebellion, especially those who came from the United States after 1790, the governor began to suspect some he had previously considered loyal, including Fatio.

He noted that the corn provided by Fatio "was worm eaten and of little usefulness." See Quesada to Las Casas, July 13, 1795, EFP, reel 129, bundle 294 P 12. Fatio seems to suggest that Enrique White, who became governor in 1796, was a better military strategist than Quesada.

27. Richard Lang had settled in Florida earlier and owned a plantation along the St. Marys. Suspected of treason at the time some Americans sympathetic to the French Republic were planning an invasion of East Florida in 1793, he was indicted with a number of others and put in prison. After being released in January 1795 for lack of evidence, these men moved north of the St. Marys River into Georgia. Lang first sought compensation for his persecution, Lang to Quesada, February 27, May 10, 1795, EFP, reel 83, bundle 196 A 16. Then he began to organize troops for a Florida invasion. They first attacked Fort Juana, which had been built on the King's Road at the present-day Ribault River in April 1794, Atkinson to Howard, April 21, 1794, EFP, reel 50, bundle 126 S 10.
28. Cow Ford was the name used in referring to the narrow river crossing at the Pass of San Nicolas. It was also used to identify the battery of St. Nicolas.
29. Isaac Wheeler was commander of the twelve-man militia at Fort Juana. All were taken prisoner. See Howard to Morales, July 4, 1795, Archivo General de Indias, Papeles procedentes de Cuba, legajo 1438. Microfilm in Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington [hereinafter AGI, PC].
30. Also referred to as Fort Jane. See Isaac Wheeler to Charles Howard, December 9, 1794, EFP, reel, 51, bundle 127 J 10. One reason the dates and details remain so clear in Fatio's mind is that Lang's men took 114 head of cattle, which Fatio had contracted to buy as the meat supply of the province, several horses, and a Negro belonging to Fatio, Fleming to Morales, July 3, 1795, AGI, PC, 1438.
31. After their success at Juana, Lang and his men decided to cross the St. Johns River again in small boats and attack the two-gun battery at San Nicolas. Three of the garrison were killed and some twenty-eight men were taken prisoner, Quesada to Las Casas, July 25, 1795, AGI, PC, 1438. The Spanish forces recaptured the battery on July 12 and took several of the enemy prisoner, but Lang and the others escaped. See Janice Barton Miller, "The Rebellion in East Florida in 1795," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LVII (October 1978), 181-84.
32. George Fleming married Fatio's daughter Sophia in 1788. He served as captain of the urban militia, EFP, reel 146, bundle 32. He was also paymaster of the St. Johns militia at the time of the 1795 rebellion. See Atkinson to Morales, May 2 1, 1795, EFP, reel 51, bundle 128 K 10. Fleming continued to perform many services for the Spanish government.

for today, which has stopped our picking cotton;<sup>33</sup> and not being able to dry the picked cotton, we were obliged to stop ginning yesterday. As of the 16th we had already ginned 4324 pounds of raw cotton and as of this morning we had baled 17 bales of cotton— 3667 pounds— from this year. This evening we shall finish another bale of 276 pounds, which will bring us close to 4000 pounds of cotton. We have put aside the 19 bales for Mr. Henry which weigh 5006 lbs. We have remaining 11 Bales which weigh 2954 lbs; one from this evening weighed 296. That will make 3250 lbs. which I plan to send to you in town by Arnau with all we are able to bale later.<sup>34</sup> We only have enough ginned cotton for two medium-sized bales, but as the weather has turned dry again, and since we have on hand 960 lbs. of picked cotton— we shall begin our work again next Tuesday and every two days we shall be able to gin a large bale. Meanwhile Mr. Fleming has four Negroes at the gins; and I hope that next week all his picked cotton will be ginned and baled and ready to be sent with ours; he will have 33 good bales and some left over.<sup>35</sup>

I received with pleasure the coffee, sugar, and onions. We need some pencils. I don't have a drop of wine, which is a great inconvenience. Yesterday I drank some toddy at dinner which, although extremely weak, made me unwell. Today I wanted to drink some pure lemonade without Brandy; it made my breathing short; fortunately I had in reserve the sole bottle of wine from the cases and I drank half of it; the rest will be for tomorrow. The 5 broken bottles did me a great disservice; on the return trip of the Negro I hope you will send me several bottles in the warlets.<sup>36</sup> I would like very much to receive a couple of

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33. Fatio noted that he began to plant cotton in 1793 and soon found that "one good acre of Cotton can very well purchase the Corn of ten acres when the price is not exorbitant," Fatio to McQueen, March 12, 1801, EFP, reel 55, bundle 136 F 11.

34. Possibly José Arnau, a Minorcan who lived in St. Augustine.

35. Fleming's cotton probably came from his plantation, Hibernia, which was on the opposite side of the St. Johns from New Switzerland. This seems substantiated by the fact that in July 1800, "four of Captain George Fleming's Negroes" were taken by the Indians "on the opposite of St. Johns River." See Hall to White, July 8, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11.

36. The "warlet" or wallet was evidently some type of saddle bag placed on the back of the horse to send supplies back and forth between New Switzerland and St. Augustine. The dates of the letters exchanged by Fatio and his wife suggest that such a trip was made every few days.

dozen by Arnau. We have enough tobacco, but we are going to be able to count the days until we need salt. If you have some, send me a barrel of it. We expect to kill a lamb tomorrow morning at dawn— you shall have half of it.<sup>37</sup> Fleming believes that a piece of it would give the Governor pleasure, if Dr. Travers is willing to let him eat it.<sup>38</sup> I shall not be able to send you any fresh butter because we do not have any hogslard to season our winter squash, etc. Our cows go too far away looking for good pasture. Today Gray put them in the upcountry fields so we will be able to have them early in the evenings and also get more milk.<sup>39</sup> We shall save the cream which Mary gives me a little of every evening in my tea, if the cows don't come back.<sup>40</sup>

Our cotton fields promise an abundant harvest if we are not stopped by the Frost. I don't believe we have yet picked a fourth of the cotton, although what we have already picked amounts to 5388 lbs. reduced to net weight, or 1347 baskets of 12 lbs. calculated at 4 lbs. net.<sup>41</sup> I hope that Mr. Henry will want to buy our oranges and take them when he comes to load his cotton.<sup>42</sup>

37. Fatio had some 150 sheep. See Fatio's Census Return, February 27, 1801, EFP, reel, 55, bundle 136 F 11.
38. Governor Enrique White. Dr. Travers was, until his death in 1807, principal physician of the Royal Hospital of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He was both physician to and friend of Governor White.
39. Juan Gray, a free mulatto, was field foreman of the plantation. See Fatio's Census Return, February 27, 1801, *ibid.*
40. Reared by her grandparents, Mary Fatio, then twelve years old, was the only child of Louis Fatio and his first wife, Ann Douglas, daughter of John Douglas, colonel in the British Army and commandant in St. Augustine during the Revolutionary War. Ann died of a throat infection in 1788, soon after Mary's birth, and was buried at New Switzerland. Louis was later asked by Fatio to return to Europe to manage the family property there. Louis settled near Nice in 1792, remaining there until he died of the plague in 1799. G. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, II, 12.
41. If the 5,388 lbs. of picked cotton was a fourth of the crop, the total yield Fatio expected that year would be over 20,000 lbs. The average yield at that time was 200 lbs. of cotton per acre. One may surmise then that around 100 acres were planted in cotton at New Switzerland.
42. Oranges became an increasingly important crop at New Switzerland. The master of a schooner reported having loaded 165,000 oranges and 5,700 lemons at the Fatio plantation in 1831 for shipment to New York. *Papers*, Jacksonville Historical Society (Jacksonville, 1949), II, 17. The extensive groves, containing some 3,000 trees, surrounded the house on all sides except the one facing the river and remained productive until their destruction by frost in 1835. G. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, II, 17. Dr. Paul Schuler, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, reports that it was customary to plant forty-nine orange seedlings per acre during the 1700s. There must have been then about sixty acres of orange trees on the plantation.

The letter he wrote me is very satisfactory, and I hope you will have received delivery of the Libranza for a thousand piastres before my letter reaches you.<sup>43</sup> However, one cannot always count on promises.

If we are not chased out of here, I shall soon have some very fine salad greens.<sup>44</sup> I am sending you some asparagus— a little small— but it is a rarity. My garden appears promising, and it is just about in order. I have planted cabbage, onions, carrots, mustard, beets, spinach, parsnip, horseradish, and some garlic from that which you sent me, most of which was stolen by the Negroes to make necklaces against yellow fever. Send me some more of the same which was very fine and good. I didn't have enough to plant three rows, and I have three more which are waiting.

I would have liked very much to have some chicory and some blite, as well as some sweet potatoes. Then my garden would be complete for winter. Not a seed of the cauliflower which Farley sent came up. We do not have any English peas, or any beans. Dr. Travers could get some for me— the peas from the Minorcans and the beans from the Commandant.

Morning of the 19th

I have in the second drawer of my big desk, on the left, a pound of gunpowder in a hidden packet. Please be so kind as to send it to me . . . [illegible words] . . . my main food with fish and pigeons, because I am not able to eat any salted meat. I am writing to the Doctor to ask him to get us some powder from the Government and some ball.

Goodbye, my dear Friend, I am wrapped up in my winter clothes. This cold weather doesn't bother me as it did last year. I am better in mind and spirit, and am of good cheer. Love me without worrying. I shall be happier. But I would not know how, nor would I be able, to love you more.

If Frantney wishes to have our sheep, he must find a pasture for them other than the garden. I have just given the rest of my tea, half a box, which will last us nine days. I shall send you on

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43. *Libranza* – Spanish contract of exchange.

44. Some Indians had already declared they intended to ransack every plantation along the St. Johns, beginning with Fatio's. See Fatio to White, June 25, 1800, EFP, reel 55, bundle 135 E 11.

the wagon the 6 lbs. Goodbye. Your devoted husband and loving companion.

F. Fatio

We are all well and I do not have a single Negro sick. We have finished the molasses which was very helpful to us for our sick.

Mary is sending some cakes to her cousins.<sup>45</sup>

What suit will you give me to wear when I go to town? My old white suit?

Have someone look again at my velvet suits, re-sew the buttons and make the lining straight at the bottom, which folds out from the inside. The tailor can do that without my being there. It is not worth the bother of my having a suit made of new material for the remaining months I have to live. I think this winter, if it is severe, will not spare me. Please make me several pills of roasted rhubarb. I fear my diarrhea.

Fatio's concern about the cold weather was due to the fact that the preceding winter had been an extraordinarily severe one, with much snow and frost. The January 1800 snowstorm developed into the greatest recorded in the history of the region. Near the mouth of the St. Marys, over five inches of snow fell on January 10, 1800, the deepest snowfall known to have fallen in Florida.<sup>46</sup> The frost damaged his cotton crop, the deer

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45. The cousins included five Fatio grandchildren living in St. Augustine. Louis Michael Fleming, son of George Fleming and Sophia Fatio, was then two years old. Others were Francis Joseph Fatio and his sister Sophia, children of Philip Fatio and his wife, Jane Cross, who had died in 1795. Also living with their grandparents were Louisa and Eliza Fatio, daughters of Francis P. Fatio, Jr. and his first wife, Susan Hunter, who had died in 1799. See G. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, I, 48-49. Louisa Fatio, who never married, later owned the house on Aviles Street in St. Augustine now known as the Ximenez-Fatio House. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is the museum of The National Society of the Colonial Dames in the State of Florida.

46. *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott, 1706-1800* (Philadelphia, 1814), Appendix 121. Ellicott's *Journal* also carried an account of a freeze on February 19-20, 1800, when there was a "smart frost," water congealed nine feet from the fire, and ice formed one-sixth of an inch thick. Andrew Ellicott, "Astronomical and thermometrical observations made on the boundary between the United and His Catholic Majesty," *American Philosophical Society Transactions*, V (Philadelphia, 1802; reprint ed., New York, 1966), 281. See also David M. Ludlum, *Early American Winters, 1604-1820* (Boston, 1966), 160-62.

destroyed his pumpkins and peas, and the dry spell in the spring limited his corn harvest to about 1,000 bushels.<sup>47</sup>

His physical ailments also continued to bother him. Fatio wrote on March 12, 1801: "I propose to be in town some days next week if my Rupture permits me to travel."<sup>48</sup> In spite of declining health, he remained the patriarch of the family and continued to oversee his plantations for eleven more years. This responsibility may be better understood in light of the information given in his 1801 Census Return. It lists eighteen white members of the family, one free mulatto, four free Negroes, and eighty-six slaves, totaling 109 "souls" in his care. In addition, he had fifty-eight head of cattle, fourteen horses, 150 sheep, and sixty pigs. He owned five houses in St. Augustine, two houses in the country, two store houses, five work sheds, two horse barns, and twenty-seven cabins for the Negroes, a total of forty-three buildings to be maintained.<sup>49</sup>

Fatio was nearly eighty-seven years old when he died in 1811. His wife died a year before him, but he was refused burial beside her in the church graveyard in St. Augustine because he never converted to Catholicism.<sup>50</sup> His grave is now lost among the tall trees covering what was his beloved plantation, New Switzerland.

The following year, during the Insurrection of 1812, the other members of his family barely escaped with their lives when the rebels and Indians plundered the plantation.<sup>51</sup> They burned the house and its contents, including Fatio's fine library of some 1,200 volumes. They also burned the fences and more than 100,000 feet of lumber. They killed the livestock— sixty head of cattle, 106 head of sheep, and fifty pigs. What they did not burn or kill, they stole. Losses included twenty-one Negroes, six teams of oxen, five horses, a large boat, carpentry tools, blacksmith tools, a cotton gin, two stills, a telescope, and a microscope. The losses amounted to 34,841 pesos.<sup>52</sup>

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47. Fatio to McQueen, March 12, 1801, EFP, reel 55, bundle 136 F 11.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Census Return of February 27, 1801, *ibid.*

50. O'Reilly to Estrada, July 15, 1811, EFP, reel 38, bundle 100 I 8.

51. S. L'Engle, *Notes of my Family*, 29-30; G. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, I, 52, 80.

52. Francis Philip Fatio, Jr., 1817 Inventory of Losses, EFP, reel 174, bundle 385.

Several years later, another house was built at New Switzerland and cultivation was begun again. But other disasters were not long in coming. The extensive orange groves with some 3,000 trees were destroyed by frost in 1835.<sup>53</sup> The Indians plundered the plantation in January 1836 during the Second Seminole War. Once more the house was burned; it was never to be built again.<sup>54</sup>

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53. G. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, II, 17.

54. *Ibid.*