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JOHN ELLIS, KING'S AGENT, AND WEST FLORIDA

by JULIUS GRONER AND ROBERT R. REA

IN the short though not uneventful life of the British colony of West Florida, major figures came and went with disruptive frequency. Three royal governors and two lieutenant governors headed the resident administration of the colony in eighteen years, but all of them enjoyed the administrative stability provided in London by the royal agent for West Florida, John Ellis. For a dozen years this distinguished scientist and modest bureaucrat presided over the parliamentary grant upon which West Florida depended and disbursed its funds in such a judicious manner as to restrain gubernatorial fiscal exuberance, maintain necessary public functions, and satisfy probing Treasury scrutiny at the end of his service. Only recently have historians grudgingly admitted the importance of such men and their work, and only recently has the scope of John Ellis's career been thoroughly investigated.¹ A clarification of certain details of his life and a demonstration of his intimate connection with the affairs of West Florida will correct the record and add new dimensions to the colonial scene.

Victory over France and Spain in Canada and in the Caribbean enabled Britain to secure Florida and the eastern Gulf coast by the Peace of Paris. During the summer of 1763, the Board of Trade and the southern secretary agreed that "the great Tract of Sea Coast from St. Augustine, round Cape Florida, along the Gulph of Mexico, to the Mouth of the Missis-

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1. Julius Groner, "Some Aspects of the Life and Work of John Ellis, King's Agent for West Florida, 1763 to 1776" (Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1987). Other studies include Robert R. Rea, "The King's Agent for British West Florida," *Alabama Review* 16 (April 1963), 141-53; Roy A. Rauschenberg, "John Ellis, F.R.S.: Eighteenth Century Naturalist and Royal Agent to West Florida," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 32 (March 1978), 149-64; and "John Ellis, Royal Agent for West Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 62 (July 1983), 1-24.

issippi makes it . . . indispensably necessary that this Country should be divided into two distinct Governments." Hence East and West Florida were created by royal proclamation on October 7, 1763, and their capitals established at St. Augustine and Pensacola.²

West Florida, a colony whose governor and other officers were appointed by the crown, enjoyed the support of annual parliamentary grants which specifically provided funds for salaries, Indian presents, and the contingencies of various public services. Such aid was clearly necessary for the establishment and survival of an infant colony and was in keeping with developing imperial policy. Annual appropriations ranged between £3,900 and £7,200 through the years; monies were disbursed by the king's agent according to the practices of the Treasury and on the advice of the Board of Trade and eventually the colonial secretary. The first agent, John Ellis, was appointed on April 2, 1764.³

At the time he entered upon American business, John Ellis was a leading figure in the international community of scientists. His personal life, however, has remained obscure, the details frequently in error. Careful evaluation of the evidence establishes with certainty that Ellis was born not later than 1710 or 1711. His father, also a John Ellis, was a "Gentleman" who resided in Hoxton, a northern suburb of London, in 1724. The absence of parish birth or baptismal entries for the son suggests, but does not prove, that he was born elsewhere. In January 1724/25, young Ellis was apprenticed to Edward Harraden, A "Citizen and Clothworker of London," for a period of seven years and upon payment of a £20 fee. His apprenticeship ended in 1731, and within a year he was in business for himself in Lawrence Lane in the parish of St. Lawrence Jewry. On February 5, 1733/34 he was made Free of the Clothworkers' Company. Under the name of John Ellis & Co., he soon expanded his activity to the point that he occupied two houses in the parish of St. Lawrence Jewry, where he paid poor rates. During the next forty years

2. The standard works are Cecil Johnson, *British West Florida, 1763-1783* (New Haven, 1943; reprint ed., Hamden, CT, 1971), and Clinton N. Howard, *The British Development of West Florida, 1763-1769* (Berkeley, 1947).

3. Johnson, *British West Florida*, 97-98, 223-25.

Ellis was involved in numerous business ventures in the cloth trade.⁴

In February 1754, Ellis took as his wife Carolina Elizabeth Peers of Walthamstow, Essex. Mrs. Ellis, who was about fifteen years younger than her husband, was the granddaughter of the prominent London businessman, Sir Charles Peers, from whom she inherited £1,500 dower money. It was a good marriage. A daughter, Martha, was born within the year, but premature delivery of twins in 1758 proved fatal to the mother and infant girls.⁵ The bereaved and grieving father wrote to Governor Henry Ellis in Georgia, "If I was disengaged from the World, I would certainly go over to your country."⁶ Botanical and other scientific pursuits would fill the void in his life until America came to John Ellis. The agent's later years were well-occupied by his mercantile ventures, lobbying for the Irish Linen Board, for which he was agent in London, and the meticulous, wide-ranging endeavors in the fields of botany, zoology, and microscopy upon which his greatest fame rests. His health and eyesight deteriorated in his later years, and he died at his home in Hampstead on Saturday, October 5, 1776.⁷

4. Indenture, Corporation of London Record Office, CFI/549, February 1733; Tithes and Poor Rate Books, St. Lawrence Jewry, Guildhall Library, London, MSS 2518/12,22, 2519/2; Parish Registers, St. Leonard, Shoreditch; Records of the Clothworkers' Company, London. The legal requirements for Ellis's advancement in the guild and as a London businessman preclude the birth date of 1714 advanced by Rauschenberg, "John Ellis, Royal Agent for West Florida," 1. Also see Groner, "Some Aspects of the Life and Work of John Ellis," 9-17. Rauschenberg considered it probable that Ellis was born in Ireland; as no specific evidence has been discovered, that question is still open.
5. Bishop of London's Marriage Allegations, Guildhall MS 10091/94; Parish Registry, St. Mildred Poultry, Guildhall MS 4429/2; "The Register of St. Lawrence Jewry and St. Mary Magdalen Milk Street London, 1677-1812," Harleian Society *Publications* 71 (1941), 63, 238, 641.
6. John Ellis to Henry Ellis, September 20, 1758, Ellis MSS, Library of the Linnaean Society, London.
7. The oft-cited date of October 15 is proven wrong by obituary notices in *London Chronicle*, October 5-8, 1776, and *Lloyd's Evening Post*, October 4-7, 1776. Groner, "Some Aspects of the Life and Work of John Ellis," 37-39. Rauschenberg's date of October 18, in "John Ellis, Royal Agent for West Florida," 24, is clearly in error. The *Annual Register* (1776), entry cited actually gives the date of September 18; the obituary notice in *Gentlemen's Magazine* 46 (October 1776), 483, carries the correct date of October 5. The final audit of Ellis's accounts which mentions October 15 as "the day of his Decease," was compiled ten years after his death and appears intended simply to cover the month of September 15-October 15 for book-keeping purposes. London, Public Record Office, AO 1/1262.

As with so many appointments to lower level posts in the incipient civil service of the eighteenth-century British empire, John Ellis's nomination owed much to personal connections and favor in high places. Ellis's acknowledged patron was Robert Henley, earl of Northington and Lord Chancellor of England. To a correspondent Ellis happily confided, "Fortune has smil'd and My Good Lord Northington, the present Chancellor, has got me the Agency of West Florida and has taken me under his protection."⁸ Northington was a pliable lawyer and an agile politician. He was also an enthusiastic amateur gardener who employed Ellis in the selection and cultivation of new plants at his estate, The Grange. "I spend a good deal of my time with him in the Country," said Ellis, "and am often a visitor of his plantations there by his order when he himself is employed in the publick Service in London."⁹

Whatever Northington's role, other men were closer to the center of imperial planning and better placed to advance the interests of their friends. The key figure in determining colonial policy with regard to the new American colonies was the secretary of state for the Southern Department, the earl of Egremont, and his chief advisor was Henry Ellis, a gentleman of considerable means, sufficient standing in scientific circles to be a Fellow of the Royal Society, and governor of Georgia from 1757 to 1760. John and Henry Ellis do not appear to have been related, though they have sometimes been thought to be cousins. Their correspondence suggests only a long friendship based upon mutual scientific interests but strong enough to move the governor to concern himself with the welfare of John Ellis.¹⁰) Governor Ellis's closest associate in Georgia was William Knox, an ambitious hanger-on who was greatly interested in the future of Florida. Both men were in London in 1763, deeply involved in drafting the proposals that culminated in the creation of the two Floridas. As early as June 1763, Knox was promised the position of royal agent for East Florida by Egremont, doubtless at Henry Ellis's suggestion, and it is likely that John Ellis received assurances of the West Florida agency about the same time and

8. Spencer Savage, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of the Linnaean Society of London, Part IV* (London, 1949), 61.

9. John Ellis to Thomas Fitzhugh, November 28, 1764, Ellis MSS.

10. Henry Ellis to William Knox, August 7, 1770, Knox Papers, I, 49.

through the same connection.¹¹ Egremont's death in August raised fears in both William Knox and John Ellis that the promises he had made would not be honored posthumously, but the ensuing changes in the ministry probably strengthened Ellis's position. In September, another of his noble horticultural friends, the earl of Hillsborough, became president of the Board of Trade and gave his support to Ellis's appointment. The formalities of creating the colony and designating its officials would take some time, but Hillsborough's word was good, and Ellis's warrant was duly sealed in the spring of 1764.¹² It was no coincidence that Governor Henry Ellis signed as surety for the £1,500 bond required of John Ellis when he took up his new employment. In 1770, when Knox became an under-secretary at the Colonial Office, Henry Ellis particularly recommended "my old rough, but honest friend, Mr. Ellis" to Knox, and it was to Knox that he wrote for advice regarding the agent's bond when he learned of the death of his "old friend" in 1776. Henry Ellis certainly sponsored John's appointment and was delighted to find that in doing so he literally trod a garden path to success.¹³

The duties that John Ellis assumed in the spring of 1764 were of importance to the province of West Florida. Money voted by Parliament was made available to the agent through the Treasury. On May 22, shortly after assuming his post, Ellis received a total of £8,200 with which to meet charges dating back to June 24, 1763, the beginning of the fiscal year. The salaries of colonial officials had top priority, from Governor George Johnstone's £1,200 down to Assistant Surveyor Clark Durnford's £30, and including the agent's own salary of £200. Indian presents worth £1,180 had already been purchased against the West Florida account, as had "church furniture" for both Pensacola and Mobile. The agent had also to pay a number of fees for the privilege of doing government business; these amounted to £153 for his first year.¹⁴ Such perquisites were

11. Leland J. Bellot, *William Knox: The Life & Thought of an Eighteenth-century Imperialist* (Austin, 1977), 36, 39-46, 49, 51, 55-57; Jack M. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln, 1961), 56-57.

12. Rea, "The King's Agent for British West Florida," 145.

13. Henry Ellis to Knox, November 29, 1776, Knox Papers, II, 67.

14. AO 1/1262.

required for services rendered by the Treasury, the Board of Trade, the auditor of the Receipt of the Exchequer, the Sign Manual, the Tellers, the Pells, and the clerk of the Exitus. Charges against the 1763-1764 grant appeared sporadically during the next two years so that it was February 18, 1766, before Ellis could balance the books for his first short year in office.¹⁵

Like other royal agents in the new colonies, Ellis sought advice from the Treasury and the Board of Trade and was subject to their instructions. He disbursed funds according to the terms of the parliamentary appropriation and upon the presentation of drafts against those monies from authorized persons. He was responsible for the propriety and legality of all such expenditures, and his records were subject to auditing by the Exchequer.¹⁶ The evidence provided by those audits casts fresh light upon the affairs of the colony.

Complications arose when vouchers were missing and when colonial officials attempted to draw funds in excess of those allowed or for purposes not covered by the terms of the appropriation. Ellis had then to consult with officials at the Treasury and the Board of Trade. Upon such occasions Ellis neither paid nor refused payment of (dishonored) colonial drafts pending the outcome of consultation. Ellis's relations with the Board of Trade, over which Hillsborough presided from 1763 to 1765, and as colonial secretary from 1768 to 1772, and where William Knox was under-secretary after 1770, appear to have been smooth. The Treasury, on the other hand, could be difficult. Burdened by tradition, an antiquated system of bookkeeping, and a small but well-entrenched staff, the Treasury moved at its own sedate pace. The agent, who should have had access to thousands of pounds at the Treasury, might unexpectedly find his account void of funds with which to meet colonial demands. The situation was explicitly set forth by Ellis in a memorial of June 12, 1770, to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury: "That the sum of four Thousand eight hundred Pounds was granted in the last Sessions of Parliament upon Account of defraying the charges of the Civil Establishment of his Majesty's Colony of West Florida and other incidental Expences attending

15. Ellis's accounts for 1763-1765 are printed in Howard, *British Development*, 119-21.

16. Dora Mae Clark, *The Rise of the British Treasury: Colonial Administration in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1960), 98.

the same from the 24 of June 1769 to the 24 of June 1770. That your Memorialist has had several bills of Exchange drawn on him for the said service, and is in daily expectation of more. And therefore prays your Lordships Direction for the issuing to him the said sum of £4800 without the deduction of six pence in the pound for the Civil List as the sum granted in the former year was issued."¹⁷

Ellis performed the work of king's agent from chambers at No. 5, Coney Court, Gray's Inn, where he lived "like a Monk in his Cell." At the same time he was occupied with many scientific inquiries, business interests, and lobbying on behalf of the Irish Linen Board.¹⁸ The sheer mass of his scientific publications alone would lead to the conclusion that all else must have been fairly routine, but if the work of the agency could usually be fitted into his other activities, it could, at times, interfere significantly. To his Scottish correspondent, Dr. David Skene, he wrote in 1766, "I intend to write to you soon again . . . being at present very busy about my Agency affairs."¹⁹ Later in the year he apologized to Skene, "I have not time to get another [drawing of a coral] finish'd as I am very busy . . . about West Florida."²⁰ In 1767 he complained, "I have had so much to do about Linen and West Florida that I have wrote but one letter. . . on Natural History."²¹ That letter, addressed to Linnaeus and read before the Royal Society on July 9, 1767, definitively established the animal nature of the genus *Corallina* and won for Ellis the Copley medal.²²

Irregularities in the administration of West Florida were the cause of many of Ellis's problems. Among these was the case of Attorney General Edmund Rush Wegg, who was suspended by Governor Johnstone "upon the general Charges of Negligence and Incapacity" from 1765 to 1768.²³ Wegg returned to London and pleaded his case successfully, but while he was suspended

17. London, Public Record Office, T 1/478.

18. Rea, "The King's Agent for British West Florida," 144.

19. John Ellis to David Skene, July 14, 1766, David Skene MSS 38/100-04, King's College Library, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

20. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1766.

21. *Ibid.*, July 10, 1767.

22. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1767; Royal Society of Great Britain, *Philosophical Transactions* 57 (1768), 404-20.

23. Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1763-1766, English Dominion*, 10 vols. (Nashville, 1911), I, 532-33.

and absent from his post, his salary was paid to the governor's friend, Arthur Gordon.²⁴ More fortunate was James McPherson, the provincial secretary, clerk of the council, and registrar— and the most notorious of the colony's absentees. McPherson spent barely a year at Pensacola before returning to England; nevertheless, his £200 a year was regularly paid by Ellis.²⁵

Ellis's early anticipation that West Florida would be a fount of botanical discoveries never materialized. He "heard from no people of science" in the colony, and one shipment of specimens was lost at sea.²⁶ He rather unjustly blamed George Johnstone, "a bad governor, who is recalled," and hoped for better success under Johnstone's successor, Montfort Browne, "who seems to have some taste" for natural history.²⁷ Chief Justice William Clifton dispatched to Ellis "many curious new Species of plants," including two specimens of *Illicium anisatum* of which Ellis noted, "From his account of its escaping the severe frosts that now & then happen there it may prove an agreeable acquisition to the lovers of Gardening."²⁸ At the other end of the colonial hierarchy was schoolmaster John Firby, who forwarded to Lord Hillsborough and to the royal gardens at Kew, packages containing seeds of the star anise and a swamp magnolia apple. He took care to inform the king's agent of his botanical offerings.²⁹ As new men went out to govern West Florida, they found it useful to consult with the agent and politic to recognize his insatiable scientific curiosity. Although the sudden death of Governor John Eliot frustrated Ellis's high expectations, the appointment of the "curious and intelligent" Elias Durnford as lieutenant governor was most fruitful, and Governor Peter Chester forwarded the botanist's interests vigorously.³⁰

24. AO 1/1262.

25. Ibid.

26. John Ellis to Linnaeus, July 19, 1765, in *A Selection of the Correspondence of Linnaeus and Other Naturalists*, 2 vols., James E. Smith, ed. (London, 1821; reprint ed., New York, 1978), I, 168.

27. John Ellis to Linnaeus, August 26, 1767, September 10, 1765, in Smith, *Correspondence of Linnaeus*, I, 211, 173.

28. Spencer Savage, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of the Linnaean Society of London, Part IV* (London, 1948), 74.

29. John Firby to John Ellis, September 26, 1770, Ellis MSS.

30. John Ellis to the Duchess of Norfolk, August 7, 1769; Alexander Garden to John Ellis, January 26, 1771, in Smith, *Correspondence of Linnaeus*, I, 587; II, 75.

Save for the leading figures in the colony, few officials received salaries sufficient to provide a decent living in the face of inflation on the frontier of empire. At gubernatorial suggestion, and with the approval of the colonial secretary in London, John Ellis's accounts reflect a steady increase of pluralities and allowances for house rent. The Reverend William Gordon, minister at Mobile, annually received £100 for his spiritual services, £25 for teaching school, £25 for acting as curate at Pensacola, and £8 for housing.³¹ No one surpassed Governor Peter Chester's secretary, Philip Livingston, when it came to amassing offices, fees, and perquisites, but few names appeared in the agent's books more often than that of Elias Durnford, surveyor and lieutenant governor.³² Durnford was a hard worker, however, and, in addition to his salary of £120, he unquestionably earned the £586 he was paid "in consideration of his labour and expense in making surveys of several parts of West Florida between the years 1765 and 1774."³³ His efforts were also reflected in the £52 charged "for making sundry plans of the rivers Mississippi, Amit and Comit, and hire of a barge and canoe, for provisions given to sundry settlers, etc. in the year 1772."³⁴ When Durnford began the construction of Governor Chester's palatial new residence in Pensacola, his drafts reached Ellis with alarming frequency, but to far less point.

Certainly one of the happiest charges on Ellis's records was the salary of Bernard Romans, provincial botanist by recommendation of Governor Chester. "For his care and skill in the collection of rare and useful productions in Physick and Botany," Romans received £50 in 1773 and 1774.³⁵ Ellis's accounts also show an additional payment to Romans "for drawing a General Map of the Province and for Surveying and finishing a plan of certain lands in West Florida as by his receipts £46.12.4 1/2."³⁶ Romans recognized that the botanist-agent was a sympathetic paymaster. In 1774 he lamented to Ellis, "I lead a very neglected Life and am very hard put to it to maintain

31. AO 1/1262.

32. Johnson, *British West Florida*, 228.

33. AO 1/1262.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

myself & as I have no friend in Europe to whom to apply, I once more take the freedom to address you on that head."³⁷ Friendship with Ellis might have survived the outbreak of the American Revolution, but as Romans opted for the patriot side, his salary did not.

Although Ellis once described him as "a particular friend," no one caused the agent more trouble than peripatetic Lieutenant Governor Montfort Browne, who yearned to see and then to develop the rich lands along the Mississippi River.³⁸ Browne thought it only reasonable that a governor should be familiar with all parts of his province, but he was aware that his inflated travel expenses might not be reimbursable. Anticipating difficulties, Browne drew two drafts on Ellis in which he inserted the phrase, "to be paid as the Earl of Hillsborough shall direct."³⁹ At the same time he requested the agent to pay the drafts out of his salary, if necessary, in order to avoid their being dishonored by Ellis and subsequently protested by whomever presented them for payment. Ellis sought advice from Hillsborough on the matter, and the latter's answer was succinct: "There is no fund for such expenses"; he refused to approve payment. Accordingly, Ellis charged the drafts against Browne's salary, made payment, and reported the incident to both the American secretary and the Treasury.⁴⁰

Protested bills could wander endlessly between the Treasury, the American secretariat, and the West Florida agent. In December 1769 Browne presented a draft for Indian presents worth £127.7.0 on behalf of himself and Elias Durnford. Ellis approved Durnford's share of the bill, but in December 1771 he was still trying to get Browne's portion sorted out between the Treasury and the American secretary who refused to take notice of it. Browne also tried to transfer £150 out of Ellis's account in favor of his friend Leonard B. Westrupp, deputy superintendent for Indian Affairs. Hillsborough rejected the claim as properly falling upon John Stuart's Indian Department, and Ellis advised that it should have been drawn upon the

37. Bernard Romans to John Ellis, May 14, 1774, Ellis MSS. See also John D. Ware, "The Bernard Romans-John Ellis Letters, 1772-1774," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 52 (July 1973), 51-61.

38. John Ellis to Linnaeus, July 19, 1765, in Smith, *Correspondence of Linnaeus*, I, 167-68.

39. T 1/484.

40. *Ibid.*

Treasury rather than the West Florida account. "Having no money in his hands for that service," the agent also turned to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury for advice regarding £315 Browne drew for a year's maintenance of the provincial sloop.⁴¹ Protested bills could be expensive; Browne paid £72.13.7 for damages resulting from just one mistake. In spite of being recalled from Pensacola in considerable disgrace and with grave charges of maladministration hanging over his head, Browne succeeded in making the government pay for his misdeeds. Ellis's account shows £988.9.11 paid to the lieutenant governor as compensation for the prosecutions and damages he had sustained. In the final analysis, Browne came out of a financial quagmire with a valid claim of £287.10.2 against the agent's funds. He graciously knocked off the odd £87 "in compliment to Mr. Ellis" and settled for £200.⁴²

John Ellis's audit records disclose a number of details of life in West Florida that are not to be found elsewhere. The sums involved (here rounded off) are seldom great, but the activities they reflect are important. Indian gifts were large, starting with whole shipments of presents: £328 on the *Peggy*, Captain Alexander, in 1773; £425 aboard the *Success*, Captain Cheesman, the following year.⁴³ Other Indian presents were drawn from the supplies of local storekeepers like Alexander McCullagh and Patrick Strachan. Between 1772 and 1776, John Stephenson received £180 for food given to visiting Indians. In three years John Southwell provided bread worth £34 to Indians and prisoners. William Block coopered powder kegs, Catherine Battison and Leonard Wisner repaired guns for the Indians—MS. Battison being one of the few identifiable businesswomen of Pensacola. John Simpson, Indian interpreter, who aired the Indians' powder and provided them with corn and pork, received five shillings a day and £10 annual house rent.⁴⁴ It is a little incongruous that he also supported several women and children whose husbands and fathers had been murdered by Indians. Presumably his charity had no connection with the forty gallons of rum, valued at £8, purchased by Charles Stuart for the Arkansas Indians.⁴⁵

41. T 1/493.

42. *Ibid.*

43. AO 1/1262.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

Colonial Pensacola had its share of indigents. Between 1774 and 1776 over £76 was spent on food for "several poor Objects of Charity." Not all survived. Between 1769 and 1775, John Amer was paid £17 for making coffins for deceased paupers. The £6.6 paid to Alexander Hardie for the passage of Mary Magee and four children from East Florida may also represent an act of public charity.⁴⁶

Law and order came at a high price on the frontier. Alexander McCullagh, deputy provost marshal, had a salary of only £30 a year, but for his various services he averaged £140 more, not counting rent for the jail at Mobile at £48. Security in that jail required a fence which Simon McCormack built for £27. As jailkeeper at Mobile, McCullagh's salary was £18, nicely augmented by the £30 paid to him as gaoler at Pensacola. The Pensacola jail was long a cause of dispute among all involved, inmates as well as officers of the law. William Aird built a new jail for £262, but his charge was not allowed. Catherine Battison did, however, get £3.9.9 1/2 for doing the ironwork. George Urquhart and John Blommart received £68 a year for maintaining prisoners and guarding the jail.⁴⁷

The salaries of legal officials and court personnel fell upon Ellis's account. Chief Justice Clifton received £500 and Attorney General Wegg £150 a year (the attorney general's fees averaged another £80 annually). Alexander McPherson and John Allen Martin, successively both clerks of the Crown and clerks of the Pleas, had salaries of £30 and £20 for the respective offices. The cryer of the Court of Common Pleas, John Anderson, got £10. John Allen Martin and Michael Grant, coroners, were paid by the body—on average £16 a year—although on one occasion Martin received £4 for presiding at a single inquest.⁴⁸

Because the courts met only at Pensacola, crown prosecution was expensive. John Reilly earned £72 between 1772 and 1776, for bringing prisoners from several parts of the colony to Pensacola. The firm of Falconer & Co. was paid £28 for transporting one prisoner, a witness, and a constable aboard the sloop *Elizabeth* from Manchac to Pensacola. The expenses of John Royal and others were paid in the amount of £64 "for attending as Evidence in several causes." The requirements of the courts

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. AO 3/119.

also included the purchase of six sets of Burn's *Justice*, an appropriate reference work for the province's part-time judicial officers, and a set of the *Statutes at Large* for the chief justice.⁴⁹

Although Pensacola and Mobile were linked naturally by the sea, the utility of inland communication was obvious. Indian trails had to be turned into proper roads, and military considerations led to the employment of soldiers as road gangs. River crossings posed special problems, and Ellis's accounts disclose that John Murray maintained the ferry at the Perdido River crossing. For the fiscal year 1773-1774 he was paid £11.13.4, a sum suggesting that he was compensated according to the amount of traffic he carried. Bridges were built across the Fish River and Grand Bayou, and for their construction and maintenance Charles Parent received £18.3.4 for the years 1770-1774. A modest £7 went to William Marshal for clearing and draining the swamp behind Pensacola. For "making a new bridge over the run at the bottom of Charlotte Street" and other carpentry, Andrew Allsopp was allowed £27. Mr. Allsopp was a particularly useful public figure. In addition to taking responsibility for the upkeep of Pensacola's fire-engine for at least five years, he functioned as the town's fire chief and led the volunteer fire brigade into action when the occasion demanded.⁵⁰

It is evident from John Ellis's accounts that the British government contributed most significantly to the well-being of its Gulf coast colony, and in the elderly scientist enjoyed the services of a faithful and attentive servant. During a near-fatal illness in 1772, he was forced to rely upon the assistance of a Mr. Irving, and when his sight failed he employed an amanuensis.⁵¹ If his salary of £200 a year was generous, it was earned honestly and without those perks that oiled so much of the eighteenth-century bureaucracy— save as Ellis once suggested, "All the pay I demand from the Province is to be in rare plants and seeds."⁵² More than £74,000 was approved for payment by him in twelve

49. AO 1/1262.

50. *Ibid.*

51. David Blissett to Rev. Talbot, August 27, 1772, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fourteenth Report, The Manuscripts of the Earl of Dartmouth* (London, 1895), II, 90.

52. John Ellis to Hillsborough, n.d., Ellis MSS. This letter has been incorrectly dated 1763; it should be dated 1769, for it refers to newly-appointed lieutenant governor Elias Durnford, who was then in London consulting with Ellis.

years, and his record was spotless. The accuracy and competency of his work was certified by two official audits; the first, covering the years 1763 to 1772, was approved at the Treasury on July 6, 1774. The second audit was occasioned by John Ellis's death, October 5, 1776. His accounts were submitted to the Treasury by his daughter and administratrix, Mrs. Martha Watt, the books being closed as of September 15, 1776, and turned over to his successor, Christopher Nesham, according to Treasury instructions dated November 7. The transfer of control of funds to the new agent, the onset of the American Revolution, the loss of the colony of West Florida to Spain, and post-war political changes in England delayed approval of Ellis's accounts until July 19, 1786, when the younger William Pitt, as chancellor of the Exchequer, set his name to the final audit. That same year Pitt's budget included the sum of £1,816.15.7 3/4 in payment of arrears to the representatives of the late John Ellis, agent for West Florida.⁵³

53. *Annual Register* (1786), 250.