

1987

## Demography and the Political Destiny of Florida during the Second Spanish Period

Abel Poitrineau



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Poitrineau, Abel (1987) "Demography and the Political Destiny of Florida during the Second Spanish Period," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 66: No. 4, Article 6.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol66/iss4/6>

## **DEMOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICAL DESTINY OF FLORIDA DURING THE SECOND SPANISH PERIOD**

by ABEL POITRINEAU

**T**HE twenty-year period of British sovereignty of the Floridas came to an end September 3, 1783, when the treaty concluding the American Revolution was signed at Versailles, France. The Treaty of Paris, as it was known, gave the Spanish crown control of a large portion of North America. Spain retained sovereignty over the Louisiana Territory, and the Spanish flag once more flew over the Floridas as it had from 1565 to 1763. However, the restoration of Spanish rule in the Floridas, so important for the control of the Bahama Channel, was at best precarious. Spain's military weakness and the financial difficulties of the Viceroyalty of Mexico loosened the mother country's heretofore iron control. Castillian interests had begun their decline, and throughout the Western Hemisphere the seeds of the independence movement in Latin American history were beginning to ripen.

The second Spanish period in Florida history (1783-1819) can be examined in demographic terms. No longer does one have to be dependent only on the letters of kings and government officials. With the availability of historical statistics, the people can speak for themselves about where and how they lived and by what means they were able to sustain themselves. Population shifts can also be catalogued and explained. For example, although East Florida had only a few thousand people at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the population was neither ethnically nor culturally homogeneous. Pressure was being exerted along the Florida frontier by American planters, breeders, and merchants coming from Alabama, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Virginia in search of good land. They were disturbing the countryside and contributing to a Negro slave prob-

---

Abel Poitrineau is professor of Modern History, Université de Clermont-Ferrand II, France, and former director, Institut d'Etudes du Massif Central.

lem.<sup>1</sup> It is the data of this confrontation between the Anglo-American and the Spanish colonial systems that this study will examine.

Under the terms of the 1783 treaty, Patrick Tonyn, the English governor, handed over East Florida to Don Vincente de Zéspedes on July 12, 1784.<sup>2</sup> The following year a census was compiled which listed 654 heads of households. Of this number, 378 revealed their intentions to use the option provided by the 1783 treaty; they would re-settle on English territory elsewhere. Some forty-nine heads of households were undecided as to whether they would remain or emigrate. The 654 families, if one takes into account the imbalance of the sexes which characterized most of the colonial societies at that time, probably totaled about 2,000 white people.<sup>3</sup> There were only a few black slaves to be added to the population count. The Minorcans, who lived in and around St. Augustine, formed the only relatively large and homogeneous bloc within this varied and widely-scattered population. Survivors of the odyssey of the Andrew Turnbull settlement at New Smyrna in 1768, they were a mixed lot. Many were from the Mediterranean island of Minorca, but there were also Corsicans, some Italians from Libourne and Naples, and a few Greeks.<sup>4</sup> The Minorcans worked as stone masons, bakers, rope makers, carpenters, roofers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and a few were shopkeepers. Some worked a few acres of land which they rented or owned outright in the immediate vicinity of St. Augustine. Others were fishermen, sailors, or owners of small vessels employed mainly in the coastal trade. Seventy Negro slaves were owned by Minorcans; four of these were rented to a third party. The Minorcans were thus engaged in various forms of manual labor common to the lower

- 
1. Thomas P. Abernathy, "Florida and the Spanish Frontier, 1811-1819," *The Americanization of the Gulf Coast, 1803-1850*, Lucius F. Ellsworth, ed. (Pensacola, 1972), 88-120.
  2. Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida, 1784-1790* (Miami, 1963), 33.
  3. Census returns, 1784-1814, reel 148, bundle 323A, East Florida Papers (hereafter cited as EFP), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, microfilm copies in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.
  4. Jane Quinn, *Minorcans in Florida: Their History and Heritage* (St. Augustine, 1963), 88-89; Kenneth H. Beeson, Jr., "Fromajadas and Indigo: The Minorcan Colony in Florida" (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1960), 32.

middle classes and did not play an active social or economic role in the government of the colony. Their land holdings were modest; they worked only 1,058 acres, most of it rented. Only three members of this group appeared even moderately wealthy. One, a native of Corsica, was a skin trader and owned three slaves, two horses, and six acres of land. He also held a half-interest in a sloop. Another, a Frenchman who described himself as a carpenter and a farmer, worked 130 acres with seven slaves and owned some forty horses, which he used as breeding stock. A third, a Minorcan absentee landowner, had bequeathed his 500 acres, all with registered titles, to his widow. After his death, she managed the plantation with the help of six slaves and three horses.<sup>5</sup>

Besides this clearly defined and, it seems, culturally welded group, there were a handful of English Catholics (seventeen heads of families) and a few of mixed origin who were not yet Catholics but who had declared their intention to convert. There were also seventy-one heads of families who pledged their obedience to the king of Spain but would not convert to Roman Catholicism. None of the latter were driven from the colony or punished before an ecclesiastical court. Four Frenchmen remained in East Florida. One was Don Santiago del Aroque (in French, Jacques Delaroque), a doctor living in St. Augustine with a family of seven but without any horses or slaves.<sup>6</sup>

The census for 1783 and for 1784 shows that while the East Florida population was small, there was a wide diversity among the community. There were also some strange groupings into "unconventional" families. The Minorcan families tended to conform closely to the classic European model. East Florida at the beginning of Governor Zéspedes's administration was a veritable racial melting pot. Among the notables— those who had the privilege of using the title of Don or Doña because of their economic status— were natives of Scotland, England, Ireland, Switzerland, France, Turkey, and the United States (the Carolinas, Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia). The Minorcan population represented persons from Minorca and the Balearic Islands, Italy, Corsica, Greece, France, Ireland, and Spain. There

---

5. EFP, reel 148, bundle 323A.

6. *Ibid.*

were also Minorcans born in Florida. Listed on the census were also natives of Germany, Prussia, Saxony, Portugal, and Malta.<sup>7</sup>

Of the 632 "heads of fires" (heads of households) who are listed in the 1784 census, only 220, or fewer than thirty-five percent, lived outside St. Augustine. These included several important colonial personalities. One was Francisco Xavier Sánchez, a Roman Catholic, who declared that he "has always been and remains content under the law of his rightful king, the Spanish monarch, and intends to remain in the province in the future."<sup>8</sup> Sánchez was a bachelor although he had seven illegitimate children, probably mulattoes. He lived about two and one-half miles from St. Augustine along the road to San Juan. Sanchez owned a 1,000-acre farm which he had obtained during the English period, some forty horses, 800-900 head of cattle, and thirty-four slaves. He employed an English overseer.<sup>9</sup> French-born Joseph Terris, a former steward of Governor Tonym, also declared his intention to remain under the protection of the Spanish flag. A widower, he had lived in Florida for seventeen years. With the assistance of his son and seven slaves, he worked a farm of 100 acres divided into two plots, one in the vicinity of St. Augustine and the other on the St. Johns River. He was also known as a horse breeder and as a skilled carpenter.<sup>10</sup>

There was also a Polish Jew, David Moses, whose main enterprise was a leather and skin store on Charlotte Street in St. Augustine. He was assisted by a white clerk and two slaves whom he rented from their owner. Moses, obviously fearing his treatment by the Spanish authorities, intended to migrate to British territory. Brian Langley, a native of North Carolina, apparently felt at home in Florida, and was in the employ of the Spanish. Langley spoke Creek and Seminole, which he had learned from his association with Alexander Young in trading ventures among the Indians. He had also worked as a translator for the English. By 1783, he owned eight horses, fifteen slaves, a house with an attached shop, and 350 acres of land along the St. Johns River, about twelve miles upstream from Picolata. Langley is referred to in Spanish documents as Don Brian Langley, and was therefore a "notable."<sup>11</sup>

---

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

The average St. Augustine household for “decent persons” consisted of 2.6 people, including white domestics and white hired help. There was also a large number of women— widows, single women, or those deserted by a husband or whose spouses had been absent for a long period of time— who acted as heads of households. Among these women in St. Augustine, there were: one notable, six Minorcans, and twenty-one of various origins who made up the lower classes. There were also two women living in the interior some distance from St. Augustine. These constituted thirty households out of a total of 632. Sarah Delgell, a widow originally from Georgia, lived with her four sons on a seventy-acre farm along the banks of the St. Johns River. She owned one horse, twenty-two slaves, and a boat equipped with sails and six oars. She also declared that she planned to emigrate to British territory.<sup>12</sup>

The Spanish census also indicates a large number of Negro slaves, although an exact count is difficult. They were listed as property along with livestock, land, boats, and buildings. The notables, who were the most affluent class, were also the largest slave-owning group, possessing more than one-half the slaves in East Florida. Of the totals of 2,330 Negro slaves, 1,322 were owned by notables.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the notables who were living in St. Augustine also had plantations in the interior, which were worked by slaves under the supervision of an overseer. One notable employed 260 slaves and another, 216. Other notables were stewards of absentee proprietors, some of whom were British officials who had left Florida but still retained title to their property. The number of slaves— 2,330— listed in the census was larger than the approximately 2,000 white inhabitants in East Florida. The count of white inhabitants did not include soldiers or Spanish government agents. There were a few “free persons of color,” but the number was insignificant.<sup>14</sup>

The census provided the Spanish authorities with a rough overview of the economic-demographic situation, enabling them to take over the reins of government from the British. However, there was another power in Florida at the time, Pantón, Leslie

---

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

& Company, which owned 12,820 acres of land, consisting of nineteen plots located within sixteen miles of St. Augustine. The company also managed some 6,000 acres, the property of several British planters who had appointed the company as their representative before they departed from Florida. Panton, Leslie also held as owner or agent many houses and building lots in St. Augustine, 260 slaves, seventy-two horses, and 330 head of cattle. The company employed approximately thirty-six white men as Indian traders, some with wives and children.<sup>15</sup> The transfer of the company's operations to Pensacola during the second half of 1783 and the early months of 1784 weakened the East Florida colony, but it also removed a substantial foreign influence which could have caused some problems for the Spanish authorities in St. Augustine.<sup>16</sup>

The Spanish authorized several censuses beginning in 1784. None was entirely accurate, and the data for the inhabitants of the interior— particularly those along the northern frontier who were reluctant to have much contact with the Spanish officials— were not complete.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, these censuses provide a variety of information on the people of East Florida and their land, slaves, and other property holdings. The 1786 census provided the kind of data that would be very useful to the government tax collectors.

Households seemed to have been grouped around a head of household. An example was John Hudson, a twenty-eight year old Irishman, who described himself as both a Catholic and a planter. In his household were: Doña Maria Evans, a fifty-six year old Catholic born in America; Juan Treats [Tate], a sixteen-year old English apprentice and Catholic Sunday school pupil; Joseph Stefanopoly, a forty-year old Corsican plantation manager who was a Catholic with an absentee wife; and Duncan Noble, a twenty-nine year old Scotsman who was a stonemason by trade and a Catholic by religion. This group managed forty-four unbaptized Negro slaves, twenty-nine of whom were male.<sup>18</sup>

The 1793 census, although inadequate in several respects, reveals the stagnation of the population. It indicates that the quality

---

15. Ibid.

16. Arthur Preston Whitaker, ed., *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas* (DeLand, 1931), xxx-xxxix.

17. Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida*, 134-35.

18. EFP, reel 148, bundle 323A.

of those moving into Florida was lower than those who were leaving under the individual option allowed in the 1783 treaty.

TABLE I  
Population of East Florida in 1793

Whites: single (males, 454; females, 376); married (males, 188; females, 192); widowed (males, thirty-one; females, sixty-one). Free mulattoes: single (males, fifteen; females, two); married (males, three; females, three); widowed (males, two; females, one). Free Negroes: single (males, forty-two; females, twenty-one); married (males, twenty; females, thirteen); widowed (females, six). Mulatto slaves: single (males, thirty-three; females, twenty-two); married (males, one; females, two). Negro slaves: single (males, 909; females, 694). Soldiers: (whites and Negroes, 468). Priests: two. Total inhabitants: 3,561.<sup>19</sup>

The Spanish authorities did try to increase the homogeneity of the white population. By 1790, 366 heads of families of foreign extraction had been naturalized as subjects of the Catholic king, including fifty-one who were of French origin. This trend continued throughout the decade, and a second list of naturalized foreigners dated 1799 lists the names of 356 heads of households, twenty of whom had been born in France. The French sample shows that out of seventy-one persons who together with their families accepted Spanish nationality, fifty-six were residents in St. Augustine and all but one were Roman Catholics. The exception, Antonio Suarez, a Protestant, was married and had five children. He operated as a planter on Amelia Island where he owned fifteen slaves, three horses, and twenty head of cattle. The other ex-Frenchmen were mostly artisans or traders: five carpenters, four bakers, three painters, and tailors, rope makers, masons, coppersmiths, and coopers. There were also nine sailors, one of whom called himself a "sea-captain," a wigmaker, a doctor, and a surgeon. This group added to the ranks of the lower middle classes, along with the resident Minorcans. The majority of these seventy-one men were bachelors, although thirty-three were married, and they had a total of sixty-nine children. Apart from Jorge Arons, who

---

19. Ibid.

had settled on a plantation on the banks of the St. Marys River and employed fifty-three slaves and bred eighty-two horses and fourteen head of cattle, the members of this group owned only a few slaves. They reported a total of 210 blacks, fifty-three the property of Arons and sixty-six of a Mr. Bonnemain.<sup>20</sup>

A royal decree of April 5, 1786, pointed to the need to increase the population of East Florida. It provided for the free concession of land— four fanegas (6.36 acres) and three septimes (1.0714 miles) per each white man and one-half this area for each black man, whether slave or free. This decree did not tend to increase the size of the Spanish population, but it did encourage Anglo-Saxon immigration from the United States to East Florida.<sup>21</sup> In fact, as the second Spanish period was nearing its end the demographic statistics provided by the census of 1813 showed only a modest population increase since 1783 for the area in and around St. Augustine.<sup>22</sup>

Any series of demographic charts of the population of East Florida would not be enough to provide even a modestly detailed idea of its evolution. It is necessary to combine this series of successive static views with other extant sources.

The only Catholic parish formed in East Florida, that at St. Augustine, was first a dependency of Cuba and then, after 1795, of the new diocese of Louisiana. Even then a church building in the Spanish sense— one constructed of stone— was not ready until the end of 1797.<sup>23</sup> The church maintained parish registers listing baptisms, marriages, and burials, which provide additional information on the East Florida population. From the first notation in 1785, to September 1788, these parish registers were kept in Latin. Then, a decree of the episcopal visitor, Don Juan Mandéz de la Vega, led to the abandonment of the Latin system and the adoption of the Castillian, and entries thereafter were made in that language. The parish priest was the recorder since he also officiated at baptisms, marriages, and burials. The first was Father Thomas Hasset, a Salamanca-educated Irish priest. Father O'Reilly's signature appears on the rolls as Hasset's auxiliary. The curate, Miguel Crosby, succeeded in 1803,

20. *Ibid.*

21. Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida*, 59.

22. EFP, reel 148, bundle 323A.

23. Michael V. Gannon, *The Cross in the Sand: The Early Catholic Church in Florida, 1513-1870* (Gainesville, 1967), 104-09.

and he remained in office until February of 1821. He was replaced by Father Gomez, whose signature first appeared on the registers in 1816. On May 1, 1826, the initials of Father McCarthy appeared for the first time. He declared himself to be "cura parroco, vicario y juez ecc.o de este iglesia;" he remained in St. Augustine for only a short time. After McCarthy, the register becomes sporadic. Missionaries or passing priests administered the sacraments at irregular intervals. By 1823, a few entries had been signed by Don Jean McEnroe as "curate coadjutor." In 1827, several baptisms were celebrated by Don Miguel Portier who called himself "obispo de Oleno y vicario apostolico del estado de Alabama." The Frenchman, Edouard Magne (Eduardo Mayno) appeared for the first time after 1823, claiming the same titles as McCarthy. From 1830 to 1832, the entries were made either by Don Eduardo Mayno, Don Miguel Portier (now known as Bishop of Mobile, Alabama, and the two Floridas), Don José Bourdet (vicar general of East and West Florida), or Juan Federico as apostolic missionary.<sup>24</sup>

An incumbent curate, Don Francisco Boland, preceded Timoteo McCarthy as head of the parish, but it also appears that this clergyman never participated in writing the parish registers. At least that was what was stated in a note written by the Curate McCarthy which remarked that Boland had not registered any of the baptisms he had administered during 1824. McCarthy also wrote that he had left seven pages of the register blank so that Boland could make his entries upon his return to St. Augustine.<sup>25</sup>

After 1822, a growing lack of organization within the parish administration became evident as a result of political events in Florida. On July 10, 1821, Colonel Robert Butler, acting on the authority of the American government, officially took possession of the town of St. Augustine and the fort of San Marcos in the name of the United States of America. The church, built by the Spanish state, became the property of the American government.<sup>26</sup> Thus, if demographic research covers only the period 1784-1821 (the equivalent of one and one-half generations), there are obvious limitations to the conclusions that can be

24. Parish records of the diocese of St. Augustine, microfilm copies in the P. K. Yonge Library, reels 284I, 284J, 284K, and 284L.

25. Gannon, *Cross in the Sand*, 119-36.

26. *Ibid.*, 119-20.

drawn. Nevertheless, parish registers at St. Augustine do provide vital information.

In theory, in a Catholic community under Spanish law at the turn of the nineteenth century, one should be able to identify baptisms solely with births. In addition, baptisms of illegitimate children and foundlings seem to have been recorded throughout the period 1783-1821. However, in the second Spanish period in Florida, the records indicate numerous adult baptisms, particularly in the years up to 1800, which demonstrate that many Protestant residents of Anglo-Saxon origin were converting to Roman Catholicism. This was a decisive step since it suggests integration into the dominant society, with all of the advantages they conferred. For the demographic historian, however, these conversions introduced a new dimension into the use of basic data to interpret a demographic phenomenon. Baptismal records could no longer be related only to children.

With regard to the black population, the baptism registers are even less complete. The free colored people— whether Negroes or mulattoes resulting from the different types of possible miscegenation— were baptized because they lived in a Spanish Catholic environment. Slaves, whether pure Negro or not, were rarely given religious instruction because when a Negro became a Christian in the Spanish system, he or she acquired the same basic political rights in the eyes of the law and the Roman Catholic Church as those enjoyed by any other peon. As a consequence, a Roman Catholic slave would be worth less on the market than one still a “heathen.” Only the most devout slave-owners were willing to assume this serious economic loss. Those slaves properly admitted to the Roman Catholic Church would have the rights to religious marriage and burial. They were members of the group of Roman Catholic colored people who, although slaves, could be defended by the Church in the case of cruel or unusual treatment by their masters.

In the matter of the white population, an examination of data taken from the parish registers, not including adult baptisms, reveals a two-stage, vertical movement. The first phase consisted of a certain modest growth from about 1895 to 1809. During this short period the mean number of infant baptisms per year increased from about fifty-five to more than sixty. In the previous period, 1800-1804, the average annual number was sixty-five. In the years 1812-1822, the number of births per

year declined to 48.8. This reduction was indicative of the decline in East Florida of the Spanish or Hispanicized portion of the population.<sup>27</sup>

The birth rate underwent seasonal changes. It was at a minimum in spring and a maximum in winter. Conceptions were at a peak in May, April, and July, becoming relatively rare in September, October, and November. This roughly reflects biological regularities linked to the alternation of seasons. There were few illegitimate white children born in the period 1783 to 1800; only seven in seventeen years are listed on the baptism registers. Then, from 1801 to 1821, there was a sharp increase to a total of seventy-seven, or 6.5 percent, of the total births in the colony.<sup>28</sup> This increase does not seem to be connected to reinforcements to the military garrison, whose number remained at almost a constant level, but rather to the replacement of the first two priests—Fathers Hasset and O'Reilly—by clergy with less moral authority. Perhaps there was also a crisis of moral values when the future of the colony became even more uncertain.

Baptisms of adult colored people or Negro slaves constituted a high percentage of the sample. Out of a total of 1,585 baptisms listed in the two registers devoted to the colorados between 1785 and 1822, 141, or about 8.8 percent, related to individuals nine years old and above.<sup>29</sup>

The continual miscegenation, the result of whites and blacks living in close proximity in St. Augustine and a certain lack of racial prejudice among the Hispanics, can be traced in the pages of the registers. This was the case with the group of free Negroes and mulattoes. In the period 1786-1788, there were sixty-four colorados and sixteen Negro slaves baptized. In the period 1796-1798, the numbers were ninety-eight colorados and forty-four slaves. There were 111 baptized colorados in the period 1806-1808 and thirty-nine slave infants. The increase in the number of colored persons baptized in the course of three periods (1786-1788, 1796-1798, 1806-1808) resulted from the number of children of slaves baptized and from the number of children of free mulattoes and Negroes who were presented for the sacrament. The complex range of colorados examined from the point of view of parental status, ethnic origins of the parents,

27. Parish records, white baptisms, reel 284I.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Parish records, colored baptisms, reel 284J.

and the combination of these two parameters does not reveal any large increase in the number of people of mixed blood.<sup>30</sup>

TABLE II  
Baptized Colorado Infants, 1786-1818

Number of baptized Colorado infants: 1786-1788 (sixty-four); 1796-1798 (ninety-eight); 1806-1808 (111); 1816-1818 (ninety-nine). Negroes: father and mother slaves, 1786-1788 (sixteen), 1796-1798 (forty-four), 1806-1808 (thirty-nine), 1816-1818 (forty-seven); father and mother free, 1786-1788 (nine), 1796-1798 (five), 1806-1808 (four), 1816-1818 (ten); father slave and mother free, 1796-1798 (two); father free and mother slave, 1806-1808 (two); father ? and mother slave, 1786-1788 (twenty), 1796-1798 (three), 1806-1808 (nine), 1816-1818 (three). Mulattos: father white and mother Negro slave, 1786-1788 (two), 1796-1798 (nine), 1806-1808 (seven), 1816-1818 (six); father white and mother Negro free, 1786-1788 (two), 1796-1798 (four), 1806-1808 (three), 1816-1818 (six); father white and mother mulatto slave, 1786-1788 (one), 1796-1798 (two), 1806-1808 (two); father white and mother mulatto free, 1786-1788 (two), 1796-1798 (six), 1806-1808 (three), 1816-1818 (five); father Negro slave and mother mulatto slave, 1786-1788 (one), 1796-1798 (one); father Negro slave and mother mulatto free, 1796-1798 (one), 1806-1808 (one); father Negro free and mother mulatto slave, 1786-1788 (one), 1796-1798 (one), 1806-1808 (one); father Negro free and mother mulatto free, 1796-1798 (one), 1806-1808 (one); father mulatto and mother mulatto slave, 1796-1798 (one); father mulatto free and mother mulatto free, 1806-1808 (one), 1816-1818 (four); father mulatto free and mother Negro, 1786-1788 (one), 1796-1798 (one), 1806-1808 (two), 1816-1818 (one); father Negro and mother mulatto, 1786-1788 (one), 1796-1798 (two); mulatto totals 1786-1788 (eleven), 1796-1798 (twenty-nine), 1806-1808 (twenty-one), 1816-1818 (twenty-two).<sup>31</sup>

An evaluation of the number of reported baptisms of Negroes or coloreds and whites does not reveal an unusual increase in

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

the number of half-breeds. While baptisms of adult or adolescent colored people were relatively numerous between 1786 and 1808 (a total of 119 or 12.2 percent of the baptized colorados), they became fairly rare in later years. From 1809 through 1822, there were only twenty-two baptisms reported for the adult and adolescent coloreds. This was 4.5 percent of all colored baptisms.<sup>32</sup>

There were separate parish registers for white and colored burials. There was also a register noting the burials of young white children. This recorded those who died before taking their first communion. The register for white children included 405 names for the period from 1785 to 1821. Some of the deaths came at a time of severe epidemics, such as those in May 1793 and October 1809, but there were many other causes for the deaths of children at that time. The greatest number of casualties occurred in the months of August and September when the heat and humidity were highest. There were fewer deaths among young children in the period from January through April. Some 542 adult (those having received first communion) deaths were recorded from 1785 to 1822. Therefore, and with reference to the 2,146 baptisms administered during this same interval, some 947 deaths can be determined.<sup>33</sup>

If East Florida constituted a "closed" demographic area, this balance would have pointed to a rapid natural population growth. However, one must be wary, there are many "X" factors also present: the persistent poverty of the colony, its uncertain political future, the continuing emigration of adult males, and the fact that most of the economic development that did take place occurred away from St. Augustine. These and other factors, mainly the lack of demographic statistics, leave uncertain how many burials of young children went unregistered.

An examination of the number of white burials in St. Augustine indicates the largest number also in the summer months of September and October, with the fewest in March. There was no severe "mortality crisis" in the course of the thirty-seven years surveyed in this study. A major epidemic would have affected the adult Catholic population in and around St. Augustine and would have been revealed in the registers. This fact requires no explanations for those familiar with the climate of Florida and

---

32. *Ibid.*

33. Parish records, white deaths, reels 284K, 284L.

the conditions of life in the area during the colonial era. The burial records also confirm the variety of national and geographical antecedents of the colony's white Catholic community. They show that the majority of the inhabitants lacked strong roots. The records also demonstrate the relatively heavy death toll among the garrison soldiers. Of the seventy deaths registered for the three-year period, 1786-1789, twenty-eight were soldiers.<sup>34</sup>

The range of geographic origins of the deceased remained wide throughout the second Spanish period and indicate that the majority of the inhabitants lacked real roots. The fourteen burials in 1787 involved persons from Andalusia, Castille, Canada, France, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, and Navarre. Natives of Andalusia, the United States, France, Ireland, and Minorca were buried in 1797. In 1807, the twenty deceased were from the Canaries, Scotland, Spain, Italy, Ireland, the United States, Mexico, and Minorca. In 1817, the eighteen burials represented Spain, Cuba, Mexico, Malta, Minorca, and New Granada.<sup>35</sup>

Using burial records as an indication, the Hispanic population of East Florida after 1810 was smaller than it had been in previous years. Also, there seems to have been fewer immigrants from France, Germany, Ireland, and Italy.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the fact that the political situation in Western Europe was more stable after the Napoleonic period is the reason for this decline in foreign settlers.

There is little information available on the black and half-breed populations of Florida. There is no accurate count in the registers of arrivals and departures; they reflect only that part of the Colorado population absorbed into the religious community as reported by slave-owners.

Between 1785 and 1821, there were 1,293 black infant baptisms and 222 black infant deaths. Detachments of Negro and mulatto soldiers from Havana or Saint Domingue were frequently stationed for long periods in St. Augustine, and the records of their marriages and deaths are listed in the parish registers. There were transfers of slaves from colony to colony at the whim of their masters, but there are no records of those

---

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.* Based on a comparison of the national origin of persons buried in the years 1787, 1797, 1807, and 1817.

individuals. There are also no separate listings for the deaths of colorado children. Burials of Negro and mulatto children are reported in the general register of colored people, if at all. For instance, in the period 1790-1791, there are ten entries (four Negroes and six mulattoes) of children younger than one year out of a total of nineteen entries of burials for all ages.<sup>37</sup> This suggests that deaths of Catholic colorados are under-recorded. The overall impression, however, is one of a large increase in the size and vitality of the Negro and half-breed Catholic community as newly converted adults were added to the parish rolls.

The records of white marriages were entered with some care until 1823. Beginning in 1785, the number of marriages increased each year until about 1810; afterwards there was a continuing annual decline until the transfer of the Floridas to the United States and for two years thereafter.<sup>38</sup>

There are not many marriages between Negroes and "pardos." From 1786 to 1801, most of the few Negro slave marriages reported were slaves belonging to Don Francisco Xavier Sánchez, a Catholic and one of the largest slaveowners in St. Augustine. Of thirty-six slave marriages from 1786 to 1801, fifteen were Sánchez slaves, two were owned by the governor, one by the curate, and one by the commander of the artillery at the fort of San Marcos. From 1785 to 1819, a total of forty-eight colored couples appeared before the curate or his vicar to receive the sacrament of marriage. Not all were slaves or "pure" Negroes. There were twenty-nine slave couples, five free blacks, four free/slave couples, three pardo/Negro couples, six free pardo couples and one diver. Of twenty-nine slave couples, ten were between men and women belonging to different masters.<sup>39</sup>

Determining the fecundity levels for Negro and half-breed families is nearly impossible because of the sparsity of marriage records. It is not much easier to examine this matter for the white population. It is impossible to reconstitute a very large number of families because of the brief period, 1785-1822, for which precise and continuous observations are available.

It is difficult to secure data on the births and deaths of both black and white families because records are not complete.

37. Parish records, colored deaths, reel 284L.

38. Parish records, white marriages, reel 284K.

39. Parish records, colored marriages, reel 284K.

Most spouses were not born in Florida, and birth and baptism records are not accurate. Only thirteen families whose marriages occurred between 1785 and 1790 are listed with the names of the couples involved; relatively full information is available on only these families. Table III shows the names and dates of each marriage, number of children, the number (in parentheses) who died in infancy or who did not live beyond sixteen years, and the dissolution by death of the unions. Of the total of eighty-eight children born to the thirteen couples, the names of twenty-one disappear from the records before reaching adulthood.<sup>40</sup>

This is a very limited sample of only thirteen of the 460 white families united in marriage in St. Augustine between 1785 and 1822. The data reveals a high reproduction rate. Some of the marriages involved soldiers and servants of the crown who did not remain in St. Augustine permanently. Thus, the number of eligible marriageable women, always limited, continued to decline. Between 1785 and 1822, eighty-eight soldiers or government employees, all temporary residents, married. A comparison between the eighty-seven couples married between 1784 and 1788 and the census lists of 1811-1814 shows that only one household in five was still operating after twenty to twenty-five years. Since only about ten of the eighty-seven husbands in the period 1784-1788 were civilian functionaries or soldiers, the others must have departed from East Florida. The evidence suggests that some of those who had married in St. Augustine were refugees (displaced persons) who had no special attachment to Florida and who would emigrate if and when another place offered hope of a better economic status. This was the case for many French people uprooted by revolutionary troubles in Europe and St. Domingue. They either came from France directly or from the islands of the French West Indies. About a dozen of these French refugees married in St. Augustine, but by 1811 they had disappeared from the records.<sup>41</sup>

The key to changes occurring in Florida's population between 1819 and 1821 is the relatively peaceful, but nevertheless continuing invasion of American settlers crossing the frontier from the neighboring United States. Spanish citizens found themselves outnumbered by these new arrivals. After 1800 the

---

40. Parish records, white marriages, reel 284K.

41. *Ibid.*

TABLE III

<i>Marriages</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Broken Unions</i>
Lorenzo Capello and Catarina Duran	May 15, 1785	Ten, between 1786 and 1809	Death of Catarina Duran, September 28, 180_.
Juan Triay and Johanna Ximenes	August 21, 1786	Five, between 1786 and 1791	Death of Johanna Ximenes, October 30, 1814.
Geronimo Alvarez and Antonia Venez	April 2, 1788	Six, between 1789 and 1798	Death of Antonia Venz, March 8, 1798.
Andrés Lopez and Antonia Sanz	April 12, 1788	Ten, between 1789 and 1815	- - - -
Francisco Triay and Margarita Stosso	December 12, 1788	Nine, between 1791 and 1813	- - - -
Lorenzo Capo and Margarita Castello	January 12, 1789	Seven, between 1790 and 1813	- - - -
Antonio Loubias and Anna Heinmann	June 2, 1789	Eight, between 1789 and 1805	Death of Antonio Loubias, August 6, 1812.
José Peso de Burgo and Maria Mabridy	April 14, 1789	Five, between 1793 and 1800	Death of José Peso de Burgo, August 5, 1819.
Juan Pomedá and Martina Hernandez	June 22, 1789	Nine, between 1790 and 1815	Death of Juan Pomedá, June 20, 1819.

Manuel Romero and Maria Rodriguez	September 12, 1789	Three, between 17- - and 1809	Death of Manuel Romero, January 1, 1816.
D. Tadeo de Arriba and Maria Garcia Perpela	June 28, 1790	Seven, between 1791 and 1810	- - - -
Martin Martinez and Antonia Coruna	September 29, 1790	Nine, between 1789 and 1810	Death of Martin Martinez, December 12, 1817.
Bartholomeo Obrador and Antonia Murillo	November 18, 1790	None	- - - -

SECOND SPANISH PERIOD

437

area around the St. Marys River and along the St. Johns River, particularly near the site of Cowford (present-day Jacksonville), began to be settled by Americans.<sup>42</sup> It became increasingly difficult for the Spanish to administer this region. In theory, these foreigners were supposed to swear allegiance to the king of Spain, promising "to submit themselves completely to the laws of the kingdom and to take up arms to defend the province against whatever enemy might choose to attack." The names of many of those taking the oath in the period 1798-1811 are recorded.<sup>43</sup> However, one wonders how many squatters failed to go through the formality of swearing any kind of allegiance.

In the period 1794-1811, 521 swore an oath of loyalty to Charles IV and Ferdinand VII. Not all, of course, were single men. In 1803, out of 162 male oath-takers, sixty-two were married and four were widowers. Don Juan Fraser, born in Inverness, Scotland, took the oath on September 1, 1809. He was married and had five children. In most instances, it is difficult to determine exact family situations. The number of children is rarely mentioned, and the ages of dependents are never listed. There are no references as to whether or not wives were brought along to Florida. One learns only by chance that Don Ulrich Mills, a native of Philadelphia, was married and had three sons and three daughters. His wife was living, but there is nothing to indicate whether she came with him to Florida or if she remained in Philadelphia. On the other hand, Juan Bonnemaïson arrived from France. His oath, taken on December 10, 1803, lists a wife left behind in Martinique who was probably running his plantation since he also listed seventy-six slaves there. His oath suggests that he had come alone to Florida to prepare a place for his wife and other members of his household.<sup>44</sup>

These newcomers, by their religious and national origins, changed the character of the small, Spanish, Catholic East Florida colony considerably. The majority of the American settlers were Protestants. From 1794 to 1811, 402 new arrivals identified themselves as Protestants and 105 as Catholics. From 1797 to 1805, seventy-nine Frenchmen took the oath. Some were refugees from the French Antilles where the slave revolts were in progress; others migrated from the United States. Don

42. Abernathy, "Florida and the Spanish Frontier," 88-120.

43. Oaths of Allegiance, 1790-1821, reels 163, 164, Bundle 350U4, EFP.

44. *Ibid.*

Augustin Demilliere, a planter and an artist from Dijon, was married. His declaration of March 5, 1798, stated that he owned fifty Negro slaves of undetermined value. When Pierre Bichon from St. Domingue took the oath on June 21, 1798, he had in his possession 100 piastres and *una lancha chica*. Several Frenchmen, including René Coste from Marseilles, stated that they had money in the United States, in Charleston or Savannah. Nicolas Nazaret, a doctor from Versailles, arrived with six Negroes and indicated that he intended to import twenty more. His declaration of September 20, 1798, listed his holdings on St. Domingue. A few settlers, escaping from St. Dominique after the failure of General Leclercq's expedition, came to Florida seeking Spanish protection. One, Doña Maria Sinet, a widow born in Angers, placed the value of her property in La Guarcia, St. Domingue, at 4,800 piastres.<sup>45</sup>

These French arrivals were not of poor peasant origin; only eight appeared to be incapable of signing their declarations. Among them were farmers, merchants, tailors, sailors, caulkers, and carpenters. They were from all parts of France, although the majority were from the coastal regions. The colonial government accorded recognition to fifteen of these French immigrants by conferring on them the title of Don, a title usually given to an individual with sizable amounts of property. Don Juan Vermonet from Caen was married and a Catholic, and he brought goods valued at 70,000 piastres including a schooner, money in coin, furniture, and eight Negro slaves.<sup>46</sup>

While most of the immigrants were Americans, taking the oath also between 1797 and 1809 were sixty-five Irish, twenty-eight Scots, and thirty-four English. The majority of the English were Protestants, as were twenty-four of twenty-eight Scots, but 61.2 percent of the Irish newcomers were Catholics. Most of the English and Scotch were literate, but one in seven of the Irish immigrants was illiterate. Immigrants from the British Isles generally possessed some capital, although often only a small amount. Don George Hart, from Limerick, Ireland, who swore "respect and allegiance" on February 21, 1804, possessed only a few pesos. Guillermo Jox, who made his declaration on July 3, 1807, brought ten pigs with him to Florida. Others had larger

---

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., reel 164.

amounts of capital. The Scotsman Don Alexandre Drysdale had holdings in the Bahamas which he claimed he wanted to sell so as to purchase slaves to bring to Florida. His holdings included 110 Negroes, land valued at 2,000 pesos, livestock worth 4,500 pesos, agricultural materials worth 750 pesos, furniture worth 2,500 pesos, cotton valued at 3,500 pesos, and buildings. Drysdale's assets totaled more than 50,000 pesos. Among the penniless immigrants were four Englishmen, one Scotsman, and nineteen Irishmen, including Alexander O'Hara who took the oath on March 18, 1811. The impecunious Irish included hatters, shoemakers, accountants, masons, and a schoolmaster.<sup>47</sup>

Other nationalities represented among the new arrivals were from Italy, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Portugal, Holland, Honduras, and the Mautian Islands. On June 1, 1799, Don Guillermo Delany, a widowed Danish trader, who declared himself to be a Catholic, stated in his oath of allegiance that he planned to bring into Florida various goods worth 70,000 piastres from Mexico, the United States, and the island of Santa Cruz. Don Miguel Pinto was born in Smyrna, Greece, of Portugese parents. His list of possessions included a brigantine worth 5,000 piastres, five Negroes, and other assets worth 9,000 piastres. Furthermore, he declared that he owned 130 Negro slaves yet in Africa whom he planned to import into Florida. Don Pinto was probably a slave trader.<sup>48</sup> Less well off were Heinrich Keeble, a roofer from Osnabruck, and Georg Charkell, a Saxon who was a mason by trade. They jointly declared on December 3, 1802, that they possessed three horses and six head of cattle.<sup>49</sup>

Four Minorcans, all reasonably well off, also settled in St. Augustine, joining the remnants of Andrew Turnbull's settlement who were living there. One, Don José Rota, had land, a shop stocked with merchandise in Charleston, and a schooner anchored in the port of Santa Amelia.<sup>50</sup> Among the few immigrants from the West Indies were a tailor from Barbados, three survivors from New Providence—two were mulattoes working as a mason and a carpenter, one Englishman from Honduras (probably from the Mosquito Coast where the woodcutters of

---

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, reels 163, 164.

49. *Ibid.*, reel 164.

50. *Ibid.*, reel 163.

Campeche had been operating for a time), and two individuals from the Bahamas and New Scotland.<sup>51</sup>

The largest number of arrivals were Americans. Between February 3, 1794, and February 3, 1809, some 318 articles relating to oaths taken by Americans, often in groups, are noted in the Spanish registers. It is not known from the records whether any or all of the members of their families were present with them in Florida at the time. Of those Americans taking the oath, 47.9 percent (156 persons) declared themselves to be married and 4.3 percent to be widowers.<sup>52</sup>

The Americans migrated from North Carolina, South Carolina, Connecticut, Virginia, Georgia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Mississippi. The majority came from the southern states and identified themselves as craftsmen such as carpenters and tailors and as agricultural laborers. One though, James Hall, was a doctor from New Hampshire who made his declaration on April 14, 1798. Approximately one-third of the Americans stated that they owned a house and land in the United States. One, John Briggs of Boston, affirmed on October 17, 1799, that he had a house and 200 acres of arable land in Massachusetts. John Reid of Connecticut owned 500 acres of land, a house worth 1,000 pesos, six Negro slaves, three horses, forty head of cattle, and 100 pigs. Don Juan Houston of Georgia was the wealthiest newcomer. He owned a 15,000-acre plantation which he estimated to be worth 70,000 pesos. All the Americans could sign their names. The majority of those who were illiterate came from Virginia and the Carolinas.<sup>53</sup>

Many brought with them, or said they would later bring, their Negro slaves. Some apparently wished to import Negroes as a speculative capitalistic venture; others planned to use slaves as their own laborers. On the other hand, fifty-six of the Americans arrived with no tangible assets. A third group, who had some capital in the form of liquid assets, material goods, or cattle, needed slaves to develop their plantations. Don Juan Kelsail, a married Protestant from Georgia, declared assets worth 74,000 pesos in the form of land, cattle, agricultural materials,

---

51. *Ibid.*, reels 163, 164.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

money in coin, commercial items, and 225 slaves. His intention was to sell this property and purchase more slaves in Florida to help clear land and develop his agricultural interests.<sup>54</sup>

It is not surprising that these Americans soon controlled the commercial traffic between East Florida and the United States. These settlers became a power to be reckoned with in a colony as poverty-stricken as Spanish East Florida.<sup>55</sup> It is impossible to determine whether all these new Floridians actually brought all the goods they had claimed into the colony or whether all of these declared Americans even settled there. Undoubtedly, some remained only for a brief period and then moved on. After 1808, many Americans crossed into Florida, tempted by the area's virgin lands, without bothering to contact the Spanish colonial administrators in St. Augustine. While there is no record of who or how many squatters there were, they had an important effect on the events between 1808 and 1818 which finally led to the treaty in which Spain surrendered Florida to the United States.<sup>56</sup>

An English traveler in 1819 stated that St. Augustine was nothing but a garrison and that the only activity was in the king's service.<sup>57</sup> The chronic lack of money and the problem of supply helped to make the situation in East Florida nearly untenable. Pressure from the English immigrants and traders north of the St. Marys River and from the Indians affected Spanish Florida as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, and even stronger pressures were exerted by Americans after 1783.<sup>58</sup> The population in East Florida at the beginning of the second Spanish period was too small and too heterogeneous to provide the Spanish colonial administrators— despite realistic and prudent management— with the means to consolidate their position. Because of problems in Spain, Venezuela, and Mexico after 1793, there were so few non-American immigrants that

---

54. *Ibid.*

55. Pablo Tornero Tinajero, *Relaciones de dependencia entre Florida y Estados Unidos, 1783-1820* (Madrid, 1979), 123-25.

56. Wanjohi Waciuma, *Intervention in the Spanish Florida, 1801-1818: A Study of Jeffersonian Foreign Policy* (Boston, 1976), 124.

57. Gannon, *Cross in the Sand*, 112.

58. John J. TePaske, "French, Spanish, and English Indian Policy on the Gulf Coast, 1513-1763, A Comparison," *Spain and Her Rivals on the Gulf Coast*, Ernest F. Dibble and Earle W. Newton, eds. (Pensacola, 1971), 9-39; Abernathy, "Florida and the Spanish Frontier," 88-120.

the Hispano-Minorcan population could not be reinforced. Natural increase among this element was also low.

Economic blockage and stagnation doomed the colony, since Florida had been reoccupied in 1784 only as one part of a Spanish effort to drive the English from the Caribbean. Neither trade with the Indians, nor plantation development, nor maritime commerce were major economic forces in this all but forgotten possession. In addition, the continuing conflict after 1800 between the United States and Spain over the contested zone between the St. Marys River and Fernandina further weakened East Florida, which could neither defend herself nor expect any real support from the mother country. Such was the paradox of the demographic-economic situation of the Spanish colony.

Demographic stagnation was the main reason for the failure of the Spanish in East Florida after 1783. Unless an abundant transfusion of new blood arrived from the Hispanic countries, Florida was condemned to vegetate for four decades. American pressure unbalanced the fragile establishment and forced it into a downward spiral toward oblivion. It was only after Florida became a part of the United States that the slow but steady immigration of a new blood stock of Americans gave the promise of a new future.