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SIBLING STEWARDS OF A COMMERCIAL EMPIRE: THE INNERARITY BROTHERS IN THE FLORIDAS

by THOMAS C. KENNEDY

MARQUIS JAMES, in his biography of Andrew Jackson, alluded to John Forbes and Company, a firm which had succeeded Panton, Leslie and Company in 1804, and asserted that members of the Forbes enterprise "remained the actual rulers of Florida." Among its members in 1804 were James Innerarity and his brother John. Of the latter, Marquis wrote: "Like a white shadow, John Innerarity glided through the weaving labyrinth, never on the losing side."¹ Another scholar contended that individuals connected with both companies "were influential with the governments under which they lived, and exercised unmeasured control over the Indian tribes with which they dealt."² Both judgments may incline somewhat toward hyperbole, but they also give some inkling as to why these firms, which operated in the southeastern Spanish borderlands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, have been the subject of substantial scholarly research and writing.³

The activities of James and John Innerarity were most pronounced in the period of John Forbes and Company, during which the brothers, especially John, sometimes came under severe censure. During the course of the War of 1812, for example, a British officer complained bitterly, "The Mayor of Mobile [James Innerarity] has a brother in this town [Pensacola]. His name is [John] Innerarity. I have found him a great scoundrel

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1. Marquis James, *The Life of Andrew Jackson, Complete in One Volume* (Indianapolis, NY, 1938), 321.
2. Thomas M. Owen, comp., "West Florida and Its Attempt on Mobile, 1810-1811," *American Historical Review* 2 (July 1897), 701n.
3. The most recent and comprehensive study of these companies is William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton Leslie & Company and John Forbes and Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola, 1986). See 382-94 for an extensive listing of published and unpublished works dealing with both firms.

... [and] a great traitor."⁴ In 1821, in the midst of a legal dispute involving Forbes and Company, Andrew Jackson informed Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, "the arts, the influence, the wealth, the power of no individual, not even of [John] Innerarity himself, could any longer obstruct the pure channels of justice."⁵ With these "mixed reviews" in mind, this study proposes to examine the careers of James and John Innerarity and the legacy they bequeathed, as stewards of a commercial empire, to the history of the Gulf coast in the early nineteenth century.

Their story begins in the revolutionary/independence period of the United States in the late eighteenth century, and revolves around the person of the Scotsman William Panton. This merchant has been described as "a typical late-18th century British entrepreneur with special gifts for reaping personal gain from the demands of high politics."⁶ The Scotch Innerarity clan became joined with Panton's family in 1776 when William's sister, Henrietta, married John Innerarity. Of their five children, two were sons born in Scotland: James (b. August 18, 1771), and John, Jr. (b. November 11, 1783). Both would follow their father to the New World in association with Panton, Leslie and Company, and then John Forbes and Company.⁷

In 1792 John Innerarity, Sr., was stationed at one of his brother-in-law's trading posts at San Marcos de Apalache in East Florida. Panton soon realized that his brother-in-law was not the best person for managing the store. John Innerarity, Sr., apparently agreed and soon returned to his family, established residence in London, and engaged in a series of commercial ventures that were not very successful. But relations between Innerarity and Panton remained cordial. For a time, Innerarity served as a guardian for one of Panton's nephews (William

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4. Quoted in David H. White, "The John Forbes Company: Heir to the Florida Indian Tribe, 1801-1819" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1973), 154-55. Edward Nicolls's title for James Innerarity was inaccurate; in March 1814 James was elected by the town commissioners of Mobile to be their president. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 284n.
 5. *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1832-1834), II, Class X, Miscellaneous, 801.
 6. Thomas D. Watson, "Merchant Adventurer in the Old Southwest: William Panton, the Spanish Years, 1783-1801" (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1972), iv.
 7. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders* 18.

Lumsden in England) and became involved in the care and education of a son (Alek) and nephew (David Tate) of Alexander McGillivray. McGillivray, chief of the Creek Indians, was extremely crucial in promoting Pantón's trade relations with Indian tribes in the Spanish-held Floridas in the decade after 1783. In addition, John Innerarity, Sr., was an important go-between for Pantón with London firms involved in trade and insurance matters with Pantón, Leslie and Company. On occasion, he even purchased Irish and English lottery tickets for his brother-in-law in America.⁸

James Innerarity arrived in West Florida in 1796 to begin his apprenticeship as a Pantón, Leslie and Company clerk. For a few years he was stationed at the store at San Marcos de Apalache where his father had worked. One of the more vexing episodes James encountered occurred in 1800, namely, the return of William Augustus Bowles who, with a party of Indians, had participated in the seizure of the St. Mark's trading post in 1792. This Maryland-born Loyalist had sought to challenge both McGillivray's leadership among the Creeks and Pantón's trade relations with the Indians. In 1799, following his escape from Spanish captivity the previous year, Bowles once again appeared among the Creeks. Early in 1800 he led a band of Indians in attacking and capturing the St. Mark's store and fort, only to be driven out by Spanish warships and troops. James duly reported to his uncle, William Pantón, the inventory of the St. Mark's store after Bowles's attack, as well as noting the continuing pre-

8. Ibid. Marie Taylor Greenslade, "John Innerarity, 1783-1854," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 9 (October 1930), 90-91. (Mrs. Greenslade was the great-granddaughter of John Innerarity, Jr. Peter A. Bannon, *The Southern Indian Trade* [Montgomery, AL, 1935], 33n.). William Lunsden to William Pantón, June 17, 1797, Cruzat Papers. References to the Cruzat papers in this article are from chronologically arranged copies held in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. The originals are in the collections of the Florida Historical Society Library, University of South Florida, Tampa. John Innerarity, Sr., to Pantón, September 24, 28, 1798, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 14 (October 1935), 116-18. John W. Caughey, *McGillivray of the Creeks* (Norman, 1938), 24. Michael D. Green, "Alexander McGillivray," in *American Indian Leaders: Studies in Diversity*, edited by R. David Edmunds (Lincoln, 1980), 48, 51. John Innerarity, Sr., to Pantón, January 8, July 20, 1798, March 12, 1799, Greenslade Papers. References to the Greenslade papers in this article are from chronologically arranged copies held in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History. The originals are in the collections of the Florida Historical Society Library.

sence of "that vagabond" in the vicinity. Bowles was soon captured by Spanish authorities— a capture in which John Forbes assisted— and died in 1805 as a prisoner at Morro Castle in Cuba. One measure of Pantón's increasing confidence in his nephew's ability and judgment was demonstrated when, in an 1801 codicil to his 1793 will, he appointed James Innerarity to be one of his executors. A sister of Pantón subsequently granted both Innerarity brothers the power of attorney in settling Pantón's estate.⁹

John Innerarity arrived in Florida in January 1802, nearly a year after William Pantón's death (February 26, 1801). In 1804 their uncle's firm was reorganized as John Forbes and Company. Also in that year James became a partner, conducting most of his business affairs from the Mobile store. His brother John began his apprenticeship as a clerk at the main post in Pensacola where he would become a partner in 1812. He also resided in a fine house that his uncle had constructed in Pensacola until the dwelling burned in 1848.¹⁰

The documentary record reveals more about John Innerarity, Jr.'s background than that of his older brother. In his early teens he had attended school in Banff, Scotland, in preparation for attending the University of Edinburgh. In an enthusiastic letter to his mother in 1799, John was especially proud of the progress of his studies in French, arithmetic, and geography. He was also looking forward to his father's return from America and expressed concern about his brother's well-being there. In addition, he lamented the negative impact upon his uncle's trade of the on-going conflict between England and France. In re-

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9. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 114-17, 151-56, 231-33, 240-42. James Innerarity to Pantón, March 1, 1800, Cruzat Papers. James Innerarity to Pantón, July 5, 1800, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Floridas, legajo 1, expediente 12, in Elizabeth H. West Papers, box 7, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History. For a scholarly assessment of Bowles's career, see J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *William Augustus Bowles: Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens, 1967). Pantón's will, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 14 (October 1935), 128-29. Magdalene Pantón and others to James and John Innerarity, May 12, 1802, Greenslade Papers.
 10. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 230n, 250. Robert S. Cotterill, "A Chapter of Pantón, Leslie and Company," *Journal of Southern History* 10 (August 1944), 278n. Thomas D. Waton and Samuel Wilson, Jr., "A Lost Landmark Revisited: the Pantón House of Pensacola," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60 (July 1981), 278. Greenslade, "John Innerarity," 42.

sponse to a letter from his younger brother, James indicated his pleasure with John's educational achievements, particularly in his "much improved writing and in the study of Latin." By 1800, a London partner of the firm, John Leslie, wrote to Panton about how his nephew John, "a very smart intelligent youth," would be joining him shortly. And while John's mother "could not help shedding tears" at the prospect of her youngest son leaving for the Floridas, "the lad himself betrays no repugnance to the voyage, but rather on the contrary."¹¹

The interval between the dates of arrival in the Floridas for James and John Innerarity were not altogether auspicious. That is, from 1796 to 1803 Panton, Leslie and Company encountered many problems which would test the mettle of the young merchants. In addition to the threats to the Indian trade posed by William Augustus Bowles, there were growing challenges to the firm's existence from the government of the United States and competition from American traders, especially after the Treaty of San Lorenzo (1795), whereby Spain granted Americans free navigation of the Mississippi River and rights of deposit at New Orleans. Further pressures included the unstable international scene in which European rivalries involving England, France, and Spain spilled over into the New World in ways that jeopardized the company's foreign commerce. The combination of these threats, challenges, and pressures found William Panton seriously considering a possible agreement with the United States, and even the idea of withdrawing from the Florida trade altogether.¹²

11. John Innerarity to Mrs. Innerarity, June 30, 1797; James Innerarity to John Innerarity, September 3, 1798, Greenslade Papers. Robert Leslie to Panton, 1800, quoted in "John Innerarity," 90-91. The almost fatherly tone of James's 1798 letter seemed to anticipate the nature of the relationship which would continue between the brothers for years to come. On rare occasions, James would chastise his younger brother in a father-to-son fashion, as when he objected to the way John handled some property matters. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, December 18, 1829, Greenslade Papers. He also expressed disappointment in John's apparent reluctance to have one of his daughters marry James's son, William Panton Innerarity, named in honor of his uncle. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, December 27, 1840, "Will of James Innerarity," May 26, 1812, Greenslade Papers.

12. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 203-25. Mark F. Boyd, "Events at Prospect Bluff on the Apalachicola River, 1808: An Introduction to Twelve Letters of Edmund Doyle, Trader," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 16 (October

Panton's death in 1801 thus coincided with a time when his company's influence among Indians in the Spanish borderlands had weakened somewhat. Moreover, the Napoleonic Wars, in conjunction with policies of the Jefferson and Madison administrations toward the Louisiana Territory and the Floridas, further reduced John Forbes and Company's ability to serve as an instrument of Spain's Indian and commercial policies in an effort to retain the Floridas.¹³

Nevertheless, dealings with Indians continued to be an important aspect of the activities of the Innerarity brothers in behalf of John Forbes and Company. Increasingly, however, there was a linkage between the trade and debts owed by various Indian tribes, some of them preceding Panton's death. A major tactic for recovering these debts was through land cessions in which John Forbes and the Innerarity brothers played significant roles. In 1803, for example, John Forbes made a proposal, witnessed by James Innerarity, with Choctaw Indians for the cession of land on the Mississippi River to the United States which would pay the firm \$150,000. This offer, however, was repudiated by the Indians. A more successful arrangement of land in lieu of debts estimated at more than \$66,000 was tentatively negotiated by Forbes with leaders of the Seminoles in 1804. James Innerarity had received the consent of the Spanish governor of West Florida, Vicente Folch, to conclude this land grant within Spanish territory. Along with another Forbes Company agent, William Hambly, James was now charged with the responsibility for completing the deal. But Innerarity initially encountered some difficulties owing to rumors spread by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, the United States agent among the southern Indians. Hawkins had told Indians that the intention of the Forbes firm, once the land was in their possession, "was to settle the country with a set of vagabonds from Georgia and South Carolina who would make continued encroachments on the Indians and would soon complete their ruin." Innerarity was able

1937), 61. Panton to John Forbes, September 22, 1800, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 15 (July 1936), 66. Watson, "Merchant Adventurer," 264-65, 303-04. John Innerarity, Sr., to Panton, January 8, 1798, Greenslade Papers.

13. *Ibid.*, 321-22. Michele Scott, "International Intrigue on the Florida Frontier: The Panton, Leslie Company, 1783-1805" (master's thesis, University of South Florida, March 1976), iv-v.

to reassure a couple of important Seminole chiefs that this was not the case. Rather, he argued, the company planned "to settle the land principally with people from the Bahamas, and from the other English, Spanish and French colonies, but of whatever nation they might be, none but good men should be admitted." In addition to securing consent for the cession of land, Innerarity also promised to price the company's goods as moderately as possible. But he also reported "that I would give credit to no one whatever." He informed his partner, "with everything they were very well pleased, and particularly the last arrangement, which however some of them wanted to break . . . but were refused."¹⁴

This 1804 agreement, which was approved by Upper Creek and Lower Creek factions, as well as the Seminoles, did not resolve all debt collection or land cession issues with the Upper Creeks, some of whose chiefs were disappointed that they had not been consulted with regard to the land grant negotiated by James Innerarity. Further, as one of the company's partners, William Simpson, indicated in 1805, new talks should be entered into with the Upper Creeks to secure acceptance of the principle of cash payment of debts owed to the company. In this instance, John Innerarity played an important role in resolving the issue by 1812, the year he became a full partner in John Forbes and Company.¹⁵

For a week in late October of 1812, John Innerarity held a series of discussions with the chiefs and head-men of the Upper Towns of the Creek Nation. Also in attendance were some American agents, including Colonel Benjamin Hawkins. Unlike his somewhat antagonistic role in the talks that James Innerarity held in 1804, Hawkins, on this occasion, behaved more in the fashion of an attorney pleading the case of Forbes and Company. After a few days, the negotiations became bogged down over the question of the interest to be paid on the claims against the Indians. The total claim was \$40,000, of which a bit more than half, \$21,916, represented the principal. Over and over

14. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 246-54. James Innerarity to William Simpson, September 24, 1804, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (October 1931), 102-06. Boyd, "Events at Prospect Bluff," 61-63.

15. William Simpson to James Innerarity, February 28, 1805, Cruzat Papers. John Innerarity to Simpson, March 11, 1812, Greenslade Papers.

the spokesmen for the Indians objected to the payment of the more than \$18,000 in interest. Their contention was that they did not understand what this custom and concept of interest among white people meant, and that "there was no word for it in their language." Just as often John Innerarity remained inflexible, trying to impress upon them that he "could not renounce the interest as it was as sacred as the principal." In view of the Creeks' determination on this point, Innerarity proposed to cancel fifty percent of the interest or, alternatively, to write-off \$10,000 of the interest. These appeals to reasonableness and compromise, however, did not sway the chiefs. Indeed, their principal spokesman, Big Warrior, told Innerarity that if he "talked anymore about interest they would not settle with me." Finally realizing that he would have to accept the proverbial half loaf rather than none, Innerarity consented to an agreement on November 1, 1812. According to its terms, the chiefs promised to pay only the principal, in cash, by November 1814.¹⁶

From 1804 to 1809, agents of the firm had also labored diligently to collect debt payments from other tribes, namely the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee. By late 1812, of a total of \$200,000 in claims against the Indians, the company had collected nearly all of this sum through cash payment or land grants. The diplomacy of James and John Innerarity was thus vital in reaching agreements with the Seminoles and Creeks involving about \$30,000 of the total. However, in addition to the debt problems, frequent disagreements over other issues—such as the price of the company's goods, the location of American trading posts in areas once monopolized by Panton, Leslie and Company, and the value of deerskins—produced many strains which "contributed to disaffection between John Forbes and Company and its customers."¹⁷

Sandwiched between the debt agreements concluded with Indian tribes by James in 1804 and John in 1812, both brothers experienced more happy events in their personal lives, namely, romance and marriage. In 1806 John married Marie Victoria

16. "A Journal of John Innerarity, 1812," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 9 (October 1930), 67-89. William S. Coker, ed., *John Forbes's Description of the Spanish Floridas, 1804* (Pensacola, 1979), 8. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 270-71.

17. *Ibid.*, 272.

Coulon de Villiers, the daughter of Jean Marcos Coulon de Villiers, captain of the Region of Louisiana. Three daughters and a son were born of this union. Since his wife-to-be was not versed in English, John made good use of his earlier studies by conducting the courtship in impeccable, if sometimes florid, French. In a love letter, for example, he wrote: "There was something so winning, so touching, the kindness of your heart, your exquisite sensitiveness, all your amiable qualities made the most profound impression on my heart. . . . Alas! what would life be for me without YOU."¹⁸ The depth of John's affection and wedded bliss was further demonstrated during the occasion of the newlyweds' first separation about six months after their wedding. Writing from Mobile he detailed the sorrow of not being with her, but he also expressed his happiness at being "the object of the love of a virtuous woman," who was the "partner of my fate [and] friend of my heart."¹⁹

Possibly inspired by the connubial bliss of his younger brother, James married Heloise Isabelle Trouillet on August 6, 1808, in Mobile. The collected correspondence of the Inneraritys do not contain, for James, ardent love letters comparable to those of his brother. But James and Heloise did have five children before his wife's death about 1820.²⁰

The personal happiness that the brothers enjoyed as a result of marriage and parenthood must be balanced against the day-to-day problems they encountered stemming from their affiliation with John Forbes and Company. One of the most trying periods of their lives, a period which would be a catalyst for the firm's eventual demise as a factor in the Indian trade of the Gulf coast region, was the War of 1812 and its aftermath. It was a time, moreover, when the many years of strong ties with Spain increasingly were weakened.

Four months after the War of 1812 officially began, the Innerarity brothers, though nominally subjects of Great Britain, applied for, and were confirmed as, naturalized citizens of

18. Greenslade, "John Innerarity," 92, 94. John Innerarity to Mmme. Marie Victoire Coulon de Villiers, 1805 (?), Greenslade Papers.

19. John Innerarity to his "Beloved Victoire," April 28, 1807, Greenslade Papers.

20. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 329n.

Spain.²¹ Their senior partner, John Forbes, was encouraged to follow their lead.²² These citizenship decisions were not based on an overwhelming sense of political loyalty to the Spanish crown. It was a pragmatic attempt to use Spain's official neutrality in the Napoleonic Wars for the commercial benefit of the firm.²³ Indeed, in the decade before the War of 1812 began, and as the pressures of American settlers and traders on the lower Mississippi Valley increased, company partners and agents realized the necessity for adjusting to the probability of a greater American presence in the Floridas. In this regard, in 1803 John Leslie wrote John Forbes from London that, given the renewal of Anglo-French hostilities, the United States-French negotiations concerning the Louisiana Territory, and the uncertain status of West Florida, it might be appropriate, in order to protect company property in Mobile, for some members of the firm to become American citizens.²⁴ A few years later, James Innerarity expressed concern to a partner about the possibility of "impending hostilities" between the United States and Spain, but optimistically thought "the prudence of Jefferson will prevent him from involving his country in war at the moment when peace appears about to take place in long distracted Europe."²⁵

During the first term of James Madison's administration, however, events occurred which posed potential threats not only to the interests of Forbes and Company, but to the physical security of some of its members. Taking advantage of Spain's domestic unrest and simultaneous revolts in her New World colonies, beginning in 1810 there were some Americans who, without specific authorization from the United States government, tried to seize Spanish territory in the Floridas.

21. Ibid., 276. "Naturalization Papers of John and James Innerarity," October 6, 1812, Cruzat Papers.
22. James Innerarity to John Forbes, April 24, 1813, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 11 (October 1932), 89. John Forbes to James and John Innerarity, January 12, 1814, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 13 (April 1935), 236.
23. White, "The John Forbes Company," 92-93; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 273.
24. John Leslie to John Forbes, September 21, 1803, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 13 (October 1934), 105-06, 108-09.
25. James Innerarity to Simpson, October 23, 1806, Forbes Papers. References to the Forbes Papers in this article are from copies in the John C. Pace Library, University of West Florida, Pensacola. The originals are in the collections of the Mobile Public Library, Mobile, Alabama.
26. White, "The John Forbes Company," 124. Isaac J. Cox, *The West Florida Controversy, 1798-1813* (Baltimore, 1918), 358-436.

The possibility that West Florida might be conquered was perceived as so great that the Spanish governor, Vicente Folch, at one point made an offer (later withdrawn) to have the United States annex the province. Both James and John Innerarity, though not averse to continuing to live under Spanish rule, were nonetheless sensitive to the growing inability of Spain to retain the Floridas by military means. They were equally sensitive to the possible ill-effects this might have on their business affairs. In November and December of 1810, for example, an American judge in the Mississippi Territory, Harry Toulmin, exchanged letters with James Innerarity about some of the leaders of the American insurgents. Also discussed was their takeover of Baton Rouge, their threat to Mobile, and the possibility of a transfer of the Floridas to the United States. Furthermore, in January 1811, James corresponded with Colonel James McKee who had served as an American agent to the Cherokees and Choctaws. After referring to a recent proclamation by President Madison for taking possession of the Floridas, James criticized some of the rebel leaders, labeled them as "firebrands," and singled out one Joseph Pulaski Kennedy whose schemes, Innerarity was pleased to note, had been thwarted. But he was especially worried about the implications for the company's future because of a bill introduced into the United States Senate calling for merger of the Mobile region with New Orleans. If approved, he remarked, New Orleans "will feel us as a tumor wasting her body and whose progress she will endeavor to retard. As we must be commercial rivals, she can never feel an interest in our prosperity, therefore it is unjust to subject us to her legislation."²⁷

Meanwhile, from Pensacola the younger Innerarity wrote to John Forbes, enclosing copies of letters he had exchanged with Judge Toulmin. The correspondence, he believed, "will convey to you some idea of our danger." John also expressed the hope that an American force at Fort Stoddert might "save us from our impending danger" and "renew and enforce the claims of

27. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 277. Harry Toulmin to James Innerarity, November 15, 1810; James Innerarity to Toulmin, November 22, 1810; James Innerarity to James McKee, January 22, 1811, *American Historical Review* 2 (July 1897), 701-05. Toulmin to James Innerarity, December 13, 1810, Greenslade Papers. Cox, *West Florida*, 448, 582-84.

the U.S. to the Perdido [River] Boundary, as the Spanish Government is no longer in a situation to contest this point." He also reported that "numbers of Americans keep flocking in here without any apparent business, and circulate exaggerated reports of the strength of the invading force." He further related that a young American recently had made a declaration, under oath, to the commmandant of Pensacola about a force of more than 500 rebel Americans who "intend reducing this place before they attacked Mobile." According to this declaration, moreover, members of the American force made threats against the company and John Forbes personally, stating "that they would neither respect our persons, nor property and that they would set fire to our premises." While remaining somewhat skeptical of this report, John Innerarity was still intending to take "all measures of precaution." Nevertheless, he had to confess his limited power and thus "must trust to the timely interference of the American Government to the obstacles which the insurgents will obviously have to contend with in their progress." Yet, despite this alarmist assessment of what he characterized as "our deplorable political situation," Innerarity then went on to remark that "our business still goes on favorably." This was followed by a generally dispassionate discussion of such routine matters as the arrival of a shipment of slaves consigned to the company and how he met "with few difficulties in my course."²⁸

The seeming ambivalence in John Innerarity's letter to John Forbes suggested one of the fascinating aspects of the fortunes of the company in the years prior to the War of 1812; that is, the firm generally was able to conduct business in a profitable way by sometimes shipping its goods on neutral American merchant ships during the first few years of the Napoleonic Wars. Then the policies of economic coercion pursued by the Jefferson and Madison administrations against England and France often benefitted Forbes and Company in its trade relations.²⁹

The official beginning of war between the United States and Great Britain in June 1812, however, confronted the company and its employees with the severest challenges to its operations

28. John Innerarity to John Forbes, November 29, 1810, Cruzat Papers.

29. Thomas Forbes to James Innerarity and William Simpson, June 10, 1805, Cruzat Papers. Adam Gordon to John Innerarity, September 8, 1810, Forbes Papers.

since the 1790s. In particular, British military strategy along the Gulf coast merged with the discontent of many Indians against the United States to serve as catalysts, not only to the eventual removal of Spain from the Floridas, but to the decline of Forbes and Company as a significant factor in the economic and political life of the Floridas.

It was not until early July 1812 that James Innerarity learned about the possibility of war between the United States and England. Writing from Nassau in the Bahamas to his brother John in Pensacola, James indicated that he had recently received a letter from a Mr. Moodie informing him that the House of Representatives had approved a declaration of war, and that "a majority of 2 voices in the Senate in favor of the war is also calculated on." In that event, he added, "all your energy and activity, and policy will be required to guard our interests during the first period of the hubbub; if we get through that with safety things will go smoothly afterwards."³⁰

On July 11, 1812, James wrote to an uncle in England about the difficulties he was continuing to encounter in regard to land grants, the Indian trade, and litigation over the estate of his uncle, William Panton. In one passage, however, he presented a litany of past woes which soon would be superceded by the adverse consequences to Forbes and Company of the War of 1812: "From the period of Mr. Panton's death to this moment we have been in the prosecution of the recovery of the outstanding [Indian] debts, engaged in continual warfare with our neighbours in the American territory, in which our only gain has been that of exciting a degree of odium that has occasioned not only great detriment to our affairs, but has on more than one occasion put the safety of our persons and property in imminent hazard."³¹

A little more than two weeks later in a letter to the same uncle, James indicated that, in view of the United States-British conflict, he was planning to return immediately to West Florida. He was convinced that the American government intended to seize that province "as they have done with east Florida, both provinces having long been objects of their ambition." James

30. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, July 5, 1812, Greenslade Papers.

31. James Innerarity to Mr. Craik, July 11, 1812, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (April 1932), 186.

also believed that “our firm will in consequence as British subjects be placed under arduous circumstances.” He was particularly uncertain about the ability of Forbes and Company to retain its property in the Floridas, and he thought that the only option might be to have “one of our members becoming a citizen of the U.S. and sheltering the whole under his name.”³² James’s prediction about “arduous circumstances” and property matters were right on the mark. Nevertheless, during the course of the war, the company in general— and the Innerarity brothers in particular— often experienced more threats and vexations from the British and some Indians than from Americans.

One prominent American not hostile to the firm was Brigadier General James Wilkinson. He had been involved in various intrigues in the lower Mississippi River Valley since the 1780s. In the early 1800s, Wilkinson befriended John Forbes and once assisted Panton, Leslie and Company in the collection of its Indian debts. In March 1813, the general’s son, Captain James B. Wilkinson, wrote a letter to James Innerarity in which he commiserated with him about Forbes’s difficulties with respect to the way American officials in East Florida were handling a dispute over slaves belonging to Forbes and Company. He also extended his own and his father’s regards to Forbes for the general “has a most exalted esteem and friendship for him.”³³

Two weeks later, James Innerarity reported to Forbes that General Wilkinson, commanding more than 1,000 American troops, took possession of the fort and city of Mobile on April 15, 1813, “without any fighting or disturbance. Everything,” he added, “has remained quiet since, no one is molested in person or property and the Civil Government is about to be organized.” But James still conveyed a certain amount of anxiety toward the future. For, despite his efforts to remain politically neutral dur-

32. Ibid., July 27, 1812, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (January 1932), 136-38. Despite President Madison’s repudiation, before June 1812, of the presence of American occupation forces in parts of Spanish East Florida, they remained there well into 1813. William S. Coker, “John Forbes and Company and the War of 1812 in the Spanish Borderlands,” in W. S. Coker, ed., *Hispanic-American Essays in Honor of Max Leona Moorhead* (Pensacola, 1979), 62.

33. Arthur P. Whitaker, ed., *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas With Incidental Reference to Louisiana* (Deland, 1931), xii, xliii, 222n. Coker, “John Forbes and Company,” 66-67. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 196-97, 245-46, 277-78.

ing these events, and although "our new authorities shew me a fair face," he added: "I know Malignity is in the hearts of many of them." General Wilkinson, however, was excepted "entirely from this suspicion." Moreover, in his brief encounters with Wilkinson, James noted, the general had expressed high regard for Forbes and a desire to promote Forbes's "interest if it lay in his power." But Innerarity believed that the general's "power of conferring benefit or doing injury is now over," a judgment confirmed by Wilkinson's departure for New Orleans by mid-May of 1813.³⁴

Despite James Innerarity's concern in March 1813 that "a change of government would heap fresh difficulties on us," the company's business affairs at Mobile did not suffer a sharp reversal.³⁵ Indeed, about one-third of the supplies used by United States Army forces in Mobile during 1813-1814 were purchased from John Forbes and Company. In addition, the army rented space in the firm's warehouse and several homes from the company for housing army officers. Building supplies were also purchased to renovate or construct forts in the area. The establishment of an American customs house at Mobile did require the payment of duties on company goods coming through that port, but this was more an inconvenience than a significant financial setback.³⁶

A greater potential threat to the security and fortunes of the firm about this time was the possibility of an Indian attack against the company at both Pensacola and Mobile. In a long letter to his older brother dated July 27, 1813, John Innerarity described how he had wanted to prevail upon the Spanish governor, Mateo Manrique of Pensacola, not to furnish a delegation of Creek Indians with any ammunition. Invited into the governor's office while the Indians were in attendance, John Innerarity was informed that, if he did not supply the Indians with the ammunition they were seeking, "they would tear down your lofty house" and that part of the Indian lands granted to Forbes and Company would have to be returned. Innerarity did send some presents to the fiercely anti-American/pro-British war-

34. James Innerarity to John Forbes, April 24, 1813, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 11 (October 1932), 88-89.

35. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, March 9, 1813, Greenslade Papers.

36. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 278-79.

riors such as blankets, tobacco, and salt. But this only made them furious. "They then came to the house much enraged . . . expressed the utmost contempt for the presents, and clamorously demanded ammunition." Innerarity was able to deflect their hostility somewhat by showing he had no powder in his warehouse and could not spare any of the lead he had on hand.³⁷

Shortly after, a company of Spanish troops, commanded by Captain Cardoso, confronted the Indians at the Pensacola store. The officer "told the Spanish interpreter to order McQueen [a chief of the Creeks] out of the house"; the order was complied with after Captain Cardoso brandished his sabre in the chief's face. "McQueen," Innerarity continued, "now seemed quite submissive, shook me by the hand, told me he was my friend, said that the town [of Pensacola] had got alarmed for nothing, that he nor none of the others intended to do any harm until they crossed the Spanish limits" into American territory. The governor then criticized a few of the chiefs for their behavior. But Innerarity was not pleased by the governor's engaging in "milky discourse, instead of threatening to punish them severely for their audacity and insolence, as everybody round him advised him to do."³⁸

John informed his brother James that "McQueen and his party said they would not injure anything belonging to us, but that you must leave Mobile and come here with your family, for it was their intention to take Mobile at an appointed time." John skeptically characterized this threat as "balderdash" and later in the letter stated that he thought "the danger is greatly magnified," adding sarcastically that "the only danger that I conceive is to be apprehended from the sun during these intolerable heats." Possibly there was more than a touch of false bravura in that remark for he had already indicated his apprehension about Governor Manrique giving the Indians ammunition with which "they will spill much innocent blood." And so he did not discourage James from coming to Pensacola, noting that he was "very anxious to see him on many accounts."³⁹

John Innerarity's apprehensions, as it turned out, were justified. The very day he penned this lengthy letter to his brother

37. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, July 27, 1813, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 18 (April 1940), 249-54.

38. *Ibid.*, 255-56.

39. *Ibid.*, 257-58.

the first battle of the Creek War, which the Indians won, had taken place at a site near Mobile. The fundamental causes of the conflict stemmed from the anger of a dissident faction of Creeks known as “Red Sticks” against the policies of the United States government and the encroachment of American settlers on their lands. During the winter of 1814, James Innerarity informed John Forbes in Nassau that the Indians had suffered some severe setbacks. As a result he anticipated a quick end to the Creek War, after which he was confident the company could engage in “a free commerce exteriorly . . . and an interior trade with Tennessee.”⁴⁰ In March 1814, General Andrew Jackson did indeed defeat the Indians decisively in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, after which “more than a thousand Red Sticks sought refuge in the swamps of northwest Florida.”⁴¹

But whatever sense of relief might have been felt by the Innerarities as a result of Jackson’s victory was short-lived. Soon after, the British, as a part of their southern campaign against the United States in the War of 1812, decided to enlist these dissident Indians as allies. The clearest and most present danger to the interests of John Forbes and Company revolved around the activities of a British captain, George Woodbine. In May 1814 he appeared with two warships at the mouth of the Apalachicola River. On board Woodbine had guns, ammunition, and other supplies that he planned to give to members of the Red Sticks faction. The company’s Prospect Bluff trading post in the vicinity, under the management of William Hambly and Edmund Doyle, was thus threatened by this British-led, hostile Indian force. Indeed, the company store lost about 300 head of cattle, several horses, and at least nine slaves who escaped to seek refuge with Woodbine.⁴²

The Innerarities soon learned of these depredations. In a memorandum dated June 24, 1814, James indicated his desire to have Hambly “maintain his post with firmness and not remove but at the last extremity and then to Fort St. Marks.” As for why James felt it necessary that the company hold on to the post at Apalachicola, he was optimistic that “the war will have

40. John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812* (Gainesville, 1972), 231-44. James Innerarity to John Forbes, February 17, 1814, Greenslade Papers.

41. Coker and Watson. *Indian Traders*, 280-81.

42. *Ibid.*

in its results a beneficial effect on our interests by raising the value of our lands." On the possibility that the Seminoles might "take up the hatchet," he believed (perhaps recalling the Battle of Horseshoe Bend) that they could "hope for no better fate" than the Upper Creeks.⁴³

James Innerarity's expectations and hopes notwithstanding, the ability of the Forbes Company's traders to hold on to the store at Prospect Bluff was considerably lessened by Woodbine's actions. Moreover, at this time a number of Indians were suspicious that members of the company deliberately had tried to keep the Indians from allying with the British and to prevent them from receiving goods sent by the British.⁴⁴ These suspicions created an atmosphere in which Edmund Doyle was convinced, as he explained to John Innerarity, "that a party has been selected for some time to kill Hambly and myself."⁴⁵ About two weeks later he expressed a desire to be rid of any further responsibility in behalf of the company. "As affairs are now come to such a crisis that neutrality cannot longer be supported," he wrote, "I will again repeat my request of sending some person to take charge of the place."⁴⁶

Captain Woodbine's activities with the Red Sticks and some escaped American slaves were part of the larger British strategy to keep a sizable American force occupied on the Florida frontier to relieve pressure on Canada. In pursuit of this strategy, the capture of Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans was also contemplated. The latter objectives must have crossed the minds of the Innerarities, for in July 1814 James wrote to John, "I fear that Great Britain will empty out the vials of her wrath upon us," although he still had some "hopes of an equitable peace."⁴⁷ The following month a force of more than 100 British troops arrived in Pensacola under the command of Colonel Edward Nicolls who believed he had secured a promise from John In-

43. James Innerarity, "Memorandum for my Brother," June 24, 1814, Greenslade Papers.

44. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 280-81.

45. Edmund Doyle to John Innerarity, July 4, 1814, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 16 (April 1938), 261-63.

46. Doyle to John Innerarity, July 16, 1814, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 17 (July 1938), 55.

47. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 283. Mahon, *War of 1812*, 345-47. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, July 12, 1814, Cruzat Papers.

nerarity to cooperate with the British.⁴⁸ This, however, was not to be the case. As military events unfolded along the Gulf coast, both John and his brother acted in ways that were distinctly favorable to the American cause.

In order to capture Mobile and New Orleans, the British planned to use Pensacola as a staging ground to seize the American-held Fort Bowyer on Mobile Point, a strategic site that would control communications between the two towns. The colonel revealed his plan to attack Fort Bowyer to Governor Manrique at Pensacola. Perhaps the British officer was counting on Spanish neutrality and anti-American sentiment in assuming the governor would maintain a discreet silence about this privileged information. He did not. Manrique passed this information on to Father James Coleman, his confessor and parish priest at Pensacola. The clergyman, in turn, told John Innerarity about this impending military action. Since Forbes and Company had property near Mobile Point (at Bon Secour), as well as the more extensive holdings at Mobile itself, Innerarity understandably was concerned about losses to company interests beyond those already sustained at Prospect Bluff. Accordingly, in a sort of southern variation on the North's earlier Paul Revere exploit, John Innerarity engaged a man by the name of McVoy to ride to Fort Bowyer and warn the American commander there that "the British were coming."

Nicolls learned of this breach of military intelligence soon enough to make an effort to apprehend McVoy, but the attempt failed. Nevertheless, the British were still determined to carry out the assault. This decision, similar to Nicolls's indiscretion in confiding his secret plan to Governor Manrique, called into question his powers of prudent judgment. In late August 1814, Andrew Jackson had anticipated a British assault on Mobile within a month. Thus measures were taken to make Fort Bowyer more secure even before McVoy arrived at Mobile Point. And, while British naval and ground forces outnumbered the Americans by four-to-one, the fort was successfully defended in September 1814. During the attack Colonel Nicolls sustained several wounds, including the loss of one eye. Understandably, if not entirely consistent with all the factors involved, Nicolls

48. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 284.

would remark testily more than two years later that his defeat was due entirely to the treachery of John Innerarity whom he characterized as a "villain." But company interests still were not completely safe. During the retreat, the British and their Indian allies raided the Forbes Company store at Bon Secour which resulted in estimated losses of \$5,890.⁴⁹ The site of anxiety for the Innerarity brothers now shifted to neutral Pensacola where Andrew Jackson planned to replace the British as occupiers of the capital of Spanish West Florida. Word about the approach of General Jackson and some 7,000 troops in early November 1814, was accompanied by rumors, according to John Innerarity, that the general would permit his soldiers to engage in a twenty-four hour pillage of the city. In the face of Jackson's imminent arrival, the British commander decided to evacuate Pensacola. This was accompanied by a brief, limited naval bombardment, plus the blowing up of Fort Barrancas and its powder magazine where some of the gunpowder was the property of Forbes and Company. But other company property and buildings were left untouched. Moreover, after the British left and the Americans entered the city, "instead of the massacre and pillage which was anticipated," John was pleased to report that "Genl. J. and his army have obtained for themselves a lasting name for their humanity and good order. . . . Not a single excess was committed." In a similar vein, Jackson's chief engineer, Major A. L. Latour, would write that the Spaniards in Pensacola "expressed their admiration and astonishment at being better treated by the Americans, who seemingly had entered the town as foes, than by their British allies and friends, who used them cavalierly."⁵⁰

Although Jackson soon departed Pensacola, for the balance of the War of 1812 company interests at Mobile and Pensacola would not be directly threatened by the British. However, company losses as a result of British actions at Prospect Bluff, Bon Secour, and Pensacola would lead to acrimonious charges by the

49. *Ibid.*, 285-86. Coker, "John Forbes and Company," 71-74. William S. Coker, "The Last Battle of the War of 1812: New Orleans, No, Fort Bowyer!" *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 43 (Spring 1981), 49-53.

50. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 287-88. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, November 10, 1814, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 9 (January 1931), 127-30. Arsene L. Latour, *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15* (Philadelphia, 1816), 49.

Innerarity brothers against Colonel Nicolls and Captain Woodbine for their roles in causing damage to company interests. With Colonel Nicolls in mind, James angrily wrote his brother: "Time was when the name of an Englishman was honorable, now it is a term to designate a man capable of everything that is low, vile, base, villainous, atrocious." This sentiment was equally shared by his younger brother.⁵¹

Before the Innerarities could hope to secure compensation from the government in London, however, military engagements between British and American forces along the Gulf coast would have to end. In this regard, James would play a role similar to his brother's earlier assistance to Americans in the first battle of Fort Bowyer, September 1814. The Treaty of Ghent which represented the diplomatic conclusion of hostilities was signed on December 24, 1814. But the delay in trans-Atlantic communications did not bring an immediate halt to hostilities in North America, including what traditionally has been regarded as the last significant military engagement of the War of 1812, the American victory at the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815.⁵²

By 1814, not only had James Innerarity long been in charge of the company store at Mobile, but in March of that year his well-respected status in the community was confirmed when the town commissioners elected him their president. In August 1814, James received a communication from Vincent Gray, an American merchant at Havana, Cuba. In it Gray outlined British plans for conquest in the Gulf coast region, including New Orleans. In the same month Gray also dispatched letters to Governor W. C. C. Claiborne of Louisiana and Secretary of State James Monroe containing similar information, which they conveyed to Andrew Jackson after James Innerarity had received his letter. Moreover, when James received word from his brother detailing the arrival of Colonel Nicolls's force at Pen-

51. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, November 18, 1814, Greenslade Papers. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, November 29, 1814, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 9 (January 1931), 130.

52. Professor Coker has argued persuasively that while a second battle for Fort Bowyer (February 7-11, 1815) was not comparable in magnitude to the Battle of New Orleans, it, and not Jackson's victory, "was the last battle of the War of 1812, and the British won that battle." Coker, "The Last Battle," 62.

sacola, James decided to seek an audience with General Jackson in Mobile on August 27, 1814. The purpose was to share with him the news from his Havana informant. Jackson was sworn to keep Innerarity's identity secret, and would later describe James Innerarity as "a gentleman . . . of high respectability" who wanted me "to prevent the country from conquest." Thus forewarned, and after frustrating possible British control of Mobile and Pensacola, Jackson eventually was able to mount a formidable and successful defense of New Orleans against an equally formidable British sea and land assault. Of this recently discovered secret mission of Innerarity, Professor William S. Coker asks: "Is it too much to suggest that the Scotman's son, James Innerarity, should be entitled to a small share of the glory for having prevented what might otherwise have been a disaster for the United States?"⁵³ One might add that, however inadvertently, James Innerarity also may have contributed in some measure to Andrew Jackson's election to the presidency.

However, neither the Innerarities nor other members of John Forbes and Company would reap much glory as a result of the War of 1812. Despite the satisfactory settlement before 1815 of most of the Indian debts, "the war had practically eliminated the company's Indian trade, from which great profit had derived during its earlier years." Further, wartime depredations in which the British had participated resulted in substantial losses to the firm, estimated by John Forbes to be more than \$100,000.⁵⁴

The Innerarities diligently tried to secure British restitution for these losses. On occasion it appeared as though the brothers might prevail in having their claims honored. For example, shortly after the war they seemed to have found a sympathetic champion in Captain Richard Spencer of the Royal Navy. They believed that not only would Colonel Nicolls be punished for his actions, but financial compensation would be awarded.⁵⁵ The

53. William S. Coker, "How General Andrew Jackson Learned of the British Plans Before the Battle of New Orleans," *Gulf Coast Historical Review* 3 (Fall 1987), 85-93.

54. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 297.

55. Doyle to Captain Spencer, April 6, 1815, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 17 (January 1939), 237-42. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, April 13, 1815, Cruzat Papers. "Documents Relating to Colonel Edward Nicolls and Captain George Woodbine in Pensacola, 1814," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (July 1931), 51-52.

captain was given the task of settling claims against Britain on the part of Pensacola residents, as well as assisting in the return of slaves such as those lost by Forbes and Company at Apalachicola. But despite numerous appeals and detailed statements throughout 1815 documenting the company's losses, many factors conspired to prevent financial compensation. In October 1815, in a mood of bitter sarcasm, James wrote to John: "The 1/40th of [the Duke of] Wellington's reward for cutting the throats of a few thousand Frenchmen would nearly pay us for his countrymen's plunder. Suppose you address a petition to him on the subject?" As late as May 16, 1854, John Innerarity would make another futile deposition concerning losses sustained at Pensacola under the orders of Colonel Nicolls in August of 1814.⁵⁶

This effort to secure British compensation for losses sustained during the War of 1812 was only one of the many frustrations encountered by Forbes and Company in the five years after the conflict. There were other problems and new difficulties which pointed toward the further ebb of the fortunes of the firm. For about two and one-half years after the war's end, the Innerarity brothers oscillated between moods of hope and despair. On the one hand, there were times when they were rather optimistic about various matters, including the prospect of purchasing new land in West Florida, the possibility of establishing a store at St. Stephens or Fort Claiborne in American-held territory, the reopening of the store at Prospect Bluff (Apalachicola), the expansion of non-Indian trade, and even the potential benefits of American annexation of all of West Florida. On the other hand, James was depressed by such things as another Indian war involving "the turbulent Seminoles," and financial difficulties at Mobile, of which he complained: "I am bare to misery and nothing, nothing coming in." Toward the end of 1815, after reflecting on various business problems, he informed his brother that he was experiencing "many sleepless hours overcome with horrors [about the state of the company's

56. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 290-91. "Narrative of the Operations of the British in the Floridas, 1815," Cruzat Papers. Statement of John Innerarity, March 1815, Greenslade Papers. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, October 4, 1815, Greenslade Papers. John Innerarity Deposition, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 10 (July 1931), 53-54.

books] when others rest. I know not how your philosophy bears it, but I fear it will make me a complete hypochondriac."⁵⁷

James's concern about Indian unrest was amply justified in the First Seminole War (1816-1818), which finally sounded the death knell for the company's trade relations with Indians. During this period of turmoil, the Innerarity brothers had reason to worry about an attack by American insurgents upon Pensacola. Once more they feared that their lives as well as property might be placed in jeopardy. In the aftermath of an attack by American troops upon a fort held by dissident Negroes in the vicinity of the company's trading post at Prospect Bluff in early August 1816, James and John exchanged a series of letters in which they conjectured about an insurgent assault upon Pensacola. Not until early 1817, however, did James become sufficiently alarmed to advise John to send to Pensacola his wife and children, valuable personal property, and the company's books. Nevertheless, John was supposed to remain there to safeguard the company's property. About this time, John Forbes in Cuba wrote to John Innerarity about the atmosphere of anxiety in Pensacola, but hoped that the past failures of the insurgents would continue and thus guarantee the safety of the place. In reply, John noted that martial law had been established. Much of the letter, however, was devoted to a discussion of Forbes's intention to withdraw from the firm. This prospect so discouraged John Innerarity that he was prepared to consider the possibility of "one general sell off," after which he and James would also move to Cuba. Yet, he realistically concluded that "it is a consumation rather devoutly to be wished than expected."⁵⁸

57. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 302-03, 312. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, June 20, 1815. James Innerarity to John Forbes, August 12, 1815, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 12 (January 1934), 127-30. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, October 4, November 4, 25, 1815, Greenslade Papers.

58. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, August 13, 1816, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 12 (July 1933), 37-38. John Innerarity to James Innerarity, August 14, 1816, *ibid.* 11 (January 1933), 140-41. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, December 13, 14, 1816, January 14, 15, February 9, 10, 12, March 5, April 11, 1817, Greenslade Papers. John Forbes to John Innerarity, February 28, 1817, Greenslade Papers. John Innerarity to John Forbes, May 24, 1817, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 12 (July 1933), 84-86. In the spring of 1817 James, in a letter to his younger brother, allowed as how Matanzas, Cuba, (where John Forbes resided) is "paradise," but he could not expect to clear up their business matters in the Floridas for another two to three years. "I would to God we were clear," he added, "for my

The feared invasion of Pensacola by American insurgents did not materialize. But by late 1817 and early 1818, events had transpired in connection with the First Seminole War which would find Andrew Jackson, however unintentionally, once again coming to the rescue of the interests of Forbes and Company. In 1817 Jackson invaded the Floridas for the purpose of chastising Indians and other adventurers who were threatening lives and property in, and slightly north of, the Floridas. Suspected of inciting the Indians were the Englishmen Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister, plus a War of 1812 nemesis of the Inneraritys, George Woodbine. Not only did the depredations threaten company property and trade with the Indians in the Apalachicola area, but two company employees— Edmund Doyle and William Hambly— were held as prisoners for three months. Arbuthnot and Ambrister were apprehended by Jackson and, after a general court martial, were executed.⁵⁹

Since hostile Indians still in the vicinity of Pensacola required pacifying, and since John Innerarity informed Andrew Jackson that the Spanish governor of West Florida had prevented the company from shipping goods to an American fort, in May 1818 the general was determined to occupy Pensacola again. The day after the Indians evacuated Pensacola, Spanish forces were defeated by Jackson's army. The Spanish would reoccupy the city in February 1819, at which time John Innerarity's father-in-law, Lieutenant Colonel Marcos de Villiers, was commissioned to take charge of the Spanish fort at San Marcos de Apalache. While there he also served as the Forbes Company agent, in addition to engaging in the slave trade for himself and his son-in-law.⁶⁰

part I would at this moment give up my hopes of profit to be quit of my responsibilities and retire on my wife's undoubted property." James Innerarity to John Innerarity, April 7, 1817, Greenslade Papers.

59. Doyle to John Innerarity, January 28, 1817, *Florida Historical Quarterly* 17 (April 1939), 312-15; Doyle to John Innerarity, June 3, 1817, *ibid.*, 315-18; Doyle to John Innerarity, June 17, 1817, *ibid.* 18 (July 1939), 61-63; Doyle to John Innerarity, July 11, 1817, *ibid.* 18 (October 1939), 135-38; Doyle to James Innerarity, August 17, 1817, *ibid.* 139-40. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 313-23. Robert F. Crider, "The Borderlands Floridas, 1815-1821: Spanish Sovereignty Under Siege" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1979), 242.
60. Crider, "Borderlands Floridas," 248-49. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 324-26.

These developments occurred at a time when negotiations were taking place between the United States and Spain that would result in Spain's eventual removal from the Floridas. This prospect was viewed in an ambivalent fashion by the Innerarity brothers. As Spanish military power became less effective in the Gulf coast region, and as British power seemed to jeopardize the company's interests, the Innerarities were not opposed to limited American military intervention that benefitted Forbes and Company. Moreover, after 1815 they occasionally seemed reconciled to the inevitability of American annexation of the Floridas. But as negotiations toward this end progressed, they became apprehensive about the continued possession of lands that had been acquired by the company and its members during the period of Spanish rule. Indeed, they even discussed the idea of petitioning the Spanish minister, Luis de Onís, who was engaged in talks with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, to validate their land claims.⁶¹

The primary concern was that the United States, in a treaty of cession, would refuse to recognize all Spanish land grants in the Floridas approved after April 11, 1802. Such a provision would necessarily jeopardize the legal status of the company's grants. Musing about this possibility, James Innerarity described the United States as a "villainous government" which would force King Ferdinand VII of Spain to "turn robber and annul all grants to his subjects since 1802. The President and all heads of departments," he added, "are of course parties to this nefarious measure." James also used the occasion of this letter to endorse criticisms of Secretary Adams "for his unjustifiable, horrible defense" of Andrew Jackson's incursions into the Floridas.

Even after receiving word that the treaty of cession had been concluded, James speculated about the possible difficulties, both in Spain and the United States, of securing its ratification. Should it not be ratified, or even if ratification was greatly delayed, he believed the United States would simply take possession of the Floridas by force. In that event, Pensacola would be

61. James Innerarity to John McDonough, September 1, 1816; McDonough to James Innerarity, November 5, 1816; James Innerarity to John Innerarity, April 8, 1817, Greenslade Papers.

62. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, February 13, 1819, Greenslade Papers.

a primary objective, an act which would be supported, he contended, by "that hot-headed unprincipled scoundrel John Quincy Adams." Should that come to pass, James urged John to settle his affairs and come to Mobile.⁶³

James Innerarity's suspicions and fears proved to be groundless, for the treaty of cession of 1819 validated all Spanish land grants in the Floridas before January 24, 1818. Seemingly, the titles to all the company's lands were secure. As it turned out, however, the Inneraritys underwent many years of exasperating litigation in United States courts contesting their legal rights to land grants known as Forbes Grant I and Forbes Grant II. Nor were their problems made any easier by John Forbes's retirement from the firm in 1818, and his death on the island of Cuba in 1823. By 1835, the Supreme Court had upheld the legality of the Inneraritys' sale of Forbes Grant II. But Forbes Grant I would become entangled in a series of court cases into the twentieth century. In 1923, the Florida Supreme Court finally settled the issue when it rendered the decision that the lands in Forbes Grant I had never legally belonged to John Forbes and Company, whether under Spanish, United States, or Florida law.⁶⁴

The transfer of control over John Forbes and Company to the Innerarity brothers in 1818, plus the formal transfer of the Floridas to the United States in 1821, did not halt all commercial activities of the firm. But by 1821, trade dealings, largely with Americans, were pretty much confined to Mobile and Pensacola. Moreover, commerce absorbed less and less of the brothers' energy to the point where, as has been aptly suggested, "litigation became the partners' most important occupation after 1821."⁶⁵

In addition to the above-cited land grant cases, the Innerarity brothers became enmeshed in numerous law suits or legal problems stemming from the claims made by heirs of William Panton, Alexander McGillivray, and other partners who had been associated with Panton, Leslie and Company or John Forbes and Company. Perhaps the most fascinating, however, was the Vidal Case of 1821-1822. Though involving a pittance

63. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, February 13, September 6, December 27, 1819, Greenslade Papers.

64. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 327-29, 353-55, 361-62.

65. *Ibid.*, 365.

of money in comparison to other cases, it received a great deal of publicity at the time, created a minor dispute between the United States and Spain, and resulted in a confrontation between John Innerarity and Andrew Jackson.

The last-mentioned aspect of the case was surprising if only because the two men had been reasonably cordial acquaintances since 1814. And, as demonstrated in the Fort Bowyer incident of that year, John Innerarity was not reluctant to engage in actions that could serve the interests of the United States, Jackson, and, of course, Forbes and Company. Indeed, Jackson was sufficiently impressed by John Innerarity's good reputation in the Pensacola community that, days after the general assumed command as governor of West Florida (July 17, 1821), he appointed Innerarity to the town council of Pensacola.⁶⁶ Within a month, however, this cordial relationship would become somewhat strained because of the Vidal case.

In August 1821, Mercedes and Caroline Vidal of Pensacola, daughters of Dr. Nicholas Maria Vidal, brought to the attention of Governor Jackson their contention that the Forbes Company owed them money from the estate of their father who had died in 1806, and for whom the company had served as executor. The suit became a matter of bitter controversy in part because of John Innerarity's procrastination, from 1817 to 1821, in turning over to the Spanish authorities of West Florida the records from Vidal's estate. The Spanish governor of West Florida on the eve of the formal transfer of the province in 1821 was Colonel José Callava who also refused to surrender to American officials the relevant documents he had received from Innerarity. When Jackson, through his emissaries, ordered Governor Callava to release the papers to him (an order of which John Innerarity was aware), Innerarity, according to Jackson's later written account, is supposed to have exclaimed: "The die is cast!" It was this alleged provocative statement which elicited Jackson's pugnacious remark about how not even John Innerarity could "obstruct the pure channels of justice."⁶⁷

Shortly after this encounter, Colonel Callava, joined by Innerarity, was escorted under armed guard for an audience with Andrew Jackson. The interview required simultaneous English-

66. *Ibid.*, 330.

67. *Ibid.*, 331-36. *American State Papers*, 801-02, 829, 850-53.

Spanish translation, in which Innerarity assisted. Forcefully, Jackson continued to demand delivery of the papers bearing on the Vidal sisters' accusations. The failure to do so would lead to the imprisonment of Callava and other Spanish officials. Since there was no immediate compliance, the day after the meeting Jackson ordered the seizure of the Vidal papers from Callava's home. Jackson also removed John Innerarity from the town council of Pensacola, informing him that his replacement would be a person "better disposed to execute the laws and support its dignity." In addition to antagonizing Jackson for his role in defending Callava, Innerarity was also ordered to appear before the American governor to answer questions about other matters relating to Pensacola. Failure to appear and answer the questions, Innerarity was warned, would be perilous to him. Innerarity did not fail to keep the appointment.⁶⁸

After additional judicial proceedings it was determined that Forbes and Company would have to pay the Vidal heirs \$2,027.19, although some scholars have concluded that the Vidal heirs owed John Innerarity \$157. Possibly the best and most authoritative conclusion is that of Coker and Watson: "It is doubtful . . . that the [Vidal] heirs ever received so much as a penny from the money Innerarity was obliged to pay."⁶⁹

Despite the vicissitudes and controversies the Innerarity brothers experienced once they were obliged to live under American rule, the more than two decades of life remaining to both were not years of unrelieved woe and lack of personal happiness or accomplishment. James, for example, continued as the surviving partner of John Forbes and Company headquartered at Mobile from 1830 until his death at that city in 1847. But during the years from the 1820s to the 1840s he also lived on a plantation in Cuba, where he met Laura Manuall Centeno, by whom he apparently had five children out of wedlock.⁷⁰ Further, while he had often criticized the leaders and policies of the United States, toward the end of his life he seemed reconciled to the outcome of past events and favorably optimistic about America's destiny when he wrote his younger brother that he had "full confidence in the fortune of the U.S."⁷¹

68. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 337-42.

69. *Ibid.*, 349.

70. *Ibid.*, 329n.

71. James Innerarity to John Innerarity, May 8, 1842, Greenslade Papers.

As for John Innerarity, in 1830 he purchased most of the remaining Forbes and Company property in Pensacola for his own use, thereby ending the firm's official activities there. In addition to enjoying the company of his family, including the marriage of two of his daughters to Americans and the third to his nephew, William Panton Innerarity, he continued to maintain a prominent social and economic status in Pensacola. A unique achievement and responsibility was his appointment, in 1830, as the vice-consul of France, for which service he was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1846. Moreover, according to a great-granddaughter, during the course of his association with Forbes and Company, "he became well-versed in law, was a great linguist, spoke nine living languages, and learned several Indian dialects."⁷² Finally, as a measure of his determination, and shortly before his death at Pensacola on May 16, 1854, he once more tried to have the British government pay for losses sustained by Forbes and Company during the War of 1812.⁷³

Thus, in the more than four decades the Innerarity brothers were associated with Panton, Leslie and Company and its successor, John Forbes and Company, they shared in a number of momentous events and changes in the Old Southwest of the United States. Though each began his business apprenticeship in the New World at the relatively young age of eighteen, both quickly matured in carrying out responsible, and sometimes dangerous, assignments in behalf of the commercial empire primarily founded by their uncle. They entered the business at a time when their uncle's firm, coincident with declining Spanish power in the lower Mississippi Valley, was beginning to lose some of its near monopoly of the Indian trade in the Old Southwest. Moreover, after their uncle's death in 1801, and during the first decade and a half of the nineteenth century, many events conspired to complicate the commercial endeavors of the Innerarities and other employees of Forbes and Company. These included: European rivalries spilling over into North America, various intrigues along the southern frontier, and Indian uprisings along the border between the United States and

72. Greenslade, "John Innerarity," 94.

73. Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders*, 329.

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the Spanish Floridas. While the two brothers could not prevent the ultimate decline of the company's fortunes, especially after the War of 1812, through perserverence, intelligence, and adroit dealings with friend and foe alike, they were able to uphold successfully the company's interest for many more years. In this sense, James and John Innerarity were indeed good and faithful stewards of their uncle's commercial empire in the Floridas.