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## **THE COMMERCE OF EAST FLORIDA DURING THE EMBARGO, 1806-1812: THE ROLE OF AMELIA ISLAND**

by CHRISTOPHER WARD

**W**HEN Thomas Jefferson's embargo policy brought much of North Atlantic commerce to a halt, world economic patterns—already stressed by France's continental system—readjusted along informal lines for the duration of the Napoleonic era. Of the numerous “transshipment” ports that evolved between 1807 and 1812, none became more significant than Amelia Island, “neutral” Spain's northernmost settlement on the Florida Atlantic seaboard. Just a few hundred feet across the St. Marys River from Georgia, Amelia Island (Fernandina after 1811) became an important link in a chain that enterprising merchants forged to bypass American trade restrictions. The years before the War of 1812 saw a commercial boom in East Florida, and with it a temporary prosperity that did not go unnoticed by United States officials. The Madison administration in 1812 supported actions against Spain's colony in an effort to expand the jurisdiction of the Non-Importation Act, to assert United States hegemony in the region, and to preempt any self-serving British activity in the Floridas. The fact that war with England was plainly on the horizon brought this last concern to the forefront.

The study of world commerce in the era of Napoleon has proven attractive to more than a few historians. It is both an interesting era in economic history and one of the earliest periods for which abundant documentation exists for a near-complete analysis of international traffic.<sup>1</sup> A recent study of the

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1. While data are generally available for most major United States and British ports, statistics are often somewhat suspect for imports. See John

North Atlantic economy in the early nineteenth century is the collection of essays edited by Jacques Barbier and Allan Kuethe, *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy, 1760-1819*.<sup>2</sup> Even with this latest publication, no advances have been made in the study of the role of East Florida during the embargo years since Herbert Heaton's 1941 article, "Non-Importation, 1806-1812," wherein it is ambiguously reported, "Amelia Island, and St. Mary's River on the boundary between Georgia and Florida, may have been bases for inward as well as outward illicit traffic."<sup>3</sup> In her 1932 study, Anna Clauder wrote, "Amelia Island, off the northern coast of Florida, was the destination of many British ships which started from London or Liverpool to pick up American cargoes."<sup>4</sup> Most works acknowledge that Florida was an important commercial center, but until now the dimensions of this traffic have not been estimated.

In recent years, American scholars have increasingly turned to foreign archives to fill historical gaps that have resulted from the study of American documents. Along this line, the ongoing cooperation between Spanish archives and the University of Florida's P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History has resulted in the microfilming of the shipping records of East Florida, a hitherto unexploited find. The opportunity presented by these records is at once unique and exciting, for it is a rare event indeed when the historian is permitted to analyze the documentation of a semi-illicit economy.<sup>5</sup>

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Coatsworth, "American Trade with European Colonies in the Caribbean and South America, 1790-1812," *William and Mary Quarterly* 24 (April 1967), 243-66.

2. Jacques A. Barbier and Allan J. Kuethe, eds., *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy, 1760-1819* (Manchester, 1984). See also Jeffrey A. Frankel, "The 1807-1809 Embargo Against Great Britain," *Journal of Economic History* 42 (June 1982), 291-308, and Donald R. Adams, Jr., "American Neutrality and Prosperity, 1793-1808: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Economic History* 40 (December 1980), 713-37.
3. Herbert Heaton, "Non-Importation 1806-1812." *Journal of Economic History* 1 (November 1941), 188.
4. Anna Cornelia Clauder, *American Commerce as Affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1793-1812* (Philadelphia, 1932), 176.
5. The United States-Florida-Europe trade route was not considered illicit from the Spanish perspective. Since under United States law trade with Spain and Spanish territories was never strictly prohibited, from the American perspective, the trade on this route was semi-illicit. Transshipment through Florida was a means of getting around restrictions. Collections containing data on the commerce of East Florida during the period under

With the last years of the eighteenth century came one of the great periods of commercial expansion. A keystone of the Enlightenment, free trade for the first time replaced the traditional mercantile order that had been imposed upon the North Atlantic economy in the sixteenth century. Bourbon commercial reforms in the Spanish empire revitalized the South American and Caribbean economies, and demographic and economic expansion in the newly independent United States catapulted the young republic into the center of world trade.<sup>6</sup> Although Great Britain was the leading economic power (and the most vulnera-

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review are Papeles Procedentes de Cuba and the East Florida Papers, duplicates of which are in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. Data for the years 1805-1808 and 1811-1812 are from summary sheets of the hacienda real. These reports consist of data copied by treasury officials from the original manifests of the ships. Documents for 1813 are made up of cargo manifests but are not in any specific order and are difficult to use. Data for the first months of 1814 are missing, and materials available for the rest of this year do not give much information other than the amount of taxes collected. The same is true for 1815, but only September and December are missing.

A basic modification of the data set is required for some of the calculations that follow. In some procedures (such as the totaling of arrivals and departures), it is essential to eliminate the ballooning effect of coastal traffic that, for the most part, was separate from the international trade which developed. Coastal traffic was often carried in small vessels—canoes and the like—which had limited cargo capacity. Moreover, customs officials were often lax in reporting the cargoes of these small boats. The action taken to eliminate arrivals and departures of coastal craft during 1805-1808 has been not to consider arrivals and departures that paid less than ten pesos in tariff duties. It has also been necessary to adjust the total of arrivals and taxes collected on these arrivals to remove the effect of several slave ships that called on East Florida.

A final methodological note is that while this study is inclusive with regard to the number of arrivals and departures from Amelia Island, it is exclusive with regard to a number of cargo classifications. To report entire manifests would involve hundreds of cargo variable classifications. Excluded are most variables related to coastal commerce (mainly food items such as butter, corn, lard, flour, etc., and supplies such as soap and candles). In addition, many Caribbean products—sugar, rum, molasses, cacao, and coffee—have been excluded since the importation of these products was infrequent.

6. Janice B. Miller, "The Struggle for Free Trade in East Florida and the Cédula of 1793," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (July 1976), 48-59; Brian R. Hamnett, "Mercantile Rivalry and Peninsular Division: The Consulados of New Spain and the Impact of the Bourbon Reforms, 1789-1824," *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv* (1976), 273-305; John Fisher, "Imperial 'Free Trade' and the Hispanic Economy, 1778-1796," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 13 (May 1981), 21-56.

ble to fluctuations in maritime traffic) as the nineteenth century began, the prosperity and imperial success of her continental opponent was also tied to international commerce. World commerce had always been fickle to strife and warfare among the European powers, but not until the Napoleonic period did economic warfare, as such, become an important component of strategy.<sup>7</sup> The economic conflict that hurled normal commercial activity into a chaos of embargoes, blockades, and restrictive tariffs can be divided between two main theaters. The first was Napoleon's continental system which resulted from England's invincibility to France's naval strength after Trafalgar. The second, and the one that most relates to Florida, was the Jefferson/Madison non-intercourse policy which was formulated as the best means of keeping the United States out of the conflict in Europe.

Jefferson first initiated restrictions on American commercial interaction with the European belligerents in April 1806 with passage of the Non-Intercourse Act. While the act restricted imports on certain goods into the United States, it had no immediate effect because its implementation was postponed until November. Then it was again suspended after only five weeks of enforcement, and it was not until December 1807 that confiscation of cargoes began. The act was ambiguous in defining the specific kinds of goods it covered; almost any item could be seized depending upon the interpretation of local officials.<sup>8</sup> In February 1807, Congress tried to clear up this problem with the passage of the Embargo Act which banned all imports from England and France. It was put into force December 22, 1807. The following March, Congress acted once more by banning all commercial interaction with the belligerents, a policy that, but for one short period, continued until May 1810 when all restrictions were lifted for three months. During mid-1809, trade was briefly opened under the provisions of the Erskine Treaty, but when the British Parliament refused ratification, the restrictions were reapplied. In the fall of 1810, the impediments to trade were again in force, and in February 1811, the confusion con-

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7. This concept is explored in Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1912).

8. Heaton, "Non-Importation," 182-83; Clauder, *American Commerce*, 148.

tinued when the Non-Importation Act was passed, permitting American trade with Europe, but no imports of British goods into this country. In April of 1812, the full embargo was reimposed and remained in force until June 19 when war was declared.

The effects of these actions on the American economy have been debated over the years, and most scholars agree that the non-intercourse policy had a detrimental impact upon the export-oriented sectors of the country—especially in the north-eastern ports and in the cotton-producing areas of the South.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, merchants in the principal American ports were strongly opposed to the restrictive legislation.<sup>10</sup> There was little support in the commercial communities for strict adherence to the non-intercourse policy, and soon both direct and indirect smuggling was common in many ports.<sup>11</sup>

The economy of East Florida during the second Spanish period centered around the port of St. Augustine. Amelia Island was a distant second, being little more than a village of not-too-wealthy cotton growers and farmers. While the whole province was potentially rich in exportable goods, there was little economic development after Florida was returned to Spanish control in 1783. During the short twenty-year British period, however, some progress had been made, particularly in the lumber and wood products industries.<sup>12</sup> Spanish administrators in the last years of the century attempted to maintain this prosperity by relaxing trade restrictions in the 1790s but East Florida continued to stagnate.<sup>13</sup>

Illicit traffic, quite apart from the embargo-era commercial expansion, was the main link to the outside world for the resi-

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9. See Adams, "American Neutrality and Prosperity," or Frankel, "The 1807-1809 Embargo Against Great Britain," for challenges to this claim.
  10. Clauder, *American Commerce*, 135, 148-49; Frankel, "The 1807-1809 Embargo Against Great Britain," 301-02; Heaton, "Non-Importation," 181.
  11. Frankel, "The 1807-1809 Embargo Against Great Britain," 295-301.
  12. "Description of the Commerce of East Florida, Written by Luis Fatio, November 17, 1790," in Whitaker, *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas*, 125-30. See also "Representation with Respect to Commerce by the Governor and Various Inhabitants of East Florida, January 10, 1793," in *ibid.*, 169-73.
  13. Miller, "Struggle for Free Trade in East Florida and the Cédula of 1793," 58-59.

dents of St. Augustine and the Florida east coast.<sup>14</sup> American ships illegally supplied most of the town's needs and provided, next to Havana, the only export market for growers.<sup>15</sup> European entanglements, especially the alliance with France, made it impossible for Spain to supply her colonies— much less police them for smugglers— so the empire was thrown open to neutral trade until the war could run its course. When Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808, partly to enforce his continental system, Britain became Spain's defender, and before long English ships began trading in Hispanic America.

Table 1 illustrates the movement of shipping from Amelia Island during 1805-1806. Cotton exports dominated Amelia Island's commercial activity. In 1805, over 77,000 pounds left the port (with figures for the post-harvest months up— December and January accounting for nearly one-half the trade). The volume of cotton exports decreased somewhat to about 66,000 pounds in 1806, with November and December being the leading months for exports, though cotton was also exported in large quantities during April and June. Lumber was only a relatively insignificant export at this time. The small cotton shipments reflect the small-scale nature of the plantations in the area. Most were owned by Englishmen who had immigrated to Florida during the British period and had elected to remain when Spain regained suzerainty.<sup>16</sup> Food for Fernandina and the

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14. The governor of East Florida requested that the crown take action on illicit commerce by banning all export trafficking in items "which are notoriously known not to be products of this country." See "Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada to the Conde de Lerena Relative to the Commerce of East Florida, November 15, 1791," in Whitaker, *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas*, 155.
  15. This is documented in East Florida Papers, sec. 58, "Miscellaneous Civil and Criminal Proceedings, 1784-1819." bundles 261N5-272.
  16. The names of many of the area's landed citizens can be found in the treasury records in Papeles de Cuba, 403a, 403b. The 1805 records, for example, include the names of many former British subjects: William Fitzpatrick, William Lawrence, John Daniel Kehn, George Atkinson, John Tucker, Samuel Fams, Andrew Atkinson, Spencer Christopher, Henry O'Neille, Donald McDonell, Donald McFarlane, Stephen Brown, Raymond Lawrence, John Crighton, Charles Broward, Michael Ledwitte, John Underwood, and so on. There are only a few Spanish names appearing in the lists. As tensions between the United States and Great Britain grew leading up to 1812, these and other Floridians of British origin implored London to take over East Florida to prevent its falling into the hands of the United States. See J. Leitch Wright, *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (Athens, 1971), 172-73.

Table 1. Commercial activity on Amelia Island.

1805				
	Arrivals	Departures	Cotton exports (lbs.)	Lumber imports (ft.)
JAN	0	3	21,750	1,000
FEB	1	3	9,300	0
MAR	1	1	13,170	1,800 (exported)
APR	1	0	2,550	0
MAY	3	1	2,800	1,000
JUN	0	0	1,100	1,000
JUL	1	0	150	0
AUG	0	1	2,050	1,000 (exported)
SEP	0	1	3,700	1,500
OCT	1	0	1,900	150 (exported)
NOV	1	1	6,650	1,000
DEC	0	0	12,500	1,000
	9	11	77,620	6,500 (imported) 2,950 (exported)
1806				
JAN	3	3	4,200	0
FEB	0	1	5,100	0
MAR	0	0	1,390	0
APR	0	2	8,150	0
MAY	0	0	500	0
JUN	1	2	5,750	0
JUL	0	1	3,850	1,000
AUG	0	1	3,200	1,500
SEP	0	0	1,700	500
OCT	0	1	4,475	500
NOV	4	3	10,900	500
DEC	1	2	16,700	10,700
	9	16	65,915	14,700

Note: Arrivals and departures columns include only ships which paid more than ten pesos in tariffs.

vicinity was imported from Savannah, St. Marys, and Charleston, indicating that Amelia Island was not yet self-sufficient.

In the months after Jefferson began his policy of trade restrictions, no great change took place in the structure of the Florida economy. Indeed, the whole year of 1807 fits well with the 1805-1806 pattern.<sup>17</sup> The number of vessels arriving (that

17. Papeles de Cuba, 403a, fols. 1-178.



paid a tax of more than ten pesos) was eleven, and sailing were twenty. The number of departing ships was higher, but the amount of export duty paid in 1807 was only 200 pesos more than in the previous year. The amount of cotton exported is comparable: 60,900 pounds in 1807, with 65,915 in 1806. There was, however, a small rise in lumber production for export that overcame the trade deficit in the product for the years 1805-1806 and resulted in a surplus of 64,400 feet. The year 1808 also fits well with the regular pattern, although by the last months English ships had begun arriving, signaling the beginning of the embargo economy in Florida.<sup>18</sup> Total cotton exports for the year were 74,650 pounds, and lumber cutting expanded to double its 1807 level with 131,000 feet being cut. The significant aspect of the 1808 data, however, is that on September 23 the first ship flying the English flag arrived to participate in commerce. In November, three more English vessels entered the Amelia Island port; most of these, like the one in September, arrived in ballast. One ship, however, introduced 20,000 varas (1 vara = 32 inches length) of finished canvas and 2,000 barrels of salt. A further indication that the illicit economy was underway by the end of 1808 is that John McClure of Amelia Island imported 1,500 pounds of raw cotton from Georgia on December 7. The normal flow of cotton was from Florida to agents in the large southern ports of Charleston and Savannah; its introduction into Florida (3,500 pounds by the end of 1808) represents a significant event.

The indirect trade that began in the last quarter of 1808 continued throughout 1809. Tables 2 and 3 present a summary of the year's commerce.<sup>19</sup> Both import and export traffic was strong at the beginning and end of the year, while the summer months show a marked slowdown. On the export side, the summer was even slower than in the base years 1805-1806. Although the second peak period, October to December, was a reaction to the tightening of trade restrictions by Congress in March 1809, the January peak cannot be explained so easily. In fact, legislation affecting commerce during that month had been in effect for some time. This indicates that there was almost a year's

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18. *Ibid.*, fols. 179-96.

19. *Ibid.*, fols. 258-540.

Table 2. Monthly Imports to Amelia Island, 1809.

	Arrivals	Cotton	Duelas	Lumber	Rice	Tar	Turpentine	Salt	Potash
JAN	6	16,960	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEB	2	3,333	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MAR	3	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
APR	35	251,534	212,469	20,500	217,950	1,378	207	1,200	0
MAY	13	137,260	141,000	10,000	10,500	250	220	0	106
JUN	4	21,600	10,000	15,000	0	0	0	0	0
JUL	3	16,200	0	0	0	65	0	0	0
AUG	2	12,240	0	0	500	0	0	0	0
SEP	4	5,000	0	12,000	0	5	0	0	0
OCT	10	35,000	222,650	14,400	0	96	0	0	459
NOV	10	37,900	53,500	10,350	22,250	430	200	1,000	0
DEC	44	398,550	198,800	78,200	320,350	62	630	800	127
	136	940,577	838,419	160,450	571,550	2,286	1,257	3,000	692

Note: In tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, cotton is measured in pounds, duelas in actual number, lumber in feet, rice in pounds, tar, potash, and turpentine in barrels, and salt in bushels.

Table 3. Monthly Exports from Amelia Island, 1809

	Sailings	Cotton	Duelas	Lumber	Rice	Tar	Turpentine	Salt	Potash
JAN	5	216,250	0	80,000	0	125	0	0	0
FEB	6	59,000	14,500	268,000	0	50	0	0	0
MAR	5	9,500	11,500	130,000	0	100	0	0	0
APR	21	202,114	209,676	104,000	260,290	1,306	210	1,200	0
MAY	25	149,040	331,375	359,700	10,500	1,750	220	0	106
JUN	3	0	0	226,000	0	0	0	0	0
JUL	3	15,000	26,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	0
AUG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SEP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OCT	8	44,900	120,650	2,045	500	96	0	0	459
NOV	5	33,700	45,500	22,350	17,250	0	0	1,000	0
DEC	26	235,680	176,300	63,350	238,250	62	630	0	127
	<u>107</u>	<u>965,184</u>	<u>935,501</u>	<u>1,295,445</u>	<u>526,790</u>	<u>3,489</u>	<u>1,060</u>	<u>2,200</u>	<u>692</u>

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lag before the Florida route was exploited by merchants. Perhaps the on-and-off actions of the United States administration in 1806 and 1807 that, in effect, delayed the implementation of the embargo for most of those years convinced merchants that if they could just hold tight, normal commerce might soon be resumed. The realization that this was not to be the case was obvious by the middle of 1808, and alternative means and routes of trade were discovered and, by the winter season, exploited.

One of the most dramatic transformations observable (other than the great increase in overall commerce) is in the nature of cargoes carried. The pre-embargo export economy consisted of cotton, with occasional exports of lumber. Cotton and lumber were still traded in 1809 (although the direction for cotton was reversed), and on an augmented level, but to these exports were added *duelas* (or barrel staves), rice, tar, turpentine, and potash. What is striking here is that every export could be classified as war materials. Lumber, tar, turpentine, cotton, and barrel staves were the mainstay of the British Navy, and rice was a major component in the daily rations of English seamen. When commerce with the United States was cut off, prices of these items in Liverpool rose as shortages began to be felt. The British market was so flooded with American supplies when the embargo first went into effect that it took some time for shortages to develop—another reason that trading through Florida did not begin until over a year after commercial ties were severed.<sup>20</sup>

A comparison between import and export figures provide an indication as to the possible development of the local economy. Several of the figures indicate that economic activity other than simple transshipment of items was beginning. Cotton exports exceeded imports by 60,627 pounds, or about what was expected given the trend of local production during the years before the embargo. Products more easily exploited over the short-term, like barrel staves and lumber, on the other hand, make a strong showing. Exports of *duelas* exceeded imports by 96,882— an interesting statistic considering that before this year no barrel parts had been exported since the British period.

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20. Frankel, in "1807-1809 Embargo against Great Britain," reports this, as does Clauder in *American Commerce*.

Lumber exports were 1,113,995 above imports, almost a ten-fold increase over the previous year. Local turpentine production is also indicated.

The direction of commerce, as important a consideration as the volume of commerce, is clear; goods were imported mainly from the United States—more often than not from the South—and reexported from East Florida to Europe. A significant number of ships arrived from Europe, most frequently from England. These vessels carried finished industrial goods such as cloth and worked iron commodities. Most ships that arrived from Europe came in ballast, however, and are not recorded in the documents of the Amelia Island customs house; only ships with cargoes had to make customs declarations. Also, most ships sailing to the United States carried only insignificant cargoes, if any at all. There was no simple exchange of goods taking place; the smuggling carried on in East Florida was a major, well-organized operation in which profits were exchanged either in cash or on paper balance sheets by British and American merchant houses.

Traffic from the Caribbean, both Spanish and foreign, consisted mainly of rum and other liquors, although some sugar and molasses were imported. The export traffic to the islands usually consisted of *duelas* (important in the sugar and liquor industry), and some lumber. In all nine cases of arrivals from Africa, the cargoes were the same: slaves.<sup>21</sup> Exports to Africa consisted of barrel staves and lumber. All potash, cotton, turpentine, tar, and a majority of the lumber, barrel staves, and rice went to English ports. Liverpool, Plymouth, London, Dundee (each centers of the sugar industry), and Portsmouth (with

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21. Several works have been done on the role of East Florida as a center for slave smuggling, and most of them indicate that some illicit traffic was going on. See Frances J. Stafford, "Illegal Importations: Enforcement of the Slave Trade Laws Along the Florida Coast, 1810- 1828," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (October 1967), 124-32. The data employed in this study tend to support Kenneth F. Kiple's argument in "The Case Against a Nineteenth-Century Cuba-Florida Slave Trade," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49 (April 1971), 346-55, that no such activity existed. For the period under review here, customs records report that only a few hundred slaves were cleared through Fernandina, and most of those were re-exported to Cuba. Current research by Dr. Jane Landers, University of Florida, however, indicates that the true figure may be well in excess of this amount. Slaves were, however, imported through St. Augustine.

Table 4. Monthly Imports to Amelia Island, 1810

	Arrivals	Cotton	Duelas	Lumber	Rice	Tar	Turpentine	Salt	Potash
JAN	82	301,790	678,540	148,640	523,050	775	153	3,000	9,509
FEB	31	52,400	183,800	31,500	232,900	274	20	0	260
MAR	17	20,800	68,000	55,000	22,000	331	0	1,000	0
APR	21	38,250	115,500	32,000	21,600	50	0	0	250
MAY	12	6,250	42,000	20,000	15,500	0	0	1,000	0
JUN	3	8,500	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0	0
JUL	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AUG	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,000	0
SEP	4	0	11,000	0	0	0	0	3,200	0
OCT	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NOV	10	0	21,500	4,000	0	0	0	5,000	0
DEC	3	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>192</u>	<u>427,990</u>	<u>1,175,340</u>	<u>316,140</u>	<u>815,050</u>	<u>1,430</u>	<u>173</u>	<u>15,200</u>	<u>10,019</u>

Table 5. Monthly Exports from Amelia Island, 1810

	Arrivals	Cotton	Duelas	Lumber	Rice	Tar	Turpentine	Salt	Potash
JAN	72	215,950	491,800	354,040	415,750	629	153	3,000	3,389
FEB	25	55,700	230,500	21,500	182,500	274	20	0	260
MAR	14	18,300	125,600	120,000	26,000	319	0	0	0
APR	16	37,050	107,000	118,700	18,100	50	0	0	250
MAY	9	14,000	58,000	223,000	8,000	0	0	1,000	0
JUN	4	8,500	19,500	135,000	0	0	0	0	0
JUL	6	0	33,000	243,000	0	0	0	0	0
AUG	2	0	12,000	100,000	0	0	0	0	0
SEP	4	0	22,000	179,000	0	0	0	0	0
OCT	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,200	0
NOV	2	0	21,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	0
DEC	7	0	75,000	208,000	0	0	0	0	0
	<u>165</u>	<u>349,500</u>	<u>1,195,400</u>	<u>1,742,240</u>	<u>650,350</u>	<u>1,272</u>	<u>173</u>	<u>7,200</u>	<u>3,899</u>

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its large naval yards) were the most frequent destinations. Imports from the American northeast included tar, potash, lumber, and food for local consumption.

Commerce in 1810, if not as high in volume as the previous year, was still well above the pre-embargo level. Tables 4 and 5 report imports and exports for 1810.<sup>22</sup> The figures show that trade was very heavy in the first quarter of the year, and that January was the busiest month of the entire embargo era with rice, cotton, duelas, and lumber posting records in the export sector. Virtually all imports from the United States stop after April. This coincides with the short period of unrestricted trade permitted by the Madison administration after May. If one does not count the several slave ships that entered during the summer months, the figures are even smaller than indicated by the data. Imports increased again in October, but the singular feature about these data is that after the United States again eliminated trade in the fall of 1810, the illicit Florida route did not revive. Exports, for the most part, followed the trend of imports, although the continued production of barrel staves and the cutting of lumber allowed a few ships to keep trading even during the summer months. An import/export comparison reveals that lumber production grew still more with 1,426,100 more feet being shipped out than were imported. Except for the case of the wood products, the trade of 1810 after May is not far different from commerce during 1805-1806.

The year 1811 was a mixed one— there were no peaks comparable to the figures for January 1810, but overall commerce maintained a level somewhat about that of the pre-embargo era, and indeed the general increase in commercial activity during these years provided an economic foundation for a more permanent settlement on the Island. It was in 1811 that the city of Fernandina came into being. Figures for this year are presented in tables 6 and 7. The pattern of both imports and exports is rather even. Significant gains once more were recorded in the lumber industry, although cotton production appears to have fallen off. If the excess exports of cotton in 1811 is subtracted from the small excess of cotton imports in 1810, the difference shows a two-year local production figure of only 36,000 pounds. Either two very bad years of harvest occurred back to back, or

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22. Documents for 1810 are in *Papeles de Cuba*, 403b, fols. 89-489.



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Table 6. Monthly Imports to Fernandina, 1811

	Arrivals	Cotton	Duelas	Lumber	Rice	Salt
JAN	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEB	4	0	0	0	16,000	1,300
MAR	4	0	0	1,000	0	0
APR	3	0	2,000	0	124,000	0
MAY	4	0	0	0	0	0
JUN	5	0	5,000	12,000	20,000	0
JUL	9	0	20,000	0	600	0
AUG	3	0	0	0	24,000	0
SEP	7	0	0	0	1,600	0
OCT	5	0	0	10,000	0	2,500
NOV	13	2,000	0	9,000	0	2,275
DEC	6	0	0	3,000	3,600	0
	63	2,000	27,000	35,000	189,800	6,075

some data from these years are missing. Import figures for the year are slightly higher than in 1805 and 1806; only in rice were large figures posted. The amount of taxes collected on imports in 1811— 8,604 pesos— is high because of the arrival of several ships from England with fine finished cloth. One paid 996 pesos in duties. Very little cotton was imported into Fernandina from the southern ports, and this represents another significant change in the pattern of trade. An important reason, of course, is that the Non-Importation Act, which replaced the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts, did permit American ships to sail to

Table 7. Monthly Exports from Fernandina, 1811

	Sailings	Cotton	Duelas	Lumber	Rice	Salt
JAN	4	23,700	5,000	118,000	0	0
FEB	2	0	3,000	30,000	0	0
MAR	8	35,120	13,000	185,000	0	0
APR	14	0	52,000	479,000	124,000	4,500
MAY	5	0	28,000	170,000	0	0
JUN	7	0	23,000	316,500	20,000	0
JUL	10	46,200	5,000	236,000	0	0
AUG	7	0	44,000	128,000	12,000	0
SEP	3	5,000	5,000	73,000	0	0
OCT	4	0	6,000	78,000	0	0
NOV	5	0	0	321,000	0	0
DEC	5	6,000	5,000	176,500	0	0
	74	116,020	189,000	2,311,000	156,000	4,500

European ports. No British goods, however, could be introduced into the United States. Charleston newspapers carry advertisements for ships sailing to England right up until the embargo was reimposed in April 1812.

The data of 1812 runs only through March 12. The function of the customs house was stopped when the Americans occupied Amelia Island that month. The data for the few weeks show that the trends of 1811 continued. Lumber production remained high, as did the exports of duelas, but cotton still did not rebound from the 1811 levels. The documentation for 1813 is much different from the documents used in the rest of this study. It consists essentially of rough sketches of cargoes with no indication as to value, taxes paid, or place of origin or destination. Data for 1814 report only the amount of duties each ship paid, and the first half of the year is missing. The materials for 1815 are similar, although with only September and December missing, they are more complete. Again, however, they report only taxes paid.

Taxes collected by the Fernandina authorities can also be used to formulate a description of trade. The tax rates, however, changed over the course of the period under study. The standard tax in place since the *cédula* of 1793 was 15 percent on imports and 6 percent on exports. Taxes were only applied to cargoes of foreign origin.<sup>23</sup> In February 1807, an additional tax, the *almirantazgo*, 4 percent on imports and 2 percent on exports, was also applied. These rates were again modified in 1809, with the *subvención a la guerra* (war subsidy tax), which to the rates of 1793 and 1807 added 1.5 percent on all merchandise entering and leaving the port. This level of taxation continued until 1818. The revenues reported in table 8 have not been standardized and must be viewed in the context of the level of taxation in force during the various periods.

The increase in revenue for the period 1809-1810 was caused essentially by the accelerated level of commercial activity during those years, although higher taxes also contributed to increasing these figures. If the documents contained breakdowns of amounts charged to individual cargo classifications

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23. These rates are listed in Pablo Tornero, *Relaciones de dependencia entre Florida y Estados Unidos, 1783-1820* (Madrid, 1979), 78.

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Table 8. Taxes Collected on Imports and Exports at Amelia Island, 1805-1811

Amounts Collected (Pesos Fuerte)			
Year	Imports	Exports	Total
1805	369	482	851
1806	361	511	872
1807	533	497	1,030
1808	5,245	1,201	6,446
1809	31,676	14,426	46,102
1810	24,114	9,000	33,114
1811	8,604	4,304	12,908

when multifaceted cargoes were declared, it would be possible to calculate the total value of the various items transshipped through Fernandina. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The manifests, however, often do give actual values of the cargoes carried. On many occasions, though, this information was not recorded, and, accordingly, it is impossible to calculate the exact values of merchandise.

In March 1812, commercial activity at Amelia Island was interrupted when Spain temporarily lost possession of much of East Florida to a group of adventurers from Georgia. When these so-called "patriots" took control of the mouth of the St. Marys River and declared themselves the legitimate government of East Florida, they promptly ceded the territory under their control to the United States, their plan all along. Madison, who had not discouraged preparation for the action throughout 1811, backed down only after the patriot forces failed to capture St. Augustine. He returned the occupied areas of Florida to Spain with lengthy protestations of "sincere" apology.<sup>24</sup>

The traditional historiography of the War of 1812 and the troubles in East Florida has essentially dismissed the thriving smuggling trade as a factor in precipitating action in favor of more tangible causes.<sup>25</sup> More important, as the argument goes, were American fears that should war break out with England, Florida would become a theater of enemy operations that would

24. Ramón Romero Cabot, "Los últimos años de la soberanía Española en la Florida, 1783-1812" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad de Sevilla, 1983), 447-56.

25. For example, see Julius William Pratt, *The Expansionists of 1812* (New York, 1925), 77-78.

imperial the southern states. In addition to this, the United States did not consider the St. Marys River the final southern boundary of the nation— indeed, covetous glances had been cast southward for years. Even though these explanations were made before the Amelia Island smuggling statistics were known, the results of this study do not indicate that any significant alteration in the traditional explanations need be made. While smuggling was important, apparently it was not an overriding concern in American government documents or private correspondence of the era.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the lengthy letter of explanation written by President Madison and published in the nation's newspapers does not even make mention of the illicit traffic of East Florida.<sup>27</sup> If the data from Amelia Island are reviewed in the context of world trade before and during the embargo era, one quickly realizes that the amount of merchandise shipped via this indirect route was not very significant. The only item that really counted as contraband was cotton. The other exports were, in essence, legitimate local industries; they owed their birth to the smuggling traffic, but they were not illicit in and of themselves. American exports of cotton in 1807 amounted to 64,000,000 pounds, most of which went to England.<sup>28</sup> During the height of the smuggling era, 1809, only about 1,000,000 pounds were exported from Florida. Of course, these million pounds need to be looked at in relation to the total cotton imports to England during the embargo; in 1808 it was something over 12,000,000 pounds.<sup>29</sup> Even so, the Amelia Island figures are hardly impressive. And at a time when American customs houses were collecting millions of dollars in tariff duties, Fernandina topped out at 46,102 pesos fuertes. At least in this case, smuggling did not approach the volume posted in legitimate trade. Cotton traffic may be taken as the best indication of the actual level of illicit activity that passed through Fernandina. Imports have been reported because exports would be distorted by local production. From these figures it can be said that illicit commerce at Fernandina lasted from December 1808 until July 1810.

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26. *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, 12th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 23, 1683-94.

27. *Charleston Courier*, April 1, 1812.

28. Clauder, *America Commerce*, 133.

29. Frankel, "The 1807-1809 Embargo Against Great Britain," 296.

Another point should be considered, however, that might inflate the commercial issue as a cause for American intervention. The little community of St. Marys, Georgia, located near Amelia Island, was also a haven for illicit traffic. Unlike the Spanish in Florida who saw nothing illegal in the indirect trade with the United States and Europe, American officials in Georgia did insist that the commerce was against the law. Accordingly, there are no incriminating documents for the study of the commerce of St. Marys. If the trade of St. Marys approached the volume encountered at Fernandina, then perhaps this whole illicit economy did have a major impact on world trade and thus did pose a threat to American commercial policy.

To summarize these findings, Amelia Island was a smuggling center during the era of the American embargo against the European belligerents. Trade through Fernandina supplied vital naval materials to Britain in her struggle against Napoleon, although the volume of this traffic was relatively insignificant compared to overall pre-embargo activity in the North Atlantic. During 1809, Fernandina supplied less than one-tenth of British imports of cotton. The local lumber industry received a boost from the heavy traffic through the port, and by 1811 over 2,000,000 feet of lumber were being cut each year. This trade, while a phenomenon of the smuggling economy, was entirely legitimate and was able to flourish even after illicit trade had retreated to lower levels after 1810. For this reason alone, the last years of the second Spanish period saw the genesis of local East Florida economic patterns that would endure into the nineteenth century.