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Climate, Community, and Commerce among Florida, Cuba, and the Atlantic World, 1784-1800

by Sherry Johnson

In late June 1791, St. Augustine captain Don Antonio de Alcántara sailed into Havana harbor at the helm of his schooner, the *Santa Catalina*. As the captain and master of his own vessel, he was held in high esteem, and Spanish customs officials acknowledged his status by prefacing his name with the honorific title “Don” (Sir).¹ A decade earlier, his arrival would have been unthinkable. His port of origin was in British hands in the early 1780s, and Britain was at war with Spain. Even after the conflict ended in 1783, commerce with Cuba remained restricted.² More important, Alcántara would not have been granted a gentleman’s

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1. “Relación de las Embarcaciones Españolas y Estrangeras que en el próximo pasado mes de ____ han salido de este puerto para las Colónias Estrangeras en solicitud de Negros; y de las que en el propio mes han entrado en este puerto con cargamento de ellos con distinción de su número, clases, y sexos por el orden siguiente” (hereafter “Relación,”), 1 July 1791, Legajo 2207, Audiencia de Santo Domingo (hereafter SD), Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Seville, Spain, photocopies in the Levi Marrero Collection, Special Collections, Florida International University, Miami; *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 7 August 1791, Colección Cubana, Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana, Cuba.
2. James A. Lewis, “Anglo American Entrepreneurs in Havana: The Background and Significance of the Expulsion of 1784-1785,” in Jacques A. Barbier and Allan J. Kuethe, eds., *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy, 1764-1819* (Manchester, Eng., 1984), 112-126.

status because he was of humble origins.³ In the intervening years, however, St. Augustine returned to Spanish rule, commercial regulations were relaxed, and Alcántara and several other families enjoyed unprecedented social advancement because they were the conduits that linked cities in Florida, Cuba, and the Atlantic world. Sadly, though, Alcántara's meteoric rise to prominence was short lived. Just days after unloading his cargo, he set sail for home in East Florida unaware that the fifth-most-destructive hurricane in history was poised to strike the northern coast of Cuba and the Straits of Florida.⁴ At home in St. Augustine, Alcántara's wife and *Santa Catalina's* namesake, Catalina Costa, waited in vain for her husband to return. What remained of the schooner probably washed ashore on the Florida peninsula south of St. Augustine, while the fate of her captain and crew was never officially determined.⁵

Although the hurricane of 1791 and similar storms were routine dangers for Caribbean residents, natural disasters have rarely been considered as causal agents for historic processes.⁶ Except for studies of well-known shipwrecks such as the *Atocha*, historians have virtually ignored the effects of deadly storms especially since, from 1784 through 1821, East Florida suffered but one hurricane (in 1811).⁷ From an Atlantic world perspective that acknowledges

3. Census Returns, Census of 1784, Bundle 323A, East Florida Papers (hereafter EFP), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, microfilm copies in P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville.
4. *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 7 August 1791; Edward N. Rappaport and José Fernández-Partagás, "The Deadliest Atlantic Tropical Cyclones, 1492-Present," National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Website, <<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/pastdeadly1.html>>, 2.
5. Miscellaneous Legal Instruments and Proceedings, 25 September 1791, Bundle 261n5, EFP.
6. Stuart B. Schwartz, "The Hurricane of San Ciriaco: Disaster, Politics, and Society in Puerto Rico, 1899-1901," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72 (August 1992): 303-34; Sherry Johnson, "The Rise and Fall of Creole Participation in the Cuban Slave Trade, 1789-1796," *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 30 (1999): 54-75; Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disasters in America* (New York, 2000); Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Winds of Change: Hurricanes and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2001); José Hernández Partagás, "Poey, Viñes y Millás: Contribuyentes de Cuba al conocimiento básico de la meteorología," MSS copy, Otto G. Richter Library Special Collections, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fla. See also José Carlos Millás, *Hurricanes of the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions* (Miami, 1968), for a general survey.
7. Eugene Lyon, *The Search for the Atocha* (Port Salerno, Fla, 1979), 50-68; Joaquín Sánchez, "Reports of Residents' Losses in Barrios Iglesia, Castillo,

St. Augustine's favorable geographic location, hurricanes and their consequences were catalysts that justified economic interchanges among its port cities. Disasters' immediate consequences are often outweighed by their ripple or domino effects; this study will establish how an autonomous and pragmatic local policy of disaster response evolved in the wake of several hurricanes in the region under Havana's jurisdiction from the 1760s onward.⁸ When faced with a post-disaster crisis, Spanish royal officials tolerated, even encouraged, repeated violations of imperial commercial restrictions through trade with the United States.

Through its social and environmental analysis, this article joins other studies that challenge the portrayal of East Florida during the Second Spanish Period (1784-1821) as a destitute backwater and a financial drain upon the Spanish treasury.⁹ A growing number of such studies demonstrate that St. Augustine's merchants and captains traded throughout the Atlantic world, but one major conceptual stumbling block has been the inability to explain why trade between Spanish East Florida and the United States could

Contaduría and Cuarteles," Papers on Various Subjects, 1783-1821, 15 October 1811, Bundle 198C16, EFP. Prior to the return of Spanish rule, the most recent hurricane occurred in 1775; William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, ed. Mark Van Doren. (1928; reprint, New York, 1955), 311.

8. Richard Stuart Olson, "Un-Therapeutic Communities: A Cross-National Analysis of Post-Disaster Political Unrest," *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 15 (August 1997): 221-38; "Towards a Politics of Disaster: Losses, Values, Agendas, and Blame," *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 18 (August 2000): 265-87; A. Cooper Drury and Richard Stuart Olson, "Disasters and Political Unrest: An Empirical Investigation," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 6 (September 1995): 153-61. Richard Lobdell, "Economic Consequences of Hurricanes in the Caribbean," *Review of Latin American Studies* 3 (1990): 178-96; Virginia García Acosta, "Introduction," in Virginia García Acosta, coord., *Historia y desastres en America Latina*, 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1996), 1: 15-37; Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin, eds. *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disasters* (New York, 1997).
9. Pablo Tornero Tinajero, *Relaciones de dependencia entre Florida y Estados Unidos* (Seville, Spain, 1978); James G. Cusick, "Across the Border: Commodity Flow and Merchants in Spanish St. Augustine," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 69 (January 1991): 277-99; Christopher Ward, "The Commerce of East Florida during the Embargo, 1806-1812: The Role of Amelia Island," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (October 1989): 160-79; Sherry Johnson, "The Spanish St. Augustine Community, 1784-1795: A Reevaluation," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 68 (July 1989): 27-54; idem, "Marriage and Community Construction in St. Augustine, 1784-1804," in *Florida=s Heritage of Diversity: Essays in Honor of Samuel Proctor*, ed. Mark D. Greenberg, William Warren Rogers, and Canter Brown Jr. (Tallahassee, Fla., 1997): 1-13.

operate in clear violation of imperial laws. The conclusions of this recent historiographical trend conflict with an older tradition that maintains that one of the most important commercial reforms of the Bourbon era, the Real Orden de Comercio Libre of 1778 (Free Trade Decree), was not extended to East Florida until 1793.¹⁰ Unlike explanations that are framed in political and economic terms, this article will demonstrate that post-disaster emergency conditions allowed imperial laws to be set aside. By situating East Florida's dilemma within the wider context of Spanish imperial policy, this study will establish that government responses implemented in the aftermath of hurricanes between 1784 and 1794 were simply a continuation of measures developed in Cuba over the previous twenty years. Because East Florida was politically and economically subordinate to Havana, the province was impacted—sometimes positively and sometimes negatively—when hurricanes struck Cuba, Louisiana, and other areas under that island's jurisdiction. In most cases, when scarce resources could not be transferred to Florida, emergency measures opened the normally-rigid commercial regulations, and St. Augustine's maritime community took advantage. For Alcántara and other men of his social cohort, trade among Atlantic port cities led to the accumulation of wealth and extraordinary social advancement.

In early June 1784, hurricanes were far from the minds of Havana's military community, as frenetic preparations were underway throughout the Spanish Gulf Coast and the Caribbean in anticipation of the return of Spanish rule to the Floridas. Royal orders flew back and forth across the Atlantic between Cuba and Spain. In the barracks and on the wharves, men and materiel were gathered for transfer to St. Augustine. Newly-appointed governor Brigadier Vicente de Zéspedes prepared to embark for East Florida and continue his distinguished service to His Majesty, Charles III.¹¹ In Philadelphia, Father Thomas Hassett, designated

10. Arthur Preston Whitaker, trans. and ed., *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas, with Incidental Reference to Louisiana* (Deland, Fla., 1931), xxxix-xl, 177-85; Janice Barton Miller, "The Struggle for Free Trade in East Florida and the Cédula of 1793," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (July 1976): 48-59.

11. José de Gálvez to Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, 31 October 1783, Legajo 10, Fondo de las Floridas, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, in Joseph B. Lockey, *East Florida, 1783-1785: A File of Documents Assembled, and Many of Them Translated*, ed. John Walton Caughey (Berkeley Calif., 1949), 174.

as East Florida's principal priest and ecclesiastical judge, packed his belongings for the trip southward.¹² In Havana harbor, captain Pedro Vásquez readied his bergantine, the *San Matias*, and the other ships under his command for the important responsibility of carrying the governor and his entourage to their new assignment.¹³ Although not part of the expeditionary force, the regiment of Asturias celebrated their part in the victory that had returned the province to Spain and waited for the *San Cristóval* to be readied to carry them home to Cádiz.¹⁴

Far out to sea, unknown to the inhabitants of Florida and Havana, the telltale counterclockwise circulation and dropping barometer warned that a deadly storm was brewing in the tropics. In its journey westward along the twenty-fourth parallel, the storm skirted the north coast of Cuba as it bore inexorably down on the Straits of Florida and the peninsula. Like many early season storms, though, the cooler land mass of North America deflected the brunt of the tempest. Recurving northward, the worst of the storm stayed out to sea, although violent winds and copious amounts of rain drenched the city of Havana.¹⁵ Anxious to arrive at his destination, Governor Zéspedes waited impatiently for the weather to clear.¹⁶

At last, on June 19, Zéspedes and the five hundred men who accompanied him departed for St. Augustine on the *San Matias*. Sailing on a fresh wind that trails the passage of a strong storm, the convoy made good time and arrived off St. Augustine in seven days. But the hurricane that frustrated Zéspedes's departure also frustrated his arrival for upon entering the harbor, pilot Joaquín Escalona conveyed the news that the main channel leading into St. Augustine had been silted over from the storm's strong winds and high tides. Zéspedes was forced to wait until the following day when Escalona returned in his shallow-draft launch and ferried the

12. José de Gálvez to Thomas Hassett, 25 November 1783, Bundle 39, EFP, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 176-77; Michael J. Curley, *Church and State in the Spanish Floridas* (Washington, D.C., 1940), 73-86.

13. Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes to Bernardo de Gálvez, 16 July 1784, Legajo 2660, SD, AGI, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 223-24.

14. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 4 July 1784, Bundle 40, EFP.

15. Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 15 June 1784, Legajo 1344, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba (hereafter PC), AGI.

16. Zéspedes to Pedro Vásquez, 11 July 1784, Legajo 2660, SD, AGI, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 228.

governor into the city.¹⁷ Unable to cross the sand bar that drew only seven feet of water, Captain Vázquez and the fleet of ships under his command proceeded north to the port of St. Marys to complete the disembarkation of men and materiel.¹⁸

For Governor Zéspedes, the storm was but an inconvenience but for other members of the expedition, the dangers were far greater. Father Hassett made his way southward towards East Florida aboard the *Santa Ana*, captained by Miguel Ysnardy. The hurricane caught the on June 28, and at the height of the storm's fury, it foundered on the reef of Arogüito Key. Badly injured, Father Hassett and the other survivors made their way ashore. They repaired one of the *Santa Ana*'s boats, and he and twelve other men sailed to Havana where authorities were notified to send a search party for the remainder of the crew.¹⁹ A similar fate befell the regiment of Asturias. The *San Cristóval*, sailing north in the Gulf Stream between the Florida peninsula and the northern Bahamas, also foundered on a reef. The ship and eight soldiers were lost, but the majority of the regiment along with the ship's crew and captain made it to a nearby island where they were rescued and brought to safe harbor at St. Marys.²⁰ But Mother Nature was not yet finished with the expeditionary force. In early July, the high winds and rough seas of another early season storm caused many boats anchored in St. Marys harbor to lose anchor cables and crash into one another. The *San Matias* collided with the *San Antonio de Padua* and suffered considerable damage above deck, although it escaped any structural damage below. At last, after recuperating in Havana, Father Hassett arrived in St. Augustine, and in early August the shipwrecked regiment of Asturias was able to depart for Spain with the happy news that Spanish rule had been reinstated in Florida.²¹

Hurricanes were facts of life to residents and royal officials in the fortified port cities of the Caribbean. Families who made their living from the sea adopted a fatalist attitude toward the inherent

17. Zéspedes to Bernardo de Gálvez, 16 July 1784, Legajo 2660, SD, AGI, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 223-24.

18. Ibid.

19. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 13 October 1784, Bundle 40, EFP.

20. Ibid., 4 July 1784.

21. Ibid., 8 August, 13 October 1784.

dangers involved in a maritime culture. But even though popular attitudes remained static, the government's response underwent significant change in the late eighteenth century. Since the beginning of Charles III's reign in 1759 and the spread of Enlightenment ideas to Cuba, the captain-general of Cuba and other royal officials took an active role in promoting scientific knowledge.²² Over the previous twenty years, the development of meteorology, although primitive by modern standards, had grown by leaps and bounds and maritime practices had changed accordingly.²³ Harbor pilots in Caribbean port cities like St. Augustine operated under strict rules that compelled them to delay departures if traditional wisdom and weather signs portended treacherous weather.²⁴ During the autumnal equinox, Caribbean ports were closed, and no ship was permitted to leave until the dangerous season had passed.²⁵ No stranger to the devastating effects of hurricanes, Governor and Captain General Bernardo de Gálvez sent out a circular order in the wake of the 1784 storm to all captains and pilots detailing the means to prevent transports from being caught in another storm.²⁶

Equally important as the desire to advance scientific knowledge and improve navigation, Charles III's officials developed imperial policy to mitigate disaster's impact on the civilian population. Such royal initiatives evolved, in part, as a result of hard experience in another of Spain's Gulf Coast colonies, Louisiana, and the unsatisfactory attempt to impose Spanish rule in 1766. The man chosen as governor, Antonio de Ulloa, was a capable bureaucrat with long experience in Spanish America, but his efforts to bring the rebellious former-French residents under control were thwarted by the collateral effects of a hurricane in 1766

22. Manuel Casado Arbonés, "Bajo el signo de la militarización: las primeras expediciones científicas ilustradas a América (1735-1761)", *La ciencia española en Ultramar* (Madrid, 1991), 19-47; Manuel Lucena Salmoral, "Las expediciones científicas en la época de Carlos III (1759-1788)", *La ciencia española en Ultramar*, 49-63.

23. Report of José Antonio Armona, 17 October 1773, Legajo 256-A, Correos, AGI.

24. Junta de Pilotos de la Havana, 10 October 1775, Legajo 257-B, Correos, AGI; Miscellaneous Legal Instruments and Proceedings, 1784-1819, 19 September 1787, Bundle 261N5, EFP.

25. Report of José Fuertes, 16 August 1791, 25 October 1790, Legajo 260-A, Correos, AGI.

26. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 11 July 1784, Bundle 40, EFP.

that drained the funds in his limited treasury.²⁷ When the royal transports carrying the money for his treasury were wrecked along the Gulf Coast, Ulloa was forced to grant concessions to the local residents.²⁸ For two years, he struggled to govern the colony when disaster intervened once again in the form of a particularly deadly storm that struck Havana on October 15, 1768.²⁹ The crisis in Cuba created a domino effect that led to predictable shortages and forced royal officials to shift resources to the island. Two weeks later, the French inhabitants of Louisiana took advantage of the crisis and revolted against Spanish rule. Ulloa was forced to flee the colony for the safety of Cuba.³⁰ Only a strong response by Cuban officials in Havana brought Louisiana back into the Spanish fold.³¹

The repression of the New Orleans rebellion is universally analyzed in a political context and frequently is seen as a purely local event. If the rebellion is revisited in the light of recent theoretical advances in modern disaster research, however, it is clear that a series of disasters led to a scarcity of resources that led in turn to rebellion. As early as the 1760s, Cuban officials recognized what modern governments are just learning: in disaster's aftermath a strong correlation exists between an inadequate governmental response and political unrest.³² Faced with numerous problems in Louisiana, Charles III's officials reacted with autonomous decrees granting concessions designed to make recovery easier and quicker for the areas hit hardest. The first decree allowed

27. Robert S. Weddle, *Changing Tides: Twilight and Dawn in the Spanish Sea, 1763-1803* (College Station, Tex., 1995), 10-23.

28. Francisco de Solano Pérez-Lila, *La pasión de reformar: Antonio de Ulloa, marino y científico, 1716-1795* (Seville, Spain, 1999), 220.

29. *Estado que comprende las desgracias que causó el huracán el día 15 de octubre en la ciudad de la Havana* (Cádiz, Spain, 1768); *Estado que comprende las desgracias que causó el huracán el día 15 de octubre en la ciudad de la Havana* (Madrid, 1769), Legajo 1594, SD, AGI.

30. John Preston Moore, "Antonio de Ulloa: A Profile of the First Spanish Governor of Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 8 (summer 1967): 189-218; Ernest F. Dibble and Earle W. Newton, eds., "Revolt in Louisiana: A Threat to Franco-Spanish Amistad," in *Spain and Her Rivals on the Gulf Coast* (Pensacola, Fla., 1971), 40-55; Gilbert C. Din, *Francisco Bouligny: A Bourbon Soldier in Spanish Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, La., 1993), 31-35.

31. Bibiano Torres-Ramírez, *Alejandro O'Reilly en las Indias* (Seville, Spain, 1969); Weddle, *Changing Tides*, 15-22, describes how weather and navigational difficulties plagued the O'Reilly expedition.

32. Olson, "Towards a Politics of Disaster," 283.

Caribbean captains-general unprecedented autonomy in setting aside both metropolitan and local regulations that would hamper recovery efforts.³³ In practical terms, this meant that foreigners would be allowed to provide food for the province, and by 1768 after the rebellion, Louisiana expended 70,000 pesos, nearly half of its 160,000 peso budget, for flour purchased from the "English."³⁴ Similar allowances were promulgated in Cuba during the disastrous 1770s and continued into the 1780s.³⁵ Of course, concessions were intended to be temporary, but subsequent ecological crises during the remainder of the century meant that the emergency measures enacted in the 1760s were invoked again and again.³⁶

The political crisis that faced Vicente de Zéspedes in Florida in 1784 was virtually identical to that facing Antonio de Ulloa in Louisiana in 1768. Like Ulloa, Zéspedes dealt with a surly popula-

33. Ramón de la Sagra, *Historia económica política y estadística de la Isla de Cuba* (Havana, Cuba, 1831), 133; Roy F. Nichols, "Trade Relations and the Establishment of the United States Consulates in Spanish America," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 13 (August 1933): 293; María Encarnación Rodríguez Vicente, "El comercio Cubano y la guerra de emancipación norteamericana," *Anuario de estudios americanos* 11 (1954), 94; Julio Le Riverend Brusone, *Historia económica de Cuba* (Havana, Cuba, 1974), 103.
34. Athanase de Mézières to Luis de Unzaga y Amézaga, 1 February 1770, Legajo 110, PC, AGI, in Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed., *Athanase de Mézières and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1768-1780* (New York, 1914), 147. The correspondent, Athanase de Mézières, reported that the wheat crop failed because of the extremely rainy season.
35. For the 1768 hurricane, see Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 12 November 1768, from Batabanó, and from Guadalupe (where many Floridano families had evacuated in 1764), 31 October 1768, granting permission to militia members to sell bananas to alleviate the food shortage, Legajo 1093. The official governmental dossier on the storm is in Legajo 1097. For the 1770s, see Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 22 October 1772, 2 November 1772, 11 February 1773, Legajo 1151; 2 December, 16 December 1772, Legajo 1143, all PC, AGI.
36. C.N. Caviedes, "Five Hundred Years of Hurricanes in the Caribbean: Their Relationship with Global Climate Variations," *Geojournal* 23 (April 1991): 301-10; idem, *El Niño in History: Storming Through the Ages* (Gainesville, Fla., 2001). Beginning in 1766 and continuing through the 1790s, the settlements of the Caribbean basin suffered "spasmodic climatic interludes" ranging from drought to deluge; Caviedes, *El Niño in History*, 167-68, 201, 206. Geographers and climatologists date the little Ice Age as lasting from c. 1550 through c. 1850; César N. Caviedes, Personal communication to author, 24 October, 2000; Sherry Johnson, "Where Has All the Flour Gone? Environmental Crisis and the Formation of Atlantic World Connections, 1760s-1770s" (paper presented at the American Historical Association Meeting, San Francisco, Calif., January 2002).

tion of foreigners with a treasury that was inadequate for the costs of the recovery.³⁷ Zéspedes was sent to St. Augustine with a ridiculously small sum of forty thousand pesos, which was hardly enough to pay ordinary operating costs, never mind the extraordinary costs of the aftermath of disaster. To begin were the costs of procuring additional boats to take the regiment of Asturias to Cádiz.³⁸ Crews from the damaged vessels had to be transferred to ships that would be returning to Spain, an additional expense.³⁹ While waiting for the equipment and munitions to be unloaded, the captain of the Asturias regiment and thirty of his soldiers were lodged aboard the *San Matias*.⁴⁰ St. Augustine's treasury bore the entire cost of their maintenance since they were not permitted to set foot on shore, and ultimately, it was saddled with all of the transportation costs.⁴¹ On a smaller scale, Father Hassett, who had lost everything in the shipwreck, petitioned the crown for restitution, and upon Zéspedes's recommendation, he was awarded four hundred pesos in 1786.⁴²

Although Zéspedes recognized compensation as the prudent and just course to take, by 1785 it was apparent that funds in his treasury could not cover the costs of provincial operations. On numerous occasions he pleaded with Bernardo de Gálvez, the captain general of Cuba, and with Juan Ignacio de Urriza, the Intendant in Havana, to send him more money.⁴³ The problem was complicated because the Mexican treasury that supplied the Florida situado was experiencing its own difficulties of poor harvests caused by drought.⁴⁴ Faced with food shortages and popular riots, Mexican officials limited money they sent to Havana for St.

37. The troublemakers in East Florida were termed "banditi" by contemporaries. Lockey describes them as "reft gees and vagrants"; Lockey, "Introduction," in *East Florida*, 14-19.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Zéspedes to Bernardo de Gálvez, 16 July 1784, Legajo 2660, SD, AGI, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 228.

40. *Ibid.*, 227.

41. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 8 August 1784, Bundle 40, EFP.

42. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 8 August 1786, Bundle 41b4, EFP.

43. Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes to Juan Ignacio de Urriza, 20 September 1785, Bundle 55, EFP, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 727-28; Zéspedes to Gálvez, 1 October 1785, Legajo 2660, SD, AGI, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 730-31.

44. Enrique Florescano, *Precios de maíz y crisis agrícolas en México (1708-1810)* (Mexico City, 1969).

Augustine. Worse still, when the *situado* did arrive, the Intendant of Havana discounted a percentage of the *situado* monies before shipping the remainder to East Florida.⁴⁵

Determined not to repeat the experience of his predecessor, Zéspedes's prudent response drew upon precedent and practice that began in Louisiana and had been commonplace on the island of Cuba for eighteen years.⁴⁶ To begin, he implemented emergency measures at the local level that allowed foodstuffs to enter duty free.⁴⁷ He also drew upon the example set in 1772 that permitted Spanish ships to travel to foreign ports to purchase provisions, and foreign ships were allowed to enter St. Augustine if they carried food.⁴⁸ Although promulgated in St. Augustine, the action met with the approval of his superior officer, captain general Gálvez, who confirmed Zéspedes's actions in 1786.⁴⁹ Zéspedes's response subsequently won approbation at the highest levels of government from Minister of the Indies José de Gálvez.⁵⁰ Such actions violated all existing restrictions that prohibited trade between Spain's colonies and the newly-independent United States, nevertheless, Zéspedes's emergency powers allowed the prohibition to be circumvented.⁵¹ The result was that the United States, hard pressed for currency and prohibited from trading directly with Cuba, would come to utilize St. Augustine as the gateway to the island. All participants would profit, but mariners and merchants in St. Augustine would be the direct beneficiaries.

The reaction of St. Augustine's maritime community was immediate and led to a stampede to purchase ships. Sales were financed through a variety of methods, but frequently properties

45. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 25 August 1786, Bundle 41b4, EFP.

46. Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 12 November 1772, Legajo 1141; 12 September 1772, Legajo 1143, PC, AGI.

47. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), Bundle 41b4, 25 August 1786, citing Zéspedes's original declaration in 1784.

48. Departures of Vessels, July-December 1784, Bundle 242H19, Arrival of Vessels, July-December 1784, Bundle 214F17, both EFP; Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 22 October 1772, 2 November 1772, 11 February 1773, Legajo 1151; 2 December, 16 December 1772, Legajo 1143, PC, AGI.

49. Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 12 September 1784, 9 November, 20 November 1784, Legajo 1356, PC, AGI.

50. Royal Order, 4 November 1784, Bundle 39, EFP, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 304.

51. Nichols, "Trade Relations," 289-313; Lewis, "Anglo American Entrepreneurs," 112-26.

owned by a prospective captain's family were sold or mortgaged. For example, barely one month after the return of Spanish rule, merchant Roque Leonardy sold a slave and house he had purchased during the British period and just as quickly invested in a shallow-draft schooner for the coastal trade.⁵² Another strategy was to mortgage a family property to raise capital for the purchase.⁵³ Other men enlisted the help of kin and compadres who posted security bonds to finance their entry into the maritime trade.⁵⁴ One complicated financial trail surrounded Antonio Laso and José Suárez who combined their resources to purchase a schooner from William Slater.⁵⁵ Within days of the purchase, Laso sold his house to José Aguirre to raise capital to consummate the deal, but apparently the value of the house was not sufficient to cover the vessel's cost.⁵⁶ Early the following year, Aguirre and merchant Pedro Cosifacio pledged additional certifying that the partners were acceptable credit risks for the schooner's purchase.⁵⁷ Still others borrowed money from St. Augustine's affluent residents. Juan San Salvador borrowed a sum of money from María Triay's husband, Juan Carreras, and he promised to pay the debt within five months from the profits that he anticipated in the coastal trade.⁵⁸ Alcántara, too, financed the purchase of his first ship, a sloop he named *La Catalina*, through a loan he secured from one of St. Augustine's most affluent women, Isabel Perpall.⁵⁹

From the beginning, maritime commerce to St. Augustine took on a multinational dimension and straddled the ranks of the city's society. The immediacy of the situation in summer 1784 meant that a captain's nationality or port of origin was irrelevant when it came to providing food to a desperate population. In August, barely one month after the return of Spanish rule, at least eight merchantmen arrived from Savannah and Charleston with provisions for the city. Among the captains were St. Augustine res-

52. Escrituras, 3 August, 13 August 1784, Bundle 366, EFP.

53. "Libro primero de anotaciones y hipotecas y tributos el 12 de julio de 1790 hecho por don Domingo Rodríguez de León," folio 23, Bundle 407, EFP.

54. Escrituras, Ignacio Darde to Argel Baquero, 11 August 1784, William Slater to Antonio Laso and José Suárez, 20 October 1785, Bundle 366, EFP.

55. Ibid., 20 October 1785.

56. Ibid., 10 November 1785.

57. Ibid., 28 February, 15 March, 1786.

58. Ibid., 2 July 1785.

59. Civil Proceedings, 31 March 1785, Bundle 329r7, EFP.

idents Joaquín Macheoqui and Santiago Clak who brought food into the city from Savanna, but Anglo captain Pedro Braselman was equally welcome with his cargo of salted beef, wine, gin, and aguardiente from Charleston.⁶⁰ Gualtero Griffith's arrival on the *Punch* brought herring and beer, and his cargo of china and nails were now offered to consumers in the city.⁶¹ For other areas of the Spanish empire, trade with North America was prohibited, but St. Augustine's merchants suffered no such prohibition. From July through December 1784, twenty-eight civilian ships arrived in port. All but two came from United States cities, and as the news spread far and wide, soon ships began arriving from northern ports such as New York and New London, Connecticut.⁶²

Already-well-connected families had little difficulty in capitalizing upon hardship and amplifying established maritime networks, and with the opening of trade with both northern and southern ports, St. Augustine took on the function of an entrepot. Miguel Ysnardy, the captain of the *Santa Ana* that was wrecked in the 1784 storm, was a member of a kinship and commercial network that linked St. Augustine to Philadelphia, Havana, and Cádiz. In Philadelphia, brother José María Ysnardy supervised the northern terminus of the enterprise, and within a year the family enjoyed so much success that they were forced to contract their merchandise out to other captains.⁶³ Another brother, Tomás Ysnardy, was the conduit through which the family traded with the home port, Cádiz.⁶⁴ The Havana branch of the operation was managed by Miguel Ysnardy's wife and mother-in-law, who established a permanent household there in 1789.⁶⁵ The Ysnardy clan expanded their commercial contacts to Baltimore through their association with Margaret Frean. Frean initially came to St. Augustine with her husband, John, but he ultimately returned

60. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 11 August, 27 August 1784, Bundle 214F17, EFP.

61. *Ibid.*, 16 August 1784.

62. *Ibid.*, July-December 1784.

63. *Ibid.*, 6 May, 8 October, 20 December 1785; Nichols, "Trade Relations," 296-302; Manuel Moreno Fragnals, *El ingenio: complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, 3 vols., 2d ed. (Havana, Cuba, 1978), 1: 100-101.

64. Antonio Raffelin to the Casa de Contratación, 12 July 1787, Legajo 512, Ultramar, AGI.

65. Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General, 26 September 1791, Legajo 1481, PC, AGI.

north while she remained in St. Augustine and became one of the most prominent merchants in the city.⁶⁶

Maritime connections were also established with New York by Thomas Tunno, a holdover English merchant from the British period, who acted as collection agent for debts owed to departing British citizens.⁶⁷ Tunno's ship, the *Swift*, was one of the first to transport provisions into the city.⁶⁸ He was also among the vanguard in using St. Augustine as a gateway to the more lucrative markets in Havana. By 1785, he had acquired an agent in St. Augustine, Juan de Aranda. Under Aranda's stewardship, Tunno's cargoes did not comply with the spirit of imperial regulations, much less the letter, as merchandise was not even perfunctorily unloaded before it was transshipped on to Havana.⁶⁹ In 1787, Tunno left East Florida, possibly to reconfigure his interests in New York, but by 1789, he had returned to St. Augustine, having established even more lucrative commercial contacts with Cuba.⁷⁰ Portuguese merchant Juan Bautista Ferrera spent a brief time in Charleston where he married into the Bentley-Nixon family. In 1787, Ferrera requested permission to immigrate to St. Augustine with his family, and by the following year he was selling East Florida's products in Havana in return for slaves.⁷¹ Charleston and other United States ports provided more than provisions and slaves; they also provided ships for eager buyers in the Spanish world.⁷² Francisco Xavier Sánchez purchased the *Nuestra Señora de*

66. Escrituras, 8 October 1791, 11 November 1791, Bundle 367; Memorials, 1 August 1792, Bundle 182m14. Oaths of Allegiance, Bundle 350U4, 18 May 1791, all EFP. This extensive network may have had even greater linkages throughout the Caribbean. Another man with the surname Ysnardi, Francisco Ysnardi, was involved in commercial activities and political intrigue in Spanish Trinidad, Caracas, and Cumaná in the late eighteenth century, but a connection between Francisco and the Ysnardi clan in Havana and St. Augustine has not been determined; Jane de Grummond, "Venezuelan Sesquicentennial Documents," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 42 (November 1962): 547-49. Nichols, "Trade Relations," 298-313, was one of the first scholars to understand these pan-Caribbean networks of trade.

67. Census Returns, Census of 1785, Bundle 323A, EFP.

68. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 30 August 1784, Bundle 214F17, EFP.

69. *Ibid.*, 27 February 1785.

70. *Ibid.*, 30 August 1784; Memorials, 28 June 1787, 25 May 1789, Bundle 180A14; Census Returns, Census of 1784, Bundle 323A, all EFP; Moreno Fraguinals, *El ingenio*, 108.

71. Memorials, 6 September 1787, 17 March 1788, Bundle 179J14, EFP.

72. Marina Alfonso Mola, "Navegar sin botar: El mercado de embarcaciones de segunda mano en la Carrera de Indias (1778-1797)," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 34 (1997): 144-57.

las Angustias in Charleston through the efforts of agent Josef Pérez.⁷³ Another agent, Thomas Wooten, earned three hundred pesos in commission when he arranged the purchase of a ship in Charleston for an unnamed Florida buyer.⁷⁴

It was in St. Augustine's Mediterranean community that opportunity had its most dramatic effect.⁷⁵ During the British period, these families had been marginalized, but scarcity, the subsequent relaxation of regulations, and East Florida's strategic position contributed to their unprecedented social advancement.⁷⁶ Two extended families exemplify the dimension of social mobility that characterized the period. One network, the Alcántara-Costa clan, centered around Antonio Alcántara, his brother José, his brother-in-law Miguel Costa (Catalina's brother), and the extended family that was created when his mother-in-law married into the Tudelache clan. Another network revolved around the extended clan of Bernardo Segui, Domingo Martinelly, Juan Quevedo, Sebastián Ortega, and Pedro Cosifacio (subsequently identified as the Segui clan). Although both clans were related to each other by marriage, whether they cooperated or competed is difficult to establish.⁷⁷ What is clear, however, is that in 1784, all of these men and their extended families were consigned to the ordinary ranks. Only Bernardo Segui was of sufficient status to be accorded – sporadically – the honorific title “Don.”⁷⁸ A decade later, their status had changed dramatically.

Quickly, members of these families entered the intercoastal trade. Alcántara already was an experienced captain and compe-

73. Memorials, 12 February 1787, Bundle 297P8, EFP.

74. Thomas Wooten to Lydia Wooten, 4 December 1789, Manuscript Collection—Colonial Florida, Box 3, P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

75. The term “Mediterranean community” refers to the heterogeneous group of people classified as Minorcans in the Census of 1784, Census Returns, Bundle 323A, EFP. While many were from Minorca, a large percentage were Italians, Corsicans, and Greeks, including Pedro Cosifacio, Domingo Martinelly, Juan Quevedo, Antonio Alcántara, and Miguel Costa; Zéspedes to Gálvez, 16 July 1784, Legajo 2660, SD, AGI, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 232-33.

76. Patricia Griffin, *Mullet on the Beach: The Minorcans in Florida, 1764-1783* (Jacksonville, Fla., 1991), 105-92.

77. Brother and sister Juan and Agueda Villalonga were members of the Alcántara-Costa and Segui clan respectively. Agueda Villalonga was Bernardo Segui's wife. Her niece, Margarita Villalonga, was Juan's daughter and married to Jorge Costa; Census Returns, Census of 1793, Bundle 323A, EFP.

78. Census Returns, Census of 1784, Bundle 323A, EFP.

tent to sail the entire east coast.⁷⁹ On July 7, 1784, he became one of East Florida's first residents to enter the coastal trade when he was called upon to ferry men, materiel, and provisions from the damaged royal ships anchored at St. Marys.⁸⁰ José Alcántara shared his brother's nautical knowledge and eventually succeeded him as a captain in the family enterprise.⁸¹ Miguel Costa was a freelance captain-for-hire who sailed ships for various mercantile enterprises including St. Augustine's merchant houses and transported members of the Havana oligarchy to ports as far away as the Río de la Plata.⁸² The brothers-in-law were members of an extended seafaring family of Corsican origin that included stepfather Demetrio Tudelache, brother Jorge Costa, half-brother Nicolás Tudelache, and brother-in-law Josef Buchoni.⁸³ The clan was already experienced in sailing and in a favorable position to take advantage of the changes, when Zéspedes's decree galvanized them into action.⁸⁴

The Segui clan was a different story; only two of the members, Martinelly and Ortega, both sailors, had any maritime experience. In 1785, Segui and Cosifacio were traders, Ortega was a stonemason, and Quevedo listed his occupation as a tailor in 1786.⁸⁵ Still, the clan wasted no time in entering coastal trade. In early October 1784, Ynés Quevedo, married to Cosifacio, sold a house to finance the purchase of a schooner.⁸⁶ Bernardo Segui was the first of the group to arrive in port from Charleston with a boatload of provi-

79. Papers on Various Subjects, 7 July 1784, Bundle 195M15; Escrituras, 31 March 1791, Bundle 368; Census Returns, Census of 1784, Bundle 323A, all EFP.

80. Papers on Various Subjects, 7 July 1784, Bundle 195M15, EFP.

81. "Relación," 1 May 1793, Legajo 2207, SD, AGI.

82. Papers on Various Subjects, 7 July 1784, Bundle 195M15; Escrituras, 31 March 1791, Bundle 368; Census Returns, Census of 1784, Bundle 323A, all EFP; *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 26 July 1792.

83. Census Returns, Census of 1786 (Hassett Census), Census of 1793, Bundle 323A, EFP.

84. Pablo Tórner Tinajero established that sailors were the second largest segment of St. Augustine's workers: (forty-three), behind laborers whose numbers totalled eighty-two; "Sociedad y población en San Agustín de la Florida, 1786," *Anuario de estudios americanos* 35 (1981): 28.

85. Census Returns, Census of 1785, Census of 1786 (Hassett Census), Bundle 323A, EFP. An excellent analysis of the Segui clan from an anthropological perspective is Griffin, *Mullet on the Beach*, 184-92, who links the men in the family through their wives, the Quevedo (Cavedo) women. Accordingly, she categorizes the family as "matrifocal" and describes them as "upwardly mobile."

86. Escrituras, 6 October 1784, Bundle 366, EFP.

sions.⁸⁷ His kinsman, Martinelly, sailed to Havana, from where he returned in January 1785.⁸⁸ In one short year, the volume of traffic had grown so much that the clan was forced to expand their operations. In December 1786, Bernardo Segui booked passage to Havana on *La María*, and two months later, he sailed into St. Augustine harbor on the object of his voyage, the *Nuestra Señora de Belén*.⁸⁹

By 1788, St. Augustine's ships ranged the Atlantic coast from New York in the north to Montevideo to the south, and their captains were ubiquitous in the coastal trade that linked the Atlantic world.⁹⁰ Their maritime paths crossed frequently as they carried flour from the United States, lumber from New Orleans, foodstuffs from St. Augustine, and dried jerked beef (*tasajo*) from Buenos Aires.⁹¹ During the busy shipping season from winter 1787 through spring 1788, the Segui clan sailed several provision ships into St. Augustine's harbor. In January 1788, patriarch Bernardo Segui arrived from Havana with two shipments for his commercial enterprises, but he also carried two additional cargoes, one consigned to Ysnardy and another to Manuel Herrera. He remained in port only long enough to unload his cargo and take on another before he left on a northbound voyage. Likewise, his son-in-law, Quevedo, simply stopped over in St. Augustine before continuing his journey between Havana and Savannah, while at the same time Martinelly sailed southward from Charleston with a ship loaded with provisions.⁹² In late March, Segui returned from Charleston with a cargo of two thousand bricks and several barrels of beans, arriving in company with free-lance captain Joaquín Macheochi, at the helm of a ship that belonged to kinsman, Cosifacio. On board

87. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 29 November 1784, Bundle 214F17, EFP.

88. Ibid., 31 January 1785.

89. Departure of Vessels, 7 December 1786, Bundle 262; Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 1 February 1787, Bundle 216H17, EFP. Shortly thereafter, Segui sold one of his houses to Juan José Bousquet; Escrituras, 17 April 1787, Bundle 367, EFP.

90. Arrivals of Vessels and Cargoes, 1784-1795, Bundle 214F17 (1784-1785), Bundle 215G17 (1786), Bundle 216H17 (1787), Bundle 217I17 (1788-1789), Bundle 218J17 (1790-1791), Bundle 219K17 (1793-1794), Bundle 220 (1795), EFP.

91. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, January 1788, Bundle 217I17, EFP; *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 30 October 1790, 5 April 1792.

92. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 10 January, 27 January 1788, Bundle 217I17; Departures of Vessels and Cargoes, 14 January 1788, Bundle 262, EFP.

was a mixed cargo of flour, rice, beer, wine, porcelain, and even whetstones for sale in East Florida.⁹³

The Alcántara-Costa family was also busily plying the Caribbean and South Atlantic waters. Antonio Alcántara, as the owner and captain of *La Catalina*, preferred to sail between Havana and St. Augustine.⁹⁴ His brother-in-law, Costa, was more limited as a freelance captain-for-hire, but nevertheless, he was able to work for the clan's benefit. In February 1788, he arrived in St. Augustine with a contracted boatload of provisions from Charleston, but he immediately leased a schooner from Luis Fatio and returned to Charleston with a cargo of oranges and lumber. On his return trip he brought back sailcloth, rope, and thread for outfitting another ship.⁹⁵ Once on shore, Both the Segui and the Alcántara-Costa clans marketed their cargoes through these family stores in the city.⁹⁶

When such commercial activity is analyzed in an ecological context, what results is a plausible explanation why St. Augustine's families could trade with the United States in spite of imperial restrictions that prohibited such activity. St. Augustine's merchant and maritime families sailed among the Atlantic port cities with impunity because crisis allowed them to do so. For their part, royal officials in Florida continued to portray the situation as an emergency for to do otherwise would cause the concession to be revoked. Indeed, by 1787, Cuban authorities were becoming increasingly suspicious that the crisis in St. Augustine was less grave than appeared, and they insisted that emergency operations be halted.⁹⁷ Zéspedes, in communication with Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish minister in New York, responded by citing the specific permission he had received from the late Conde de Gálvez (Bernardo de Gálvez) that allowed St. Augustine to trade with United States ports for necessary supplies.⁹⁸ The trade continued.

93. Ibid., 26 March 1788.

94. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 27 February 1788, Bundle 217117, EFP.

95. Ibid., 5 February, 19 February 1788.

96. Memorials (Store Licenses), 7 September, Cosifacio and José Peso de Burgo married to María Mabriti, Catalina Costa's niece; 9 September [Catalina Costa, Segui, Ortega, Juan Villalonga], 1790, Bundle 180A14, EFP.

97. Correspondence with Ministers and Consuls, 6 February 1787, Bundle 101S18, EFP.

98. Ibid., 19 March 1787.

At the same time, even Mother Nature conspired to perpetuate the quasi-legal situation by sparing the city from the brunt of a direct hit while savaging other areas of the Caribbean. Major storms, both in the Atlantic and in the Gulf of Mexico, stayed well out to sea, and when they did make landfall, they did so in underpopulated areas.⁹⁹ East Florida, nevertheless, suffered from their collateral effects as ships bound for the province went to the bottom with their cargoes of pesos and provisions. In September 1785, two ships headed for St. Augustine were lost at sea, exacerbating the already-precarious stability of the province.¹⁰⁰ By December 1786, Gardoqui had negotiated a contract with the commercial firm Stoughton & Lynch of New York to provide food for East Florida on a regular basis.¹⁰¹ The next year East Florida's treasury suffered yet another blow when *La Esclavitud*, en route to St. Augustine carrying fourteen thousand pesos and mail, was never heard from again.¹⁰² In this case the loss was both immediate and collateral as *La Esclavitud* would have continued on to New York where a cargo of emergency provisions awaited transportation southward. With the loss of *La Esclavitud*, Gardoqui was forced to charter a private vessel to transport the provisions, thus increasing the costs of governing even more.¹⁰³

St. Augustine's maritime-mercantile community continued to reap the benefits with a significant shift in Spanish imperial economic policy: the promulgation of a royal order in February 1789 that liberalized restrictions on slave imports into Cuba. Most studies of the slave trade portray the declaration as a watershed in Caribbean history, one that contributed to the explosion in slave imports into the island.¹⁰⁴ A related historiographical debate centers around whether Florida was a conduit through which slaves

99. Millás, *Hurricanes of the Caribbean*, 263-81.

100. Correspondence of the Cuban Captain(s) General 19 September 1785, Legajo 1387, PC, AGI.

101. Zéspedes to Gardoqui, 29 December 1786, Correspondence with Ministers and Consuls, Bundle 101S18, EFP.

102. Correspondence with Ministers and Consuls, 17 September 1786, Bundle 101S18, EFP.

103. Correspondence with Bernardo de Gálvez (Captain General of Cuba), 17 May 1787, 27 May 1787, Bundle 41b4, EFP.

104. Proclamations and Edicts, 31 May 1789, Bundle 278O13, EFP; Rafael López-Valdés, "Hacia una periodización de la historia de la esclavitud en Cuba," *La esclavitud en Cuba* (Havana, Cuba, 1986), 13-29; Le Riverend, *Historia económica*, 178-83; Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio*, 51; Kenneth Kiple, *Blacks in Colonial Cuba, 1774-1889* (Gainesville, Fla., 1976).

were smuggled into the United States from Cuba after the trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished in 1808.¹⁰⁵ The most significant contribution to the debate was offered by Kenneth Kiple, who argued convincingly that large-scale slave imports from Cuba were unsupported both by evidence and by economic common sense. Kiple demonstrated that the primary and more lucrative market for slaves was Cuba because the island needed slaves far more than the southern United States and was willing to pay more for them.¹⁰⁶ Simply put, whether in 1784 or 1818, the Spanish possessions were economically solvent, and trade with Cuba provided specie that was unavailable otherwise.¹⁰⁷ Under the Articles of Confederation, the United States faced internal dissent and financial difficulties, a fact often forgotten by historians but clearly comprehended by Vicente de Zéspedes who, as late as 1787, reported to José de Gálvez that “unstable government, obvious dissension, and scanty commerce. . . at the present time are keeping in commotion the States still inappropriately called ‘United.’”¹⁰⁸ Zéspedes’s assessment was also common knowledge among Florida’s captains, and while they recognized the potential for profit by trading in slaves, they also knew that the direction of the trade did not flow from Cuba into the United States. Rather, they knew that the trade went in the opposite direction, from United States ports toward the island.

Even before the royal order of 1789, St. Augustine had served as a port of entry for slaves from northern United States cities. The ministry of José de Gálvez had always promoted the principles of

105. Frances J. Stafford, “Illegal Importations: Enforcement of the Slave Trade Laws along the Florida Coast,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46 (October 1967): 124-33. Stafford’s argument cites and follows the lines of Dorothy Dodd, “The Schooner Emperor: An Incident of the Illegal Slave Trade in Florida,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 13 (January 1935): 117-20; W.E. B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (Cambridge, Mass., 1896), 110-23; Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery, A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York, 1952), 147; Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1956), 271; Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law, 1837-1862* (Berkeley, Calif., 1963), 26.

106. Kenneth F. Kiple, “The Case Against a Nineteenth-Century Cuba-Florida Slave Trade,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49 (April 1971): 346-55.

107. Charles W. Calomiris, “Institutional Failure, Monetary Scarcity, and the Depreciation of the Continental,” *Journal of Economic History* 48 (March 1988): 47-50.

108. Vicente de Zéspedes to the Marqués de Sonora (José de Gálvez), 12 May 1787, in Whitaker, *Commercial Policy*, 53.

free trade for Spain's Caribbean colonies, and in approving Zéspedes's emergency measures in 1784, he extended commercial concessions by permitting slaves to enter East Florida duty free.¹⁰⁹ The number of slaves represented but a trickle and was conducted as secondary to the importation of more important products. On a return voyage from Charleston in October 1785, Bernardo Segui brought four slaves into East Florida along with various foodstuffs. One male slave was for his household, but the other three were "contracted prior to his departure by other citizens of the province."¹¹⁰ Pedro Cosifacio imported two more slaves from Charleston in December, and Joseph Aguirre transported one of Segui's slaves to St. Augustine two weeks later.¹¹¹ Antonio Alcántara's return voyage from Charleston in November 1784 exemplified not only the diverse nature of commerce with the city, but also the ability to engage in slaving, albeit on a minor scale. *La Catalina* carried a cargo of cheese, brandy, gin, apples, and butter. He had contracted to carry one large box of supplies for the artillery company of the city, and several bales of clothing for Thomas Tunno. Two slaves also entered on the voyage: one belonging to Alcántara; the other the property of an unnamed passenger.¹¹²

The universal free trade declaration allowed St. Augustine's merchant families to expand their maritime repertoire, and the Ysnardy network simply instructed their captain-for-hire, Antonio Marichal, to begin carrying slaves along with his customary cargoes of wheat and lumber.¹¹³ Thomas Tunno's return to St. Augustine and his creation of mercantile connections in Cuba coincided precisely with the liberalization of slave import regulations. He became associated with Cuba's most outspoken proponent of increased slave imports, Francisco de Arango y Parreño, and their commercial alliance lasted into the nineteenth century.¹¹⁴ St. Augustine's captains were also very attractive employees to Havana's merchants. Pedro Juan Erice, a merchant from Navarre, moved in the highest circles of *habanero* society and became one of

109. Royal Order, 4 November 1784, Bundle 39, EFP, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 304.

110. Arrival of Vessels and Cargoes, 24 October 1785, Bundle 214F17, EFP.

111. *Ibid.*, 1 December, 17 December 1785.

112. *Ibid.*, 25 November 1785.

113. "Relación," 1 September 1794, Legajo 2207, SD, AGL.

114. Memorials, 28 June 1787, 25 May 1789, Bundle 180A14, EFP; Moreno Fragnals, *El ingenio*, 1: 108.

the most prominent figures in Cuba's plantation complex economy in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵ In 1792, he commissioned Miguel Costa to sail to the coast of Brazil in his bergantine *El Dichoso*, on a voyage that brought 105 slaves into Havana.¹¹⁶

The activities of the less affluent merchant families offer compelling evidence of the impact of the free trade declaration on a personal level.¹¹⁷ In June 1789, Alcántara sold his original vessel, *La Catalina*, to fellow clan member Juan Villalonga, who renamed the ship *Industry* and entered the coastal trade. Meanwhile, Alcántara booked passage to New York where he purchased a capacious schooner from agents John Moley and Solomon Saltes that he promptly named *Santa Catalina*.¹¹⁸ Acquisition of a larger ship allowed him to import fifty-five slaves into Havana in November 1790.¹¹⁹ Alcántara's cargo of slaves originated in Baltimore, and his ability to purchase slaves in that city was a clear consequence of previous contacts developed under the emergency of the 1780s. Now able to bypass East Florida entirely, Baltimore became the primary source of slaves that St. Augustine's captains brought to Cuba.¹²⁰ Prior to the liberalization, Domingo Martinelly's sloop, *Carmen*, carried food products and lumber; afterward he too carried slaves to Havana acquired in the northern port.¹²¹ José Covachica was another of St. Augustine's slave captains who traded not only with the United States but also in slave markets throughout the Caribbean. On his first slaving voyage into Havana, his schooner, *La María*, imported seventy slaves that he purchased in Savannah and Baltimore.¹²² He enjoyed a sterling reputation in Cuba, and in March 1792, when he announced that he would sail to "foreign colonies" to purchase slaves on consign-

115. Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio*, 1: 71, 100, 108.

116. *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 26 July 1792, 29 June 1794.

117. In addition to the following examples, other St. Augustine captains who participated in the slave trade include Simón Cucullú ("Relación," 1 July 1794) and Jayme Prats (ibid., 1 February 1795, Legajo 2207, SD, AGI).

118. Memorials and Concessions, 22 June 1789, Bundle 297P8, EFP.

119. "Relación," 1 December 1790, Legajo 2207, SD, AGI.

120. *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 28 November 1790.

121. *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 18 October 1792; "Relación," 1 November 1792, Legajo 2207, SD, AGI.

122. *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 26 June 1791; "Relación," 1 July 1791, Legajo 2207, SD, AGI. Ironically, Covachica was in Havana harbor at the same time that Alcántara departed on his fateful voyage, but Covachica somehow avoided the deadly storm that took the latter captain's life.

ment, investors contributed 23,000 pesos to his proposed subscription voyage in just three days. Five weeks later, Covachica returned from Dominica with a cargo of 149 slaves.¹²³

The rising fortunes of St. Augustine's captains and merchants stand in sharp contrast to political interpretations that view the latter decade of the eighteenth century as a time of crisis. Paradoxically, while St. Augustine's families were enjoying economic prosperity, the political situation in the Atlantic world as a whole entered a dangerous "Turbulent Time."¹²⁴ For Spain and Spanish America, the long spiral downward began with deaths of key members of the Gálvez clan. Bernardo de Gálvez, who earned the coveted appointment as Viceroy of Mexico, died in 1786; his uncle, José, minister of Indies, followed in 1787. The greatest blow was Charles III's death in December 1788, bringing his untrained son, Charles IV, to the throne.¹²⁵ Royal ineptitude trickled down to the Caribbean, where it was manifested in Cuba in the ineffective and arrogant regime of captain-general Luis de las Casas (1790-1796).¹²⁶ Las Casas's political machinations and blatant favoritism towards a small group of plantation interests alienated the majority of the island's inhabitants and resulted in near anarchy.¹²⁷ Compounding the problem, the Spanish Caribbean suffered from proximity to French St. Domingue and its 1791 rebellion. In 1793, Spain became embroiled in the internal fighting in St. Domingue, and the defeat of a Spanish expeditionary force the following year led Spain to cede Santo Domingo, which occupied the eastern half of Hispaniola, to France.¹²⁸ In Louisiana, the incompetent government of Las Casas's brother-in-law, the

123. *Papel Periódico de la Havana*, 1 May, 3 May, 12 April 1792; "Relacion," 1 May 1792, Legajo 2207, SD, AGI.

124. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds. *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997).

125. John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808* (New York, 1989), 376-81; Jacques A. Barbier, "The Culmination of the Bourbon Reforms, 1787-1792," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 57 (February 1977): 52; John R. Fisher, *Commercial Relations between Spain and Spanish America in the Era of Free Trade* (Liverpool, Eng., 1985), 49, 65; David Ringrose, *Spain, Europe, and the "Spanish Miracle," 1700-1900* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 106-19.

126. Sherry Johnson, *Social Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Cuba, 1753-1804* (Gainesville, Fla., 2001), 121-45.

127. *Ibid.*, 146-63.

128. María Rosario Sevilla Soler, *Santo Domingo: Tierra de la frontera (1750-1800)* (Sevilla, Spain, 1980), 377-408.

Baron de Carondelet, sparked a troop mutiny and a nearly-successful rebellion of whites, free coloreds, and slaves.¹²⁹

The situation was equally precarious on the Florida frontier where the border was under siege by the intrigues of Citizen Genêt and the ambitions of adventurers from Georgia and the Carolinas.¹³⁰ In characteristically partisan fashion, Las Casas transferred the few troops he could spare to Louisiana to help Carondelet, leaving the "gallant garrison in Florida" to fend for itself. In 1795, rebels attacked an outlying fort in the northern part of the province along the St. Johns River, capturing one officer and thirty soldiers, but St. Augustine's veteran troops and civilian militia rallied to expel the invaders. Even while they looked fearfully over their shoulders for conspiracies, residents in Havana praised the example set by the Florida community for its patriotic and loyal stance. The Catalan Mountain Riflemen were credited with retaking the fort on the St. Johns River, the chronically-undermanned Third Battalion was lauded for its exceptional bravery, and the civilian militia units and ordinary citizens were compared favorably to *habaneros* themselves. Contemporary opinion clearly acknowledged that the victory in East Florida was one of the few bright spots in the dismal administration they were forced to endure.¹³¹

The successful defense of Spanish rule in 1795 is even more remarkable because disaster in Cuba threatened to cut East Florida off from its line of supply. On the morning of August 27, 1794, at approximately 4:00 a.m., a major hurricane struck

129. The conspiracy is known as the Pointe Coupée rebellion. Asuntos Políticos, 18 July 1795, Legajo 5, numero 27, Archivo Nacional de Cuba, in *Boletín del Archivo Nacional* 40 (1941): 59-62; Jack D.L. Holmes, "The Abortive Slave Revolt at Pointe Coupée, Louisiana, 1795," *Louisiana History* 11 (fall 1970): 341-62; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, La., 1992), 316-74; Kimberly S. Hangar, "Conflicting Loyalties: The French Revolution and the Free People of Color in Spanish New Orleans," in Gaspar and Geggus, *Turbulent Time*, 178-203.

130. Jane G. Landers, "Rebellion and Royalism in Spanish Florida: The French Revolution on Spain's Northern Colonial Frontier," in Gaspar and Geggus, eds., *Turbulent Time*, 156-77; "Richard F. Murdoch, *The Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1793-1796: Spanish Reaction to French Intrigue and American Designs* (Berkeley, Calif., 1951); Janice Borton Miller, "Rebellion in East Florida in 1795," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 57 (October 1978): 173-86.

131. Miseno de Laura, [Pablo Estévez] *Parte tercera de las revoluciones periódicas de la Havana escribiada Miseno de Laura* (Havana, Cuba, 1796), Rare Books and Pamphlets, Library of Congress; Johnson, *Social Transformation*, 146-62.