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British Trade in West Florida, 1763-1783

John Dewey Born Jr.

BRITISH TRADE IN WEST FLORIDA

BORN

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BRITISH TRADE IN WEST FLORIDA, 1763-1783

By

John Dewey Born, Jr.

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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PREFACE

Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 the territorial holdings of Great Britain were increased in several areas of North America; among them was the province of West Florida. It was, however, shortly after what Lawrence Henry Gipson chooses to call "The Great War for the Empire" that the English colonials in the eastern section of North America began to agitate against what they considered to be repressive British economic measures. The familiar story of these events which led to the American Revolution has been written with varying interpretations by scholarly historians. These narratives, almost without exception, center around the activities of the original thirteen colonies. But it is well to remember that there were other British colonies in North America prior to the American Revolution. One of those was the new province of West Florida whose territory once included parts of the present states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. No historian, as far as the author can determine, has presented the story of British trade in that frontier possession. It is, then, the writer's opinion that the economic history of West Florida should be considered in order to discern the nature of the commerce which developed and its relation to the larger picture of the American conflict.

PREFACE

In any original or exploratory work, there is always the problem of using the primary sources in such a way as to draw the most objective picture. In addition to the government records of Great Britain, this work has the advantage of presenting two new and apparently unused source materials. While on sabbatical leave at the University of Edinburgh, Professor William Minor Dabney discovered in the National Library of Scotland the Letterbook of Charles Strachan, a Scottish merchant who spent several years in Mobile prior to the Revolution. This manuscript, discussed in Chapter IV, adds many interesting facts to the story of the role of the early colonial merchant. The second new source is the Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick, another Scot who has left a lengthy account of his contemporary observations while in the British colony.

In the course of other studies both Cecil Johnson and James Alton James have made brief reference to the Fitzpatrick record, but Johnson made no analysis and James's two references to the work are inaccurate. Another interesting work consulted during the course of research was Bernard Romans' A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida which is quite rare and considered to be the most complete contemporary description of the colony.

The subject is the result of suggestions made by Professor William Minor Dabney who has been most patient

during the long period of research. The author also wishes to thank the rest of the history faculty at the University of New Mexico for their assistance. Several libraries throughout the country were consulted during the time spent in research. They include the National Archives, Tulane University, Louisiana State University, University of Florida, and the University of California. Special words of appreciation are reserved for the staff of the library at the University of New Mexico where many personal kindnesses were extended.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS

Historians have given little space or attention to the British occupation of West Florida, sadly neglecting an area which covers most of our lower South. Why this has occurred is a question open to debate, and many causal factors may be advanced including the paucity of source materials, the popularity of New England history, or even the much-recorded New England bias in early American historical writing. As a matter of fact, only two secondary accounts of scholarly merit have been written about West Florida, and it has been more than fifteen years since any published work has recalled the story of British control there.[1]

The importance of West Florida to the British plan of empire was primarily commercial. Here lay a vast acreage with a temperate climate, teeming in wildlife and vegetation, rich in natural resources, and abounding in navigable rivers. In addition, the colony was a possible

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[1]Cecil Johnson presents an excellent though brief account in British West Florida, 1763-1783 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), and Clinton Newton Howard covers the early military history in The British Development of West Florida, 1763-1769 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947).

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entrepôt for Spanish gold entering the North American continent via New Orleans. Had her potential been realized, West Florida might have become a great bulwark in the mercantilistic system of Great Britain. Yet no exploratory work has been attempted to tell the story of the trade which might have developed to full bloom in an area of such abundance. It is, therefore, the primary intention of the author to make clear the nature of the commerce which developed in British West Florida and to describe its effects, if any, on the failures and fortunes of the American Revolution.

According to the terms of the Peace of Paris ending the Seven Years' War on February 10, 1763, France ceded to Great Britain all her mainland possessions in North America east of the Mississippi River with the exception of the so-called Isle of Orleans which she gave to her former ally, Spain; thus the fleur-de-lis was removed from the continent of colonial North America. But because Spain had supported France during the war under the terms of the Family Compact, she lost her province of Florida to Great Britain while gaining only the city of New Orleans.[2] With the acquisition of so much territory the government of Great Britain desired to ease the problems

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[2]Arthur S. Aiton, "The Diplomacy of the Louisiana Cession," American Historical Review, XXXVI (July, 1931), 701-721.

of transition before they occurred by planning the nature of the new political units to be created. To this end the Earl of Egremont, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, asked the Board of Trade to consider some of the more important problems of empire to get the new colony established on a sound footing. The Board was quite anxious to settle the area along the Mississippi River, to increase trade in specified commodities, to exploit the Indian trade, and to make these new colonies emerge as positive advantages in the British mercantile scheme.[3]

In a further definition of settlement policies, King George III issued what has been termed one of the important state papers of the eighteenth century.[4] This was the famous Proclamation of 1763 which set the western territorial limits of the English colonies in North America. Historians offer many reasons for the measure, but a worthy student of the Proclamation, Clarence Walworth Alvord, feels its pertinency lies in the fact that it was a temporary expedient designed to settle the Indian problem and

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[3]Adam Shortt and A. G. Doughty (eds.), Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791 (2d ed. rev.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1932), 127-131.

[4]Clarence Walworth Alvord, "The Genesis of the Proclamation of 1763, A Report to the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society," Lansing, December 13, 1907.

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to stabilize the colonial population of the new frontier areas.[5] Contained in the edict was the creation of the province of West Florida with the delineation of her territorial limits. The northern and southern boundaries were extended from the thirty-first parallel down and to the Gulf of Mexico. The eastern boundary was fixed at the Apalachicola and Chattahoochee rivers while the western boundary was the Mississippi River.[6] Because the new colony did not include some abandoned French areas of settlement which the English planned to rebuild, colonize, and exploit, certain nebulous machinations transpired between the governor and the Board of Trade which resulted in a new commission being issued in 1764 moving the northern boundary from the thirty-first parallel to a line drawn east from the confluence of the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers to the Apalachicola River. Thus the colony became a rectangle approximately one hundred and forty-five miles deep and three hundred and seventy-five miles long

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Henry Steele Commager, Documents of American History (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 6th ed., 1958); South Carolina Gazette, December 31, 1763; Thomas Hutchins, An Historical Narrative and Topographical Description of Louisiana and West Florida Comprehending the River Mississippi with its Principal Branches and Settlements, and the Rivers Pearl, Pascagoula, Mobille, Perdido, Escambia, Chacta-Hatcha, etc. The Climate, Soil, and Produce Whether Animal Vegetable, or Mineral . . . . (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken Printers, 1784.

enclosing the major settlements of Mobile and Pensacola.[7]

With the observance of proper protocol and signing of the treaty, the territory in question was transferred from the French and Spanish forces to the English during the summer of 1763. British military government of the province commenced on July 3, 1763, when Major-General William Keppel at Havana ordered Colonel Augustin Prevost of the 3rd Battalion, Royal American Regiment of Foot, to proceed to West Florida and there take command of the Spanish post at Pensacola. Upon his arrival, Prevost was to place himself under the command of General Thomas Gage, Commander of His Majesty's forces in North America. Prevost left Havana on July 6, 1763, but because of contrary winds did not arrive in Pensacola until August 6, 1763, when he delivered the letters of surrender from the court of Spain to the Governor of Florida. The Governor complied with the surrender terms, but could not evacuate the inhabitants or supplies until the Spanish Governor-General of the West India Islands sent transports to carry the troops, population, and military stores.

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[7]James A. Padgett (ed.), "Act of the Privy Council, Colonial Series, IV," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXI (January,1939), 1034-1035; John Francis Hamtramck Claiborne, Mississippi as a Province, Territory, and State Vol. I, (Jackson, Mississippi: Power and Barksdale, 1880),'94-95; Henry E. Chambers, West Florida and its Relation to the Historical Cartography of the United States (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1898), 1-60.

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As a result Prevost had to quarter his troops in huts until September 2, 1763, when the abject Spanish forces finally set sail for Vera Cruz.[8]

General Keppel also sent a separate detachment of soldiers to take possession of French West Florida. Under the command of Major Robert Farmar, the 34th and 22nd Regiments occupied the fort and town of Mobile on October 20, 1763, and Farmar detached a subaltern with thirty men in five batteaux to the Tombigbee River where an interior post one hundred leagues from Mobile was taken over by the British. Farmar lost no opportunity in reconnoitering the new area sending parties of exploration to a deserted post called "Natchize" about eighty leagues north of New Orleans on the Mississippi River; to the island called Dauphin to assist the pilot "in going off to ships, as the bar is very dangerous;" and to explore the Iberville River which was a tributary of the Mississippi, to see if that stream might be navigable.[9] He felt that this could solve the trouble and the dangerous navigational problems of entering the mouth of the Mississippi, and the menace of being exposed to the French or Spanish

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[8]Great Britain, Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5:582 ,"Instructions for Colonel Augustin Prevost of His Majesty's Royal American Regiment of Foot which he is to follow and observe until the King's pleasure is further signified to him from England or by a Governor appointed by His Majesty for Florida," Havana: July 3, 1763; cited hereafter as Colonial Office.

[9]Ibid., Farmar to Egremont, Mobile, January 24, 1764.

at New Orleans, for if the Iberville were navigable then vessels might pass into the Gulf of Mexico by way of the River [Bayou] Iberville, Lake Maurepas, and Lake Pontchartrain without passing New Orleans or navigating the troublesome currents of the Balize.[10]

Almost immediately Farmar issued a proclamation declaring English would supersede French law, and while he was quite hospitable to the French, he stated firmly that no French plotting with the Indians would be tolerated. The Major's own words best describe the tenor of what the English-sponsored program was to be:

> . . . whenever it shall be discovered that they [the French] are guilty of maliciously prejudicing the Indians to the disadvantage of the English, or act in any manner to their detriment, or should make attempts to overthrow the English government, they shall be proceeded against as rebels.[11]

There was some justification for such a statement because the three hundred and fifty inhabitants of Mobile were not too pleased when Farmar marched his troops into town. The French had a vague, but unformulated, idea of moving to New Orleans, but when they learned that the hated Spanish had been made a present of the Isle of

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[10]See the map of Bayou Iberville in the Appendix for a complete understanding of the plan.

[11]Dunbar Rowland (ed.), Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1763-1766, English Dominion I, (Nashville: Press of the Brandon Printing Company, 1911), 130.

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Orleans, most of the citizens of Mobile had a change of heart and swore allegiance to the English crown.[12]

The new commander at Mobile happened to arrive in the midst of a congress being conducted between French and Indian officials, and he insisted in taking part in it. The French were at first reluctant to permit his participation, but after talking with the chief French officer in Louisiana, Monsieur D'Abbadie,[13] the English Major convinced him of the necessity of instituting a bi-lateral Indian program. In November, 1764, a council with the Choctaw nation was held where D'Abbadie issued a joint address to French and Indian alike setting forth what the English expected of them. For example, the Indians were told that henceforth all those living on the eastern side of the Mississippi River could expect presents, trade, and protection from the English. The Indians were reminded of their debts to the French and vice versa. Farmar promised to protect all against any dishonest English traders and admonished his officers to give attention to this factor from the onset to forestall any trouble.[14]

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[12] Ibid., 121-122.

[13] In no primary source or secondary account consulted is the complete name of Monsieur D'Abbadie ever mentioned.

[14] Colonial Office 5: 574, Memorial of George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, London, May 29, 1764.

Thus English rule was begun in the two largest villages in West Florida. But almost immediately after occupancy a stream of pessimistic reports began to reach the Board of Trade railing the bad conditions in the province. From Pensacola, Colonel Prevost decried the poor physical condition of the village of one hundred huts surrounded by a broken stockade. The harbor, because of the elongated Saint Rose Island in the bay, rendered the water only four fathoms deep and made navigation quite troublesome. No livestock was available and most of the edible meat had to be imported from Mobile. Game, however, was plentiful in the backwoods and the sea did afford a great variety of fish. No improvements had been made in the town for many years which prompted Prevost to declare:

> The Country from the insuperable laziness of the Spaniards remains still uncultivated, the woods are close to the village and a few hawltry [paltry] gardens shew the only improvements . . . . years and a number of industrious setlers [sic] can only make a change upon the face of the colony.[15]

One particular situation which worried the small Pensacola garrison was the proximity of numerous Indian tribes. Prevost was visited by representatives of five nations shortly after he arrived; all wanted presents.

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[15] Colonial Office 5:582, Augustin Prevost to Lord Egremont, Pensacola, September 7, 1763.

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nations apparently after no attrition; all wanted presence.

Since the military was existing on short rations already, the Colonel could only supply a very small quantity of rum to the present-seeking natives. This seemed to afford temporary pacification, but Prevost remained very wary of the numerical strength of the Indians in spite of their white-feathered peace overtures. Rumors of Indian uprisings and suspected treachery abounded and Colonel Prevost readied his post as best he could.[16]

Mobile reported a similar situation to that of Pensacola. The soil was sandy and poor; there was a scarcity of vegetables; the French population remained quiet but indifferent to English rule; and the Indians were always a potential source of trouble to English authority.[17] Under such adverse circumstances sickness began to plague both military garrisons. Many officers and men died of fevers and "inveterate scurveys which terminated in mortification and death." To make matters worse, after an initial calm the Indians became openly hostile by March, 1764.[18] The military officials grew quite apprehensive with the cumulative effects of these events. Farmar, in particular, sighed with relief on

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol.I, 38.

[18] Ibid., 123.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol.I, 39.

[18] Ibid., 129.

learning that the newly-appointed Governor of West Florida was expected in the autumn of 1764 to take over executive command of the province.[19]

Captain George Johnstone, a thirty-three year old brawling Lowlander, who had served with some distinction in His Majesty's navy was chosen to be Governor of West Florida by the Scottish-dominated Bute ministry.[20] His appointment began on November 21, 1763; however, he did not arrive in the province until October 21, 1764.[21] Why was Johnstone tardy in the assumption of his new command? Colonial governors were notoriously late in assuming their New World offices, if they assumed them at all, and Leonard Woods Labaree has explained the most common reasons for this. He asserts that pressing business commitments, a lack of necessary capital, and adverse weather conditions were among the most common causes of delay.[22]

Johnstone's tardiness seems to have been occasioned by complications of transport and travel. This fiery and

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[19] Ibid., 120.

[20] John Knox Laughton, "George Johnstone," Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1908), X, 963-965.

[21] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to Robert Farmar, Pensacola, October 31, 1764.

[22] Leonard Woods Labaree, Royal Government in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 1-35.

ebullient personality had made application to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations to have Indian presents, ordnance stores, medicines, and troops placed on board his vessel for the transatlantic journey.[23] He felt that this would facilitate his taking over the administration of the province and place it on a proper footing within the empire. But the Board of Trade deferred the decision to Captain Sir John Lindsay of the Admiralty who in turn refused the petition as impractical to the needs of the fleet.[24] The new Governor was chagrined, but undaunted, and left England on board His Majesty's vessel, the Grampus, arriving at Kingston in Jamaica on August 15, 1764, where he purchased twelve puncheons of rum to be used as Indian presents. Johnstone got in touch with Sir William Burnaby, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's fleet in the Gulf of Mexico, and asked him if West Florida could expect naval protection. Burnaby gave him a vague statement promising help if trouble should arise, but set up no definite procedure for the Governor to secure naval aid. Johnstone grew weary of government matters and began to recruit settlers for his province, but most of the people of Jamaica did not care to brave the wilds of frontier life in West Florida. With very little left to do

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[23] Colonial Office 5:524, George Johnstone to Lord Egremont, London, January 29, 1764.

[24] Ibid., George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, London, undated.

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[23] Colonial Office 5:572, George Johnstone to Lord Egremont, London, January 29, 1764.

[24] Ibid., George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, London, undated.

while waiting for passage the new Governor spent about three weeks collecting "seeds and roots of beneficial produce" to introduce into his province from Jamaica. The Governor's stop at Kingston had been of comparatively little value with the possible exception of providing a break in the monotony of an otherwise excessively long sea voyage. On September 21, 1764, Johnstone sailed aboard His Majesty's sloop, the Nautilus, to Pensacola where he arrived on October 21, 1764, after a tempestuous voyage due to storms and the ignorance of the crew regarding navigation.[25]

West Florida was definitely in a bad condition, but the Governor immediately deduced the problems were caused by lack of money and trade and he began to prescribe a cure. The inhabitants of Pensacola were in a deplorable state. People suffered for want of every necessary with absolutely no cash circulating while the goods of the local merchants were rotting in the stores.[26] Armed with his royal commission and instructions, Johnstone went to work by calling a meeting of the provincial council at Pensacola on November 24, 1764, when permanent members

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[illegible]

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at Hendecote on November 24, 1969, when permanent members
went to work by carting a wagon of the provincial council
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were appointed to form a provincial government.[27]

Johnstone paid especial attention to the depressed commercial situation. It was evident that something had to be done to put the provincials on their collective feet. Twenty-six separate instructions outlining the Acts of Trade and Navigation had been given the Governor and he wanted to utilize those fully in gaining their greatest benefit for fostering any commerce which might raise the colony from its economic lethargy.[28] Before his arrival, Johnstone had been corresponding with West Floridians and knew something of their distressed affairs, but a personal acquaintance with the problem made the Governor all the more resolved to place the colony on a sound economic basis within the frame of empire.

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[27] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to Sir John Pownall, Secretary to the Board of Trade, Mobile, February 19, 1765. The following officials were appointed by Johnstone to the provincial council.
"John Stuart, His Majesty's agent for Indian affairs.
James MacPherson, Secretary of the Province.
Captain Robert Mackinen, Commander of the 35th Regiment at Pensacola.
James Bruce, Collector of Customs at Pensacola.
William Struthers, merchant in the Indian trade.
Elias Durnford, Surveyor of the Province.
Francis Moresier, Ancient Protestant inhabitant.
Jacob Blackwell, Collector of Customs at Mobile.
Robert Crooke, merchant in the Indian trade.
Francis Caminada, Ancient Protestant inhabitant.
William Clifton, Chief Justice."

[28] Clarence E. Carter, "Some Aspects of British Administration in West Florida," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, I (December, 1914), 364-365; James A. Padgett (ed.), "The Johnstone Commission," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXI (October, 1938), 1034-1035.

Johnstone was a Scot with a sense of the value of specified commodities and how to market those commodities for a profit. In this case the commodity happened to be West Florida and the marketing principle hinged on two things: the trade to the South and the trade to the North. West Florida was strategically located in a most enviable position. Johnstone was no newcomer to the world of commerce, having served several years in the merchant fleet, and he knew that the Spanish trade to the South would be of inestimable value to the province. He wanted desperately to tap that trade. This decision was quickened upon his arrival in America when he heard that a certain Captain Lucas, in his zeal to carry out orders in an exact and prescribed manner, had seized a Spanish vessel at Pensacola with forty thousand dollars in cash, and had finally towed her out to sea without allowing the purchase of any British manufactured goods. Later in 1764 three other Spanish vessels laden with over thirty thousand pounds sterling were treated in much the same manner. Johnstone was intent upon making some changes which would alleviate the dire economic poverty of West Florida. In his mind this type of foolhardy, if chauvinistic, action would ruin the colony "and when once a Channel of Commerce is turn'd it is difficult to tell where it will brake [sic]

Johnstone was a Scot with a sense of the axiom of specified commodities and now to market those commodities for a profit. In this case the commodity happened to be West Florida and the marketing principle applied on two fronts: the trade to the South and the trade to the North. West Florida was strategically located in a more expansive position. Johnstone was no newcomer to the world of commerce. Having served several years in the Mediterranean trade, and he knew that the Spanish trade to the South would be of inestimable value to the British. He saw opportunity for gain that trade. This question was influenced upon his arrival in America when he heard that a certain Captain Lucas, in his zeal to carry out orders in an exact and prescribed manner, had seized a Spanish vessel at Pensacola with forty spanish dollars in cash. And had it not for the timely arrival of an Britisher commissioned Rogue. Taken in this light there would have been no doubt although the Spanish officer should have been with very little ceremony. Johnstone was taught upon meeting some changes which would alleviate the dire economic poverty of West Florida. In addition, his observations soon convinced him that a certain amount of gain could be had from the Spanish trade. Johnstone was also aware of the value of the Spanish trade to the British Empire. Spain relied heavily on the British for manufactured goods. Into question was thrown a certain amount of gain upon the British in America when he heard that a certain Captain Lucas, in his zeal to carry out orders in an exact and prescribed manner, had seized a Spanish vessel at Pensacola with forty spanish dollars in cash. And had it not for the timely arrival of an Britisher commissioned Rogue. Taken in this light there would have been no doubt although the Spanish officer should have been with very little ceremony. Johnstone was taught upon meeting some changes which would alleviate the dire economic poverty of West Florida. In addition, his observations soon convinced him that a certain amount of gain could be had from the Spanish trade. Johnstone was also aware of the value of the Spanish trade to the British Empire. Spain relied heavily on the British for manufactured goods. Into question was thrown a certain amount of gain upon the British in America when he heard that a certain Captain Lucas, in his zeal to carry out orders in an exact

out or when it will return."[29]

The Indian trade to the North also represented a great source of revenue for West Florida. Johnstone felt that the proper application of justice and a respectable military force to insure that justice would repay the crown many times over in the interior. If the military were not sent in to give stability to this commerce then vagabonds "worse than the very Horses who carry their Bruthens" would rape the interior and West Florida would reap no benefits from the Indian peltry and skins. Johnstone was quite insistent that interpreters should be sent up the Mississippi River to facilitate the work of the military in carrying on this commerce with the Indians.[30]

The Governor gave many reasons to the Board of Trade why the commerce which he was trying to develop would not hurt the mercantile position of Great Britain. He noted that the Spaniards had no commodity which would interfere with English manufactures, and,as a matter of fact, West Florida would become a gigantic warehouse to dump those manufactures on the Spanish in return for the much desired gold and silver bullion.

Johnstone was critical of the present conditions of the province, but he envisaged a great future in store

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[29] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, October 31, 1764.

[30] Ibid.

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[29] Colonial Office 5:572, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, October 31, 1764.

[30] Ibid.

for her if the Board of Trade would extend salutary neglect to West Florida. To him nothing but folly could prevent an extensive commerce from flourishing in this strategic location. Commerce, and commerce alone, would bolster the shaky foundations of the colony and give value to the lands of the province. West Florida could draw from Vera Cruz, "Campeachy," Merida, and Havana. Pensacola, Mobile, Manchac, and New Orleans would become the colossal ports of North America with millions of dollars in annual trade to benefit the British Empire. There was only one condition to Johnstone's commercial utopia. He expressed it best in a letter written to the Board of Trade: "Nothing can enable that commerce to flourish but a free gress and Regress where the ships bring bullion or peltry . . . and take our commodities in return."[31]

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[31] Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTEMPORARY VIEW

The West Florida colony which George Johnstone sought to place on a sound commercial basis appeared to be a land of opportunity to both American colonials and newly-arrived Europeans. In spite of the ominous reports of the early military commanders, the land was quite productive in many areas. To be sure, the extreme eastern section was sandy and barren, but most of the British felt that other factors offset this disadvantage. For example, the Governor collected over one hundred species of vegetables in Jamaica and found these could be cultivated to perfection in Pensacola.[1] Of particular note was the climate which perhaps made up the greatest contribution to the city. A blue and serene sky blanketed the area as "never failing breezes . . . blew in the morning from the land and from the sea after the sun came up . . . ."[2] In contradiction of Colonel Prevost, the Governor maintained that the harbor was excellent. Pensacola Bay, he determined, was the largest bay on the Gulf of Mexico and especially fitted for shipping.

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[1] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, October 31, 1765.

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The depth of the bay, based on naval surveys, was three and three-fourths fathoms at low tide and four fathoms at high tide. It extended some forty miles inland branching into numerous lagoons into which emptied rivers from all over the colony. These swift streams would conceivably become the arteries of a great commerce filling wharves with provincial exports which would bring in Spanish gold.

Johnstone dreamed of Pensacola's becoming the number-one port-city of North America, and he never seemed to tire of defending its positive features, perhaps the most outstanding of which was the proximity to Mexico, Cuba, and South America. The following excerpt from a letter sent to the Board of Trade reveals his intense belief in the capital city of West Florida:

> Panzacola in a few hours can receive the Produce of a circumference of One hundred and fifty miles round; such is the width and so numerous are the Trenches of its very Commodious Bay; it has been remarked in all Ages that Cities never flourished from the natural Fertility alone of the plantation on which they stood; it is commerce only that gather together those great Societies which constitute Towns; it was thro it that anciently Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Colchos [sic], and Palmyra rose, tho built in Deserts and on sand; and in modern times we find that their situations have not

The depth of the pit, based on nearly entirely new prices and three-fourths labor as low this side and four times as high this side. It expanded some fifty miles inland, and three-fourths of a million sucked into mining enterprises at Pachuca, a population greater than Denver, Denver with its Mexican colony. These emigrants represent the most concentrated of mining men and the principal-one port-city of North America, and he never seemed to tire of determining the positive temperature, permanent-one port-city of North America, and he never monkey prune in Spanish Rock.

Pachuca quarters of Pensacola, a population that measure little more than twenty-five miles inland from a letter sent to the Boston of Three Lo- to Mexico, Cuba, and South America. The difference excerpt from a letter sent to the Boston of Three Lo-

FIGURE:

Avenue and Intersection Depicted in the central city of Mexico

Pensacola in a 1 km north-east Pachuca

the Province of a circumference of one

punished and fifty miles long! such

is due width and so numerous are the

Tributaries of the very Commodious Bay!

It has been Lengthed in all Ways that

Cities never flourished from the Nest-

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find that first stranglions have not

> hindered Amsterdam, Venice, and Genos from being great and populous.[3]

The largest settlement in the province at the time of English occupation in 1763 was the old French area of Mobile. Located in an exceedingly humid climate, the town was originally founded by the Sieur de Bienville, and at one time had been the capital of French Louisiana. Mobile was situated at the confluence of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers near the head of Mobile Bay which appeared to be a prosperous place with its fine homes, mercantile houses, and rich interior Indian trade.

> About this place there are white and red bays and wild cherry trees. There are likewise white and red cedars; the latter is very fine, and very good for inlaid work; its smell expels insects, and the wood indeed is incorruptible. There are several sorts of trees in the forests hereabouts, which are unknown in Europe, and some which abound with a gum like turpentine. There are likewise cypresses of such a size, that the Indians make piraguas out of one piece, which can contain sixty men.[4]

But this location "just at the mixture of the Salt and Fresh Waters" was the insect and vermin haunt for miles around. Compounding her troubles even more, Mobile

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[3] Colonial Office 5:583, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 20, 1765.

[4] Nicholas Bossu, Travels Through that Part of North America Formerly Called Louisiana, trans. John R. Foster (London: T. Davis in Russell Street, 1771), 222.

had a bay so shallow that large vessels could not come within seven miles of the city. Thus it is easy to see why Mobile's exterior was so deceptive to many early travelers who marveled at her outward appearance. Perhaps the outstanding industry of the town was livestock production and most of her revenue was derived from the sale of beef to Pensacola.[5]

In the last half-century several works, including Peter Joseph Hamilton's, Colonial Mobile, have sought to popularize the early history of the town. The fact remains, however, that Mobile was the most unhealthy site in West Florida being plagued with fevers and mortal sicknesses of epidemic proportion during the entire period of British rule.[6]

About fifty miles southwest of Mobile was another old French settlement at Biloxi where a small population engaged in a lively, but limited, production of naval stores throughout the period. This place was rich in native yellow pine which was the source of the rosin

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[5]William Bartram, Travels through North and South America, East and West Florida . . . . (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken Printer, 1791), 404.

[6]Peter Joseph Hamilton devotes ample space to his home town in Colonial Mobile: An Historical Study Largely from Original Sources (2d ed. rev.; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910); Charles Grayson Summersell gives a brief description of the maritime efforts of the port in his monograph Mobile: History of a Seaport Town (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press), 1949.

necessary for conversion to pitch and tar. The English had ambitious plans for using these resources to establish a shipbuilding industry. As a matter of fact, John Pownall, Secretary to the Board of Trade in 1771, sent twelve books of Swedish origin explaining the process of making tar and pitch. Pownall claimed that he had gone to great trouble to procure these books and asked the Governor to make sure that they were placed in appropriate places for all desiring to learn the methods of processing naval stores.[7]

From Biloxi across the boundary of West Florida into the Spanish-governed Isle of Orleans was located a very populous agricultural region that would play a major role in the trade of the British province. Beginning with the Bayou de Saint Jean, which connected New Orleans with Lake Pontchartrain, and moving north to Cannes, Brule, and Chapitoula, was "the richest and most cultivated plantation area on the Mississippi River."[8] Here a chain of well-kept plantations produced all varieties of grain, timber, and fruit, in addition to short-staple cotton, hemp, flax, saffron, sassafras, myrtle-wax, and tobacco.

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[7] Colonial Office 5:588, Peter Chester to Lord Hillsborough, Pensacola, August 24, 1771.

[8] Frank Heywood Hodder (ed.), Captain Philip Pittman's, The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 58.

But the area's most important crop for commercial outlet was indigo which yielded three or four cuttings a year and according to a contemporary observer, possessed a color far brighter than any other in the world.[9] Another crop which was beginning to excite the imagination of the richer French planters here was sugar. Many of them had begun to experiment with the sugar culture in an attempt to extract the juice of the cane for commercial purposes. The quality of the sugar produced was excellent according to contemporary observations, but cold winters coupled with the lack of an economical method of crystallizing the sugar rendered the venture unprofitable.[10]

Eighty miles north of New Orleans where the Mississippi River overflowed to form the source of the Bayou Iberville was located the trading post of Manchac.[11] A few traders maintained warehouses here for the larger mercantile firms in Pensacola and Mobile, but there was hardly any permanent population here at the time of British

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[9] Ibid., 59

[10] P. Lee Phillips, Notes on the Life and Works of Bernard Romans (Deland, Florida: The Florida State Historical Society Press, 1924), 123.

[11] Mattie Bell Cawthon Singletary reveals faulty scholarship in her paraphrase of a potpourri based on the works of Charles Gayarré and Alcée Fortier while contending that her work comes from primary materials in "Louisiana's Mysterious Manchac" (unpublished Master's thesis, Dept. of History, Louisiana State University, 1931).

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occupancy. Because of the aforementioned possibility that the Iberville could be made navigable, the British had great plans for Manchac. They envisioned a teeming commercial depot of wharfs, warehouses, and mercantile agencies which would receive the rich Indian peltry trade from Canada south all along the stretches of the mighty Mississippi.[12]

About eighteen miles north of Manchac in West Florida was the loosely organized agricultural settlement at Baton Rouge. Most of the contemporary travelers through this area make no special mention of the community except to remark that it was a plantation area of note where diversified agriculture was practiced.[13]

On the west side of the great river in Spanish territory, about thirty miles north from Baton Rouge, was another French settlement at Pointe Coupee. The plantations of this place extended about twenty miles along west side of the Mississippi to its juncture with the

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[12] Colonial Office 5:574, General State of the Province Message from George Johnstone to John Pownall, Mobile, February 19, 1765; Colonial Office 5:582, Robert Farmar to the Earl of Egremont, Mobile, January 24, 1764; and Colonial Office 5:585, George Johnstone to John Pownall, Pensacola, May 4, 1764.

[13] Hodder, Pittman's Mississippi Settlements, 43; Bartram, Travels, 400; Romans, A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida, 5-7; and Hutchins, An Historical Narrative, 29-30.

False River.[14] Local planters here cultivated tobacco, indigo, and engaged in a profitable poultry and lumber production.

Switching once more to the British section and two miles above the last plantation of Pointe Coupee one found a small Tonica village of about thirty warriors. But the French wine and incessant, if fruitless, raids against the plantations had reduced them to a mere subsistence mode of existence.

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[14]The False River area is still a rich agricultural region in Louisiana. Captain Philip Pittman, who visited there, has recorded an interesting legend telling how the river got its name in Mississippi Settlements (London: J. Nourse, 1770), 72-73. "There are some plantations back on the side of what is generally called la fausse riviere, thro' which the Missisippi [sic] passed about sixty years ago; making the shape of a crescent, and made a difference to the voyager of about eight leagues. It is said that about that time two Canadians were descending the river, but were stopped at the beginning of this crescent by the roughness of the waves, occasioned by the wind blowing very hard against the current. One of these travellers chose to amuse himself with his gun until the wind should abate; and that he might not lose his way in the woods, he determined to follow a little brook, which had been made by the inundations of the river; he had gone but a small distance, when he again found himself by the side of the river, and saw the white cliffs before him; which he knew by the course of the Missisippi to be eight leagues from the place where he left his companion; to whom he immediately returned, and acquainted him with this discovery. They agreed to endeavour to get their cance across, as there was about a foot [of] water in the brook, which sloped towards the lower part of the river; they got their canoe into the brook . . . and the waters of the river entering seconded their endeavours, so that in a short time they effected their purpose. In less than six years the Missisippi passed through this channel, leaving its former bed quite dry. . . ."

The northernmost settlement in the province was Natchez (referred to as the Natches throughout most of this period) located ninety miles from present-day Baton Rouge. It was exposed to Indian dangers and had suffered many raids, but the land was reputed to be the richest in the colony. It is alleged that the soil contained a rich and "black-mould" some three feet deep on the hills and even deeper in the bottom lands.[15]

To the settler, Natchez was a veritable paradise which supported a great variety of both native and domesticated plants. Captain Philip Pittman, a military engineer who was commissioned by Governor Johnstone to record his impressions of the area, has left a vivid description of the rich allure of Natchez to the settler.

> The country is well watered, hops grow wild, and all kinds of European fruits come to great perfection . . . . several fruit trees, mostly figs, peaches, and wild cherries. The French always esteemed the tobacco produced here, as preferable to any cultivated in other parts of North America.[16]

Having briefly described the major settlements of West Florida and vicinity, we may note but one other place of importance. That is the famous city of New Orleans which in 1763 was the largest city on the Mississippi

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[15] Colonial Office 5:577, Montfort Browne to the Earl of Shelburne, Pensacola, July 6, 1768.

[16] Hodder, Pittman's Mississippi Settlements, 78.

River.[17] It was founded by the Sieur de Bienville in 1718 and had remained a commercial and cultural center of the French colonials in North America until 1763 when Spain was awarded the city because of her territorial losses during the Seven Years' War. Despite the Spanish flag, the French in New Orleans remained devoted to their native land. When the English came to West Florida, New Orleans was a community of some seven thousand, excluding slaves. Located high on the east levee of the Mississippi River, the town was laid out in straight streets crossing each other at right angles which divided it into sixty-six squares; eleven by the side of the river and six deep. These sides of the squares were about one hundred yards wide and accommodated twelve lots for the inhabitants. Most of the eight hundred houses of New Orleans were of one story, eight feet high, brick construction with raised wrought iron galleries. Cellars were built under the floor, level with the ground as any subterraneous construction filled with water.

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[17]There are a great number of works which cover the history of New Orleans, however, there is no account devoted to an exclusive coverage of the Crescent City during the period under consideration. Survey histories which cover much of the same material include Grace King, New Orleans, the Place and the People (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1895); Harold Sinclair, The Port of New Orleans (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Publishers, 1942); Lyle Saxon, Fabulous New Orleans (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1928); and George Washington Cable, The Creoles of Louisiana (New York: Charles Scribner, 1884).

The gardens of the Crescent City were magnificent, and the orange trees planted there gave the city a very agreeable smell during the spring months. The levee, which was maintained by individual citizens whose property fronted there, was an excellent place to load and unload as the river was very deep near the shore. Vessels simply sailed in and made fast while cargoes were unloaded and loaded.[18] The English recognized the value of New Orleans because it was the only place in 1763 where the articles of trade from the interior could find outlet for European markets. Even though the treaty of 1763 had provided for free navigation of the Mississippi River an unfriendly government at New Orleans could ruin the rich interior trade for the English merchants, traders, and farmers of West Florida, unless the Iberville could be made navigable.

As pointed out by these contemporary inhabitants of the province, West Florida seemed to be a land rich in agricultural and commercial potentialities. Most of the reports placed her high in both categories. The English settlers held dreams of expanding these potentialities, and they wanted to open up trade with their neighbors on the west side of the Mississippi. Equally impressive to

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[18]Hodder, Pittman's Mississippi Settlements, 41-44.

the settlers were the reports of the rich lands along the great river where it was rumored that almost any crop could be grown. The British crown was likewise eager to populate this area with colonists in view of recommendations which had been made by the Board of Trade.[19] As a result of these factors, the government proclaimed a liberal land-grant program for war veterans wishing to remain in West Florida. With this aid many men took North American discharges to accept these promising lands. The Colonial Office papers abound with memorials of officers and men who desired this type of arrangement on being mustered out. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel William Harcourt of His Majesty's 18th Regiment of Dragoons, asked for 10,000 acres of land because of services rendered during the late war; Michel Furey, an officer who had served under General Robert Monckton, wanted 10,000 acres; Lieutenant Elias Durnford, later to become Lieutenant-Governor of the province, 10,000 acres; and Captain Amos Ogden, wanted 25,000 acres because of "expenses and wounds received for the King."[20]

But the provincial soldiers who had served the crown were as interested in the give-away program as the

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[19] Shortt and Doughty, Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 127-147.

[20] Colonial Office 5:576, References of Petitions for Land from the Principals involved to the Board of Trade, London, September 20, 1770.

the settlers were the reports of the rich lands along the Grand River where it was rumored that almost any crop could be grown. The British crown was likewise eager to populate this area with colonists in view of recommendations which had been made by the Board of Trade.[19] As a result of these factors, the government proclaimed a liberal land-grant program for war veterans wishing to remain in West Florida. With this aid many men took North American discharges to accept these promising lands. The Colonial Office papers abound with memorials of officers and men who desired this type of arrangement or being mustered out. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel William Harcourt of His Majesty's 15th Regiment of Dragoons, asked for 10,000 acres of land because of services rendered during the late war; Lionel Durey, an officer who had served under General Robert Monkton, wanted 10,000 acres; Lieutenant Silas Dunford, later to become Lieutenant-Governor of the province, 10,000 acres; and Captain Absa Ogden, wanted 25,000 acres because of "expenses and wounds received for the King."[20]

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[19] Shortt and Doughty, Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1727-1791.

[20] Colonial Office 5:574, Petitions of Persons for Land from the Peninsula Levied to the Board of Trade, London, September 26, 1770.

crown regulars. They held that they had fought, bled, and died with the same intensity of purpose as the regulars. The land program was an ever-constant source of irritation to these provincial soldiers, and they did not believe it was fair that the regulars should hold priority over them in size and quality of land grants to be received. Perhaps the most outstanding example of the plight of the provincial soldier who wanted land is seen in the case of Major-General Phineas Lyman of His Majesty's provincial forces who wanted a grant of 150,000 acres because of personal and family service rendered to the crown during the war. Lyman was admittedly upset because of the favoritism shown the regular veteran. He was, however, a staunch loyalist and hoped that the crown would rectify its official position to give equal proportion to the colonial troops. The General rested his case by asking for land near "Natches" which he and his five sons could cultivate to produce good staples for the commerce of West Florida.[21]

It is easy to see that interest in the colony ran very high, and with the great contributions of sun and soil it was expected that West Florida would produce a

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[21] Colonial Office 5:577, Memorial of Major-General Phineas Lyman Requesting a Grant of 150,000 acres of Land in the Province of West Florida, Place unknown, February 16, 1770.

remarkable variety of crops. Needless to say, it did. The Acadian French, who had settled the lower Mississippi valley around 1755, had produced hemp, indigo, tobacco, and some short-staple cotton; but what they were most interested in was the "cultivation of the vine." Even though these people were in indigent circumstances and poorly supplied with farming implements, they made a moderate success at farming. France, recognizing the superior quality of the grapes produced, feared for her own wine industry, and placed a prohibition on the Acadians under heavy penalty to cultivate the vine. But as the English traveler Thomas Hutchins has so aptly put it, "Soil and situation triumphed over all political restraints, and the adventurers [Acadians] at the end of the war in 1762, were very little inferior to the most ancient settlements of America in all the modern refinements of luxury."[22]

Besides the rich land, the temperate climate of West Florida offered promise to many persons trying to escape the cold winters of New England and Europe. After an extensive tour of the province shortly after Britain took over, Thomas Hutchins was impressed with the climate, soil, rivers, flora and fauna; and he devoted several pages of his much-quoted journal to the temperate nature of the

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[22]Hutchins, An Historical Narrative, 30.

province. Hutchins made many comparisons, some factual and some fanciful, between the province and certain romantic places of Europe and Asia where all varieties of exotic growths abounded. He really felt that there would be no restriction on the progress of West Florida because of the wonderful natural setting and declared that no place in North America, or even in the universe, exceeded the Mississippi River valley in fertility of soil and temperature of climate.[23]

Captain Philip Pittman echoed the same observations after an extended visit to the province. He saw nothing wrong with the climate, except the cold but short winters, and voiced his opinion strongly in favor of the colony in a book written in 1770 after his return to England. He asserted:

> I am surprised that nobody has yet attempted to wipe off the unfavorable impressions that have taken place in the minds of many people from the unjust reports made of the climate in West Florida . . . . Pensacola and Mobile have both proved fatal to our troops; the former from mismanagement, the latter from its situation.[24]

Perhaps the most vivid and complete picture of West Florida has been preserved for us by Captain Bernard Romans,

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[23] Ibid., 28-29.

[24] Hodder, Pittman's Mississippi Settlements, 24-25.

a Dutch cartographer and soldier of fortune in the service of the English crown. Romans was a many-faceted genius ranking with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson in variety of interets and accomplishments. He toured West Florida from 1769 to 1774 and at the request of Governor Peter Chester was awarded an annual stipend by the crown to continue the work of map-making. Romans incorporated most of his maps, notes, and observations into a work entitled A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida which was printed in 1775 and again in 1776.[25] This study is an indispensible guide to the student of British West Florida because of the comprehensiveness with which Romans describes the natural phenomena of the province and because of the many theories which he presents regarding the commercial possibilities that could be developed on an intra-colonial or inter-colonial basis.[26]

Thus it is fair to say that colonial visitors and settlers viewed West Florida as a land of promise which

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[25] Historians have been unable to discover the publisher of Romans' A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida. P. Lee Phillips has accurately, if somewhat pedantically, pointed out the fact that Robert Aitken of Philadelphia was merely the printer in Notes on the Life and Works of Bernard Romans, 20-23.

[26] Colonial Office 5:587, Bernard Romans to Governor Peter Chester, Pensacola, undated [probably 1772].

would become quite productive. Rich soil, a temperate climate, and luxurious vegetation combined with great navigable rivers, good harbors, and a plentiful source of naval stores spelled out future profits for those who were willing to invest. Trade, most critical observers commented, would constitute the life blood of a colony predicted to become Great Britain's greatest economic asset in North America.

CHAPTER III

GOVERNOR JOHNSTONE AND TRADE

West Florida showed much promise; but there were many problems which had to be solved before either the province or Britain, co-operating within the framework of mercantilism, could stabilize the situation or establish a sound economic program. Governor Johnstone knew that Pensacola was close enough to enjoy the bountiful harvest of the rich Spanish colonies, which in turn, wanted English manufactured goods. Furthermore, he knew that the Spanish trade was worth £300,000 per annum to the merchants and traders of his province.[1] His idea was to convince the crown to allow this southern commerce, and he set about doing this by repeated requests to the Board of Trade asking for the permission to carry on commerce between West Florida and Spanish America. The Governor, his provincial council, plus countless numbers of traders and merchants knew that the Navigation Acts, which ostensibly would not allow free "egress and regress" in this enterprise, might in fact allow and encourage trade between the two areas. It is important that we analyze the reasons, selfish or otherwise, which prompted the citizens of West Florida to arrive at such a conclusion

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[1] Colonial office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, November 22, 1766.

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[1] Colonial Office 5:572, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, November 22, 1766.

in the light of past crown policy.

Colonials believed that nothing would promote the trade and navigation of Great Britain so much as the opening of commerce with the Spanish dominions. They pointed out that as participants in trade, West Floridians only vended manufactures, drugs, and raw materials to be used in dying cloth. The Spanish, on the other hand, exported not one article of trade that would interfere with the revenues of the province. The sale of English manufactures and the prosperity of West Florida, they asserted, depended upon the successful opening of this southern artery of trade. A plan was proposed to allow the Spanish ship-owners to act as the common carriers of goods between Spanish America and West Florida. The colonials rationalized that the Spanish were well acquainted with all the bays, customs, and laws of the coastal area; therefore, the Latins would be much better qualified to carry out the physical mechanics of the trade. These Spanish ships, claimed the colonials of West Florida, could only be "deemed as Boats Carrying our Goods to the Shore to bring their Produce in return."[2]

The British Admiralty, however, had another opinion on the subject. Captain Sir John Burnaby opposed this plan

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[2] *Ibid.*, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 7, 1765.

as being entirely in conflict with the purpose of the Navigation Acts, and he expressed the opinion that colonists were trying to circumvent the letter and spirit of the law to give a life to their own selfish economic interests. Burnaby further demanded the Navigation Laws stated that no colonial traffic could be carried in "foreign bottoms."

> Be it enacted . . . That after the five and twentieth day of March, 1698, no goods or merchandizes whatsoever shall be imported into, or exported out of, any colony or plantation to his Majesty, in Asia, Africa, or America, belonging, or or in his possession, . . . or shall be laden in, or carried from any one port or place in the same, the kingdom of England, dominion of Wales, or town of Berwick upon Tweed, in any ship or bottom, but what is or shall be of the built of England . . . .[3]

Needless to say, the West Floridians resented this attitude as being representative of a vested interest bent on formulating and shaping misguided policies, and the citizens of the colony insisted that they knew better than the Admiralty what was best for them and consequently what was best for the economic success of Great Britain. After all, the Spaniards were offering the produce of their colonial possessions which could be used in the province or sold in the common market on the continent. Great Britain

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[3]Great Britain, Statutes at Large, Vol. IX, 428, quoted in Henry Steele Commager, Documents of American History, 38.

should be grateful for this opportunity to increase and diversify the number of her commodities, the colonials rationalized, especially when it meant no outlay of risk to English ship-owner or insurance underwriter. Was not this fair in view of the fact that it would actually increase the amount of shipping?

Another interesting rationalization from the colonial point of view was not without consideration. Hector Berringer Beaufaine, the Collector of the King's Customs at Charles Town, South Carolina, viewed the Navigation Acts as laws set up with the general idea in mind to prevent goods from being imported and exported between the colonies and a foreign destination. With that in mind, he asserted it did not mean that all landing or shipping of goods in and out of the provinces had to be in British ships. If the Spanish brought dyewoods and bullion into West Florida in return for English manufactured goods, then the trade was actually between England and Spain, not the province of West Florida and the Spanish dominions.[4] Thus both England and Spain benefitted from the trade and only incidentally West Florida and the Spanish colonies. In other words, Beaufaine held that the spirit of the

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[4]With all proper respect to the knowledge of Beaufaine regarding the Spanish empire in South America, it should be pointed out that most of the dyewood of South America came from Brazil which was a Portuguese, and not a Spanish colony. In Spanish North America, however, there was dyewood to be had from the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico.

Navigation Laws was adhered to because the colonies, in fact, were not engaged in exporting and importing. He strengthened his theory by pointing to the fact that Britain herself had already set the precedent for this practice as illustrated by the Molasses Act of May 17, 1733. This law imposed a duty on sugar imported into the province; "the Duty is to be paid immediately, and before Landing" if the sugar was for provincial consumption. But if the sugar was not for local use "no duty is payable, not that the Act makes any Such Provision . . . the word Importation alone implies it, the Goods Landed and Exposed [are] not deemed imported while they Continue under Obligation to be shipped off."[5]

Colonials thus felt themselves to be only factors in the greater scope of the mercantilistic system advocated by Great Britain. They scoffed at the fear expressed by members of the Parliament that permission for foreign vessels to engage in the West Florida trade would, in effect, issue a carte blanche to France because such timidity would presuppose that foreigners would have better opportunity and greater temptation than the English to engage in the trade.

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[5] Colonial Office 5:574, Opinion of Hector Berringer Beaufaine delivered to Governor George Johnstone regarding the Spanish Commerce, February 8, 1765. Other examples are also listed by Beaufaine to bolster his argument but unfortunately time has rendered the manuscript of them illegible.

> The Spaniards will not run Upon Us the Manufactures of Europe . . . which are the Great Articles of Clandestine Trade in the American Colonies, these are the very goods they take of us. And as to Shipping any of our Plantation Goods, those are so Bulky, that no quantity Worth running any Risque Can be Stolen on Board or concealed; Foreign Vessels may be Laid under any Restraints while they Stay, May be ordered away at Pleasure, Our Vessels come in without leave from any other part of the World. The Masters may take their own Time for loading and Unloading, and in all Respects, that can be named, they have a Greater facility to practice Frauds, the Spaniards [sic] has Little or None, and if he commits any Fraud, we are Sure he makes more than Amends for it.[6]

Governor Johnstone, himself, reported to the Board of Trade that many merchants moved to Pensacola explicitly because of the allure of a rich market which was expected to develop with British occupation there. He further alleged that he had received letters from Havana, Merida, and Campeche advising that the merchants in those places would be happy to send bullion and dyewoods in return for printed linens, furniture, saddlery, and bays.[7] Excluding the Spanish from English colonial trade would mean a total lack of cash. If the trade, however, could be opened, the

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[6] Ibid., George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 9, 1765.

[7] Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to Sir John Pownall, Pensacola, undated.

Governor opined, "We would have dollars, as plenty as Halfpence in London."[8] To the populace of West Florida the absence of trade to the South was an incredible situation in a country surrounded with gold and silver. The fact remained that this trade was necessary to keep West Florida from privation, and the Governor warned the Board of Trade that the colony would be doomed without such an intercourse. Constant hammering at the Board with petitions, memorials, and state of provincial affairs messages to open the trade continued through the Johnstone administration, but all to no avail.

By May, 1766, it was learned in the province that Jamaica was being allowed free trade with the Spanish colonies and many Floridians, interested in commerce, thought a renewed assault should be made on the home government. In compliance with the demands of the citizens, the Governor again bombarded the Board of Trade with requests for equal trading privileges. One letter especially conveys the strength of Johnstone's belief and his chagrin over the dire economic situation.

> It is with the utmost grief that the Inhabitants of West Florida find that the benefits of Commerce lately extended to Jamaica have been denyed to

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[8] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 15, 1765.

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[8] Colonial Office 5:579, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 15, 1765.

> this Province where they humbly presume to think from its happy Situation that all the Advantages to be expected to flow to the Mother Country from this place, if admitted to the like Freedoms, and this without any dread of those disadvantages which might be objected respecting Jamaica.[9]

Those who had come to Pensacola to enter commercial business were growing discouraged with the attitude of the crown, and numerous merchants left the city by mid-year 1766. Johnstone was in a quandary; he knew that if the crown did not shake its orthodox position then the trade and perhaps the entire colony would be lost.[10]

The inhabitants of the province wanted to have the right of free importation of linens and other foreign manufactures of Europe in English-built ships. This seemed fair to them in view of the fact that they also proposed to warehouse the British goods in Florida and sell them under a bond of exportation to Spanish America. If the home government did not allow this, then the Spanish, in desperate want of manufactured goods, would turn to the common market where they would purchase them. The citizens engaged in production of naval stores; they petitioned the

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[9] Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to John Pownall, Pensacola, October 23, 1766.

[10] Cecil Johnson is very complimentary to the Governor for his efforts expended to convince the crown that West Florida would be a worth-while economic enterprise in British West Florida, 60.

crown for the right to export masts, spars, pitch, tar, and turpentine, and kept pleading for a modification of the southern commercial blockade. This would have kept both the manufacture and the means of supplying it in British colonial hands while having the secondary advantage of diverting the Spanish from setting up those manufactories in Louisiana. And because of the tremendous number of trees, a shipbuilding industry could have supplied these Spanish colonies with boats. Colonials appraised these plans as carrying a double advantage; it would clear the land, and it would furnish the much desired bullion so badly needed to rescue the sagging colonial finances.[11] In spite of all these representations to the government, the people of West Florida were never granted any concessions in mercantile trade. Johnstone pleaded with the crown from the time of his arrival in Jamaica in 1764, through 1765 and 1766, and until he was removed from the governorship in 1767. No changes were ever hinted at by the home government and the benefits of Spanish commerce were never extended by Parliament or George III to West Florida.[12]

In addition to the Spanish trade there was another

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[11] Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to John Pownall, Pensacola, October 27, 1766.

[12] Ibid., Duke of Halifax to the Board of Trade, London, February 9, 1765.

way open for West Floridians to make Pensacola and Mobile emerge as great commercial outlets. Twelve miles below the present capital of Louisiana and forming the southern boundary of East Baton Rouge Parish lies the bed of a stream which could have given Pensacola the lift to become the number one port in the South. This bed once carried the Bayou Iberville, known sometimes as the Bayou Manchac, and often incorrectly referred to as the Iberville River. The Bayou had been formed during the course of time because of spring rains which caused the Mississippi to overflow with particular ferocity into this low-lying area. Gradually it became twelve to eighteen feet deep and up to one hundred and fifty feet wide in some places. Bayou Manchac extended on an east-north-east line for about four and one-half French leagues where it flowed into the southern branch of the Amite River. The Amite empties into Lake Maurepas and two channels, commonly referred to as Northwest and Southwest, connect Maurepas to Lake Pontchartrain.[13] From Lake Pontchartrain vessels could sail into the Gulf of Mexico bound for Mobile or Pensacola. The only part of this water highway which was not navigable was a portion of the Iberville; and the English in West Florida, impressed with the prospect of gaining the peltry and skin trade of

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[13] W. Adolphe Roberts, Lake Pontchartrain (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1946), viii-xi.

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the interior for the ports of West Florida, wanted to make the Iberville navigable. If they could succeed in this venture, the port of New Orleans would become obsolete except for local French and Spanish commerce.[14]

Although Mobile was the closest terminal of this proposed route of interior trade, it was never reckoned as the ideal port because of the shallow harbor and bad climate. Thus Pensacola had the opportunity once more to become a great port in the southern colony. However, there were complications aplenty to this visionary scheme. In the river vocabulary of the lower South there are three terms which must be understood to appreciate the nature of the problems confronting the English in their plans to open the Bayou. During the flood season the Mississippi River carried a great number of fallen trees and other foreign matter. A lot of this litter overflowed into the Iberville to complicate ease of navigation. One particularly serious problem was that of the "planters" or tree-trunks fastened to the bottom of the river in a permanent fashion. Another obstacle to navigation was that of "sawyers" which are tree trunks lying in the water but bobbing up and down to knock gashes into the hulls of ships as the waves dash them about. And the third obstruction in the

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[14]The English engineer, Philip Pittman, drew a map of the Iberville and pin-pointed her various depths and widths. This map has been reproduced by the author from Hodder, Pittman's Mississippi Settlements and is contained in the Appendix.

contemporary glossary of river navigational problems is called the "wooded-island" which is simply a place where drift woods had collected to cause a matted formation of wood and other debris. These three obstructions constituted a test to colonial engineering proficiency and required the organization of a formal operation for their removal.[15]

In spite of these apparent problems trade had been the economic life-line of the area. For example, the French empire in North America had been based primarily on trade,[16] and the French had explored the possibilities of making this very same Iberville "River" navigable, but after unsuccessful efforts they had given up in disgust. It has already been noted that when the English took the province, Major Robert Farmar dispatched Captain James Campbell and a small party from Mobile up the Mississippi River through New Orleans to investigate the rumor that the Iberville could be made navigable for vessels drawing up to three feet of water.[17] Campbell examined that part of the Iberville next to the Mississippi and conferred

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[15]Nancy M. Miller-Surrey, The Commerce of Louisiana During the French Regime, 1699-1763 (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1916), 1-30.

[16]Herbert L. Osgood, The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924),IV, 280-285.

[17]Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol. I, 20-24.

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[17] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol. I, 20-25.

with local French plantation owners who assured him that the Bayou could be made navigable. The political situation in Louisiana west of the Mississippi was unstable at this time because the Spanish had not taken over the Isle of Orleans and the French were not sure how the incoming Spanish would treat them. But while Campbell was in the Pointe Coupee-Baton Rouge area, it was rumored that a Spanish Governor was on his way to New Orleans. The French grew anxious with this news, lest they lose their property and large herds of cattle to the Spanish Dons, and they began to co-operate with Campbell.[18] They asked to move over on the east bank of the Mississippi into British West Florida, started making improvements on the land, and a certain Monsieur Depart even sent fifty Negroes to help the English clear the sawyers and wooded-islands from the Iberville. Things went so well that Campbell reported the Bayou would be navigable by January 10, 1765, for vessels not drawing over eight or nine feet of water.[19]

Playing his usual aggressive role, Johnstone was fired with enthusiasm on receipt of this report. But the Governor was no fool; he knew that when news leaked back

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[18]Johnston, British West Florida, 35.

[19]Colonial Office 5:582, Robert Farmar to Lord Egremont, Mobile, January 24, 1764.

to New Orleans the Spanish authorities there would be irritated exceedingly by reports of British attempts to wrest the peltry trade from that city. Accordingly, he held a council with the leading military officials in the Iberville area who had surveyed the project. This included Captain Campbell and Major Farmar. Johnstone also invited the two outstanding military engineers of the colony, Elias Durnford and Archibald Robinson, for their opinions of the project. Farmar had cooled to the idea by this time because of other disagreements with the Governor, but in spite of his dissenting opinion, the group agreed that a fort should be constructed near Manchac to protect this valuable artery of trade.[20] Loyal to the Scottish minister who had been instrumental in securing his appointment, the Governor asked that the place be called Fort Bute.[21] Several provincial engineers, including Durnford and Robinson, drew up a cost estimate of the new fortification placing the figure at $5,619.07. It was to be as inexpensive as possible consisting only of a "blockhouse with a small stockaded Fort fit to Receive Stores, and Provisions and to

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[20] Ibid., George Johnstone to Archibald Robinson, Pensacola, February 9, 1765.

[21] W. Adolphe Roberts gives a very vivid account of the naming of Fort Bute in Lake Pontchartrain, 76. Minutes of the meeting of the engineers is in Colonial Office 5:574, Pensacola, February 10, 1765.

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[20] *Ibid.*, George Johnstone to Archibald Robinson, Pensacola, February 9, 1765.

[21] W. Adolphe Roberts gives a very vivid account of the naming of Port Bute in *Lake Pontchartrain*, 76. Minutes of the meeting of the engineers is in *Colonial Office 5:572*, Pensacola, February 10, 1765.

Contain Two Hundred Men on an Emergency."[22]

While the negotiations were going on regarding the construction of Fort Iberville, Johnstone received a note from the Duke of Halifax, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, stating that British intelligence reported there were many persons on the west side of the Mississippi who wanted to come to West Florida. Always looking for new

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[22] Colonial Office 5:574, Estimate for the Post to be erected at the Point of the River Iberville, Pensacola, February 19, 1765.

"38,000 Bricks at Eight dollars per m	304.00
200 Barrels of Lime at one dollar per barrell	200.00
100 Days of a Bricklayer at two dollars per Day	200.00
300 Days of a Labourer at two bills per Day	60.00
For Floors, Center doors, and windows of Magazine	30.00
410 Boards for Soldiers Barracks at four Bills each	160.00
For Iron Work	10.00
42 Square Cases of Shingling at five dollars	210.00
Rafters, Flooring, and Frame of Barrack	250.00
310 Boards for officers Barracks at four bitts each	124.00
20 Square Cases of Shingling at five dollars each	100.00
Frame and etc.	180.00
Boards for the Storehouses, etc.	300.00
Shingling	110.00
Frame, etc.	200.00
Cooking places and necessarys	120.00
300 Days of a Carpenter at two dollars per Day	600.00
Nails, Locks, Hinges, etc.	106.07
1500 Stockades	750.00
200 small D. . for Banquets, etc.	60.00
30 Sleepers for Platforms	45.00
Labourours [sic]	500.00
For conveying the Materials	1000.00
Total Dollars	$5619.07"

settlers and knowing the value of propagandizing the Iberville project, Johnstone sent Captain Alexander McClellan on a mission to sound out these colonials of Spanish Louisiana to see if they really wanted to move into the province. McClellan queried these people on this basis and reported to the Governor that they would come if their Roman Catholic religion would be tolerated; if they were given lands along the Mississippi which was fertile; and if an establishment were actually made at Manchac to protect them from the Indians.[23]

This confirmed the project as far as the Governor was concerned. Sir John Lindsay, Commander of His Majesty's Gulf Squadron, promised to aid Johnstone in building the fort by readying the sloop Nautilus to carry men and materials to the selected site; whereupon, the Governor commissioned Archibald Robinson to the post of principal director of the project. Since the crown had not given the Governor even tacit approval for such an undertaking, he advised Robinson that the cost of the post should be held to an absolute minimum.

> The fort is merely to be considered as a Post . . . untill the further Directions of Government can be obtained and therefore if it is possible to curtail

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[23] Ibid., George Johnstone to the Duke of Halifax, Pensacola, May 4, 1765.

> any part of the Plan, and reduce the ExPence . . . Safely, you will do it.[24]

In the first week of February, 1765, the Nautilus under the command of Captain Sacker set sail from Pensacola for Dauphin Island where British troops were put on board and taken to Point Iberville to begin construction of the fort. By February 19, 1765, the Nautilus and her passengers had safely arrived at the site and construction of the fort was begun.[25] However, the expense of the operation far exceeded the estimate, and when the spring floods came the Iberville once again became clogged with debris which expanded the cost of the whole project. Evidently the expense of clearing the stream and the construction of the post became prohibitive and little was actually accomplished. Johnstone was censured by the Board of Trade for presuming to write a note to be negotiated in New Orleans to cover the cost of construction. Indians harassed the operation by stealing necessary supplies and liquor at the site while clearing operations were underway in the Bayou.

The attempt was finally abandoned, however, because the Board of Trade objected to the cost. The Governor was furious at this and wrote the Board a long letter expressing

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[24] Ibid., George Johnstone to Archibald Robinson, Pensacola, February 18, 1765.

[25] Johnson, British West Florida, 35, bases his account of the Iberville construction on Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to John Pownall, Pensacola, February 19, 1765.

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turtone at fits and wrote the Board a long letter expressing

his discontent with the situation while pointing out the short-sightedness of the august body. In the letter Johnstone complained that General Thomas Gage had already expended two thousand dollars for military aid in opening the Iberville, and if the Board did not allow more money to finish the construction before the arrival of the Spanish troops at New Orleans, then "it may be Concluded from Just Principles, that they will Endeavour to Obstruct everything which Could promote the navigation of the Iberville."[26] Many inhabitants of New Orleans and Pointe Coupee wanted to remove to West Florida for fear of these same Spanish. Johnstone pointed out also that this post would be the only means of checking the power of the Indians and from it soldiers could reconnoiter North as well as South. And lastly, Johnstone mentioned that since no Spanish commerce was to be allowed, unless the Board furnished the money to construct Fort Bute, there would be no trade and the colony would founder on good intentions.[27]

After a great number of memorials and some persuasion in Great Britain, the Board did allow work to be resumed, but the Navy was not convinced that it was the thing to do.

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[26] Colonial Office 5:576, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, May 6, 1765.

[27] Ibid.

Sir William Burnaby of the Admiralty ordered Sir John Lindsay and his Gulf Squadron not to aid Governor Johnstone in his attempts to erect Fort Bute.[28] Major Farmar, likewise, refused to furnish troops to facilitate construction, and when it seemed that he was cornered by the Governor and would have to send some men to Manchac, took twenty available personnel to a remote area on a fictitious mission. Nevertheless, construction went ahead and a temporary post was put in operational order by the end of 1765.[29] The post was garrisoned on October 2, 1765, when Johnstone sent a small party of newly arrived soldiers in a British transport, the Prince of Wales, to strengthen the fort. They had orders to maintain the post, prevent the Bayou from filling with trees and debris, keep a small section navigable, protect the newly growing Manchac settlement, secure British trade on the Mississippi and "round the lakes," and watch the Indians. On this ambitious mission, Johnstone dispatched one hundred and twenty men with six months provisions and three hogsheads of rum.[30]

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[28] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, December 14, 1765.

[29] Robert Lowry and William H. McCardle present a brief description of the founding of Fort Bute in A History of Mississippi (Jackson, Mississippi: R. H. Henry and Company, 1891), 113.

[30] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Commander of Fort Bute, Pensacola, October 2, 1765.

Sir William Bentley of the Admiralty ordered Sir John Dinwiddie and the Gulf Squadron down to ship Governor Johnstone in the Mississippi to effect Fort Bute.[58] Major Mentel, Lieutenant Colonel Dickson, Captain Forth and William H. McCarty Dickson, 8 Regular troops and Rangers were ordered on October 5, 1765. When Johnstone sent British troops on the Mississippi and "found the lakes", he was requested to detach some men to Manchac, took twenty-five soldiers and a small section naval-armed boat and quartered one hundred and twenty men with six months pro-visions and three months of rum.[59]

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Colonel Clifton Stroud, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, December 14, 1765.

With this job tentatively finished the wily Governor set about opening an overland passage from Pensacola to Mobile. For the discussion of this project, he called in Captain Sir John Lindsay of the Navy, the provincial engineer, Elias Durnford, and other ranking officials of the garrison at Pensacola. In the ensuing meeting it was proposed that the area under consideration should be explored, the problems and solutions of building noted, the Perdido River surveyed for a possible bridge, the places of most frequent ambush studied, and a master report submitted to the Governor explaining the nature of their findings. This was done in the early months of 1766, and the Governor felt elated with the progress which he seemed to be making.[31]

Indian raids were another of the Governor's primary concerns. He was forever troubled by the Indian outrages, and apparently had come to the conclusion that nothing but a strong military force could solve the problem. However, he deemed it practical to confer with John Stuart, the Indian Superintendent for the Southern District,[32] about the feasibility of holding Indian congresses to restore tranquility and perhaps promote a lucrative interior trade. Because

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[31] Ibid.

[32] John R. Alden adequately covers John Stuart's career in the Floridas in John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1944), 192-214.

there had been sporadic Indian flare-ups after the Proclamation of 1763,[33] the crown had deemed it imperative to begin a study of Indian problems. The result of that investigation called for a new Indian policy which was contained in the so-called "Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs."[34] The purpose of the plan was to disentangle the Indian problem, centralize Indian administration under royal control, and make North America safe from Indian attacks. The main provisions of the plan called for a division of the Indians into nations, instead of geographical units; imposed closer supervision of trade by a southern and northern superintendent; fixed rates for all who engaged in trading; and licensed traders to operate in specific areas only.[35]

The plan was distributed among the major crown officials in the colonies for study and criticism. John Stuart was impressed with the plan and remarked:

> The first and main step toward the right governing of Indians and bringing them

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[33] Howard H. Peckham, Pontiac and the Indian Uprising (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

[34] New York Colonial Documents, VII, 637-641.

[35] Clarence Edwin Carter, "Observations of Superintendent John Stuart and Governor James Grant of East Florida on the Proposed Plan of 1764 for the Future Management of Indian Affairs," American Historical Review, XX (December, 1915), 816-831.

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[35] Clarence Edwin Carter, "Observations of Lieutenant John Stuart and Governor James Grant of East Florida on the Proposed Plan of 1764 for the Future Management of Indian Affairs," American Historical Review, XX (December, 1915), 316-331.

> under some Police will be having Good men Traders in the different Nations subjected to good and wholesome regulations . . . .[36]

Stuart immediately implemented this Plan of 1764 in his Southern District by calling for a series of congresses with the Indians. Johnstone was more apprehensive than Stuart, but after a thorough study of the details and for lack of any other organized purpose, he agreed to join the Superintendent and share responsibility. The first of these Indian congresses was held in Mobile on March 25, 1765, with representatives of the Chickasaw and Choctaw nations in attendance. Paya Mattaha led the former while the Choctaws were represented by Chief Albamon Mingo. The congress was quite an event featuring harangues by Johnstone, Stuart, and the leading chiefs. After two days of talking the following general agreements were consented to by all the parties present:

1. Great Britain and the Indian nations expressed the desire to continue in peace and friendship.
2. The Indians agreed to become British subjects.
3. The British agreed to give full and ample justice to the Indians.
4. Reciprocal agreements were made for punishment involving murder cases.
5. The English promised not to encroach upon the Indian territory as defined by the Proclamation of 1763.
6. A system of check-points was to be set up throughout the nations to protect Indians as well as traders.

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[36] Ibid., 820.

7. Prices and rates for goods were fixed.[37]

Upon conclusion of these terms of understanding, there was much celebration and gaity. Indian chiefs were awarded medals which showed their high rank and friendship, and the English representatives felt that, at last, some beginning in official friendly relations with the Indians was being made.[38]

Because of the success of this first conference, a second conclave was scheduled and held in Pensacola on May 28, 1765, with the Creek nation. The Mortar, a shrewd and crafty chieftain who had exacted much tribute from the French, represented the Creeks, and he expected to follow the same policy with respect to the English if they wanted to become his friends. At the meeting, the Indians agreed to many of the same provisions which were set forth in Mobile, but the Mortar was sullen and remained aloof when he was not treated with the protocol which he had expected. As a result, the Pensacola talks did not have the air of amity and agreement which had prevailed in Mobile.[39] Nevertheless, a precedent had been established and it was felt by all concerned that in time a state of tranquility between

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[37] Colonial Office 5:582, Minutes of a Congress held at the town of Mobile in the Province of West Florida, March 25-27, 1765.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 211-214.

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Upon consideration of these terms of "independence" there was much celebration and "gaity." Indian chiefs were signing medals which echoed their pride, rank and "friendship" and the English representatives left them, at least, some day in official friendly relations with the Indians as "people who had exercised such rights from the first 25, 1763, with the Creek nation." The "COMPACT" a system and civil authority who had exercised such rights from the French" represented the Creeks" and be expected to follow the same bounds with respect to the English if they wanted to become his friends." At the meeting" the Indians agreed to many of the same provisions which were set forth in "Compact" but the "COMPACT was signed and remained about much/ to be not fleeted with the protocol which he had expected." as a result" the Tensacola delks did not have the gift of amity and "friendship which had previously in Mobile." [36] However, a precedent had been established and it was left to all concerned that in time a state of friendship between the English representatives with the Indians signifying in official friendly relations with the Indians were being made.[37]

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[34] Colonial Office 5:583. Minutes of a Congress held at the fort of Mobile in the Province of West Florida, March 25-27, 1763.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Kenjamin, Administrative Territorial Changes, 311-312.

the Indians and the English would be established.[40]

The Governor remained wary of the Indian professions of friendship, and had only agreed to participate in these congresses because it seemed the best way to further peaceful interior trade. He remained doubtful as to the Indian intentions, and was sorely afraid of attack by a combined effort of the Indian nations against his token military defenses. His report to the Duke of Halifax reflects that fear.

> Nothing but compleat Corps can effectually relieve such shatter'd Regiments with neither officers or men. The ill disposition of the Indians arises from this distrest Situation & in Case they should take advantage & push this ill humor further I fear we could not resist.[41]

On the basis of Johnstone's energetic and aggressive leadership, it would seem that the colony would move forward and an improved state of affairs would result. However, this was not to be the case. From the very beginning the Governor had a terrific problem with his military commanders. The best description of the nature of this problem is contained in Clinton Newton Howard's study of the military aspects of Johnstone's administration.[42] The Governor felt

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 168.

[42] Howard, British Development of West Florida, 1-63.

that it was his duty, by virtue of his commission and royal instructions, to be Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the province. He believed that either he would rule or the military would rule, but not both, for he maintained:

> Imperium in Imperio cannot exist in a Commonwealth, much less within the Fortifications of a Garrison; either You [the military commanders] must have the Command of the Fort or I; this is indubitable.[43]

One might surmise that Johnstone's position would be quite defensible in his argument with the commanders. After all, he had the royal authority which made him the colonial executive. But there was a tremendous fight, and Johnstone was subsequently recalled as Governor. The reasons for this are quite complicated and confusing. It seems that the Governor had a history of duelling while he had served as a naval officer.[44] Most authors have attributed this to a hot temper which combined with a dominating personality made him a man hard to deal with. Because of his new-found authority, it is possible that the Governor developed many of the characteristics of a martinet. The officers of West Florida may have resented his coming in and telling them their duties; after all,

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[43] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 158.

[44] See the sketch by James K. Laughton in the Dictionary of National Biography, X, 963-65.

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[43] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 158.

[44] See the sketch by James K. Laughton in the Dictionary of National Biography, 563-65.

most of them preceded him there by a year and they felt that their allegiance was to General Thomas Gage, the commander of all the British troops in North America.[45] Also, it is well to remember that Johnstone was younger than the military officers, and most of these men enjoyed the full confidence of General Gage. Invariably, when they reported a misunderstanding with Johnstone, the General would denounce the policies of the Governor. Gage enjoyed a superior status, and when disputes arose, the Governor found that his requests were relegated to an inferior place.[46]

As time elapsed, the Duke of Halifax, then Secretary of State for the Southern Department, was drawn into the fight between the Governor and his officers. He felt the problem of dual authority required study and after considering all the evidence on both sides, the Duke decided that the only solution to the problem was to issue new and explicit instructions to both Governor and military commanders to remove the possibility of any dual jurisdiction or ambivalent meanings. These new instructions were dispatched to the colony as early as February, 1765. But

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[45] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 162-164.

[46] John R. Alden has presented the story of the career of General Gage in the colonies in General Gage in America (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948).

in spite of this action, trouble continued between the military and Johnstone. Things finally got so bad that Gage was prevailed upon to order Brigadier General Henri Bouquet into West Florida to clear up the misunderstanding. Bouquet, unfortunately, died two weeks after his arrival in the province and nothing was accomplished.[47]

Provincial squabbling continued and even reached greater proportion when settlers began to take sides either with Johnstone or the commanders. This fight reached a fever pitch in the Walsh affair. Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Walsh was, at this time, commander of the fort at Pensacola. In January, 1766, the provincial council with the Governor's blessing, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Maxwell of the garrison at Mobile to march on Pensacola and arrest Walsh for alleged insubordination and disobediance to the Governor.[48] Simultaneously, Johnstone wrote to General Gage and asked that Walsh be court-martialed.[49] Colonel Maxwell and his troops arrived at Pensacola on January 31, 1766, and the Governor ordered him to take over the fort. But Walsh had closed the gates. Everyone in Pensacola was excited and a fight seemed imminent.

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[47] Colonial Office 5:565, Johnstone's Report of the Death of General Henri Bouquet to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, September 14, 1765.

[48] Howard, British Development of West Florida, 373-374.

[49] Ibid., 413-414.

Maxwell, however, was sensible enough to confer with Walsh, and after their council the officer from Mobile decided to take his Regiment and leave. After all, he reasoned, why should the wrath of a fellow officer be incurred? Moreover, General Gage was none too friendly to Johnstone. Of course, this irritated Johnstone and the local citizens wondered what the Governor would do. They did not have long to wait for the Governor quickly ordered the provost marshal to place Walsh under arrest. This done, a quick trial was held; but Walsh was found to be innocent of the charges preferred by the Governor. The entire event sounds like a plot worthy of Gilbert and Sullivan, but it gives us an insight into the character of a man whose temper had put him in similar situations in time past. It is largely because of this event that people in Pensacola became more divided in their opinion of the Governor, and when many council members loyal to Johnstone resigned it looked as if his effectiveness as Governor had come to an abrupt end.[50]

When the trouble between the Governor and the military commanders first broke out, the Lieutenant-Governor, Montfort Browne, gave his assistance to Johnstone. But as the fight intensified, Browne began to take the side of

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[50] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 7, 1765.

MAXWELL, HOWEVER, WAS SENSITIVE ENOUGH TO CONTACT WITH MEXICO, and after final consult the officer from Mobile decided to take his regiment and leave. After all, he responsed, why should the wrath of a fellow officer be incurred? Moreover, Captain Gerald Cage was done too literally to telephone.

Captain Cage was sent to telephone the local officers of Compte. But illiterate telephone and the local officers moreover that the governor would do. They did not have a dutch long to wait for the governor dutifully ordered the process to be served upon Major Major since long to be innocent of the charges preferred by the governor. The entire event somehow filtered through the grapevine and suddenly was in everyone's mouth. Major Major's friends were indignant. Little Gone, a dutch [illegible] to Major Major since long to be innocent of the charges preferred by the governor. The entire event somehow filtered through the grapevine and suddenly was in everyone's mouth. Major Major's friends were indignant. Little Gone, a dutch [illegible] to Major Major since long to be innocent of the charges preferred by the governor. The entire event somehow filtered through the grapevine and suddenly was in everyone's mouth. Major Major's friends were indignant. Little Gone, a dutch

the military. Later he claimed that Johnstone had misrepresented the Walsh case to him, but after conducting an investigation of his own, the Lieutenant-Governor concluded that the military officials were carrying out their duty and Johnstone was interfering with them.[51] Although he claimed to be acting on principle, it is necessary to point out that Browne would benefit politically if Johnstone were removed from office; and the Lieutenant-Governor soon became the active leader of a faction accusing Johnstone of collecting a council of men subservient to his purposes who did not dare speak out against his rule.[52] The Governor countered that the rebels of Browne were simply plotting to depose him. He further asserted that under Browne's leadership the group was merely stirring up trouble as a subterfuge to keep from paying the Stamp Act tax.[53]

Coincident with this open quarrel, isolated Indian depredations broke out against the colonists. And at this point Johnstone vehemently denounced the peace policy which Stuart had inaugurated with the Indians. When several white

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[51]Howard, British Development of West Florida, 417-419, 455-457.

[52]Helen Louise Shaw, British Administration of the Southern Indians, 1765-1783 (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Press, 1931), 40.

[53]Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 511-516.

settlers were murdered inside the provincial boundary, the Governor declared war against the Creeks.[54] A plan of action was executed and military operations were actually initiated against the Creeks.[55] Of course, reports were quickly carried back to the home government representing Johnstone's behavior as deviant and unorthodox, and on February 19, 1767, the Secretary of State wrote to Johnstone informing him that it was the desire of the King that he should be recalled from the province.[56]

Thus ended the Johnstone era in West Florida, but in spite of his belligerent temper and brawling ways, the province had lost a champion. Johnstone had fought an up-hill battle to prove to the mother country that the colony needed a strong executive, free and unrestricted commerce, and a strong military force if she were to become a desirable contributor to the mercantile system. If the crown had co-operated with the Governor, it is reasonable to assume that Pensacola would have emerged as a flourishing center of colonial commerce. Fate, however, had decreed otherwise, and events were to move swiftly to seal the economic failure of West Florida.

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[54] Shaw, British Administration of the Southern Indians, 41-44.

[55] Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, 517.

[56] Johnson, British West Florida,

CHAPTER IV

THE TRYING YEARS

Coincident with George Johnstone's appointment as Governor of the province in 1763, many of his countrymen were in the midst of a mass exodus from Scotland because of the unstable economic and social conditions there.[1] A number of these men possessed some education and were literate enough to go into the frontier business community in North America where they sought to build their lives and enhance their fortunes. In fact, so many Scots sought out places as representatives of large mercantile firms that the word Scot became synonymous with factor or foreigner.[2]

Trade in West Florida during the early years was dominated by these Scots, and our best evidence for this comes from a perusal of primary materials of every description which covers this phase of her history. For example, the names McGillivray, Falconer, McIntosh, Graham, Fitzpatrick, Fulton, Hodge, Dunbar, Simpson, Stephenson, Strachan, and Struthers dominate every phase of provincial commerce during the period of British rule. Since these men, if for no other reason than sheer numbers,

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[1] Ian Charles Cargill Graham, Colonists from Scotland (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 23-89.

[2] Arthur Meier Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution (2d printing; New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1957), 35.

exerted the greatest influence on the trade of the colony, it would follow that a study of their activities would bring to light the nature of their hopes, frustrations, successes, and failures in the commerce on this provincial frontier. These Scots were hard-working, tight-fisted entrepreneurs whose business was money-making, and they exhibited shrewd, honest, but quite demanding traits in the conduct of their businesses.[3]

One such Scotsman was Charles Strachan, a native of Kinnabec near Montrose in Scotland, who spent five years of what he termed the best part of his life engaged in the frontier trade of West Florida. Strachan came to Savannah, Georgia, in the latter part of 1763, where he was employed as a member of the mercantile firm of Johnson and Wylly. After a short apprenticeship there, the company was evidently so pleased with his work that they extended to him the opportunity to become a factor representing the company in Mobile. It seems that no restrictions were placed on his personal activities because he subsequently formed his own independent company in Mobile while continuing to represent Johnson and Wylly as well as other merchants in West Florida and England.

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[3] Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, March 23, 1775.

[4] Letterbook of Charles Strachan, ms. 720, National Library of Scotland, microfilm copy at the University of New Mexico.

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[3] Pinkney's Virginia Gazette, March 23, 1775.

[b] Letterbook of Charles Strachan, ms. 220, National Library of Scotland, microfilm copy at the University of New Mexico.

Strachan departed for Mobile about January 1, 1764, on board the English sloop, Adventure, under the command of Captain Robert Stapleton. Aboard he supervised a quantity of goods placed under his authority which were to be sold and bartered to traders in the Mobile area. But because of a stormy passage of eleven weeks during which time the vessel was almost lost, the Captain was forced southward to the port of New Providence in the Bahamas.[5] After the weather cleared and the goods were checked to determine if there was any damage, the voyage was continued. When the vessel docked in Pensacola, Strachan proceeded overland to Mobile via the Creek nation. Why he did this we can only guess. It may be that he was weary of the voyage or he may have wanted to inform potential business connections of his new enterprise in Mobile. Nevertheless, Strachan arrived in Mobile in time to help land the cargo which was mostly ruined or spoiled due to the tempestuous voyage. After a survey of the damage, Strachan decided to sell the goods at public auction or vendue which was the common practice in the colony. Damaged goods, or those not in great demand, often met this fate when merchants deemed it necessary to make room for a stock of marketable merchandise. The goods in question were simply turned over

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[5]Strachan to John Beswicke and Company of London, Mobile, May 14, 1764, ibid.

to a vendue master who sold the goods on a specified day at the highest price offered.[6]

Charles Strachan was disappointed to find that there were no traders in Mobile, but he soon discovered that the Indians of the area had wasted all spring in Mobile begging for presents during an Indian congress which had been sponsored by the local French official, Monsieur D'Abbadie and attended by the English military commander for Mobile, Major Robert Farmar. As a result no hunts had been made and the traders of the interior had brought no skins into Mobile. Strachan made reconnoiter by sending two local traders, Joe Wright and John McIntosh, into the interior to investigate the situation there; but they found that active Pensacola traders had already bought and bartered for the few skins available. With this disheartening news, the Scotsman notified Johnson and Wylly that no commerce would develop in Mobile before September.[7]

Having little business to transact, Strachan decided to buy a house. He looked about and made several enquiries before settling on a small house with four rooms and a separate kitchen on a double lot. Strachan purchased the house for three hundred and fifty dollars, but was

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[6]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, May 10, 1764, ibid.

[7]Alden, John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier, 195.

to a vague memory who told the story of the Scots in a skirmish with the Indians at the planet Price Orieted.

Captain Stranger was disappointed to find that the more on Tlaqala in Kopitia' but he soon discovered that the inhabitants of the area had seized all arms in Kopitia' pen-ning for protection against an Imperial soldiery which had been abandoned by the local Terran officials' government. Darkness was approaching by the Earthian military commander' for Kopitia' Major Farmer. As a result no guards were posted and the flagpole of the Imperial Residency in Kopitia. Stranger made a hasty decision that: per week longer than scarcity permitted and Terrans were allowed to hoist the flag of the Imperial Residency in Kopitia' but he soon discovered that the Scots had removed the flagpole' and Mr Wright and John McIntosh' were ordered to hoist the Union flag.

"When' John Sinclair and the Scots' Commander' Major Farmer' and the Terrans' Commander' Captain Stranger' had left the Residency' Mr Wright and John McIntosh' were ordered to hoist the Union flag.

later disturbed when he discovered that he had done so with insufficient knowledge of costs; the early English settlers had paid much less for a residence. True to his Scottish sense of value, he rationalized that his was the "only tolerable house to be found for sale."[8] He also pointed out to friends and correspondents that the house was very close and convenient to his place of business.

With apparently nothing but leisure at hand, Strachan began to learn all he could of the local state of affairs. After considerable enquiry he judged that, at least temporarily, trading prospects were not bright. He noted, as countless others had and would, that the lands about the city were barren and even several miles north, were only tolerably productive.[9] The population was sparse; a trading enterprise would founder without an adequate number of residents to support it. But he did think that Mobile was well situated on two navigable rivers, the Tombigbee and the Alabama, to receive the trade of the Choctaw and the Chickasaw nations. And when he heard rumors

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[8]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, May 10, 1764, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[9]Andrew Burnaby, Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America in the Years 1759 and 1760; with Observations Upon the State of the Colonies (3d. ed. rev.; London: Longmans, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1812), 751, and Bossu, Travels Through that Part of North America formerly called Louisiana, 221.

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that New Orleans was to become a Spanish possession, the new merchant rejoiced because the French would no longer be in power to incite the Indians against the British.[10]

Strachan, nevertheless, declared to his superiors that he would order no goods until the prospects of trade were better. It seemed that the only hope for developing an extensive commerce lay in the possibilities of the Spanish allowing New Orleans to engage in free trade with the colony. Since the Treaty of 1763 allowed the English the right of free navigation on the Mississippi, there seemed to be a justification for thinking that trade would materialize.[11]

When the vendue master succeeded in selling the damaged goods, Strachan experienced his first conflict with Farmar's forces in Mobile. They demanded that he present the papers to their office for approval before he could return them to Johnson and Wylly. The Scotsman expressed considerable irritation at this and never changed his opinion of the military forces as long as he remained in West Florida. They seemed to discourage trade at every turn and Strachan represented the feelings of the merchants of Mobile when he expressed the hope that a civil governor

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[10]Strachan to John Beswicke and Company of London, Mobile, May 14, 1764, ibid.

[11]Hutchins, An Historical Narrative, 1.

would arrive shortly to place things on a more equitable footing for commercial enterprise.[12]

In spite of the Indian congresses, lately recessed in Mobile, Strachan was very apprehensive about the Indians. He constantly harbored ill-feeling towards the French and referred to them as instigators of Indian raids against the British. Yet he did note in the early months at Mobile that smallpox was carrying off the Creeks so fast that there was little trouble with the Indians.[13]

Events moved slowly and by the last of June, 1764, Strachan was prompted to write, "Things continue here in the same dull situation as when I wrote you last."[14] The monotony was broken, however, when news reached Mobile of the attempts of a Spanish merchant vessel laden with the equivalent of forty thousand dollars to make port at Pensacola. Everyone was excited and thought that the Spanish trade was opening. But English naval officers in the capital city seized the vessel and towed her out of the harbor, not allowing any discharge of goods or intercourse between the Spanish and English there. Strachan glumly

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[12]Strachan to John Beswicke and Company of London, Mobile, May 14, 1764, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[13]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, May 28, 1764, ibid.

[14]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, June 27, 1764, ibid.

commented:

> . . . it is my opinion that had they met with no interruption there might have been a great deal of business done in that way. Why they discourage a trade that consumes such a quantity of our manufactures and brings us cash in return is more than I can imagine.[15]

Strachan was further depressed because his early experience showed the inland trade was inconsiderable, and he predicted that it would never be of any consequence. It was at this time that the Scot contracted a condition which he called the "dry gripes" and had to take to bed, quitting work for three months. He was up and around, though in a weakened condition, by October and he took heart when he learned that Governor Johnstone was daily expected in Pensacola.[16] With this news the merchant resolved not to leave Mobile without making a real try, for he and his peers felt that the Governor would end the military blockade of Spanish trade.[17] As a matter of fact, Strachan anticipated the Governor's actions by ordering a token amount of goods which he felt would interest the Spanish market.[18] He was fully aware that there was no

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Colonial Office 5:574, Major Robert Farmar to the Board of Trade, Mobile, June 30, 1764.

[17] Charles Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 2, 1764, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[18] Ibid.

current demand for the goods, but the evidence seemed to indicate there would soon be; and when the opportunity afforded itself, Strachan was determined to be among the first to make a push "where there may [be] an opening."[19]

Conditions, however, continued to grow worse in Mobile. The Governor was having no luck with his program to implement the Spanish trade, and food was increasingly hard to purchase in the town. Even the bad beef on which the citizens had subsisted throughout the summer was in short supply. Many of the merchants grew depressed, and seeing no way out, left the province. Strachan reported, "we are all starving here" and asked Johnson and Wylly to send some ham if at all possible.[20] His health, already failing, became so bad that by the end of November, 1764, he could not write to his friends and correspondents.[21] Strachan resolved to make a trip to New Orleans and there combine rest with business. In that city he spent several weeks in January, 1765, making business acquaintances and taking orders for British manufactured goods.[22] Business

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 10, 1764, ibid.

[21] Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 27, 1764, ibid.

[22] Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, February 18, 1765, ibid.

evidently became brisk, for Strachan reported selling £1000 sterling worth of "strouds" and sundry other items. As a matter of fact, he sold more strouds than he had in stock and was forced to give half his sale to Robert Crooke and Company of Mobile which had filled out the balance of the New Orleans order.[23] The principal New Orleans purchaser was a certain Monsieur Petit whom Strachan regarded to be "one of the surest men in New Orleans."[24] The French merchant bought strouds, glasses, calicoes, printed linens, handkerchiefs, and chintzes.[25] Business activity seemed bright. In February, Strachan sold nearly all his stock and he was very much elated, but remained cautious and refused to plunge headlong into the ordering of goods which might not sell. Rumors persisted that when Spain took over New Orleans a brisk commerce would ensue. The Governor assured the merchants that the token Spanish

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[23]Strachan to Monsieur [possibly Joseph] Petit of New Orleans, Mobile, February 12, 1765, ibid.

[24]Although the references are brief it seems obvious from his correspondence to merchants in West Florida that Strachan held Petit in high esteem. This French merchant is quite possibly the same Joseph Petit mentioned by Charles Gayarré, Alcée Fortier, and F.X. Martín, in their respective histories of Louisiana, as one of the principals who followed Nicolas Chauvin de Lafreniere in the French revolt against Spanish authority during the regime of Don Antonio de Ulloa.

[25]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, February 18, 1765, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

trade with New Orleans would not be interrupted.[26] And although Strachan made no direct mention of it in his correspondence, there is a strong implication that the peltry and skin trade had begun to improve.[27]

Things seemed to be going so well that Strachan asked Johnson and Wylly to order an entirely new stock from the London firm of John Beswicke and Company. But in March, 1765, conditions went sour. Strachan's health grew bad and he became so depressed that he asked Johnson and Wylly to countermand his requisition; the reason was very simple.

> . . . I am afraid this country will not do for me and I would not choose to be engaged with a new cargo which it will be a considerable time before we could get rid of until I see if I am likely to keep my health better for the future than I have done hitherto . . . as there is no consideration [that] would induce me to suffer so much as I have done since the first [of] July last.[28]

But Strachan's health was not the whole story. In November, 1764, he had said that it would be weak to leave a place in which there were "tolerable prospects from the

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[26] Colonial Office 5:574, Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 19, 1765.

[27] Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 11, 1764, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[28] Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, March 27, 1765, ibid.

Spanish trade"[29] and as late as February, 1765, had said that he wanted to be certain there were no prospects of a good business before leaving.

It seems that by March the merchant became convinced that trade was not going to develop because the Spanish had not shown up to take over New Orleans. He rationalized that it would be easy to order goods later if the Spanish did appear in the Crescent City. At this point Strachan was revealed as a dejected Scot who wanted to prosper quite badly, but there seemed to be no way open to him. This depression grew much worse, and he reported in May, 1765, that in his opinion Mobile would soon be nothing but a military post.[30]

The scarcity of fresh meat and vegetables continued to plague the starving inhabitants of Mobile.[31] Strachan, once more, became so ill that he could not work. He did accept a small shipment of marketable goods in April, 1765, from Johnson and Wylly; however, upon examination of the merchandise, it was found to be so motheaten that most of the items had to be returned. It was at this time that Johnson and Wylly became concerned over the health of their

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[29]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 2, 1764, ibid.

[30]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, May 9, 1765, ibid.

[31]Rowland, Mississippi Provincial Archives, Vol. I, 14-17, 31.

Mobile representative and offered to send help, but Strachan assured his superiors that, in spite of his poor physical condition, he could handle ten times the amount of business available in Mobile.[32]

At the end of twelve months in this frontier outpost, Strachan's books revealed a net gain of sixteen hundred dollars. This even included the loss of five hundred and fifty dollars suffered because of damaged goods on the initial voyage.[33] It is thus easy to see why a man interested in personal economic advancement would brave the wilds of Mobile in order to make his way in the world. And in spite of sickness, hunger, bad weather, and Indians, Strachan could count his blessings.

The Scot enjoyed good health at this time and began to move about more in May, 1766. This was first occasioned when he received a letter from Arthur Gordon, merchant and lawyer in Pensacola who was then serving in the official capacity of provincial Advocate-General.[34] Gordon asked Strachan to make a trip to New Orleans to look for a certain Captain Ralph Wardlaw who owed money to the Georgia firm of Dunbar, Young, and Simpson. It seems that Wardlaw

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[32]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, April 12, 1765, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[33]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, May 9, 1765, ibid.

[34]Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to Sir John Pownall, Pensacola, February 19, 1765.

was trying to escape payment of the debt by sneaking out of the province to New Orleans with ultimate plans of going to Jamaica. Gordon's letter claimed that he had not sufficient time to get a deposition to the Captain's bond; therefore, he could not arrest him in Pensacola. Strachan expressed irritation that Gordon should call on him for such aid. He judged that the Advocate-General had been neglectful and tardy in not arresting Wardlaw in Pensacola. He was acutely aware, however, that he might need to confer the power of attorney on peers in Pensacola to collect bad debts there, and he did not want people in the capital city to feel that he was unco-operative. As a result, Strachan left for New Orleans to stop Wardlaw. Of course, he realized that he had no legal power to detain the Captain without a deposition, but he was able to exact a bill of sale from Wardlaw for real estate which he owned in Pensacola and he got a power of attorney to collect some debts allegedly due Wardlaw.[35]

Strachan was happy to get this much; and even when he heard that Wardlaw had already sold his Pensacola property and that no debts were owed to the Captain, the Scot felt he had done his duty towards the Advocate-General.[36]

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[35]Strachan to Arthur Gordon, Mobile, May 10, 1766, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[36]Ibid.

This points up the fact that merchants and others in colonial businesses had a tremendous problem in collecting outstanding debts.[37] If a debtor refused to honor his obligation on the date due, the creditor might confer the power of attorney on a friend who was better able to collect the money. This practice was complicated by problems of weather, transportation, and costs; and it is easy to understand why bills might remain outstanding for years. It is to be marveled at that business did not stagnate and become inoperative more often than it did in view of the cumbersome methods which merchants were forced to use in the collection of debts.

The activities of Charles Strachan acting in this capacity point out the complications of the problem and require further illustration. For example, in the Wardlaw affair, Strachan gave his power of attorney and the bill of sale for the lot and houses at Pensacola to Thomas Hardy, a merchant who resided there.[38] Hardy wrote to Strachan that he would sell the supposedly encumbered property and send the proceeds from the sale to him.[39] This situation was stretched out for years and was marked by a series of

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[37] Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 35-44.

[38] Strachan to Thomas Hardy, Mobile, May 21, 1766, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[39] Strachan to Thomas Hardy, Mobile, October 24, 1766, ibid.

letters which passed between Strachan and Hardy; Strachan and Dunbar, Young, and Simpson; and Strachan and the Advocate-General. Because of the depressed state of colonial finances, it was November, 1767, before Hardy was able to sell the real estate, and even then it brought a very paltry sum, not wiping out all of Wardlaw's debt. The last note of the affair was made by Strachan in a letter to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson in which he explained that Captain Wardlaw was at Dauphin Island in the Gulf of Mexico, but hourly expected in Mobile.[40] Strachan never mentioned the matter again as far as the extant correspondence indicates.

Concurrent with the problem of Wardlaw's debt, Strachan was representing Dunbar, Young, and Simpson in another matter. This involved the sale of the schooner, Charming Nancy, to the Georgia firm by a certain Captain Samuel Bennyworth. The Captain owed them money and gave a bill of sale for his schooner as security on the debt. He also allowed the register of the vessel to be transferred from his name to theirs. Bennyworth, however, kept charge, going as master of the vessel to West Florida. Once there, the Captain sold her as his own to a Captain James Ross, who got a new registration from James Bruce,

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[40] Strachan to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson, Mobile, November 28, 1767, ibid.

Collector of Customs at Pensacola,[41] and renamed the vessel King of Prussia. Dunbar, Young, and Simpson heard of the affair and extended their power of attorney to Charles Strachan who was visiting Savannah in January, 1766. They wanted the Scot to seize the schooner. On his return to Mobile, Strachan stopped in Pensacola where he conferred with Bruce who showed him the original register in the name of Dunbar, Young, and Simpson. Pressing business commitments caused Strachan to leave for Mobile, but he sent his power of attorney to Thomas Hardy in Pensacola and acquainted him with the situation while requesting that he also get a copy of the registration.[42] With this completed, Strachan wrote to Bennyworth in Pensacola and asked him to explain the entire affair to Thomas Hardy. If there was no authority for the sale, then Dunbar, Young, and Simpson should be considered the legal owners, and Bruce was at fault for altering the property by granting a new registration. If there was, however, some agreement unknown to him, Strachan suggested to Bennyworth that he seek out Hardy and explain fully.[43]

Upon receipt of the power of attorney mentioned,

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[41] Colonial Office 5:574, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, February 19, 1764.

[42] Strachan to Thomas Hardy, Mobile, May 10, 1766, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[43] Ibid.

Hardy stopped the King of Prussia from sailing out of Pensacola. Captain Ross became furious at this because he already had a cargo loaded and was ready to set sail for Jamaica. Strachan was informed of this, and agreed to allow the schooner to leave if Bennyworth would put up the necessary security for her. Meanwhile, the Scot was growing weary of the matter and began to suspect there were many things which he did not understand about the entire affair. He wrote the Savannah merchants for a full and unfettered account of the entire proceeding. As events moved on, Bennyworth began to complain that he had made arrangements with Dunbar, Young, and Simpson to keep the schooner for use as he saw fit.[44] After a closer perusal of the papers which Strachan received from Georgia, he became convinced of Bennyworth's good intentions, and told the Captain to write Savannah and explain while he did likewise. But late in the afternoon on May 21, 1766, Strachan received orders from Dunbar, Young, and Simpson to sell the schooner at public auction for whatever amount of cash she would bring. This message was relayed to Hardy who promptly made preparations for the sale.[45]

Some Mobile merchants, meanwhile, heard about the

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[44]Strachan to Thomas Hardy, Mobile, May 21, 1766, ibid.

[45]Strachan to Thomas Hardy, Mobile, May 22, 1766, ibid.

vessel and asked Strachan if they might purchase her. He was happy to comply since they offered much more than the King of Prussia would bring at a public sale.[46] But it was too late; the sale had already been completed in Pensacola on June 24, 1766. Upon his arrival there a few days later, he found that it would be very difficult to recover the vessel legally. Nevertheless, Strachan did succeed in securing a mortgage from Bennyworth on his house and a bill of sale for a Negro which he owned as security for the balance owed to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson. While there, Strachan inspected the schooner, and happily reported to the Georgia merchants that it was old and worthless, but the house and Negro were worth upwards of eight hundred dollars. Strachan further requested that Dunbar, Young, and Simpson send him a full statement of Bennyworth's account signed under the testimonial of a local resident, so that he might complete the business.[47] The Georgia firm, however, had not replied by January 7, 1767, when Strachan again asked them to comply. They did not reply to this enquiry; subsequent requests met with the same fate until Bennyworth died in June, 1768. By that time Strachan had become so exasperated with the entire matter that he complained:

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[46] Strachan to Thomas Hardy, Mobile, May 25, 1766, ibid.

[47] Strachan to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson, Mobile, June 24, 1766, ibid.

[illegible] Stratchen to Thomas Hardy, Monday, May 25, 1885.

[illegible] Stratchen to Donald, Xonne, and Stephen, Monday, June 24, 1885, [illegible].

[illegible]:

become so exasperated with the entire matter, that he com-
menced to plot in June, 1885. By that time Stratchen had
engaged! superfluous lodgings not with the same late until
again asked them to comply. They did not lodge to date
however, had not lodged by January 7, 1887, when Stratchen
so that he might complete his business. The George Tilm,
account signed under the pseudonym of a local resident,
Xonne, and Stephen were his a full statement of Bermuthotts
punished goliers. Stratchen further lodged that Donald,
less, but the house and Negro were sold upon order of Eight
torted to the George Watchman that it was off his motth-
there. Stratchen instructed the solicitor, and happily lo-
the balance owed to Donald, Xonne, and Stephen. While
fill to sale for a Negro which he owned as security for
secured a mortgage from Bermuthott on his house and a
two lessor lands. Nevertheless, Stratchen did succeed in
leaves, he found that it would be very difficult to recover
secure on June 24, 1885. Upon his arrival there a few days
was too late! the sale had already been completed in Ben-
Kind of Tuesday would prove as a hopeless sale.[illegible] But it
was happy to comply since they offered much more than the
vessel and asked Stratchen if that might purchase her. He

> . . . it is very surprising that if he owes you anything you should not before now have furnished me with the means of recovering it for you by transmitting me proper account.[48]

It is evident from these examples that debt collection was one of the most time-consuming and tedious problems of commerce and trade in West Florida. It is certain that no merchant or factor liked the task, but equally apparent is the fact that it was necessary to offer this reciprocal courtesy if the merchants were going to survive in business.[49] No matter how much one might complain, he knew that time and circumstance would inevitably put him in the position of having to press a customer or business peer for debts so that he could continue in business himself.

Charles Strachan is a striking example of this. He wrote to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson that their business required more of his time than his own affairs did.[50] He cursed the King of Prussia as that "damned schooner" which vexed him more than anything in his life heretofore.[51]

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[48]Strachan to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson, Mobile, July 21, 1768, ibid.

[49]Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, July 27, 1766.

[50]Strachan to Dunbar, Young, and Simpson, Mobile, June 24, 1766, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[51]Strachan to William Telfair of Georgia, Mobile, June 24, 1766, ibid.

But he carried out the work of collecting to his utmost ability because he knew that eventually he would be in the same position with respect to a future debtor.

Collecting debts was one thing. Stirring up business remained another. All through the year 1766, the merchants of West Florida held their breaths while Governor Johnstone fought for their desire to trade freely with the Spanish colonies. In May, 1766, the merchants received news that Great Britain had suspended the Stamp Act for twelve months which gave them cause to rejoice.[52] But external trade was stagnant and money was growing more and more scarce.[53]

Personally, Strachan was in a state of bliss. He enjoyed good health at this juncture, and reported to a friend that he was feeling better than he had in years.[54] Conditions, however, were not so good in Pensacola. The struggle between the Governor and the military was beginning to rupture the colony into civil and military factions; there was no stability in the government. Strachan had hoped that the Governor would solve the many problems of the province, but had long regarded his fellow countryman

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[52]Strachan to Thomas Oringston of Pensacola, Mobile, May 10, 1766, ibid.

[53]Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to John Pownall, Pensacola, October 23, 1766.

[54]Strachan to William Telfair, Mobile, October 24, 1766, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

as a person "too hot" for the colony. It was also in 1766 that the bubble began to burst in the New Orleans trade. The Spanish Governor there, Don Antonio de Ulloa, had issued a statement to Governor Johnstone expressing his desire for friendship and amity. He had even sent his personal secretary, Don Antonio Manuel Félix Riesch, on a journey of state to greet Johnstone. The Governor was impressed with the visit and even sent his envoy to New Orleans in return, but he heard that Ulloa was inspecting every part of Louisiana "as narrowly as a Jew does his Purse" and was apprehensive of his real intentions.[55] Strachan made no mention of these events to friends in his correspondence, but he was well informed of contemporary political affairs becsuse of the nature of his business and because he visited New Orleans in May, 1766. He knew that local French merchants resented Ulloa, and the Spanish forces there were fortifying the colony along the Mississippi River because they feared British entry into Louisiana from West Florida.[56]

Strachan first mentioned trouble between the French and Spanish residents of New Orleans in January, 1767, when he related to a friend the story of quarrels and arguments going on there. But he felt, at the same time, that the

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[55] Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to John Pownall, Pensacola, July 19, 1766.

[56] Charles Gayarré, History of Louisiana (4th ed.; New Orleans: Hansell Publishers, 1903), II, 133-135.

Spanish would chase out the French, allow a larger Spanish population to come in, engage in free trade with West Florida, and the over-all economy would be bolstered. Mobile would, in the wake of such a policy, profit with higher prices and more diversity of goods.[57] But the fight continued between the entrenched French merchants of New Orleans and the Spanish soldiers. Seeing no alleviation, Strachan became depressed, and returned to trading within the province. The last piece of commercial correspondence between Strachan and New Orleans merchants is dated April 8, 1767, and he advised friends in West Florida that they would never recover their outstanding debts in the Crescent City.[58]

Trade continued to be dull in Mobile with goods simply rotting on the shelves.[59] Strachan discouraged acquaintances from sending any items to Mobile except supplies for local consumption. He reported that grain was so scarce the poultry was dying, and even asked a Savannah correspondent to send fifty bushels of Indian corn if at all possible.[60] Evidently he did not receive the grain because

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[57]Strachan to William Telfair, Mobile, January 7, 1767, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

[58]Strachan to William Telfair, Mobile, May 7, 1767, ibid.

[59]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, July 1, 1767, ibid.

[60]Strachan to William Morgan [probably in Savannah], Mobile, May 8, 1767, ibid.

there is a record of repeated requests for it.[61] Things proved to be uneventful throughout the summer of 1767 which prompted the Scotsman to write:

> . . . this place is if possible becoming worse daily. It is said that the two regiments here are to be removed and only two companies to remain in the province.[62]

Charles Strachan was not the only British merchant at Mobile to predict a black future for the commerce of West Florida. His friend and fellow merchant, William Telfair, had entered into a partnership with John Dunbar in Mobile, but by the latter part of 1764 decided to leave the city and return to another of his business enterprises in Georgia. Charles Strachan had been wise enough to applaud the decision as being one of a very sensible man.

> . . . I should think it the greatest folly in nature for a man who has got to a tolerable business in an agreeable healthy place to give it up for a precarious trade in I am certain the most disagreeable and unhealthy place in America.[63]

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[61]Strachan to Alexander Wylly in Savannah, Georgia, Mobile, June 10, 1767, ibid.

[62]Strachan to William Telfair somewhere in Georgia, Mobile, July 4, 1767, ibid.

[63]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 2, 1767, ibid.

Upon leaving Mobile, Telfair gave his friend a power of attorney to collect outstanding debts and take care of other personal matters. Strachan tried to make these collections throughout his entire stay in Mobile. There was some initial progress, but as the economic depression became worse, few debts were brought in. Affairs were so bad by 1766 that Strachan confessed to Telfair, "Most of the people have already and the rest are preparing to quit Mobile as soon as possible so that in a short time, I expect it to be entirely deserted."[64] Nor were any debts collected in 1767, and Strachan's report to Telfair was dismal.

> . . . with regard to your other affairs here I can do very little in them the houses will fetch very little at present nor will anyone rent them. Bruce is gone home on Charity I myself lost about 70 Dollars by him Mills and LeConte there is not a farthing to be got from. I have again sent their notes to Orleans to endeavour to be recover'd but, I'm afraid without Effect. Lysetts Bill has never been heard of & there has been several Judgements out against Carr these 12 months & nothing found to satisfy them. . .[65]

Business continued in this distressed condition well into 1768. To make matters worse, Strachan became quite ill and remained so from November, 1767, until

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[64]Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, November 5, 1767, ibid.

[65]Strachan to William Telfair, Mobile, November 28, 1767, ibid.

July, 1768, when he decided that he could endure the situation no longer and resolved to return to a permanent residence in Savannah.[66]

As he was making these plans, the merchant received a message from Scotland which bore the news of his grandfather's death there. Strachan had been named the beneficiary of an estate near Montrose, and this was like a gift from heaven for the unhappy, sick, and luckless Scot. He made immediate plans to return by giving his power of attorney to Daniel Ward and Company of Mobile, while notifying peers and correspondents of his intention to return home.[67]

Because of complications in travel, Strachan did not arrive in Scotland until January, 1769, where he found that he had not been freed of the troublesome matters of provincial business. It seems that in January, 1767, he had, with Peter Swanson of Mobile, been appointed as a joint executor in the estate of William Pope. John McNab and William Pope had a partnership in Mobile but were in indigent circumstances until Pope had been employed by the military in West Florida to send a detachment of troops up into the interior, and engaged himself for the payment

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[66] Strachan to John McIntosh of Natchez, Mobile, June 20, 1768, ibid.

[67] Strachan to Johnson and Wylly, Mobile, July 28, 1768; Strachan to George Ancrum of Carolina, Mobile, July 23, 1768, ibid.

of all the expenses involved in order to get the job.[68] He then charged the "commanding officer commissary" about fifteen hundred dollars for the cost of the trip. These charges were refused by the military officer because they were considered to be excessive. Pope, however, died before any understanding could be reached and the matter fell on the shoulders of Strachan and Swanson. As joint executors they decided to sue for the money, and they were successful in recovering it, but the expense was great. Pope, it was learned, had not paid many people who went on the expedition and the executors were forced to pay these people from the estate funds.[69]

Alexander Pope, the father of William Pope and a clergyman of Caithness, wrote Strachan accusing him of having done injustice to the estate of his son. Strachan reacted strongly to the accusation and asked the father on what grounds did he believe that the estate had been cheated. He further demanded that if there was news from West Florida to the contrary that the informants were simply liars. This affair continued for quite a while without the elder Pope receiving satisfaction, but there

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[68] Colonial Office 5:574, Major Robert Farmar to the Board of Trade, Mobile, December 14, 1765.

[69] Charles Fullertoun to Alexander Pope of Caithness, Kinnabec, Scotland, January 6, 1769, Letterbook of Charles Strachan.

was little that he could do.[70]

Strachan was a complete failure as a trader in the New World, but at last he was home and quite happy. Thorough analysis of Strachan's brief career as a merchant in West Florida reveals several factors which offer evidence as to why he failed and more significantly why West Florida failed. The desired trade was never opened with Spanish America. There was a lack of money in the colony which prevented even the internal commerce from being spirited. Merchant after merchant pulled out of Mobile to return to South Carolina, Georgia, or Europe because of the unhealthy environment. The New Orleans trade never materialized because the Spanish were fearful to co-operate.[71]

Strachan's example reveals the harsh conditions of frontier trade, the lack of necessary profits, and the unending pursuit of creditor after debtor. The commercial climate of West Florida by the end of 1767 was, indeed, tempestuous.

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Johnson, British West Florida, 68.

CHAPTER V

THE PROSPEROUS YEARS

The return of Charles Strachan to Scotland was an event symptomatic of growing commercial discontent throughout the entire province, and several merchants shared the belief that West Florida would not be able to endure because of the interpretations collectively laid on mercantilism by George III, his ministers, and Parliament at the close of the Seven Years' War. The colonial attempt to induce the home government to allow Spanish trade had failed completely, and many civil and governmental officials including Governor Johnstone, despaired of the commercial well-being of West Florida. There was one ray of hope remaining, however, and that was in the promising allure of the lower Mississippi River valley. Englishmen in America remained interested in these rich lands and respected the significance of the interior trade. With the failure of Pensacola's development as a leading colonial port, establishment of trade in the western part of the province seems to have become the catalytic agent which brought the hopes of provincial merchants to rest on the success of establishing a thriving trade on the lower Mississippi River. Abundant flora and fauna, a good climate, and rich lands could host a thriving commerce on the river, and if there were to

be no chance to develop that trade, the economic health of the province seemed preordained to failure.

There was some precedent for the aspirations of these merchants. Strachan had engaged in successful, if sporadic and limited, trade with the New Orleans merchants as had others in Mobile and Pensacola. It was true that since 1763 Spain had made bold pronouncements relative to the state of affairs in New Orleans, but she had remained dilatory about effecting strict mercantile rule over the island of Orleans.[1]

Don Antonio de Ulloa, Captain in the Spanish Royal Navy, was appointed as the Governor and Captain-General of Louisiana on May 21, 1765; but he did not arrive in the colony until March 5, 1766. He had only ninety men in his command, and without French co-operation effective occupation of the area was impossible.[2] French soldiers refused to serve under the Spanish even at their former rate of pay because it was less than the Spanish soldiers under Ulloa were receiving, and even when Ulloa arranged to pay them at the same rate, they refused to enlist in the Spanish army of occupation.[3] With these problems, Ulloa was

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[1] E. Wilson Lyon, Louisiana in French Diplomacy (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 13-35.

[2] Gayarré, History of Louisiana, II, 131.

[3] Ibid., 13.

convinced that any attempt to take over the province without more troops would be impossible. He decided to negotiate with the former ranking French official, Monsieur Charles Aubry, and allow the latter to become the ruling agent for the Spanish crown in Louisiana. The French merchants, however, were especially hostile to Ulloa. They had enjoyed unrestricted commerce during the French and Indian War and, of course, did not want to give it up. When Ulloa, who was afraid because of a lack of military power, refused to face the demands of these merchants, the belief arose in the Crescent City that Spain did not intend to keep Louisiana, and the cession was merely a temporary political maneuver between Bourbon courts of Spain and France.[4]

Ulloa, meanwhile, took a short tour of the interior posts as far as Natchitoches on the Red River and then returned to find that the Spanish crown deemed it advisable to issue a set of commercial regulations designed to protect the public against profiteering. Ulloa asked Aubry to announce these regulations, but the merchants reacted so violently that Ulloa fled from New Orleans for the Balize.[5] In essence, the newly appointed Spanish Governor

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[4]Lawrence Kinnaird (ed.), Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794; Part I, The Revolutionary Period, 1765-1781:Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1949),II, xvi.

[5]Gayarré, History of Louisiana, II, 168-173.

was acquiesing to the resistance of the merchants largely because of his meager military forces. There was one especial thing which frightened Ulloa: the possibility of British encroachment of Spanish Louisiana from West Florida. Ulloa and Johnstone had exchanged diplomatic niceties,[6] but something had evidently scared him, and he began to institute a program of erecting new forts and defensive positions along the Mississippi opposite the British establishments on the eastern side of the river.[7] Under the Governor-General's direction, San Gabriel was founded in the Iberville district across from Manchac [later referred to by the English as Spanish Manchac],[8] San Luis de Natchez was erected opposite British Natchez,[9] and Ulloa himself started the construction of a new Spanish fort at the mouth of the Mississippi which he named the Isla Real Católica de San Carlos.[10]

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[6] Colonial Office 5:575, George Johnstone to Don Antonio de Ulloa in New Orleans, Pensacola, April 1, 1766.

[7] Louis C. Houck (ed.), The Spanish Regime in Missouri, I, (Chicago: R. R. Donnelly and Company; 1909), 1-25.

[8] Kinnaird, Spain in the Mississippi Valley, II, xvii.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Arthur P. Whitaker, "Antonio de Ulloa," Hispanic American Historical Review, XV (July, 1935), 189.

The New Orleans merchants never liked Ulloa, and this personal dislike added to the failure of Spain to send troops or provide adequate financing contributed to their hatred. It was not long before this strained state of affairs led to open revolution in the autumn of 1768. The merchants of New Orleans circulated a rumor that the Spanish were not going to pay for provisions purchased from local planters. To put down these rumors Ulloa sent his personal secretary, St. Maxent, to pay the debts; but the secretary was captured by the ringleaders of the rebellion and his money was seized. Then on October 28, 1768, a group was organized in New Orleans which marched on the Governor-General's headquarters. Ulloa was forced to flee to the Balize, where he decided to give up his authority and sail away from the colony.[11]

The revolt never reached serious proportion because Monsieur Aubry acted to restrain the rebels. As a matter of fact, many of the Spanish soldiers remained in the colony without being molested by the French.[12] The revolutionists sought aid from the British in West Florida with the idea of creating a republic, but they were coldly received and the insurrection came to nought.[13]

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[11] Kinnaird, Spain in the Mississippi Valley, II, xx.

[12] Gayarré, History of Louisiana, II, 84-85.

[13] Ibid., 281-282.

At the end of the Seven Years' War and while these internal problems were erupting in Louisiana, British traders moved into New Orleans hoping to encourage and take advantage of the confusion. The absence of defined French or Spanish commercial policy for New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana offered the hope of greater financial returns for free-lance operators. Such an entrepreneur who established himself in the city to engage in the free trade was John Fitzpatrick, a veteran of the late war. He had served three and a half years with Rogers' Rangers before being captured by the Indians of the Illinois country in August, 1763. Fitzpatrick had remained their prisoner for about a year before he escaped in September of 1764.[14] Records of his activities immediately after the escape are fragmentary, but it seems that he entered into a partnership with Francis Lavaring, a fellow veteran, and these men traded in the Illinois country and Canada for more than a year.[15] By November, 1765, Fitzpatrick decided to enter business for himself

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[14] Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick, ms. 1029, New York Public Library. In various places throughout the letterbook Fitzpatrick is referred to as Jean but he always seems to sign the first-name John. Fitzpatrick to Messrs. Godley and Raincock of Pensacola, New Orleans, July 17, 1769; Fitzpatrick to Thomas Hardy of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 11, 1769; Fitzpatrick to John Ritson of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 11, 1769; Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, October 2, 1776.

[15] Fitzpatrick to William Barrow at the Illinois, Manchac, August 26, 1770, ibid.

in New Orleans,[16] but unfortunately, there is a hiatus in the record of his life from that time until October 14, 1767. Circumstantial evidence, however, would indicate that he had succeeded in New Orleans business while establishing commercial relations with middlemen and suppliers in Mobile and Pensacola.[17]

From October, 1767, Fitzpatrick was an active merchant and trader in New Orleans; but he was forced out of the city by General Don Alejandro O'Reilly in 1769, and moved to Manchac in West Florida where he continued to operate as a middleman, merchant, and trader until Pebrarary of 1784. His hitherto unused letterbook which records the Scotsman's business enterprises and contemporary observations during these years indicates that he was very energetic and carried on a large volume of business with peers in Mobile, Pensacola, New Orleans, and Natchez. Many of Fitzpatrick's associates were the same men with whom Charles Strachan had dealt, but Fitzpatrick's range of acquaintances and his volume of business was much larger and more complex. Strachan's efforts reveal a comparatively simple picture and he was never really a successful operative, whereas Fitzpatrick became a wealthy merchant, at least until the final stages of the American Revolution.

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[16]Fitzpatrick to Laurant Privantiger of Boston, Manchac, August 24, 1775, ibid.

[17]Fitzpatrick to John Ritson of Pensacola, New Orleans, October 14, 1767, ibid.

It is unfortunate that John Fitzpatrick left no impressions of New Orleans under the administration of Ulloa, but we know from other sources that in 1768 the city was bustling with anxieties, demands, and talk of revolution.[18] The French were unsure of the attitude which Spain was extending to them, and Fitzpatrick made little mention of local opinion, but his correspondence is filled with evidence of an extant trade between merchants in New Orleans and West Florida. An analysis of that trade reveals the most common items of export from New Orleans to the province were indigo, skins, wines, linens, staves, boards, shingles, and tobacco; while English-manufactured goods and slaves constituted the most desired items of trade from West Florida.[19]

One of Fitzpatrick's biggest orders while in New Orleans came from John Stephenson and Company of Pensacola who ordered one hundred and twenty mules. This was, of course, an unusually large order and Fitzpatrick correctly held that such an enormous order would come to the attention of local French and Spanish authorities. To prevent any misunderstanding and loss of profit, he called upon Monsieur Aubry and discussed the feasibility of filling

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[18] Marc de Villiers du Terrage, Les Dernières Années de la Louisiane française (Paris: Goupil and Company, 1903), 285.

[19] Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, New Orleans, June 30, 1768, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

an order of such quantity. Aubry gave his stamp of approval after consultation with Ulloa, but expressed grave doubts that such a quantity of mules could be procured. They were found, however, in Natchitoches; but it took well over four months to deliver the mules even at £25 apiece.[20]

The enterprises of John Fitzpatrick in New Orleans were quite varied; while not collecting mules for sale to West Florida merchants, he held a power of attorney representing several provincial creditors as a collector of bad debts from those who fled to Louisiana,[21] procured runaway Negro slaves for West Florida owners, and kept friends informed of the New Orleans demand in the fluctuating prices of the major items of trade.[22] With the unstable political conditions in the city, commercial prices were in a constant state of flux and money varied from being scarce to being very scarce.[23] Fitzpatrick was aware of the ominous situation and recorded his impression that prices were far too high. Yet, like many other merchants, he tried to

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[20]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, New Orleans, September 28, 1768, ibid.

[21]Fitzpatrick to Teller Swanson of Mobile, New Orleans, April 16, 1769, ibid.

[22]Fitzpatrick to Daniel Hickey of Mobile, New Orleans, May 3, 1769; Fitzpatrick to Valen Stephen Comyn of Pensacola, New Orleans, May 5, 1769, ibid.

[23]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, New Orleans, June 10, 1769, ibid.

remain optimistic because of the especially enviable location of New Orleans between the interior fur trade and the rich South American commerce.

There is an unexplained break in the letterbook from September 28, 1768, until April 13, 1769, with no indication as to where Fitzpatrick was during this six-month period. We can only guess what he may have been doing. But as may be recalled, this was the period in which the French merchants were revolting against Ulloa,[24] and Fitzpatrick may very well have decided to visit friends in the province until the affair calmed.[25] The merchant's account is resumed in April, 1769, when he recorded that the people of New Orleans seemed to be excited over the impending arrival of a replacement to assume Ulloa's former position. Fitzpatrick felt elated with the prospects and stated to a friend:

> We are still in suspence About the Result of the rupture between the French and Spanards [sic] but [it] is the General oppion of the people here that it will fall to the Spanards, if so Cash will circulate in this place, and the Articls you was kind Enough to promise to send me will answer extream well . . . .[26]

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[24] Kinnaird, Spain in the Mississippi Valley, II, xix.

[25] Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, New Orleans, April 22, 1769, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[26] Ibid.

His optimism was to prove groundless, however, with respect to any idea that the trade of the colony might revive on the arrival of a new Spanish executive. As early as August, 1769, the city received word that General Don Alejandro O'Reilly, reputed to be the greatest Spanish military officer of his era, was at the mouth of the Balize with twenty-two ships and 4,800 troops, on his way to begin a new government in Louisiana.[27] With this news the merchants grew confident that they could sell their wares to the new troops, and raised their prices, already high, for produce and wine. This had the effect of making intercourse prohibitive between New Orleans and West Florida;[28] but regardless of prices, Monsieur Aubry was becoming more nervous. He was extremely apprehensive of the wrath of General O'Reilly and placed an embargo on all shipments of livestock and produce from New Orleans.[29]

Fitzpatrick took the cue, and expressed fear that restrictive commercial regulations would become the order of the day.[30] But he clung to the vain hope that the reported $500,000 which the incoming Governor was carrying

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[27]Fitzpatrick to Valens Stephen Comyn of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 1, 1769, ibid.

[28]Fitzpatrick to Arthur Struthers of Mobile, New Orleans, August 1, 1769, ibid.

[29]Fitzpatrick to John Ritson of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 1, 1769, ibid.

[30]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 4, 1769, ibid.

indicated a free and easy trade policy. As a matter of fact, he informed correspondents in Pensacola and Mobile that he had interrogated an advance-guard of Spanish officers as to their opinions regarding English manufactured goods. They had expressed ignorance of O'Reilly's plans, but reckoned that beer, port, hams, bacon, and cheese would be gladly received and meet with a quick sale. Other Spanish troops volunteered that English-and Prussian-printed cottons, scarlet and blue broadcloth, handkerchiefs, hats, and French buckles would be in great demand.[31] But when O'Reilly arrived in the city on August 18, 1769, he showed why he was regarded with a great deal of respect by all who knew him. Unlike Ulloa, the new Governor had a full complement of soldiers, and he immediately rounded up the ring leaders of the abortive revolt of 1768. Several of the leaders were given death penalties and others confined to prison.[32] O'Reilly's nick-name of "Bloody" was not accorded for naught. The new executive made no announcements of public economic policy for about three weeks, but the rumor circulated that English merchants would have to leave the city as

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[31]Fitzpatrick to Philip Comyn of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 13, 1769; Fitzpatrick to Arthur Struthers of Mobile, New Orleans, August 13, 1769, ibid.

[32]Alcée Fortier, A History of Louisiana (New York: Manzi Joyant and Company, 1904), I, 221.

soon as they collected their outstanding debts.[33] O'Reilly seized all English merchandise, subjected it to rigorous inspection, confiscated all sub-standard goods, and placed an embargo on all foreign merchandise.[34] Upon completion of these preliminary steps, the General continued to study the local situation until September 7, 1769, when he issued a proclamation which fixed the prices of food. Fitzpatrick and other British merchants were further stunned when it was ruled that all citizens of the British empire who were not married would be required to leave the city. Any person caught trying to land English manufactured goods was ordered to be "impaled" by the General's troops.[35]

Events moved swiftly after this. John Fitzpatrick received special word from the Commandant that he should leave New Orleans immediately[36] despite the fact that he had not collected many personal debts, not to mention those of West Florida acquaintances whom he was representing. He was afraid to push the General too far, however,

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[33]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, New Orleans, August 26, 1769, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[34]Fitzpatrick to Alexander McIntosh of Pensacola, New Orleans, September 7, 1769; Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, New Orleans, September 2, 1769, ibid.

[35]Fitzpatrick to Robert Barrow at the Illinois, New Orleans, September 7, 1769, ibid.

[36]Fitzpatrick to John Ritson of Pensacola, New Orleans, September 20, 1769, ibid.

and notified his correspondents that he was being forced to leave the city. Fitzpatrick departed New Orleans for Mobile on September 22, 1769.[37]

Before leaving, Fitzpatrick had heard rumors that Manchac, near Fort Bute, might become a thriving commercial center; and he decided to attempt to settle there. Manchac had great commercial possibilities because of its prime location which allowed the residents to tap the internal Mississippi trade for merchants in West Florida. It was here that produce, skins, and peltry from the northern reaches of the river could be siphoned out of the main artery thus depriving New Orleans of these goods. Manchac was also close enough to the various French settlements on the western side of the river so that a very profitable trade could be envisioned by an imaginative and enterprising person.[38] Moreover, Fort Bute at Manchac and Fort Rosalie at Natchez had recently been fortified with upwards of two thousand British troops.[39]

Fitzpatrick arrived in Mobile on an undetermined date prior to November 23, 1769. It was there that he ordered goods from Philadelphia, Pensacola, and London to

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[37]Fitzpatrick to John Bradley of Natchez, New Orleans, September 21, 1769, ibid.

[38]Claiborne, Mississippi as a Territory, Province, and State, 105.

[39]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. Banton, Wharton, and Morgan of the Illinois, New Orleans, September 11, 1769, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

stock his new commercial venture at Manchac.[40] While waiting for the arrival of these items, he engaged a schooner owned by William Marshall of Pensacola to carry him and his stock up the Mississippi to the new site.[41] In late December, 1769, the deal was consummated and the vessel loaded with three thousand dollars worth of saleable items. Fitzpatrick accompanied the schooner as far as New Orleans where he disembarked to attempt the collection of seven hundred and fifty dollars in debts which were owed to him by local persons. Unfortunately, the sentries of O'Reilly discovered his presence and locked him in the local jail for thirty-six hours. They promised to let him go only if he should proceed immediately out of town without attempting to collect any debts.[42] Fitzpatrick grudgingly agreed to their terms while privately swearing to come back and collect these debts as soon as the General left New Orleans.

Manchac proved to be a place "destitute of inhabitants" but the Scot was hopeful that illegal trade would become brisk because of the stringent commercial regulations

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[40] Fitzpatrick to Monsieur Lafitte of New Orleans, Mobile, November 23, 1769; Fitzpatrick to John Bradley of Natchez, Mobile, December 1, 1769; Fitzpatrick to John McNamara of New Orleans, Mobile, November 23, 1769, ibid.

[41] Fitzpatrick to William Marshall of Pensacola, Mobile, December 6, 1769, ibid.

[42] Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, February 15, 1770, ibid.

being imposed on the French in New Orleans.[43] He notified new and old correspondents of his removal to Manchac and reminded friends that he would be glad to serve them in any way possible. Very soon, a ready market for household items was discovered at Pointe Coupee where planters ordered quantities of rum, sugar, tea, coffee, files, and assorted manufactured items. They paid for these items in choice Pointe Coupee and Natchitoches tobacco which was reputed to be the finest in all America. Fitzpatrick ordered two hundred "carrots" of it for shipment to Pensacola and Mobile where the commodity was in great demand.[44]

The new Manchac merchant was constantly bothered by the bad debts owed to him by citizens of New Orleans. He sneaked into the city on two occasions hoping to recover part of them but had no success on either occasion. He finally gave up in desperation and appointed a New Orleans acquaintance to attempt collection for a five per cent fee. Fitzpatrick grumbled about the terms, but assented because there was little else which he could do if the money was to be collected.[45]

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[43] Fitzpatrick to John Ritson of Pensacola, Manchac, February 13, 1770, ibid.

[44] Bernard Romans defined a "carrot" as tobacco leaves made up into a close packed bundle in A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida, 73.

[45] Fitzpatrick to John Ritson of Pensacola, Manchac, May 11, 1770, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

With some leisure at hand, the Scot began to construct a house during the spring months of 1770. This was cut short when increasing trade began to demand all his time and energy. Firms such as those of Daniel Ward, Peter Swanson, and Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers began to order more of the Natchitoches tobacco and French wine.[46] But the story was not so cheery for mercantile firms in the interior of the Illinois country who were trying to market their produce in Manchac. To them Fitzpatrick sorrowfully reported:

> . . . there is no Encouragement for your sending any flour, nor mault liquor to these parts; The most of all the British inhabitants are very poor; Glad when able to attain to the Common necessary's of Life, the French will always prefer Raffia which they can have much cheaper from the Havana than yours can be afforded at; New Orleans and several of the plantations are at present well stored with Good Merchantable flour lately from New York sold on board $6 and $7 per barrells of 1800 or 2,000 each . . . .[47]

Fitzpatrick's chief supplier and buyer during the early years at Manchac was the firm of McGillivray and Struthers which operated commercial houses in both Mobile

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[46] Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Mobile, May 31, 1770; Fitzpatrick to Peter Swanson of Pensacola, Manchac, May 31, 1770, ibid.

[47] Fitzpatrick to George Morgan at the Illinois, Manchac, September 12, 1770, ibid.

and Pensacola. From the spring of 1770, they advanced him all the articles in demand at Manchac, and the Scot promised to make seasonal payments for these items, primarily in skins and peltry gained from planters and traders who desired the goods in question. He was very conscious of the generosity and good-will which the firm extended to him.

> . . . I am Greatly obliged to you for your kind offer in supplying me hence Forward; with any goods I might want and [you] may rest satisfied all my connections in that as hitherto will meet reciprocal complyance, being the Commercial Expidiancy [sic] to support mutual Interest, friendships, and free the supplyers from apprehensions in case of Accidents; which Ile Always Endeavour to provide against, as well for your sakes as other friends.[48]

In spite of the ready market for French claret and Louisiana tobacco in the province, Fitzpatrick found that skins constituted the bulk of the exports to West Florida. Many traders brought their skins to Manchac in 1770 and this trade grew lively. By August 30, 1770, Fitzpatrick had accumulated "1000 choice skins in the hair" to pay Pensacola merchants for manufactured goods which had been advanced to him on credit.[49]

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[48] Fitzpatrick to McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, May 31, 1770, ibid.

[49] Fitzpatrick to McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, August 30, 1770, ibid.

The main problem involved with the skins was that of delivery to Pensacola. The best method was to load them on the vessel which brought in manufactured goods; but very often provincial merchants liked to accumulate items of trade from all along the coast on the return trip, which often precluded Fitzpatrick from loading all the skins on a single vessel. Such was the case in 1770 when McGillivray and Struthers enjoined the Scot to wait for the vessel of a certain Captain Gerome to carry the skins to Pensacola. But it happened that the vessel became unseaworthy while taking on tobacco at Point Coupee.[50] Fitzpatrick was notified of the situation, and decided to pack his stock of what now had swelled to eighteen hundred skins to prevent undue spoilage and rotting. But it seems that the more he packed, the more skins he accumulated, and the newly built warehouse was filled to the rafters with twenty-seven hundred skins. Fitzpatrick became impatient and asked the provincial merchants to send a separate vessel laden with ball, powder, white shirts, brass kettles, wine-colored beads, mirrors, mohair, silk, hoes, and saddles, with instructions to the Captain to take the skins as ballast for the return trip. In the meanwhile, Gerome repaired his schooner and loaded what was now thirty-two

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[50]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, October 30, 1770, ibid.

hundred skins for the Pensacola destination.[51]

Trade remained good in 1771 and Fitzpatrick continued to accumulate more skins to pay his West Florida suppliers. However, he began to complain about the quality of the merchandise which the merchants there were sending to him. The following note to a provincial merchant reveals his dissatisfaction.

> I Received in good order Excepting Some blankets the Sundrys sent me per the Sloop Dolphin; but am sorry to find that the Blankets are not so good As they were last year; although the price is Still the Same.[52]

The traders from the interior kept coming down to Manchac with their skins throughout the latter part of 1771 with Fitzpatrick "gitting more skins," but he did not like the haphazard methods of delivery which the West Florida merchants seemed to do nothing about. As an alternative, the Scot devised a new plan to float the skins down the river on barges to the plantation of a friend, Monsieur Ranson, where they would be in a more advantageous position to be picked up by a company sloop.[53] The large supply of

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[51]Fitzpatrick to John Bitson of Pensacola, Manchac, March 17, 1771, ibid.

[52]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, July 11, 1771, ibid.

[53]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, September 22, 1771, ibid.

skins dwindled, however, during the winter of 1771 and sales of manufactured goods were so few that the new plan to transport the skins to an easier pick-up station was temporarily forgotten.[54]

A man whom Fitzpatrick had known since his early days in New Orleans was John Stephenson, well-to-do British merchant in Pensacola. Correspondence dated as early as June 30, 1768, reveals that these men had entered into a business agreement whereby Stephenson received wine, skins, boards, shingles, and tobacco in return for English manufactured goods.[55] But as trade became dull, Fitzpatrick became depressed. It seems that the American traders from the North had begun to enter the Mississippi River to sell their wares because of the agitation against England in the northern ports. Fitzpatrick was amazed at the number of traders who moved into Manchac and sold at very low profits. The Scotsman felt that he was unable to compete with them because he would lose money on almost every item which he had bought from Pensacola. As a result, he advised Stephenson and others not to send him any more goods until he should so signify, especially because the French at New Orleans were beginning to seize merchant vessels as they

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[54]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, November 9, 1771, ibid.

[55]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, New Orleans, June 30, 1768, ibid.

moved up the river.[56]

In spite of the fact that Fitzpatrick blamed the French for beginning the policy of search and seizure of English vessels in the Mississippi, we know that this is not the case. Spanish officers in New Orleans were becoming increasingly aware of the illegal trade between rural areas such as Pointe Coupee and English Manchac. Louisiana, they agreed, was a very desirable colony capable of supporting a large population and carrying on an extensive trade with South America.[57] But because the citizens of Spanish Louisiana could not purchase even the bare necessities of life, they engaged in the illegal exchange of their produce for English manufactured goods. This trade, according to some contemporary observers, netted the English traders over one million dollars annually; and something had to be done to retard this intercourse.[58]

In a memorial written to King Charles III of Spain, Captain Don Francisco Bouligny of O'Reilly's New Orleans staff, suggested that Louisiana might be allowed to trade with Spanish colonies in South America as well as Spain.[59]

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[56] Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, October 31, 1772, Ibid.

[57] Houck, The Spanish Regime in Missouri, I, 77.

[58] Ibid., 78-83.

[59] Alcée Fortier has translated and included Bouligny's memorial to the King in A History of Louisiana, II, Chapter II.

He pointed out that merchants and planters of Louisiana would be glad to trade with the Spanish instead of English merchants, and reminded the crown that their produce was quite valuable. Crops and goods on the Spanish side of the river, instead of finding an English market at Manchac, could be brought into the trade of the Spanish empire. His illustration of how the British were taking advantage of decadent Spanish mercantilism is striking:

> An Englishman in Jamaica freights a bark of one hundred and fifty tons, for $1500 at most, to come to the Mississippi. He loads with articles which he takes on credit, and with 20 or 30 negroes. With the product of the goods he reimburses the capital and pays the freight, and a profit remains. He sells three fourths of the negroes, and with the remainder, who are always the best, he settles at Manchac, and in a few years he is very wealthy.[60]

However sure Bouligny felt about the matter he never received an answer to his petition. But Fitzpatrick had new problems to face also. The glorious days of English dominance of the river trade were ended. Throughout 1772 the New Englanders filled the river with boats and goods as far south as Manchac. Their prices were low and Fitzpatrick continued to grumble about the fact that he was not selling anything because he could not compete with them.[61]

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[60] Ibid., 30.

[61] Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, January 16, 1773, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

To offset the new Spanish commercial policy at New Orleans which featured confiscation of English vessels along the lower stretches of the river, the West Florida merchants began to develop the "lakes" route. This simply meant that goods were to be carried by ocean vessels from Pensacola or Mobile westward through Mississippi Sound, Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Maurepas where they were unloaded and then transshipped on barges up the Amite River through Bayou Iberville to be unloaded and carried overland about nine miles to Manchac.[62] Because of the complexities of travel, this route proved to be quite expensive and reduced profits considerably, yet it was safe and there was no chance that the Spanish would confiscate valuable manufactured items of trade.[63]

But the damage had been done to the English monopoly on the Mississippi River. Trade continued dull in 1773 with business getting so bad that Fitzpatrick resolved to go up the river to Grand Gulf located in present-day Mississippi in an attempt to collect twenty-seven hundred dollars worth of bad debts in order to make the seasonal payments due to Pensacola merchants for goods which he had already

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[62] Roberts, Lake Pontchartrain, 74.

[63] Fitzpatrick to Messrs. Evan and James Jones of Pensacola, Manchac, May 8, 1773; Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, May 8, 1773, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

received.[64] Fitzpatrick remained in Grand Gulf collecting skins in lieu of bad debts from December 27, 1774, until April 20, 1774, when he returned to Manchac.[65] During this period, affairs had grown no better in Manchac. There was no silver in town, people were fleeing without paying their debts, and New England traders were still operating in the area.[66] In a desperate attempt to recoup his sagging fortune, Fitzpatrick began to raise sheep, but the river overflowed drowning most of the seventy-two head which he had accumulated.[67]

It was in December, 1774, that Fitzpatrick made his first reference to the agitation of the northern colonies against England. At this time he told James Johnstone of Natchez that the great congress had been held in Philadelphia "declaring that they will not Importe anything from the Mother Country" after the first of the month, and that all exportations had been stopped until the English Parliament "Recoalls [sic] all that has passed in the Houses."[68]

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[64]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Manchac, August 16, 1773; Fitzpatrick to Patrick Murphy of New Orleans, Manchac, December 26, 1773, ibid.

[65]Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Grand Gulf, March 22, 1774, ibid.

[66]Fitzpatrick to John McGillivray of Mobile, Manchac, June 23, 1774, ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Fitzpatrick to James Johnstone of Natchez, Manchac, December 27, 1774, ibid.

With this decision more merchants came down the Mississippi to ply their trade.[69] It was at this time that General Thomas Gage recalled most of the troops from West Florida to defend against the uprising,[70] and Fitzpatrick expressed his loyalist sentiments to Captain Collin Graham who was ordered North to put down the rebellion.

> I am really [sorry] to hear that your regiment has received orders to hold itself in Business; to go on so Disagreable an Expedition; as against the Bostonins [sic] . . . may this find you In the same good health you enjoyed while with us on the Mississippi; and may the gods protect you; when you shall be exposed to danger; and Bring you safe Back hear again . . . .[71]

Fitzpatrick recorded that in the early months of 1775 business became slightly better. Many of his correspondents asked him to receive goods via the lakes, but he refused on every occasion because he regarded the cost too high "exceeding more than half the freight cost from Europe to the province."[72] It was during these early months of the

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[69] Fitzpatrick to John Miller of New Orleans, Manchac, February 2, 1775, ibid.

[70] Colonial Office 5:580, General Thomas Gage to Captain Thomas Hutchins, Boston, February 23, 1775.

[71] Fitzpatrick to Captain Collin Graham of the 16th Regiment at Pensacola, Manchac, March 6, 1775, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[72] Fitzpatrick to John Miller of New Orleans, Manchac, March 26, 1775, ibid.

American conflict that Fitzpatrick recorded some information about the Revolution. For example, in July, 1775, he told of a rumor that Fort Detroit had been taken by the Americans,[73] and later expressed much elation to hear that the American army had been defeated on Long Island.[74]

During 1776 prices continued to rise in the river trade, and items became more scarce as debts became increasingly harder to collect.[75] Fitzpatrick became disillusioned with the situation and began to petition for land from the provincial authorities.[76] His request was turned down;but he resolved to remain at Manchac, hoping that things would get better when the British armies defeated the Americans.[77] Events proved, however, that his hopes were in vain because the Americans were intent upon removing themselves from the mercantile system of Great Britain. The second phase of trade in West Florida had yielded profits even though they were illegal but the third phase of the war ushered in economic ruin for the merchants of West Florida.

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[73]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, July 2, 1775, ibid.

[74]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, December 5, 1776, ibid.

[75]Fitzpatrick to John McGillivray of Mobile, Manchac, December 6, 1776, ibid.

[76]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, October 2, 1776, ibid.

[77]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, January 14, 1777, ibid.

CHAPTER VI

THE YEARS OF DISASTER

With the recall of Governor Johnstone in 1767, the Lieutenant-Governor of West Florida, Montfort Browne, assumed office until a new Governor could be selected. For a while fate seemed to be kind to the new executive as internal bickering among the Indian population quieted their external marauding against the white population. And Browne, for want of any defined plan of his own, adhered to the old policies which Johnstone had established for the colony.[1] He tried to reopen the question of Spanish trade by sending new memorials to the Board of Trade,[2] and made a good-will tour of the colony as far to the northwest as Natchez.[3] Of course, the Board rejected his requests as it had in the past, and colonial tranquility was not long to endure.[4] Browne became genuinely alarmed when he was informed by General Thomas Gage that many of the troops were

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[1] Colonial Office 5:575, Montfort Browne to Alexander McPherson, April 14, 1767.

[2] Colonial Office 5:577, Montfort Browne to the Earl of Shelburne, February 1, 1767; Montfort Browne to the Board of Trade, September 29, 1767.

[3] Colonial Office 5:575, Montfort Browne to the Board of Trade, February 6, 1768.

[4] Colonial Office 5:577, Montfort Browne to the Earl of Hillsborough, February 25, 1769.

to be removed from the province because the crown had requested that he cut imperial expenses wherever possible.[5] Browne protested this action quite vigorously but to no avail, and the troops were removed from the province in conformance with the new decree. The colonists were very upset when this happened and bombarded the government with many petitions of protest. The King, desirous of maintaining colonial support in the face of trouble in the northern colonies, intervened to force General Gage to return at least a token military force for the support of the colony.[6]

Meanwhile, a new royal Governor, John Eliot, was appointed, and he arrived in West Florida on April 2, 1769, but for some unknown reason committed suicide within a month.[7] Browne, then unexpectedly, returned to office as interim Governor until a new executive could be appointed. He dispatched Elias Durnford, a member of the provincial council, to England to make a full report on the state of colonial affairs.[8]

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[5]Clarence Walworth Alvord, The Mississippi Valley in British Politics, II (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1917), 27-31.

[6]Colonial Office 5:577, Montfort Browne to the Earl of Hillsborough, August 29, 1768.

[7]Colonial Office 5:580, Montfort Browne to the Earl of Hillsborough, May 13, 1769.

[8]Hamilton has devoted several paragraphs of doubtful value extolling the merits of Elias Durnford in Colonial Mobile, 462-464.

Durnford, however, decided to take advantage of the situation by promoting his own interests at court; and on December 26, 1769, the crown appointed him to the post of Lieutenant-Governor, simultaneously ordering Browne's recall.[9] The temporary executive reluctantly gave up his office, but returned to England where he hoped to appeal the decision and be returned to favor.

Durnford's short-lived interim as chief executive was characterized by comparative peace. Sporadic Indian raids continued, but even these resulted in a more defined regulation of the Indian trade as promulgated by the Trade Law of May 19, 1770.[10]

British regulation of the Indian trade had been laid down as a part of the Proclamation of 1763; further regulations were included in the Plan of 1764, and at various times, congresses had been called to create a spirit of commercial amity between the traders and the Indians. However, the traders were not a group to be dominated by a spirit of ethical morality. From 1763 they had loaded their pack-horses, made their ways inland, in pairs and in groups with hidden liquor and legal wares, to ply their trade among the Indians. The articles most acceptable to

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[9] Colonial Office 5:577, Elias Durnford to the Earl of Hillsborough, Pensacola, January 20, 1770.

[10] Johnson, British West Florida, 72.

the Indians were illegal rum, weapons, and ammunition plus legal articles of clothing and manufactured goods especially prized by the natives.[11] The prices of these legal items had been established by mutual consent among Indians and traders alike and were reckoned in terms of pounds of deerskins.[12]

It would be exceedingly difficult to estimate the volume of the Indian trade. Governor Durnford, who is considered by Cecil Johnson and Peter Joseph Hamilton as being conservative and reliable, said that a vessel of two hundred tons made annual trips to Mobile to bring in British manufactured goods and return peltry to England.[13] The contemporary traveler, Thomas Hutchins, estimated that the value of skins and furs annually exported from Mobile was about fifteen thousand pounds sterling.[14] In a memorial addressed to the crown many of the local citizens claimed that the value of exports from West Florida reached two hundred thousand pounds sterling annually.[15] It should be pointed out, however, that memorials to the crown seem to run to exaggeration, and as there was no customs house in the western part of the

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[11] Ibid., 190.

[12] Shaw, British Administration of the Southern Indians, 195-197.

[13] Colonial Office 5:591, Elias Durnford to the Board of Trade, undated.

[14] Hutchins, An Historical Narrative, 70.

[15] Colonial Office 5:595, Memorial of Leading Citizens of Mobile to the Board of Trade, (probably 1779).

province, no real value can be ascribed to this figure.

A new Governor, Peter Chester, was appointed to the province in late December, 1769, and in traditional dilatory fashion did not arrive to assume office until August 10, 1770.[16] His administration was to extend to 1781 when the colony was lost to Spain. Chester was quite efficient, careful with details, and exacting in his administration of the province. After making the normal investigative studies, the Governor deduced that the real problem was the absence of a uniform code of commercial regulations to standardize the inter-colonial Indian trade. He then sought to remedy the problem by recommendation to the Board of Trade that all the North American colonies observe a distinct set of Indian commercial practices.[17] Chester reasoned that this uniform code was needed to end laxity and sporadic intra-colonial enforcement of trade laws, and he believed that the Indians were being unnecessarily cheated. Because Chester was a vigorous administrator, West Florida was the first colony to enforce the Trade Law of May 19, 1770.[18] However, the law was more of a commentary on how trade should have been regulated than an effective instrument to gain control of a very

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[16] Colonial Office 5:577, Peter Chester to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, September 29, 1770.

[17] Johnson, British West Florida, 191.

[18] Ibid., 74.

distasteful situation. At first glance its numerous provisions look to be imposing. A heavy penalty was provided for unlicensed traders. Fines were to be levied on all who sold their skins in New Orleans or to any person other than British subjects. Traders were required to post bonds for two hundred pounds sterling to guarantee themselves and their employees to observe the regulations. Each was forced to give written contracts to any person in his employ; slaves were forbidden from participation in the trade. Traders were admonished to attend Indian congresses to learn the law. None could possess more than eighteen gallons of alcoholic beverages at a single time. Weapons and ammunition were not to be bartered to Indians. No trading was to transpire in the woods. A price list in terms of pounds of leather was established on more than forty items of Indian trade.[19]

These regulations sound very weighty but there were no provisions to enforce them effectively. Chester sought enforcement by insisting that John Stuart call new Indian congresses to relieve the depressed commercial situation. Stuart conferred with ministry officials who were hesitant to permit new talks because of the expense incurred. After a lot of consideration and argument the ministry assented to Chester's proposal, and in 1771 the Indian Superintendent

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[19] Colonial Office 5:623, Peter Chester to the Board of Trade, Pensacola, August 2, 1771.

for the Southern District ordered a new series of Indian conclaves. The Creeks and the Choctaws were not on friendly terms and two meetings were necessary. The Creeks were summoned to Pensacola in late October, while the Choctaws and the Chickasaws were to meet in Mobile about two months later. The congresses were very similar to those which met during the Johnstone administration in 1765. There was much smoking of the calumet, fiery speeches, harangues by the civil officials, feasting and finally, distribution of presents to the leading Indian chiefs.[20] Generally speaking, the natives were put in good spirits and affected an air of cordiality towards the British.[21] It should not be assumed, however, that these meetings solved the chronic problems of the parties involved. As a matter of fact, these troubles endured throughout the American Revolution.

Another matter which the new Governor tried especially hard to set straight was the land distribution system in the colony. Under the original terms of the Peace of Paris in 1763, the area of West Florida had extended to the thirty-first parallel, but Johnstone had waged a successful campaign to get the boundary moved further north so that Natchez might be taken into the province.[22] The crown authorized him to

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[20]Johnson, British West Florida, 80.

[21]Shaw, British Administration of the Southern Indians, 84-162.

[22]Johnson has erroneously stated that Johnstone argued for the enlargement of the province so that Mobile could be included in British West Florida, 6.

enlarge the colony so that the southern and northern limits were the Gulf of Mexico and a line which was drawn at thirty-two degrees and twenty-eight minutes.[23] Very little of this new land had been granted to settlers during Johnstone's administration, and Chester was of the opinion that even the amount granted had fallen into disuse. He wanted that land forfeited to the crown for redistribution to new settlers. However, because of the original crown instructions, Chester could not get this complicated policy reversed and Johnstone's old system of land distribution was continued.

The Governor was quite vigorous in working out a plan for the internal development of the colony. The western lands were of much interest to him since that area seemed to have the greatest promise. He noted from reports of immigrants along the Mississippi River that the land was fertile and the local Indians were not so ferocious. Like George Johnstone, the new Governor was interested in renewing attempts to make the Iberville navigable to induce more traders and settlers into the western area. Manchac was thriving and so was Natchez. Chester began to make more and more grants to emigrants who wanted to go west. The rush was on, but alas, in 1773 the ministry warned Chester not to make any more land grants in the area. Why did this

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[23] [James A. Padgett] (contributor), "A Further Commission to George Johnstone for Enlarging the Province of West Florida," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXI (October, 1938), 1034-1035.

happen? Professor Alvord has suggested that this was an attempt by the crown to convert all the ungranted land into a potential source of royal revenue.[24] Whatever the reason, the citizens of West Florida were indignant that the crown should thwart the potential growth of the colony. But as in the case of removal of the troops in 1767, the King soon decided to make an about-face. This came in 1775 when George III became convinced that the province was a loyal colony and that the unnatural rebellion in the northeastern colonies would necessitate granting more land to loyalists who wished to evacuate those places for West Florida. Chester followed the pattern which had been set by the monarch and popularized the colony as a loyalist refuge. Land was made available for those whose sympathies were with the crown. Hordes of royalists, too many to mention, came from Georgia, Connecticut, South Carolina, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, St. Vincent, and Grenada.[25]

But these people came too late. The brief illegal commercial success of the colony, based as it had been on illicit trade, was rapidly nearing an end. The primary reason for the decline in profitable enterprise, as attested

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[24]Alvord, Mississippi Valley in British Politics, II, 212-213.

[25]Johnson, British West Florida, 142-148.

to on many occasions by John Fitzpatrick, was this tremendous increase in the number of traders and merchants into the colony. Growing numbers combined with the increasingly antagonistic attitude of Spanish New Orleans plus the troublesome Revolution in the North spelled commercial disaster for the infant colony.

That Revolution was really beginning to take definite form by 1775. And as the world watched, some of the nations of Europe began to see the implications of a successful American Revolution. France was especially interested; she had been smarting since her defeat in 1763 and saw the chance to return a compliment to Great Britain. Whether France was prompted by revenge or sheer will to power is not within the scope of this paper. It is, however, of interest to note that Samuel Flagg Bemis considers France to be following a policy of revenge against Great Britain during this period.[26] Little matters the motive; the important thing to consider is that France did provide real aid to the American Revolution.

Under the terms of the Franco-American Alliance in 1778, France moved to active participation in the war against Great Britain. This decision had important consequences for other nations of Europe. Under the terms of the Bourbon

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[27] Samuel Flagg Bemis, The Diplomacy of the American Revolution, (Washington: American Historical Association, 1935), 14-15.

Family Compact, Spain might have been expected to become an ally to the American colonies. But Spain demurred because of the fear of setting a precedent which would result in similar revolutions in Latin America. The anxious French foreign minister, Charles Gravier de Vergennes, put pressure on Spain while the Americans sent John Jay, an able diplomat of Huguenot ancestry, on a mission to Madrid to induce Spain to declare war on England. American revolutionaries had even offered to aid in the conquest of Pensacola if Spain would allow the Americans free navigation of the Mississippi River.[27] Spain was not impressed with the colonial offer, but she did agree to join France in an alliance if it were understood that her prize of war would be Gibraltar. France agreed, and by the secret Treaty of Aranjuez signed on April 12, 1779, the two countries agreed to fight until Gibraltar fell. In no official agreement did Spain ever agree to become a participant in the American revolutionary cause.[28]

Before this secret treaty was signed, a new Spanish Governor-General was appointed for the Louisiana territory. This was the famous Bernardo de Gálvez, nephew of the

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[27] Worthington Chauncey Ford (ed.), Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, VI (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 1057.

[28] Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Short History of American Foreign Policy and Diplomacy (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), 15.

powerful minister of the Indies, José de Gálvez.[29] West Florida was in for a rude awakening when this sagacious noble decided to favor the cause of the American Revolution. He assumed office on January 1, 1777, and from the beginning pursued a course of trying to stop the English contraband trade on the Mississippi River. This action, coupled with the withdrawal of all English troops from the Illinois country, wreaked havoc on the already impoverished river commerce.[30] Moreover, Gálvez made matters worse by removing the stringent commercial regulations which had been laid on New Orleans by General O'Reilly in 1770. True, the predecessor of Gálvez, Luis de Unzaga, had closed his eyes to the illegal trade between the French and English who plied the waters of the mighty river, but the West Floridians had already established a superior monopoly by that time.[31] Unzaga determined to follow the path of least resistance and he adhered to a lax policy until 1770. There had been some war talk at the time between Spain and England, and he became apprehensive when Britain regarrisoned the forts of West Florida. Unzaga mounted adequate defenses of the

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[29]John Walton Caughey has provided an excellent treatment of the able Spaniard in Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 1776-1783 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934).

[30]Fitzpatrick to Philip Comyn of Pensacola, Manchac January 24, 1777, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[31]Gayarré, History of Louisiana, III, 46.

Crescent City, but no war came and the lax trade policy was resumed.[32]

As a result of the enlightened commercial policy of Gálvez, British vessels were left stranded in the river laden with goods which they could not sell because of the free trade lately extended to the French. The planters of Pointe Coupee and Natchitoches favored their fellow countrymen with their produce and were rewarded when French merchants began to undersell the British merchants. Old-timers like Fitzpatrick wailed to the heavens.[33]

But after three months of the new policy, Gálvez decided to institute a more aggressive plan to rid the river of English merchant vessels. He ordered the seizure of all these craft, and by April 17, 1777, thirteen ships were taken.[34] Moreover, the Spanish Governor ordered all British merchants in New Orleans to leave.[35] Several of John Fitzpatrick's friends were financially ruined by this move, including John Waugh of New Orleans, James Pickle of

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[32]Clarence Edwin Carter, Great Britain and the Illinois Country, 1763-1774 (Washington: American Historical Association, 1910), 142-144 and "British Policy towards the American Indians in the South, 1763-1768," The English Historical Review, XXXIII (April, 1918), 37-57.

[33]Fitzpatrick to William Wilton of Natchez, Manchac, January 23, 1777, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[34]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, April 23, 1777, ibid.

[35]Fitzpatrick to Alexander McIntosh of Natchez, Manchac, April 28, 1777, ibid.

Natchez, and James Mather of the Illinois country.[36] Fitzpatrick could not understand the reason for the action unless Great Britain was on the verge of war with France and Apain; and this, to the merchant's mind, was not outside the realm of possibility. Fitzpatrick became extremely agitated over the ominous situation when he read a letter which a French officer at Dunkirk had sent to his nephew in New Orleans during the early part of January, 1777. Commenting upon the message to a friend, he stated:

> . . . there is 3,800 men employed in building the walls at Dunkirk that the English Engineer had protested against their building, yet the work was continued which gave many reason to imagine that there will be something to do this summer between England and France, but hope this will turn out nothing but French news.[37]

Ample reason existed for the Scot loyalist to worry about war. New Orleans was a beehive of revolutionary talk. The leading advocate of the American cause in the city was Oliver Pollock, an Irish merchant and American who had made the acquaintance of General O'Reilly in Havana.[38] Evidently

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[36] Fitzpatrick to Donald McPherson of Natchez, Manchac, March 28, 1777, ibid.

[37] Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, March 28, 1777, ibid.

[38] James Alton James thoroughly covers the role of Pollock in the American Revolution in Oliver Pollock: The Life and Times of an Unknown Patriot (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937).

the ties of blood were strong and the General allowed Pollock the privilege of moving to New Orleans where he became one of the leading merchants there. Pollock enjoyed great success, and when the Revolution broke out he did everything in his power to sway the Spanish administration to support the American revolt in spite of the fact that Spain never espoused the cause. Examples of his intervention to promote understanding between Latin Americans of New Orleans and North Americans are outstanding.

In 1776 the American Continental Congress ordered Captain George Gibson and Lieutenant William Linn to sail down the Mississippi to negotiate with Spanish authorities at New Orleans for badly needed munitions and war matériel. Upon their arrival, Pollock interceded for them so successfully that the officers were able to obtain several tons of arms and ammunition.[39] Part of this war matériel was shipped from New Orleans by sea to Philadelphia, but a larger part of it was placed under the direction of a certain Captain Bethell. The Captain and a "one leg Spaniard named Don Basill" then sailed up the Mississippi with thirteen thousand five hundred pounds of arms and ammunition plus a reported thirty hogsheads of wine.[40] They arrived to replenish

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[39] Ibid., 61-65.

[40] Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, December 5, 1776, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

the depleted supplies of American-held Fort Pitt in February, 1777.[41] This significantly marked the beginning of direct Spanish aid to the rebels of the North, and Pollock was soon to expand his efforts as the Revolution wore on. Traders on the river looked on and were both amazed and frightened by this change of events. All were supposedly loyalists but those who owed money to English merchants at Natchez and Manchac decided, in an expression of early American pragmatism, not to pay their debts until they determined which way the war would go. Fitzpatrick was furious at these people for their reluctance to pay honest debts, but his hands were tied.[42]

Hispanic-American relations were becoming more of a factor in the American Revolution as time elapsed. In the spring of 1777 several American vessels returned to New Orleans for more matériel, and more important, the commander at Fort Pitt, Colonel George Morgan sent an enquiry asking Gálvez what he thought of a possible attack on British Pensacola. Gálvez agreed to support the American idea with seventy thousand dollars worth of munitions, if the aid could be kept secret.[43] Taking the hint, Patrick

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[41]Fitzpatrick to John Stephenson of Pensacola, Manchac, February 14, 1777, ibid.

[42]Fitzpatrick to John McGillivray of Pensacola, Manchac, December 6, 1776, ibid.

[43]Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 90-92.

Henry, Governor of Virginia, wrote to the Spanish commandant in October, 1777, and proposed that the Crescent City be made a free port where the products of western America could be marketed. Gálvez replied that the Spanish commercial regulations would not permit such a policy.[44] Meanwhile, Colonel Morgan wanted to lead a band of men down the Mississippi, confer with Gálvez, and make a combined attack on Mobile and Pensacola. The Continental Congress considered his proposal but vetoed it on the grounds that it would prove to be too expensive for the strategic value involved.[45]

Gálvez continued to aid the Americans in many ways but he remained firm on the Spanish policy of disallowing all Americans free trade at New Orleans. New trouble, however, was awaiting the British traders on the river. In mid-January, 1778, James Willing, a former resident of West Florida, organized a raiding expedition to descend the Mississippi River.[46] His group moved to Natchez by Feburary 21, 1778, where the West Floridians were caught off

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[44] Gayarré, History of Louisiana, III, 241-242.

[45] Edmund Cody Burnett (ed.), Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, II, (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1921), 445-449.

[46] New Orleans Times-Democrat, "A Memento of Willing's Raid," February 25, 1924, 14.

guard. Willing called in the leading citizens of the town and demanded that they take an oath of neutrality. Then he moved down the river repeating the process in each frontier outpost.[47] His group arrived in Manchac and confiscated Negro slaves, manufactured goods, and local produce. Fitzpatrick, who had been wanting to leave the province for some time, feared for his life and fled to the Spanish side of the river. His comments on the results of the raid are quite candid.

> Two days before your note came to hand a small party of Americans arrived at English Manchac which has entirely broke up all the English settlements on this river for want of a small assistance in due time. I shall be a considerable loser by it as several [traders] have joined them . . . .[48]

Willing loaded his booty on vessels which he could commandeer and moved down the river where he was joined by some of Pollock's forces from New Orleans.[49] With this extra help, Willing was able to float a large quantity of confiscated

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[47] John Walton Caughey, "Willing's Expedition Down the Mississippi, 1778," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XV (January, 1932), 5-36.

[48] Fitzpatrick to Messrs. McGillivray and Struthers of Pensacola, Spanish Manchac, April 10, 1778, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[49] James Alton James, "Oliver Pollock, Financier of the Revolution in the West," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (June, 1929), 67-80.

produce to the city. Whereupon the raider presented Oliver Pollock with a commission to act as agent in New Orleans for the Continental Congress. A meeting was held between Gálvez and Pollock and it was determined to publicly auction the booty and to give sanctuary to Willing's forces.[50]

After the spoils of war were sold, Willing returned to Manchac where he again plundered the plantations nearby. However, this time the enraged populace near Natchez heard about the second expedition and were lying in wait for the spoiler when he arrived there. A terrific battle ensued and the loyalists defeated the Willing group.[51] Panic resulted among the raiders as they fled to the safety of New Orleans. Why Gálvez permitted this second raid is a matter for debate. He was a shrewd observer of men and their ways and perhaps realized that Willing would never succeed without Spanish co-operation.[52] It is possible that he was playing both ends against the middle without risking the loss of any Spanish strength. Whatever the reason, when Willing returned to New Orleans it was not long before he was chased out by Pollock and Gálvez for

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[50] Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 113 and James, Oliver Pollock, 120-121.

[51] Albert James Pickett, History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period (Charleston: Press of Walker and James, 1851), 36.

[52] Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, I, 91.

bad personal morals and debauchery. Willing left the city in a sloop bound for Philadelphia, but was captured by the British and spent the greater portion of the American Revolution in prison.[53]

The British were alarmed as a result of Willing's expedition and sent reinforcements to their West Florida posts. They made a demand that Gálvez return some of the spoils of Willing's conquest, to which he readily assented.[54] Fitzpatrick, who had scurried to a Spanish retreat at the new settlement of Gálveztown,[55] heard that English troops were being sent to Manchac from Pensacola to restore order, but he remained in his Spanish refuge on the south side of the Iberville until he could ascertain if the rumor was a fact.[56] However, when the British reinforcements arrived in English Manchac they confiscated all his buildings and took his house for the residence of the "gentlemen officers."[57] Fitzpatrick could not believe his eyes and confessed to a

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[53]James, Oliver Pollock, 147.

[54]Andrew Ellicott, The Journal of Andrew Ellicott (Philadelphia: Budd and Bartram Printers, 1803), 130-133.

[55]Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 80-81.

[56]Gayarré, History of Louisiana, III, 115-120.

[57]Fitzpatrick to David Ross of Mobile, Spanish Manchac, June 29, 1778, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

friend the following:

> I am sorry to acquaint you that the military forces sent here for the protection of the remaining Inhabitants, heretofore English but now obliged to turn Spaniards, is so different from what they had a right to expect that very few have returned to their former possessions . . . .[58]

The Scot was so disillusioned by the attitude of the military forces that he determined to become a subject "to another prince and throw up all further claim to my houses and large improvements."[59] But Fitzpatrick was a Britisher at heart. Even though he hated the officers of the English occupying forces at Manchac, he could never force himself to relinquish his British citizenship. And these troops did effectively stabilize the commerce along the stretches of the river above New Orleans. By February, 1779, when a new British commander, Captain Smith, determined to aid the merchants who had fled to Spanish territory, Fitzpatrick returned to the English side of the river. The officer evidently gave Fitzpatrick a rather good orientation on the values of British citizenship because the Scot shortly ordered a new stock of goods from a Mobile supplier and reported the following:

> . . . you requested I would send you [an order]

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[58] Fitzpatrick to William Weir of Natchez, Spanish Manchac, September 16, 1778, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[59] Ibid.

> for the sundries good that I shall want, for the Insuing year; and as things now appears I am in hopes that they will come to a good market, especially should the troops remain in our neighbourhood and that Tranquility rains on the river but should this not be the case I shall take proper care to give you timely notice so that . . . you shall run no risque.[60]

But the American Revolution was still in progress and the Continental Congress sent a special word of thanks to Gálvez for his handling of the Willing episode.[61] The Spanish executive knew that France had entered the war against England, and assuming that it was just a matter of time until Spain became involved, he laid plans for a possible campaign against the major cities of West Florida.[62]

The new English commander of West Florida, General John Campbell, was much distressed about the defenses of the area. After a full examination of forts, he made the following report to his superior, Sir Henry Clinton, at New York.

> . . . I have to set forth to your Excellency the total impossibility of beginning the fortifications to be erected on the Mississippi for want of materials, for want of tools, for want of artificers, for want of proper vessels for the navigation to transport troops and

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[60] Fitzpatrick to John Miller of Mobile, Manchac, March 11, 1778, ibid.

[61] Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1083-1084.

[62] Gayarré, History of Louisiana, III, 124-127.

provisions, and even for want of provisions.[63]

Meanwhile, Fitzpatrick became more upset. Rumors circulated that fifteen hundred Americans were on their way down the river. His glum comment was, "I am much afraid we shall have to seek protection a second time from Don Galvez."[64] The Scot recognized the existence of English troops but he feared that they would be pulled out for use elsewhere. Under such desperate circumstances, trade had fallen off to the point where Fitzpatrick could not even get food enough to feed his slaves.[65] All English vessels were blocked at the New Orleans entrance to the Mississippi, and any trade that was carried on had to come via the expensive lakes route.[66] The merchant had been unable to collect any debts and his Pensacola and Mobile creditors were beginning to complain. Everything looked bad indeed, but the worst was yet to come.

Gálvez received news of the Treaty of Aranjuez in 1779; then, concealing his intentions, marched to Manchac where he made an unexpected attack on the British garrison

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[63] Mississippi Transcripts, X, October 31, 1778, cited by Johnson, British West Florida, 212.

[64] Fitzpatrick to John Miller of Mobile, Manchac, May 9, 1779, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[65] Fitzpatrick to John McGillivray of Pensacola, Manchac, May 29, 1779, ibid.

[66] Fitzpatrick to John Miller of Mobile, Manchac, August 19, 1779, ibid.

there. The English commander was caught off guard and ordered his troops to fall back to newly constructed fortifications at Baton Rouge.[67] While Gálvez was advancing towards the new place of English resistence, an American naval Captain, William Pickles, moved into Lake Pontchartrain and closed the lakes route to the English.[68] Meanwhile, the Gálvez army reached Baton Rouge on September 21, 1779, and there defeated the English in their new defenses. Discussion about terms of surrender followed, but the Spaniard was unwilling to accept the surrender of the British commandant, Colonel John Dickson, unless he agreed to a simultaneous surrender of Natchez.[69] After some negotiation, this agreement was made; and British control of the Mississippi, as set forth by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, came to a dramatic close.[70] Scattered military operations continued and in less than a month the army of Gálvez had

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[67] "Reasons for Moving to Baton Rouge," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XII (January, 1929), 263-264.

[68] Manuel Serrano y Sanz (ed.), Documentos Historicos de la Florida y la Luisiana (Madrid: Publisher Unknown, 1912), 343-350, cited by Gayarré, History of Louisiana, III, 130.

[69] "Capture of Manchac, Baton Rouge, and Natchez," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XII (January, 1929), 264-265.

[70] The Favrot Papers, ms. 168, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana, "Reponse faite aux articles de Capitulation proposes par Mr. le Lieutenant Colonel Dichon: a Moi le Colonel Don Bernardo de Gálvez," September 21, 1779.

subdued the entire British population along the lower stretches of the river. So many prisoners were captured that they were sent to New Orleans where all were treated well upon the condition that they should not take up arms against Spain or her allies.[71]

These ominous events, coupled with the news of the capture of the Illinois country by Colonel George Rogers Clark, strangled and ended all British commerce on the Mississippi River. Fitzpatrick was economically ruined and personally very depressed. He did, however, negotiate with Colonel Dickson to determine if the English government would reimburse him for the loss of his personal property, but he never received satisfaction from any of the authorities.[72] The Scot remained in Manchac trying desperately to collect enough debts so that he would be able to leave the colony; however, his efforts were wasted.[73]

News of the military success of Gálvez along the river struck terror into the hearts of the citizens of West Florida. The people of Mobile and Pensacola were alarmed, and the more rumors they heard the more desperate they became. Governor Chester was accused of misappropriating

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[71] "Dickson to Campbell, October 20, 1779," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XII (January, 1929), 258.

[72] Fitzpatrick to John Miller of Mobile, Manchac, October 20, 1779, Letterbook of John Fitzpatrick.

[73] Fitzpatrick to John Davis of New Orleans, Manchac, March 2, 1780, ibid.

public moneys which could have been used to save Natchez, Baton Rouge, and Manchac.[74] General Campbell felt that the Governor and the council were uncooperative in organizing the defenses of the colony. But the sad fact was apparent. There was no money, no manpower reserves, and no materiel of war. Campbell, nevertheless, improvised a defense of the remainder of the colony as best he could.[75]

The dauntless Governor of Louisiana had received orders to drive the British from West Florida.[76] His next objective in the intended coast-hopping campaign was Mobile. There had been some talk in the northern colonies of a combined offensive with the Continental Line hitting the Carolinas and Georgia while the Spanish forces attacked in the Floridas. This would have had the double advantage of weakening the British on both fronts.[77] General Washington had expressed readiness to co-operate with the Gálvez forces, but the Continental Congress did not see fit to enter into such an arrangement and the talk was dropped.[78]

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[74]James A. Padgett, "Manuscript Copy of Peter Chester's Defense," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXII (April, 1939), 31-46.

[75]Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, 252.

[76]Ibid., 312-316.

[77]Francis Wharton (ed.), The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 320.

[78]Jared Sparks (ed.), The Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, IV (Boston: N. Hale, Gray and Bowen, 1829), 542.

On February 5, 1780, Gálvez sailed from the Balize into Mobile Bay and began siege operations against the city early in March. The Mobile commander surrendered in the face of heavy fire and the Spanish commander granted liberal terms of surrender after the British forces had laid down their arms against Spain.[79] Flush with his second major victory in West Florida, Gálvez made immediate plans to lay siege against Pensacola. The British garrison there was frantic and General Campbell complained to his superiors that the British might as well abandon Pensacola if no reinforcements were available for deployment there.[80]

A council of war in the Spanish camp advised that Gálvez should abandon his immediate siege of Pensacola. The Governor-General was surprised and somewhat disheartened, but returned to New Orleans to await further orders. On receipt of this news, General Campbell and his troops breathed a heavy sigh of relief.[81] Their good fortune was quite ephemeral, however, because Gálvez was soon ordered to Havana where he organized a force to be used in an all-out attack on Pensacola. As time elapsed, General Campbell began to enjoy an illusion that the Spanish were not going to attack. He became so bold that he sallied forth to

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[79] Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, 317-319.

[80] Caughey, Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 191.

[81] Ibid., 124.

counterattack the Spanish army of occupation in Mobile. The fruitless effort was, of course, repulsed by a superior Spanish force in January, 1781, and Campbell retreated to Pensacola.[82] Meanwhile, a storm plagued the expeditionary forces of Gálvez, but he was not to be denied his prize. He reorganized his army and sailed to Pensacola where in March, 1781, siege operations were commenced. The British held for several days but General Campbell was forced to surrender Pensacola to the Spanish on May 8, 1781.[83] As in the past, Gálvez granted just terms of surrender and transferred the British soldiers to another part of North America. Thus ended the major Spanish military exploits during the American Revolution. The Mississippi River was once more in her possession and she had redeemed the Floridas. When the Americans completed their successful revolt against Great Britain, a provisional treaty placed the northern border of West Florida at the thirty-first parallel if it were to remain in Spanish hands.[84] Spain was not happy with the idea and argued that the northern limit should be placed at the amended boundary of thirty-two degrees and twenty-eight minutes. This was a source

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[82] Hamilton, Colonial Mobile, 256-257.

[83] "Diary of the Operations of the Expedition Against the Place of Pensacola, Conducted by the Arms of His Catholic Majesty, Under the Orders of the Field Marshall Don Bernardo de Gálvez," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, I (January, 1917), 46-84.

[84] Commager, Documents of American History, 118.

of misunderstanding between the Americans and the Spanish until the Pinckney Treaty of 1795 which confirmed the northern Florida border at the thirty-first parallel.[85] The most immediate result of the war was, however, the destruction of British trade and interests in West Florida.

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[85]Samuel Flagg Bemis, Pinckney's Treaty: A Study of America's Advantage from Europe's Distress, 1783-1800 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1926), 44-77, 391-411.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The study of British trade in West Florida reveals an evolutionary pattern of boom and bust. During the first stage there was profound hope expressed by most provincials, including Charles Strachan and Governor Johnstone, that the colony would become a building-block in the creation of a rich intercolonial commerce between Spain and Great Britain. Strachan gave his energy and health to that end. Johnstone worked industriously against the terrific odds of enforced mercantile policy, a sullen military force, and meager financial resources in order to realize the vast potential of the colony. Leading citizens and merchants gathered from all parts of the empire to every port and city of the province to implement this idea. They wrote memorials to the Board of Trade, planned new routes of transportation, held congresses to cultivate Indian tranquillity, proposed new and safer lines of communication, offered new lands for settlement to lure immigrants, and tried to bring about friendly relations with the Latins to the South. But because of strict mercantile policy, internal friction, and perhaps, because the colony was considered to occupy a place of secondary rank within the empire, the early attempts to encourage commerce ended in failure.

The second phase of development gives evidence of colonial recognition that neither Great Britain nor Spain would sanction any trade reciprocity between their respective colonial possessions. But it also shows that the people of the province were not ready to give up their aims and aspirations. If they could not develop a southern trading community, they would explore the commercial possibilities offered in the western part of the province along the Mississippi. The best example of this determination is seen in the driving ambition of John Fitzpatrick. Thrown out of New Orleans by the Spanish officials, this loyal Scot sought out a new residence and place of business in Manchac where he engaged in the illegal trade on the Mississippi River. This traffic proved to be a lucrative source of revenue and many followed his example by making the trek to the western limits of the colony. In theory profits were high, but these were only profits recorded on paper. Business was conducted on a crude credit basis because of the shortage of specie and currency. Fitzpatrick was a success, but his prosperity depended mainly on the ability of hunters, traders, and planters to pay for manufactured goods on a seasonal basis. In many cases this meant that goods were used up or worn out by the time the purchaser was able to pay.

With this credit system in mind, we enter the third and final phase of British trade in West Florida. The "buy

now and pay later" policy was operational only so long as there were no insurmountable foreign obstacles and in another time or place this sort of arrangement might have saved the colony from financial disaster. Fate, however, had decreed otherwise and the fickle nature of world conquest and development served to destroy the primitive economic equilibrium of the province.

Neither France nor Spain had left the Seven Years War without a feeling of enmity for Great Britain. They had, ostensibly, lost all their colonial possessions in North America east of the Mississippi River with the exception of the island of Orleans. France strongly desired the return of her colonial fur empire, and Spain wanted to regain her buffer states of East and West Florida. The prolonged, and ultimately successful, American Revolution gave both nations a chance to redeem their respective spheres of influence in North America east of the Mississippi. While it is true that Spain did not militarily assist the cause of the Revolution, it should be pointed out that she was interested in regaining her Florida possessions and disrupting English commerce along the great river. With proper consideration of these Franco-Spanish grievances, it is not impossible to understand the reasons for the failure of British trade in West Florida. Though the Spanish Governor-General did not openly aid the cause of

the Americans, he did cooperate with the Willing raiders, make loans to the revolutionists through Oliver Pollock, and later lead a force of Spanish troops which destroyed the English authority in Natchez and Manchac.

Compounding the problem was the fact that some provincial loyalists such as John Kennedy, Thomas Newman, John Bloomart, and Richard Bradley refused to pay their debts when the American Revolution spread into the river areas. A few merchants, however, were honorable and made an honest effort to pay their creditors, but the Revolution provided great temptation for active loyalists to become latent revolutionaries. Most of them were deeply in debt when the war began; and as events transpired, these men simply rationalized that they would not have been in dire financial circumstances except for the oppressive mercantile policy of Great Britain.

British trade, even on a piecemeal and illegal basis, could have succeeded on the Mississippi River if the American Revolution had not occurred. French residents in New Orleans and on the west bank of the river were eager to exchange their produce for English manufactured goods. The Spanish government at New Orleans was powerless to stop the trade except in the Crescent City because of small military forces, but even more important, by allowing this illegal exchange of goods, both the British and the French along the

river were kept happy at a small cost to the Spanish. It is true that General O'Reilly curbed the commerce to a large extent, but he was never very effective outside the city limits.

It seems quite apparent that British trade along the Mississippi River was ended because of a successful American Revolution. This prompted Spain and France to renew their aggression against Great Britain through the aegis of the Bourbon Family Compact. Britain did not have enough troops to cover effectively all her fronts and the way was paved for the destruction of West Florida as a British possession. Since there are no previous works treating this subject, it is impossible to refute or revise the work of others. But as a matter of historical speculation, one might make a conjecture relative to the destruction of British commerce in the lower South. A mercantile community was slowly emerging along the river in Louisiana and Mississippi. If there had been no conflict and these areas had been allowed to complete the full cycle of merchant capitalism, it is possible that the South might have been saved from a staple crop economy and dependence upon slavery. Certainly, the economic history of New England reveals the development of industrial capitalism after the completion of the phase of merchant capitalism. The lower South possessed a fine climate, vast quantities of

raw materials, a growing number of free immigrants, and water for potential industrial power. But for the American Revolution, there is a possibility that the agrarian South might have emerged as the industrial South.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

AN ATTEMPT TOWARDS A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF WEST FLORIDA[1]

Whether this Province be Considered only as a Settlement for the Cultivation of the Necessaries of Life, or for its Natural Produce, that is Already known, or for its Excellent Situation, Either for Commerce as well as for key to the Gulph of Mexico; (for which last Purpose it is Peculiarly Adapted thro' the Excellence of its Ports;) or again as to its Connexions with, and Proximity to the Southern Indians, in General, it Certainly Bids fair to Become in a Small Space of Time as Flourishing a Country as any AMERICA can Boast of. For the first Article Viz: the Tillage of the Ground; not to Speak of the Mississippi, About which there hath been Lately so much said that I Judge whatever Could now be Mentioned concerning that Father of Rivers would only be Needless Repetition- I shall therefore Begin with the next Considerable River to the Eastward of it, I mean the Pearl River; I have seen its Sources which Encircle together with the Branches of the Tombechbe the whole Chactaw Nation and the Sources of Pasca Oocoloo: in these its Upper Regions it Certainly Yields to none in Fertile Grounds; its Northermost Branch rises about Two hundred and Sixty Miles (in a Direct Line) North of the

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[1] P. Lee Phillips has reproduced this description of West Florida written by Bernard Romans on one of his earliest maps, the original of which is in the Colonial Office, London. Phillips has included this in Notes on the Life and Works of Bernard Romans, 119-128.

Gulph of Mexico; it is Said that it Abounds all the Length of its Course in an Equally Good Soil, as that which we See where it first Springs But as we are as Yet unluckily in Such darkness Concerning its Hydrography, we Can only take these Vague Accounts from the Hunters Reports. Certain it is that the two or three Familys Living near its Mouth are Faithfully paid for their Honest Labours, which they bestow on the Grateful Earth, and for its Navigation it is known to be Capable of Admitting very Considerable Crafts. The next to the Eastward is the Bogue Pasca Oocoloo, the River of the Nation of Break, it has this Name from a Tribe of that Name who lived near its Mouth and by their Neighbour with that Staff of Life. I have traced it from its first Original Spring, down to its Confluence with the Bogue Aithee Tanne, Vulgarly Called Backatanne, which after receiving another not at all Inconsiderable Branch Called Bogue Chitte, running Between the Pasca Oocoloo and said Bogue Aithee Tanne, and Neither Yielding to the first in Fertility, Joins the Pasca Oocoloo below the Chactaw Nation about One Hundred and Seventy Miles directly North from the said Gulph their Heads are all About two hundred and thirty five Miles in a North Line from the Same, its present Masters who Inhabit the Banks from this Confluence upwards are the Chactaws (Already Sufficiently described in one of my former Maps) I shall therefore only observe that they well deserve the Above named Eipthet Viz. the Nation of Bread as they Yearly Supply many of Several

Sorts of Leguminous Plants Entirely before Unknown to me. Concerning the Navigation of this River I shall only Say that it is better than the Pearl River, in that Article and Anno one thousand Seven hundred and Seventy, there was a Vessel Built at Chicasatray, two hundred Miles from the Sea if Measured in a Straight line, which Vessel brought down to the Sea Six hundred Bushells of Corn besides a Considerable Quantity of Deer Skins. The Next River is the Tombechbe Certainly the first in North America after the Mississippi and St. Lawrens, Whether it be Considered for its Extensive Navigation which Begins in Latitude 35:20 and after Receiving the Yaneka, Swangelo, Oaka Tiohaw, Oaka Nokshaba, Sookan Catcha, and Many Others of Lesser Note into its Western side, And the Rivers Called Twenty Seven Mile Creek, Last River, two Archers Rivers, the Sispe, Potcoahatcha, or Triscaloosa, all very Considerable, and Last of all the Great River of the Alibamas, on its Eastern side which Last Confluence is in Latitude 31:12 and Glides Gently thro' Innumerable Islands, as in this draught Expressed, and at Mobile the Islands Ending it becomes Above Eight Miles Wide, and then Assuming the Name of Mobile Bay, Disembogues itself into the Gulph of Mexico in Latitude 30:11. I myself Came down its Stream Above Six hundred Miles. This River also Abounds in very Fertile Soil, I Cut a Cane on its Banks which Measured Forty Seven Feet from the third Joint, to its Extremity, thirteen of its Joints I brought down to Mobile and Presented to the Honorable

John Stuart Esquire in January of this Instant Year One Thousand Seven hundred and Seventy two, which each of them were in Length Above Twenty Inches, and Above five Inches in Circumference, nor was this an Extraordinary Case, for I might brought Several Thousands of that Size had it been worth While. May it was the first Come to, for I sent my Servant to Cut the first Large Cane he could find, which proved the One Mentioned, This River in Process of time must Indubitably become a fine Settlement not Inferior by itself to any Province now known. By Means of this River Mobile will One Day become the only Mart, for the Skin Trade from the Chactaw, Chickesaw, and Upper Creek Nations. From here Eastward the Land diminishes in Goodness. The next River is the Perdido of Inconsiderable Note either for Navigation, or Plantable Lands, it rises in Latitude 31:10, and this makes but a Short Course. But it together with the Styx, Roche Blave, and all its former heads, are invaluable on Account of the Incomparable pasture it Affords, it even now Maintains between it and the Taenso Branch of the Mobile Above Ten Thousand Cattle and Horses, The Three Rivers Viz: The Scambe Middle River and Chester are of the Utmost Consequence to the Town of Pensacola and will Undoubtedly prove One of the Sources of its future Wealth. On Chester River and the Scambe there are Abundance of Valuable Rice Lands, such as have enriched the Planters in Carolina, and Georgia. On the Scambe the Swamps being higher and easier drained,

they are upon that Account at Present more Valuable to a Colony where Working hands are as yet Scarce, and Where Labour is for that Reason Expensive, but when the Country comes to be better Peopled the Rice Lands on Chester River may be made Equal to any in America. The Middle River has few or no rich Swamps upon it, only in some places there are Boggs Overgrown with that Species of Hypericum, which is here Called the Loblolly Bay, and even the want of Swamps upon this River is an Advantage, for by the Number of landing places, which it Affords, the Town of Pensacola can always be Supplied with Various kinds of Excellent Timber, with which the Country adjacent to the Middle River Abounds, tho' it Already begins to be Scarce below the Swamps on the Scambe and Chester Rivers, will prevent the making of Roads there except at a very Great Expence. On the East and the North East of Scambe these Swamps and Bogs, I found so Extensive as to render it impossible for me to Examine these parts more particularly this Wet Season. On the West side of the Scambe, and about the Weeocca, there are likewise a great Many Boggs, so that I found it Difficult to pass there with Light Loads, even in the Dryest Season of the Year. The Present Road to the Upper Creek Nation however is by this Route, and from the reason Already Mentioned the Difficulty in Crossing Several of the Creeks and Branches which fall into Coosa or Alibama River, as well as from the Winding of the Path, and the Obstructions to be met with from the

Logs and light Wood, thrown down by Hurricanes it is but a very Indifferent One. On Chester River the Swamps are also very Wide but not Boggy. The Lands about the Two Large Creeks Marked A and B are the finest Imaginable and particularly those next to the Latter. I would humbly presume to Recommend the Reservation of a Small Township or Village by the Name of New August, at C: a Spot which has already been Pointed out by the Indians themselves as the most Convenient Situation for that Trade, there is even now a very good Road from the Upper Creek Nation to the Point B which is about four Indian Days Journey, or One hundred Miles Distance from thence they divide themselves into Small Parties for the Conveniency of hunting in the Lower Grounds. To make a Road from C to B all that seems to be wanting is the Blazing of the Trees, and the passage of about one hundred Pack horses a number not much exceeding what the Traders now bring to Pensacola at one time the Distance is about Six Days Journey, and a high and dry one of Land all the Day. But upon Account of Water the Road Ought not to be Carried too far from the Banks of Middle River. I should also Imagine that if ever a Post road to the Northward be undertaken, it must go along the Edge of this Ridge. From C there is also a road to the Lower Creek Nation tho' it has not been used much of late. But I need say no more concerning the Advantages of this Situation from Pensacola to it: There is a very Excellent Basin to

receive Such Vessels as Can go in there and they are Well Sheltered from every Wind that Can blow. The Tide flows About two and a half feet, Most of the high Lands which I have Examined from the Tenosa or Coosa River to Chester River, are Inferior to few in America, either for Summer or Winter Food for Cattle, in many places it is Gravelly, not Sandy, and a kind of Clay or Marl is often found near the Surface. When the People therefore are Convinced that a Mixture of Clay or Marl with Lands makes these Lands fertile, they may do it at a very Moderate Expence. This part of the Country Abounds in Iron Mines. As to the Boundary Line with the Upper Creek Nation that is a Difficult Matter to be Properly adjusted, but I am humbly of Opinion that to have any Conveniency for Planting or a Tolerable Range for Cattle it ought to begin at the Creek Marked D where it is said to fall into the Alibama River, near to the Bayou Conoga or Hesia, and to go Along the said Creek to its Source, from thence to go Across the Path from Mobile to the Upper Creek Nation, to a Cane Branch which falls into the Weeocca and down the Weeocca to its Confluence with the River Scambe and so down the Scambe to the turn Marked E, and from thence to a Line drawn nearly East to a Remarkable Raft in the Middle River Marked F, and from this Raft in a line drawn South Easterly, to the first Raft in the Yellow Water or Chester River, near to the Hutt now Possessed by the Indian Called Johny Watts, and so in an Easterly Direction

to the Chattowhatchee, where the Lower Creek Line begins. This Boundary would nearly Include all the River which fall into the Bay of Pensacola as far as they are Navigable at Present, and Nothing but mere Jealousy Could prevent the Indians from Granting it, as there is Scarce a hunting camp to be Seen below this Line, and very few near to it, that are of any Consequence. It was on the Seventh day of July Anno Domini One Thousand Seven hundred and Seventy Two that I surveyed the Weewa Lane up to the place marked G and I could not go over the Gaps Cut for Canoes. I Viewed the River higher up by Land and saw that it was Still Wide and Navigable, it Certainly Comes a Great Way. There was a Land flood in the Rivers therefore I Could not Observe the Limits of the flowing of the Tides very Exactly, but in the Lakes H and I it flows about Sixteen Inches, Next Eastward we find the Chatto Hatcha Emptying into Santa Rosa Bay, but we know only that it receives the Talako Hatcha, and runs a good Length and Emptys as Above. The next is the Apalachicola which is the Boundary of the Province. But all we know of this is that it is Large, Plentiful in Fish, and its Adjoining Country fertile, so that we must Content ourselves till further Examinations will make us better Acquainted with the Geography of that Part of the Country, besides these there are many of the Inferior Note, the Principal of which are, the Iberville, Amite, Tangipoha, and Chafuncto, all now beginning to be Inhabited and

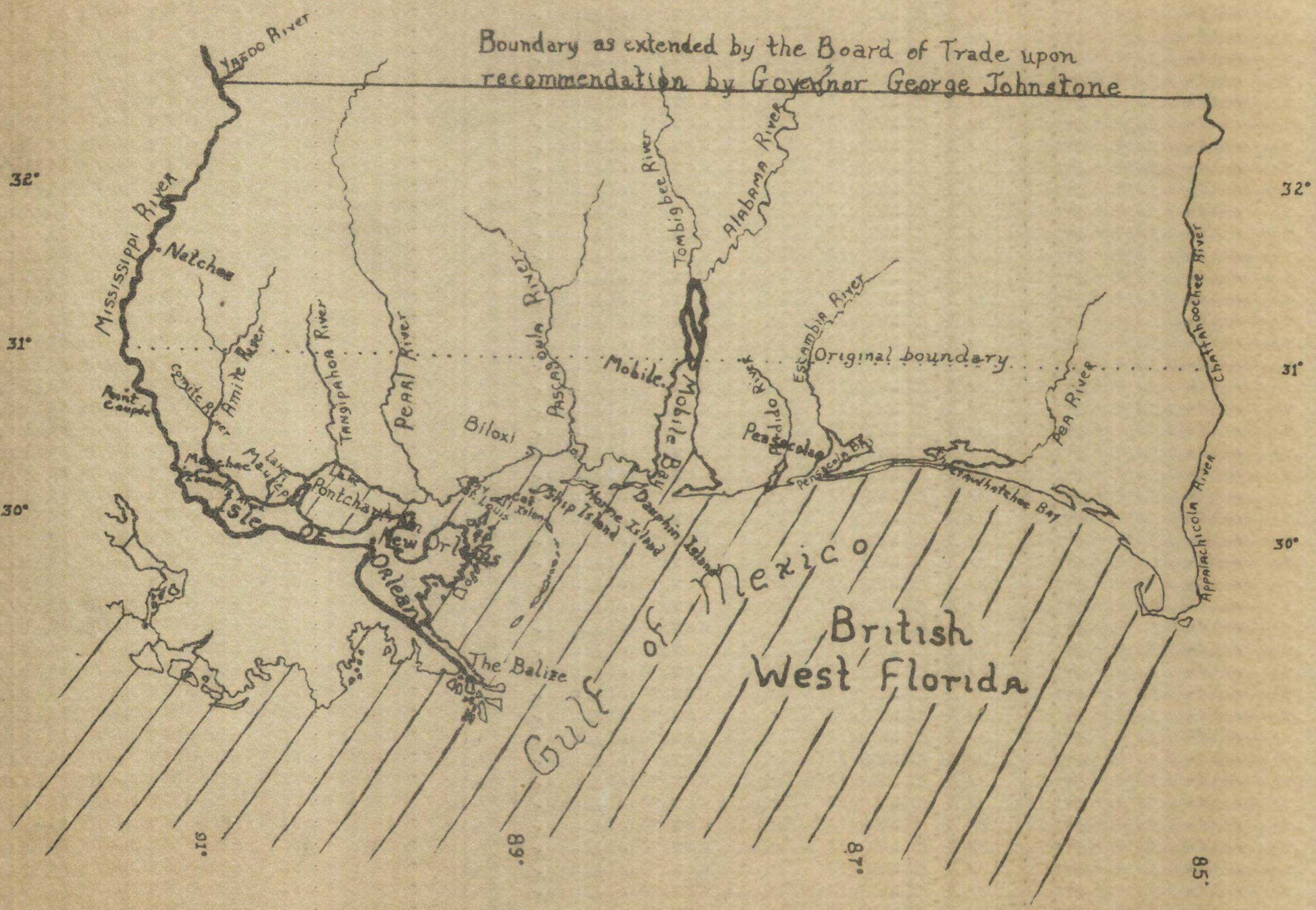
not without much Reason their fertility is much boasted of. But as they are of Short Course and never yet Examined, I shall for the present say no more of them. Next as to its Natural Produce it Abounds in Useful Plants Among which I think the Indigo deserves the first Rank, this we find in a very great Abundance and such as it is known to be an excellent Sort. Next the great Variety of Wild Pulse for feeding Cattle of all kinds, in Timber no Country on Earth Can Surpass it, either in Quantity, Quality, or Variety, the Quantity is such as makes it Absolutely impossible to Describe, Among these sorts of Timber, the Elm, Ash, Maple, About Twenty Sorts of Oak, and many Species of Pine, etc. are in Common to Other Countries. But the Live Oak, Juniper, Cedar and Yellow Pine, are not to be Equalled anywhere and are a Vast and Inexhaustible Mine, for the Building of those so Necessary Vehicles to Great Britain . . . . Next we Consider the Medicinal Plants, we find here there are Many, not to Speak of the Numbers of Antiscorbutiks, we find here Spontaneously everywhere whose Nature is so well known to the Seamen after long Voyages, and of whom I shall only Mention the Principals, Such are the Crambe, Checorium portulacca, a Species of Esculent Amaranthus, and many kinds of Allium, Sisymbrium, and Cacalia, I must not forbear the Mention of the Tallap of which Root I Claim the first finding in any Settlement, Belonging to Great Britain, or any other Power Except Spain, and of which there is here a Plentiful

supply for to begin its Cultivation, was it Encouraged, the Specansanha is here also in Abundance, besides the Pistacia Therebinthus, the Styrax Officinale, Convolvulus Scammonia, Smilax China, Smilax Sarsaparilla, Peenia Granetum, Memordica Elateria, and Innumerable Others Used by the Savages and to us almost Utterly Unknown. Next let us proceed to the produce of its Waters, and for this the sea is Certainly first in Rank, it Abounds here in fish of all kinds, that are Usually found in those Latitudes, Principally the Jacob Evers, or Jew Fish, the Tarpom, the Mangrove Snapper, Spanish Mackerel, Grunts Black and Red Drum, this Last Miscalled in this Country the Carp, the Sheep Head, the Hog fish, the Croaker, the Glen fish, not unlike the Trout in Europe, and of the same Outward Appearance and so Called here, Rays and Species of Turbot, Cavallos, Dolphins, Eels, among which the Murena, A Species of Albula and Mullet, besides prawns and Many others too Tedious to Mention, and those in very great Abundance. The Rivers have in Common with those of Europe the Sturgeon, the Eel, the Pike, the Chab or Chevin, here Miscalled a Trout, this last of a much finer Flavour than in England, and so is the Sturgeon, But the Pike is Inferior, those peculiar to America are three Species of the Bream, One of which is here Called Perch, the Striped Rock, and a kind of Fish that is very Excellent and on which there is not a Name yet fixed it is Seemingly peculiar to this Province, and in it to the Western Rivers;

I have Seen but One it is Silver Coloured with a Black Back, flat and Broad, but as I saw but one I must forbear a Proper Description . . . . The Savages are not so Well Provided with Bread as the Spaniards who bring some with them but both are Supplied with that Article in a very great Measure by the Cabbage Tree, but more by a Species of Convolvulus known by the Name of Wild Potatoe, and found in the Cane Branches, as well as by Several Species of Smilax China, the Root of which they pound into a flower, or more porperly in an Impalpable Powder, and of this they make a kind of Bread which tho' Insipid is yet very Nourishing, Likewise in Years when the Canes produce their Seed which indeed is not frequent, they Supply them with an Excellent Grain, and the first shoots of Cane are far from being a Despicable Food, they also have a Species of Coreopsis of which they make a Sort of Sweet Bread, tho' in no great Quantity . . . . The Woods supply them with such Amazing Abundance of very Excellent Honey that after eating it in Surprizing Quantities they Carry with them at going away many Skins full for to Sell, this Honey is so very good that a Gentleman who was with me one Winter declared it Surpassed the Mediteranean Honey, and had two Bottles full Carefully put up, and reserved for Lord Moyro, who he said was a good Connoisseur in that Article, how his present was Approved of or whether it was really sent or received, I never heard. Now let me speak of another article which I think might be made of Consequence

to Pensacola how Conveniently are they not placed to repair to the resort of Indians, and with Smaller Vessells Supply those Savages with flower, Rice, Blankets, and a reasonable Quantity of their beloved Rum, which at those Seasons they are not much given to make an ill use of, and many Others of the Heavy Articles which by the present Manner of Trading Cannot be but Sparingly brought to them perhaps three hundred Miles by Land upon horses Consequently they must pay a very Incredible price for them and everyone who is in the least Acquainted with the Indians, knows that they will part with their most Valuable things for a Supply of said Articles. Now how much Cheaper might this be done in Small Vessells from Pensacola than on Horses from Carolina and Georgia, Also would not this be a Means to make the Trade of the Lower Creeks Center in West Florida, as well as that of the Upper Creeks, and Chactaws, this however has not been tryed, therefore it may be Liable to be thought a Visionary Scheme, but I will take upon me to say that at some not very remote period it will take place; I beg leave Also to Mention that to all Appearance this part of the Indian Trade might be so regulated As to make it be Carried on with less Danger of a Breach of Peace with those People, which whenever it happens is so dreadfull to our remote Settlements and Causes such an Unusual and Severe Service to our Brave Troops, as Surpasses Description, and in which Simple Death is the Smallest

Misfortune, that Can befall them, for it is Certain that all the Troubles we have with the Indians take their rise in the Behavior of the Vile Race who now Carry on that Business, and whose Manners, Discourse, and Way of Life, is such that a relation of it in the most favourable Manner could not fail to Shock humanity . . . .

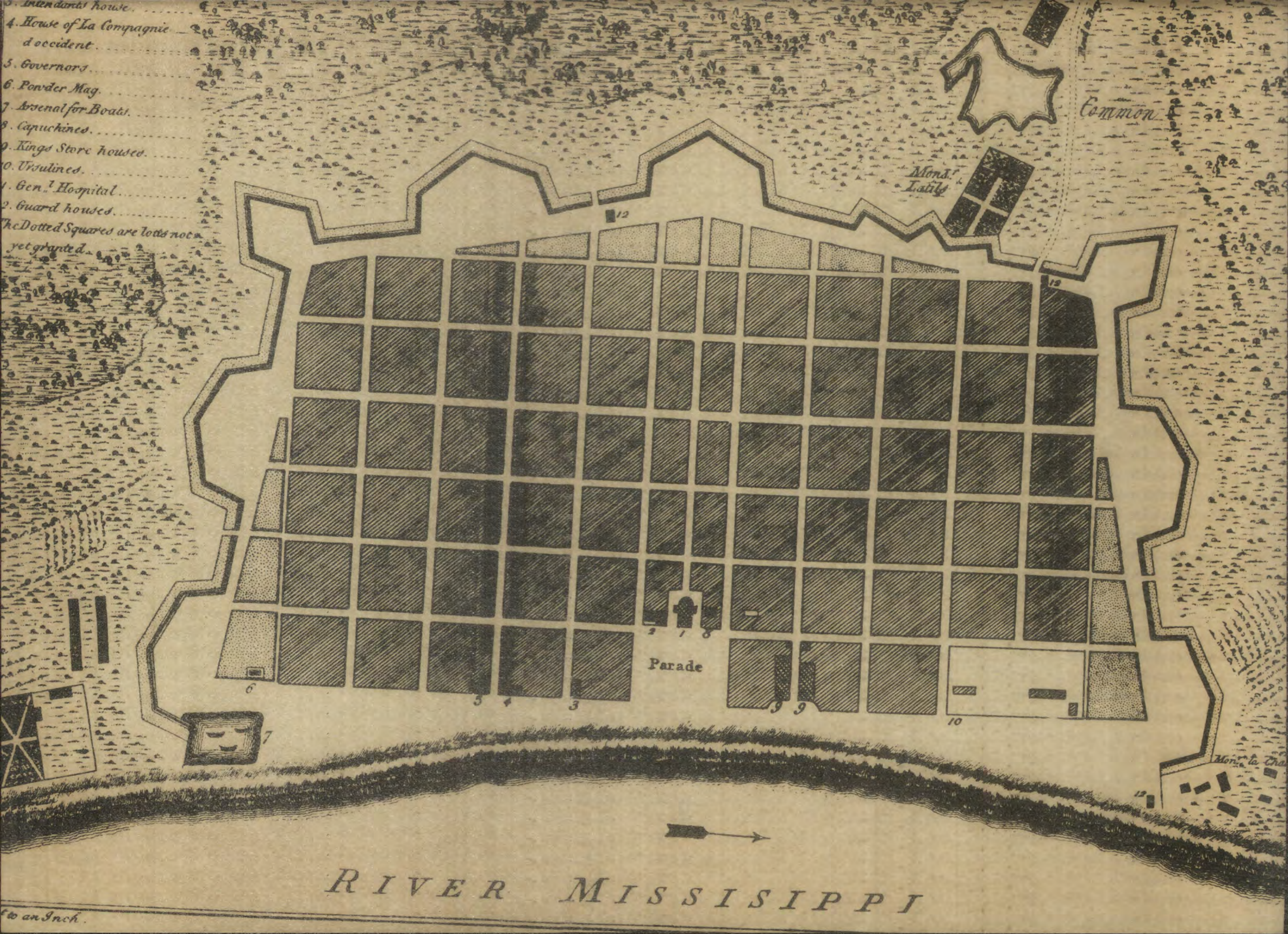

Boundary as extended by the Board of Trade upon recommendation by Governor George Johnstone
Yazoo River
Mississippi River
Natchez
Amite River
Comite River
Point Coupee
Manchac
Lake Maurepas
Lake Pontchartrain
Tangipahoa River
Pearl River
Biloxi
Pascagoula River
Mobile
Tombigbee River
Alabama River
Mobile Bay
Dauphin Island
Mobile Island
Ship Island
Cat Island
St. Louis
New Orleans
Isle Orleans
The Balize
Pensacola
Pensacola Bay
Escambia River
Original boundary
Choctahatchee Bay
Pea River
Chattahoochee River
Appalachicola River
Gulf of Mexico
British West Florida
32°
31°
30°
91°
89°
87°
85°

A Plan of Mobile

A. Fort Charlotte
B. Governor's House
C. Barracks
D. Bake House
E. Indian House
F. Provision Magazine
G. Hospital

100 200 400 800 1200
Scale

Feet


4. House of La Compagnie d'occident
5. Governors
6. Powder Mag.
7. Arsenal for Boats.
8. Capuchines.
9. Kings Store houses.
10. Ursulines.
12. Guard houses.
The Dotted Squares are lotts not yet granted.
Common
Parade
RIVER MISSISIPPI


DRAUGHT OF THE
R. Ibbeville
Being a short communication from the SEA to the first of the English Settlements on the
MISSISIPPI
Scale french League to 3/4 Inch.
Figures on the Rivers are fathoms on Lake Maurepas, feet
Indian Encampment, some canoes came up as far as this.
Thus far Navigable all the Year
Batrau lay here
Anutamaha
Tagoulasay
Riv. Amit
150 feet across
Osketaholli
Axiapoea
Houmas
70 feet across
Mushake
Riv. Amit
230 feet across
Lake Maurepas
Nitabani
West Channel
N.W. Channel
Tandipas

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