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Pensacola in the British Period: Summary and Significance

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PENSACOLA IN THE BRITISH PERIOD: SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

by CECIL JOHNSON

THE DOCUMENTED story of Pensacola in the British period has already been written by competent historians and much of it has been published in this *Quarterly.* [1] The purpose of this writer is not to do again a job that has already been well done; rather, this is a brief account of British Pensacola with significant aspects of its history while it was the capital of the short-lived and ill-fated English royal province of West Florida; and this with a minimum of documentation and other scholarly impediments to the layman's enjoyment of reading.

West Florida came into existence as a political entity through provisions of the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763. This famous document reveals plans of the British ministry to deal with some of the problems which confronted it at the conclusion

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The most prolific writer on British Pensacola (and West Florida) is C. N. Howard who has published the following articles in the Florida *Historical Quarterly:* "The Military Occupation of British West Florida," XVII (1938-39), 181-197; "Governor Johnstone in West Florida," *ibid.*, pp. 281-303; "Colonial Pensacola: The British Period," XIX (1940-1941), 109-127, 246-269, 368-398. In the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly,* he has published, "The Interval of Military Government & West Florida." XXI (1938), 18-30: and in the *Journal of Southern History,* "Some Economic Aspects of British West Florida, 1763-1768," VI 1940, 201-221. Finally there is his valuable monograph, *The British Development of West Florida,* 1763-1769 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947).

Additional articles in the *Florida Historical Quarterly* are W. H. Siebert, "The Spaniards Evacuate Pensacola in 1763," XI (1932-33), 48-57; and George C. Osborn, "Major-General John Campbell in West Florida," XXVII (1948-49), 311-339. In the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* are found two articles by Clarence Edwin Carter: "Some Aspects of British Administration in West Florida," I (1914-15), 364-375, and "The Beginnings of British West Florida," IV (1917-18), 314-341. John W. Caughey, *Bernado de Galvez in Louisiana,* (Berkeley, 1934), is a full length biography of the conquerer of West Florida; it contains a good account of the siege of Pensacola based largely on Spanish documents. Another book of an earlier vintage deserves mention: Richard L. Campbell, *Historical Sketches of Colonial Florida* (Cleveland, 1892), devotes considerable attention to Pensacola and gives many interesting touches. There are other valuable books and articles relating to West Florida, too numerous to mention here. The volume mentioned below has a bibliography that was reasonably complete at the time of publication. In preparing this article the writer has leaned heavily - sentences, paragraphs, pages - on his *British West Florida,* 1763-1783 (New Haven, 1943).

of the French and Indian War and the diplomatic negotiations which followed. Among these problems were, the need for quieting the Indians and reassuring them in regard to their lands, demands of colonists for new areas of settlement, and the administration and defense of the imperial domain which had been so recently wrested from France and Spain.

West Florida was only one of four colonies created by the proclamation. It included territory which had formerly belonged to Spanish Florida and to French Louisiana and some which Georgia might have claimed under the Charter of 1732. It was composed of the southern halves of the present states of Alabama and Mississippi, the southeastern fraction of Louisiana, and the northwestern portion of Florida. Its boundaries were: the Gulf of Mexico on the south, Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas, the Iberville River and the Mississippi River to the thirty-first parallel of north latitude on the west; this parallel on the north; and the Chattahoochee and Apalachicola rivers on the east. The northern boundary was subsequently raised to a line drawn due east from the confluence of the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers, or approximately to thirty-two degrees and twenty-eight minutes, north latitude. The province was roughly rectangular in shape, Spanish Pensacola and French Mobile were the only settlements of any significance, though Biloxi had in an earlier period been of some importance.

The government of West Florida was prescribed in a general way by the Proclamation of 1763, and in great detail by the royal commission and instructions issued each civil governor. This proclamation with the commission and instructions has been aptly characterized by one writer as the constitution of West Florida. Here it is sufficient to say that the government, generally speaking, was that of the usual royal or crown colony with an executive composed of a governor, lieutenant governor, and council appointed from England; a bicameral legislature of which the council was the upper house and an elected assembly, the lower; and a judiciary headed by a royally appointed chief justice which borrowed its characteristic parts and procedures from the mother country. In one respect, however, West Florida differed from the usual royal colony: the civil establishment was supported by an annual appropriation from Parliament. This grant, made necessary by the frontier character of the

colony and its sparse population, made the governor independent of the legislature but did not prevent the quarrels between the executive and the assembly which so frequently occurred in the English colonies.

This then was the colony of British West Florida of which Pensacola was to serve as capital.

The story of the Spanish evacuation of Pensacola is told in the correspondence between its governor, Don Diego Ortiz Parrilla, and his superior, Lieutenant General Count De Ricla, commandant in Cuba. [2] The entire population of Pensacola at this time was less than eight hundred souls including three small detachments of soldiers and their dependents, more than a hundred convicts, a similar number of Catholic Indians, a small group of officials and their families, and slightly more than a hundred citizens or civilians, only seventeen of whom were listed as adult males. In the late summer and early fall of 1763, this entire group, with the exception of Don Carlos Ricardos who remained to look after the cargo of a vessel which had gone aground, was transported at government expense presumably to Veracruz or Havana. Most of their real property had been disposed of to British subjects.

Meanwhile the British military occupation of Pensacola had taken place. Under orders from Major General William Keppel at Havana, Lieutenant Colonel Augustin Prevost arrived at Pensacola on August 6 with the third battalion of the Royal American Regiment. Governor Parrilla, acting on orders already received from Count De Ricla, immediately surrendered the post to Prevost and pushed plans for the evacuation and departure of his garrison, an operation which was delayed by lack of transports and the necessity of loading numerous stores.

The accounts which British officers gave of Pensacola were far from flattering. The town consisted of about one hundred huts. According to Prevost, "The country from the insufferable laziness of the Spaniards remains still uncultivated, the woods are close to the village, and a few hawltry [paltry] gardens show the only improvements. The climate is not healthy, the soil around the village though sandy is able to produce vegetables; further back the country is good and capable of improvement -

2. Siebert, "The Spanish Evacuate Pensacola in 1763."

but years and a number of industrious settlers can only make a change on the face of the colony. Stock they have none, being entirely supplied from Mobile. . . . Game is extremely plenty in the woods and the sea supplies quantities of fish of different sorts and kinds." Major William Forbes, who arrived with the 35th Regiment on November 30, commented on the dilapidation of the fort, the inadequacy of the barracks composed of "bark huts without any sort of fire places or windows, void of every necessary utensil." Both officers spoke feelingly of the unpleasant necessity of supplying visiting Indians with food and presents.

A modern writer has thus pictured Pensacola and its harbor at the beginning of the British period:

> Pensacola in 1763 was a small village consisting of about one hundred huts encircled by a stockade. It was situated on the northern shore of a very large harbor approximately ten miles from the sea. The entrance of the harbor was somewhat difficult of navigation for inexperienced pilots because the long island of Santa Rosa formed a breakwater across the mouth of the harbor scarcely four fathoms deep, at the extreme western end. This channel twisted like the bend of the letter S. Bayous and lagoons with sand-barred mouths lay on either side of the bay. Upon the point of Santa Rosa on the eastern shore of the harbor's entrance was a small square stockaded fort with two guns in it, which the Spaniards had maintained rather as a signal than as an actual defense. [3]

The military administration was brought to an end in the fall of 1764 by Governor George Johnstone who arrived in Pensacola on October 21. This first civil governor of West Florida was a Scotchman. Though less than thirty-five years of age, he had already acquired a reputation for vigor and gallantry through service in the Royal Navy in which he had attained the rank of post captain by 1762. However, various duels and brawls in which he had been involved gave him a name for contentiousness and controversy which must have been considerably enlarged as a result of his actions in West Florida. On his return to England after his recall in 1767, he served for many years in Parliament where he was regarded as something of an authority on American affairs. In 1778 he was a member of

3. Howard, "The Military Occupation of British West Florida."

the Carlisle Commission in its fruitless efforts to conciliate the colonies. In characteristic fashion he became involved in a controversy which caused the Continental Congress to adopt a caustic declaration refusing to deal further with him. Such was the man who would institute civil government in the new British colony.

Johnstone set about his duties with energy and dispatch. He took the numerous required oaths at the first meeting of his council on November 24, and administered the required oaths to the councilors. He commissioned a number of local civil officers either on his own authority as governor or by virtue of warrants from England under the sign manual and signet.

He issued a blanket commission appointing all members of the council, and nineteen other residents justices of the peace. These officers were empowered to bind persons over by imprisonment or bond to keep the peace. Two of them acting together, one of whom must belong to a select group known as the "quorum," might try offenses against the laws of England and the province; but when the life of a man was involved, the case was to be referred to a higher tribunal. A short time later a commission was issued establishing a general court of pleas to meet quarterly in Pensacola with procedure modeled after that of English courts. A vice-admiralty court was set up to deal with maritime cases.

The question of land in Pensacola presented a problem. The Spaniards on departing had sold their holdings to several Britishers described as speculators. The governor and council refused to recognize the titles thus obtained though some consideration was given to these claims. Elias Durnford, provincial surveyor, was directed to draw up a plan for the town of Pensacola. He subsequently brought in a diagram which, after reserving certain sections for official purposes, divided the remainder of the land into lots eighty by one hundred and sixty feet, to each of which was attached a garden lot bordering on the rivulet which flowed by the north side of the town. [4] The council prescribed the conditions under which the lots should be granted. An annual quit-rent of six English pence was levied on each town lot. Each grantee must enclose his plot with a five-foot fence within eigh-

4. A poor copy of Durnford's plan is reproduced in Peter J. Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile,* (rev. ed., Boston and New York, 1910).

teen months and must build within two years a tenantable house, not smaller than fifteen by thirty feet with at least one brick chimney. We will not assume that these conditions were usually met. A council minute gives an interesting suggestion as to the kind of house sometimes erected: "Read a petition from David Dewary praying for said lot No. 31. Granted said petition, he engaging to His Excellency and the Honorable Council to raise a house upon it by tomorrow night."

For the purpose of receiving grants, petitioners were divided into five groups. The first was composed of those who were entitled to preference because of claims of purchase from the Spanish. Fourteen persons in this group were granted a total of twenty-six lots. In the second class were the holders of official positions. To the five in this group, a total of six lots was granted. In the third category were those whom the council thought most able to improve their grants. Fifteen members of this group received nineteen lots. Membership in the fourth and fifth classes was also determined on the basis of ability to improve the land, the most impecunious being placed in the latter class. There were sixty-two grantees and an equal number of lots in the fourth class, and fifty-six grantees and fifty-five lots in the fifth.

Governor Johnstone interested himself in the intriguing activity of persuading the inhabitants of southern Louisiana, who were thought to be unhappy over the prospect of Spanish rule, to immigrate to West Florida. Soon after his arrival in Pensacola, he sent Lieutenant Alexander Maclellan to New Orleans to encourage this project. Though Maclellan sent back an optimistic report, the movement never reached large proportions, probably because of the unexpected mildness of the Spanish administration.

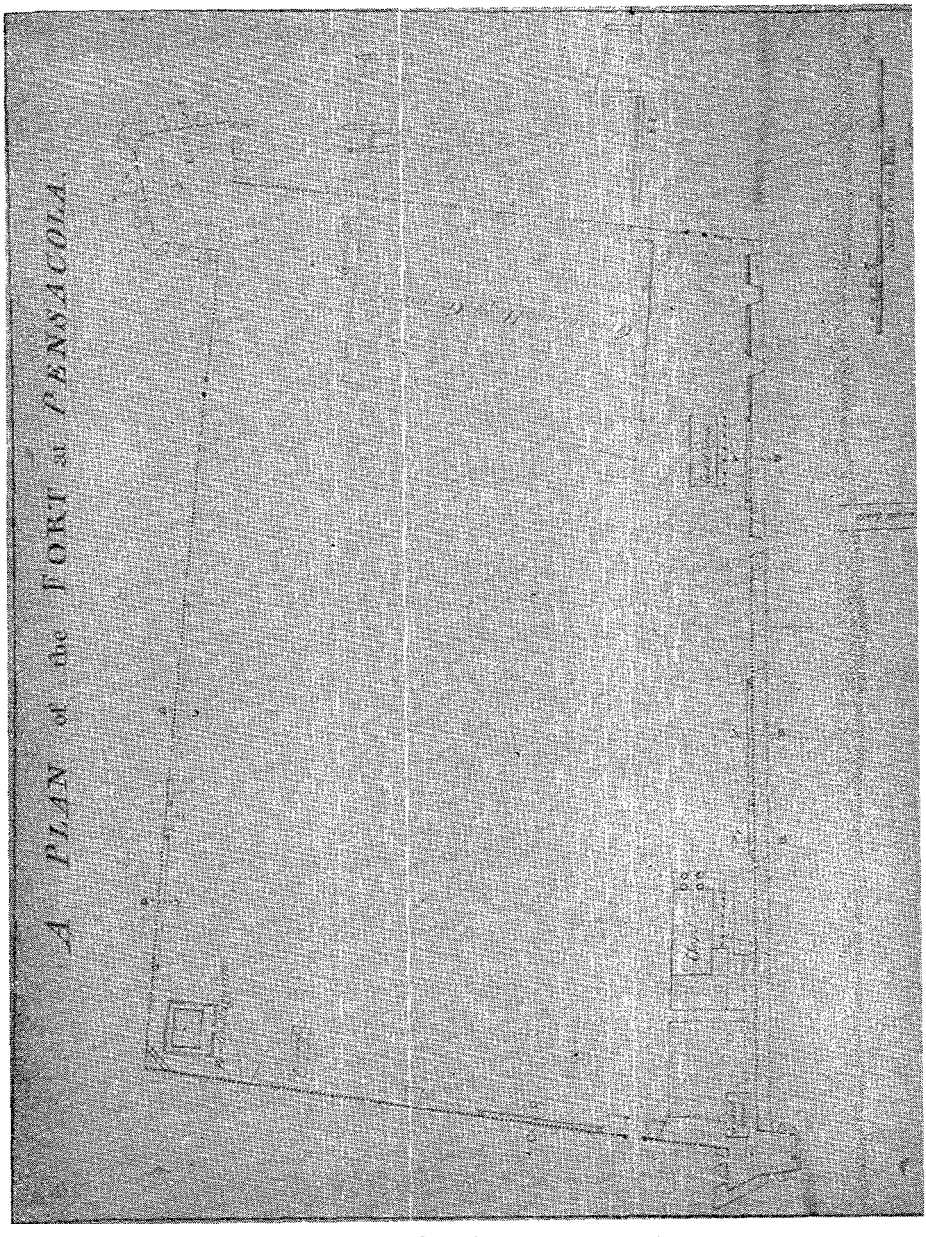
Johnstone's active mind envisaged a waterway from the Gulf of Mexico to the Mississippi by way of the Rigolets, Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas and the Iberville River. Such a route would by-pass New Orleans and be under English control. Though the project was widely discussed and actually attempted, it was doomed to failure by the fact that the Iberville was not a true river but an effluent of the Mississippi with water too shallow for navigation except when the Mississippi was high.

The governor had great responsibilities in regard to the Indians with whom he was to maintain friendly relations, set up trade arrangements, and negotiate for cessions of land for white settlement. In early 1764 he held a formal congress with the Choctaws and Chickasaws at Mobile, and in May and June he held a similar meeting with the Creeks in Pensacola. This tribe, with its Upper and Lower divisions, contained an estimated 3,600 fighting men.

Johnstone was aided in his negotiations by John Stuart, British Indian Superintendent for the southern district of North America, and Sir William Barnaby of the Royal Navy who happened to be in Pensacola at the time. The most influential chief present was The Mortar, on whom the English were anxious to make a good impression. The proceedings were conducted with great formality. The Mortar had requested that the governor and superintendent meet him and his warriors at the gate of the town but they, perhaps not completely convinced of the pacific nature of his intentions, sent word that it was their "constant custom to receive Indians in the council chamber under the great king's picture." The Indians, therefore, came into the town and were greeted by a discharge of great guns. They gave Johnstone and Stuart each a white wing as an emblem of peace and friendship from the whole nation. "Sir William Barnaby, the Governor and Superintendent were saluted with and fanned by eagle's tails."

Notwithstanding these friendly gestures the meeting was not signally successful. The Indians were almost insolent in their demands for presents, they objected to some of the proposals for regulating trade and they were very miserly in the land they agreed to give up. However, a better note was sounded when The Mortar and three other leaders of the Upper Creeks were made Great Medal Chiefs, and three leaders of the Lower Creeks were given Small Medals as evidence of their friendly attitude toward the English. It is well to point out here that Johnstone's relations with the Creeks were not good and his eventual recall came in part because he was alleged to have started unauthorized hostilities with these Indians.

One of the principal endeavors of Johnstone was to tap the lucrative Spanish trade. Pensacola with its fine harbor and proximity to Spanish settlements in Mexico, Central America,



BRITISH. (PRESENT PLAZA)

and the West Indies was very favorably located for distributing to the Spanish, articles of British manufacture and receiving in return silver, gold, and valuable tropical raw materials which would not compete with products of the English colonies.

Such a commerce in British bottoms was legal from the standpoint of the English navigation laws but was illegal under the Spanish laws and consequently extremely hazardous. When the trade was carried on in Spanish ships, though such a practice was contrary to both Spanish and English trade laws, it was less risky for the English; and inasmuch as it was in perfect accord with two cardinal tenets of mercantilism: namely, that of disposing of goods of British manufacture, and that of obtaining desirable raw materials, it was thought that the enforcement of the English laws might be relaxed.

The officers of the navy, however, were not inclined to allow this trade. On several occasions they turned back Spanish ships which were said to be anxious to exchange Spanish dollars for English goods. The scarcity of hard money in the province rendered these actions especially grievous. Though Johnstone put the matter emphatically before the home authorities, he was not able to get a sanction for this commerce and Pensacola never became the emporium that some of the merchants and officials had hoped and expected.

Pensacola, as the seat of government, was the scene for the meeting of the West Florida assembly the first session of which convened, in response to a summons by Governor Johnstone, on November 3, 1766. This body, as already suggested, contained an upper house which was composed of the governor's council and a lower house whose members were chosen by the electors of Pensacola, nearby Campbell Town, and Mobile. Though small in numbers, the lower house regarded itself as a miniature House of Commons; with an elected speaker and carefully worked out rules of order, it had a high sense of its dignity and importance. Johnstone's relations with the assembly were good but some of his successors were to encounter the recalcitrance which was found in many of the colonial legislatures of the period.

Not a little of Johnstone's time and energy were consumed in fruitless and seemingly unnecessary quarrels with officers of the West Florida Military establishment. The frontier conditions of the province with the proximity of the Spanish and Indians

made strong garrisons essential to its welfare and development. The sparsity of population and its concentration in Pensacola and Mobile, the seats of military posts, made inevitable some conflict between the civil and the military unless the governor were a man of tact and diplomacy. These were two qualities in which Johnstone seemed to be entirely lacking. He was bellicose and litigious by nature and determined that not one of the governor's prerogatives, as set forth in the formal phrases of his commission or as construed from a broad interpretation of this document, should be infringed upon.

It may have been that his background as a naval officer was a factor in his controversies with the military. Be that as it may, he quarreled violently with Captain Robert Mackinen, Major Robert Farmar, Captain Andrew Simpson, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Walsh and others over such matters as command of the garrison, the keys of the fort, sentinels at the governor's house and respect due the governor, who should entertain a visiting Indian chief, or on what day the king's birthday should be celebrated. Twice Johnstone summoned military detachments from Mobile to strengthen his hand in Pensacola and on one occasion, amid scenes of great confusion, he himself executed a warrant for the arrest of the commander of the Pensacola garrison.

A sidelight on Johnstone's attitude is given in a biting comment from a letter written by an officer to General Thomas Gage, Commander-in-Chief for North America. Concerning the governor he remarked, "When madmen are sent out, it would be a proper precaution to send keepers and chains with them." The official records contain literally hundreds of documents which relate to these controversies. These unhappy disputes also served to divide the civil population into antagonistic groups and to cause a breach between Johnstone and the chief justice and the attorney general, both of whom the governor suspended from office.

On February 19, 1767, Lord Shelburne, British Secretary of State, wrote Johnstone that the king, dissatisfied with his handling of Indian affairs and with the spirit of disunion which had afflicted West Florida, had ordered his recall. The governor, however, had already left the colony on January 9, on the strength of a six months' leave of absence. The good results which might have come from Johnstone's administration were largely dissipated by the dissensions to which he was a party.

The three and a half year period following the departure of the first civil governor was characterized by confusion and uncertainty for Pensacola and for West Florida. It saw the violent death of a governor, the humiliating recall of a lieutentant governor, a dramatic duel, and a contest between the executive and the legislature.

Lieutenant Governor Montfort Browne, on whom the government now devolved, is an interesting colonial character about whom enough has not been written. Fugitive references reveal a career which included participation in the French and Indian War as a subaltern, speculation in western lands, an administration as governor of the Bahamas after he left West Florida, time spent as a prisoner of war when these islands were taken over by the Americans, and subsequent service in the British Army. Though he had been in West Florida for some time, he had associated himself with the elements opposed to Johnstone. He was not familiar with the routine of administration in the colony when he assumed the government. His position was weakened by the knowledge that his tenure was temporary and would come to an end with the arrival of John Eliot who was appointed governor early in 1767. Despite a brief period of constructive endeavor which included efforts to quiet the Indians and to foster the Spanish trade, and a trip to the western part of the province, he soon Sound himself at odds with Major Robert Farmar, the commander at Mobile, over the possession of land, in a dispute with the assembly over salaries which the members voted themselves, and the subject of a memorial to the home government which charged him with various irregularities including misappropriation of provincial funds. The situation was aggravated by unexpected delay in the arrival of the new governor.

When Eliot finally reached Pensacola, two years after his appointment, he undertook an examination of Browne's accounts. The interruption of this investigation is best described in a letter of Browne to Lord Hillsborough, his superior in England:

"This inquiry continued through several days during which time His Excellency frequently expressed his surprise at the malice and iniquity with which it [the charge against him] was supported, but the intervention of a most unforeseen and melancholy circumstance deprived me of the happy opportunity I had

so long and ardently wished for and [deprived] the world of His Excellency, who on the second of May hanged himself in his study. I had had the honor of dining and spending the preceding day with him when he seemed cheerful and composed and showed me the utmost politeness."

This tragic event threw Pensacola into great confusion. Browne reassumed the government despite some opposition and proceeded to purge the council of his enemies. Elias Durnford, provincial surveyor and member of the council, who was on the point of going to England under authority of a leave of absence, carried an account of the condition of affairs to Hillsborough. Browne says he regarded Durnford as his friend, and sent Hillsborough a letter by him.

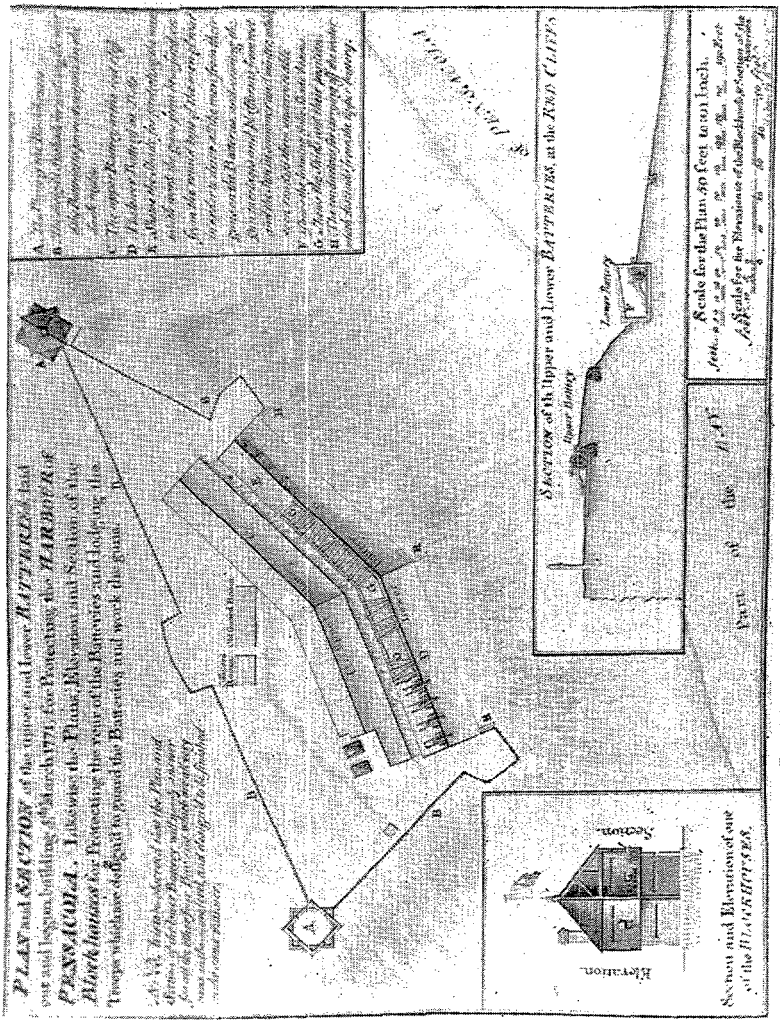
What account Durnford gave of the situation we do not know, but we do know that when he returned to Pensacola he brought with him a commission for himself as lieutenant governor, a recall for Browne and instructions to investigate Browne's conduct. Browne was naturally humiliated over his recall and enraged over what he considered to be the duplicity of his friend. Durnford's investigation resulted in the accusation that Browne had furnished his family and Negroes with supplies which should have been used as Indian presents. Browne on his part charged that Durnford would not allow access to records needed for his defense. Matters came to a crisis with a duel between Browne and one of Durnford's adherents. An eyewitness gave a graphic but laconic account of the affair: "Phillips Comyn maketh oath and sayeth that about seven o'clock this morning Montfort Browne and Evan Jones did go out with firearms as far as Gage Hill, where said Evan Jones cocked his pistol which missed fire, and said Montfort Browne did then fire at said Evan Jones and shot him through the body so that his life is despaired of." [5] Browne surrendered himself to the authorities. He was at first held without bail but was later released on the basis of a somewhat dubious writ of *habeas corpus.* When it was seen that Jones was on the way to recovery, Browne was allowed to embark for England. Pensacola must have been rocked by the exciting events recounted above.

5. I am not sure of the source of this colorful affidavit. It may have come from materials in the Florida State Historical Society collections which the late James Alexander Robertson generously allowed me to use. For an equally vivid account, see *Florida Historical Quarterly,* XIX, 265.

The arrival of Governor Peter Chester in August of 1770 brought to a conclusion the Durnford administration and marked the establishment of a government which was to continue throughout the remainder of the history of the colony. Little is known of Chester before or after his governorship in West Florida. His eleven year regime saw the development of a great interest in the fertile lands in the western part of the colony and something of a shift in interest from Pensacola to the Mississippi; there were even suggestions that the seat of government be moved to the Mississippi or that the western part of the colony be erected into a separate province. Though the agitation against British policies which was found in the Atlantic seaboard colonies during this period was scarcely felt in West Florida, the designation of the colony in 1775 as a refuge for loyalists resulted in the coming in of a great many refugees from the older settlements in the East. Most of these people moved into the area west of Mobile, but they had to come or send to Pensacola for their land grants. The westward development was given a severe jolt by the Willing raid of 1778 which had been authorized by the Commerce Committee of the Continental Congress. This expedition coming down the Ohio from Fort Pitt resulted in much irresponsible plundering along the Mississippi particularly at Natchez and at Manchac. [6] It gave the people of West Florida their first real taste of the Revolution. The second was not long in coming.

Convinced by their victory at Saratoga that the Americans had a good chance to win, France had come into the Revolutionary War on their side in 1778. The close diplomatic relationship which had existed for many decades between France and Spain made it probable that Spain would follow her traditional ally into the struggle. It was not until a year later, however, by the Treaty of Aranjuez, that terms were agreed upon and Spain in alliance with France went to war with England in the hope of regaining Gibraltar and recovering Florida. Even then Spain did not enter into an alliance with the emerging United States. War between the mother countries would be the signal for hostilities to break out between British Florida and Spanish Louisiana. This contingency had been considered and prepared for by the home and colonial authorities of both countries. The

6. Manchac was a small settlement at the point where the Iberville flowed out of the Mississippi.



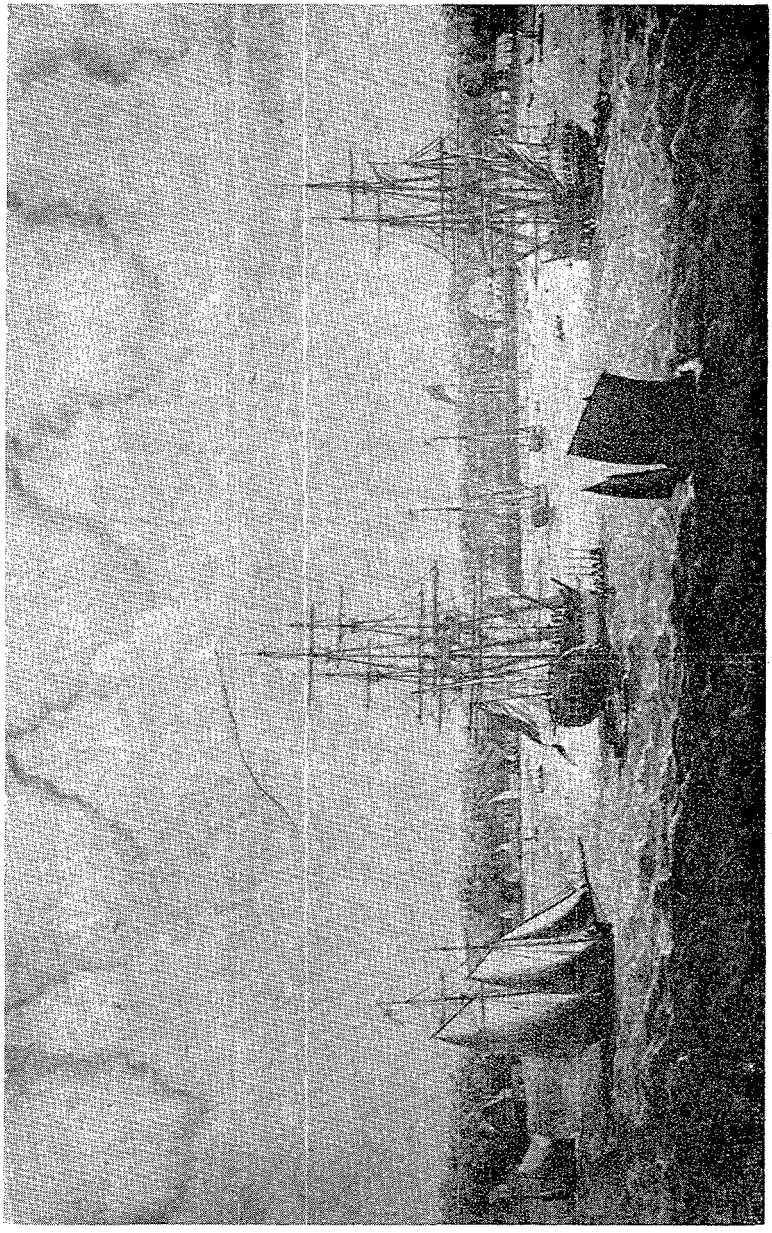
BRITISH FORTIFICATIONS AT BARRANCAS

news of the outbreak of war, however, reached the dynamic, able, young governor of Louisiana, Bernardo Galvez, before it reached the British authorities in West Florida and Galvez was in a position to exploit it. Almost immediately Galvez' forces took possession of the English settlements along the Mississippi and compelled the surrender of military detachments which had recently been sent to Natchez and Manchac. The following

year, 1780, he laid siege to and captured Mobile. Then he turned his eyes toward Pensacola.

Meanwhile preparations were being made for the defense of the West Florida capital. After the Willing raid Chester summoned the assembly in what unhappily proved to be an abortive session because of a wrangle which developed over the question of representation for Mobile; he authorized the raising of a provincial troop of twenty-five officers and 250 men; he appealed to General Dalling, governor of Jamaica, and Admiral Sir Peter Parker of the Jamaica naval station for aid. The British government, impressed by the defenseless condition of the province and the imminence of war with Spain, began large scale defense activities. By the latter part of 1778 Brigadier General John Campbell was on his way from New York to Pensacola with a force of about 1,200 men including 475 Pennsylvania and Maryland Loyalists and 750 German mercenaries from the principality of Waldeck. After touching at Jamaica, he reached Pensacola on January 17, 1779. He had orders to establish a military hold on the Mississippi and to put the province in an effective posture of defense. These orders he was attempting under great difficulties to execute when the rupture between England and Spain occurred with results which have already been recounted.

After his success at Mobile, "Galvez prepared to capture Pensacola and complete the conquest of the province by using Mobile as a base and obtaining aid from Havana. The English prepared for a final stand; friendly Indians were summoned to Pensacola; naval and military reenforcements were sent from Jamaica. Spanish authorities at Havana made at least two gestures toward an attack on Pensacola but were deterred by timidity and by reports of British ships of war in the vicinity. In August Galvez himself went to Havana and after numerous *junta de guerra* a formidable expedition sailed on October 16 for the West Florida capital. But Pensacola was saved for the time being by a hurricane which scattered the fleet and necessitated the temporary abandonment of the project. In January, 1781, Campbell sent a force overland to make a counter-attack on Mobile, but the expedition was repulsed with heavy losses. An additional negative effect, from the English point of view, was the fact that this incident served to strengthen Galvez' hand in



BRITISH PENSACOLA (1780) CONTEMPORANEOUS, G. GAULD.

his endeavor to convince the officials at Havana of the necessity of bringing Pensacola under Spanish control."

"During the winter of 1780-81 Galvez had reassembled and reorganized his expedition and on the last day of February the small armada set sail from Havana. Ten days later the fleet arrived before the Pensacola harbor and after a brief delay a landing was effected. This maneuver was the more easily accomplished because of the inadequacy of the harbor defenses and the lack of naval protection. Soon reenforcements of 2,300 men arrived from Mobile and New Orleans, and on April 19 a combined Spanish and French squadron with another 2,300 appeared unexpectedly. Galvez now had more than 7,000 men under his command and besieged the town by land and by sea. Campbell had a force of about 2,500, including about a thousand Indians, with which to oppose him. Despite this disparity in numbers the British put up a stubborn resistance and the issue was long in doubt; but the explosion, on May 8, of an English powder magazine, resulted in the surrender of the town and garrison on the following day. It was agreed by the two commanders and Governor Chester that the British soldiers should be transported to some part of North America where the British were still in control and that the ultimate fate of the province should be left to the respective courts." Thus ended the British control of Pensacola a little less than eighteen years after it had been established. [7]

* * *

In conclusion may I offer a few comments which may help to summarize and interpret the history of Pensacola in the British period.

Pensacola was the capital of West Florida which was just as surely a part of the British colonial picture as any one of the so-called "original" thirteen colonies.

As capital, Pensacola was the scene for the transaction of the official business of the colony. Here the assembly met, the governor's council held most of its meetings, the principal courts functioned; and through the office of the provincial secretary in

7. Caughey, *Bernardo de Galvez* contains a full account based on Spanish documents while George C. Osborn "Major-General John Campbell in West Florida," gives the British view. The quoted paragraphs are from my *British West Florida,* 1763-1783. 216-18.

Pensacola all land grants had to pass after they were authorized by the governor and council.

In addition to being the seat of civil government, Pensacola was usually the military headquarters for the southern district of North America and the residence of the brigadier general in command. The literally thousands of letters and documents originating in Pensacola, now preserved in the British Headquarters Papers in the Clements Library at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and in the collections of Colonial Williamsburg, attest to the military importance of the town.

Pensacola was significant in the management of Indian affairs and was the site of important Indian congresses. In addition to the one described, others were held by Durnford and Chester. John Stuart, Indian Superintendent for the southern district, was sometimes in Pensacola and a member of the governor's council.

The conquest of West Florida culminating in the fall of Pensacola is one of the neglected aspects of the Revolution. It may be characterized as a significant example of the importance of Spanish participation and as a part of the general decline in British fortunes which came to a climax with the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown only a few months after the surrender of Campbell at Pensacola.

Finally, the Spanish conquest of Pensacola had important effects on the peace arrangements set up at the end of the Revolution. Had Spain not been in military possession of West Florida, this province, and East Florida, would probably have remained under British sovereignty. It was comparatively easy for the United States in the course of thirty-five years to detach all Florida from third-rate Spain. With the Floridas under British control, the story might well have been different. Indeed, the new republic would have found itself within the jaws of a strong vise, British Canada and British Florida; and in this situation its destiny might not have been quite so manifest.

LET NO ONE SAY, THEREFORE, THAT BRITISH PENSACOLA WAS UNIMPORTANT, AND ITS HISTORY INCONSEQUENTIAL TO THE UNITED STATES.