

Runaways, Renegades, and St. Augustine's Town's People

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"The inhabitants were of all colours, whites, negroes, mulattoes, Indians, &c, at the evacuation of St. Augustine." So wrote English colonist John Bartram in 1765. His observation was not a firsthand account as he visited St. Augustine almost two years after the Spanish had evacuated the capital city and the Florida colony, sailing to Cuba and Mexico. Who was his informant? Perhaps he heard this from one of the first of the British soldiers to arrive whose posting overlapped the evacuation for Spanish residents. Yet narrative reports and records made during the Spanish centuries bear witness to Bartram's comment.¹

I will attempt to describe the some of the peoples of St. Augustine in the late 1600s and first half of the 1700s, .and in the process some of the events that shaped their individual lives as well as the stories of colonies and nations. Thus this will not be a straightforward history, but the events will emerge as perhaps the persons in the town saw them and perhaps as the persons in St. Augustine saw each other or to borrow historian James Grossman's phrase, "synthesizing diverse strands into a narrative" of a long-ago person.² It would seem to us today that the major events to shape the lives of St. Augustine's residents were the attacks by British in 1702 and 1704,. English expeditionary troops from Carolina laid siege to St. Augustine in the fall of 1702, occupied the town for fifty days and burned most of the city as they retreated. En route to St. Augustine, the English troops had attacked Spanish mission villages. Some of the villagers had advance notice of the attacks and were able to run toward St. Augustine for refuge. Two years later the English attacked again, assailing the missions that survived to the west of St. Augustine. The invaders took a number of captives while a few of the refugees from the missions were able to make it to St. Augustine. One group from mission San Luis de Apalache formed a village in the place where the free-black village of Gracia Real Santa Teresa de Mose would later be located.³

In 1740 the British from South Carolina attacked again, this second time joining forces led by British settlers living in the newly established colony of Georgia. This time the invaders were not able to reach or breach the walls of St. Augustine, but did encamp at Fort Mose, two miles north of the city. The British troops set up artillery on the barrier islands and fired upon St. Augustine. While these were indeed major events, the first sixty years of the eighteenth century were decades of raids and of menacing ships waiting off shore, and probably even more pervasive, of the fear of attack.

The attacks were reported by both the Spanish and British colonial officials. Both times the British efforts did not succeed and lengthy investigations followed once the troops returned home. Carolinians and Georgians looked to assign blame and perhaps assess penalties for poorly executed expeditions. Like today, political positioning and the enhancement of the position and wealth of accusers at the expense of the unsuccessful motivated much of the hearings. Three centuries later we know more about the actions of the losers than those who held out against the attacks. Winners seldom need to provide lengthy descriptions or explanations. For example, the investigation of unsuccessful British tactics during the Battle of Bloody Mose in June 1740 far exceeds the length of the letter written by Florida Governor Manuel de Montiano's when reporting the British defeat.⁴

Let me offer some scenarios that I have composed using the many documents that are needed to describe just a small piece of the life of an ordinary person who lived in Spanish Florida and St. Augustine in the late 1600s.and the middle of the 1700s. The short stories of colonial residents based on entries in the records of the St. Augustine parish church—baptisms, marriages and burials; the muster rolls of the soldiers; a couple of maps that identify ownership; petitions to reclaim property by returning evacuees after 1784; and a very few probate records from first Spanish period. And, of course, a few serendipitous, fortunate documents that were found while looking for something else. These sorts of documents are straightforward and succinct. There is little opportunity to describe heroics or treachery in the recording of the baptism of an infant.⁵ While we do not know what these

long-ago personages actually thought or said, the scenarios synthesize their diverse attitudes and their activities into narratives with a strong historical basis.

Gertrudis de Morales

It was the fall of 1684. She stared out across St. Augustine's choppy bay and out to the gray, fierce ocean. There would be no boats leaving the dock today to offload the ship that was forced to remain outside the harbor--too large to navigate the inlet. The equinoctial storm tossed the vessel in all directions. She imagined what it would be like to board a ship and sail away from St. Augustine and to see some other place. She recalled some background landscapes in paintings of saints, but Gertrudis de Morales was more entranced by the faraway places in the background than by the martyrs in the foreground. She often heard the new soldiers in town talking about where they were born and places where they had fought. Some spoke of Africa, others of the Netherlands. Some had been to Panama. Many had been to Mexico and almost all had seen at least Cuba. St. Augustine had been the birthplace of her first husband. Her second husband, to whom she was married only a short while before he died, had been born in Cuba. José Antonio Rodríguez, the new soldier who was flirting with her, came from Sevilla in Spain. She tried to picture the tall Moorish towers and huge churches that he described. She tried to imagine towns near Sevilla with blinding white buildings. She was becoming accustomed to Jose's style of speech. These days there were so many regional versions of Spanish heard on St. Augustine's streets that often Gertrudis could understand only a little of what she was able to overhear.

Sometimes she could eavesdrop on the convicts as they walked the streets. Sentenced to years of hard labor for debts or minor thefts, convicts were relocated away from the venue of their crimes to serve their sentences. They too spoke of tropical places, such as Venezuela or the coast of Mexico. Some of them came from the mountains of Mexico. Slaves owned by the crown talked about many of the same places. Many of the convicts and slaves had arrived to work on building of the new fortress, a project going on now for a dozen years.

Even the Indians who came in from the missions to the west and from the coast to the north had been farther and seen more than she had. And the governor was always talking about where he had been and what he had done. Gertrudis de Morales had never seen land higher than sand dunes and a few bluffs on the barrier islands. She was not quite sure what snow was and could only liken it to frost. Sometimes Gertrudis pouted that the only place she would probably ever see other than St. Augustine was Eternity and there was plenty of talk about the Hereafter in this Catholic town and colony.

In 1684 Florida-born soldiers fretted about uncertain futures. "What if I am discharged because of the governor's order? Will I have to leave Florida to survive?" Lieutenant Francisco Bernal Castillo, a native of St. Augustine, might have worried over these matters, for Florida Governor Juan Marques Cabrera was mustering Florida-born men out the Spanish troops in the colony. This made the women of St. Augustine worry as well. "What if my husband loses his *plaza* with the troops?⁶ What if I am widowed again? If that were to happen and if I'm smart, I will choose one of the new soldiers arriving here from Spain to be my next husband." Gertrudis de Morales might have tumbled these thoughts through her mind.

For a century Florida-born men found employment with the Spanish military. Now Florida residents continued to watch the governor remove local men from the army and cast them into the world of the unemployed. Soldiers from Spain, Mexico and Cuba were arriving to staff the soldiery. One hundred thirty after its founding, St. Augustine's received a renewal of Iberian traditions, dialects and culture with the replacement soldiers arriving for the garrison. The military companies would not again be staffed by those who knew only the Florida colony and who were complexly related by birth and by marriage to each other.

Francisco Jospogue

Up the Atlantic coast from St. Augustine about 60 leagues (150 miles) near the St. Catherine's Island (Georgia), the stormy weather also dampened the face of Francisco Jospogue as he too looked out to the ocean. The same weather system brought gusty winds and dark skies to both Francisco and to Gertrudis. Francisco Jospogue faced the marshes of the estuary and a frightening future. "Will I be alive next summer or will I starve or be killed or captured by English raiders? Should I turn to the English? Would it be better if I stay with the Spanish as my parents chose?" Francisco dreaded the thought of fleeing again. Carolinians had attacked his village on St. Catherine's Island (Santa Catalina) in May 1680. He and his neighbors fled south to the mission village of San José on Sapelo Island (Zápala). Now rumors warned that there would be more assaults by the English who were now joined by their own Indian allies.⁷

How his life had changed in ten years since Bishop Gabriel Díaz Vara Calderón⁸ visited Francisco's village in 1675. The bishop said Mass and confirmed already baptized Christian worshippers. Francisco knew that he would soon have to choose sides, for the Europeans would not allow him to be neutral or to remain outside of their rivalries. For Catholics, like Francisco and his neighbors, the choice also was also a matter of religion. Catholic priests had arrived in his village years before the landing of the Carolinians. The priests had brought Christianity to the villagers and taught some of the villagers to read and write. Francisco shivered at what the price of his choice might be. The English from Carolina enslaved Indians who were enemies and thus could be captured in war. Most of the Indians slaves were shipped to the English sugar islands in the Caribbean, to New England, or to Europe.⁹ While he may have known little of the Africans and their capture and deportation to faraway lands, Francisco never thought until now that he or his loved ones might face similar threats. Remaining loyal to the Spanish would mean that he could be a target for enslavement as an enemy of the English.¹⁰

Gertrudis de Morales, Lt. Castillo and Francisco Jospogue faced changes that were by-products of Spain's response to the settlement by the English in 1670 in the southeast. The changes that unsettled Gertrudis and Lt. Castillo would be the expected and the usual for their children and grandchildren. Gertrudis's grandchildren who lived in Spanish Florida would not recall a time when there was no concern that the English might attack.

Except for the records of her three marriages and details about her in the record of her children in the St. Augustine parish records, there is little information written about Gertrudis. She may have even married a fourth time during a period for which the marriage records are missing. She could probably neither read nor write. Many of the soldiers were as illiterate as Gertrudis. Spanish military historian Juan Marchena Fernández noted that for every one hundred soldiers in Florida, only twelve could sign their names and eight could read. As previously mentioned, church and military records provide the few documentary tiles in the partial mosaic of lives which we can reconstruct today. With his chiefly position, Francisco Jospogue filled a more important in Florida's society. Because of his noble position and education, he left more information. Francisco Jospogue could sign his name. It is likely that the Franciscan friars in his village had taught him to read and write. History is not just written by the victors. The history of these centuries was written by those who could write.

St. Augustine and the colony of Spanish Florida was a cultural mosaic, as Geronima's musing reveal and she feels left out of the new experiences. Francisco Jospogue might have wished for no new experiences that were foisted upon him. Yet their two families would end up living right next to each other, sharing a common property line located on St. George Street at the west end of Fort Alley, from where they could look right at the southwest bastion of the Castillo and the defense wall.

As a city on the ocean and along the Atlantic seaway, St. Augustine's location led naturally to a mixture of people. Sailing ships unloaded cargo and crew made up of sailors both willing and unwilling to be part of the crew. Pirates spent little time in St. Augustine, but fear of their arrival and raiding consumed energy and funds in the Florida capital. Pirates made a major attack on St. Augustine in 1668 and continued to be a threat for the next two decades, but during the 1700s St. Augustine worried less about pirates attacking the town and more about privateers capturing cargo, especially food supplies,

headed for St. Augustine. British privateers captured Spanish ships and St. Augustine felt the blow. But Spanish privateers reciprocated with their own captures. When a Spanish privateer brought his captured prize vessel into St. Augustine, there was excitement about what food and other cargo would be available to the townspeople. For example, in October 1740 Spanish privateers captures a pink off Charleston bound for Hamburg. On board were 9,000 arrobas (more than 200,000 pounds) of rice. Governor. Manuel de Montiano claimed that the rice "ha[d] been the salvation of this city." The residents and troops lived on the rice (no doubt, grinding it into flour) and baked it into *rosclas* (ring-shaped biscuits or cakes).¹¹

All sorts of peoples arrived in St. Augustine as defenders, as laborers on the defenses, and as refugees and runaways. And the port brought in all sorts of persons, yet behavior in St. Augustine was kept structured, stable, and conservative by the military regime and the Roman Catholic Church--both institutions offering hierarchy and stratification. St. Augustine offered a sharp contrast to contemporary British Carolina as noted by Jack Greene in *Pursuits of Happiness*¹².

Gerónima Rodríguez.

In the middle of the 1730s, the families of Gertrudis and Francisco lived next door to each other in St. Augustine. In February 1737 Gerónima, daughter of Gertrudis, was ill and feared that she would live only a short while. She lay sick in the house on the piece of land where she had been born and where her parents had lived. The house was probably new when she was born or built soon after her birth, its predecessor destroyed in the English siege of 1702. Buildings in this area lay within the range of musket fire (750 feet) of the Castillo and were burned by the Spanish themselves to deprive the English troops of cover and a place to shoot at Spanish soldiers on the gundeck of the fortress. Based on what we know of typical siege strategy, the Carolinians might have dug trenches through or very close to her property.¹³ "Who will take care of my children? Juan is only nine year old and Juana just seven. I expect that my husband will marry again and possibly bring his new wife here to live in this house, which will pass to my children just as it passed to me from my own mother." Francisco Navarro, watched his sick wife and pondered the same concerns. He recalled how it was that he had come to St. Augustine 13 years before and soon married Gerónima. Like Gerónima's father (the flirtatious *sevillano*), Francisco Navarro too was a native of southern Spain. He had served aboard ship and been wounded. After Gerónima died, Francisco Navarro did remarry—to a woman who had been widowed three times.

For Gertrudis's family, this lot would be a family home for several generations. For Francisco Jospogue, the lot next door would be his last home after decades of moves to escape captivity or death. Documents suggest that Francisco Jospogue lived in this last residence for about three years, when he was about 70. The child of "noble, Christian Indians," Francisco had become a chief in 1696. (At some pint his name was often shortened to "Jospo".) His alliance and allegiance with the Spanish brought him after 1702 to a sequence of refugee mission villages around the Spanish capital. Villages were reorganized several times, relocated for safety, and combined to create a village large enough to defend itself. In 1728 Francisco requested a pension from the Spanish crown to recognize and reward his years of service. In the petition he gives us a bit of autobiography and recounts his services and sacrifices. "I led my men and taught them to handle firearms and led them into a number of fights. In the early morning of November 1, 1715, enemy pagan Indians (meaning English-allied Indians) descended upon St. Augustine seeking to burn the town. I was one of the first to take up arms to defend the city of Florida. Meanwhile, my family, defenseless while the men were away from the village, were captured. The raiders separated the strong Indians at knifepoint, then gathered up the women and children to conduct them away to be sold as slaves in other lands at a great distance. I and other chiefs banded together to offer food and other things to ransom our captured families. Three times the English offered to return my family in exchange for my allying with the English and abandoning Catholicism. Three times I refused. I believe that my wife and four children were dispersed, and separately they perished in foreign lands. Over the next few years I headed the village of Our Lady of Candelaria . I had 46 adults and 23 children under my care, all heathens, but one. Then I

married again. Agustina Pérez was much younger than I, for I wanted a new family. In my sixties, I became the father of Miguel.”¹⁴

Agustina Pérez was among the evacuees described by John Bartram, but the Spanish records of the departures did not count Agustina as an Indian, for she was a resident of the city of St. Augustine, not of a mission village. Like Agustina, Pedro de Rivera and Maria de la Cruz, neighbors living on the street to the west of her, had also become residents and parishioners of the St. Augustine church. The couple balked and argued when a Franciscan friar included them among the mission Indians, making them wards of the crown. The manpower needs of the military had offered to Pedro de Rivera and to Chief Francisco the path to personal economic improvement and with it the change in status.

Tomás

From the 1680s until the Spanish turned over Florida to the British eighty years later (1763), enslaved blacks ran from the British colony of Carolina to Spanish Florida in hope of freedom. A Spanish royal decree in 1693 had encouraged the runaways by offering the possibility of freedom. Perhaps Tomás talked to himself in this way. "I started life in Africa, was captured by slavers, carried across the ocean and after a few years working in the fields of Barbados, then found myself moved to Carolina. There, everyone knew about the offer made by the Spanish that those who ran to Florida would be freed. Once in Florida I agreed to be baptized and took the new name of Tomás." Many runaways arrived in St. Augustine, were baptized and were given freedom or provided with the possibility of freedom after a period of service. But sometimes, the runaways were returned to men from Carolina, especially when tensions between the British and the Spanish were an issue. "At first things went well for us who succeeded in escaping to Florida. We were paid to work on defense projects. Women worked in the well-to-do households. The runaways married local black slaves and free blacks. But the Spanish governors were more concerned about keeping things peaceful with the British. So it was never certain for a runaway what the course of action would be when he arrived in Florida and St. Augustine." The attitude and actions of the Spanish changed with the international political situation and also with the defensive strength in Florida itself. Spain's King Carlos II "invited" slaves to run from Carolina with the promise of refuge and freedom in Florida, but that was not a consistent policy. Some runaways were returned to the masters who came from Carolina to retrieve them. At other times runaways were sold to Spanish owners and from the sales some monetary compensation was offered to the owners in Carolina. "The governor here is concerned that the British might attack in order to take back us runaways. Another time the crown decided that four years of royal service would have to be completed before we could be freed. And then, I sometimes wonder what the slaves who have been in Florida all along think about the offer of freedom made to those who ran from Carolina, but there is nothing similar for them."¹⁵ The monarchy of Spain offered freedom to black runaways, but not at the expense of the interests of the crown.

In St. Augustine runaways from Carolina established families as they married among themselves. Others married blacks already living in St. Augustine: free men married enslaved women, free women married enslaved men, and all the possible combinations of backgrounds and birth places. The parish records include blacks of the African "nations" of Caravali, Congo, Guinea, Mina, as well as those from Jamaica, Mexico, Brazil, Curaçao, New York and New England.

As I imagined the stories of the people of two centuries ago, the difference of breadth of experiences of places and people for each category of persons became apparent. The white (Spanish) women had the narrowest range of experiences--born in St. Augustine, lived in St. Augustine, died in St. Augustine. Locally born men who were able to remain in St. Augustine probably resembled the local women in the narrow range of experiences. Many local men had to leave Florida to survive and with their departure we lose track of them. The soldiers imported from other parts of the Spanish empire brought with them the traditions of their home areas, but also a wider perspective as they had been stationed around the empire and fought in several venues. Spaniards usually identified themselves with their home region rather than Spain itself--Andalusía, Cataluña, Castilla. A notable number of the soldiers had at some

time fought at Acre near Jerusalem ¹⁶ This was a change from St. Augustine during the town's first century, when few soldiers arrived in the town.

Indians and blacks had seen more places and peoples, but might have been willing to give up variety for security, if that had been the option. Most of the Indians in St. Augustine were natives of the lower southeast--mostly south of Charleston to around St. Augustine and from the west to the Tallahassee area.

Blacks were probably the most widely travelled, continually adapted to survive. Of course, a number of them were natives of St. Augustine and had remained in the area of the city. Both enslaved men and women were natives of Africa and seldom brought directly to St. Augustine. Other blacks had been born throughout the Caribbean and Mexico and relocated to St. Augustine.

We today are interested in cultural diversity and it is in fact the theme of this conference. But in 18th century St. Augustine assimilation, movement into the mainstream economy of the military budget brought a better life for the diverse cultures. Residents of the destroyed town of Mose wanted to remain in St. Augustine in 1740, not return to the village. Remember the Rivera-de la Cruz family who fought against being denominated as Indians, especially a mission villagers? So important was the distinction that Pedro de Rivera gathered witnesses to testify under oath to the fact that he was a resident of St. Augustine.

The many sorts of residents made St. Augustine a cosmopolitan place incongruent with its size and location. The many cultures that lived in St. Augustine in the 18th century enabled the town to survive. Assimilation studies have fallen out of vogue among historians and other researchers. Yet-- while today we celebrate cultural diversity, we cannot impose such a notion or wish back on the residents of St. Augustine two hundred years ago. For them assimilation brought a better life--maybe we should say, enabled to sustain life.

¹ John Bartram

² " James Grossman March 2012, *Perspectives on History* 50:3 (March 2012), 7.

³ Hann,, Timucua . See Landers

⁴ Salley, ed., Georgia Assembly, Montiano letter

⁵ Cathedral Parish Records, _____, For examples of muster rolls and similar see Parker, "The Second Century of Settlement____. For a description of the content of the records see Parker, "Second Century,") intro pages.

⁶ A *plaza* was an authorized man-space in the troops.

⁷ Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 146.

⁸ Gannon, *Cross in the Sand*, 61-67. Orig document

⁹ Gallay _____; Lauber, 1913 about Indian slavery.

¹⁰ Eugene Lyon, ed., *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, (New York: Garland Publishing co., 1995), xxiii, 429; Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana*, 65-66.

¹¹ Gov. Manuel Montiano to Guemes y Horcasitas, January 2, 1741, trans. _____, published in *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (1908).

¹² Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

¹³ Charles W. Arnade, *The Siege of St. Augustine in 1702* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1959), 43, 47, 48.

¹⁴ Parker, "Second Century," 58-60.

¹⁵ Based on Jane Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," (SAHS, 1992), 10-12.

¹⁶ See TePaske; Navarro service record