

COLONIZING SCHEMES IN AN INTEGRATED ATLANTIC ECONOMY: LABOR
AND SETTLEMENT IN BRITISH EAST FLORIDA, 1763-1773

by

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ABSTRACT

The colonization of British East Florida in 1763 did not occur in a vacuum. Colonizers formulated different settlement plans based on their experience in the colonies and the Atlantic world in general. The most obvious differentiation was in their choice of labor. Some men chose to base their settlements on slave labor. Others imported white laborers either as indentured servants or tenant farmers. Historians have looked at this differentiation in labor as an important element in the downfall of the colony, but the key question should be: why did each man choose the labor and settlement scheme he did? The answer to this question goes to the nature of the British Empire and the different ideas that developed in the center and peripheral areas of the imperial system. Based on a close analysis of correspondence, official records and petitions, this study examines four different men who were involved in colonizing early East Florida: Colonial governor James Grant, Atlantic merchant Richard Oswald, former member of parliament Denys Rolle, and Scottish physician Andrew Turnbull. Each man dealt with the problems of colonization in different ways. This study is about how each man dealt with the many different influences regarding colonization and labor.

Dedicated to my wife who moved away from her family to be with me, and without whom this would never have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

This story of British East Florida is one of competing interests. Its colonists had to deal with the British Government in London at a time when the Empire was at its peak, but also seeking to recover the costs of a decade long war. Colonists in East Florida were also influenced by colonial centers of power. By the 1760's South Carolina had become the center of economy, culture, and politics in the colonial South. The settlement plans in East Florida reflected the influence of these two areas. Most men planned to create slave-based plantations. But a few others relied instead primarily on white immigrants either as tenant farmers or indentured servants. There were in fact different plans based on varying combinations of white European servants, tenants, and African slaves. Each man who sought to create a plantation in East Florida incorporated these different immigrants in different ways for different means. In some ways they are very similar, but they are also very different.

This study examines the key individuals involved in the development of British East Florida from 1763 to 1773: James Grant, the first civil governor; Richard Oswald, one of the largest land owners and an experienced businessman; Andrew Turnbull, Scottish physician and architect of the largest importation of white settlers to the colony; and Denys Rolle, member of the British gentry, and organizer of one of the two actual settlements of white Protestants that were attempted in the colony. Both Grant and Oswald are representative of the majority of colonizers who focused on slave labor and staple crop producing plantations. Rolle and Turnbull represent a particular faction that existed in England, but was less numerous in the colonies. That faction, including English

pamphleteers Dr. William Stork and Archibald Menzies, advocated settlements based on the labor of white Protestants in the production of luxury goods. Rolle and Turnbull were in fact the only two men to attempt plantations based on primarily white labor. For this project they were chosen because of their prominence in the historical literature of East Florida and the interesting comparisons they provide with Grant and Oswald.

The point of this study is to examine the four men and their colonizing schemes in comparison, something that has yet to be done in East Florida historiography. When taken together, the actions of these individuals demonstrate the complex nature of colonial settlement in the mid-eighteenth century British colonies. Historical figures never act in a vacuum. They are influenced by a variety of factors. Through a comprehensive examination of correspondence between and involving these individuals, this work seeks to shed light on the complex factors that combined to influence the four men and their colonization efforts. Of primary importance here is the period from 1763 to 1773, the governorship of James Grant and the period during which most of East Florida's land grants were issued and developed.

The British Empire at the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 was at its peak of power and control in the Atlantic world. It had established its dominance at sea and acquired territory throughout the world. In North America alone England gained the territory of Florida and Nova Scotia. The territory previously known as Spanish Florida was divided into two separately controlled colonies: East Florida and West Florida. West Florida comprised all of the territory that is known today as the panhandle of Florida

along with the entire gulf coast up to the Mississippi River, with its capital at Pensacola. The rest of the territory became East Florida, governed from St. Augustine.¹

Soon after its inclusion into the British Empire, the government in London placed restrictions on land grants issued for East Florida. The Board of Trade required each man who applied for land grants in the colony to settle approximately 200 white Protestants on their land or risk losing it altogether. Grants were issued in 20,000-acre plots to prospective planters. Each grantee was forced to settle one white Protestant person per 100-acres, one third of which had to be settled within three years or the grantee was subject to a forfeiture of his grant. Land was also granted in family plots to men who applied directly to the governor of the province and ex-soldiers were given land freely under a different system. Nevertheless, the majority of grants in East Florida were 20,000-acre plantation plots that were subject to the white Protestant clause.² No distinction was made between laborers and settlers in the law. Therefore, colonizers were encouraged to import white Protestants any way they saw fit. These restrictions were not explicitly anti-slavery either. The Board of Trade did not comment on slavery at all in its proscriptions for the colony. But these restrictions, if followed to the letter, would make it financially difficult to run a plantation with slaves since planters would also have to fund white immigrants.³

The Privy Council and Board of Trade in England instituted this clause for several reasons. At the end of the Seven Years War Britain had acquired a vast amount of new

¹ Charles L. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1663-1764* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 50-60.

² Mowat, *East Florida*; Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

³ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 430-435; Mowat, *East Florida*, 50-57.

territory. With the exodus of the Spanish, East Florida was devoid of Europeans. The most important goal for the government was to ensure that these lands remained part of the British Empire. The best way to accomplish this goal was to settle white men who were loyal to England and could constitute a militia if the province ever came under attack.⁴ It served other purposes as well. The government was looking for ways to encourage people to settle in frontier regions other than the western portions of already established colonies, to divert settlement from the regions around the Proclamation Line and to prevent conflict with Indian groups. East Florida, West Florida, and Nova Scotia were seen as good alternatives.⁵ Furthermore, the grant stipulation encouraged settlers from other Protestant countries in Europe. From the British government's perspective these White Europeans provided a taxable base in the new colony and at the same time deprived rival countries of their taxpaying laborers. Perhaps most importantly, settlers from Europe would not drain the labor pool in England that was becoming increasingly important for its growing industrialization.⁶ Furthermore, similar to Georgia, mercantilist ideas were a strong motivation.⁷ Both colonizers and government officials planned to encourage the production of luxury goods not currently produced within the British

⁴ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

⁵ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 430-435.

⁶ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 430-435.

⁷ Kenneth Coleman, "The Founding of Georgia," in Harvey H. Jackson and Phinzy Spalding ed., *Forty Years of Diversity: Essays on Colonial Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 15.

Empire, including wine and silk. White Protestant Europeans were seen as a viable labor force for these conditions in East Florida as they had been in Georgia.⁸

While the government in London sought to influence the settlement of East Florida to satisfy the goals of the Empire, other sources of power had emerged in the North American colonies that influenced the colony. Many historians see South Carolina as the center of economic, social, and cultural life in the southern colonies at this time. Nowhere is this more evident than in the colonization of Georgia. Originally begun by the trustees as a haven for England's destitute population, by the mid-eighteenth century Georgia permitted slaves and shifted crop production to mirror that of South Carolina.⁹ While historians disagree about some of the issues regarding Georgia's shift in labor, they all agree about the influence of South Carolina, both economically and politically. Colonizers in East Florida were dealing with the same issues in 1763.

In order to explain why some men followed the South Carolina example and others more closely followed the ideas of London, this study will rely on the theoretical model of "center and periphery." Jack Greene argues in his works *Peripheries and Center* and *Pursuits of Happiness* that the peripheries of an extended empire gradually developed interests and worldviews different from the center. Cathy Matson argues that in addition to influences coming from the metropolitan center, there were multiple forces that acted on individuals throughout the colonies and these colonial influences grew stronger over

⁸ Mart A. Stewart, "What Nature Suffers to Grow:" *Life, Labor and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 30.

⁹ Stewart, *Nature*; Jackson, *Forty Years*; Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial America, 1619-1776* (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

time.¹⁰ At its base, center and periphery assumes that power and influence are radiated from a geographical, political, cultural, or economic “center” or “metropolis” to a “periphery.” Peripheral areas then take these influences and shape them to fit their own situations. Therefore, peripheral areas are not mirrors of a center. To complicate matters, peripheries also influence decisions in the center to various degrees. The theoretical or geographical distance affects the degree to which one influences the other. Furthermore, as empires grow and societies grow more complex, other “centers” can emerge which exert power over peripheral areas. Therefore, it is possible, and in fact probable, that one peripheral area can be influenced by multiple “centers” at any one time. As with any social model, center and periphery can be drawn out ad infinitum and used to create needlessly complex situations. It should be a given that historical figures in any situation have an infinite number of forces acting on them at any given time. Every historian interprets the evidence at hand. Given the scope of this thesis, two centers of influence will be discussed: South Carolina or Charleston, and England or London. Each of these areas represented specific ideas about colonization and labor that were related but separate from each other and each exerted some measure of influence over the men who settled East Florida.

In East Florida, these different influences manifest themselves most clearly in the ways different men planned on settling the colony. Of the 16 men who obtained a grant

¹⁰ Jack Greene, *Peripheries and Center : Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788, The Richard B. Russell Lectures ; No. 2.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Jack 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); Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

and settled their land before 1776, two of them relied primarily on white indentured servants or tenant farmers as their primary form of labor. The remaining 14 used slaves.¹¹ Even though only 2 men relied on white servants, other proposals were made on the same basis that were never carried out. Both Dr. William Stork and John Savage planned to establish colonies of white servants.¹² This is important because it suggests that there were different ideas about labor that existed in the empire. Of the four men examined here, individuals who were more experienced in the peripheries of the empire used slaves as their primary form of labor on South Carolinian style plantations but integrated white Protestants in a limited way. Men who were less experienced in the North American colonies used primarily white indentured laborers of some kind with limited integration of African slaves. The use of white indentured servants was not uncommon in the colonies even by the mid to late-eighteenth century, but given the experience in Georgia where servants gave way to slaves, it should be considered curious that some men in East Florida chose the same path.

Scholars writing about East Florida's history have focused on several different themes. One of the first and oldest types of study about the province was the comprehensive political survey. Several prominent state historians examined the history of the colony from its inception to what was often portrayed as its inevitable demise. Governor Grant figured prominently in all of these works, followed closely by Dr. Turnbull—perhaps the most interesting character of the period. State historians emphasized political developments, colonial government policy, and the ultimate failure

¹¹ Mowat, *East Florida*, 61.

¹² Mowat, *East Florida*, 60.

of many of East Florida's settlements. Generally, slavery in the colony was for the most part ignored, as was slavery as a whole in the historical literature of the time. Because they were primarily interested in the specific politics of the colony, they did not place it in the context of the British Empire or examine its primary settlers or settlement policies. Overall, these were the first studies of the colony and they explained its political history in great depth. Future study of the colony would have been stunted if not for the wealth of knowledge conveyed through these works.¹³

Other colonial histories take the form of biographies of its major players. These characteristically portray their subjects in a more sympathetic tone and more effectively set their subjects within the context of the empire. In the case of James Grant, his career as an officer in the Seven Years War is detailed along with his various connections throughout the colonies. Since previous historians characterized the colony as a failure, these works tended to portray individual actors as tragic figures doomed to failure. Taken together, the biographies more effectively place East Florida with the context of the Empire, but there is no comparison and very little information on the interactions of these men with each other or the British government prior to their arrival in the colony. While each man's particular motivations are taken into account, imperial laws and contemporary economic factors are not.¹⁴

¹³ William T. Cash, *The Story of Florida* (New York: The American Historical Society, 1938); Mowat, *East Florida*.

¹⁴ Carita Corse, *Dr. Andrew Turnbull and the New Smyrna Colony of Florida* (Florida: Drew Press, 1919); Epaminondes Panagopoulos, *New Smyrna; and Eighteenth Century Greek Odyssey* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966); Paul David Nelson, *General James Grant: Scottish Soldier and Royal Governor of East Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1993).

There are several other types of studies currently available on British East Florida including, cultural studies primarily about Indian groups, studies of slavery, and brief overviews in larger works. Cultural interaction is a main theme for some more recent historians. These works compare British policy in the frontier in order to draw conclusions about the revolution or simply to examine cultural interaction after the Seven Years War. These works compare the policies of and cultural interaction in the Southern Gulf region in the 1760's and 1770's, but they do not examine the events in East Florida primarily. Emphasis is instead on the interactions of disparate groups and how the British government influenced these interactions.¹⁵

Perhaps the most prominent topic in the recent historiography of East Florida is slavery. Originally seen as proof of the failure of white settlement, recent historians examine the use of slavery as an economic benefit to the colony. In addition to this economic explanation, slavery in East Florida is often examined in comparison to slavery in other areas. Spanish policy on slavery kept Florida outside the norm for eastern North America. Florida under Spanish rule allowed blacks much more freedom than their British colonial counterparts. This differentiation influenced the colony up to its acquisition by the United States in the nineteenth century. As is common with works of slavery, these studies tend to focus on economic processes or agency within the system.

¹⁵ Robin F. A. Fabel, *Colonial Challenges: Britons, Native Americans, and Caribs, 1759-1775* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000); Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: the Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

They include little explanation of the developments within the empire, and do not discuss decisions to use slave labor over white labor.¹⁶

Implicit in the arguments made in this thesis is the nature of labor in the colonies. In addition to slavery, indentured servitude and tenancy provided landholders in the British colonies with labor. From the view of the immigrant, indentured servitude provided an economic alternative to those who had trouble finding work in England. As Bailyn and most historians point out, the decision to sign an indenture contract was the result of economic forces in England. Middle class men, women and children often came to the colonies with the hope of better opportunity.¹⁷ In addition, historians debate the very nature of the indenture relationship. Some argue that servants had little power in their decisions. Taking this view assumes that market forces and limited knowledge of colonial labor forced immigrants to make decisions that were not to their benefit.¹⁸ In addition to slaves and indentured servants, Steven Sarson argues that tenancy was increasingly common in the eighteenth century American Colonies even among the slave holding regions of South Carolina. Furthermore, he asserts that landholders forced higher

¹⁶ Larry E. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000); Jane Landers and David R. Colburn, *The African American Heritage of Florida* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Bailyn, *Voyagers*; Christopher Tomlins, "Reconsidering Indentured Servitude: European Migration and the Early American Labor Force, 1600-1775," *Labor History*, 42, 1 (2001), 5-43; James Horn, "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, ed. Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 206-242; Richard S. Dunn "Servants and Slaves: The Recruitment and Employment of Labor," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, ed. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 157-194.

¹⁸ Sharon V. Salinger, "Labor, Markets, and Opportunity: Indentured Servitude in Early America," *Labor History*, 38, 2-3 (1997), 311-338; Dunn, "Servants and Slaves."

rents and circumscribed tenants' economic freedoms.¹⁹ In any case, tenancy existed throughout the colonial era and varied depending on time period and location.²⁰

Colonizers in East Florida made use of each of these types of labor in varying degrees.

East Florida is also mentioned in two more general studies of colonial history that are the only recent ones to adequately set the colony in the context of the empire. These studies portray the colony as an episode of foolish arrogance and uncalculated optimism on the part of most everyone involved. Bernard Bailyn's *Voyagers to the West* examines immigration, and David Hancock's *Citizens of the World* studies the economic integration of the British Atlantic world. Each uses East Florida as a chapter of the larger picture and each demonstrates the shortcomings of the colonizers. However, since so little space is devoted to East Florida alone, a much more comprehensive examination is needed. Because they are broad syntheses, these works rely on the secondary literature already mentioned for large amounts of information. As a result, the tragic episodes or misadventures of the colony are used as examples of miscalculation without any examination of the policies or motives that set them in motion.²¹ Complete examination of East Florida cannot be expected though, given the scope of these works.

In addition to placing East Florida in the context of the empire, the regional economy is central to understanding its colonization schemes. South Carolina and

¹⁹ Steven Sarson, "Landlessness and Tenancy in Early National Prince Georges County, Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 57, 3 (July, 2000), 569-598.

²⁰ Gregory A. Stiverson, *Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Tenancy in Eighteenth Century Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); A. Roger Ekirch, "Poverty, Class, and Dependence in Early America," *The Historical Journal*, 27, 2 (June, 1984), 493-502.

²¹ Bailyn, *Voyagers*; and David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Georgia dominated the regional market, specifically through the production of staple crops like rice and indigo. Each colony was connected economically to London. They provided needed resources to the growing industrialism of the empire. Historian R. C. Nash has examined the nature of this connection in detail. Nash argues that rather than being solely dependant on demand, the crop export in South Carolina was related more closely to changing supply in London and the increasing productive capacity of South Carolina. He seeks to explain why South Carolina developed as it did within the British imperial system.²²

Slavery is another critical factor in explaining the nature of the regional economy. Historians debate why many plantation owners throughout America turned to slavery as the primary method of labor in the seventeenth century? There are several themes historians use to explain the shift. Some see it as a purely economic decision that resulted from the decreasing mortality rates in the colonies and more reliable imports of slaves. This in turn made it more cost effective to purchase a laborer for a lifetime, rather than on a short-term contract. Others argue that the political influence of the planters prompted a retreat from indentured servitude. Planters feared armed conflict with servants who rebelled against the social and economic conditions after completion of their indentures. Furthermore, ex-servants represented competition to planters who were increasingly interested in cementing their own political and economic control. Still other historians emphasize the changing dynamic of racial attitudes and culture that began to see Africans as ideal agricultural laborers. Most of the recent works on slavery tend to integrate all of

²² R. C. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Nov., 1992) 677-702.

these theories.²³ Although this study does not seek to answer any of these complicated questions for East Florida, issues surrounding slavery did affect its colonizers since they faced decisions about whether to use slaves or servants as their main forms of labor.

Finally, the historical literature about Georgia provides insight into both the imperial context and regional economic issues for studying East Florida. Georgia was Britain's most recent colonial effort prior to the establishment of East Florida and its story is comparable in many ways. Georgia was established in 1733 under a board of trustee's that had philanthropy as its main goal, but there were other interests involved as well. The government wanted an outlet for its surplus population manifested most visibly in the poor vagrants and debtors of London. At the same time, South Carolinian planters wanted a buffer zone between their colony and Spanish East Florida. The Trustees tried to fulfill both of these interests while still holding true to their benevolent ideals.²⁴

There are many complicated issues involved in the colonial history of Georgia. For the purposes of this study, two debates are key: the original motives and effects of the benevolent colonization of white immigrants and the transition to slavery. Both issues deserve more attention than can be given here. Recent historians have argued over the nature of the philanthropic efforts of the trustees. While their original intent was to bring over "unfortunates," the trustees were concerned about the industriousness of Britain's

²³ Russell R. Menard, *Migrants, Servants, and Slaves: Unfree Labor in Colonial British America* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate/Variorum, 2001); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Wood, *Origins*; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁴ Jack P. Greene, "Travails of an Infant Colony: The Search for Viability, Coherence, and Identity in Colonial Georgia," in Jackson *Forty Years*.

poor and often avoided debtors and vagrants all together, turning instead to other Europeans. Historians have discussed these efforts, their complex relationship to the goals of London and their application on the ground in Georgia in detail.²⁵

The second key question about Georgia's history relates to its transition to slave labor. Historians like Betty Wood view the transition as a result of a political campaign waged by a pro-slavery faction that was given more stock because of economic and social factors.²⁶ In contrast, Mart A. Stewart, emphasizes the agency of nature in the decisions of the colonists. Stewart contends that the environment did not support early efforts of the colony, aimed at the production of luxury goods. In his model, success came only when production began to emulate low country South Carolina.²⁷ Most historians tend to agree that both factors along with a myriad of different issues including race, social structure and economy combined to influence colonists' decisions.²⁸

The colonization of East Florida did not occur in a vacuum. In this study, the model of center and periphery helps to explain why several very different colonization schemes emerge and the ways in which four key men tried to create profitable plantations within the context of competing interests. The method of settlement in East Florida in part resulted from the integration of the mid-eighteenth century British Empire and all the

²⁵ Milton L. Ready, "Philanthropy and the Origins of Georgia," in Jackson, *Forty Years*; Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia a History* (New York: Charles Scribners Son's, 1976); Wood, *Georgia*; Greene, "Travails of an Infant Colony," in Jackson, *Forty Years*.

²⁶ Wood, *Georgia*.

²⁷ Stewart, *Nature*.

²⁸ Coleman, *Georgia*; Greene, *Travails*; Betty Wood, *The Origins of American Slavery: Freedom and Bondage in the English Colonies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997).

diverse assumptions and goals it engendered. Other historians have viewed these efforts as foolish, or doomed to failure, but this proscription hides an important story about the colony: why did men choose to establish settlements East Florida in the way that they did?

“Colonizing Schemes in an Integrated Atlantic Economy: Labor and Settlement in British East Florida, 1763-1773” will be divided into four chapters. Each chapter will discuss a different individual. These four men dealt with their settlement plans differently and were influenced in different ways by the policies of London and the situation in the colonies. Commonalities and differences emerge in each man’s choice of labor and level of experience. Grant and Oswald were intent on using primarily slaves as a labor force. Their plantations were influenced by the example of South Carolina and their plans reflect a constant dialogue between the interests of London (reflected in the white Protestant clause) and their connections with South Carolina. Rolle and Turnbull put their faith in the industriousness of white indentured laborers and the hope of government reimbursement. These assumptions were based on their experiences within British society and the influence of London. But through their experiences in East Florida and connections with men like Grant, both men integrated slaves into their plans and created plantations resembling South Carolina in some ways.

While it is important to explain what this study is about, it is also important to be clear on what it is not about. This study does not attempt to answer questions about immigration, whether regional or international, nor does it try to fit into the debate on slavery or the nature of indentured servitude. It does not attempt to tell the story of the slaves or the white immigrants. It does however seek to understand why some men chose

primarily slaves and other did not. This presents several problems. Any attempt to try and gauge the motivations of men in the past is exceedingly difficult. Through an examination of their correspondence and their actions, this study puts forth several theories about why these men made the decisions they did. It is impossible to take everything into account. Given their words, comparisons with each other, comparisons with other colonies, and knowledge of the variety of forces that shaped their world, it is possible to make some arguments as to why each man chose the path he did. The explanation posed here is that often competing forces in the colonies and in England influenced these men and their decisions reflect their experience.

CHAPTER 1: JAMES GRANT AND BENEVOLENT GOVERNMENT

Governor James Grant was perhaps the most important player in the early development of East Florida. He was forced to deal directly with the interests of London and the realities on the ground for his colonists. In 1763 when Britain inherited the colony, it had no infrastructure save the city of St. Augustine. The climate was harsh, the soil was sandy, and the Board of Trade instituted a costly stipulation that forced every colonizer to colonize others at their own expense. At the same time the British colonial economy was a vibrant one, expanding in the years after the seven years war. Competition for laborers was greater than ever before. Grant commented in 1767 that South Carolina offered 4 pounds sterling for every white inhabitant who arrived from Europe and settled there.²⁹

It was on this stage that Grant became governor. During his tenure, East Florida was the colony with the most new grants of land of all the new British acquisitions, receiving almost double the land petitions of Nova Scotia.³⁰ Grant was able to convince investors from South Carolina and Georgia to start plantations in the colony, and he presided over one of the largest single importation of white colonists in the colonial period. While some historians would characterize East Florida as an ultimate failure and Grant as misguided, when examined in the context of the British Empire and all the difficulties associated with colonizing East Florida, Grant was perhaps the best man for the job. His assumptions about labor were based on years of experience in South

²⁹ Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 January 1767, MC 63 B5, St. Augustine Historical Research Library (hereafter SAHRL).

³⁰ Mowat, *East Florida*, 60-61.

Carolina. He thought African slaves were the best method of labor in southern plantations and although he was forced to incorporate servants in some capacity, he did so in a calculated way.

As historian Daniel Shafer argues, Grant was the reason slavery was the primary labor of choice for most colonizers in East Florida. Contrary to what other historians argue, Shafer contends the lack of white labor was not a precursor to failure but a calculated measure on the part of Grant who believed Europeans were useless in plantation work.³¹ Grant's colonial experience convinced him that slave labor was most efficient in the plantation economy of the southern colonies. Early in his tenure he promoted his colony to his friends in South Carolina and encouraged them to move to Florida year round. To others like Richard Oswald and Denys Rolle, he cautioned against the primary use of indentured servants. Eventually he established a profitable slave plantation of his own and began to instruct others to do the same. If servants were to be used, Grant thought they should be secondary to slaves and then only "industrious" people should be selected.

Grant demonstrated a keen knowledge of the various interests involved in the settlement of East Florida. He had to support the importation of white Protestants required by the Board of Trade and at the same time encourage planters in South Carolina to invest. Grant devised different ways to develop the colony and fulfill the interests of all involved. He was specific about the types of people he wanted in the labor force. Grant

³¹ Daniel L. Shafer, "'Yellow Silk Ferret Tied Round their Wrists' African Americans in British East Florida, 1763-1784," in Jane Landers and David R. Colburn, *The African American Heritage of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995).

avored slaves but also supported colonization efforts aimed primarily at Europeans. To those planters whom he wished to recruit for settlement, he worked out several options so satisfy the law while still allowing them to use slaves, either by settling large groups of white Protestants surrounded by plantations, and thus satisfying the law for all, or, as he did for Oswald, by cautioning against servants in favor of tenants. In sum, Grants ideas and actions promoted a colony that should have functioned well with both white colonists and black slaves.

Rather than discouraging large-scale European importation like that of Andrew Turnbull, Grant supported it whole-heartedly. Because he was the colonial governor, he had to support all settlements, but in the case of Turnbull, he went further than he had to. He petitioned for money from the Board of Trade on behalf of Dr. Turnbull so that he could keep his Greek colonists fed and he fought to get land and troops to protect the New Bermuda colony, a settlement of poor Bermudians. Of course his reasons behind this were calculated to fit into his role as governor. While he ultimately wanted to establish a functioning slave based society, he was always conscious of the ratio of black slaves to whites. The constant importation of white servants would help to prevent a majority slave colony like that of South Carolina while still employing a labor force that had proven successful in that colony.

South Carolina Planters

It is interesting that Grant was appointed governor given his adversity to the intentions of the Board of Trade. He did not agree with the Board of Trade's

encouragement of white Protestants settlers and he set about creating a slave based economy. The most important piece of his plan was to attract experienced colonial planters. On July 30, 1763 the newly appointed governor of East Florida wrote a letter to the Board of Trade in which he detailed what he saw as the “most reasonable and frugal methods of peopling and settling the new established colonies in America.” Instead of the current bounty encouraging the settlement of white Protestants, Grant suggested that the money be paid to “industrious Adventurers” in the form of “premiums upon the produce of the colony” and if good support was given early on, colonists could be self-sufficient in five years.³² In this way he intended to change the law to keep it from discouraging planters from South Carolina whom Grant knew would rely on slave labor. In his personal correspondence he said, “I should like the Bermudians, and some good substantial Carolina planters much better for our neighbors than English grantees, whose business will go on slowly as soon as the locality is fixed upon.”³³

Throughout his term as governor, South Carolinian planters were Grant’s greatest concern because he viewed them be the most valuable asset to the colony. He prevailed upon his acquaintances in South Carolina to move to East Florida. He believed “they are very credible people” and that they would “live sometimes in Carolina and sometimes here, and will be a great acquisition to the province, even in that way, but still more so if I can prevail upon them to settle here entirely.” He thought they would be more likely to

³² James Grant to John Pavnall Esq., 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

³³ James Grant to Henry Laurens, 21 November 1764, BCM.

move permanently “if their plantations turn out well of which they do not seem to doubt.”³⁴

Grant tried to attract experienced planters in several ways: he advertised the tropical climate and soil and he worked to provide defense. Most common in his first few years as governor were his comments about the quality of the land and the possible crops they could produce. His promotional claims are nothing new in terms of an infant settlement. In 1764 Grant commented that, “the vines grow wild all over the woods here” suggesting that land would be good for the cultivation of wine. Furthermore, because rice was a prospective crop he added, “the river St. Johns seems to be the favorite spot, and the great demand of land will be there.”³⁵ In fact, in almost every letter Grant sent in the first two years of his governorship he promoted the quality of the land especially as it related to staple crops like rice, indigo and cotton.

While many early colonies advertised their climate and soil in a similar way, Grant’s attempts to secure defense for the various settlements was unique in that he recognized two main threats: Indians and slaves. He dealt with the Indian threat first by concluding a treaty in 1765 with the lower Creeks in Florida that promised limited settlement and offered them a variety of gifts.³⁶ Even though he intended large scale agricultural development outside the boundaries of the previous Spanish settlement, he commented, “the Indians feel no inconvenience from settlements made within the boundary line tho’ tis to be hoped those settlements will soon increase as many planters waited with impatience for the conclusion of the treaty, which is more advantageous than

³⁴ James Grant to Lords of Trade, 22 November 1764, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

³⁵ James Grant to Richard Oswald, 20 September 1764, BCM.

³⁶ Mowat, *East Florida*, 21.

any of them expected.”³⁷ Through the treaty, and the gifts Grant provided from the moment of his arrival, the Indians in East Florida never proved a significant of a threat.

The Indian threat, in Grant’s eyes, was closely related to the threats caused by enslaved laborers. Since he envisioned his colony as a large staple-producing plantation, he enticed Carolinians to invest. His experience in South Carolina proved extremely beneficial in this endeavor because he had some idea of what these potential investors would want. Grant commented to well known South Carolina trader Henry Laurens, “I know enough of Indian Wars to avoid them... if you have a mind to become a planter [your] negroes will not be in the way of being molested” because the colony will be settled in townships with “a little stockaded fort in every town.”³⁸ His use of the term “molested” is of particular interest. A key reason many American colonists wanted Britain to occupy East Florida was to prevent slave runaways. Spanish Florida had been a destination for slaves fleeing their masters and many planters feared that constant conflict with Indians would increase the number of slave revolts and runaways.³⁹

Furthermore, there was still the threat of Spanish involvement by offering freedom to slaves or fostering revolts from their territory in nearby Cuba. Grant consistently petitioned Whitehall for additional troop assistance to help solve this problem. He wrote in 1764, “As this country, my lord, is to be settled in Townships of about 20,000 acres each, a small stockaded fort erected in each town... would be a great

³⁷ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 9 December 1765, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

³⁸ James Grant to Henry Laurens, 31 August 1764, BCM.

³⁹ Mowat, *East Florida*, 21-30.

security to the inhabitants.”⁴⁰ On several occasions Grant pushed his plan to increase troop strength and he wrote several times to General Gage the regional commander of British forces to these ends—not to build an army capable of repelling an attack but because “it would make them [planters] ease their own minds.”⁴¹ He believed “with very little support [the colony] would soon flourish for many of the Carolina Planters point at something southward of St. Augustine.”⁴² Certainly this could be a reaction to fears about Indians or the Spanish as well, but given his experience with South Carolinians, his aspirations for the colony, and his successful diplomatic efforts with local Indian tribes, Grant’s efforts to gain increased security were more likely for protection against slave revolts.

Slaves and Immigrants

The most significant bar that kept many Carolina settlers from investing in East Florida was the land grant stipulation. From the beginning of his appointment as governor, Grant made it clear that he did not agree with the rule that required grantees to settle free white laborers on their land, but he was forced to go along with it. Rather than simply ignoring the law and paying lip service to the Board of Trade, Grant developed ways to get around the land policy and to aid planters in establishing their grants. He advised grantees like Oswald to settle people as tenants, rather than to use indenture contracts. But even this was more hassle than Carolina planters were willing to endure.

⁴⁰ James Grant to Lords of Trade, 2 September 1764, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁴¹ James Grant to Lords of Trade, 8 May 1765, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁴² James Grant to Lords of Trade, 1 March 1765, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

Grant took up the burden of solving this problem by promoting large-scale settlements of white Protestants that he hoped would prosper and attract more settlers, thus fulfilling the requirement for all. The best example of Grant's efforts was the new Bermuda settlement. Governor Grant received a proposal from a person mentioned only as "Mr. Savage of Bermuda" to settle two hundred poor Bermudians from "his overcrowded island" in East Florida "at his own expense."⁴³ In a similar manner to the Georgia Trustees, Savage planned to assign family plots and fund the early years of settlement.⁴⁴ The most important part of this scheme to Grant was that "Sir Savages intention is to attend his bounty to a much greater number" than his grant stipulation required.⁴⁵ As a result, he believed "the expense of sending people from Europe may be totally avoided."⁴⁶ Grant's plan was to create a township surrounded by plantations. In this effort it is clear that Grant tried to recruit large numbers of white settlers in an effort to settle the grant stipulations. Whether each plantation owner had white Protestants on his land was less important in his mind than the total number of white Protestants in the colony. The difficult part was attracting free white men not settling them on a particular piece of land.⁴⁷

Grant laid out a plan to aid every new plantation owner in settling his land according to the grant. Rather than incurring the expense of bringing over settlers from Europe, he sought to attract people in Carolina or Bermuda in large numbers, thus

⁴³ James Grant to Board of Trade, 22 November 1764, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁴⁴ James Grant to the Earl of Halifax, 21 August 1766, MC 63 B5, SAHRL; Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) 13.

⁴⁵ James Grant to Richard Oswald, 21 November 1764, BCM.

⁴⁶ James Grant to Richard Oswald, 21 November 1764, BCM.

⁴⁷ James Grant to the Earl of Halifax, 21 August 1766, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

satisfying the spirit of the settlement law without actually forcing each plantation owner to do it on his own. Grant realized that New Bermuda would not include enough white settlers to fulfill the terms of the law, so he proposed “that I may lay my account with getting two or three thousand people by Sir Savage’s means into this province.” He also proposed to aid Oswald specifically in this task. “I shall try at first to comply with the terms of your grant by means of the people of neighboring province[s], and when the proper time comes I shall make a push for some of the French Protestants.”⁴⁸

Grant tried to attract people in different ways. He encouraged large-scale settlements like that of New Symrna and New Bermuda. In 1764 he published an ad in colonial newspapers in which he offered 100 acres to every head of a family and 50 acres for every additional person, white or black, man or woman, who composed the group when the grant was issued. Additional land was given to groups that planned on cultivating their land.⁴⁹ Grant was never able to attract a large number of white settlers to live in his province, although not from lack of effort. His greatest accomplishment to this end was his support for Turnbull. His lack of success in attracting others may explain why he was so supportive of Turnbull. Furthermore, Turnbull brought over people Grant considered to be “industrious” who provided a stark contrast in Grant’s mind to those who were not.

⁴⁸ James Grant to Richard Oswald, 21 November 1764, BCM.

⁴⁹ Ad copied in letter: James Grant to Board of Trade, 22 November 1764, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

White Protestants

From the beginning Grant was convinced that white servants would not fit his vision of East Florida. He believed that people who were convinced to settle because of their financial situation at home or “from the temptation of a little money, are commonly induced to make that choice by their idleness, and want of industry at home, they become rather an encumbrance in the country they are sent to and very seldom answer the trouble and expense of transporting them.” Here he was specifically referring to white indentured servants. Grant suggested recruiting French Protestants but only those “who are not induced to leave their country out of penury and want, but from a desire to live under a free government.”⁵⁰ He thought English grantees knew little of the business of running a plantation in the American South, and to Grant the requirement of white Protestants only made things worse because it led less experienced men to use a form of labor that he did not deem appropriate. He began instructing grantees like Oswald to avoid servants that are not “industrious.”⁵¹

It is clear that he believed the best method for attracting settlers was to create a bounty on certain beneficial goods, primarily cotton and indigo.⁵² This in turn would attract planters, since the government subsidy would lessen their financial risk. Their success would in turn attract more planters and large-scale landowners. White Protestants could be brought over later in the life of the colony after the difficult work of carving out

⁵⁰ James Grant to John Pawnall Esq., 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁵¹ James Grant to John Pawnall Esq., 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁵² James Grant to the Lord of Hillsborough, 20 July 1769, MC63 B4, SAHRL.

new settlements was done. Despite his advice, the law did not change and Grant was forced to endure white settlement, and force planters to settle other men on their land. His experience with one colonist would convince him that his thoughts on white laborers were right. Denys Rolle's settlement on the St. Johns was a half-decade long odyssey that resulted in the collapse of Rolle's "new-world" ambitions and the near collapse of Grant's sanity. Rolle gave the governor constant problems. When he arrived in September 1764 he set out to his assigned plot of land where he promptly changed his mind "without giving any reason for it" and continued up river with his few English servants. Grant commented to the Board of Trade: "During that time the few people he brought out with him have left him. And he is now, as I am informed, at a place called Mt. Pleasant, almost alone."⁵³ Grant made it clear what he believed to be the best method of settlement, and the problems of English grantees personified clearly in Rolle. Servants could not be controlled like slaves. Grant's assumption was that only a completely subservient class of workers would be useful.

Part of Grant's dismay might have been because of his personal feelings toward Rolle. In a response to charges filed by Rolle complaining about the delay in finding a suitable tract of land, Grant said, "Mr. Rolle thinks me his enemy and says so publicly." Grant believed instead that the delay "can only be imputed to Mr. Rolle's suspicious and litigious disposition, for an unhappy jealousy in his temper is the source of all his grievances, which exists no where but his imagination."⁵⁴ This formal letter did not convey the same emotion as one he sent to his friend Henry Laurens where he referred to

⁵³ James Grant to Board of Trade, 11 November 1764, MC 63, B4, SAHRL.

⁵⁴ James Grant to Lord Hillsborough, 13 August 1768, MC 63, B4, SAHRL.

Rolle as, “the most miserable wretch I ever saw.” Grant maintained that Rolle “starves himself, the few people he brought out have left him and I am convinced he never will be the means of settling an acre in this country.”⁵⁵ But more importantly to Grant, “he said he would go to St. John’s which is a great loss to the province, because that part of the country would soon be settled by planters from Carolina, Georgia and the neighboring provinces.”⁵⁶

Grant’s poor opinion of English planters and indentured servants was shaped by his knowledge of the American colonies, most specifically South Carolina. Grant was not surprised when Rolle was forced to leave his estate in East Florida. Despite being difficult to deal with, Rolle brought with him the very worst type of settler in Grant’s mind: English debtors. Grant commented when he arrived, “with six poor naked people, those who were good for anything left him at Charlestown upon their landing, the others have followed their example.”⁵⁷ Rolle attempted a similar settlement in 1767. This time Grant warned him “they will only stay with you as long as they have it in their interest to do so, I told you so when you first came into the province, upon your complaining of what happened at Charlestown.” He went on to caution Rolle, “there is no law in England or in any one colony in America, by which they can be obliged to live or settle upon your estate.”⁵⁸ When Rolle’s settlers left him yet again, Grant commented, “I am sorry to hear your indentured servants behave ill well, but people imported from Britain and Ireland seldom turn out to the advantage of their American masters, I am quite convinced that

⁵⁵ James Grant to Henry Laurens, 21 Novemeber 1764, BCM.

⁵⁶ James Grant to John Pownall, 21 November 1764, BCM.

⁵⁷ James Grant to John Pownall, 21 Novemeber 1764, BCM.

⁵⁸ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 8 July 1765, BCM.

their labor is never worth their food.”⁵⁹ The situation in East Florida made it even harder to control that type of settler because of the vast opportunities available in the colonies. Grant cautioned Rolle about this very issue, “a Man with but a little industry can contrive to make a dollar a day...those settlers brought out of your expense if they are not indented care free people upon their landing” could easily find work as carpenters.⁶⁰ In many cases these men could seek out land of their own, and petition Grant for their own family plots or even find their way into South Carolina where they offered assistance to any new white settlers. For these reasons Grant saw English indentured servants as a bad idea, Rolle proved him correct.

While Grant expected Rolle’s hardships, he saw Dr. Turnbull’s New Smyrna colony as a benefit to East Florida. Turnbull’s undertaking was vast, but given his education and monetary support back in England, Grant hoped he would succeed. Grant was enthusiastic about Turnbull and his Greek settlers, whom he viewed to be much more industrious than the English debtors brought over by Rolle. He first mentions Turnbull in his letters in late 1766. Upon hearing of Turnbull’s arrival to scout out possible grants in the colony, Grant commented that Turnbull “is a great acquisition to the province” and he promised he would do what he could to support the doctor because Grant thought “there is no doubt of his success.”⁶¹ Here Grant offered his political protection and his services in promoting his settlement to possible investors. He even petitioned the Earl of Hillsborough to aid in the New Smyrna settlement politically as well as financially,

⁵⁹ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 31 March 1767, BCM.

⁶⁰ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 8 July 1765, BCM.

⁶¹ James Grant to Isaac Barre, 24 November 1766, BCM.

His plan is extensive and may no doubt be of great public utility both in example and effect—that consideration tis to be hoped will induce your lordship to honor Dr. Turnbull with your protection, which I am convinced will be found necessary in the end, to enable him to carry his schemes into execution, the expense of which far exceeds the doctor’s estimates.⁶²

Even that was not the end of Grant’s support. He drew money from the treasury to support Turnbull in his first years and continued throughout his tenure as governor to gain monetary support for the New Smyrna colony.⁶³ As always he justified these measures to keep the settlement afloat because of its necessity in East Florida, which he makes clear to the Earl of Hillsborough. “I cannot avoid having many serious thoughts about a settlement which is of such consequence to this infant colony.”⁶⁴ Grant believed that Turnbull’s New Smyrna settlement was of such consequence because of its example. If one large group of white Europeans became successful in East Florida, many more would be attracted.

The problems encountered by New Smyrna as Grant saw it, were not a result of its colonists, but of miscalculation on the part of Turnbull. When the colony began to become distressed and Grant looked to Hillsborough for support, he justified the situation as the result of failure “to repair the first fault of exceeding the number of people to be imported.”⁶⁵ Turnbull, it seemed, could not turn anyone down. He eventually imported

⁶² James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 3 January 1769, MC 63, B4, SAHRL.

⁶³ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 1 September 1770, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

⁶⁴ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 1 December 1768, MC 63, B5, SAHRL.

⁶⁵ James Grant to the Earl Of Hillsborough, 1 September 1770, MC 63, B4, SAHRL,

nearly double the number of people for which he originally planned.⁶⁶ Furthermore and in contrast to Rolle's settlement, Grant frequently made light of Turnbull's situation rather than condemning it. He believed that "if supported they will soon be in a comfortable state"⁶⁷ or "the next year my lord everything will be well."⁶⁸

Turnbull's plan was better in the eyes of Grant because he planned to use foreign settlers. While he saw the importation of poor Englishman as foolish, Grant thought industrious foreign workers could be as good as slaves. In 1763 he commented that French Protestants who were not poor or in debt would be best.⁶⁹ The key to the Greek colonists, Grant believed, was that they were "more likely to be permanent than the other white inhabitants who are brought into America, as they will be settled in a body and as they speak a different language from their neighbors they will not be so easily seduced away from their master."⁷⁰ These types of indentured servants could be treated like slaves in Grant's mind. They would not realize the available opportunities in the northern colonies or petition for their English rights if they were injured. Also adding to his settlement's survivability as Grant saw it was Turnbull's use of slaves. When he arrived originally in 1766 to take his grant he purchased several slaves who were "employed in clearing ground and building houses, for the reception of his settlers."⁷¹ In this way the land would not be totally unlivable upon their arrival. As his reactions to Turnbull's

⁶⁶ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, Dundee City Archive, [available online] Floridahistoryonline.com (hereafter DCA).

⁶⁷ James Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, 1 September, 1770, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

⁶⁸ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 14 January 1769, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

⁶⁹ James Grant to John Pownall, 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁷⁰ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 July 1768, MC 63, B4, SAHRL.

⁷¹ James Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, 20 January 1767, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

settlement prove, Grant believed that “industrious” foreigners could be just as valuable as slaves if they could be dominated in similar ways.

* * *

By 1767 Grant had become frustrated with the situation especially when he noticed that “the legislature of South Carolina gives four pounds sterling to every white inhabitant who arrives from Europe and settles there, as there is not encouragement of that kind here, the Carolina bounty prevents inhabitants from finding their way into this province.”⁷² The only bounty that existed for the new colony was for beneficial produce. At the time this included vines, silk, cotton, indigo and rice. Up until 1767 no one in East Florida profited from that bounty. Early in his career as governor, Grant complained that the bounty should be given to “industrious adventurers, upon their arrival in the new country” because he knew the most important time in the life of an infant colony is its first five years, after which “the colonists should certainly be able to support themselves.”⁷³ In 1767 he commented to the Earl of Shelburne “’tis true my lord that no part of that bounty has been applied to the object for which it was granted,” because inhabitants had been concerned primarily with producing goods for their own subsistence. By early 1771, Grant learned of the death of his father and went back to Scotland to claim his inheritance. He never returned to East Florida, but on the year of his departure, the colony managed to ship 28,000 pounds of indigo to Britain.⁷⁴ Two years

⁷² Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 January 1767, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

⁷³ James Grant to John Pownall, 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

⁷⁴ Paul David Nelson, *General James Grant: Scottish Soldier and Royal Governor of East Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) 66.

later the Board of Trade dropped the land grant restrictions that gave the governor so many problems because they had clearly failed to attract large numbers of white settlers.⁷⁵

Grant dealt with his two main centers of influence in various ways. His main concern in the development of the colony was the employment of a slave labor force in the production of indigo. This goal was shaped somewhat by his experience in South Carolina. He tried to encourage South Carolinians to settle in East Florida and worked to accommodate them in three ways: he offered them the best land, he petitioned for increased military support and crafted a treaty with the Indians to protect their slaves, and he searched for various methods to attract white immigrants into the colony to fulfill the terms of their land grants. To some colonists like Oswald, he advocated tenancy as a more cost effective option, but only as a supplement to slavery. This method was aimed at fulfilling both the official policy and the situation on the ground.

He recognized the necessity and benefit of white Protestants if they were “industrious” and if they could be completely dominated. This can in part be explained by his experience in South Carolina. Some historians argue that the switch from indentured servitude to slavery resulted in some ways from increasing value of land and the inability for indentured servants to rise in status. The proclamation line increased this tension in 1763 and made it harder for landless freemen to gain land. This disaffected group proved a threat to the political hegemony of planters.⁷⁶ It is understandable that many South Carolinian planters would be adverse to the situation in East Florida because

⁷⁵ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 471-473.

⁷⁶ Menard, *Migrants*; Wood, *Origins*.

of the government's insistence of creating a large white population. Grant tried to remedy this by advocating foreigners who would not recognize their rights as an Englishman would as could be treated differently. This can also explain why he was so supportive of New Smyrna.

Nevertheless, Grant thought slaves were more valuable because they were more cost effective. This notion was also based on his experience in the colonies, both by the example of set in South Carolina and in Georgia. The colony of Georgia had proven that settlements based primarily on the labor of white Europeans in the production of luxury goods would not necessarily succeed. There are several explanations for why this occurred, but in the end, Georgia turned to slavery and the production of crops similar to those in South Carolina.⁷⁷ Though he may have thought the government in London seemed to be making the same mistake in its plan for East Florida, Grant would not.

⁷⁷ Wood, *Georgia*; Stewart, *Nature*; Coleman, *Georgia*.

CHAPTER 2: RICHARD OSWALD IN EAST FLORIDA

Richard Oswald was a prominent Atlantic merchant in the late eighteenth century British Atlantic world. Although the majority of his business ventures involved trade, especially in slaves, he decided to start a plantation in East Florida when Britain acquired the Spanish territory in 1763. When he first discussed his plans, labor was the key issue. The quality of land in Florida was rumored to be second to none, so prospective planters set about obtaining a labor force as their first endeavor. Oswald envisioned a slave-based plantation and planned to produce, rice, cotton, or indigo as a primary crop.⁷⁸ These assumptions, his planned produce and labor force, are congruent to most areas in the American South like South Carolina. Though Oswald did try various methods to attract white settlement and fulfill the terms of his grant, his main goal was personal profit and his chosen method of labor was enslaved Africans. Oswald's decisions for his plantation grew out of his relation to the economic system of South Carolina.

The colonization plans of Oswald evolved throughout the decade of the 1760's. He first planned settlement in Nova Scotia, another newly acquired territory of the empire, but found that colony in disarray. Next he planned to establish a farm in "the backcountry of South Carolina" and even acquired a grant of 8,000 acres, "roughly 150 miles from Charleston." This plan was also frustrated, so Oswald finally chose to apply

⁷⁸ James Grant to Richard Oswald, 21 November 1764, The James Grant Papers-The American Papers, Ballendoloch Castle Muniments, microfilmed at the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, Scotland (hereafter BCM).

for a 20,000-acre grant in East Florida. He was one of the first to apply, and quickly sought out the partnership of Governor Grant.⁷⁹

Oswald was an experienced Atlantic merchant, although he was not an experienced planter, or colonizer. This fact is important because he was able to take advice from those who were experienced in planting, and he was able to draw from his vast resources in the Atlantic to aid in his operation.⁸⁰ He was also perhaps the most famous of all settlers in East Florida. He served as Britain's representative at the Paris peace negotiations in 1782 that ended the American War for Independence, and he managed a large West African slaving operation. His connections to the complex web of businessmen that comprised the late-eighteenth century British Atlantic is best documented by other historians.⁸¹

Oswald's Early Plan

It is obvious from Oswald's letters that his early intention in East Florida was to establish a plantation and he encouraged his friends to do the same. On 12 February 1766 in his letter to Governor Grant he asked him to secure land for a plantation based on slave labor.⁸² There was one large problem: the Privy Council law that required grantees to settle white Protestants on their land or risk losing their grant. How could one establish a profitable slave plantation and still afford to settle Europeans? Benevolent colonization

⁷⁹ Hancock, *Citizens*, 154-155.

⁸⁰ Hancock, *Citizens*, 10.

⁸¹ Hancock, *Citizens*, 10.

⁸² Richard Oswald to James Grant, 12 February 1766, BCM.

was a possible avenue for planters, but while this worked for a time in Georgia, Oswald was more concerned about his profits than the religious or economic freedom of Europe's masses.⁸³ One answer was to use indenture contracts to force white servants to work for several years on the plantation in exchange for their trip over to the colonies. Because Oswald was an experienced merchant and had spent time in the southern colonies where slavery was the dominant form of labor, he was not as enthusiastic about white settlers as other men, but he was forced to use them in some capacity.

Oswald was obviously influenced by the idea of indentured servants when he was in London. In the first years after the creation of East Florida he had meetings with other East Florida enthusiasts, men like William Stork and Andrew Turnbull who convinced him of the benefits of white indentured labor. These two men had not spent time in the colonies; therefore their assumptions about labor were based in large part on the ideas common in London, the metropolitan center. On June 2, 1766 Oswald met with Dr. William Stork, a fellow prospective colonizer who was intent on settling Germans on his land. Stork claimed he could find as many colonists as needed. While in Germany, Oswald told Grant "I shall have some good tradesmen picked out for you, sawyers, axmen, shipwrights, coopers, and such." He concluded, "if these gentlemen proceed with the spirit they now seem to be possessed of, we shall soon give your colony a [settlement] that will make it worth attending to."⁸⁴

In some instances it is clear that Oswald was heavily influenced by his meetings with Dr. Turnbull and Dr. Stork, both of whom were adamant about using "industrious"

⁸³ Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) 13.

⁸⁴ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 2 June 1766, BCM.

white laborers. Dr. Turnbull was most influential because he eventually created the New Smyrna colony of composed of over one-thousand Greeks. After a meeting with Turnbull and his associate, Oswald wrote to Governor Grant, “I found by their conversation that they are quite focused in their embarkation of prosecuting their scheme, and I believe that the Greeks are a very solid part of it.” Though Greeks were not Protestant, their labor was considered by Turnbull to be valuable because of their knowledge of the exotic goods he planned to produce.⁸⁵ Beliefs about Protestantism in this instance revolved in some ways around industriousness and Turnbull hoped these people would be the same if he removed them from the “tyranny” under which they lived.⁸⁶ Oswald took this advice to heart and set about searching for European tradesman. Like Turnbull, he centered his plan on European servants and the production of exotic goods.⁸⁷

From the start though, Oswald was thinking about how to involve slaves and after several discussions with Grant he almost completely gave up on subsidizing large numbers of indentured servants. Since Grant was running his plantation until he was able to travel to East Florida, Oswald sent his instructions on paper. In the same letter in which he suggested colonizing Germans he said, “I could order some new negroes from the coast of Africa to be with you in the fall.”⁸⁸ His final plan involved a plantation with thirty or so slaves within the first three years, and he wrote that “the great part may be new Negroes directly from Africa, they will cost much less than the others.”⁸⁹ The white

⁸⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 22 September 1768, Dundee City Archive; available from <http://www.floridahistoryonline.com> (hereafter DCA).

⁸⁶ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 16 February 1768, DCA

⁸⁷ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 14 March 1766, BCM.

⁸⁸ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 14 March 1766, BCM.

⁸⁹ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 18 May 1769, BCM.

Protestants would be brought over later after the plantation had been prepared. They were not an integral part of the first stages of his colonization plan.

Cost Effectiveness: South Carolina's Example

In his first years of planning, Oswald constantly struggled with the necessity of settling white Protestants, set out in the grant, and the viability of slaves for the type of plantation he intended. In contrast to some other colonists, Oswald was fairly certain he wanted to follow the South Carolina model by producing rice, cotton, or indigo. He discussed with Governor Grant the idea of importing Germans, but Grant was convinced that such people were unfit for East Florida given their mutual goals. In a previous letter, Governor Grant had tried to persuade him of the difficulty in managing white Protestant indentured servants. Oswald replied, "Your observations as to settling German servants are certainly wise. It's in vain to think that such sort of people will keep to their engagements either as servants or tenants for any considerable time in a country where they can so easily become proprietors."⁹⁰ Instead, Grant proposed to give European settlers "part of the land in property which may be done after one is a little acquainted with the circumstances of the estate."⁹¹

Prior to this letter Oswald had been in the company of Dr. Turnbull and Stork in England. Both men were the loudest proponents of white settlement in East Florida. After

⁹⁰ This is similar to what occurred in Georgia. It was thought that whites could not do the hard labor required on southern plantations. Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) 158-160.

⁹¹ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM.

this letter from Grant in 1767, Oswald began to change his tactics based on Grant's suggestions. He sent over a few "trusty persons...upon wages for the form of three years after their arrival." But rather than simply releasing them after their time was up, he proposed, "if they behave well, to lend them money to buy 2,3, or 4 negroes—and settle them on their own land, either upon my own land, or my neighborhood." This scheme, although it would satisfy the terms of the grant, was not as benevolent as it sounded. Oswald chose his settlers wisely so that with "such sort of people I should think the property will be safe having a mortgage upon the negroes, and as the masters will by that time know how to make the most of their slaves, they can afford to pay reasonable compensation for the use of their money."⁹² Oswald's goals were clear: he wanted to make a profitable plantation and to fulfill the terms of the grant in the most financially favorable manner.

With a little advice from Grant, Oswald was able to rework his plans for bringing over European settlers. While he at first toyed with the idea of settling German traders and artisans as indentured servants, he reworked his ideas into something different. Through Grant's suggestions, Oswald decided the best way to make money and settle white Europeans at the same time was not to bring them over through indenture contracts as servants only, but to agree with them for wages and then help them to become established by providing mortgages on their land and slaves. Even those he brought over through indentures would be given this opportunity. This relationship between landowner and farmer was more complex than simply a "tenant" style relationship. It implied a sort

⁹² Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM.

of paternalism because it included the owner providing education and laborers for the “tenant” in addition to land.⁹³ Historians have argued that the instances of tenancy grew in the mid-1700s as land value rose and that it was based on harsher conditions than those in England. No in-depth studies about tenancy have yet been done in regards to South Carolina, most of them center on the Chesapeake region and merely mention the existence and harsh nature of the institution in South Carolina.⁹⁴ Grant must have been aware of its use in some measure given his certainty about its benefits.

This method benefited Oswald in more ways than one. To prospective settlers, Oswald could offer a deal that seemed too good to be true. He would pay for their transport over, sometimes require a small period of wage based service after arrival (which he could promote as education) then give them their own tract of land and a small retinue of slaves for which he would only charge a marginal fee. The “short period” of servitude was never really defined and certainly not advertised. Oswald would obviously have adjusted his methods based on the situation. One beneficiary of this scheme was a Mr. Frederick Alert, whom Oswald mentioned in one of his letters to Grant. He “has been long in my employ... and having always behaved well, I think myself obliged to give him a little assistance to help settle himself in the world.” In addition, Oswald offered him food and lodging at his plantation. Getting to the heart of his scheme, he added “incase I have good accounts of his behavior, which indeed I have no doubts of, [I plan] to lend him money as will purchase ten good negroes from Africa, and tools and other necessities for beginning his settlement, he giving me a proper security on the same as customary for

⁹³ For the sake of simplicity, this will be referred to as a “tenant” relationship hereafter.

⁹⁴ Ekirich, “Poverty,” in *The Historical Journal*, 496.

provincial and British interests.” But unlike other white Protestants who would come over to East Florida, Alert went out “on his own expense to see the country and to learn something about the business of planting.”⁹⁵ Oswald did not force this man into servitude. He did not pay for his voyage, but he did provide services intent on coaxing him to stay on Mount Oswald, thus fulfilling the land grant stipulations. Grant and Oswald thought this relationship would create fewer problems with the imported Europeans. This relationship was not unheard of in the colonies. As Steve Sarson points out, many slaveholders used tenant labor in colonial America and often instituted strong controls over tenants’ economic freedoms.⁹⁶ Oswald would still maintain a degree of power over the individual, but because it was less coercive he hoped it would encourage settlers to remain on his plantation.

This method theoretically provided a perfect solution to the white Protestant clause. Men who could fund their travel, but not their entire operation would find financial backing in terms of education, materials, and land. As Oswald noted to Grant, “many of them are entirely at a loss as to the preliminary steps, and are also startled at the sum of money that may be required to lay the proper foundation.”⁹⁷ In this role Oswald was situating himself to be a prominent merchant in the new colony, as well as a South Carolinian-style planter. Despite the obstacle set forth in the land grants that required settling large numbers of white Protestants, Oswald was still posturing to create a very southern colony based primarily on slave labor.

⁹⁵ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 8 June 1767, BCM.

⁹⁶ Sarson, “Landlessness,” in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 569-571.

⁹⁷ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM.

Cost also measured into the equation in the types of slaves Oswald used. The first group of slaves to arrive on Oswald's land in East Florida consisted of forty "seasoned" slaves from South Carolina. He believed that "in the infancy of the settlement the proportion of seasoned negroes purchased in Carolina ought to be larger than in a more advanced state, when perhaps the whole supply may be taken directly from Africa."⁹⁸ Oswald thought this measure was necessary because "seasoned" slaves were easy to communicate with, were more used to plantation work, and had an established record of labor. Ultimately though, Oswald planned to use Africa slaves almost exclusively because he could secure them from his own African operation and supply them to his fellow planters at a lower cost than they could be purchased from South Carolina.⁹⁹

Oswald used his network of contacts to help settle East Florida. About a quarter of the individuals who applied for land grants in the colony had known Oswald in some capacity before 1763. Oswald was a key instrument in promoting the colony to these men. Along with encouraging his friends to invest in the colony, he provided them support materially through his Atlantic connections.¹⁰⁰ Throughout his correspondence with Governor Grant Oswald constantly recommended people and asked for favors for them from the new governor.

Oswald did bring over white servants, but it is clear from his letters that his ideas gradually evolve as he spends more time talking to Grant. After he had spent some time in the colony and began to develop his plantation, he wrote to Grant several times expressing his distaste for the grant stipulations, "[I] will apply to his majesty" he

⁹⁸ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 18 May 1769, BCM.

⁹⁹ Hancock, *Citizens*, 162.

¹⁰⁰ Hancock, *Citizens*, 155.

claimed, “for an alteration in the conditions of population, by desiring to have Negroes subjugated in place of Protestant settlers. Without that the province can never be settled by British proprietors.”¹⁰¹ In another letter he complained that, “the obligation of introducing such a number of white people is a great discouragement and to most people an absolute bar to settlement.” He later referred to it as a “fluke in the grants” and stated that instead he hoped for “a substitution of negroes in leau [sic] of white Protestants.”¹⁰² But despite his displeasure with the situation he mentioned Dr. Turnbull, wishing him success “in his scheme which is bolder still than mine, and may turn out a very expensive one.”¹⁰³ It is clear in his letters that Oswald shifts his opinion on the viability of white labor based on his discussions with Grant and experience on the ground. When he actually began the process of creating his plantation in the late 1760s, he was totally convinced that a slave-based plantation would be best.

Protection

In spite of the preference to use predominantly slave labor, Oswald recognized the need for white settlers to balance out the population. While he did not agree with the white Protestant stipulation for his own plantation, he realized how it would benefit him if others followed it. On the one hand, Oswald always counted on his slaves being the integral part of his plantation. They would clear the land and build the accommodations for the white settlers Oswald brought; they would also compose the backbone of the labor

¹⁰¹ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 19 February 1768, BCM.

¹⁰² Richard Oswald to James Grant, 19 June 1767, BCM.

¹⁰³ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 19 February 1768, BCM.

force. On the other hand he knew too many slaves could be dangerous. Oswald, like many planters in the southern colonies recognized the threat that loomed over a society that was composed mostly of permanently enslaved laborers. The solution was to colonize a number of semi-free or free white settlers first, and then to gradually increase the number of slaves introduced into the colony. Oswald said, “I am sensible that progress ought to be gradual and that there should (with a view to safety) be an addition of strength of whites, before I can venture to increase the number of Negroes; and at the same time that the life of the settlement and the profits from it must depend on the Negroes.”¹⁰⁴ South Carolina represented an example of what a strong slave-based plantation colony could look like. Oswald not only tried to replicate what he viewed as its strengths, but also to prevent its weaknesses.

This problem could be confronted from the beginning in East Florida by moderating slave imports until the number of whites grew. In this effort though, Oswald never intended there to be an equal number of each. He still envisioned a plantation-based economy where, according to the ideal, the only whites would be planters, overseers, and the occasional artisan, similar to what he saw in South Carolina. He specifically detailed his plan to Governor Grant in March 1767. He wrote, “I shall send over three or four sober, trusty persons, one of them a carpenter who had long been a sergeant in the Army—and I shall send along with him the necessary tools of his trade as well as for husbandry and the common utensils for cookery, so that there may be proper convenience for the present servants and for the reception of others.” These artisans,

¹⁰⁴ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 14 March 1766, BCM; Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM.

along with the slaves that were already there would clear the plantation and establish the “proper convenience.” Oswald’s ultimate goal was to bring over enough slaves to run a profitable plantation. He continued “once a reasonable security is established I shall send from time to time small parcels of young Negroes about 15 or 16 years of age males and females, less or more according to circumstances.”¹⁰⁵

* * *

Historians have commented that the key problems with the East Florida settlement were the lack of planning and understanding about the area, and the character of the labor force. Hancock contends that men like Oswald only paid “lip service” to the Board of Trade’s rule about white settlement while really intending to use only Africans as laborers.¹⁰⁶ His personal correspondence with Grant clearly demonstrates that Oswald genuinely attempted to attract and settle white colonists and that he tried several ways to accomplish this so as to earn as much profit as possible. The fact that he never came close to satisfying the grant rules less critical than the process though which he attempted to create a profitable plantation.

Oswald’s plantation was a “bog” and limited his success in developing a viable commercial crop. Men had difficulty succeeding as planters for many reasons most significant of which was the Florida soil, which was nothing like the land in South Carolina or Georgia.¹⁰⁷ This story has been told. Oswald’s efforts in planning his plantation tell an interesting story that has not been told about labor in relation to the

¹⁰⁵ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM.

¹⁰⁶ Hancock, *Citizens*, 161-162.

¹⁰⁷ Hancock, *Citizens*, 159.

empire and the colonies. He was enthusiastic about European servants at first, even though he was engaged in the slave trade. Most importantly though, his correspondence with Governor Grant and his experiences on the ground convinced Oswald by 1770 that slavery was most cost effective given the crops he wanted to grow, Indigo, Rice and Cotton. He made his position on this clear in the letters he wrote to the Board of Trade condemning the white Protestant stipulation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 19 June 1767, BCM.

CHAPTER 3: DENYS ROLLE AND THE UNRULY SETTLERS

Denys Rolle is more a mystery than any other man in East Florida. He never clearly stated his intentions and because he was so haphazard in his methods, his goals are hard to ascertain. Very little is known about his early life, as is the case with many eighteenth century men. The youngest son of a member of parliament, he was born into the upper class of England in 1725. His older brother stood to inherit the family lands but Rolle took over his father's seat in Parliament in 1761 when he passed away. Florida historian Claude Sturgill commented, "Rolle undoubtedly cast about for a way to get rich quick, and after 1763 the new colonies, those which seemed to offer the greatest apparent opportunities, were East and West Florida."¹⁰⁹ By the time of the American Revolution, Rolle had attempted three separate settlements one after the other. Each time changing his method of attracting white immigrants and increasing the number of African slaves until his final settlement was completely based on slave labor.

Unlike the other colonists, Rolle rarely discussed his settlement scheme. The most common theme in his correspondence was his mistreatment by the governor and what he considered to be the poor quality of his servants. In 1765 after his first attempt at creating a settlement, he wrote a long petition to the Parliament that berated the governor for luring away his settlers and for refusing to enforce their indenture contracts.¹¹⁰ Though Rolle attempted two more settlements after this one, much less evidence exists about those. He does correspond with Grant throughout his tenure in East Florida, but because

¹⁰⁹ Denys Rolle, *The Humble Petition of Denys Rolle*, Bicentennial Floridiana Facsimile Series (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1977) xv.

¹¹⁰ Rolle, *Petition*, 1-10.

of the nature of their relationship, Rolle did not discuss his plans in depth with the governor as other men did. As a result of this fact, most of this chapter will be concerned with Rolle's first settlement attempt. For the purposes of this study, however, his initial colonization attempt and its aftermath are the most significant because they demonstrate Rolle's original intent and the immediate changes he made after his first plan failed. It must also be mentioned that some of the evidence regarding Rolle's settlements is problematic. Grant obviously disliked Rolle personally and the feeling was probably mutual. The problem is that much of the evidence comes from the observations of Governor Grant. Grant's bias regarding Rolle must be taken into consideration.

Rolle was unprepared for a colonial settlement. His first plan revolved around importing "undesirables" similar to the Georgia colony. Gradually through three separate attempts he transitioned from a colony with only British men, women and children, to one that incorporated slaves, and finally to a colony based solely on slave labor. At first, his goals in settlement were based on assumptions in England that took into account the political and social goals of the empire rather than on the experiences of similar colonies. This was the case because he spent little time in the colonies and was more involved in solving the political and social problems of the empire as a member of parliament in 1761. Second, he assumed that his servants would work tirelessly for him if he gave them guidance and land.

The Problem with Servants

Rolle created three successive settlements. His first began in 1764 and consisted of fourteen British men, women, and children. His second in 1767 incorporated some slaves because, in Grant's view, he "saw his error."¹¹¹ But even this plan, according to Grant, was "in contradiction to the sentiments and opinion of every man in America" because he persisted in his use of British people as indentured servants.¹¹² Of most concern to Grant was Rolle's continued employment of white servants who "sat idle." Furthermore, of the 22 slaves Rolle purchased, "13 are children and do nothing" and, according to Grant, "he has been above four years at work and he has not as much to show as a planter with 12 negroes should have in 6 months."¹¹³ The Governor's frustrations were palpable, as were his feelings about white servants. Even when Rolle decided that slaves were a necessity, he still kept 50 white settlers on his land at his own expense. From Grant's point of view, that was a waste of money.

After his first two settlement schemes failed, Rolle changed his mind about his methods of peopling the colony. In 1769 he returned to England and advertised for people who would be proprietors of the land instead of servants. They would pay for their transport over and for a parcel of land on Rolle's property.¹¹⁴ This was exactly the

¹¹¹ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 24 December, 1768, MC63 B5, SAHRL.

¹¹² James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 24 December, 1768, MC63 B5, SAHRL.

¹¹³ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 24 December 1768, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

¹¹⁴ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 450.

method Grant advocated to Oswald.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately for Rolle, he had few takers for this scheme. After this final disappointment, Rolle purchased a permanent work force of slaves who remained on his land until the British lost control of East Florida in 1783.¹¹⁶ Rolle's most persistent problem was his servants. He expected them to work for him until their contracts ran out. In September of 1764 Rolle arrived in East Florida with fourteen poor English men, women and children. His original intent was to travel to a place called St. Marks, in Appalachee, but he altered his plan "without giving any reason for it," and settled instead at Mt. Pleasant on the St. Johns River.¹¹⁷ One year later Rolle returned to England after his settlers all fled. Two years later in 1767 he returned with 49 more vagrants from England and began a new settlement. Shortly after, his new servants successfully petitioned the governor to release them from their indentures, and Rolle was left alone, again. Governor Grant attributed Rolle's difficulty to his demeanor and his servants, while Rolle believed the lack of law and order in the colony was to blame.

When Rolle first arrived in East Florida in September 1764 he was immediately confronted with problems for which he was unprepared. Rolle signed indenture contracts with each of his fourteen settlers that forced them to work on his plantation as servants. There is no evidence that he offered them any benefits of land ownership or tenancy at this point.¹¹⁸ As early as March 1765 Grant commented, "The few people he brought with him have left him." Grant claimed that Rolle intended to return to England without

¹¹⁵ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM.

¹¹⁶ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 450.

¹¹⁷ James Grant to Board of Trade, 22 November 1764, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

¹¹⁸ Rolle, *Petition*, 2.

“running out his estate” because it would be a burden to his family.¹¹⁹ In his petition for financial relief, Rolle complained about his settlers who fled to St. Augustine soon after their arrival, “enticed with dissipation at Augustine, and disliking the inconveniences attendant on the first settlement of a colony.”¹²⁰ Throughout his petition he complained of settlers being lured away by people “who wished ill to his settlement.”¹²¹ He was surprised when the Governor refused to discipline his settlers for running away. Grant commented, “Mr. Rolle thinks it is in my power to make his servants work.”¹²² After the majority of his settlers left him, Rolle blamed his neighbors or others in St. Augustine for assisting the colonists in breaking their contracts, or having lured them away by their “opinion of high wages at St. Augustine.”¹²³ Grant tried to placate him by assuring him that, “I should have a bad opinion of any planter who endeavored to seduce [your servants] from you.”¹²⁴ Eventually his history of complaints allowed him a forum with the Board of Trade, which reimbursed him for his trouble.¹²⁵

The settlers were not the only problem that Rolle encountered in the new world. On his first voyage to East Florida in 1764 the crew failed to pack enough water for all of his colonists.¹²⁶ The ship’s “tyrant captain” failed to allow them adequate provisions.¹²⁷ A family of five left him at Charleston, seduced away by other landowners, and they

¹¹⁹ James Grant to Lords of Trade, 1 March 1765, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

¹²⁰ Rolle, *Petition*, 9.

¹²¹ Rolle, *Petition*, 9.

¹²² James Grant to Earl of Hillsborough, 13 August 1768, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

¹²³ Denys Rolle to James Grant, 1765, R9-200, BCM; Denys Rolle to James Grant, 20 February 1767, BCM.

¹²⁴ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 8 July 1765, BCM.

¹²⁵ Rolle, *Petition*, xxvii.

¹²⁶ Rolle, *Petition*, 3.

¹²⁷ Rolle, *Petition*, 4.

would not be the last.¹²⁸ When he finally arrived in Florida, a boat he hired to bring provisions was lost on the sand bar outside St. Augustine.¹²⁹ He claimed Indians stole his horses.¹³⁰ Two soldiers came in and carried off a “smith and his wife.”¹³¹ A hunter hired to provide provisions broke his contract.¹³² The surveyor for the colony came to his house and treated him poorly, as did the local officers of the law, who did not force his servants to uphold their contracts.¹³³ These are just a few of Rolle’s many complaints about the problems he had in the new colony. According to Grant, they were primarily the result of personality conflicts that arose from Rolle’s litigious nature.¹³⁴ Whether or not they were the result of his own actions, Rolle ran into a surprising number of problems with his new colony.

Rolle also had trouble recruiting people in the first place. He was only ever able to obtain people considered socially undesirable, or those who had no alternative, such as debtors, vagrants and prostitutes. The “industrious” French or Greek settlers that seemed so valuable to Grant and Oswald were nowhere in Rolle’s plan; in fact, there is no evidence that he considered any other type of labor than poor English people. The Georgia colony had attempted nearly the same thing only fifty years earlier and it had proven a failure. Grant attempted to remedy the problems he saw in Georgia by integrating slaves, tenants, and “industrious” Europeans.

¹²⁸ Rolle, *Petition*, 5.

¹²⁹ Rolle, *Petition*, 6.

¹³⁰ Rolle, *Petition*, 14.

¹³¹ Rolle, *Petition*, 8.

¹³² Rolle, *Petition*, 15.

¹³³ Rolle, *Petition*, 19; Rolle, *Petition*, 18.

¹³⁴ James Grant to Lord Hillsborough, 13 August 1768, MC 63, B4, SAHRL.

Rolle's goals for his settlement are not always clear. Initially he hoped to make a profit, but he seemed bound to the idea of benevolence. His language in his petition and his efforts to control the lives of his colonists seem tied to his ultimate goal of turning "useless" people toward the "great emolument of the mother kingdom."¹³⁵ To this end Rolle saw himself not as a master of his immigrants, but as a leader. He argued at times that he tried to improve the lives of his settlers, rather than just use them for his own profit. Temperance was a key idea Rolle claimed he tried to instill in his colonists. He banned the consumption of alcohol altogether after he noticed it made some of his servants "lazy."¹³⁶ Some left because they were uncomfortable in the wilderness of Florida, but also because of their "confinement within the bounds of sober regulations."¹³⁷ Rolle saw it as his duty to protect his servants in this way; "to be careful over his own people, in using every caution to prevent Intemperance therein."¹³⁸

While this may seem similar to philanthropic efforts in other colonies like Georgia, Rolle made this regulation only after he realized the trouble alcohol consumption cause among his main source of labor. He noticed that "when rum came we knew not each other; but it made us Women, and we quarreled and fought with one another, and therefore, though your petitioner had it for the use of his people in their hard labor, to drink with water, yet they must not have any."¹³⁹ The fact that he used "we" to describe the problems he was having gives some credibility to his benevolent attitude. At one point a hunter unaffiliated with Rolle's settlement introduced rum to a family at his

¹³⁵ Rolle, *Petition*, 4.

¹³⁶ Rolle, *Petition*, 12.

¹³⁷ Rolle, *Petition*, 9.

¹³⁸ Rolle, *Petition*, 11.

¹³⁹ Rolle, *Petition*, 12.

plantation, “to the ruin of the industrious, particularly that family... which did not do the least work towards raising corn, garden stuff, or anything for their subsistence.”¹⁴⁰ In his petition, alcohol enters into every instance where Rolle relates a story of unruly settlers or reasons for their abandonment of him. Of course his petition was written after the failure of his first attempt with an eye for reimbursement from the government. The only evidence of the settlers’ opinion is in a letter Grant wrote to Whitehall in which he asserts, “they say he [Rolle] starved them.”¹⁴¹ The benevolence portrayed in his petition cannot be trusted given his goal of government reimbursement.

The Goals of an Empire

How can one explain Rolle’s actions? Certainly, his lack of experience is key, as most historians point out.¹⁴² But Rolle was not stupid. His ideas were based in some part on his understanding of the empire. The British Empire after the seven years war was very different than it had been a decade earlier. Religious rivalries still existed between Protestant England and Catholic Spain, but England had established its dominance in the Atlantic. Nevertheless, in attaining the new colony of Florida the key British concern was to ensure its protection against the Spanish. Whitehall planned to attain this goal by forcing landholders to settle white Protestants on their land, thus providing a base of citizens to protect the colony from Spanish incursion from the Caribbean and ensuring

¹⁴⁰ Rolle, *Petition*, 15.

¹⁴¹ James Grant to John Pownall, 21 November 1764, BCM.

¹⁴² Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 447-451; Mowat, *East Florida*, 71.

that it remained British for years to come.¹⁴³ This measure provided other benefits to the empire as well. It created markets for manufactured goods, provided an alternative labor force to slaves, who created security problems of their own, and helped direct the flow of immigration away from the Western frontier and the Proclamation line to prevented conflict with the Indians.¹⁴⁴

Another key problem in the empire was the economic contraction and debt that had mounted over years of war, the most visible effect of which were the vagrants and debtors of the city of London.¹⁴⁵ Politicians at various times tried to find ways to put these people to work for the empire. When the colony of Georgia was founded in 1733 as a buffer colony between Spanish Florida and British South Carolina, poor people were used in part to settle the colony. This provided two benefits to the country, it took people considered useless out of London and other English towns and it provided a group of colonists who would constitute a militia against Spanish incursion.¹⁴⁶ Florida in 1763 was in a similar situation. East Florida was now the border colony between Spanish Cuba and Georgia. Georgia's use of white immigrants had proven problematic. By 1763, Georgia was a colony in the mold of South Carolina.¹⁴⁷ The question that remains is why did London continue in the same vein, even after the failure of Georgia?

¹⁴³ William B. Willcox and Walter L. Arnstein, *The Age of Aristocracy: 1688-1783* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001) 156-170.

¹⁴⁴ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 430-437.

¹⁴⁵ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1989) 165-217.

¹⁴⁶ Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976) 13.

¹⁴⁷ Coleman, *Georgia*, 245.

To answer that question, one must only look at Georgia. Historians view the failure of the Georgia Trustee's vision as result of both the influence of South Carolina and the suitability of crops and the environment.¹⁴⁸ The trustees intended to settle British poor and "industrious" Protestants from Europe who were being persecuted by their Roman Catholic rulers.¹⁴⁹ They imported British citizens because of their concern with the social problems in England.¹⁵⁰ The failure then was most poignantly expressed by Governor Grant when he declared, "people imported from Britain and Ireland seldom turn out to the advantage of their American masters, I am quite convinced that their labor is never worth their food."¹⁵¹ The German and French Protestant immigrants imported into Georgia were seen in different terms. Governor Grant uses the same language as Oglethorpe in his efforts to secure French Protestants; Oswald uses similar language when discussing Germans.¹⁵² The reasons for this distinction may have to do with the successes of the German immigrants in comparison to their British counterparts. For example, most of the Salzburger who traveled to Georgia had farming experience and knew good soil from bad, while the British immigrants were mostly artisans and merchants. They were considered to be the most successful colonists in Georgia.¹⁵³ Colonizers like Grant, and the government in England made a clear distinction between British immigrants and other European immigrants. This was the reason the grant

¹⁴⁸ Stewart, *Nature*; Wood, *Georgia*.

¹⁴⁹ James Edward Oglethorpe, *Some Account of the Design of the Trustees for Establishing Colonies in America*, ed. Rodney M. Baine and Phinizy Spalding (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990) 12.

¹⁵⁰ Stewart, *Nature*, 30; Coleman, *Georgia*, 13.

¹⁵¹ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 31 March 1767, BCM.

¹⁵² James Grant to John Pawnall Esq., 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL; Richard Oswald to James Grant, 2 June 1766, BCM; Oglethorpe, *Some Account*, 14.

¹⁵³ Stewart, *Nature*, 56, 65.

stipulations mentioned only white Protestants, not Englishmen. Furthermore, foreigners were not always granted the rights of Englishmen and in some cases could be treated much more harshly.

Rolle seemed to imitate the original intentions of the colony of Georgia in some ways. In contrast to Rolle, London was very familiar with the failures in Georgia, but their goals remained the same: defense. Rolle was the only one who did not see the problems of Georgia at first. Although Grant would later characterize Rolle's servants as debtors and vagrants, Rolle refers in his petition to his settlers as "unhappy, unprovided [for] orphans," "unfortunate tradesmen" and "minute-portioned branches of young families."¹⁵⁴ In fact, his use of these terms echo Oglethorpe's original plans for Georgia.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, he claimed that he was turning them to the "great emolument of the mother kingdom."¹⁵⁶ Rolle even compares his provisioning of settlers with that of the trustees; "the rules of provision for the settlers imported by Mr. Rolle during the voyage from England were in general the same as offered to the trustees for Georgia."¹⁵⁷ Even his use of temperance and lack of slaves suggests his connection to the earlier colony.

There is no evidence that Rolle had any experience in the business of colonial trade, or more importantly, the production of staple crops. In his own words, "the declaration of the Board of Trade, concerning the prior sales of land in the Florida's,

¹⁵⁴ Rolle, *Petition*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ James Edward Oglethorpe, *Some Account of the design of the Trustees for Establishing Colonies in America*, eds. Rodney M. Baine and Phinizy Spalding (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990.) 12.

¹⁵⁶ Rolle, *Petition*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Rolle's rules for dispensing provisions to his settlers, R19, BCM.

encouraged me to set out from England to settle a colony in this province.”¹⁵⁸ His original plan involved land in South Carolina or Georgia, but after he noticed the large number of applications for land in Florida, and the general excitement that surrounded the new colony, he changed his mind.

The evidence often portrays Rolle as more of an aristocratic English landowner rather than a colonial American planter. He was very concerned about land. Rolle often viewed his settlers as bargaining chips that he used to obtain more land for himself. Originally, every petitioner could apply for 20,000 acres of land in the new colony if they settled one white Protestant on it per hundred acres, or each head of family could receive up to 100 acres for himself. Rolle believed that he could obtain a 20,000 acre grant and add to it 100 acres for each individual settler he brought into the colony. He also tried to obtain other grants for himself or to set out his current colony in non-contiguous tracts. Grant insisted that his instructions from the Board of Trade were inconsistent with these requests.¹⁵⁹ Rolle continued to argue the issue with Grant until the day he left the province, but after all his settlers fled, it became a mute point. Grant commented in 1768 that Rolle did not accomplish half of what of what he should have given his amount of laborers.¹⁶⁰ Why should Rolle have been concerned with obtaining more land? Labor was at a premium, not land. Even if he had obtained more land he did not have the means, or his settlers the motivation, to clear it. This fact emphasized the problematic nature of Rolle’s servants in the mind of Grant.

¹⁵⁸ Denys Rolle to John Gordon, 21 November 1764, *Humble Petition*, Appendix p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 24 September 1764, BCM.

¹⁶⁰ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 24 December 1768, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

When Rolle composed his petition in 1765 he portrayed his efforts as nationalistic in the hopes of reimbursement:

With some view of a future reimbursement at a long day to my successors in family I made application to the government at home offering to make an effort to settle a lot in the new ceded colony of East Florida in a manner suitable to my own circumstances but entirely consonant to the interests of the mother kingdom at a certain great present expense.¹⁶¹

In his petition he mentioned several times the need for the “protection of the Government”¹⁶² in the colonies or the “great expense”¹⁶³ he incurred by establishing his settlement. Two main grievances took precedence over all: first that “some irregularities in his settlement may have been encouraged by persons in power” namely Governor Grant. Second, “that an inability in some of the settlers, introduced at the great expense of your petitioner, seem to intimate, some methods of seduction have been used.”¹⁶⁴ In other words, he blamed Grant for the problems he had in locating a suitable plot of land, and his neighbors for “seducing” his expensive colonists to flee. He never hesitated to mention the personal expenses he incurred during the debacle. At the end of his petition he asked the Privy Council for a “recommendation to his Majesty for the just accommodation of himself, in settling a plantation therein.”¹⁶⁵ This petition was written after his first colonization attempt, and although he submitted it several times it was

¹⁶¹ Denys Rolle to James Grant, 25 April 1765, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

¹⁶² Rolle, *Petition*, 4.

¹⁶³ Rolle, *Petition*, 85.

¹⁶⁴ Rolle, *Petition*, 83.

¹⁶⁵ Rolle, *Petition*, 83.

rejected until Rolle's opposition party came to power in England in 1783.¹⁶⁶ Soon after the new government took over, Rolle's petition was taken up on the floor of commons and he was reimbursed.¹⁶⁷

To Rolle, his greatest contribution to the empire was his resettlement of "unfortunate" people. He proposed to recruit people such as

The unhappy unprovided [for] orphan, the unfortunate tradesman, the minute-portioned branches of large Families, who seek their bread in these American wilds.¹⁶⁸

In his own mind, or at least in his arguments, Rolle was not only creating a plantation for his own personal benefit, but he was providing a service to England and to his settlers. According to this view, he was taking "useless" people out of the country to a place where they would be "useful." Furthermore, because of his efforts at temperance, he promoted his colony as benevolent.

Rolle's understanding of the colonies is most clear in a letter written to the *Gentlemen's Magazine* in 1767. Charles Lock Mowat guessed that Rolle was the author, but even if he was not, Florida historian Claude Sturgill claimed it was certainly an influence in Rolle's view of colonialism in East Florida and it was "an apt description of the social and economic position of Denys Rolle."¹⁶⁹ Entitled, "An Exhortation to Gentlemen of Small Fortunes to Settle in East Florida," the anonymous author presented

¹⁶⁶ Rolle, *Petition*, xxvii. Though Rolle's petition was forwarded to parliament in the late 1760's, he did not receive any reimbursement until the opposition party took over in 1783.

¹⁶⁷ Rolle, *Petition*, xxvii.

¹⁶⁸ Rolle, *Petition*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Rolle, *Petition*, xvi.

the new colony as a virtual gold mine and those who stood to benefit most were the middling classes of England. “There is no class of men half so much interested in getting grants of land in East Florida, as the middling gentry of England, and the younger sons of good families.”¹⁷⁰ The author made this assumption because of the “impossibility of preserving rank without fortune” in England, but with the purchase of a “secure tract of land” anyone could be “happy, independent, and in a few years’ rich.”¹⁷¹ The key difference as the author saw it was, “the difference betwixt living in expensive England without any landed property, and the living in cheap America upon an estate of your own.”¹⁷²

Even more interesting was the author’s suggestion about how to make a profit. “A settler, with one thousand pounds, will begin at least with five white servants and ten negroes” and the proper implements. “On the second year, he will see a good increase, and, besides the points of agriculture, he will have laid a foundation for reaping the profits of trade.”¹⁷³ Finally, using the other colonies as a comparison, the author estimated that “at a minimum, upon the best calculations repeatedly made in the fourteen colonies of America, the labour (sic) of each servant or negro leaves a clear profit to the matter of twenty five pounds a year.”¹⁷⁴ Given his enthusiasm about colonization, and his probable “get rich quick” attitude, Rolle must certainly have read this article or something similar. This article was published in 1767, after Rolle’s first settlement, but

¹⁷⁰ “An Exhortation to Gentlemen of Small Fortunes to Settle in East Florida,” *The Gentlemen’s Magazine* 37, January 1767, 21.

¹⁷¹ *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*, 22.

¹⁷² *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*, 22.

¹⁷³ *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*, 22.

¹⁷⁴ *The Gentlemen’s Magazine*, 22.

before his second. Rolle's second settlement included a number of slaves, perhaps in response to the suggestions in this article. Given the success of other colonies, men like the author of this article assumed that with minor preparation and no experience one could establish a settlement in America.

* * *

Denys Rolle was perhaps the most inexperienced colonizer in East Florida. Although he was a Member of Parliament in 1761, he seemed blissfully unaware of the problems of the Georgia colony. His first attempt at colonization in East Florida was rife with difficulty. The fourteen English subjects he brought to accompany him petitioned the governor for their release several months later.¹⁷⁵ On his second attempt in 1767 he modified his position because of his experience on the ground in East Florida, or because of Grants persistent advice. That time he purchased twenty-two slaves. This attempt was also frustrated because, as Grant noticed, thirteen slaves were children. Furthermore, Rolle persisted in his goal of importing British people by funding nearly fifty on this occasion.¹⁷⁶ When he arrived in England after this debacle, he searched for men who would fund their own travel and become tenants on his land. When he had no takers, he purchased a group of slaves to run his plantation.¹⁷⁷

Compounding his difficulties was his lack of knowledge in agriculture and the state of his land. Like many men who dreamed of creating plantations in East Florida,

¹⁷⁵ James Grant to John Pownall, 21 November 1764, BCM.

¹⁷⁶ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 24 December 1768, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

¹⁷⁷ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 450.

Rolle thought he could produce almost anything he wanted.¹⁷⁸ He got little chance at first. In his first two colonies, most of the time was spent clearing the land, building houses for his many immigrants and ensuring the transportation of his goods to St. Augustine.¹⁷⁹ His only success came on his final plantation of slaves run by experienced overseers.¹⁸⁰

Rolle's relationship to the center of the empire and his lack of knowledge about the colonies shaped his settlement plans in East Florida. Like most plantations in East Florida, Rolle's land was primarily swamp, but he was able to produce a reasonable amount of crops on that land by 1780. He obviously knew very little about the experiences in Georgia regarding British "unfortunates." Because his relation to the center of the empire was very similar to that of the trustees fifty years earlier, he continued along a similar path. As a Member of Parliament in 1761 he was certainly dealing with the issues of the empire, including the large poor population in London. His scheme of indentured servants was undoubtedly the result of this experience. After he spent time in East Florida and recognized the difficulties in creating a plantation without a completely dominated labor force, he modified his later efforts to more closely model plantations in South Carolina, as governor Grant had suggested from the beginning.

¹⁷⁸ Rolle, *Petition*, 1.

¹⁷⁹ Mowat, *East Florida*, 71.

¹⁸⁰ Mowat, *East Florida*, 71.

CHAPTER 4: DR. TURNBULL'S GRAND SCHEME

Dr. Andrew Turnbull was a Scottish physician who became enamored with East Florida. He was the architect of the largest single importation of white inhabitants into the American colonies since the puritan migration of the 1630's, and was the subject of countless letters from the empire's most prestigious individuals who each hailed his effort as pure patriotic genius.¹⁸¹ But the story of the New Smyrna colony is not one of fortune and prosperity. It is one of hardship and misery. Most historians who have examined New Smyrna have labeled it a failure, and even worse, they claim, as a result of foolish ambition and uninformed leadership.¹⁸² Presented with the facts, it is hard to disagree.

Turnbull began formulating his plan for settlement soon after East Florida became a British Colony in 1763. In 1768 he arrived in the new colony with 1,400 Greek settlers and a few slaves, more than originally anticipated. Turnbull's indentures signaled a variety of different contractual arrangements. Most of these people were contracted to work as tenants on his land and some were indentured servants. The length of these contracts varied, but in some cases they could last as long as six years and placed a large amount of debt on each immigrant.¹⁸³ Several months earlier he had purchased 500 slaves who were supposed to clear the land and prepare the way for his settlers, but they were lost in a wreck off the Florida Coast. Already greatly over budget, the colony spent its first few years trying to maintain enough provisions to survive. As time went on, little

¹⁸¹ Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1986) 452.

¹⁸² Bailyn, *Voyagers*.

¹⁸³ Andrew Turnbull, *Form of Contract Between Andrew Turnbull and New Smyrna Settlers*, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

changed. Accounts from the colonists claimed that Turnbull became impatient and harsh, whipping them and suspending their provisions. On several occasions Turnbull apparently had his black slaves whip his Greek colonists. Eventually most of the Greeks ran away to St. Augustine and petitioned to be released from their obligations citing harsh treatment and unfair contracts.¹⁸⁴ With his colonists gone, Turnbull quietly faded from history, but the story of New Smyrna remained as evidence in the eyes of most historians of the foolish errand that was British East Florida.

Turnbull's colony was an interesting endeavor that is important as a demonstration of mid-eighteenth century views about labor and colonization in the British Atlantic world. Turnbull developed a colony based primarily on white labor but also on African slavery. He did not use poor British citizens like Rolle, but instead chose Catholic Minorcans and Greeks. While the Greeks were not Protestants, Turnbull's rhetoric regarding their "industriousness" was very similar to that of the French Protestants Grant mentioned. Turnbull described their situation under "tyranny" from Turks and thought that they could be "industrious" under Protestant rule.¹⁸⁵ Like Rolle there was some benevolence involved. Turnbull hired slaves to clear the land and build houses for the settlers he brought with him. Most importantly, others in England and East Florida agreed with his plan and supported his colony financially and morally.

¹⁸⁴ E. P. Panagopoulos, *New Smyrna: An Eighteenth Century Greek Odyssey* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1966).

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 20 March 1768, DCA.

The Plan

The most important part of Turnbull's plan was finding cheap labor. Turnbull, like every Florida colonist was required to settle white Protestants on any land he received. Many men in England considered the best form of labor for this part of the world to be Greeks from the Levant. Both Dr. William Stork and Archibald Menzies published pamphlets that celebrated the Florida climate and suggested Greeks could be used to cultivate olives and wine.¹⁸⁶ Menzies wrote that they were "naturally frugal and industrious people, used to a hot climate, familiar with the cultivation of exotic products...and subject to the brutal tyranny of the Turkish conquerors."¹⁸⁷ Turnbull agreed and planned to import a large number of Greeks to a plot of land just south of St. Augustine. He intended to settle them on small plots of land on which they would produce staple crops for trade and food for their own sustenance. His plan essentially created a colony of tenant farmers mixed with slaves and the occasional indentured servant. Each colonist signed an indentured contract with Dr. Turnbull. Families were to be given a small plot of land on their arrival and allowed to cultivate it until they could sustain themselves. At that point, all of their excess produce was to be turned over to Turnbull until he was repaid for the cost of their initial sustenance. Turnbull explicitly claimed in his contracts that he would shoulder the burden of the transport costs. After each family repaid this initial debt, they were forced to split the surplus produce with Dr. Turnbull for ten years on top of what they already paid, essentially making them

¹⁸⁶ Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 11-12.

¹⁸⁷ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 451.

tenants.¹⁸⁸ Individuals were accepted under different terms in positions of servitude. The contracts indentured each individual for six years and paid him or her five pounds a year, half at the end of each year and half at the end of their indentures. Servants from the ages of fifteen to twenty served at half wages until they were twenty years old.¹⁸⁹ Turnbull commented in 1768 that these contracts allowed “greater advantages by half than any proprietors ever had in America.”¹⁹⁰

The language used to describe the Greek immigrants is interesting. While it was not explicitly racialized his descriptions of Greeks seem like something between African slaves and Northern Europeans.¹⁹¹ People who resided in hot climates were considered more suited for the difficult work of plantation labor in the colonial South. African slaves most heavily supported this idea in the minds of Europeans, but Menzies expressed a similar sentiment towards the Greeks.¹⁹² Like slaves they could be dominated, they did not speak the language and they were thought to work well in hot climates. In contrast to slaves, Greeks fulfilled the grant stipulations in Governor Grant’s eyes.¹⁹³

On Turnbull’s first trip to the colonies he took it upon himself to investigate planting methods and in South Carolina he sought, “the most intelligent persons in this place” with an eye toward “seeing their plantations.” “The Olive Tree thrives” he found,

¹⁸⁸ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 November 1768, Dundee City Archive; available from <http://www.floridahistoryonline.com> (hereafter DCA); Andrew Turnbull, *Form of Contract Between Andrew Turnbull and New Smyrna Settlers*, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 11 July 1767, DCA.

¹⁹⁰ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

¹⁹¹ Wood, *Origins*; Berlin, *Thousands Gone*.

¹⁹² Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 451.

¹⁹³ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 July 1768, MC 63, B4, SAHRL.

and “the silk made here last season is equal to the Persian.”¹⁹⁴ When he arrived in St. Augustine he noted that the climate and fertility, “far exceed my expectations” and he guessed that the climate would “be as good both for Rum and Sugar as any of the West Indies, and this without the least help or care.”¹⁹⁵ Throughout his first visit to the colony he composed letter after letter to his partner William Duncan proclaiming the fertility of the soil and climate. In most cases he went beyond reality: the “St. Johns [river] has rice land enough to furnish all Europe with that grain,” he claimed. He also thought the river “will furnish many thousand tons of fish a year.”¹⁹⁶ “The cotton plant is stronger and better than any I ever saw in Turkey,” he boasted, and “the Indigo plant stands the winter, which it never does in the neighboring provinces.” Turnbull thought, “the labor of ten men is equal to twenty” when the crop was raised in these conditions.¹⁹⁷ He planned to create a vineyard on his plantation and guessed that “figs [and] dried raisins will all become articles of export,” and “mulberry trees [will] grow well without care of cultivation.”¹⁹⁸

Of course one could find similarly overstated expectations for any new colony in America. Mart Stewart argues in his work that the trustees plan for Georgia did not fit into its environmental constraints. The cultivation of luxury goods like silk, wine, and olives and the land policies that structured the colony made it difficult if not impossible to become successful because the land was not suitable for these products. They were able to succeed only after these limitations were removed and land was cultivated under

¹⁹⁴ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 15 November 1766, DCA.

¹⁹⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 26 November 1766, DCA.

¹⁹⁶ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 January 1767, DCA.

¹⁹⁷ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 26 November 1766, DCA.

¹⁹⁸ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 26 November 1766, DCA.

the South Carolinian model.¹⁹⁹ Turnbull's plan was very similar. African slaves were considered unsuited for the skilled labor involved in the production of exotic goods, so he used them in a limited way.²⁰⁰ Since his goal was primarily to produce exotic goods, the only land that was valued was land that could produce those goods. This discouraged the cultivation of other areas that would be more productive in rice or indigo, crops that had been proven to be much more profitable in the region.

The Colonists

While exotic crops were certainly a feature of Turnbull's planned colony, he believed his settlement was unique because he planned to bring over people from Italy, France and Greece who had first hand knowledge of cultivating these crops. Turnbull thought this fact would allow him to succeed where others had failed. In one scheme, for example, he intended to procure "some able vine and olive planters" from Marseilles, France or "to carry a few Italians with me from Leghorn that... [possess] every chance of knowledge and experience in the cultivation of these valuable productions."²⁰¹ He seemed to be totally ignorant of the Georgia Trustee's similar intentions.²⁰² In expectation of creating a profitable wine culture in East Florida, Turnbull procured "some very expert people from the South of France."²⁰³ Referring to all of his European settlers Turnbull claimed that they would be very useful because they "carry with them the

¹⁹⁹ Stewart, *Nature*.

²⁰⁰ Oglethorpe, *Some Account*, 15.

²⁰¹ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 29 May 1767, DCA.

²⁰² Oglethorpe, *Some Account*, 14.

²⁰³ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 15 June 1767, DCA.

improvements of ages in the culture of many productions.”²⁰⁴ Turnbull believed the great benefit of European settlers was their knowledge of “different modes of culture” which to him “seem superior to [that] which is generally practiced in America.”²⁰⁵ His plan also assured he would be able to consistently draw upon that source of labor.

The key to the Greek colonists as Turnbull saw it was their suitability to the climate and type of work. Upon his departure from Italy he was confident in his own great importance to the British colonies because of his efforts. “Though this first number [of settlers] is small, I can see that it has opened such an emigration [sic] from this part of the world as will be of great consequence in America.”²⁰⁶ The conditions were such in the areas he visited that people were not able to find work. He believed his endeavor would convince many colonizers to switch to European laborers and that it was “probable that America would soon drain Italy and Greece of the greatest part of their working hands if ships are sent to bring them away.”²⁰⁷

Greek colonists offered other benefits according to Turnbull, since they would subsist “chiefly on fish” the rivers of East Florida would provide.²⁰⁸ Furthermore he thought that the Greeks “will find the labor lighter”²⁰⁹ than in their home country because he noticed they “choose to work hard in cultivating the little pieces of ground they find among the mountains, [rather] than live under tyranny in the fertile and extensive plains

²⁰⁴ Andrew Turnbull to The Earl of Shelborne, 27 February 1768, Bowood Papers, British Library, London; available online at <http://www.floridahistoryonline.com>.

²⁰⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 22 September 1768, DCA.

²⁰⁶ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 26 June 1767, DCA.

²⁰⁷ Andrew Turnbull to the Earl of Shelborne, 27 February 1768, Bowood Papers, British Library, London.

²⁰⁸ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 26 November 1766, DCA.

²⁰⁹ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 January 1767, DCA.

under them.”²¹⁰ He was so convinced of the usefulness of these people that he planned to fund ships to bring over up to one thousand Greeks per year. Some of the immigrants he would use as tenants and laborers; in other cases, he would sell off the contracts because of the settlers’ great usefulness and industrious nature, which he was convinced every other planter in America would recognize.²¹¹

At first Turnbull believed Greek settlers would be cheaper than slaves or other indentured servants primarily because of the conditions of his contracts combined with assumptions about their industrious nature. In commenting on contracts, Turnbull noted that

The labor of these people will not cost us half so much as is generally paid, besides the advantage of their being easily maintained, and of keeping the one half of the wages in our hands until the expiration of the term of years agreed upon. This will ensure their staying with us better than any other method I could think of, and at the same time saves the laying out of much money for wages till the produce makes a fund for that end. 212

He had a separate contract for families which allowed them their own plot of land. According to these agreements, they grew produce on their plots to repay their debt to Turnbull. Furthermore, the contracts required them to stay for an additional ten years beyond the payment of their debts.²¹³ They were more valuable than other indentured servants because of their “industrious nature,” their eagerness to leave their home in

²¹⁰ Andrew Turnbull to the Earl of Shelborne, 27 February 1768, Bowood Papers, British Library, London; available online at <http://www.floridahistoryonline.com>

²¹¹ Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, 7 April 1767, BCM.

²¹² Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 11 July 1767, DCA.

²¹³ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 November 1768, DCA.

search of freedom from tyranny, and their foreign language, which prevented them from being “so easily seduced away from their masters.”²¹⁴

Even when expenses soared Turnbull still believed in his plan. During his original trip to the Levant he had accepted nearly double the immigrants he originally anticipated. His scheme, therefore, required more provisions than planned, both on board the ship and for years to come in the colony. Despite this difficulty, Turnbull was confident in his success. He believed that

The engagements I have made with most of the families obliges them to stay with us as farmers for ten years after the cultivation of the land gives an advantage which ensures them on our farms for thirteen years at least.²¹⁵

As Turnbull stated simply to his partner, their “greater number gives a proportionate advantage.”²¹⁶

Turnbull also amended the indentures he had with the young single men to remedy his numbers problem. “Most of the first young men I engaged for six years only have now agreed with me for ten years in the manner I mentioned [that of the families],” they did this because of “the particular good treatment they have experienced from me.”²¹⁷ Turnbull further commented that these contracts allowed “greater advantages by half than any proprietors ever had in America.”²¹⁸ At one point he proposed selling them off in Carolina “at a high price since they are engaged for double the time usually agreed

²¹⁴ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 July 1768, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²¹⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 16 February 1768, DCA.

²¹⁶ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

²¹⁷ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

²¹⁸ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

for.”²¹⁹ Crop production in the first year, he thought, would be enough to reimburse him for the cost of transportation, even though the expense could reach upwards of three thousand pounds. Of course all this assumed that the Greeks would be willing workers. Given the harsh climate and working conditions and the fact they were free rather than enslaved, Turnbull had to believe in their strong “industrious” nature or their gratitude to him for releasing them from their troubles at home to keep them from leaving him and seeking greater opportunity in other colonies.

In short, his goal was to ensure “the country has everything which one can wish for to make the Greeks happy.”²²⁰ Governor Grant was enlisted to help provide for these very important settlers. He promised that all Greek settlers would receive the same quantities of land as a subject of the British Empire; furthermore, he promised them free exercise of their religion. Land was reserved in St. Augustine for a Greek Orthodox Church with small surrounding plots for “such Greek inhabitants as shall choose to settle in St. Augustine.”²²¹ Money for the first priest in the colony was funded by the Board of Trade.²²² These provisions cost Dr. Turnbull and his associates a great deal of money on top of the already significant expense of transporting their settlers.

In addition to the expense of the immigrants, Turnbull also planned on using slaves. Because of the need to find white settlers for his land, and the great expense involved in shipping them over, Turnbull went to great lengths to ensure the happiness of his immigrants. In 1767 Turnbull purchased forty black slaves with two overseers to

²¹⁹ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 16 March 1768, DCA.

²²⁰ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 1 February 1767, DCA.

²²¹ James Grant to the Earl of Shelborne, 20 January 1767, BCM.

²²² Report of the Board of Trade to the Earl of Shelborne upon Doctor Turnbull’s Memorial for a Bounty to Greeks imported into East Florida, 16 April 1767, BCM.

“clear land for provisions,” raise cattle and “to be employed with building houses for the Greeks.”²²³ One settler commented that, “Dr. Turnbull’s purchase [of enslaved Africans] is likely to turn out but a poor one. I was very sorry he bought the whole, some of them being dear at any price.”²²⁴ To make matters worse, the slaves he bought “were not good” because he “did not look narrowly enough at them.”²²⁵ Turnbull did not have experience in the slave market.

Perhaps the most important part of Turnbull’s plan was the hope of recruiting large numbers of Greeks. In 1766 he claimed that the Christian subjects of the Levant were “disposed to fly from the calamities which they groaned under in that despotic government.” Greeks especially would “embrace the opportunity of flying from that country of slavery and oppression.” Turnbull claimed that, “these repeated declarations from thousands of that people engaged me to petition his majesty for a tract of land in East Florida.”²²⁶ In March of 1768 he offered to sell off some of his settler’s contracts to recoup some of his costs, but he added, “I should be sorry to be obliged to put these families into the hands of masters who might bear hard on them.” Furthermore, he thought the “selling of them, as it were, would put an entire stop to our procuring more people from this part of the world.”²²⁷ When he mentioned the poverty and oppression of their homelands, he did it to argue for their work habits. “This collection [of immigrants]

²²³ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 January 1767, DCA.

²²⁴ John Graham to James Grant, 2 April 1767, BCM.

²²⁵ James Grant to Andrew Turnbull, 26 April 1767, BCM.

²²⁶ Andrew Turnbull to the Earl of Shelborne, 1 September 1766, MC 63 B4,

SAHRL.

²²⁷ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 16 March 1768, DCA.

is made up of good working people as they are all taken from great oppression and extreme poverty their being carried into a better country will have a good effect.”²²⁸

In spite of his good intentions and rhetoric of good will, Turnbull treated his immigrants like slaves once in East Florida. After he arrived it became clear that profit was Turnbull’s main goal. Almost immediately he mercilessly put his servants to work. Most of the servants were treated like slaves; sometimes they were whipped, jailed, or even sold to defray the great cost of shipping them over.²²⁹ By November 1768, three hundred people had died mostly from scurvy.²³⁰ At their trials for a mutiny that involved several of the young men Turnbull employed, each man recalled the harsh conditions they faced, including whippings, starvation, and forced contract extension. One man claimed he received fifty lashes for participating in the mutiny and, “after that he was chained for a month.”²³¹ Another Greek colonist claimed he “was beaten severely by Dr. Turnbull because he had knowledge of two deserters, [and he] was placed in the stockade and given thirty-five lashes by a negro on Turnbull’s orders.”²³² The most common complaint was forced labor beyond their contracts. Several men commented that they were threatened with beatings and starvation if they did not renew their contracts to work under Turnbull.²³³ His efforts to obtain large numbers of immigrants and the way

²²⁸ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 20 March 1768, DCA.

²²⁹ Piero Cozisacy to Spencer Man J.P., 7 May 1777, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²³⁰ James Grant to William Knox, 24 November 1768, BCM.

²³¹ Piero Cozisacy to Spencer Man J.P., 7 May 1777, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²³² Pompey Possi to Spencer Man J.P., 7 May 1777, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²³³ Giosefa Marcatto to Spencer Man J.P., 7 May 1777, MC 63 B4, SAHRL; Piero Cozisacy to Spencer Man J.P., 7 May 1777, MC 63 B4, SAHRL; Louis Morgan to Spencer Man J.P., 7 May 1777, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

he treated them suggest he was willing to deploy any rhetoric to encourage support of his plan.

The Support

Turnbull was certainly confident in his success, but he was not the only one. Everyone seemed to be excited about Dr. Andrew Turnbull. Lord Adam Gordon, the president of the East Florida Society of London said of Turnbull “He is a sensible active man and I think will prove a great blessing to so young a child as is yours of East Florida.”²³⁴ George Grenville invested over one thousand pounds in Turnbull’s endeavors, as did Lord Hillsborough.²³⁵ Lord Shelborne assisted him in purchasing and maintaining a sloop of war to be “continually employed in carrying Greek families from Port Mahon to East Florida.”²³⁶ Two other colonizers proposed grants near Turnbull’s and drew on his methods; one was “a great statesman.”²³⁷ Finally his business partner William Duncan, who was his agent in England and organized all his affairs with investors, was the largest private investor in his scheme.

Perhaps no support was as consequential as that of Governor Grant. On many occasions he “offered all assistance” in his power in “forwarding his settlements,” because of what he considered the “great public utility both in example and effect” of

²³⁴ Lord Adam Gordon to James Grant, 12 February 1767, BCM.

²³⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 19 June 1767, DCA.

²³⁶ Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, 7 April 1767, BCM.

²³⁷ Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, 7 April 1767, BCM.

Turnbull's colony.²³⁸ He always characterized Turnbull's character as "zealous, active and enterprising" and "likely to succeed in an extensive plan as any man I know."²³⁹ While this all could be merely a public relations gesture toward one of his most prestigious and well-connected colonists, Grant's later actions in campaigning for government support prove that he truly believed in Turnbull's value to the colony. In several letters to the Earl of Hillsborough he asked for money to support Turnbull's colony claiming that only a little was needed to start them off and "if supported they will soon be in a comfortable state."²⁴⁰ In other words, Grant petitioned the government "to lesson [sic] the expense of subsidizing those people till they are able to provide provisions for themselves." Grant went to this trouble because he believed "such encouragement would no doubt induce him [Turnbull] to preserve his plan, which will make the country flourish if it succeeds."²⁴¹ When New Smyrna fell on hard times, the governor was its greatest proponent. According to Grant, Turnbull "does as much as a man can do to repair the first fault of exceeding the number of people to be imported" and he believed only minimal support was needed to save them. In the meantime, Grant said, "I shall continue to draw upon the treasury for the support of the settlement."²⁴² From the beginning Grant and Turnbull believed the Greeks would be able to support themselves after a year.

²³⁸ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 3 January 1769, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²³⁹ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 July 1768, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²⁴⁰ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 1 September 1770, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²⁴¹ James Grant to the Board of Trade, 20 January 1767, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²⁴² James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 1 September 1770 MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

When Turnbull needed more funding, he was easily able to find it. His original recruitment trip through Italy, Turkey and Greece had been a long one fraught with difficulty. Ultimately however, he was more successful in recruiting than he expected. Financers of his scheme planned for several hundred people on the first voyage but Turnbull arrived in St. Augustine with one thousand four hundred settlers. He went through his original funding so quickly that he was forced, “to proceed with £1500 of my own money.”²⁴³ Other financers soon came to his aid. George Grenville sent him one thousand pounds, and his business partner William Duncan came through with more.²⁴⁴ Because of the extra provisions and the bribes he had to offer local governments to allow people to emigrate, the expenses came to be “much heavier than I imagined.”²⁴⁵ When his debt became too much for private hands, Turnbull, like Rolle, began to rely on government funding. Much like Rolle had before him, Turnbull argued that he was doing the work of the government. In November of 1767 the Earl of Shelborne agreed to give forty pounds per head of government money for each Greek settler.²⁴⁶

Reliance on government money became more and more important as Turnbull’s financial situation worsened. First he tried to get the government bounty of forty shillings a head extended to every settler, not just the Greeks. He argued this was necessary because he was doing “the work of the government.”²⁴⁷ In another letter he claimed, “as we have been doing the work of the government I flatter myself that Lord Hillsborough

²⁴³ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 15 June 1767, DCA.

²⁴⁴ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 19 June 1767, DCA.

²⁴⁵ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 3 February 1768, DCA.

²⁴⁶ James Grant to Sir William Duncan, 7 November 1767, DCA.

²⁴⁷ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

will not let this piece of service to the public go unrewarded.”²⁴⁸ Turnbull’s second petition was for increased money to support his colonists till they could provide for themselves. Grant was his strongest advocate, frequently asking the Board of Trade for money because as he noticed, “the expense of supporting so large a settlement will be found too considerable for private pockets.”²⁴⁹ Turnbull contended in early 1768, “all this being attended with an extraordinary expense, few will enter into that way of peopling except they are assisted by government in the beginning.”²⁵⁰ Not only did he want a bounty on every person he brought in, but he thought the British government should also fund a ship to gather more settlers to bring into the colonies.²⁵¹

He expected government funding even though he did not import “Protestants” as the grant stipulations required. No one criticized Turnbull’s plan even though he used non-Protestants. The government also offered a bounty to his settlers when they had not for Rolle’s, who were British citizens.²⁵² The Board of Trade even funded the construction of an Orthodox church in St. Augustine and brought over an Orthodox priest.²⁵³ The explanation for this is political and related to the goals of the empire as a whole. Turnbull found some difficulty in recruiting some of his people from the Aegean. The Ottoman Empire along with the French made every effort to hinder the efforts of Turnbull and prevent the economic expansion of the British Empire with any means they

²⁴⁸ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 7 April 1768, DCA.

²⁴⁹ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 1 December 1768, CO 5/550, Colonial Office Papers, National Archives, Kew Gardens, London.

²⁵⁰ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

²⁵¹ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 21 February 1768, DCA.

²⁵² James Grant to Sir William Duncan, 7 November 1767, DCA.

²⁵³ Report of the Board of Trade to the Earl of Shelborne upon Doctor Turnbull’s Memorial for a Bounty to Greeks imported into East Florida, 16 April 1767, BCM.

could.²⁵⁴ The removal of a great number of people from these lands resulted in a revenue loss for their home countries both in taxpaying and in future labor.²⁵⁵

Given the failure of Rolle's two efforts to use British poor people as colonists and the collapse of Dr. William Stork's plan to settle Protestant Germans, it is not surprising that Whitehall made a modification to their requirement for Protestants. Adding to this is Turnbull's expressed commitment to benevolence toward his settlers. His efforts rescued people from their "despotic governments" and from the "slavery and oppression" they endured there.²⁵⁶ These were "good working people" who needed only the opportunity to work and if given the rights and freedoms of Englishmen, Turnbull thought, they would prove to be great additions to the empire.²⁵⁷ This served both the economic and geopolitical ends of the empire by draining the labor pools of rival countries and providing the new colony with a base of citizens committed to the British government that would protect it against the Spanish. Most importantly, Turnbull argued the success of New Smyrna would prompt others to flee their homeland to live and work under the British government. He was so convinced of this that he planned to transport several boatloads of people per year from the Mediterranean to provide everyone in America with labor.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 27-28.

²⁵⁵ Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 28.

²⁵⁶ Andrew Turnbull to the Earl of Shelborne, 1 September 1766, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²⁵⁷ Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan, 20 March 1768, DCA.

²⁵⁸ Andrew Turnbull to James Grant, 7 April 1767, BCM.

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Turnbull's plans to colonize East Florida represent interesting ideas about labor and colonization. Because he planned to produce exotic crops, he sought the labor of Europeans. But, rather than recruiting German or French Protestants as Grant suggested, he sought Greeks who were Orthodox. Like Africans they lived in a warm climate and Turnbull hoped they would be available in large numbers because of the "tyranny" under which they lived. One of the reasons colonists increasingly turned to slave labor in the early eighteenth century was because of the shortage of willing servants and the cost effectiveness of slaves.²⁵⁹ Turnbull thought his scheme would solve all of these problems. Greeks could provide a labor force that could be dominated like slaves, but had the knowledge of producing goods that were valuable to the British Empire. The fact that they were not Protestant did not bother Grant. It is clear from the actions of the government in London that his settlers did satisfy the goals of the empire, especially if all went as planned. Furthermore, Turnbull had strong support in London from influential people such as former Prime Minister George Grenville.²⁶⁰

His plans demonstrate knowledge about both the situation in London and in the colonies. The regional economy in the southern colonies revolved around indigo, rice and cotton grown on plantations worked by African slaves. Turnbull sought to produce exotic goods and hired the laborers he considered to be best for the job. He also purchased slaves. Before his colonists arrived Turnbull planned to have 500 African slaves from

²⁵⁹ Menard, *Migrants*.

²⁶⁰ Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 18.

South Carolina clear the land and construct houses for his Greeks.²⁶¹ Though this shipment wrecked off the coast, he was able to purchase more. These slaves were eventually used as overseers to his Greeks who he saw as his primary labor force.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 58.

²⁶² Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 60-64.

CONCLUSION

East Florida provides an excellent example of the various views on labor and colonization that existed in the mid-eighteenth century British Atlantic world. Each of the four men studied here had different ideas about how to create a settlement and their preferences for labor were different. Oswald planned to use primarily slaves as did Grant, but Grant advocated any form of labor that could be completely dominated. Rolle at first imported the poor of England, but eventually relied only on slaves. Turnbull sought a cheaper method of obtaining labor than slavery, but used slaves along side Greeks. All four men disavowed the humanity of labor and all four hoped to make a profit in the Atlantic world. Grant, Oswald, Rolle and Turnbull were excited about the possibility of producing exotic goods like silk, wine, and olives, but after a little trial and error each man was forced to rely on goods common in the regional market place.

Oswald was a prominent Atlantic merchant. He had business ventures and contacts throughout the late-eighteenth century British Empire.²⁶³ His meetings with men like Turnbull and Stork influenced Oswald's early plans on settlement.²⁶⁴ Both Turnbull and Stork were men from the metropolitan center, inexperienced with the colonies; both initially planned to create settlements based predominantly on white labor. Oswald proposed similar schemes involving Germans after meetings with these men.²⁶⁵ By 1767 through his constant correspondence with Grant, however, Oswald was convinced that white Europeans should be used sparingly. His plans changed to include fewer white

²⁶³ Hancock, *Citizens*, 10.

²⁶⁴ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 2 June 1766, BCM.

²⁶⁵ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 14 March 1766, BCM.

Protestants as either tenant farmers or through various other means Grant would propose.²⁶⁶

Like Oswald, Grant had experience in the colonies and the Atlantic economy in general. Grant was a British military officer in the Seven Years war and served throughout North America. Eventually he ended up in South Carolina before he became the governor of East Florida.²⁶⁷ His experiences convinced him that slavery was the best form of labor for a southern plantation-based economy. Because the British government's grants of land created the necessity of settling white Protestants, the governor modified his views slightly to include any dependant work force that could be dominated completely. He gave the example of French Protestants who were not poor, but industrious in their work habits if they were given the right opportunities.²⁶⁸ This explains why he supported the settlement of New Smyrna and why he was so critical of Rolle. South Carolinian planters formed the basis of his model colony and he went through various plans to attract them. Grant constantly petitioned for increased troop strength to protect against slave revolts and he supported white Protestant importation in part to ensure that slaves did not compose a majority of the residents in the colony.²⁶⁹ The white settler stipulation was a thorn in his side for most of his term as governor, but he tried different ways of getting around it. The most significant way he sidestepped the stipulation was his encouragement of large-scale importations like those of Dr. Turnbull's to create a population of white settlers. Grant argued that these settlements would

²⁶⁶ Richard Oswald to James Grant, 15 March 1767, BCM; Richard Oswald to James Grant, 8 June 1767, BCM.

²⁶⁷ Nelson, *Grant*, 30.

²⁶⁸ James Grant to John Pavnall Esq., 30 July 1763, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²⁶⁹ James Grant to Henry Laurens, 31 August 1764, BCM;

encourage more Europeans to come to Florida and fulfill the spirit of the white Protestant rule by increasing the white population in the colony while necessarily settling individuals families on every plantation as required in the grants.²⁷⁰

Rolle's ideas about settlement were very different from Grant's and Oswald's. As a member of the British Parliament in 1761, his efforts at obtaining labor reflect the larger goals of the empire. These goals were: the creation of a community of white Protestants who could provide a militia against a Spanish attack and thus create a buffer zone between the more established colonies and Spanish Cuba; and colonization as a means for solving the problem of poverty and vagrancy in the major cities of England.²⁷¹ This is the reason Rolle used British subjects for his laborers. When he encountered trouble with his settlers, he petitioned the British government to help alleviate some of his financial burden on the basis of his "service to the empire."²⁷² Rolle's second effort included a few slaves in reaction to his initial experiment in East Florida in which most of his indentured servants fled.²⁷³

Similar to Rolle's scheme, Turnbull's plan relied primarily on white European labor. Beliefs about the "industrious" nature of Greek Catholics were central to his colony. Even though they were not Protestant, as the grant stipulation mandated, Turnbull's efforts fulfilled several different goals of the empire. Like Rolle, Turnbull chose his colonists because of the defense and stability they could provide against

²⁷⁰ James Grant to the Earl of Halifax, 21 August 1766, MC 63 B5, SAHRL.

²⁷¹ Bailyn, *Voyagers*, 430-437; Brewer, *Sinews*, 165-217; Willcox, *Aristocracy*, 156-170.

²⁷² Rolle, *Petition*, 83.

²⁷³ James Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 24 December, 1768, MC63 B5, SAHRL.

Spanish incursion. He hoped that the success of New Smyrna would spur a larger exodus of people from Greece and across Europe. Rhetoric often claimed these people were despotically ruled in their home countries and would become industrious colonists under the “freedom” of the Protestant British Empire.²⁷⁴ Attracting more people in this way would fulfill the interests of the empire in several ways: by depriving rival Catholic countries of laborers and thus taxpayers; and by providing an alternative labor force to slavery that did not draw labor away from England.²⁷⁵

The problem with white settlers was that they had choices. By this period in the 1760’s and 1770’s, the American colonies were integrated into the British Atlantic economy more than ever before. Opportunities existed throughout the east coast of North America for white men to obtain land and work for themselves. South Carolina, for example, offered money to every white settler that came into the colony.²⁷⁶ Even governor Grant commented on the opportunity available to white Europeans in other colonies.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, British citizens knew their rights and would not accept mistreatment or overwork, as Rolle’s colonists proved.²⁷⁸ This is why Grant proposed the importation of French Protestants and supported Turnbull’s settlement of Greeks. Grant thought that foreigners would be more easily dominated because they did not speak the language and were not familiar with British law or citizens’ rights.

²⁷⁴ Andrew Turnbull to the Earl of Shelborne, 1 September 1766, MC 63 B4, SAHRL.

²⁷⁵ Panagopoulos, *Smyrna*, 27-28.

²⁷⁶ Grant to the Earl of Hillsborough, 20 January 1767, MC 63 B5, SAHRL

²⁷⁷ James Grant to Denys Rolle, 8 July 1765, BCM

²⁷⁸ James Grant to John Pownall, 21 November 1764, BCM.

The British Empire was a vastly different place in 1763 than it had been only a decade earlier and East Florida is a good example of this. The British had over a century of experience in the settlement of colonies in the North American continent. By 1763 most of these colonies could be considered very successful. In these circumstances Grant, Oswald, Rolle and Turnbull had a vast array of knowledge to draw from when they created their plans for the colony. This experience had shifted notions about the role of colonies in the empire. Grant and Oswald represent ideas that were formulated in the North American southern colonies. Their plantations reflected the influence of South Carolina and its dominance over the regional market. Rolle and Turnbull represent ideas that were popular in London at a time when the empire was at its strongest and seeking to both solidify its control over its newly acquired territory and recover its debt from the decade long war. They sought to produce goods that were not currently available within the empire, and they sought to produce these goods using people who could become, or already were, citizens.

The development of East Florida must be understood in these terms. It cannot be examined independent of the British Empire or the colonial region as a whole. Each man who created a settlement in the colony did so for a particular reason that was the result of his relation to the imperial system and each sought to fulfill different interests outside of the colony. It was precisely these influences that shaped British East Florida. Grant, Oswald, Rolle and Turnbull did not act in a vacuum and their efforts should not be viewed that way. During the second half of the eighteenth century competing notions about the direction of the empire circulated in the British Atlantic World. East Florida is an excellent example of how these competing interests came into contact. Examining

East Florida in these terms most importantly argues that it was not a series of singular events and mishaps as it is often portrayed, but perhaps the first battlefield of the competing interests of the post-Seven Years War British Empire.

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