

1936

The Panton, Leslie Papers: A Letter of Edwin Gairdner to William Panton, 1798

Edwin Gairdner



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Gairdner, Edwin (1936) "The Panton, Leslie Papers: A Letter of Edwin Gairdner to William Panton, 1798," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 15 : No. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol15/iss2/8>

THE PANTON, LESLIE PAPERS
A LETTER OF EDWIN GAIRDNER TO WILLIAM
PANTON. BUSINESS AND INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

Charleston 9th Decem. 1798

William Panton Esq.
Pensacola-

My dear Sir.

I had yesterday the pleasure of receiving your esteemed favor of the 7th. Ulto: and as the Spanish Consul had to delay answering his letters another Post, I am happy that I have so much time to answer it

From Mr. Penmans letters you will fully know the train of the Ship Sister, which is and must be very favorable for the material points as to the proof of your being British Subjects is so fully established, by the Kings order in Council, which supercedes everything else; it was only a pity your friends did not make the application, for I have heard it as the opinion of Judge Jones that had such authority existed he never could have questioned it -his arguments on the Decree entirely depended on that ground-From what cause I am at a loss to say, but the liberality or even Justice of your quondam friends, is so strangely altered since the introduction of their *last partner*, that they are not the same people-with respect to Grants acting by their positive directions there can be no doubt; let them say what they please, for since I wrote you last accident put in my way a copy of their a/c with the Augustine House sworn to before the Lord Mayor of London, and sent to them for the express purpose of doing what he did-Grant never mentioned to me that he had such authentic Papers, but it was when I disputed that John Forbes was a Partner in the Augustine

House, in which I believe I am correct, that this Paper was produced in court-they are therefore completely disappointed for they sued on the Augustine Account only, well knowing that your particular concern owed them nothing-they therefore regret, and have expressed it, that they did not lay hold of Mr. Leslie when he was here

I must confess I ever had, the greatest opinion of these Gentlemen, but a circumstance that happened lately, in which the House at Nassau are more particularly interested, has astonished me much. You must have heard that the Brig Eliza from London for Nassau, was brought in here by a french Privateer, and the Vessel and Cargo sold-of course we defended the suit with the British Consul, who always appeared first, as general agent for the underwriters, and did whatever was possible-during the suit he had as well as ourselves their thanks, for what was done, and that all expenses would be gratefully and readily paid

It will give you great pleasure to learn that our worthy friend Mr. Leslie had arrived in London in good health and spirits I have the information from young Tate, who would not remain longer in Scotland, he will be with you in the Nancy.

Mr. Forbes has written you fully via Nassau per Sheerwater of his intention of sending the ship Providence to Pensacola for a cargo of skins-he reckons on her carrying two hundred Hhds but I am affraid from her tonnage that she will not carry that quantity-the brig Campbell, Greenwood, will also be sailing about this time but as her cargo is too trifling to be sent across the Atlantic, it will probably come this way, tho' shipping has been very plenty of late in Nassau-

I have just had long letters from Mr. Forbes urging in the most pressing manner our picking up all the Indian goods which we supposed would be con-

verted to another channel, and to your detriment-after much difficulty and trouble we have procured, by a previous application, every piece of blue strouds and two and one half point blankets which were imported in an immense fleet from England-the value for Charleston alone exceeded six hundred thousand pounds sterling !!! and from which I have got about two hundred and forty pieces strouds and about six hundred pair two and one half point blankets-forty or fifty pieces of the strouds must go to St. Augustine - I could not have supposed the avidity with which these things have been sought after by people from St. Marys and other places-Seagrove amongst the number has been much disappointed and would have given any money for what we have secured-There has also been many applications from East Florida-You would scarcely believe that amongst so great, importations, so small a quantity of these articles have come here, but the shippers letters have invariably declared that those articles particularly strouds were not to be procured on any terms-indeed I have the same information from persons who generally go home for their own Goods-From every calculation I can make you cannot have your order sent to Penman & Co. completed, and with you in less than six or eight weeks after the date you give it-with the best of good luck-we have therefore studied your former order and the things that were lost in the Nancy last trip, and have in addition to the strouds and blankets already mentioned added twenty five Hhds, excellent Claret, twenty cases etc. a few bales London Duffil blankets a little White Plains, Oznaburgs, Callicos, black silk handkerchiefs 20 doz. white bone handled scaping knives, some small iron potts stock Locks & Padlocks, mens shoes, knives, spurs, hoes, nails &. and repeated some of Mr. Forbes orders to different people here, and shall fill up with flour-all of which is actually our Property

till in your power to take it-it shall be shipped as you direct consigned to the Captain who is a very steady clever fellow-and inclosed you have a Copy of instructions to him. I have been very particular in my directions respecting Insurance, from every appearance however there is little chance of a disappointment. The Brig Nancy has lately been employed in the Havannah Trade and been met with by almost every Privateer out of Providence-the Cargo shall be accompanied with Oaths as to our Property which we can fully defend, and should it be detained one moment, be entitled to damages-In the former instance we agreed to let the Brig go to Pensacola for fifteen hundred Dollars, tho' we lost much by that last trip in Expenses, delay & and only had one thousand Dollars awarded by the Judge, yet we now send her at the same rate, but instead of Ceder would much rather prefer Logwood, at the easiest rate you can procur it, as we find it very useful for our vessels when they have light cotton freights-she has now undergone a compleat repair and must sail well-Our Maria really did wonders-and as we did not keep her a month here there is a chance of her doing as well again and that we shall have her out again in February-however considering all things, excepting the difference of size, your instance was nearly as good-As to the recovery of the Insurance yr. Nancy on the former voyage I feel perfectly easy, and have not the smallest doubt of it, even on the worst ground of your importing Goods so as to vend what you have on hand-and by that means draw from an enemies Country British Property which would in all probability be lost- You may safely rely on British liberality in every instance-

From the inclosed copy of D. Nicholls opinion you may easily judge that the result must be to your wishes- and the grounds on which they have to support the cause are easily come at-the proof of

your withdrawing your property can be most completely done in that instance, and your intentions of removing, from that Country are also clear from your letters to us-and that the Property shipped was in every sence of the word the Property of the House before the Declaration of war-You can prove from the best authority that the Governor of West Florida considered you a British Subject as he considered every one in your family-these are the grounds on which will depend the future Decree and that it will be favorable there cannot be a matter of doubt-I have often thought and I believe it true that our friend T. F. [Thomas Forbes?] was so sanguine of success in the first instance, that he did not give it that attention he ought, or perhaps this would not have happened-too much confidence too frequently ends in disappointment-Mr. Forbes has given us positive instructions about ordering the East Florida skins as we see fit-when Mr. Leslie left us he had an idea that some amicable arrangement would take place on his arrival, as they had not then, as he knew, shown any inveteracy to him-in consequence we shipped twenty nine Bales of cotton received in payment on his a/c from John Mc. Queen Senr. to these Gentlemen, but in a few days we must know his determination regarding the skins, which from the supplies we have sent that way will probably be upward of Sixty Hhds, or at least long before they can be shipped-Since I wrote you last, Mr. Yonge has been here for a Supply of Goods and I have the pleasure to say that he seems a very sensible clever fellow, and with Forester, perfectly able to do the needful there - it is a thousand pities Mr. Leslie did not leave Augustine for some time before - I am well convinced from the change in his spirits even while here that he is now a very different man, and I can assure you as fully able for any Business as ever he was-On his leaving us I gave him a string of hints and

memorandums, which I am sure would be useful to him-amongst the rest, a circumstance of Grants, which you don't seem to think possible-that he and Tom Young whom I dare *say* well knew were the actual purchasers of the Grenada Packets Cargo at public sale, or at least the greatest part of them, *and that I even heard him boast and declare he had made eight hundred Pounds Stirling by the Speculation by sending them to New York and Philadelphia* - In the name of God, how could Strachan & Co. intrust *him* with your property, and make him your agent, as they did in the case of the goods per General Pinckney, after they knew this transaction, which was notorious, and had nearly been the cause of giving a Decree against the Claimants in the Courts of Georgia, because he as agent sanctioned the sale-The whole of that Property which was valued by the Court at twenty thousand Pounds Sterling will be recovered from the American Commisioners at London, for which I have sent various Copies of all the proceedings in the Courts as well in that case as the case of the Eliza, Schooner Adventure, and Aurora, to show there was no lackness on our part to recover the Property from the hands of the Privateersmen-

The thousand Dollars shall be immediately paid to young John Mc. Queen-he is really a worthy and deserving young man-however as he is somewhat older than myself I need not be making such venerable remarks, and you must know him well-

You have also inclosed, Blank Certificates respecting the present Licensed Trade between Nassau and the Spanish Settlements-with a Copy of the Kings order for such trade-you have no doubt seen such already, but I have Mr. Forbes directions for sending them as you will see by his extract also inclosed -That has been a noble opening for, the British Manufacturers thr"out the Spanish Settlements, and shows how superior Mr. Pitt is to the old meth-

ods of warfare, where the ruin of trade was always aimed at - Our Cotton planters ought to rejoice, for it adds to the value of their article-that now sells readily at 2S - but the quality here is equal to any imported into London-if you could pick up a Quantity you may depend it would do well, however you can judge from your prices and the difference in quality- a great deal depends its being well cleaned -what I have seen from New Orleans has been very indifferent.

[International affairs. The Battle of the Nile]

I am much pleased to find there is a probability of a regular intercourse between your province and Georgia-it must be of immense advantage to you for there are numbers of letters waiting for months here at times, added to the great satisfaction you must have in being regularly supplied with newspapers, which you must find highly agreeable-I have sent a vast quantity to Savannah to be forwarded by this opp'y. much more I am affraid than he will be disposed to carry-but I have recommended to Mr. Mitchel not to spare a few dollars as I am sure you would not-From some of the latest of them you will find an account of one of the grandest Victories ever gained by any Nation-that of Admiral Nelson over the french fleet at Alexandria which ended in the compleat destruction of the latter without the loss of a single ship on the part of the British-But I leave you to read it yourself in all the real plainness of a brave man, who will be handed down to posterity as the greatest in his line-For many weeks have we been amused with fabricated accounts of this Engagement from all quarters of the world- and it will be a useful lesson to the french nation if they will take the hint, to see with what avidity all the Powers of Europe took hold of every account when the french were supposed to be defeated-This was an Expedition that engaged the attention of all the

world, for had Buonapart been successful, there is no knowing what might have happened-He is now in the Deserts, where it has been supposed he has been cut up with his host by the peaceable possessors of that barren country. His Plans of conquest were immense and had they succeeded would have deprived the British of "the richest Jewell in their Monarchs Crown"-By the next accounts from England we are in hopes we shall have an account of the Capture of a french fleet that lately sailed from Brest supposed against Ireland-the affairs in that unhappy country are now happily at an end-the foolish and ignorant part of them have fortunately seen their error, and their leaders have in general met the fate they justly deserved-But as to all these matters you will have the satisfaction of having them more fully and compleately from the various papers -part of which I must thank you to send to my friend Mr. Forbes, who will be happy to read such agreeable accounts of the fall of Rascality and that good sense and sound reason will ever get the better.

From the firmness of our President and our Commissioners in france, we have got a character in the world superior to those who have submitted to the terms, that rapacious Nation have been dictating for some time-We are now fairly at war with that Nation, and have our Coasts well protected from all such plunderers, by a number of armed vessels fitted out by the Government-From the repeated misfortunes that Nation has lately suffered, and the miserable situation of her finances there can be but little probability of her ever taking possession were they ever disposed, of the Floridas, as we have sometimes heard-

One thing I can assure you, that the moment france shows any such intention, a rupture between her and *this* Country will be the certain consequence, for the people in the Southern States will never have such

neighbors-or they may bid adieu to their Negro Property-for there is no altering the disposition of that people in so short a time, and as they have given up all their possessions of that description, they can have no interest in wishing that race of beings under any order-From the evacuation of St. Domingo by the British and the total expulsion of the Whites by the Blacks the West India property is on a very precarious footing-and God knows what the consequence may be-they have great fears on that score, particularly in Jamaica, and would willingly have been at the expense of maintaining the troops at St. Domingo, rather than that the Island should be given up to the entire power of those gentry whom nothing can ever tame but a compleat extirpation-

From Mr. Inneraritys letters I have taken care of young Tate, paid his passage and other expenses and supplied him with a stock of clothes as he directed, for the hurry with which he left London he was quite bare of everything-I think him a sensible clever young man but from *this last trait* think he still has something of the Indian about him-the amount of these advances shall be sent per the Nancy-Inclosed you have sales of the Rum per Shark amount of Nt. Pounds at your Credit \$2294-81

The Puncheons were old, in bad condition and have I dare say decreased in quantity-I have I think fully replied to your letter and with the newspapers given you all the information in my power.

I had late letters from Mr. Gordon-he was well-but much engaged in Business and will no doubt continue so till the war ends-when that will be God knows-for the prospect rather seems to thicken-let what come to pass - I don't think there is any chance of a Rupture between this Country and Spain -Many are laying themselves out for a connection with the Indians, and it has even come under the idea of the Federal Government, but from matters of

greater moment that is for the present laid aside-It is certainly an object worth your attention keeping your establishment on the Most respectable footing so as to make your terms, when it may suit you to the most advantage-

Your friends here are all well and happy to learn of your wellfare- I have made an excuse to Mr. Forbes for not writing him as fully as I could wish -but as you frequently meet pray let him peruse. this hurried scrawl-Jane Mr. Moodie and my Brother joins me in affectionate compliments and good wishes for your health and happiness and believe me ever My Dear Sir

Yours Sincerely
EDWIN GAIRDNER

Should you have a few Picanne Nutts Mr. G. will thank you-

[Endorsed
Edwin Gairdner
Charleston 9th, Dec. /98
Recd. ~~9th~~ 9th, Jany. /99
Answd. in part Jany. 10th. 1799