

1929

## Elotchaway, East Florida, 1814

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## ELOTCHAWAY, EAST FLORIDA, 1814

In 1811, when war clouds between the United States and Great Britain were gathering, the United States sent commissioners to Spanish Florida seeking a temporary cession to prevent its occupancy by the British in case of war. As might be expected Spain would not consent to such an arrangement, whereupon General George Mathews, representing the United States government in this negotiation, devised a plan to bring about a cession through the medium of a revolution of the inhabitants of East Florida, who would be assisted by residents of Georgia and by the regular armed forces of the United States. Such an occurrence actually took place in East Florida, and from March, 1812, to May, 1813, United States troops held possession of the province, except the fortified town of St. Augustine. The incident is known in history as the Patriot invasion, as the revolutionists called themselves "Patriots" in the cause of freedom. They organized the "Territory of East Florida," with John H. McIntosh Director; Daniel S. Delany, Secretary of State ; and B. Harris, President of the Legislative Council.

In the negotiations for the removal of the United States troops from Florida in the spring of 1813, the Spanish government agreed to grant amnesty to those of its citizens who had been associated with the revolution. It is interesting to note the attitude of the revolutionists in this particular, as expressed in the following proclamation : <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This and the following quoted documents are from copies in the possession of the Florida Historical Society, unless otherwise noted.

EAST FLORIDA

A proclamation

**Resolved**, unanimously, that the Legislative Council view with disdain & abhorrence the proffer of pardon by the corrupt Government of St. Augustine : that they will and do pledge their reputation & property, to support the glorious cause in which they are engaged, & persist until they secure the safety, independence, & liberty of themselves & Constituents.

Patriots of East Florida!

At last the corrupt Government of St. Augustine has come forward with a proclamation offering “amnesty to the Insurgents who have co-operated in the invasion, (falsely so-called), of East Florida.” Weak must be the mind that can have the least dependence upon a promise so hollow & deceitful. Can anyone believe that such a corrupt, jealous, & arbitrary Government will adhere to promises however sacredly made? Will they not screw every title of your property from you under the pretext of making retribution for damages done to Individuals who have adhered to their oppressors? Aided by a venal Judge, supported by a cruel Government, your enemies will harrass you as long as a cent remain with you. But it is needless to dwell upon the subject. The pardon no doubt has been manufactured in St. Augustine--the Government of Spain knows nothing of it--it is designed to entrap the unwary, thinking that you are depressed by the rumor (however false) that the troops are to be removed.

Can you? Will you, in poverty become the sport of Slaves & the abhorred Army in St. Augustine? It has been unanimously resolved by the Legislative Council, that they in their representative & individual capacity, will not receive the pardon so treacherously offered, but will proceed and act to the utmost of their power until liberty and independence are secured. We

call upon you all to unite, & by our joint exertions secure our safety, property, liberty, & independence. There can be but two parties:- friends and enemies. Those that are not with us will be treated as foes. Measures are now & will be taken to punish vigorously those who basely desert.

Spies & Emissaries will meet their just punishment.

Done in Council, 30th March, 1813.

(Signed) B. HARRIS,

***Prest. of the Legislative Council***

DANIEL S. DELANY,

***Secretary of State***

JOHN H. MCINTOSH,

***Director Terry. East Florida.***

Immediately following the withdrawal of the American troops in May, 1813, we find "General" B. Harris and a body of erstwhile Patriots conferring with the Indians of central Florida who expressed great desire to be at peace with the Patriots, in consequence whereof a treaty was made whereby the Indians lost a large body of their best land in what is now Alachua and Marion counties.<sup>2</sup>

Next in the chain of procedure is a "Republic of East Florida," (supplanting the "Territory of East Florida" of the Patriots) with an "Elotchaway District" whose capital was "Fort Mitchell,"<sup>3</sup> located a few miles east of the site of Ocala, probably near Lake Bryant. Here the "Legislature" met on January 25, 1814, and was addressed by the Director, General B. Harris, as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Gen. Pinckney to Secretary Monroe, *Secret Acts, Resolutions and Instructions* . . . . (Washington, 1860) p. 70. Also referred to in Vignoles, *Observations upon the Floridas*, (New York, 1823) p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Probably named for Gov. David B. Mitchell of Georgia who succeeded Gen. Mathews as Commissioner of Florida affairs.

To the Honorable Legislative: Council of the Republic of East Florida.

Gentlemen: I congratulate you, as being the first Legislative body, assembled in the District of the Elotchewan Country, a quarter of the Continent heretofore the lurking places of the most inveterate and troublesome savages, who have been instigated by British Influence, aided by many of the Slaves of the unfortunate Patriots.

The revolution which took place in March, 1812, has produced calamities of the most distressing nature. The Patriots have undergone many privations, opposed by the Spaniards, Negroes, & Indians, who have been supplied with the munitions of war by British emissaries. Very few instances of retaliation have been effected, & it is to be lamented that in defiance of the Laws & Regulations of the United States, that a certain class of people on the Sea Coast, who are engaged in an illicit trade, have been instrumental in multiplying our mode of retaliation, into crimes of the blackest dye. And at the same time are entirely unmindful of the losses sustained by the Patriots, and we hear no mention made of the unparalleled conduct of the Spaniards who have not spared even the unprotected Widow and Orphan. But, Gentlemen, it is a subject worthy of remark, that the perfidy of our enemies is not concealed from the Government of the United States. And from information much to be relied on their Troops will shortly take an active part against our enemies.

It appears to be obvious, that the Patriots should from this place send forward a Minister to the President of the United States, vested with full and ample powers, to cede this Country to the United States, & at the same time to offer on the part of the Patriots, to engage in the contest with the United States against all his enemies.

It will now become necessary for the Council to

provide ways and means, for the encouragement, support & protection of the Inhabitants of this District.

The necessary regulations to promote good order, and a due subordination to the laws of this Republic I trust will receive your most serious considerations.

The appointment of a Contractor <sup>4</sup> for the Patriots will be necessary, as also the appointment of judges of the Inferior Court to fill vacancies.

I have the satisfaction to state to the Council, that from my present impressions there is a sufficient supply of provisions on hand, to serve the Patriots until the ensuing crop comes in, provided there is no waste committed.

Be assured, Gentlemen, of my readiness to aid every measure for the prosperity of our Infant Republic, while I remain,

Your obt. servt,

B. HARRIS,

**Director.**

The communication of the Director was followed by a Resolution of the Legislature, setting forth the calamities that had befallen the Patriots and urging the appointment of a "Minister Plenipotentiary" from the Republic to the Congress of the United States. In all of Florida's varied and assorted history this appears to be the only "Minister Plenipotentiary" on record.

By the Legislative Council of Elotchaway District, in the Republic of East Florida, A Resolution, to wit:

Fort Mitchell, January 25, 1814.

The Legislative Council of the Republic aforesaid, considering the various dispensations of divine Providence experienced in this (not long since) solitary wilderness, in the course of the two past centuries,

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<sup>4</sup> The duties of the contractor were to supply food and rations for the army—a sort of commissary-general.

and when we view the situation of the former Inhabitants compared with those that now possess the soil, we are ready with every expression of gratitude to the All-wise disposer of Events, to acknowledge, his Providential hand in bringing us into the Possession of this most Fertile and in other respects most desirable part of North America.

It is a fact within the knowledge of the enlightened Inhabitants of the United States, that fruitless and unavailing have been the various efforts made to cultivate the minds & reform the manners of the Savage Race found by our forefathers, upwards of two centuries ago in possession of the whole limits now claimed by the United States and the Citizens of this Republic. Their heathenish principles still remain in them, & their cruel practices are the same. Unprovoked and in violation of their solemn treaty they in August, 1812, approached our settlements and with unrelenting hands, shed the Blood of our Fellow Citizens, carried off from the Patriots large numbers of their slaves, and pursued and killed others within the limits of Georgia, destroyed large quantities of other property and spread desolation and destruction wherever they found the unfortunate inhabitants of this Republic. All which depredations were committed by these savage and brutal hands at a time when they had but just before appeared most in amity with the people of this Republic and the Citizens of the United States.

The Citizens of East Florida having had their dwelling houses laid in ashes, their other buildings & their fences enclosing their farms destroyed and also being deprived of every Article of Provision, they, in order to preserve their own lives and those of their Families fled for shelter into the State of Georgia. At length gathering in a band, aided by the brave Colo. Newnan and their kindred in flesh and blood from

various parts of Georgia, they pursued the enemy into their own Territory and avenged the blood of their butchered friends. The savages in the action alluded to, under Payne their leader and king was put to the route, & with the loss of their blood, their lives & their king fled without the country that we now possess & for which we are bound to contend. And when we view our situation so contiguous to the United States and many of us raised within her boundaries and under her wholesome laws, we feel it to be our duty, and are grateful for an opportunity in a Legislative capacity to make a formal application to that Government to be ceded to the general Union as a Territory of the United States in a manner that shall ensure their aid and protection and instill them to our services on any legal application to meet the common enemy in the field.

Therefore, be it Resolved by the Legislative Council of the District of Elotchaway, in the Republic of East Florida in General Assembly met, That Wilson Connor, Esq. be appointed a Minister Plenipotentiary from this Republic to the Congress of the United States of America with the full and ample powers and authority to cede to the United States of America, the District of Elotchaway in the Republic of East Florida on such conditions as shall be plainly expressed in the Commission of the said Wilson Connor, Minister Plenipotentiary aforesaid to accomplish the object contemplated in this resolution.

And be it further resolved by the authority aforesaid, that the application as contemplated in the foregoing Resolution be made without delay, and that the Communication of the Director of this Republic made this day to the Legislative Council of the District of Elotchaway in East Florida, and this Resolution with the Petition of the people be immediately forwarded in an official manner by our Minister Plenipotentiary



aforesaid to the Congress of the United States of America.

(Signed) FRANCIS R. SANCHEZ,  
**President Protempore.**

Approved, January the 25th  
day, 1814, and in the 2d  
Year of the Republic.

(Signed) B. HARRIS,  
**Director.**

The following petition to Congress for admission into the Union was signed by one hundred and five citizens. This document is of great historical value, giving as it does the names of so many Americans settled in the peninsular of Florida in 1814. Some of these names are still perpetuated in Marion and Alachua counties.

The Citizens of the District, of Elotchaway In the Republic of East Florida met at Fort Mitchell, in Latitude 29 and 14 mins. on the 25th day of January, 1814.

To the Congress of the United States of America.  
Humbly beg leave to Represent:

That in consequence of the mild and pacific Government of the United States of America they notwithstanding their present flattering prospects, in their first attempt, to extend their settlement in this our solitary Country, feel it as a duty that they justly owe to the Government of the United States, at this early period not only to petition, not only to be ceded to the United States as a territory thereof, but to tender to them our services, as Soldiers now in the field, to aid the United States in her present struggle with the British Nation and her heathen Allies in North America. True some of us who are, Gentlemen, your present petitioners, were born within the limits of Spanish America, and others have lived many years

within the limits aforesaid, but in consequence of the various wrongs done to several of your petitioners, they are glad to meet the arrival of a happy day, to have it in their power to shake off the Spanish Yoke, and to assume to themselves, and they presume justly, the liberties designed by the Supreme Governor of the Universe, to be enjoyed by all his rational creatures. It is, Gentlemen, a fact worthy of remark, that at least three of your petitioners, and one of them a Native of St. Augustine by birth, have suffered in the hands of the Spanish authority in East Florida, in a manner not even conjectured by those who have not personally experienced the distress and calamity incident to a State of Confinement in a close dungeon, and all this for no other reason than a firm attachment to the American Government, which ever was, and yet is, felt by your own suffering petitioners. Others, Gentlemen, of your petitioners tho' living for years within the province of East Florida, had difficulties of the most serious nature to encounter in being deprived of the Worship of God. True, a man might worship the supreme being in private, or in his family in his own home, but public worship unless according to the established order, was strictly forbidden. Add to this, the Authority of East Florida did arm their negro slaves and furnish the Indians with munitions of War to scatter desolation and slaughter through the country, without regard to Age [&] Sex. At length our feelings were roused from a sense of the duty we owed to God, to our families and to one another. We flew to arms, and notwithstanding we lost an immensity of our property, and the lives of a number of Citizens in the first part of the struggle, it was not long before our drooping hopes were revived, by seeing a number of the troops of the United States in East Florida, and approaching the walls of St. Augustine. Believing that those troops were under the special orders of the

United States, our minds naturally looked forward to a happy day, when under the auspices of Divine Providence, aided by the arms of our American brethren, we might safely calculate on growing [gaining?] complete and final success. But not long before our hopes seemed for a moment to be blasted by the order for removing the troops of the United States without the Province of East Florida, we fled from the territory, leaving all behind in a state of confusion. Our farms, our stocks, we may add, our all of earthly property was left behind us.<sup>5</sup> To resume; the sword in this enfeebled situation at that crisis, appeared impracticable, and to sit silent while our heathenish enemies were triumphing in their unlawful gain was more than we would bear. Over-more we flew to our arms, determined to avenge the wrongs done us by the enemy or die like men.

So far we have succeeded & we are encouraged to believe that the hand of the Supreme Being is with us, and that under his special guidance, we shall e'er long be a happy people in the quiet possession of one of the most desirable parts of the world. We are now 100 miles south of Camp Pinckney, & within a few miles of Lake George-a water of the river St. Johns. We have 150 men at the fort and in the country now in service, and our number is daily increasing, and we venture to say that we hold the country or die like men. We dread no enemy; the United States only can route us, and as our bretheren we know they will not lift the sword against us. We hope, Gentlemen, that our Minister will be revived [received?] by you, & the object of his mission fully accomplished. We long for the arrival of a happy day when we shall be called on by the authority of the United States, as a territory thereof, to join his army to execute his orders & to

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<sup>5</sup> This refers to the collapse of the Patriot revolution of 1812-13.

show the world that the sons of America are bound to live free.

Signed at Fort Mitchell, Jan. 25th, 1814.

James Stafford	Jeremiah W. Daniel	Mark Atison
William Emmons	Thomas Prevatt	Jas. Osteen
David Cooper	Shadrack Moody	Isaac Osteen
Thomas Clark	Isham Hogan	Cornelius Johns
James R. Woodland	John Hogan	Wiley Harris
John U. Nalpus	Jeremiah Moody	William Johns
Solomon Lowry	Henry Hogan	Isaac Johns
John Bohannon	Jno. Gorman	Charles McKinny
Duncan Bohannon	Edward Dixon	William F. Murrie
Samuel Lamartin	Alexander Eliot	David Davis
Giles Ellis	Levi Callen	Abner Stubbs
Henry Tutchstone	J. M. White	John Bailey, Jr.
John Uptegrove	Danl. Blue	Shadrack Stanley
Francis R. Sanchez	Wm. Niblack	Wm. Stanley, Sr.
Ezekiel Alexander	Fredk. Slade	William Stanley
Joseph Crockett	David Hogan	Lewis Dewitt
David B. Williamson	Stephen Williamson	Jno. Bennett
T. Hollingsworth	Absolem Barden	James Hayes
Thos. Theop's Woods	Britton Knight	Benj. Hayes
Jones Bevan	John Doyal	Jessee Corker
Henry Nicholas	Hardy Lienier	David Baggs
Zachariah Roberts	Jas Lienier	William Gibbons
Enoch Daniel, Sr.	John Slade	Donald McCrummen
Robert Daniel	Capt. A. McDonald	Saml. Alexander, Cl
Simion Dell	Lt. Pliny Sheffield	Danl. Sauls
Wm. Daniel	John Mizell	Jos. Durriener
Robt. Purie	George Martin	Harmon Hollimon
Enoch Daniel Jr.	Jas. Nix	Ezekiel Stafford
Jno. Stafford	Jose Silver	Geo. W. Henderson
A. Broadway	Nathaniel Stevens	Michael Henderson
Mascey Dell	Stephen Stevens	Wm. Underwood
Allen McDonald	Wm. Cone	Allen Sauls
Thos. L. Hall	Jacob Summerlin	Wm. Rollerson
Benjamin Moody	David Lang	Burton Lowden

JAMES DELL.

***Colo. Comdg. the Patriot  
Forces of East Florida***

McKEENE GREENE

WILLIAM DUNENER [Durriener?]

[Endorsed on back of sheet] :

Representation to Congress signed by 105 of the Citizens of the district of Elotchawan and by James Dell, Colonel Commandant of the patriot forces of East Florida. Met and signed at Fort Mitchell in lat 29 14 on the 25th Jany. 1814.

Wilson Connor, Florida's first and only Minister Plenipotentiary, started for Washington with the foregoing documents on February 15th. A month afterward he reached Louisburgh, N. C., and wrote Secretary Monroe as follows:

To Honorable James Monroe Esq.

Sir : Being appointed by the Legislative Council of East Florida, to repair to the City of Washington, with full and ample powers to cede to the Government of the United States, the District of Elotchaway in the Republic of East Florida, and receiving a special Commission for that purpose, I on the 15th of the last month set out for the seat of your Government, where I expected to have arrived before this, but thro' indisposition & other unavoidable circumstances occurring, I have not been able to prosecute my journey, & least my delays should be attended with some unpleasant consequences, I have thought it most advisable to make a stand at Louisburgh, Franklin County, North Carolina, and send on my official documents to you, in order Sir, that you may in time, lay them before your Government, for their deliberations. I shall continue, Sir, at this place until I receive an answer from you, expressive of the sense of Congress on the subject, which I hope Sir, will be as early as possible. And should the determination of Congress be favorable to my mission, I will Sir without delay repair to Washington, or any other place, that you may see proper to name.

I have the honor to be Sir, with high consideration  
Your Most Obt. Humble Servt,

WILSON CONNOR.

Honl. James Monroe Esq.  
Secy. of State.

15 March 1814

The American government at the time was busily engaged in the war with Great Britain, and Secretary Monroe, sadly familiar with the recent complete failure of the Patriots and knowing the uselessness of another attempt at that time, in all probability discouraged the Minister Plenipotentiary of the District of Elotchaway in the Republic of East Florida from visiting Washington.

The District of Elotchaway comprised about 350,000 acres. Regular surveys were made and numerous claims staked out.<sup>6</sup> The lines were carefully run and marked and were mute evidence for many years<sup>7</sup> of another abortive attempt by Americans to wrest East Florida from Spain.

**T. FREDERICK DAVIS**

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<sup>6</sup> Forbes, *Sketches of the Floridas* (New York, 1821), p. 125

<sup>7</sup> Vignoles, p. 148