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SOME CHURCH HISTORY OF ST. AUGUSTINE DURING THE SPANISH REGIME

When the Spaniards evacuated St. Augustine in 1763 and 1764 they took with them to Havana all the altars, images, vestments, canopies, cushions, bells, and even the wax tapers of their churches, religious brotherhoods, and the Franciscan convent. All this sacred paraphernalia was in charge of the warden of the parish church, Simon de Hita, and was transported to its destination in the schooner *Our Lady of Light*, which cast anchor in the harbor of Havana about February 1, 1764.

The royal officials of Florida, the senior sacristan of the parish church, and the wardens of the brotherhoods were already at the Cuban capital, and were soon requested to give testimony concerning the acquisition and ownership of the sacred objects listed in the comprehensive inventory which was made by order of the bishop of Cuba. Some of this testimony was given by Juan Chrisostomo de Acosta, the notary public of the ecclesiastical court and steward of the rental fund of the parish of St. Augustine, who had charge of the archives and had inspected the record books of the brotherhoods. The information he gave concerning church history under the Spanish regime in Florida is rather full and fairly accurate. Other witnesses had been at St. Augustine for long periods, and corroborated various items of the notary public's testimony. Among these were Bachelor Juan Bernardo de Paredes, priest and senior sacristan of the parochial church and sub-agent of the holy crusade, who had been in charge of the sacristy since January, 1728 ; Juan Joseph Solana, parish priest and ecclesiastical

judge, who had entered upon his duties as assistant priest in 1737 ; Juan Joseph Eligio de la Puente, the accountant of the royal customs, who had been assigned to the office of the royal auditor at St. Augustine in 1739 and to that of senior official two years later; and Juan Esteban de Pena, who had served as royal treasurer in the Florida capital from 1742 to the evacuation.

A part of the testimony of Juan Chrisostomo de Acosta relates to the founding of the religious brotherhoods. He gives us the order of their establishment, and in several instances the specific years or approximations thereto. With the establishment of the Franciscan convent at St. Augustine, which may not have been until about 1578, the first brotherhoods were there organized, namely, that of the Most Holy Christ of the Holy True Cross by soldiers of the garrison and that of Our Lady of the Conception by citizens and soldiers in cooperation. Another early foundation was that of Our Lady of the Milk at the primitive hermitage of that name (in Spanish, Nuestra Senora de la Leche), without the walls of the presidio and a mile north of St. Augustine. This brotherhood was founded by native Indians and some of the men of the garrison "at the very beginning", according to Acosta. About the year 1615 the children of the soldiers formed their confraternity at the hermitage that served as the parish church. It bore the name of Our Lady of the Solitude. About a year later the brotherhood of Souls was organized by soldiers and inhabitants. These two groups also established that of Our Lady of the Rosary about 1628, and one named after the Most Holy Sacrament in 1655. The last of the confraternities mentioned by Acosta was that of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which was founded by inhabitants and soldiers in 1722.

Six of these organizations were canonically instituted, and were approved by the royal decree of August 31, 1688. They were those of Our Lady of the Rosary, the Most Holy Sacrament, Our Lady of the Milk, Our Lady of the Solitude, Our Lady of the Conception, and the Most Holy Christ of the Holy True Cross. All the brotherhoods, whether canonically instituted or not, were maintained by their members and by the alms contributed by devotees. The images, ornaments, and other articles which they used in their religious ceremonies, were their own property, as shown by the inventories and accounts of their wardens. The brotherhood of the Most Holy Sacrament had some of its paraphernalia sent from Spain in 1732 at a cost of nine hundred and fifty-seven pesos, according to the certification of the royal officials of Florida under date of July 19, 1733. It also had a baldouquin made in Havana about the year 1779 from part of the silver of a number of candlesticks no longer used on account of their old style. Its large parasol of crimson damask with a gold lining was given by Don Lucas de Palacio, knight commander of Castile of the order of Alcantara, a former governor and captain-general of Florida.

In 1662, when Antonio Lorenzo de Padilla was curate and Antonio Menendez Marquez, the accountant of the royal treasury, administered the rentals of the parish, a large number of valuable objects was added to its sacred paraphernalia. During the years 1664-1666 the brotherhoods and hermitage had suffered greatly when the English had sacked the town and carried away most of their valuables and a small bell, as shown by the inventories taken by the vicars at that time; but various devotees had contributed to replace many of the lost articles. The priest and judge of the ecclesiastical court during that period was Christobal Bonifaz de Rivera. He and Bachelor Francisco Sato-

longo were in charge of the rental properties of the parish. During the interval from 1674 to 1688, when Antonio Ponce de Leon and Joseph Peres de la Mota were the priests and Antonio Menendez Marquez was the steward, many important additions were made to the ceremonial accessories of the church; and in 1692, during the curacy of Bachelor Alonso de Leturiondo, who was also the ecclesiastical judge, and during the stewardship of Sebastian Grosso, a gold-plated reliquary for carrying the viaticum to the sick was procured, other articles being given by devotees.

In a royal decree of February 10, 1696, it is stated that from the beginning the church and chapel of the fort at St. Augustine received ornaments requested by the curate, which were paid for from the royal exchequer and from the allowance from Mexico. These ornaments and the vases, reliquary, missals, and the rest were in charge of the senior sacristan, and constituted the chapel's "greatest service and adornment."

In the inventory of the valuables belonging to the parochial church at St. Augustine an organ is mentioned. Nothing was found in the written records concerning its acquisition, but it was common knowledge in that town that it had been paid by contributed by the garrison and the inhabitants. This was confirmed by a royal decree of August 1, 1698, evoked by a letter from Bachelor Alonso de Leturiondo informing the king of Spain that his church had an organ and begging stipend sufficient for the ordination of a priest skilled in playing such an instrument, which the king granted.

In 1701, two of our witnesses state, the parish church was burnt by the enemy. They are here referring to the siege laid to the town and fort by Governor Moore and Colonel Daniel with troops and vessels from South Carolina in the latter part of October, 1702. The governor, Joseph de Zuniga, refused to sur-

render, and the siege was raised ; but before taking his departure Governor Moore burned the town, including the parish church, the Franciscan convent with its church and valuable library, and other shrines. He also carried off the church plate. Our witnesses tell us that the king many times ordered the rebuilding of the parish church and gave various amounts for the purpose, but that only the four walls were completed. For that reason and on account of their deterioration during the years 1730 to 1737, Brother Francisco de San Buenaventura Tejada, bishop of Tricali and auxiliar to the bishop of Cuba, had it rebuilt at the expense of the alms contributed by the inhabitants and the garrison as a part of the fourth ecclesiastical tribute belonging to Brother Juan Lazo de la Vega y Cansigno, who donated the excess beyond the amount justified by the royal order of October 29, 1737. Juan Joseph Solana, who entered upon his duties as assistant parish priest in 1737, testified that when Bishop Tejada arrived at the presidio of St. Augustine, ruin threatening the church, he ordered it rebuilt and Solana carried out the order at a cost of one thousand pesos, including a stone belfrey, the amount being paid from the rental fund. Another witness mentions the rebuilding of the parish church by Father Solana with its roof and bell-tower, and adds that he had the building painted. The bishop also found the church without vestments and ornaments for celebrating pontifical high mass, and importuned the governor and other royal officials of Florida to issue a warrant for one thousand pesos to supply the needed equipment, which they did. The bishop accordingly had Martin de Arostegui of Havana make the chasubles, dalmatics, and other things, which were used during the visit of Don Pedro Ponce Carrasco, bishop of Adramite and auxiliar to the bishop of Cuba. The valuables belonging to the brotherhoods were bought from their own contribu-

tions and the alms given for that purpose. While the church was being completed the hermitage of Our Lady of Araselis was assigned for use as the parish edifice.

Sacred utensils needed by the parish had been ordered in 1706 by the governor and the officials of the royal treasury in Florida, Jeronimo de Leon being the steward of the rentals of church property at that time. In 1735 Bachelor Juan de Paredes was the senior sacristan of the parish church and administrator of the rentals. The field-marshal of the royal armies, Don Antonio de Benabides Basan y Molina, sent gifts to it soon after he went to Vera Cruz. Other gifts were made by the bishop of Trincali, including images of St. Anthony, St. Augustine, St. Joseph, St. Peter, and St. Sebastian. Utensils were added at the expense of the rental fund by the priest Francisco Xavier Arturo, who supplied at his own cost a gilt altar, where was placed an image of St. Francis Xavier. In 1753, or 1754, new ornaments were obtained from Havana, as also steps for the great altar by order of the bishop and under the direction of Father Solana. The steward of the rental fund, Joseph y Izquierdo, remitted the payment for the ornaments by the hand of Dr. Pedro de Estrade, a resident of St. Augustine.

During the stewardship of Juan Chrisostomo de Acosta, the cost of the cupboards, silver-plated candlesticks, boxes for ornaments, torch-stands, baptistry, carpets, canopies, cushions, and rebuilding of the church were paid from the same income. An entry in the records showed that the two large bells had been destined for Florida by the king. The smaller one bore the name of St. Joseph, but was recast and consecrated. Of two small bells, one belonged to the hermitage of St. Sebastian, and the other was given by the captain of a vessel.

The testimony relating to all the sacred objects listed in the inventory at Havana was submitted to Joseph Antonio Galabert, the secretary to the king and senior auditor of accounts. He certified that according to the accounts, of which he had been custodian since 1751, he found no evidence that any of the objects had been delivered to the parish church at St. Augustine at the expense of the royal treasury, except a ciborium which the viceroy of Mexico had sent out of the allowance of that year. He also certified that he had heard in Florida that the vases, ornaments, and other things used in divine worship in the parish and in the chapel of the royal forces had been requested from the viceroy, and had been sent by him at the expense of the allowance.¹

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¹ Papers from Cuba-Bundle 372, General Archives of the Indies, Seville, Section XI. The typed copy of these papers is in the Library of the St. Augustine Historical Society, which kindly lent them to the author for translation.

