

2014

## James Grant, British East Florida, and the Impending Imperial Crisis, 1764-1771

Susan Schwartz



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](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### Recommended Citation

Schwartz, Susan (2014) "James Grant, British East Florida, and the Impending Imperial Crisis, 1764-1771," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 93: No. 3, Article 5.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol93/iss3/5>

# James Grant, British East Florida, and the Impending Imperial Crisis, 1764-1771

by Susan Schwartz

When newly appointed governor James Grant arrived in St. Augustine on August 29, 1764, the tiny population greeted him with all the pomp and circumstance they could muster.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks later, attended with “all due Solemnity” by the members of the Governor’s Council, civil and military officials, and “many other Gentlemen of Distinction,” Grant took his oaths of office.<sup>2</sup> As Grant thanked his subjects for their deferential welcome, he was unaware that he had entered into the beginnings of a political morass—an imperial crisis that would culminate in the separation of the American mainland colonies from Great Britain. In contrast to the kind wishes of Grant’s constituents, colonists elsewhere on the continent were beginning to protest new Parliamentary taxation measures. Within a few months, many of those neighboring colonists would rise up against their royal governors and other

---

Susan Schwartz is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at Florida International University, Miami, Florida.

1 James Grant to James Box, September 2, 1764, James Grant of Ballinallochy Papers (Jay I. Kislak Foundation, Miami Lakes, Florida), (Hereafter JGP, Kislak Collection), microfilm, reel 1. Charles L. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 14.

2 “St Augustine in the Province of East Florida,” October 31, 1764, National Archives/Public Record Office, London, Great Britain, Colonial Office Records, Series 5, vol. 570, Library of Congress, microfilm, no. 1337. (Hereafter CO5/with appropriate volume number, e.g. CO5/570).

British officials. James Grant's term as governor of East Florida coincided with the enactment of the Stamp Act in March 1765 and the implementation of the Townshend Duties in June 1767, both of which were crucial moments on the path to Revolution.<sup>3</sup> This path to independence, however, was no foregone conclusion. In the colony's first years, its "infant" status necessitated a heavy reliance on the neighboring colonies of Georgia and South Carolina, colonies which did side with the patriot cause. Such reliance put East Florida at risk of being drawn into the imbroglio between Great Britain and the American colonies.<sup>4</sup> As Grant's tenure progressed and East Florida matured, the colony pulled more firmly away from the patriot leanings of their nearest neighbors. This twisted path between loyalty and revolt, long ignored by historians, underlines the importance of proximity, contingency, and individual action in the history of the British colonies and the imperial crisis.

James Grant's term as governor of East Florida, from 1764 to 1771, provides an opportunity to explore such issues by evaluating and gaining an understanding of East Florida's response to the imperial crisis. Upon Grant's arrival in the colony, East Florida was quickly integrated into the British Atlantic world of trade, communication, and politics. Far from being a forgotten outpost, East Florida was widely discussed as a potential area for investment, and Grant and other Floridians were not provincials, uninformed about the goings-on of the larger world. Indeed, the colony's experience with the Stamp Act and Townshend crises demonstrates that East Floridians remained attentive to imperial policies as well as the corresponding colonial outcry against such legislation. That the colony largely accepted the Stamp and Townshend Acts without complaint did not marginalize or make the colony irrelevant to contemporaries; yet historians, if they consider the colony at all, have treated East Florida as an outlier.<sup>5</sup> Historical studies of the

3 These were acts imposed by Parliament to raise revenues in the American colonies. The legislation is discussed in further detail below.

4 Grant often referred to East Florida as an "infant colony." For instance, James Grant to Ensign Wright, November [11], 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, microfilm, reel 2. James Grant to Thomas Gage, August 27, 1767, JGP, Kislak Collection, microfilm, reel 1.

5 See for instance: Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Benjamin L. Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Woody Holton,

imperial crisis and the American Revolution consistently elide East Florida's role as one of the twenty six British American colonies.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, otherwise excellent texts on British East Florida neglect the earliest years of crisis, and instead position their examinations of the colony beginning in 1774 when Governor Patrick Tonyn arrived in St. Augustine.<sup>7</sup> With few exceptions, historians of British East Florida consistently periodize their investigations of the province during the Revolution according to a military timeline.<sup>8</sup> The American Revolution, however, did not begin with Lexington and Concord. Rather, a decade-long, escalating imperial crisis led toward that moment of no return. East Florida's existence as a British colony coincided neatly with this era of dissention. East Floridians remained loyal to the British Empire during the imperial crisis, and the colony's loyalty in these early years foreshadowed its ultimate trajectory in the American Revolution. The colony's allegiance to

---

*Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Norton, 1991).

- 6 Andrew O'Shaughnessy points out that there were twenty-six British American colonies: the thirteen "original" colonies, East and West Florida, and eleven West Indian colonies. O'Shaughnessy, *Empire Divided*, xii. The Floridas, however, are outside of the purview of O'Shaughnessy's study. Histories of the American Revolution from a southern perspective tend to acknowledge East Florida's existence more often, although the colony remains peripheral to the larger narrative. See for instance, Jonathan Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?: The Evolution of South Carolina Political Culture* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007); Paul M. Pressly, *On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013); Kinloch Bull, Jr., *The Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston: Lieutenant Governor William Bull II and his Family* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).
- 7 An exception to this approach is Roger C. Smith, "The Fourteenth Colony: Florida and the American Revolution in the South." PhD Diss., University of Florida, 2011. Smith argues for the military centrality of East Florida in the Revolution and outlines the importance of land in the East Floridians' loyalty. The crux of his work, however, is centered on the Tonyn administration beginning in 1774. Also see Smith's article in this volume. Another exception is Wilfred B. Kerr, "The Stamp Act in the Floridas, 1765-1766" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21 no. 4 (1935): 463-470. Kerr's work deals almost exclusively with West Florida. In addition, Paul David Nelson recognizes that East Florida was not "completely isolated" from the imperial crisis in Nelson, *General James Grant: Scottish Soldier and Royal Governor of East Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 67.
- 8 The most comprehensive works on British East Florida are Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, and J. Leitch Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1975). Both of these works, however, largely begin their accounts of the Revolution in 1774 and they dismiss the effects of the imperial crisis on East Florida.

Great Britain was a decision that hinged upon both local events and larger issues of British identity.<sup>9</sup> That East Floridians diverged from the path towards independence, despite connections with neighboring colonies that declared independence, raises important questions about our understandings of the causes of the Revolution and the limitations of applying strictly regional approaches when considering the breadth of colonial American history.

### East Florida in the British Empire

East Florida joined the British Empire in 1763 when it was acquired from Spain in exchange for Havana in the treaty that settled the Seven Years' War. While there were certainly those who questioned the value of East Florida's "sandy deserts," [sic] proponents of the colony envisioned a profitable enterprise in which returns might be made through experiments in agriculture and plantation development, timber industries, and land speculation.<sup>10</sup> James Grant, a veteran of the recent war, requested a governorship in West Florida before the British government had even completed the business of setting territorial boundaries.<sup>11</sup> British naval officer George Johnstone, however, had already been promised that appointment. Johnstone was displeased to hear a rumor that he might be appointed to East Florida, which he feared would be a less lucrative enterprise, and he promptly wrote a letter of complaint to then Prime Minister Lord Bute (John Stuart). Apparently, Bute

9 In terms of British identity, although East Florida was developed on a South Carolina model, the colony also resembled the West Indian colonies as portrayed by Andrew O'Shaughnessy in *An Empire Divided*. Within this work, O'Shaughnessy demonstrated that colonists in the British West Indies maintained "close cultural and social ties with Britain," which encouraged a sense of loyalty to Great Britain. In particular, the West Indies had a transient population, a significant imbalance between black and white populations, and a lack of a "creole" identity, all of which encouraged loyalty over rebellion. (xv) East Florida also had some of these characteristics, which may have compelled Floridians into remaining loyal in the American Revolution. My dissertation in process explores this possibility in depth.

10 For debates about adopting East Florida as part of the Treaty of Paris settlement see Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 6; Robert L. Gold, *Borderland Empires in Transition: The Triple-Nation Transfer of Florida* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 16.

11 According to Nelson in his biography of Grant, Grant requested the position in West Florida on June 24, 1763, Nelson, *General James Grant*, 44. George Johnstone, however, had already been promised the western colony as early as June 16, 1763. George Johnstone to Lord Bute, June 16, 1763, Ninetta S. Jucker, ed., *Jenkinson Papers, 1760-1766*. (London: MacMillan & Co., 1949), 157-9.

responded favorably to Johnstone's concerns with Grant being appointed governor of the eastern province while Johnstone obtained the same position in West Florida.<sup>12</sup> When Grant received his commission as governor of East Florida, he was pleased with the appointment, and he immediately began planning for the success of the new colony. In a comprehensive report to the Board of Trade in July 1763, Grant detailed his plans for the colony's development, including his suggestions for encouraging the settlement of "Industrious Adventurers" and French Protestants, as well as his ideas to produce a wide variety of commodities including indigo, rice, and naval stores.<sup>13</sup> Grant was not alone in his optimism for East Florida, and in the colony's first years, it would draw on a number of wealthy investors who hoped to increase their fortunes in the new province.<sup>14</sup> The efforts of the new governor and the colony's investors were intended to situate East Florida within the British Atlantic world of trade, and hopes were high that the colony might make "a very beneficial acquisition" for the British Empire.<sup>15</sup>

James Grant and the East Florida investors had grand plans for the colony's future, and they looked to South Carolina as a desirable model worthy of replication.<sup>16</sup> In the early 1760s, Grant had served in the Cherokee campaign of the Seven Years' War in South Carolina. It was during this period that he formed relationships with some of the leading planters, merchants, and other elites in Charleston and the surrounding area.<sup>17</sup> These relationships, and his observations about the importance of enslaved labor for South

12 Jucker, *Jenkinson*, 157-159.

13 James Grant to John Pownall, July 30, 1763, CO5/540.

14 Daniel Schafer, "'A Swamp of Investment?': Richard Oswald's British East Florida Plantation Experiment" in *Colonial Plantations and Economy in Florida*, ed. Jane G. Landers, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 11-38; Patricia C. Griffen, "Blue Gold: Andrew Turnbull's New Smyrna Plantation" *Ibid*: 38-68; David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); George C. Rogers, Jr., "The East Florida Society of London, 1766-1767" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 54 no. 4 (1976): 479-496.

15 *London Magazine; or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* March 1, 1765, (London: R. Baldwin, 1765):120, (American Antiquarian Society Historical Periodicals Collection, Series 1).

16 Schafer, "Swamp of Investment," 12; David R. Chestnut, "South Carolina's Impact upon East Florida, 1763-1776" in *Eighteenth Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, ed., Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1976), 5.

17 George C. Rogers, "The Papers of James Grant of Ballindalloch Castle, Scotland," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 77, no. 3 (July, 1976): 145-160, 148-149.

Carolinian success, ultimately shaped the new governor's plans for East Florida's development.<sup>18</sup> In addition to his connections with other planters, slave traders, and merchants throughout the British Empire, Grant depended on South Carolina's Henry Laurens for his expertise in slave-related matters and in plantation development. In a letter to Laurens, Grant arranged for the purchase of slaves on his joint account with a London merchant, Richard Oswald. Taking Laurens' advice, Grant requested "strong new negroes," not "Country-born," whom he deemed "to be full of Trouble."<sup>19</sup> Grant's interest in slave labor went beyond his own plantation ventures, and he requested that the British government purchase one hundred slaves for the general use of the colony. The governor suggested that enslaved people could be put to work on developing infrastructure and supporting the troops and other inhabitants.<sup>20</sup> Grant's plans for the new colony also benefited from the arrival of a number of experienced South Carolina planters who brought slaves, equipment, and expertise into the new colony.<sup>21</sup> In 1765, South Carolina planters, Francis Kinloch and John Moultrie began to develop large plantations in East Florida. Combined, they delivered to the colony more than one hundred enslaved people for their planned plantations.<sup>22</sup> Grant brought in still other South

18 Rogers, "Papers of James Grant," 148-149. Rogers argues that Grant formed friendships with Henry Laurens, John Moultrie, and James Coachmen during his time in South Carolina, and Grant turned to those men when he began to develop East Florida. Nelson also notes Grant's adamant decision to employ enslaved labor in the colony. Nelson, *James Grant*, 63.

19 Grant to Henry Laurens, July 16, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

20 For Grant's official report and the planned use of unfree labor for public works and roads, see James Grant to John Pownall, July 30, 1763, CO5/540; James Grant to Jonathon Bryan, July 4, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; Grant to Brigadier Bouquett, August 11, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. For the planned use of enslaved African sailors see Grant to [unknown], February 6, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; Grant to Henry Laurens, [undated], JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; Grant to Laurens, July 16, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. For examples of enslaved people being sent to East Florida, see James Grant, [Diary], January 13, 1767, and January 14, 1767, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1 and Grant to William Knox, July 15, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

21 In addition to South Carolina planters, East Florida also benefited from investors around the globe including London merchants and Members of Parliament. See Hancock, *Citizens*, 153-171 and Rogers, "East Florida Society," 479-496.

22 By July 1765, Moultrie had already brought in thirty to forty slaves to work on his East Florida plantation. Francis Kinloch brought in eighty persons. Both men were South Carolina planters who expected to expand their investments in the new colony. James Grant to William Knox, July 15, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. Grant himself purchased forty slaves to work on his own plantation, Nelson, *James Grant*, 65.

Carolínians to act in leadership positions within the new colony. While East Florida had no popular assembly, it did have a Council, which assisted the governor in legislative matters and shared some of Grant's executive power.<sup>23</sup> Grant filled these offices with South Carolina elites including James Moultrie, who also served as Chief Justice, John Moultrie, John Ainslie, John Holmes, and William Drayton, the latter later assuming the position of chief justice.<sup>24</sup> These relationships with South Carolínians demonstrate the fluidity of movement between East Florida and the other southern colonies. Such linkages would prove crucial to East Florida's survival during the colony's first years of development, but the connections would also put East Florida at risk from political discord spreading from the neighboring colonies.

Grant, South Carolina planters, and investors from across the British Atlantic, utilized their knowledge of large-scale slave-based agricultural production within East Florida. Investors hoped that their expenditures would soon turn profitable, but they understood that it would take some time before the colony would be productive. The colony's planters experimented with a variety of produce, and they conjectured on the climate and soil, speculating that East Florida's latitudinal similarity to the Mediterranean would make the colony suitable for wine making.<sup>25</sup> East Florida planters also sought out competent overseers, and they made substantial investments in unfree labor and agricultural equipment to be used on burgeoning rice, cotton, and indigo plantations.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding these efforts, it was clear that the colony's first years might prove precarious. Grant recognized that the establishment of a colony, which had very little agricultural development or infrastructure, would be costly in its early stages of settlement.<sup>27</sup> The new governor expected that these expenditures would be temporary, and he predicted that the colony would be self-supporting within five years.<sup>28</sup> This was not an unreasonable timeframe for Grant to assume. While South Carolina took nearly seventy years to become one of the wealthiest colonies on the North American mainland, neighboring Georgia, which had recently

23 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 40-41.

24 *Ibid.*, 14-15; 44.

25 James Grant to Richard Oswald, September 20, 1764, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to [Mr.] Cheap, May 7, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 10.

26 Hancock, *Citizens*, 153.

27 James Grant to John Pownall, July 30, 1763, CO5/540.

28 *Ibid.*



taken up South Carolina's model of plantation development, took only four years to start realizing profits after adopting slavery in 1752.<sup>29</sup> In the meantime, East Florida would rely on the British government to support the civil establishment, to provide bounties on produce, to furnish presents for the Creek and other Native American populations, and to finance a military force within the colony.<sup>30</sup> Thus, while Grant and East Florida investors planned for the future, Parliament calculated how to finance the added costs of a larger empire. It was this search for revenue that would be the impetus for the imperial crisis, and as Parliament implemented new taxes to cover the expenses of an expanding empire, American colonists increasingly united in protest against unwanted revenue-raising legislation.

### **The Imperial Crisis and East Florida: a Neglected Connection**

The establishment of East Florida as a British colony coincided with and related to the early stages of the imperial crisis. In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, Great Britain gained vast territories on the North American continent, which increased the empire's expenses for the defense and support of new domains like East Florida.<sup>31</sup> Unwilling to burden further the population of Great Britain with additional taxes, Prime Minister George Grenville and the members of Parliament looked to the American colonies for revenue.<sup>32</sup> Grenville and Parliament began with the Sugar Act in 1764, which was the first open and direct tax on Americans.<sup>33</sup> Soon thereafter, Parliament enacted the Currency Act to better regulate commerce and the monetary system of the American colonies. Within the year, Grenville began to sketch out the Stamp Act, which would offset the costs "of defending, protecting, and

29 Pressly, *Rim of the Caribbean*, 192; 153.

30 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 34-41.

31 The revenues gained from the Sugar and Stamp Acts were designed to pay for defense, while the Townshend Act (mentioned later) would support the civil establishments of the colonies.

32 John L. Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and the Genesis of the Stamp Act, 1763-1765* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 16-7. The British already were heavily in debt primarily because of the expense of the Seven Years' War.

33 Peter D. G. Thomas, "The Grenville Program, 1763-1765." in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, ed. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 119; Susan Schwartz, "Merchant Political Mobility during the Imperial Crises: The Impact of London and Northeastern American Merchants on Parliament and Colonial Policy, 1765-1775" *Atlantic Millennium* 10 (Fall 2011): 57-81, 1.

securing” East Florida and the other recent colonial acquisitions.<sup>34</sup> When the Stamp Act resulted in mass unrest within the American colonies, Parliament quickly repealed the legislation. The seeds of Revolution, however, had been sown, and Americans increasingly came to question Parliament’s authority in matters of taxation.<sup>35</sup> Following a brief respite in the animosities between Americans and the British government, the imperial crisis resurfaced in 1767 with the enactment of the Townshend duties. The Townshend Act was intended to contribute towards the costs of defending the colonies as well as to fund the civil establishment in colonies, like East Florida, which were unable to support themselves.<sup>36</sup> Once again, American colonists dissented against the new taxes.<sup>37</sup> Although East Floridians would not participate in these protests in a significant way, their role as beneficiaries of the new revenue policies put them squarely in the middle of the imperial crisis.

As the rift over taxation between Great Britain and her American colonies grew, there were those who blamed East Florida and the other newly acquired North American territories for the latest revenue raising measures. Massachusetts assemblyman James Otis, writing under the pseudonym John Hampden, for instance, insisted that the colonies had never been an expense to the British government until “ill judged” efforts were made to settle “Georgia and Nova Scotia, [and] Florida.”<sup>38</sup> Before the Seven Years’ War,

34 Great Britain. *Anno Regni Georgii III. Regis Magnae Britanniae, Franciae, & Hiberniae, Quinto: At the Parliament Begun and Holden at Westminster, the Nineteenth Day of May, Anno Dom. 1761, in the First Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord George the Third ... and from Thence Continued by Several Prorogations to the Tenth Day of January, 1765, Being the Fourth Session of the Twelfth Parliament of Great Britain.* (London: Edes & Gill, 1765). (Early American Imprints, first series, no. 9986). In the Treaty of Paris, 1763, which ended the Seven Years’ War, Great Britain obtained all of the territory east of the Mississippi River, which included East and West Florida, as well as French Canada.

35 Edmund S. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, reprint edition 1995); Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 93, 110

36 Great Britain, Parliament, [“The Townshend Act”], *The Avalon Project*, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/townsend\\_act\\_1767.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/townsend_act_1767.asp) (accessed May 30, 2014)

37 Peter D. G. Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution, 1767-1776* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 76. Thomas notes that the colonial protests against the Townshend Acts proceeded more slowly than the reactions against the Stamp Act.

38 James Otis, “John Hampden to William Pym” *Pennsylvania Gazette* January 23, 1766. (Accessible Archives) William A. Pencak, identifies Otis as “Hampden” in “From Racket to Natural Law: The Permutation of Smuggling into Free

Otis continued, the colonies had not incurred any significant costs to Great Britain.<sup>39</sup> “Junius Americanus” also attacked the acquisition of East Florida. According to the pseudonymous author, “the two Floridas” would never “be made useful, or advantageous to the State.”<sup>40</sup> The author went on to decry the costs associated with maintaining the governments of the two colonies, which he claimed, offered “nothing but diseases and lamentation.”<sup>41</sup> Pennsylvania assemblyman, and future representative to the Continental Congress John Dickinson, was also full of contempt for East Florida in his *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. Writing about the latest colonial acquisitions including Canada, Nova Scotia, and the two Floridas, Dickinson questioned the “justice” in charging the American colonists for the defense of new provinces.<sup>42</sup> Dickinson reasoned that these recently obtained territories offered no benefit to the other, more established colonies, and he went on to argue that as Great Britain would be the only beneficiary of expanded colonial development, the imperial government “alone ought to maintain them.”<sup>43</sup> Dickinson’s letters were of particular significance during the imperial crisis, with reprintings throughout the American colonies.<sup>44</sup> This widespread publicity likely put East Florida firmly in the minds of Americans as they pondered the burdens being imposed in far-away London.

While Parliamentary measures resulted in protests, riots, and other disturbances throughout the British colonies, Grant and his constituents in East Florida experienced little dissent. The Floridians’ relative lack of participation in the unrest stemmed from a number of sources. First, the new colony had a small and transient population that was unwilling and unable to engage in the kind of mass unrest found in other more established colonies.<sup>45</sup> East Florida’s plantations were “thinly scattered” across the

---

Trade” ed., William A. Pencak, *Contested Commonwealths: Essays in American History* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011), 303. Pencak notes that the pseudonym was meant to suggest that Americans “suffered under grievances equal to those which provoked the English Civil War.”

39 Otis, “John Hampden to William Pym.”

40 *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, October 2, 1769.

41 *Ibid.*

42 [John Dickinson], *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (Philadelphia: David Hall and William Sellers, 1768), 40.

43 [Dickinson], 42. Dickinson went on to decry the support of civil establishments as well. Emphasis in original.

44 Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*, 155. Middlekauf writes that Dickinson’s letters were printed in “all but four colonial newspapers.”

45 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 34; Nelson, *General James Grant*, 67.

northern half of the peninsula and there were probably no more than 3,000 settlers even as late as 1771.<sup>46</sup> Second, East Floridians benefitted from their relationship with the mother country and many of the first English colonists, like Grant, relied on the British Empire for their salaries, bounties on agriculture, and military expenditures.<sup>47</sup> Georgia had been the first colony to be subsidized by British taxation, and the latest colonial acquisitions of East and West Florida and Nova Scotia benefitted from that precedent.<sup>48</sup> In 1764 alone East Florida received £5,700 in salaries, a fund for expenses, and a bounty on silk cultivation.<sup>49</sup> West Florida, Georgia, and Nova Scotia received similar amounts. Few recipients of royal largess wanted to risk their source of income by openly protesting British policy, and since the inhabitants of East Florida generally paid no taxes, they had little about which to complain.<sup>50</sup> Finally, East Florida lacked a popular assembly, the institution in other colonies that provided Americans with a vehicle for and the experience in opposing royal authority.<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the most important reason explaining East Florida's mild response to the imperial crisis was Grant himself. With respect to the assembly, for instance, Grant was clear in his motives for not allowing the popular form of government. "I can manage people singly," he wrote, but "when I talk to them in a body it might not be so easy to convince them what was right."<sup>52</sup> Instead, Grant relied on informal meetings and dinners in his home, in which all residents

46 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 58; 64.

47 For the benefits that East Florida received, see Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 34-40; Nelson, *James Grant*, 67.

48 For reference to Georgia see, Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001): 241. Mowat also notes that these subsidies were common for "infant" colonies in the British Empire, Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 35. Newspapers and British magazines support Mowat's view, and the sources demonstrate that East and West Florida, Georgia, and Nova Scotia consistently received Parliamentary grants for their support. Ibid; "Savannah, October 8" *Georgia Gazette* October 8, 1766; "Miscellaneous [sic] Articles of Expence [sic]" *Boston Evening Post* July 23, 1764; *Boston Post-Boy* August 12, 1765.

49 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 35. Even as late as 1768 East Florida still received annual subsidies of £4750. *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1767*, fifth edition (London: J. Dodesly, 1796) (archive.org) <http://www.archive.org/details/annualregisteror1767londonduoft>, accessed August 11, 2014; 218; Mowat, *British Province*, 36.

50 Nelson, *James Grant*, 67; Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 34.

51 For the lack of assembly in East Florida see, Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 34. For the idea that colonial assemblies provided training for opposition, see Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home*, 1-25.

52 James Grant to Duke Atholl, December 24, 1768, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

were welcome.<sup>53</sup> Grant's letterbooks contain numerous references to dinner parties, in which the governor and his guests sometimes consumed as many as twelve bottles of wine in a single evening.<sup>54</sup> According to Grant, he rarely had "less than six and often ten at [his] table."<sup>55</sup> By cultivating friendly relationships with and between other East Floridians, Grant could maintain peace between his constituents. Consequently, while the colonists throughout the rest of the mainland increasingly factionalized against British officials, East Floridians remained "united" under Grant's governance.<sup>56</sup> Grant also interceded in every aspect of the colony's development. In addition to his not-insubstantial civil authority, Grant appointed himself as an unofficial intermediary between colonial overseers and the proprietors with large landholdings. Whenever possible he personally mediated arguments and dissention between his colonists. Grant could hardly be considered a "martinet," as some contemporaries suggested, but it was true that he promoted his plans for the colony with vigor, and he had little tolerance for popular government, "levelling," or disorder in East Florida.<sup>57</sup>

### East Florida and the Stamp Act<sup>58</sup>

Grant's authority and charismatic leadership were put to the test early in his tenure when Parliament enacted the Stamp Act. The act, which was to go into effect on "Black Friday," November 1, 1765, provoked outspoken, violent, and extralegal protest from many American mainland colonists. From Boston to Charleston, Americans reacted to the stamp duties with petitions, riots, and nonimportation agreements.<sup>59</sup> Angry colonists burned effigies of

53 James Grant to Christopher D'Oyly, October 10, 1767, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

54 [James Grant's Diary], February 6, 1767, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

55 James Grant to William Knox, May 6, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

56 James Grant to Duke Atholl, December 24, 1768, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

57 Nelson, *James Grant*, 71. Nelson agrees that those who called Grant a 'martinet' or 'autocrat' were mistaken, and believes those rumors came from a rift between the governor and Wilhem Gerard De Brahm. De Brahm was disappointed that Grant had dismissed him from his position as surveyor and he also blamed Grant when he was "passed over for the job of governing East Florida." Nelson, *James Grant*, 71. For Grant's contempt for "levelling American heads" see James Grant to Duke Atholl, December 24, 1768, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

58 An earlier version of this research entitled "Imperial Crisis in British East Florida" was presented at the 2013 Florida Conference of Historians annual meeting.

59 There is only one scholarly work that deals specifically with the Stamp Act in the Floridas. Despite its title, however, it relegates East Florida to a couple of paragraphs and the remainder of the work is about West Florida. See Wilfred

stamp officers, tarred and feathered supporters of the Act, and destroyed the property of royal governors. In Charleston, the Sons of Liberty forced the stamp officers to resign under threats of violence.<sup>60</sup> In Savannah, where the stamp officer's arrival had been delayed, the governor himself was threatened by an angry mob said to be led by the Sons of Liberty.<sup>61</sup> In East Florida, there was no similar reaction; while their northern neighbors railed against the Stamp duties, clamoring about their rights as Englishmen, East Floridians remained relatively quiet. This is not to say, however, that East Florida was isolated from the crisis. Rather, East Florida's reliance upon its neighbors in South Carolina and Georgia for supplies and communications ensured that Floridians would be vulnerable to disruptions in trade during the Stamp Act crisis. Moreover, East Florida's proximity to its neighbors left Floridians acutely exposed to threats of unrest from across its borders. Indeed, Georgia's experience with Stamp Act riots were attributed to South Carolina Sons of Liberty, and Grant was well aware of the dangers posed by those protestors in the neighboring colonies.<sup>62</sup>

As part of the British Empire, East Florida was integrated quickly into the trade and communication routes of the Atlantic community. Consequently, disruptions to shipping in the neighboring provinces had a deleterious effect on East Florida.

---

B. Kerr, "The Stamp Act in the Floridas, 1765-1766" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21 no. 4 (1935): 463-470. For general accounts of the Stamp Act see: Edmund S. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*; P. D. G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1918); Charles McLean Andrews, *The Boston Merchants and the Non-Importation Movement* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1916); Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Norton, 1991); Breen, *Marketplace*; Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule at Home?*; Pressly, *Rim of the Caribbean*; John L. Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and the Genesis of the Stamp Act, 1763-1765* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982).

60 "Charles Town, October 30" *South Carolina Gazette*, October 31, 1765.

61 ["Extract of a letter from Georgia, dated Jan. 6, 1766"] *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, January 21, 1766.

62 Much of the protest effort in Georgia came from South Carolina Sons of Liberty who sent representatives into Georgia to recruit more rioters. Kinloch Bull, Jr., *The Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston: Lieutenant Governor William Bull II and his Family* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); 125. Also see, William Drayton to James Grant, November 3, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; and William Simpson to James Grant, February 14, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 10.

In South Carolina and Georgia, all variety of business came to a standstill as stamp officials refused to execute their offices, and royal governors hid stamped paper away from angry mobs.<sup>63</sup> According to South Carolina's Lieutenant Governor, William Bull, the "law, admiralty, and ecclesiastical" courts were closed, there were no land grants issued, and all shipping was halted as the ports were closed for lack of stamps.<sup>64</sup> In short, Bull summarized, "every transaction requiring stamps [was] at a stand."<sup>65</sup> With shipping lines closed, the movement of people into East Florida became increasingly difficult. For instance, East Florida Chief Justice William Drayton complained that he was having trouble getting passage to St. Augustine, as no ships could be cleared.<sup>66</sup> The obstacles to shipping also slowed the flow of other potential colonists into East Florida. Grant was concerned that any settlement plans would be delayed, perhaps by a year, because there were no "means of transporting" people and supplies into the colony.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the Stamp Act crisis, Grant remained cognizant of the difficulties that the rest of the colonies were facing, and he worried that these "unlucky Disturbances" in the neighboring provinces would affect East Florida as well.<sup>68</sup> His apprehensions proved prescient. South Carolina and Georgia were major entrepôts for East Florida's supplies, and Grant's colony depended heavily on those places for food, supplies, and manufactures.<sup>69</sup> In large part, East Florida's reliance upon its neighbors stemmed from a less than adequate port system of its own. St. Augustine's harbor was difficult to enter, and direct shipments into East Florida were challenging. This was because large ships that brought goods from Great Britain could not cross the bar at the harbor entrance so products had to be offloaded in Charleston or Savannah and sent

63 In South Carolina, for instance, Lieutenant Governor, William Bull took the precaution of hiding away the stamps at Fort Johnson. Bull, *Oligarchs*, 117. In Savannah as well, the governor put the stamps under guard for their protection. Randall M. Miller, "The Stamp Act in Colonial Georgia" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 56 no. 3 (1972): 318-331; 324.

64 Quoted in Bull, *Oligarchs*, 121.

65 *Ibid.*

66 William Drayton to James Grant, November 3, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 9.

67 James Grant to William Knox, January 12, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

68 *Ibid.*

69 For references to orders for provisions from South Carolina and Georgia, see: James Grant to Benjamin Barton, December 26, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to Henry Laurens, March 15, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

on in shallow draft vessels. Consequently, nearly all goods, whether from England or elsewhere, came through Charleston.<sup>70</sup> When Charleston's ports closed for lack of stamped paper, the residents of St. Augustine found themselves "in urgent need of provisions."<sup>71</sup> The garrison stationed in East Florida nearly ran out of food when expected supplies failed to materialize.<sup>72</sup> Civilian inhabitants also suffered from the slowdown in shipping. A newspaper in Pennsylvania relayed rumors about the sad state of affairs in East Florida, reporting that the shipping stoppage was having an adverse effect on the southern colony. According to the account, the inhabitants of East Florida were in danger of starving.<sup>73</sup> There was some indication that this deprivation might stir Floridians against the Stamp legislation, and the author suggested that it was "as if the Stamp Act is got among them."<sup>74</sup> It was not until Bull wrote a letter of protection to a ship's captain, granting the vessel immunity from the stamp law, that a vessel full of provisions could be sent.<sup>75</sup> This action alleviated the "great Apprehension of Distress" within the colony, but it did not end East Florida's vulnerability to the larger Stamp Act crisis.<sup>76</sup>

East Florida also experienced direct and antagonistic actions by the South Carolina Sons of Liberty. In South Carolina opponents of the Stamp Act tormented Grant by tampering with East Florida's shipments of news and correspondence. In October 1765, for example, Grant complained about packages being opened and he asserted that some people were interfering with incoming shipments.<sup>77</sup> Grant explained that his newspapers, which he usually received along with his other mail, had gone missing. The packages from which he normally obtained his papers, Grant wrote, had "generally been opened," and it appeared to the governor that the newspapers had been removed from the latest shipment.<sup>78</sup> Initially,

70 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 76. Also see Chestnut, "South Carolina's Impact upon East Florida, 1763-1776," 8. Also see Chuck Meide's article, this volume.

71 Bull, *Oligarchs*, 121.

72 James Grant to James Wright, December 26, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to [William Knox], January 12, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to Board of Trade, January 26, 1766, CO5/548. Also see Bull, *Oligarchs*, 121.

73 ["From the Floridas they Write"], *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 6, 1766.

74 *Ibid.*

75 James Grant to Board of Trade, January 26, 1766, CO 5/548.

76 *Ibid.*

77 James Grant to William Knox, October [16], 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

78 *Ibid.*



Grant was unsure of whom to blame for this particular incident, by December, however, Grant specifically named the “American Sons of Liberty” as the culprits behind the missing cargo.<sup>79</sup> Grant also came under fire from the South Carolina Sons of Liberty through his association with Henry Laurens. On October 23, 1765, a group of men arrived at Laurens’ home, shouting “Liberty, Liberty & Stamp’d Paper, Open your doors & let us Search your House and Cellars.”<sup>80</sup> Fearing that the men would destroy his home should he not comply, Laurens relented and opened the door.<sup>81</sup> After swearing to the mob that he had no insight into the location of South Carolina’s stamped paper, his attackers made a perfunctory search of the premises. Laurens was convinced that the search was a “farce,” and that the group had other motives in approaching him about the Stamp Act.<sup>82</sup> The Sons, it seems, were intent upon creating a rift between Laurens and Grant. The mob assured Laurens that they had no fight with him, if he would only “not hold way” with Governor Grant.<sup>83</sup> At this, Laurens became incensed. He proudly boasted that he did indeed “hold way” with the governor, and he knew of no reason that he should break off the friendship or business relationship.<sup>84</sup> Upon Laurens’ refusal to condemn the governor, the mob departed, adding evidence to Laurens’ suspicions that the intrusion was a pretense. In a letter to Grant relaying the troubling incident, Laurens added that he suspected Deputy Postmaster and *South Carolina Gazette* printer Peter Timothy of putting Grant’s “name into the mouths of those Anti-Parliamentarians.”<sup>85</sup> Timothy had been involved in holding back Grant’s correspondence and Laurens was contemplating filing a formal complaint about the matter.<sup>86</sup> Grant agreed that the

79 James Grant to Henry Laurens, December 28, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. Laurens did not support the Stamp Act, but he also opposed the unruly protests of his fellow South Carolinians. “Appendix to the Extracts,” George C. Rogers, ed., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, vol. 7 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1979): 106. (hereafter *PHL* with appropriate volume number, e.g. *PHL*, vol. 7)

80 Henry Laurens to Joseph Brown, October 28, 1765, *PHL*, vol. 5: 29; Also see, Henry Laurens to James Grant, November 1, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 9.

81 Henry Laurens to Joseph Brown, October 28, 1765, *PHL*, vol. 5: 29-30.

82 “Extract of a Letter from Henry Laurens to J.B., Esquire,” *PHL*, vol. 5: 38. According to Rogers, this was the extract that Laurens sent to Grant about the incident.

83 Henry Laurens to Joseph Brown, October 28, 1765, *PHL*, vol. 5: 30.

84 *Ibid*, 31.

85 Henry Laurens to James Grant, November 1, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 9.

86 *PHL*, vol. 5: fn6, 28.

postmaster should be reported, and, in the future, he tried to avoid sending mail to Laurens in a manner that would give “that Rascall [sic] Timothy” access to his correspondence.<sup>87</sup>

Grant received another scare from South Carolina in December when his newly appointed stamp collector, Thomas Grahme, arrived in Charleston amid riots and confusion. Grahme was in Charleston when the Sons of Liberty forced South Carolina’s collectors to resign.<sup>88</sup> Governor Grant, learning that Grahme might be in danger, had been irritated to learn that his new official had made no attempt to leave immediately for the relative safety of his post in St. Augustine. Grant was anxious that “the Liberty Boys (as they term themselves)” might attack Grahme and force a resignation from him.<sup>89</sup> Luckily for the governor, however, the official arrived in East Florida’s capital with a supply of the stamped paper on November 30, 1765.<sup>90</sup> On December 2, Grahme took his oath of office and immediately cleared out two ships.<sup>91</sup> The governor expressed relief over the ease of this transaction, and was happy to report that East Florida had been able to implement the Stamp Act.<sup>92</sup> During the brief time that the Stamp Act was in effect, Grahme was able to collect £44.7.3 for the use of stamped paper, much to “the disgust” of the protesting Americans in other colonies.<sup>93</sup> In this, East Florida, along with some of the British Caribbean islands and Nova Scotia, was one of the few provinces that consistently utilized the stamps and collected duties.<sup>94</sup>

While Grant and Grahme were able to implement the Stamp Act with relative ease, it should not be assumed that East Florida was completely free from dissent over the revenue raising legislation. Evidence suggests that despite Grant’s assertions to the contrary, East Floridians did engage in some forms of protest.<sup>95</sup> A Virginia newspaper, for instance, described the appearance of opposition to the laws in Grant’s province. Quoting an unnamed

87 James Grant to Henry Laurens, January 4, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

88 James Grant to William Knox, December 9, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid; James Grant to Board of Trade, December 9, 1765, CO5/548.

91 Ibid.

92 James Grant to John Graham [Lieutenant Governor of Georgia], December 26, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to Board of Trade, April 26, 1766, CO5/548.

93 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 34; Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 215.

94 Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 215.

95 Grant claimed that his colony was free of a “licentious spirit” in Benjamin Barons to James Grant, February 4, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 10; James Grant to [Board of Trade], April 26 1766, CO5/548.

source, the paper reported that “the people there showed as great resentment to the Stamp Act as any perhaps on the continent.”<sup>96</sup> This, according to the author, was convincing evidence that “the Sons of Liberty [were] dispersed through all the provinces.”<sup>97</sup> Additionally, in an offhand remark in Grant’s correspondence to the Lieutenant Governor of Georgia, Grant wrote that he might have had a “Tryal [sic] of Skill with the Sons of Liberty” had the province been more populated.<sup>98</sup> By this comment, Grant seems to acknowledge the existence of a local oppositional group, although further evidence of their existence and activities during the Stamp Act Crisis has proved elusive. Grant also reported some efforts to have him ousted from office, which may have related to the crisis as well. While Grant was away from St. Augustine, a group of merchants forged an unauthorized application for transfer in Grant’s name to Lord Albemarle.<sup>99</sup> Fortunately, Albemarle, not believing the request, refused to initiate the move without direct communication from Grant himself, and the governor remained at his post in St. Augustine.<sup>100</sup>

For those East Floridians who may have opposed the Stamp duty, there was little recourse. East Florida differed from the more established mainland colonies in two important respects, and these differences may have served to distance Floridians from the unrest elsewhere. First, East Floridians were excluded from the discussion among other colonies’ residents when the news of the impending Stamp Act was announced. In June 1765, the Massachusetts Lower House of Assembly formed a committee to address the impending Stamp duties. The committee prepared a circular letter to be sent to all the colonial assemblies inviting them to send delegates to a “Stamp Act Congress” where they could discuss a “united, dutiful, loyal and humble Representation...to King and Parliament.”<sup>101</sup> The new acquisitions, including both Floridas, Nova Scotia, and Quebec, however, did not receive an invitation to attend the

96 *Virginia Gazette*, July 25, 1766.

97 *Ibid.*

98 James Grant to John Graham, December 26, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

99 There is no precise date for when this occurred, but it seems likely that it happened in November of 1765 when Grant was at Picolata in conference with Native Americans. Grant says the incident occurred while “he was away.” James Grant to Henry Laurens, March 15, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

100 *Ibid.*

101 C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress: With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1976), 62-63.

meeting.<sup>102</sup> Grant heard some gossip about the Stamp Act Congress from Lord Adam Gordon, who was in New York at the time of the assembly. Gordon was apparently not impressed with the “bible faced, absurd angry...Yankees,” who made up some of the delegation.<sup>103</sup> In particular, he mocked the participants for their failure to properly understand social graces and polite society.<sup>104</sup>

The second way in which East Florida was distinctively different from its mainland neighbors was in the absence of a provincial agent. In each of the other mainland colonies, assemblies employed provincial agents to act as their representatives and to mediate issues between colony and empire. During the Stamp Act crisis, agents representing the other colonies petitioned Parliament in protest against the legislation. East Florida had a royally appointed crown agent, William Knox. Crown agents, unlike provincial agents, represented the British Empire, not the colony; they were paid by Parliamentary grant and their duties “differ[ed] sharply” from their provincial counterparts.<sup>105</sup> Not only was Knox employed by the crown, but he was also a staunch supporter of Parliament’s right to tax the colonies.<sup>106</sup> Thus, even if some East Floridians had opposed the Stamp Act, with no invitation to attend the Stamp Act Congress and no provincial agent to represent them to Parliament, they would have had no official avenue through which to voice their dissent. Consequently, when Grant received notice

102 Ibid, 61.

103 Adam Gordon, “Journal of an Officer’s [Lord Adam Gordon’s] Travels in America and the West Indies, 1764-1765” in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (New York: Macmillan, 1916); 167-453; Adam Gordon to James Grant, October 5, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 9.

104 Adam Gordon to James Grant, October 5, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 9.

105 Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 35. Also see, Ella Lonn, *The Colonial Agents of the Southern Colonies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 51. Lonn makes this distinction with regard to the crown agent of Georgia; Michael Kammen, *A Rope of Sand: The Colonial Agents, British Politics, and the American Revolution*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 105. Although not listed by name, the salary for East Florida’s agent was listed in the “Estimate of the Civil Establishment” CO5/570.

106 Knox penned a pamphlet supporting Parliament’s right to tax the colonies. See, [William Knox], *The Claim of the Colonies to an Exemption from Internal Taxes Imposed by Authority of Parliament, Examined: In a Letter from a Gentleman in London to his Friend in America*. (London: 1765), (Sabin Americana) Gale, Cengage Learning, Gale Document No. CY3800187093, (accessed May 20, 2014). Georgia dismissed Knox from his post in retaliation for the pamphlet. For reference to Knox’s dismissal, see Lonn, *Colonial Agents*, 365; Kammen, *Rope of Sand*, fn. 8, 112. Georgians also burned Knox in effigy for his suggestion that the colony submit to the Stamp Act. William Drayton to James Grant, November 3, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 9.

of the Stamp Act's repeal in August 1766, he announced, "every inhabitant rejoices," but he was quick to add that there had never been any "disturbance" within his province over the tax.<sup>107</sup> Grant may have exaggerated his constituents' total acquiescence to the tax; nonetheless East Floridians largely accepted the Stamp Act without major protest.

### East Florida and the Townshend Crisis

If East Florida's response to the Stamp Act was mild, its reaction to the Townshend Crisis was nearly nonexistent. In part, this was because the other colonies were not unified in their protests against the new duties.<sup>108</sup> In the summer of 1767, when Parliament enacted the Townshend duties, many Americans once again opposed the taxation effort.<sup>109</sup> Unlike the Stamp Act, however, which had provoked immediate unrest, colonists across America were slower to react against the Townshend revenue plan.<sup>110</sup> When

107 James Grant to Board of Trade, August 21, 1766, CO5/548. Grant's correspondence very often denied the existence of any turmoil in the colony. For instance, James Grant to Lords of Trade, November 4, 1766, CO5/548. James Grant to Conway, April 26, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to Henry Laurens, March 15, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to John Graham, April 23, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. Notwithstanding these attestations of peace and tranquility, however, it should be noted that Grant often overstated the positives of his colony. Nelson, for instance, reveals Grant's tendency to exaggerate about the colony's productivity. Nelson, *James Grant*, 59. Moreover, when Grant was forced to concede some ill, he was quick to add a positive note. For example, when a fever epidemic struck the colony, Grant wrote that "mortality" was "so trifling" that no one would have taken notice of it had two popular officers not died. James Grant to William Drayton, July 25, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to [Board of Trade], November 24, 1766, CO5/548. In another example of Grant's propensity to downplay bad news, when Grahme disappeared from the colony with some £800 worth of unpaid debt, Grant kept it quiet until the British Treasury requested the return of the unused stamped paper and Grant had to admit that the young man had "deserted the province." James Grant to William Knox, September 8, 1766, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

108 Parliament had in the meantime enacted the Declaratory Act, which announced Parliament's "full power and authority" over the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." William Cobbett and T. C. Hansard. *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England: from the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the year 1803*. vol. 16, 161; Oxford Digital Library, *Cobbett's Parliamentary History Collection*, <http://www2.odl.ox.ac.uk/gsd1/cgi-bin/library?e=d-000-00--0modhis06-00-0-0-0prompt-10--4-----0-11-1-en-50--20-about--00001-001-1-1isoZz-8859Zz-1-0&a=d&cl=CL1&d=modhis006-aap.2.5.1.39>. (accessed May 17, 2014). In the midst of the celebrations of the Stamp Act's repeal, there was little outcry against the Declaratory Act. Morgan argues that many Americans misunderstood the act. Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 365.

109 Nelson, *James Grant*, 68.

110 Thomas, *Townshend Duties*, 76.

the law went into effect in June, there was no meeting of colonial representatives, nor was there action taken by colonial agents.<sup>111</sup> It was not until the end of 1768 that the mainland colonies offered a “universal reaction of protest” in the form of petitions to the king.<sup>112</sup> Even nonimportation movements, which were so effective in securing the repeal of the Stamp Act, were implemented sporadically during the Townshend crisis.<sup>113</sup> South Carolina, for instance, did not enact its nonimportation agreement until July 1769.<sup>114</sup> Georgians joined the effort the following month.<sup>115</sup>

In some ways, East Florida benefitted from the haphazard protest efforts of the other colonies. For instance, ships bound for Charleston laden with cargo forbidden by nonimportation movements were rerouted to St. Augustine where no such restrictions existed.<sup>116</sup> This may explain why shipping to East Florida increased in this period despite the difficulties posed by the shallow harbor.<sup>117</sup> To be sure, Grant expected an upsurge in East Florida trade as a result of the nonimportation movements. In 1769, he optimistically wrote that South Carolina and Georgia’s latest “[r]esolutions against English manufactures will make this a place of Trade before we had any reason to expect it.”<sup>118</sup> He went on to boast that the colony would be sending “some Cotton, Rice, and Indigo...to the London Market” that winter, despite what had been an “unfavorable” season.<sup>119</sup> East Floridians may have also seen an increase in their Native American trade as well. According to South Carolina merchant and East Florida land speculator, John Gordon, Floridians involved in the “Indian trade” stood to gain if Georgia joined the nonimportation movement.<sup>120</sup> Gordon went on to write how a shift in trade might provide a method of “breaking up” an

111 *Ibid.*, 33, 76.

112 *Ibid.*, 85.

113 Schwartz, “Merchant,” 18-20.

114 *Papers of Henry Laurens*, vol. 7, xvi.

115 *Georgia Gazette*, September 20, 1769.

116 This was the case with a Rhode Island ship, which was ordered away from Charleston for potentially violating a nonimportation agreement by reshipping goods from England. The ship was said to have gone on to “Georgia or St. Augustine.” “Charles-Town, October 4,” *South Carolina Gazette*, October 4, 1770.

117 According to Mowat, by “1768 the number of ships entering and leaving St. Augustine in a year had exceeded fifty.” Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 75.

118 James Grant to Thomas Bradshaw, November [6], 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

119 *Ibid.*

120 John Gordon to James Grant, August 1, 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 18. Pressly identifies Gordon as “the largest deerskin merchant in South Carolina.” Pressly, *Rim of the Caribbean*, 199; Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 9, 53-4.

Augusta monopoly on Indian trade, and he looked forward to “depriving Georgia of the most valuable branches of its exports.”<sup>121</sup> Grant was also optimistic about this shift in commerce, and he understood that if Carolina and Georgia kept up the embargo against British imports, the Native Americans in his province would have to acquire their English goods through East Florida’s ports.<sup>122</sup>

Throughout the Townshend crisis, East Floridians continued to receive benefits from the British Empire and the relationship between the colony and the mother country remained strong.<sup>123</sup> At the same time, East Florida’s affiliations with neighboring South Carolina underwent a change. The friendship between Grant and Laurens, for example, grew colder as East Florida’s development progressed, and although Laurens certainly continued to fulfill his mercantile duties to the governor, it was clear that the South Carolinian had grown pessimistic about East Florida’s prospects. As early as 1766, Laurens began to question East Florida’s potential as a profitable enterprise citing poor soil and difficult navigation as major problems thwarting the colony’s progress.<sup>124</sup> In 1768, Laurens warned East Florida plantation owner James Penman that he would “never make it worth [his] while to plant in East Florida.”<sup>125</sup> Grant grew angry at Laurens’ reports, and Laurens complained to New Smyrna planter Andrew Turnbull that he had “lost almost all of [his] East Floridian Correspondents.”<sup>126</sup> Laurens was not the only “Anti Floridian in Carolina” who was skeptical about the new colony’s potential, but his decreasing influence with Grant was representative of a growing divide between the two colonies.<sup>127</sup>

Despite Laurens’ doubts, East Florida’s economy had grown since the Stamp Act crisis. Since taking over the territory from Spain, East Floridians had begun to provision themselves, thus

121 John Gordon to James Grant, August 1, 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 18

122 James Grant to Thomas Bradshaw, November [6], 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

123 East Floridians still paid no taxes, and the “support of the colony depend[ed] entirely upon the estimate which [was] laid annually before Parliament.” James Grant to Charles Lowndes, March [illegible], 1767, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. Charles Lowndes is listed as Secretary of the Treasury in *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1767*. Fifth edition (London: James Dodsley, 1800), 173.

124 Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, August 12, 1766, *PHL*, vol. 5, 155-160.

125 Henry Laurens to James Penman, May 26, 1768, *PHL*, vol. 5, 705-706.

126 Henry Laurens to Andrew Turnbull, October 28, 1769, *PHL*, vol. 7, 177; James Grant to Laurens, June 24, 1768, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 2.

127 James Grant to William Knox, January 14, 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 2.

lessening their dependence on their neighbors.<sup>128</sup> When East Florida began to produce goods for the market, the relationship between East Florida and the other southern colonies divided further. In 1767, Bristol received “400 barrels of pitch, tar, and turpentine, a quantity of indigo [sic], tortoiseshell, and mahogany” from East Florida.<sup>129</sup> While this was a modest beginning, it indicated that East Florida was gaining a foothold in the Atlantic trade. Throughout the Townshend crisis, East Florida increased its quantity of exports to Britain, and in 1770, two shipments of cargo were sent to London. The first, in March, included “ship’s lumber, animal skins, some indigo samples, a little rice, and even less cotton.”<sup>130</sup> In October, East Florida sent a second shipment of indigo.<sup>131</sup> By 1771, there were “about eight impressive plantations” at work in Grant’s colony.<sup>132</sup> As East Florida increased its trade, the colony lost some of its reliance upon South Carolina and Georgia for necessities. By 1768, Grant expected East Florida to begin to “supply itself” with enough food and supplies to be self-supporting.<sup>133</sup> Grant was pleased with this turn of events because it had been “expensive and discouraging...to pay a high freight for the provisions which were bought in Carolina and Georgia.”<sup>134</sup> By March 1769, Grant predicted that it would be “the last Year that we shall ever want provision help from your Northern Regions.”<sup>135</sup>

128 Quoted in Schafer, “Swamp of Investment,” 13. Major Francis Ogilvie, who headed up East Florida’s government until Grant could arrive, wrote that the Spaniards had to rely “intirly [sic] on our colonies in America for supplies of provisions.” Francis Ogilvie to [Lords of Trade], January 26, 1764, CO5/540. Grant also wrote in September 1764 that there was “not even ten acres of corn” in the colony. James Grant to [Richard Oswald], September 20, 1764, JGP, Kislak Collection, microfilm, reel 1.

129 *South Carolina Gazette*; *American General Gazette*, July 10, 1767.

130 Nelson, *James Grant*, 66. According to Grant, East Florida produced “about twenty thousand weight of indigo to [send] to the London Market.” James Grant to Thomas Gage, August 24, 1770, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. By 1771, Grant reported that East Florida had “got the better of Carolina in the manufacture of indigo.” James Grant to John Tucker, February 11, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 3.

131 Nelson, *James Grant*, 67.

132 *Ibid.*, 65.

133 James Grant to [Lords of Trade], June 18, 1768, CO5/549. Grant was a bit premature in his assessment, however, and there were still those in the colony as late as 1771 who needed provisions from neighboring colonies, including a couple of plantations. James Grant to John Gordon, January 5, 1771, Kislak Collection, reel 3. Nonetheless, many, if not most East Floridians were provisioning themselves by this time.

134 *Ibid.*

135 James Grant to George Roupell, March 3, 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 2.



This new self-sufficiency reduced the other colonies' ability to put pressure on East Florida during the imperial crisis.

In addition to the pragmatic reasons that explain why East Floridians remained loyal during the imperial crisis, including the continuing benefits received from the British Empire and the colony's increasing perception of itself as competition to the existing colonies, Grant himself once again deserves much of the credit for keeping the peace during the Townshend protests. Unlike so many other eighteenth-century gentlemen and statesmen in the American colonies, Grant evinced no Whiggish tendencies. Grant was "a royalist" and "he saw no virtue or logic" in the idea "that colonials deserved their own 'little parliaments.'"<sup>136</sup> Instead, the governor was always contemptuous of what he called "the levelling independent American system," and Grant's letters repeatedly revealed his commitment to hierarchy and order.<sup>137</sup> Within East Florida, Grant maintained control by personally choosing the members of his government, and he was largely successful in getting his appointments approved by the Lords of Trade.<sup>138</sup> Grant also continued to circumvent efforts to form an assembly, which he viewed as "dangerously democratic."<sup>139</sup> In doing so, he drew upon the precedent of a former British military leader of East Florida, Major Francis Ogilvie, who had used the excuse that there were too few inhabitants to form a government in East Florida. Of those residents that were there at the time, Ogilvie commented, "few of them [were] fit for these important offices."<sup>140</sup> In 1770, when East Florida's Grand Jury demanded a General Assembly, Grant ignored the request.<sup>141</sup> In general, Grant used his skills as mediator and his personal involvement with constituents to control the colony from the top down. In 1771, when the 21<sup>st</sup> "Musick" regiment visited St. Augustine, Grant was happy to report that his colony had "become

136 Nelson, *James Grant*, 48; 69-70. Nelson argues that Grant held something of a "viceregal position" as East Florida's governor.

137 James Grant to William Knox, February 10, 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 2.

138 Nelson, *James Grant*, 47-8; James Grant to the Earl of Albemarle, September 24, 1769, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1; James Grant to William Knox, August 10, 1765, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

139 Nelson, *James Grant*, 70. Nelson argues that Grant "never felt the need for a popular assembly." *Ibid.*, 67, 69. Mowat argues that Grant's personality probably had the biggest impact on avoiding an assembly. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province*, 42-43.

140 Francis Ogilvie to Board of Trade, Jan 26, 1764, CO5/540.

141 *South Carolina Gazette and American General Gazette*, September 3, 1770; Nelson, *James Grant*, 69.

the gayest place in America."<sup>142</sup> According to the governor, East Floridians were too busy with concerts and parties to "enter into politicks."<sup>143</sup> He went on to suggest that his "northern neighbors [should] follow the example, [and] they would be happier themselves and would give less trouble to other people."<sup>144</sup>

Perhaps the greatest evidence of Grant's power over East Florida during the imperial crisis appeared upon his departure from the province.<sup>145</sup> In contrast to his years in office, Grant's eventual withdrawal from East Florida led to disorder. Grant fully understood the role he was playing in keeping the colony free from the discord of the imperial crisis, and when a death in his family required his attention back in Scotland in 1770, Grant hesitated before leaving. In a letter to Lord Hillsborough, Grant wrote, "People are accustomed to me... but I am afraid of trusting them to themselves."<sup>146</sup> Grant went on to write that "a change of measures or men" would likely cause "dissention," and all of the work that he had done in East Florida might come to naught.<sup>147</sup> In light of this belief, when Grant received permission to leave East Florida, he decided to postpone his departure, but he could not remain in the colony forever, and on May 9, 1771, Grant left for Scotland.<sup>148</sup>

## Epilogue

As it turned out, the governor was right to be concerned that his presence was necessary to the colony's peace because when Grant left the colony, his carefully nurtured peace crumbled.<sup>149</sup> Throughout Grant's term in office, there was rarely mention of

142 James Grant to Thomas Gage, February 18, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Nelson, *James Grant*, 70. Nelson notes "It was only after Grant had returned to Britain in 1771 that opposition against his supposedly 'autocratic' style began to emerge." Mowat also notices an upsurge in unrest upon Grant's departure in Charles L. Mowat, "The Enigma of William Drayton," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 22 no. 1 (July 1943):3-33; 8-9.

146 James Grant to Lord Hillsborough, October 19, 1770. JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1. Apparently, Grant had requested a leave of absence from the colony to take care of business back in Scotland after his nephew's death, and although he received permission, he decided to stay in East Florida for another year.

147 Ibid.

148 Nelson, *James Grant*, 76. When Grant first left the colony, the assumption was that he would return. In 1773, however, upon winning a seat in the British House of Commons, Grant made it clear that he had no intention of returning to the colony. Nelson, *James Grant*, 80.

149 William Drayton to James Grant, May 13, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 22.

dissent among East Floridians, and certainly there were many, including the Council and other esteemed citizens who declared their approbation for Grant's term as governor.<sup>150</sup> Suddenly, however, a "mechanic class" of East Floridians united to declare their opposition to the absent governor.<sup>151</sup> While Grant's supporters offered positive statements and fond farewells, the governor's adversaries produced a negative address, which Peter Timothy printed in the *South Carolina Gazette*.<sup>152</sup> The dissenting address, citing the "wretched condition" of the colony, demanded a new government based on "popular forms" and offered hopes that interim governor John Moultrie might rectify the "many Evils" that the complainant claimed had occurred in the colony under Grant.<sup>153</sup> Another group confronted Governor Moultrie in person "as a committee of inhabitants."<sup>154</sup> According to Moultrie, the men spoke of "remonstrances and petitions to the king like other people," and they made a number of demands including the creation of an assembly, new laws to contend with debtors, and a "Negro Act."<sup>155</sup> Moultrie dismissed the men's demands, but the group continued to stir up trouble in the colony, leading St. Augustine merchant Spencer Mann to lament that the peace Grant had so successfully created, was not maintained in his absence.<sup>156</sup> Grant was undoubtedly disappointed to hear that his departure caused trouble, but he had accurately predicted it would happen. James Grant had hoped to keep his constituents in "good humor"

150 [Address of the Council and] "Principal Inhabitants of the Town of St. A.," Robert Wells, *The South Carolina Gazette and American General Gazette*, May 13, 1771.

151 George C. Rogers, "Commentary," in *Eighteenth Century Florida: the Impact of the Revolution*, ed. Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1976): 28-37, 35. Rogers identifies Grant's opponents as "St. Augustine Sons of Liberty," but it is not clear that the men identified themselves as part of that group. Also see, "Papers of James Grant," 156 and *PHL*, vol. 7, fn. 8, 546.

152 John Moultrie to James Grant, June 10, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 22. For the negative address, see Peter Timothy's *South Carolina Gazette*, May 23, 1771. For the address of the Council and the address of the "Principle Inhabitants of the Town of St. A.," see Robert Wells, *The South Carolina Gazette and American General Gazette*, May 13, 1771.

153 John Moultrie to James Grant, June 10, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 22.

154 *Ibid.*

155 *Ibid.*

156 Spencer Mann to James Grant, September 1, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 22.

as long as he remained in the colony, but it would appear that his people could no longer avoid “the contagion of discontent.”<sup>157</sup>

In the end, Grant accomplished much during his seven-year term as governor of East Florida. With his widespread connections around the globe, Grant brought the colony into the purview of the Atlantic world of communication, trade, and politics. He encouraged the creation of a plantation-style economy that he hoped might one day rival South Carolina. When reliance on the neighboring colonies proved risky in uncertain times, the governor encouraged his settlers and planters to produce enough provisions for self-sustainment. Grant’s efforts on this front ensured that East Floridians could address the vicissitudes of political conflict on their own terms, choosing to adhere to imperial rulings while maintaining a close eye on their dissenting neighbors. Grant’s individual efforts also ensured that East Florida remained relatively free from the discord and dissention found in so many of the more established colonies to the north. The colony’s peace and ultimate loyalty to empire, however, does not undermine the importance of East Florida to the larger narrative of American history. East Florida was not forgotten or ignored by Grant’s contemporaries, and it should not be overlooked by historians. Rather, the evidence presented here begs further investigation of the too-often neglected question of East Florida’s engagement with the imperial crisis that led to the American Revolution, and the colony’s experience of the imperial crisis underlines the importance of contingency, proximity, and individual action in historical events.

---

157 James Grant to Thomas Gage, February 18, 1771, JGP, Kislak Collection, reel 1.