

The Juan Baptista Franco Document of Tampa Bay, 1756

By CHARLES W. ARNADE

I would like to express my thanks to the Lilly Endowment Foundation which gave me in the summer of 1963 a modest grant to do historical research in the William Clements Library of the University of Michigan. The same thanks go to the Committee on International Exchange of Persons that awarded me a Fulbright grant to Spain for the academic year 1964-65. This article and the discovery of the Franco document are part of the results of these two grants.

The Holmes and Ware articles on Tampa Bay in 1756 in this issue and the Ware and Arnade studies published in the recent *Florida Historical Quarterly*¹ about the Celi expedition in 1757 to Tampa Bay complement each other. The importance of the Celi expedition is correctly given credit in the Holmes-Ware study for it is unquestionably one of the key events of Florida history. It suffices to state that regardless of Narvaez, Father Cancer and De Soto in the sixteenth century the Florida west coast was forgotten, lost to Spain and memory, and then rediscovered in the eighteenth century.² Tampa Bay was a key to the rediscovery and the Celi journey of 1757 the cornerstone to this rediscovery. We (Ware, Holmes and Arnade) now realize that the Juan Baptista Franco trip of that same year was the prelude to the Celi trip.

The Spanish re-interest in the west coast had several causes related to the international situation and to strategic considerations. It was also tied to the enthusiasm for the philosophy of the Enlightenment that was sweeping over Europe and had penetrated Spain during the Bourbon period, reaching a high point during the grandiose rule of Charles III (1759-1788).³ The Bourbons—benevolent autocrats dedicated to administrative reforms—showed much interest in stimulating the exact sciences including zoology, botany and agriculture. The results were noticeable in the organization of expeditions to look for additional natural resources—including timber—on the American

¹ See the Ware and Arnade studies of the Celi trip in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVII, No. 1 (July, 1968).

² See W. E. Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry in the Gulf Region of the United States, 1678-1702* (Austin, 1917), 238 pp.; Irving A. Leonard, *Spanish Approach to Pensacola, 1689-1693* (Albuquerque, 1939), 323 pp.

³ See Jean Sarrailh, *l'Espagne éclairée de la seconde moitié du XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1954), 779 pp.

continent.⁴ The small Franco and later Celi expeditions must be evaluated in view of this.

The Franco report was first consulted by me in 1965 while on a Fulbright grant in Madrid. A microfilm copy was made and is in my possession. Apparently the report had not been used previously by historians. It was not difficult to locate the document nor was it hidden to the researcher. It is true that the document is located in an archive that is little known and rarely used. The Franco report as correctly stated in note 8 of Holmes-Ware is available in the Archivo y Biblioteca del Servicio Histórico Militar of Madrid as a scribner's copy. The original of 1756 has not been located but usually the later scribner's copies—this one of 1761—are very reliable.

The Franco report is listed in the *Boletín* of the Biblioteca Central Militar of the Servicio Histórico Militar of 1949⁵. This number of the *Boletín* together with numbers 1 and 2 list all the documents of the Biblioteca Central Militar. Under Division E which corresponds to America, Sección a, Subsección VI, are listed several dozen Florida documents of the Biblioteca Central Militar. Document no. 6.605 (5.1.6.5) is the Franco report. It simply reads "Description of the Bay of Tampa in Florida. Year 1761." The 1761 is an error as it represents the date of the copy done by the scrivener. It is certain that the transcription came from an original either from the Archive of the Indies or from documents of the Crown of Aragon.⁶ As the original has not been found in the Stetson Collection of early Florida documents which comes totally from the Archive of the Indies,⁷ it is conceivable that it is a document that was filed away in the Crown papers of Aragon. Why that should have been is strange. I still prefer to think that the original ended up in the Archive of the Indies and then was lost.

It is recommendable that more historians of early Florida take a closer look at the Servicio Histórico Militar which together with the Biblioteca

⁴ Arthur P. Whitaker, ed., *Latin America and the Enlightenment*, 2d revised ed. (Ithaca, 1961), 156 pp.

⁵ See Estado Mayor Central del Ejército [Spain], Servicio Histórico Militar, *Boletín de la Biblioteca Central Militar*, No. 5 (1949), p. 206.

⁶ Dirección General de Archivos y Bibliotecas, *Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. Guía Abreviada* (Madrid, 1958), 117 pp. I recall seeing on some of the folders that contain documents of the Servicio Histórico Militar old identification stickers from the Aragon archive. All my inquiries as to the why were unsuccessful.

⁷ C. W. Arnade, "Florida History in Spanish Archives: Reproductions at the University of Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXXIV (1955), 36-50.

Central Militar is housed in an old but interesting building in Madrid, not far from the University of Madrid.⁸

The Servicio Histórico Militar which includes the Biblioteca Central Militar is responsible to the Estado Mayor Central del Ejército. Consequently research with the documents and the many original maps does entail bureaucratic procedures and is somewhat tedious. A short history of the Servicio Histórico, created in 1939, was recently published.⁹ The Florida documentation is sparse but a survey by me uncovered a few important unknown maps of Spanish fortifications in Florida.¹⁰ A more thorough check of all the North American material at the Servicio would probably reveal some new and useful documentation. The Franco report located in the Servicio Histórico Militar is proof of this.

Here then we have from a fascinating archive in Madrid a crucial introductory document to the now unfolding early history of the Florida west coast as demonstrated in the subsequent Celi expedition whose document I discovered in the Naval Archive in Madrid.¹¹ Celi and Franco—two rather unknown persons whose military records have been lost¹²—are two new figures in the colorful past of Florida.¹³

⁸ See *Guía de las Bibliotecas de Madrid* (Madrid, 1953), pp. 373-374.

⁹ *Exposición Histórico Militar* (Madrid: Publicaciones Españoles, 1967), 62 pp.

¹⁰ For example, see "Description of the Chart and Port of St. Marys, Its River, Amelia and Tiger Islands and Other Environs," translated and annotated by John D. Ware. Document in Servicio Histórico Militar, dated 1785, No. 6,610 (5-1-6-8), sección a, subgrupo VI; original microfilm in my possession; annotated translation by Ware in Special Collection, University of South Florida Library.

¹¹ Julio Guillén and Vicente Vela, *Museo Naval, Catálogo Guía* (Madrid, 1945), 248 pp. See also Ware article cited in *supra*, n. 1.

¹² Archivo General del Ministerio de Marina de España, Fojas de servicio [and] Oficiales de Guerra, informes reservados in Archivo Alvaro Bazán, Viso del Marqués, Province of Ciudad Real. See Juan Moreno de Guerra y Alonso, *Relación de los Caballeros Cadetes de las Compañías de Guardias-Marinas (1717-1834)* (Madrid, 1913); *Real Compañía de Guardias Marinas y Colegio Naval. Catálogo de Pruebas de Caballeros Aspirantes*, Vol. I (1717-1739) (Madrid, 1943).

¹³ It should be mentioned that the great bulk of the army archives of Spain is located in the famous castle of Segovia and is known as the Archivo Militar de Segovia. The use of this rich archive is restricted and very difficult for a foreigner and even those Spaniards not members of the Spanish armed services. It would be a worthwhile project to procure permission for the use of this archive in order to search for Spanish Florida documentation.

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