

## THE MISSING MINORCANS©

“The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them.”  
Czesław Miłosz, *The Issa Valley*

*The factual dates and locations in this story have been pieced together from historical documents to the best of the author's ability. Catarina Moll (Alzina) Usina was a real person who is buried on the land that was once Dr. Andrew Turnbull's plantation. Although her everyday life has been fictionalized in this story, it is based on the author's interpretation of what her life may have been like, from her birth on Minorca to her death in New Smyrna, British East Florida.*

*While there are no official records documenting Catarina's death or a list of the deaths of 964 other Minorcans at the plantation, it can be reliably assumed that she passed away sometime between the birth of her last child in 1773 and her husband Antonio's remarriage to widow Rafaela Capo Sabate on February 9, 1777, as documented by Father Pedro Camps in the Golden Book.*

*Catarina, along with 963 other Minorcans, was buried on what is now New Smyrna Beach, Florida. Despite extensive and important archaeological discoveries of buildings in New Smyrna Beach, no Minorcan graves have ever been discovered.*

*It is my hope at least one of these graves will be uncovered and the remains verified. I further hope the remains are transferred to Tolomato Cemetery in St. Augustine and reunited with the Minorcans who made the 70-mile walk to St. Augustine on the King's highway to freedom in the summer of 1777.*

*On the Turnbull plantation, Catarina Moll Usina gave birth to three children. The Golden Book accurately provides the names of mothers and their baptized children including the early years and lists Catarina several times.*

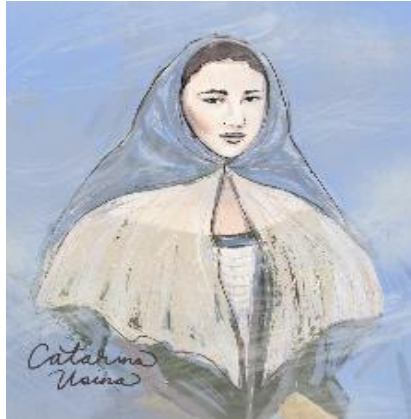
*Father Pedro Camps was the spiritual leader for the Minorcans who arrived in St. Augustine in July and August of 1768 until his death on May 19, 1790. Baptism and marriage records can be found in Father Camps' Golden Book. No records on the deaths have been found other than the in the annual reports sent from the Governors of East Florida.*

*The purpose of this story, and all efforts that follow, is to recognize and honor the 964 Minorcans who arrived in Florida in 1768, toiled as indentured servants, lived as best they could under harsh conditions, died from a variety of illnesses, and were buried in graves that have yet to be discovered. The search for the graves is necessary to bring closure for their descendants, properly recognize the proud Minorcans for their contributions to our cities, state, and nation, and, most of all ensure they are remembered.*

*Please join us in our quest to find 'THE MISSING MINORCANS.'*  
*All help will be greatly appreciated. We can do this.*

RP JONES-2023

## CATARINA MOLL (ALZINA) USINA, circa 1748-1776



*When Catarina was born, a midwife would have been responsible for providing prenatal care, assisting the birth, and caring for both Maria Moll, the mother, and newborn Catarina after delivery. The midwife likely selected a comfortable position for delivery, which could have involved using a birthing stool, lying in bed, or squatting on the floor. She would have guided Maria through the delivery process and had at her disposal a small bag containing essential tools, such as clean linen, scissors, a knife, and a string or ribbon to tie off the umbilical cord.*

*In 1748, medical knowledge on the Isle of Minorca was limited, and pain relief options were not available. As such, the midwife relied on her knowledge and experience to manage any complications that arose during delivery.*

*Once Catarina was born, the midwife checked for any complications, such as the umbilical cord being wrapped around the baby's neck. She then tied off the cord, helped Maria deliver the placenta, and checked for any excessive bleeding.*

*The midwife cleaned and dressed Catarina and then handed her gently to Maria to hold in her arms. The midwife remained in the room for a few hours to ensure that both the baby and mother were calm and stable before leaving.*

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The following **historical fiction** portrays what Catarina's life could have been like.

### **The beginning**

Maria Moll had been sewing baby clothes for Catarina for months, and Pedro Moll, Catarina's father, had recently purchased linen for her from a merchant in Mahon. The linen was highly valued for its durability and absorbency. Luckily, Maria had enlisted the help of her 19-year-old cousin, Angela Andreu, to serve as Catarina's wet nurse. Maria had concerns about her ability to breastfeed, but Angela, who had just given birth to her son a month prior, was able to produce milk exceptionally well. Additionally, she was free from any diseases that could be transmitted through breast milk.

As Angela lived just two houses down, she did not have to reside with the Moll family. After eleven months, when Catarina began eating solid foods, Angela began weaning her. This selfless act of kindness and love created a lifelong bond between Angela and Catarina.

Angela, Rafael and their son Francisco Andreu, years later, would be on the same *New Fortune* with Catarina Moll and Antonio Alzina, headed to a new life on the Turnbull plantation. A serendipitous connection between the two families was born the moment Angela held Catarina in her arms.

After finishing his work, Pedro returned to his home in the evening to have dinner with his wife and daughter. Unlike some of his peers on Minorca, Pedro did not expect his wife to shoulder all household responsibilities. He and Maria had worked hard at their respective jobs for the past two decades, and their collaborative efforts in the house were a result of their deep love for each other. Pedro assisted Maria with cleaning up after dinner, and then they went to the main room. Maria sat in a rocking chair made by her father, while Pedro played the guitar handed down to him after his grandfather's passing. This peaceful and loving routine continued throughout Catarina's time at home. When she grew too big to be held in her mother's lap, she would sit beside her father and sing along to the songs she had heard since infancy, displaying a sweet alto voice and a joyful demeanor. Catarina's birth was very difficult and Maria was no longer able to have any other children.

Catarina was educated by her mother and Catholic Nuns. She longed to go to school, but only boys were allowed and not all of them were accepted. She learned to read and write, which was great progress over previous generations.

She was 8 years old and already had black wavy hair and dark brown eyes when the French fleet defeated the British fleet in Minorca's waters. She was terrorized by the loud sound of the canons on the war ships. She longed to be far away from Mahon where the naval battles took place.

Catarina loved festivals and religious holidays. That was when the community was its happiest. Everyone decorated their houses and participated in the games, dancing and merrymaking throughout her teen years. This was the only time she and the other girls could wear their most beautiful clothes and be around boys.

She met Antonio Alzina during an Easter festival when he had his best clothes on and was wearing a broad-brim leather hat. She offered Antonio a fromajada which he gladly accepted. She had no idea he would one day be her husband. He was just one of the highly energetic boys dancing the Escola where boys and girls held hands tightly as they circled around the stage to the beat of the music.

The Moll family worked hard and had adequate food on the table throughout the time Catarina was growing up. The Minorcan diet relied on local farmers and fishermen. Bread was a staple and was made from wheat or barley flour. Other common grains included corn and rye, which were used to make porridge or other simple dishes.

Vegetables were an important part of the Minorcan diet, with potatoes and onions being among those most commonly consumed. Fruits such as figs, almonds, and citrus were also popular, and were often used in desserts and other sweet dishes.

Seafood, too, was a major component of the Minorcan diet, with fish, squid, and octopus being among the most commonly consumed. Meat was less common, as it was often more expensive and harder to obtain. When meat was consumed, it was typically pork or lamb, which were often used in stews and other hearty dishes.

Dairy products such as cheese and yogurt were also consumed, as were eggs and honey. Olive oil was a common ingredient in cooking and was often used in salads and other dishes.

The droughts that occurred on Minorca in 1767 had a significant impact on the island's agriculture and economy causing widespread crop failures. Many farmers were unable to grow enough food to sustain themselves and their families much less supply the market for those who did not grow their own food. This led to shortages and rising prices, which made it impossible for many Minorcans to afford basic necessities. The Moll family suffered with the community.

Fishing was affected as the lack of rain led to lower water levels, making it harder for fishermen to catch fish and other seafood. Many wells and other sources of water dried up.

It would take years for the island to fully recover. The weather and the ever-tightening grip of the British governor on Minorcan customs and culture that set the stage for Dr. Andrew Turnbull to show up and offer the Minorcans a deal for a new life where land and freedom would be earned in return for labor in the fields.

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*Author's note: We have not been able to find any logbooks for the eight sailing ships that transported the Minorcans to St. Augustine. I have assigned Marie Catarina Moll, Antonio Alzina and Father Pedro Camps to the New Fortune because it was one of the largest vessels of the Turnbull fleet. It had three square-rigged masts and was between 1100 and 1400 tons (bm). It was about 115 feet overall length with width of 38 feet and a draft between 12 and 15 feet. A list of passengers can be found in documents but it is not organized by ship. To reconstruct the journey across the Atlantic Ocean, I relied on historical records and other documents to describe the 70-day voyage aboard the New Fortune. Without the logbooks, we are not able to factually trace the route taken but found other information that might indicate the route they took.*

*The voyagers did not take a direct route like motor-powered vessels. Most likely, they sailed south along the west coast of Africa until they reached at least the Canaries, or even Capo Verde, in order to take advantage of the trade winds that would carry them westward. Consequently, the distance they had to traverse was significantly greater than a straight line. This journey also entailed spending considerable time on what is commonly referred to as the "horse latitudes." They are located at approximately at 30 degrees North, a latitude that happens to pass through St Augustine.*

*There are various accounts about what occurred in the horse latitudes. Some suggest that since the winds often died out, the captain would become concerned about the adequacy of their water and provisions, leading to horses being consumed as a last resort. Others maintain that the horses were jettisoned overboard to reduce their consumption of food and water, thereby making the ship lighter and increasing its speed. This voyage would have required spending extensive time in the horse latitudes. Seventy days for the voyage equals 1,680 hours. The trip from Gibraltar to St. Augustine under ideal conditions could be as much as 5,800 nautical miles. That means the ship averaged about 3 knots — that's crawling. It would have been a tortuous trip for the Minorcans who had never been on the ocean. Anyone with better information please contact the author.*

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The following historical fiction describes what Catarina's voyage could have been like.

### **The voyage**

Catarina had become a stunning 20-year-old Minorcan beauty with lots of character and personality. She had wavy black hair, full eyebrows, dark eyes, smooth skin and divine lips. Her petite frame, reminiscent of ancient works of art, added to her allure. She was strong willed, a trait displayed by Minorcans long before the Moors occupied the island and passed down to every generation since.

Father Camps advised Catarina's parents and the entire congregation about a colony being formed in America. He announced he had been selected to be the spiritual director for the Minorcans emigrating to British East Florida. Despite knowing they may never see her again; Catarina's parents urged her to grasp the opportunity for a better life.

After several weeks of tearful conversations, the day finally came for Catarina to make the trip to Mahon and bid a tear-filled final goodbye to her parents and friends. Pedro and Maria Moll were shattered and hopeful at the same time. They believed they were doing the right thing for their only child.

Prior to boarding the *New Fortune* and after signing their indentured servant contracts, they were advised to purchase hammocks. Failure to do so meant sleeping on the deck. The merchant who sold the hammocks recounted how Christopher Columbus brought hammocks back from his voyage to the West Indies in 1492 and emphasized their importance in maximizing space on British warships navigating the globe as well as sailing vessels transporting passengers.

Sleeping on the deck of *New Fortune* as it rocked back and forth from the waves would be tough. On the other hand, the hammock would swing with the movement of the vessel not only making sleeping more comfortable, but it would prevent the person from being tossed around on the deck and possibly struck by an object that broke loose from its tie-down.

The voyage was projected to last a minimum of 10 weeks, during which bathing and laundry would be impossible. Maintaining personal hygiene posed a challenge. The *New Fortune* lacked pit latrines, and while men could relieve themselves over any part of the rail, it proved problematic for women who required a place to sit or squat. There was no toilet paper. The primary method of cleansing oneself on a vessel in the 1700s was to use a tow rag. These were scraps of cloth affixed to a rope and dragged through the water then being tossed back into the sea for cleaning after each use. Referring to someone as a 'tow rag' back then was a strong insult.

After boarding the vessel, Catarina and Antonio rekindled their friendship that had started during the festivals and church services in Alaior. They joined 25 Italians from Livorno, Italy, and 35 Greek men from the mountains of the Peloponnese peninsular who had been residing on the ship for several months. Catarina and Antonio just smiled and found places to sleep. During the 70 days at sea, they would find a way to communicate.

The captain organized sleeping areas according to their native tongue with families and women in one section of the deck and single men in another. Catarina was placed next to her godparents, who joined the journey at the last minute despite both being 50 years old.

Catarina was struck by the size and construction of the wooden vessel. The captain and crew welcomed her and the other passengers as they embarked at Mahon. They were informed of their sleeping arrangements, meal schedules, and advised to avoid interfering with the crew's work. The *New Fortune* departed for Gibraltar, where it would rendezvous with the other vessels en route to St. Augustine. On April 17, 1768, the fleet of eight vessels embarked on their transatlantic voyage, an experience that would remain ingrained in the memories of the survivors forever. A British war ship accompanied them as far as Portugal to prevent pirates from attacking the convoy.

On the first day of the voyage, a considerable number of passengers fell victim to seasickness. During turbulent stretches, the ship's railing was crowded with unwell individuals, and the crew had to continuously use seawater to wash down the decks, as some passengers could not reach the rail in time. While this kept the ship's surfaces free of vomit, it made the decks slippery and treacherous.

Out of the total of 148 deaths across all vessels, 23 occurred on the *New Fortune*. The majority of the deceased were elderly, with some in their late 60s. Scurvy was responsible for several deaths, even though the disease typically takes around three months to manifest. The physical symptoms of scurvy are gruesome, including blackened skin, bleeding under the skin, tooth loss, and rotten gums protruding from the mouth. Scurvy persisted once they reached New Smyrna and contributed to the large number of deaths in 1768.

Scurvy appeared to impair the sensory inhibitors that regulate taste, smell, and hearing, leaving individuals more susceptible to overwhelming stimuli. In advanced stages, even the sound of a gunshot could prove fatal, while the scent of blossoms from the shore could elicit cries of agony. This heightened sensitivity was often accompanied by emotional instability, causing individuals to cry easily at the slightest disappointment and to long deeply for their homeland. The use of limes by British sailors led to them being referred to as "Limeys" by other nations, which was often not a compliment.

Catarina had packed two dozen unripe oranges from her backyard tree for snacking not knowing that citrus prevented scurvy. The passengers were unaware scurvy is caused by a deficiency of vitamin C, which had not been discovered yet. The British Admiralty, however, had become aware of the importance of citrus and vegetables in a sailor's diet when Scottish physician James Lind discovered sailors who consumed limes did not fall ill with scurvy. Still, the Admiralty did not order fruits for all the fleet until 1795.

On the third night of the voyage, Catarina was awakened by the penetrating moans of a man at the opposite end of the deck. After a brief moment of silence, she heard loud sobs and observed several crew members gathering around an individual who was being wrapped up in his hammock. The weeping continued long after Catarina was able to drift back to sleep. She heard the sound of death for the first time.

The following morning, the captain's voice echoed across the ship via megaphone, informing all passengers that a fellow traveler had passed away the previous night. Father Camps was to oversee the burial service, and the bereaved family stood at the rail as the congregation gathered. Father Camps emerged from the galley, followed by four crew members who carried the

deceased on a plank, enveloped in a hammock and secured with chains. They placed the front end of the plank on the rail.

Father Camps recited prayers for the departed from his book, concluding with the ancient phrase, "May this person's soul and the souls of all the faithfully departed, through the Mercy of God, Rest in Peace. Amen." He then sprinkled Holy Water on the hammock as the plank was raised, and the body slid silently into the Atlantic Ocean.

Catarina witnessed the at-sea burials for more than 20 other people who died during the voyage.

The moment the crewman in the crow's nest hollered "Land Ho," a wave of joy engulfed everyone on the vessel. At noon, the ship's occupants rushed to get a glimpse of the land. St. Augustine had been reached, and the captain informed them that they would anchor before sunset. The ship was filled with jubilation, laughter, and even a few tears.

As they approached the town, the towering Castillo de San Marcos, also known as Fort Marion to the British, came into view. Although not as grand as the impressive fort at Mahon, it was still an impressive structure. The captain signaled for a pilot to come aboard and guide them into the harbor. The ship entered the narrow inlet during high tide. Captain and passengers were unaware of the perilous history of the St. Augustine inlet and the numerous ships it had claimed.

The following **historical fiction** describes what Catarina's arrival could have been like.

### **The arrival**

On June 26, 1768, *New Fortune* was among the four ships that docked in Saint Augustine. Catarina, while admiring the charming Spanish-style houses, expressed curiosity about whether their own community would resemble this one once it was established. She may have been hopeful that life on the plantation would be as idyllic.

Antonio replied with enthusiasm, "That would be wonderful."

The arrival of more than 1,200 Minorcans, including 200 Greeks, 100 Italians, and a few Corsicans, marked a significant increase in the number of white settlers in East Florida. At the time, the total population of East Florida was approximately 2,000, with an estimated 1,000 native Indians, 500 black individuals, and a white population of around 400.

After spending 10 weeks at sea, Catarina, Antonio, and around 50 other individuals spent two days and nights on land, adjusting to stable ground before embarking on a journey to New Smyrna. Rather than boarding the *New Fortune*, they joined a group who opted to travel by foot and wagon to New Smyrna. The journey was challenging and took several days across rugged terrain. Upon reaching the plantation, they gathered around the few houses that had been constructed in preparation for their arrival. They were assigned huts according to their nationality so that a semblance of community was possible. In less than two months, the Italians and Greeks rebelled at the harsh treatments and lack of food.



Catarina heard the rebellion led by Carlo Forni from her hut on August 19, 1768. The rebellion gained momentum quickly as several hundred others, who shared Forni's discontentment joined him. The Minorcans did not participate in the rebellion as a group, although some of the men who had been harshly treated in clearing land could have joined in the action of the mob. The main Turnbull overseer, Mr. Cutter, received the brunt of the anger and died from his wounds. Another wounded man passed away a few days later, and one account suggests that a doctor who was at the plantation died from fright, while another account suggests that he was stabbed in the groin.

Catarina was not an eyewitness to any of the fights, but heard the cannon fire from the British warship sent from St. Augustine by Gov. Grant. The cannon fire immediately ended the rebellion. A few weeks later, Catarina saw most of the men in the rebellion back at work after being pardoned. She heard that three Italian men were found guilty and sentenced to death, but only two were ultimately hung. The plantation settled down after the rebellion. Turnbull asked Governor Grant for more troops at the plantation but the request was turned down by Governor Grant's superior officer.

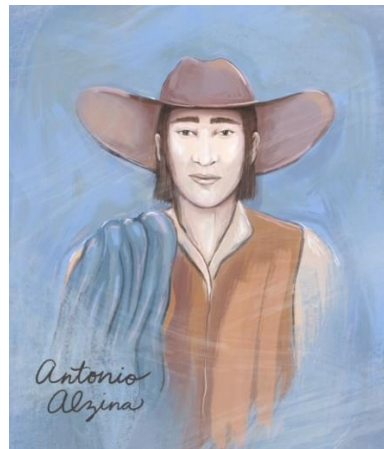
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The following **historical fiction** describes what Catarina's wedding could have been like.

### The Wedding



**Catarina Maria Moll**



**Antonio Alzina (Usina)**

Catarina and Antonio met with Father Camps five times to state their intentions and answer any questions concerning their faith. Father Camps knew they were in love. Although Catarina's parents were in Minorca, her godparents, Francis and Juana Hernandez, were at the plantation and agreed to stand with her for the marriage.

Friends gathered at 10 a.m. for the noon Mass on Oct. 9, 1769. A bright blue sky held puffy clouds moving slowly to the west. A soft, cool October breeze off the river made everyone feel great. Catarina dressed at a friend's house near the church Dr. Turnbull had built for a Greek priest. Unfortunately, the Greek priest drowned shortly after his arrival in 1768. The Greek church became the San Pedro Catholic Church.

Catarina unwrapped the black silk wedding dress she had been sewing for several years. She



knew she would wear it when she fell in love. Antonio was the man, but she did not realize it until they survived the voyage to New Smyrna. She maintained Catalan traditions. She did not cut off the last thread on the dress until the morning of the wedding. She would not look in a mirror after dressing. Catalan based tradition said to do so would invite evil spirits to join in.

Domingo Pons, Antonio's blacksmith friend, made two brass wedding rings for godfather Francis to hand to Antonio during the ceremony. Antonio would place the ring on Catarina's right finger. She would place a ring on his left finger. Had they been in Minorca planning to marry, he would have already given her an engagement ring for her left finger.

After two friends helped her put on the wedding dress, they placed the peineta (comb) securely in her hair, then draped the black lace mantilla over the peineta to cover her head and her shoulders. The mantilla had been required by the church since the 1500s to ensure modesty and as a symbol of "submission to God, their husbands and the community."

Antonio donned his best clothes and joined Catarina's godparents at the church doors. He wore a traditional black string tie. His heart leapt when Catarina appeared. He was overwhelmed and could hardly breathe. She was so beautiful and innocent. Their eyes met. They smiled passionately at each other. He felt like he was on a cloud as she walked toward him. They both shed a tear of joy. He asked himself how he could be so blessed with Catarina Moll as his wife. He knew when she appeared in her wedding dress it would be a picture he would recall for the rest of his life. He whispered to himself, "Deu è Grande."

Minorcan custom called for making the bride's maiden name and her father's last name part of her married name. Henceforth, her name was Catarina Moll Usina.

When Catarina reached her godparents, Francis hugged her gently and handed her a gorgeous bouquet of fresh orange blossoms and white flowers from the field. The orange blossoms had a pleasing aroma and signified sweetness, purity and happiness. Orange trees were scattered throughout the plantation.

Antonio and Catarina knelt on the kneelers facing the altar. Father Camps gave his blessing to the crowded church then turned to face the altar to begin the service. He began Mass reciting the same Latin prayers that were part of Catholic Mass since the 4th century.

After several prayers, there was a reading from the Old Testament and a reading from the New Testament. After the second reading, Father Camps asked the couple to stand. There was no Homily. He emphasized the Sacrament of Matrimony was established in the 13th century and is one of the most important sacraments of the church.

Father Camps asked Antonio and Catarina the question that would bind them together forever. "Do you promise to be true in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health and to love and honor all the days of your life?"

The soft, emphatic "Yes!" replies from the bride and groom made Father Camps joyful.

After Holy Communion, Father Camps concluded the service with best wishes to Catarina and Antonio and sent everyone on their way by blessing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Father Camps asked Antonio and Catarina to wait while the congregation joined the line of friends who were unable to come inside. Antonio gently held Catarina's hand as they walked toward the noisy throng of happy people as their friends tossed orange blossoms.

The entire Minorcan throng moved in unison to a beautifully decorated clearing in back of the church where there were tables of food, rum and wine. Dr. Turnbull sometimes allowed the Minorcans to fish and harvest oysters and crabs on Sunday and at night. Fresh seafood was bountiful.

There was a glowing fire from red hot embers in a long, shallow trench. Oysters stacked high on wire placed over the trench simmered. They were deep-cupped creek oysters bigger than a man's hand and were succulent and salty. Oysters were everywhere in the rivers and creeks. A squad of oyster shuckers poured the roasted oysters on the tables. The men roasting the oysters could not keep up with the demand.

A few yards from the oyster roasting trenches were three large pots used to boil crabs caught the previous evening. The river and creeks were full of blue crabs and many species of finfish. The fishermen used cow hide and bones from any meat they could get for bait.

Fishermen tied bait to a string they cast from shore. With their fingers on the string, they could feel a crab grab and begin eating the bait and would gently pull the string toward them. They built a wire basket on a long pole and became adept at easing the wire basket behind the crab as soon as they saw it. Every now and then a small shark would take the bait intended for a crab and almost pull the fisherman in the water. There were no hooks on the line so fish and even sharks were never captured.

As soon as Antonio released Catarina's hand, a dozen married men rushed to him and cut his thin, black tie into small pieces. The ritual symbolized cutting off his life as a bachelor and welcoming him into a new life with his bride. Living in a place where money is so scarce, they did not auction off pieces of the tie or the bride's garter which would have been done in Minorca.

Antonio built a box from a piece of oak firewood. He learned how to put things together without nails or glue as a young man in Minorca. The box was 4 x 6 x 2 inches. He polished it to perfection inside and outside using skins from sharks and triggerfish. He rubbed oil on the wood giving the box a golden color and shined it to perfection. In it he placed 13 coins he had brought with him from Minorca to use as part of a marriage tradition should he find his love.

Midway through the festivities, a conch shell was blown. It was time for everyone to gather around the couple in silence. The scene was surreal. Hundreds of people standing in the grass clearing next to the church and the only sounds heard were songbirds perched in the oak trees

and the rustle of leaves from a soft breeze blowing off the ocean. It seemed even the Spanish moss was happy as it swayed and danced back and forth in the breeze.

Antonio smiled deeply as he handed the box to Catarina. She was beautiful in her black silk wedding dress and the mantilla over her hair and shoulders. She had a smile he would always recall.

Catarina opened the box and saw 13 shiny coins. She knew the tradition and she knew the true meaning of the gift.

“Take these thirteen coins, blessed by Father Camps. They represent Jesus and His twelve apostles,” Antonio said. “I promise to keep God in our marriage and to support you financially all the days of my life.”

Catarina shed a tear, closed the box and put her arms around Antonio. She kissed him as only a bride can kiss a bridegroom.

The people in the field erupted with shouts of joy. Singing began as the men headed back to the wine table.

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As indentured servants, Antonio and Catarina agreed to work for a certain number of years based on their abilities. Antonio was a carpenter. His contract was for six years to pay back the cost of transportation, clothing and food. Catarina’s was for nine years, and she would work for the Turnbull’s as a seamstress and housekeeper. Like the rest of the Minorcans, they did not realize their contracted time would begin when the first crop of indigo was produced, not when they arrived in New Smyrna. That added two to three years to time as an indentured servant. This part of the contract caused great angst among the men and women working at the plantation.

As free Spanish people when they were recruited, they assumed they had certain rights and protections far different than being a slave. Even under British occupation on Minorca, they had rights that were recognized by the King of England. The Minorcans could not be sold like property, but they found out immediately they were subject to the authority of their “masters” and were physically punished if they failed to adequately perform the tasks related to the cultivation and processing of indigo or any other product Dr. Turnbull decided to grow.

The Minorcans on the plantation faced many of the same challenges as enslaved Africans, including harsh working conditions, long hours, and exposure to disease and other health hazards. They had limited opportunities for social and economic mobility, as their contracts did not allow them to own property or engage in independent trade. It is possible during the nine years they were in New Smyrna there could have come a time when they sold some of their vegetables and fruit after turning over to Dr. Turnbull his share of the product.

Overall, while the lives of indentured servants on the plantation was somewhat different from those of enslaved Africans, they still had significant challenges and limitations. The system of indentured servitude was deeply flawed and exploitive, and it represented a form of unfree labor that was unjust and unsustainable in the long term.

There was nothing the Minorcans could do about the position they were in. They could not go back to Minorca, and the nearest city where a judicial system was in effect was 70 miles from New Smyrna. Antonia and Catarina prayed for help and decided to have a family.

Catarina gave birth to twins on March 29, 1771. Maria Usina was born about 4 in the morning and Catalina was born about an hour later. They were both baptized by Father Pedro Camps on March 30, 1771. Maria's godparents were Juan and Juana Picard. Catalina's godparents were Miguel and Maria Antonia Usina.

Catarina and Antonio's son Bartolome Miguel Usina was born on February 27, 1773, about 8 p.m. and baptized on Feb. 28, 1773, by Father Pedro Camps. Miguel's godparents were Bartholome Llufríe and Antonia Mestre.

Catarina passed away sometime between 1773, after giving birth to her son Miguel, and 1777, when Antonio remarried. Her final resting place is on the Turnbull plantation yearning to be found.

The following **historical fiction** describes what Catarina's burial could have been like.

### **The burial**

Catarina began losing weight and lacked the ability to get air to her lungs. She struggled for two weeks which deeply distressed Antonio. He knew death was near and her burial would take place right away. Father Camps was at her bedside when she died.

The burial ceremony was scheduled for the next day at 5 p.m. to make sure the Minorcans finished their work at the vats before leaving to attend the funeral.

Friends of Catarina chosen to prepare her body arrived at the house early. Antonio greeted them warmly and told them Catarina asked to be buried in her wedding dress.

Her lifeless face was cleansed and cotton was inserted into her mouth, nose, and ears to prevent any bodily fluids from leaking out. Carefully, they removed her clothing and dressed her in her wedding gown. They tenderly draped the black lace mantilla over her hair and face. The only sounds were the soft whispers of the women remarking on how lovely she looked in her wedding dress. Antonio approached the bed with their children in his arms. As they bid their farewells, the children cried softly. Antonio kissed her one last time then walked to the church.

As soon as Antonio and the children left the hut, the ladies placed the burial shroud around Catarina then her body was placed on a carrying board. Four Minorcan men carried her to the church. The women in the church were sobbing and the men coughed to hide their tears. As soon as Antonio and the children took their seats on the front row, Father Camps began the Requiem Mass by saying, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost."

The Requiem Mass is different than ordinary Mass. Requiem is a Latin word that means "to rest, to be at peace." The Mass is offered with the individual's body present in the church. The joyful parts of ordinary Mass, the Gloria and Alleluia, are omitted. The focus of the Requiem Mass is on praying for the soul of the deceased person and asking for God's mercy and forgiveness,

rather than on joyful celebration. After Communion and before the congregation was dismissed, Father Camps gave a most beautiful eulogy stressing the love Catarina had for her faith and the love she gave to her family and friends during her short life. He said that on her final day, she sat up in bed and said, "I have my faith and that is all that matters."

Antonio's friends dug her grave at the cemetery near the church. The sand was soft and easy to dig to the six-foot depth that was the Minorcan custom. Ropes were placed under the board holding her body. Before lowering it and before the first shovel of sand was thrown, Antonio placed the oak box containing the 13 coins on top of the shroud. Catarina was then slowly lowered into her grave.

It was a serene moment as he knelt there in tears. The leaves in the trees rustled in the wind the moment dirt began covering Catarina. Antonio placed a small wooden cross he had made at her gravesite. He prayed at that cross every evening for the rest of the time he was at the Turnbull plantation.

Antonio thanked Father Camps for the beautiful service. He hugged and shook hands with all the people who had gathered for the burial. He brought the children back to the house where Catarina's godparents took them under their wings.

After the people returned to their houses, Antonio walked to the river and proceeded southward. He walked alone on the beach for many miles, watching the never-ending waves and listening to the calls and screeching of the shorebirds. His grief would last for the rest of his life.

"The living owe it to those who no longer can speak to tell their story for them."

Czesław Miłosz, The Issa Valley

Finis

**WHERE IS CATARINA'S GRAVE IN NEW SMYRNA BEACH? WHERE IS ANY MINORCAN GRAVE ON THE LAND THAT WAS ONCE THE TURNBULL PLANTATION? WILL YOU HELP US FIND CATARINA'S GRAVE AND IF THERE ARE REMAINS, HELP US BRING THEM TO ST. AUGUSTINE TO REST FOREVER WITH THE MINORCANS WHO ARE BURIED IN THE TOLOMATO CEMETERY?**

**PLEASE HELP US FIND THE 'MISSING MINORCANS.'**



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