

THE ITALIANS IN COLONIAL FLORIDA

A Repertory of Italian Families Settled in Florida under the Spanish (1513-1762, 1784- 1821) and British (1762-1784) Regimes; with A Brief Historical Outline, and an Appendix on the Contemporary Colonial Press. By Bruno Roselli, 1940.

THE history of the Italians in Florida supplies unusual chapters in the annals of that proverbially migratory people and of this most unique state. The student who will undertake to write it will have to assemble and interpret the records of three very distinct groups :—The members of the New Smyrna colonization scheme of 1768(a daring venture involving the largest unit of settler: that had ever come to the New World, yet omitted by most Northern textbooks on American history); the railroad builders, who began long before Flagler days to conquer the dreaded sub-tropical jungle in order to make room for the Iron Horse, and who have left a perpetual memento of their labors through the names now borne by some localities, such as Italia, Zolfo, and so on; and the large and interesting group of Italian cigar—makers of Ybor City, living in the shadow, as it were, of their better known Cuban colleagues and constituting a unique age in the history of progressive migration. For the nucleus, at least, of this last-named group — including most of the pioneers — may be styled "Albanian-Sicilian-Louisianan-Floridian-Cuban": surely an extraordinary combination. I well remember how I stumbled upon that exceptional material for social study about twenty years ago, during a casual visit to that section of Tampa, which is like a different country. Some children were playing in the street, talking Spanish with a Cuban accent. They did not look Cuban. When I asked for their names, they turned out to be Italo-Albanian. An inspection to the local cemetery showed a number of the interred to have been from Contessa Entellina and other towns in the so-called "Albanian communes" of Italy. This takes us back to the period of Turkish conquest of the Balkans; when the mighty wave struck Albania, as many Christian Albanians as could find boats made for Southern Italy and Sicily, where they were settled in special areas which have retained for all these centuries the cultural stamp impressed upon them by those refugees. Their descendants may serve in the Italian army, but the clothing and jewelry of their women, the marriage - customs, the religion (Eastern Rite), the social ceremonies, the food, and to a certain extent the language, remain Albanian. Centuries passed. Then, in the last third of the 19th century, Southern Italy and Sicily embarked upon emigration on a large scale, New Orleans receiving a considerable contingent. It was but natural that these Albanian folk, who had never become fully merged with their neighbors, would be among the first to go. They lived in New Orleans for two, three, four decades, until the time of the famous lynchings following the murder of the local chief of police, who was supposed to have whispered into the ear of one other man "the dagoes did it". (The Chief lived for some hours afterwards, talked to others, never repeated the accusation). Feeling ran very high after the lynchings, mainly because they had been carried out not by hoodlums but by some of New Orleans' "best citizens", and in order to justify them it was necessary to paint the entire South Italian and Sicilian communities as consisting solely of hardened criminals. Terror-stricken, once more the Albanians fled, instinct taking those poor social misfits from bayou to bayou toward Florida still in the making, toward foreign Cuba. That was the time when the cigar industry was undergoing troublesome adjustments, due to labor disputes and other difficulties which had compelled many factories to move from Havana to Key West, then from Key West to Tampa. With every move, as usual, it lost some of the workers, and when Tampa became the Cigar Queen of the United States, those Louisiana Italians found plenty of work there. But the South Italian has always been at home among Spaniards (his former rulers) since the days when the main street of Naples was named Via Toledo; and the cigar-making industry bears an ineluctable Spanish—

American stamp. So, those Albanian—Sicilian Louisianans were absorbed into the social orbit of the Cubans, and their children, although American citizens who have never seen Cuba, talk "Cuban Spanish" in the streets of a Florida city.

But it would be beyond the scope of this unassuming study to enlarge upon such later Italian activities in Florida, merely outlined here; my present field being limited to the Colonial periods, two Spanish and one British. And Florida's Colonial history began in April 1513.

The first recorded page in the history of Italians in Ponce de Leon's flowery domain was written as early as 1565, the date of Menendez' fateful expedition. The historian of said ex edition, Don Martin Francisco Lopez de Mendoza Grajales, who had also been its chaplain, states that when the argosy neared the Florida coast, "my lackey, an Italian, went ashore". The name of this pioneer has not been preserved; his nationality, however, is confirmed by a later passage of the same historical classic, wherein said Italian is described as "a Lombard".

If he established a record, he did not, however, establish a settlement, his experiences in the land "officially discovered" fifty-two years before by the immortal Ponce de Leon being limited to the securing of five hundred turtle-eggs and to conversations (9) with "some naked men, thought to be cannibals, whom he befriended". Public opinion being what it is at the time of writing (1939), I am afraid most of my friends will cool my pride as a *paesana* retorting that the first Italian in Florida was a cradle—snatcher and a friend of cannibals.

For the second Italian in Florida I can advance only a tentative claim. He was Father Francisco de Florencia, born at St. Augustine in 1620. Francisco de Florencia, of course, means "Francis from Florence", and it is an established fact that during early Spanish'-American days it was customary for foreigners to find themselves despoiled of their family names overnight, a *de* followed by their birthplaces being substituted for them. If Father de Florencia should some day be definitely traced back to a line of Florentine ancestors, it would add considerably to Italy's laurels, since this rather obscure historical character was actually the first priest ordained in what is now the United States. (This claim is advanced by no less an authority than the Bishopric of St. Augustine.) Father Francisco de Florencia joined the Jesuit Order in 1643, rising to the position of distinguished theologian. However, his best claim to fame lies in the historical precedent he established, which is one obviously bound to grow considerably in importance with the years.

Toward the end of the same 17th century the Florida records mention another Italian name, that of Father Johannes Carminatis, also a St. Augustine priest. His name appears in a church document of 1691, still preserved in the archives of the Archbishopric.

How many other Italians travelled to or settled in Florida during Spain's first occupation, which ended in 1762? That region was becoming fairly well known in Italy, and in view of the migratory proclivities of the Italians it would be illogical to conclude that all the information came via Spain; however, an exact answer to the above question will probably never be given. Yet we are on the eve of further discoveries in that field, and I have reason to believe that some data exists although it is not yet available. It must be remembered that while the number of original documents, transcripts, and photostats of early Spanish records in America is beginning to be very impressive, only a small part of it is decyphered (let alone translated) every year. Publication is expensive; specialists are few and often burdened with other duties. During my last visit to St. Augustine I was shown, through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Lawson of the

local Historical Society, a quantity of extremely interesting local material relating to the first Spanish occupation of Florida, still unpublished and apparently covered by some sort of a first literary mortgage. A hasty perusal of these documents, some of which date as far back as the sixteenth century, showed other names presumably Italian. That field will have to be left to later exploration.

Meanwhile, turning to published and other generally available sources for records of Italians in early Florida, we come across something of a very definite character dating from the year 1736. On December 22nd of that year, Fray Francisco de San Buenaventura Martinez de Tejada Santiago, "consecrated for residence in Florida in 1735" (Baltimore Diez de Velasco, Titular Bishop of Tricale and Auxiliary Bishop of Diocese take notice D, sent from St. Augustine a report to the Governor of Cuba. In that communication by the first American bishop who felt "continental" instead of Cuban ---and who incidentally died in territory now under the Stars and Stripes (Texas, 1760) — this significant sentence appears: "There is also an Italian store, permanently located".

I have been unable to find the name of that St. Augustine storekeeper; however, I consider the words "permanently locate " as of very great importance, because hardly anything was permanently located in the Florida of 1736; and the bishop himself must have realized it, or he would not have added those apparently useless words. Mercantile transactions then belonged to the type which can still be seen in some forgotten corner of the Near East: the merchant lands with a consignment — oftentimes the sea-captain is one and the same person as the merchant — and leaves just as soon as his wares are disposed of. (The only difference in the case of 18th century Florida would lie due to her exposed Ocean coast; merchant and sea-captain would have to keep an eye upon navigability, as well as upon disposal of consignments, in setting a date for departure). A permanent store, let alone an Italian permanent store in a Spanish colony, was a rarity then. The events of 1768 were to forge so strong a link between Florida and Italy that, as readers of the following repertory will find, by the close of that same 18th century Antonio Berta of Albissola Ligure, Joseph Bucciari of Livorno, Peter Cosifaci of Corsica, Rocco Leonardi of Modena, and Pasquale Santi of Naples, had established at St. Augustine stores the permanency whereof was made manifest by the presence of the storekeepers' wives, thirty-two children (without counting seven adopted ones, and a sprinkling of older relatives. (a)

But that was during Spain's second occupation, and after a British interlude which had strangely linked Florida with a Tuscan city notoriously bossed by Britain, Livorno. The question remains, "What was

(a) The unbiased student of the Turnbull venture will do well to compare the size and the evidences of comfortable circumstances of these families, with the status of the Italian colonists at New Smyrna. In both laces the heads of the families had come from various sections of Italy, and had married Spanish girls. In fact, the premise had been more favorable for the New Smyrna lot, personally chosen for endurance, and living the life of *contadini*, the most prolific of the Italians. Some of the merchants had come with Turnbull.

an Italian permanent store doing in Florida during the first Spanish rule?" Even granting a certain amount of similarity between Spanish and Italian tastes and needs, it is a fact, easy to prove with examples from all over America, that an Italian store presupposes a certain basic number of Italian customers or potential customers. However, not all of this merchant's clientele nee ed to consist of residents of St. Augustine; that city had constant intercourse with all of Cuba (then fully settled), with the Bahamas, with Savannah, with Charleston; and all these places were, in varying degrees, known to the Italians. From the Bahamas and nearby islands the people of Sorrento and the entire Sorrentine Peninsula obtained the large, colorful sea-shells which they transformed and still transform into the world—renowned

Neapolitan cameos. Francisco Morelli, obviously an Italian, was the owner of a fashionable tavern in Charleston, where gentlemen were invited to come and read newspapers and also to sample his creations as a past? cook. Joseph Ottolenghi was a prominent citizen of Savannah. As for Cuba, her relations with Italy have been continuous, from the time when the fortress of El Morro was built by an Antonelli, through the period when the Governor was a Bucarelli, to our own day when the Republic's first ambassador to the United States was a Ferrara.

I hope that my readers understand that I am not pretending to call the roll of customers of the nameless St. Augustine shop-keeper; I am trying to correct the general impression that the Italians, just because they did not plant flags all over the place like the Spaniards, the British and the French, did not come over here at all; they made plenty of calls, only informal, without leaving any visiting cards —and often incognito, to save their skins in a world of suspicious of foreigners.

As a matter of fact, the truly magnetic America for the early Italians lay between the 10th and the 30th parallel: this region, which I shall call "Caribbean" for the lack of another unifying word, was the coveted goal, the playground, yes, often the grave as well, of adventurous Italians, both eminently honorable and strictly dishonorable, since the day when word spread like wildfire in the native land of Columbus that El Almirante had "opened the way". Let the sour foes of everything Latin accumulate claims that America was really discovered in the 11th century by a handful of Europeans who were not discovered by 99% of Europe; let withered scholars ponder over the problem whether "CHRISTO-FERENS" and his immediate contemporaries realized that what had been found was not the back door of China; Columbus was the magician who made the classical dream come true for the masses. The urge to follow Columbus became epidemic in Italy, and if it led the followers to China, well, another countryman had preceded them there —Marco Polo. An impoverished, miserably misgoverned, war-burdened Italian proletariat was electrified: there was, then, a way out! France, Austria, Spain could overrun any of Italy's tiny states and burn the crops and leave a trail of famine and plague; prince, *podesta* and bishop could torture, scheme, tax and overtax, humiliate, cheat on the currency or claim the *jus primae noctis*:- the, wretched Italian serf, would now be able to escape it all by jumping on a vessel no larger than the Santa Maria (and how many of them were smaller!), and, unless Neptune interfered, landing one, two, three months later somewhere between the mouth of the St. Mary's near Fernandina and the mouth of the mighty Orinoco. The imposing Italian migratory currents to Argentina, Brazil, and the United States proper (outside, I mean, of the great peninsula which is like another Cuba attached by geological accident to a continent originally so unrelated) were later affairs, all bound up with economic displacements, crop productions, pressure of population upon means of subsistence and other impersonal causes enabling economists and sociologists to discourse upon so profoundly, reaching such delectably opposite conclusions. But those of us who opine that the Italian feels the call of a hungry soul as often as that of a hungry stomach, and that he needs at least as much scope for personal assertion as he needs calories, will be inexhaustibly fascinated by this earlier and individual migratory period, which sprayed with Italiana starving for escape Panama and Cuba, Venezuela the ungoverned and — why not say it? — Barataria the labyrinthine. I am surprised at the surprise of so many cultured Americans whenever they hear of early Italian settlers in and visitors to the Great Caribbean Ring; it was for a son of Italy both the easiest route, and the one which could lead him to real success: adventure, a fruitful wilderness, friendly skies, no governmental supervision to speak of. After passing the Canary Islands, he would entrust himself to the languorous Gulf Stream, steering in the general direction of Hispaniola and landing on the first bit of the New World which emerged from the waves. Nature has so arranged things in this region

that if he did not like his first American habitat, he could hop from one island or peninsula to another in no time and in the most casual of boats.

To locate these early adventurous Italians upon the map of America is exceedingly difficult, both because of the dearth of cis-atlantic vital statistics and because of the unwillingness of the emigrants to acknowledge their national origin. It must be conceded that while Italy was both "a geographical expression" and "the Great Proletarian", to use two celebrated characterizations, the Italian abroad had nothing to gain and everything to lose by revealing his nationality — even when he felt it. Which, I readily admit, was not always the case. So, he doctored his name, adopted France or Sam as a birthplace, and was absorbed by surroundings in one—tenth of the time required for the same process in a country less casual, Protestant, and predicated upon Anglo—Saxon *Kultur*. To ferret out these apostates represents a very game kind of hunting, at least from the American end.

But the terminus *a quo* helps considerably the investigator endowed with vision as well as with the customary scientific tools. From the European end, while we collect little specific data on New World destinations, obviously too peregrine (all we usually find in Italy's well—kept statistics is that after a certain date a certain man, still in good health and not too old, drops out entirely), we do obtain not only lists of "missing persons" but also an insight into causes of emigration, of distant emigration, of emigration started with the specific purpose of disappearing and therefore logically directed in preference toward the fluid, sparsely settled Caribbean region. I grant that this line of attacking the problem of transatlantic migration may appear disconcerting to scholars accustomed to use as a starting point passports, visas, and correct family names; but I am not asking my readers to substitute imagination for data, I am asking them to substitute logic. A detective agent would scour this region first if he was looking for just such persons moved by just such stimuli, even if people assured him that all arrivals had been from Spain or France; he would waive aside names as generally irrelevant; as to passports and visas, he would remember that they are a nuisance to the welcomed traveller but that the unwelcome traveller manages to move about without them. Why cannot a scholar use as much logic as a detective can?

Surely any serious student of the problem knows something about Renaissance and post-Renaissance history. He must know that the history of Italy from the days of Columbus to the Risorgimento was a long succession of foreign invasions, interstate hostilities' and intrastate revolutions, local tyrannies punctuated with brutality, police omnipotence, executions and so on. Well, where did the executioners, the torturers and political spies and tormentors, the terrorizing judges, the henchmen and hirelings of the tyrants, etc., direct their steps when those unhappy towns change hands? For they very rarely stayed under the new masters even if allowed to, it was too risky; and they somehow disappear from the local records, although they seldom formally depart. Where did the leaders of unsuccessful uprisings and the military chieftains find refuge after they had lost a campaign, or a battle, or simply their *candottiera*? A few of them would be put to death, a few might be forgiven, a few would move over into the enemy's military machine or be absorbed into civil life; but others would just bolt. Where bound? Very few would go to German Protestant states, Protestant Switzerland, Orthodox Russia, the Balkans; the Muslim world was closed to Christians; and if they went to other Italian states, to France, Austria, Hungary, the German Catholic states, Spain, or Portugal, the wonderful Catholic vital statistics would get them sooner or later. Then there were "penal baths' ", establishments of detention and punishment, usually on unfrequented islands, whence prisoners both political and otherwise succeeded in escaping, indeed in some cases were allowed to escape either for a consideration or because it was cheaper to have them forever out of

the way than to feed and guard them. There were innocent but unwelcome witnesses of crimes by the mighty to be pushed out of sight, there were more innocent but unwelcome illegitimate children of Chad known the lust of the soldiery after a city surrendered at discretion, and who were eager to start life anew very, very far. Were O. Henry and Marchand of Fashoda fame the only honest persons eager to have their previous existences forgotten? The United States has known thousands of such people, only the size of the country, the *laissez-faire*: social attitude, and the wilderness of the West makes it possible to stay under the same flag —in some cases in the same city, as the spectacular example of Philip Musica-F. Donald Coster has recently shown. And the French colonial empire is large. The British is larger yet. Shanghai, Cairo, Singapore have told their story of refuge and resurrection to readers of every adventure magazine. But a seventeenth or eighteenth-century Italian would simply have to put the Atlantic between his past and his future, and his best bet as to making the crossing and being left undisturbed at the other end, lay in his following more or less the log of Columbus.

Some doubting Thomases are to be expected, who will have none of my logic but will repeat the exasperating cry, "Show us the names!". To them I dedicate, with a gratitude they surely do not expect this little publication; there are names and dates here; the challengers of my line of approach can check up on those, and, if satisfied, may grant to me the courtesy of admitting the value of vision in "blind" research, since I had claimed their existence long before I found their names. I, for one, have never believed that every person endowed with vision should be dismissed as visionary. Of course I grant that the region I chose for my study is not as difficult as others in the same section of the Americas, because the local conditions of Florida (repeated transfers of flags, systematic colonization, chances of religious status) called for extensive vital statistics; let any student try and duplicate this effort in Panama, Guadeloupe, or Yucatan. And yet, foreign family names are pitifully distorted in the Florida records, so that in a number of cases would not have recognized them as Italian but for the plain statement to that effect. In fact, readers will find here several instances where the spelling is such that the names do not make sense in Italian, although the Italian nationality was noted (by Spanish priests and statisticians, at that). Had I extended my study to the years following the annexation to the United States, I would have fared no better, since the period from about 1830 to after the Civil War is covered by statistics sketchily kept.

From what sections of their old fatherland did those Italians come? It is interesting to find that they came from nearly everywhere, north and south, maritime regions and veritable mountain strongholds, large cities and hamlets: Piedmont, Liguria, the County of Nice (specifically mentioned as part of Italy), the Venetia with her Dalmatian islands, Emilia, Tuscany, the Papal State, Campania, the islands of Sicily, Elba, and Corsica —all Corsicans without exception being here classified as Italians, which will be news to many Americans lately fed all kinds of piffle and poppycock by improvised "international experts" of the press and radio. I believe that this wide regional distribution has no parallel in the United States; it should attract the specialized study of sociologists. And it certainly confirms my theory of "escape into oblivion", to borrow the felicitous term lately used by my good friend Professor Hanna as a title for a most delightful volume. True, more than half of the Italians had sailed to ether from Livorno in 1767; but that disproves nothing, since most of them were refugees from other parts of Italy, who had gathered at that free and easy port waiting for just such a chance as Dr. Turnbull supplied.

The occupations of these Italians in colonial Florida provide another worth-while field for study. I have already spoken at length about the owners of permanent mercantile establishments. Another group consists of sailors, maintaining homes and raising families at St. Augustine, but plying between that port

and no one knows where; the hardy maritime traditions of the Riviera, Livorno, and Lussinpiccolo are here confirmed. As to priests, wherever the cross of Rome was planted one may expect at least a few from Italy, but what surprised me most was their dearth here as compared with early Catholic settlements in America, such as Vincennes, New Orleans, St. Louis. There is a generous sprinkling of soldiers, and that is far from surprising because the poor Italian, owning no worldly goods, was likely to try and make a living offering the one thing he did have, his life. It must be somewhat disconcerting to some people I know to read about these Italian members of an "Irish Regiment" in 18th century Florida. Well, there they are, the St. Augustine documents are open to all; evidently, the University of Notre Dame has not been the only organization in America to recruit Italian fighters and to have their victories credited to "the Irish".

The documents consulted for the compilation of my repertory, by the way, are all either originals or photostats, no secondary source having been accepted at its face value. Most important and fruitful of them have been the superb old records of the venerable church of St. Augustine, young as a cathedral, unsuspectedly old as a center of episcopal power; Father Thomas Hassett's painstaking St. Augustine census of 1786; the 1787 "Padron de Mahoneses" Register for St. Augustine, Isle of Talbot, Amelia Island, and River St. John; the list of "Menorq.s, Ytalianos y Griegos" carefully prepared for remittance to Spain when the second Spanish occupation had begun to function as a colonial government; and Father Camps' records of his brave little church in the wilderness, San Pedro de Musquito, transferred into the outskirts of St. Augustine when his decimate and disillusioned flock had fled the wreck that had been the Turnbull plantation. Indeed, I cannot forbear to refer to the Musquito records without pointing to what they mean as a tribute to prostituted human dignity, and without paying homage to a grand old soldier of Christ's church militant. Fifteen hundred souls and bodies in misery found in Father Camps' ministry their only dike against the flood of des air; under his guidance they erected a shrine which must have echoed many a sob while the congregation sang Kyrie, eleison with the devotion of the early Christian slaves in the catacombs of Rome; it was he who prepared for the Great Journey the many, the too many who succumbed during the nine tragic years of the attempt at colonization, before laying them down in a swampy grave. His wards may have been but scum of the earth to some beastial Georgia overseer; but to him, to *Curata Doctor Pedro Camps*: as he signed his documents, they were as important as Spanish grandees. Let a wee child be born while its mother was toiling by the swamp, and die when a few hours old: Father Camps would consume half a page of his scant paper to record the ephemeral existence of a Christian babe named Santiago Ramon Bartolomeo Paredes, legitimate son of Domingo Pedro Francisco Paredes, a native of Valencia (his father being Antonio Gabriel Paredes of Villafranca and his mother Maria de los Dolores Margarita Ximenes of Madrid), and of his legitimate wife Catalina Eulalia Ripoll, also a native of Valencia (her father being Cherubin Aloysius Buenaventura Ripoll of Zaragoza and her mother the late Teresa Paula Maria del Carmen Ponsell of Port Mahon, in the Baleares). That is what I call vital statistics! Let the libertarians call it regimentation; theirs is merely an opinion. The fact is that owing to this wonderful faith-wide network, it is easier to trace the family tree of a benighted Haitian slave than that of a chesty Boston pundit. The historical stature of Father Camps will stand out impressively when a dispassionate scholar with no connection either with Dr. Turnbull or with his many enemies undertakes to write the story of the New Smyrna colonization scheme, not only consulting the original documents and culling a few sentences here and there, but quoting them in full, come what may. So far, the one volume on the subject is Carita Doggett's "Dr. Andrew Turnbull and the New Smyrna Colony of Florida", charmingly written but somewhat juvenile (it is not the lady's fault if she was just out of Vassar when she wrote it). I have often begged her to bring out another, fully revised, edition. But right now and here I

want to warn the many who have inveighed against her story of the venture that their darts should be hurled from a parallel platform: they should also write a book on the subject "*La critique est aisée, l' arte est difficile.*" Furthermore, historical America has become of age during the quarter of a century since the volume was written, and it is now comparatively easy to consult certain English documents, while Spanish translators, good and (mostly) bad, are plentiful; it was not so when Miss Doggett (now Mrs. Corse) blazed the trail. And there is something appealing in the sense of family loyalty of a young girl of Florida ancestry who starts using the educational tools acquired among Northern snows by lunging into the history of her great-great-great-grandfather Dr. Turnbull, gathering from everywhere the most colorful bits, and, I must say it, producing a pretty complimentary ancestral portrait therewith. I personally think it is regrettable that she did not explain to readers the family connection; but modesty may have prevented it.

The basic facts of the Turnbull venture are these: A Scottish physician and his Livornese—Levantine wife, shortly after Florida became English, planned to transport a certain number of Greeks, Italians and Minorcans (Minorca being then English) to the Great Mosquito Swamp near New Smyrna to raise indigo, for which commodity England paid a high premium. Turnbull originally obtained 20,000 acres for the experiment, but the canny doctor having succeeded in securing the partnership of no less a personage than Prime Minister Grenville, the joint grant, owned by several grantees but administered by Turnbull only, rose to the colossal total of over 100,000 acres. A certain sum being guaranteed to him by England for each settler imported, the number of those Mediterranean recruits was boosted from the original 500 to almost 1500, trusting in the *fait accompli*. The one ship became a fleet of eight, and the English government, with very understandable solicitude, gave to the argosy (at the expense of the British taxpayer) an armed escort in the shape of a British frigate accompanying the colonists as far as Madeira. No copy of the indentures, or contracts between Turnbull and the settlers, has come down to us. When the podesta of Livorno objected to the departure of so many of his people, Sir Horace Mann, the British Minister to Tuscany, was asked to intervene, and soon the British Consul at Livorno 'overruled the efforts of the local authorities ———which makes interesting reading in this year 1939. The colonists had brought to America seeds and shoots of the plants they so well knew how to grow, but since they were homesick, the doctor "declared himself reluctant to cultivate vines and olives in Florida because he feared it would fill his colonists with sad memories" (Doggett, p.43), and so put them all to work in raising indigo, on which incidentally England would pay him a premium. We hear vaguely of five hundred negroes who were supposed to be imported from Africa to clear the jungle but it was announced unfortunately they had all been drowned—and that was that.

No sooner had the colonists seen their tropical swamp and understood the real nature of their task, that a rebellion took place, speedily put down by troops sent by sea and land from St. Augustine. It must be realized that Dr. Turnbull was also Secretary of His Majesty's colonial government, so the local authorities knew what to expect if they tried to be neutral in any dispute with his wards. In this rebellion the Italians were at the fore, which made Miss Doggett lose her customary judicial, serene attitude. Leghorn, "in Southern Italy" (sic) had supplied to the venture "a small but turbulent band of Italians" (p.36), "violent and unprincipled men" (p.54), "ringleaders as blundering as they were lawless" (p.58). I consider this reaction an exceedingly interesting one. Under ordinary circumstances the revolt of a group which rightly or wrongly believes itself cheated and cornered, evokes even too much sympathy in America. But the book was written in 1919, that terrible year for Italy when the great predatory Powers, bickering at the disbanding of the artificial partnership and looking for a scapegoat, pounced on an Italy

eager for her share of the spoils, and accumulated accusations and contumely in order to be left undisturbed. France and Britain did the appropriating of colonies; America was scared into hamstringing Italy by barring her one access to gold, emigration. And since an immigration barrier was without precedent in this country, in order to put the measure over —and it took some years at that — it became ‘public policy’ to paint pitch—black the Italians of America. (I am grateful to the Jews for their recent successful sponsorship of the new attitude that whoever whispers a word against a racial group already established in America, should be prosecuted as “undermining American unity”). Whatever Miss Doggett had to say in 1919 against the Italians of New Smyrna was perfectly in tune with the general chorus; it was also bound to warm the cockles of her readers’ hearts, in fact it was sure to be mild as compared with what they were then saying over the coffee cups. It all fits that wonderful tale of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, so true even in this year 1939, about the farmer who had had one of his vineyards stolen by a neighbor. He went to court about it; but before the case was tried, he turned to the judge and said, “Your Honor, before this case is tried, I wish to know if you find that this season it is fashionable to steal vineyards. If it is, please drop the case”. As Campoamor so beautifully sings,

“En este mundo traidor
Nada es verdad, ni mentira;
Tado es segun el color
Del cristal can qua se mira”. (b)

b) "In this treacherous world — Nothing is either true or false ——Everything depends on the color — Of the chrysal through which one looks at it."

I am sure that Mrs. Corse now appreciates the extenuating circumstances in favor of the Italians, which the Miss Doggett of 1919 could hardly have seen through the surrounding mist. The colony limped along for nine years, punctuated by internal and external quarrels, epidemics, failures of all kinds, and held together mainly by Dr. Turnbull’s indomitable Will. By 1777, however, the survivors had all scattered. Their leader, heartbroken, resumed medical practice, this time at Charleston, where he died in 1792.

As I look at it all, the great, basic, in fact quasi-criminal blunder was committed by the British Prime Minister, who should never have undertaken to play for high stakes in that supposedly most profitable venture. People in high office should pay for the honor by punctilious detachment from mercantile pursuits, and I am sure that sane Englishmen will agree with me that even if it was Turnbull who tempted Grenville, the latter should have indignantly refused to join the scheme. That is one lesson to be derived from the failure of that truly grandiose plan, into which Dr. Turnbull, even if he was electrified by the profit motive, unquestionably poured the resources of a rare executive ability and-of an exceptional faculty for work in all climes and against all kinds of obstacles. Another lesson, more difficult to learn perhaps because more subtle, but no less useful, has to do with the psychology of that international venture ——and may well apply to the psychology of another and far greater international venture called the United States of America. *The Nordic fails: whenever he assumes, in his dealing: with non-Nordics, that they are moved by the same stimuli which moves him.* The Britisher may give fine hospitals to the Hindu, and the American may give fine roads to ' the Filipino; neither the Hindu nor the Filipino is nearly as grateful as he, in the minds of his benefactors, should be. I remember an experience I had in Manila about fifteen years ago. Governor Leonard Wood had just explained to me the marvels of recent improvements in the archipelago, when I saw posters all over town announcing that a Spanish dramatic company had landed and was going to play that very evening one of the classical Spanish plays. Barcelona was the last, and almost anti odal, place where the company had performed, so the local

400 were all worked up about the coming event. And it was an event — not on the stage, where things were mild, but everywhere else in the theatre. Fair descendants of Spanish governors and of lesser officials from Madrid had donned their colonial jewelry, and incredible beaux Brummels had played breath-taking variations on the drab international theme of man's evening wear. It was to them what the "St. Cecilians" are to Charleston, the "German Balls" to Philadelphia. My few local friends were beaming when they saw me, making myself a party to their fiesta. There were a number of Japanese; there was a box full of bank employees from Indo China then on a visit to the Islands, escorting a couple of painted dolls. But I failed to see a single American official at that show, which found the hearts of the people of Manila defenseless and receptive, as it meant to them one of the last nostalgic glimpses of a proud tricentennial colonial world fast fading away.

This parable applies perfectly to the New Smyrna venture. The Italians, many of whom had married and most of whom came from farms organized hundreds of years ago with an immovable routine, had brought their tools and seeds, expecting to duplicate here their European farm life. But they, and the friendly Spaniards, and the wild and totally alien Greek mountaineers (obviously chosen because their religion was to act as a screen for the Latins) were immediately housed in huge *falansteria* intended to shelter several hundred humans and told to cultivate only one crop and one they had never seen before, inedible, indeed raised to be shipped abroad for mysterious marketing. They were fed hominy, just because the British love mush, although it is repulsive to the average Latin; this was corrected only after three hundred settlers had died of scurvy. This hominy was cooked in huge kettles and dished out to men and women whom "a drum summoned from the woods to line up for their share of food". (Every Italian farmer's wife kneads her own individual style of bread loaf to be baked by the baker, and considers all impersonal food, such as American canned goods, as fit for the family hog). The entire colony was put into uniform — just as convicts are. Miss Doggett may have known that "most of them were badly off so far as clothes were concerned, and this, therefore, was a much needed measure", but I can assure her that they would have preferred individual rags. "Strange to say," concludes Miss Doggett, "all of these Ways of caring for the settlers were mentioned as great grievances by their historian, Romans.

This was the accepted way of providing for people in new colonies, the way that the Virginia, Georgia, Plymouth and Carolina colonists had lived for the first years of their pioneer life, but these people are reported to have been disappointed because they encountered these hardships". My comment is very simple: Dr. Turnbull should have taken along Englishmen and should have left the Italians alone, even though, as he wrote to the Earl of Shelbourne on July 10, 1767, they cost him "half the price usually given to British subjects carried to the Colonies". The one truly irreparable blunder of the New Smyrna venture was a psychological misunderstanding.

But while no extra amount of information upon the history of that settlement to be found in the future is likely to change that particular aspect of the great colonization scheme, other elements thereof are becoming gradually clarified through documents previously not available or overlooked. Readers will find at the end of this monograph some items from colonial papers of the time which enable us to follow much better the early days of the venture, and to distribute responsibilities more equitably.

The Georgia Gazette and the South Carolina Gazette (name changed slightly several times) are weeklies of great importance to the historian of the Colonial South. They are extremely rare, no complete original files of either being known; the Library of Congress, to mention but one outstanding example, lacks not only some years but actually some decade: of the latter publication, with the exception of an occasional issue. It is hard to believe it, but it is nevertheless true that in a land so hospitable to acceptable substitutes, no photostats have to this day been supplied to fill the gap in America's Public Library No. 1.

The scholar who would consult the one almost complete file must journey to somnolent, fragrant Charleston (hardly an ordeal, I grant), where some gracious ladies in charge of the Charleston Library Society will sing and chirp, in a local parlance distantly related to that of rigid Britannia, a reply to your queries, while they entrust to you, a stranger — with the confidence of the Southern woman in the gentlemanliness of a gentleman — their unique treasures.

Such, at least, was my experience when I first became acquainted with said Library Society, of which I am now very proud to call myself a member; and as I looked over those unconnected morsels of colonial news — separated by announcements of the arrival of Guinea cargoes, punctuated by notices of rewards for the return of fugitive slaves — I realized how much light they can shed on the history of America, and how the absence of such a light has made the current version of historical events even more faulty than incomplete.

Thus a passing reference in item III reveals to us that when, at the end of June (1768), the immigrants, who had left Minorca on March 31st and had not been permitted to go ashore when passing Gibraltar and Madeira, arrived at last at St. Augustine, *they were not allowed to land*, although Dr. Turnbull did land (thus proving that the state of the sea would allow it). They must wait until the expedition could continue its journey to the Musquito Inlet, some 80 miles down the coast. Yet those poor wretches had been crowded for almost three months in tiny ships buffeted by storms, and a number of the women were pregnant: Dr. Turnbull himself, so solicitous for the marriage bliss of his wards (we seem to remember that slave-owners encouraged births in captivity) had written from Minorca, on February 27, to the Earl of Shelbourne, "my numbers increase daily from marriages between the Italians I brought here [enroute to Florida] 8: the young women of this Island, which I encourage. . I am afraid that only one explanation is possible: Dr. Turnbull did not want his human cargo to establish any contact with "free" people. The success of his venture depended upon his landing the 1500 immigrants at one time at the great Musquito Swamp—with overseers ready, and military support available to him as a member of the Council for East Florida —and confronting them with the dilemma, "Till this or die." It will be remembered that every time an effort was made by the immigrants (and even by their beloved Father Camps for the clarification of his ecclesiastical status) to establish connection with Cuba, interference came swiftly and cruelly with the usual excuse, "they are helping Spanish lots". Spain, the eternal villain! Even to-day, school children from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, are taught about "Spanish intrigue" when learning Mississippi Valley history in the days of General Wilkinson and Aaron Burr, wit out being told that the catchy title really means *intrigue at the expense of Spain*. For the American has inherited from his English forbears the sub-conscious hatred for the "dark and devious" Spaniard which dates back to the mortal duel between Elizabeth's fleet and the Armada.

Nos. VI, VIII, IX, X, and XI, taken together, supply as direct and reliable a story of What happened at the New Smyrna colony during August 1768 as will ever be obtained; those sea captains, who had no personal interest in the venture, and two of whom were eye-witnesses (which is more than can be said for the protagonists at the trial in St. Augustine) seem to me to be eminently worthy of credence. Thus, against the official version which minimizes the importance of the revolt and the punishments meted out to the insurgents (see item no. IX, obviously "inspired"), we have the word of Captain Ryall that in addition to the 15 settlers taken to St. Augustine for trial, "about 40 were severely punished at the settlement". We can imagine what a hard-boiled British 18th-century sea captain plying between slave ports would describe as "severe punishment"; and this would fit perfectly the stories of inhuman treatment to be found in later affidavits of so many of the colonists.

I hasten to add that these stories were not denied, in fact they were bravely acknowledged, by the leading defender of Dr. Turnbull, Miss Doggett.

But what these old newspapers definitely exclude is the accepted version of all Turnbull apologists, that the doctor was a kindly soul surrounded by inhuman overseers, whose cruel rule the colonists, willing enough to toil at the beginning, were in the long run unable to bear. In Mrs. Corse's volume this period, which I may describe as of incubation, is given the duration of over two months, to be exact 71 days, from the day of arrival of "the last colonist" (pages 49 and 51). But the *Georgia Gazette* of August 10th announced that the colonists had just "set out for the Muskitoes", while the *South Carolina Gazette* of August 15th tells us that they, at last, "were gone to the Musquito's". The uprising, as all sources agree, was on the 18th, barely three days later. Granting that news did not travel fast then, so that the event reported by the Charleston paper could be a few days old (not many, for the item in the Savannah paper, announcing the settlers' departure, checks up on its Charleston neighbor), we must also grant that it took a few days to move into "location" 1500 hundred human beings who had not set foot on *terra firma* for four and one-half months, with all their earthly goods, at agricultural supplies and tools, stores and what not. There were plenty of women and a number of babies, facilities of all kinds must be immediately provided for them if they were to survive at all; I do not see how any 'serious beginning of agricultural work could have been made by August 18th. I think it is much more likely that August 18th was the very day when these children of lean but smiling Old World farms were shown their goal: a dismal Florida swamp alive with the mosquitoes so characteristically announced by its name, as well as with alligators and deadly snakes and poisonous plants, and one-thousand—and—one menaces from air and water, from fauna and flora—all equally unknown to those child-like farmers, terrified at the very thought of their starting life with their brides and babies in a land not only unfriendly but apocalyptic. And what was there above their heads? From the branches of immense trees, which stood with their feet soaked in putrid water, an endless decoration of funereal crepe—Spanish moss—hung lugubriously in all directions, with a lavishness they had never seen at a funerals in their poor country churches. They were in the shadow of death, and America was giving these superstitious folk her farewell. Was this merely a New World, or was it another world? Perhaps it was true that beyond the Pillars of Hercules death lurks, as the Mediterranean tradition held for time immemorial. And nobody could protect them, they were in a continent inhabited by savage Redskins; Europe was three thousand miles away. But somewhere near was a thriving "European" town, a Latin town, Havana! Frantically they must have made for it, with the overpowering drive of panicky animals bent upon self-preservation.

The story of their recapture, of the trials and sentences, of the new attempts at clearing the land, of the clash between Turnbull and the colonial government, of the final escape of the survivors while Nature reconquered unperturbed the scene of so much strife, has no place here. It's clearly fore-ordained place—given the methods preferred by contemporary Americans for the appreciation of history—is in Hollywood, whence it would wind its way into national consciousness. A Scottish doctor, a Smyrniote wife; intrigue in highest British circles; Charleston and St. Augustine, two American favorites; then scouring the Mediterranean for farmers, Greeks rushing down the mountains to escape their Turkish overlords, Italians gathered at Livorno of Anthony Adverse fame, Minorcans from picturesque Port Mahon. Stormy landing; Florida swamp scenes with the sense of horror from "The Emperor Jones"; rebellion. Trial and sentences; three condemned to death, the third, Carlo Forni (Paul Mun!), having his sentence commuted in exchange for his acting executioner of the others. *Climax*, Forni refuses to kill the men whom he had led to revolt, preferring to die with them. *Virtue rewarded*, the judge commutes his sentence again, saving his life. There are all the ingredients for one of the historical films which take America by storm nowadays. But those of us who were trained to find historical romance in the

business-like entries of a register of vital statistics, will not need any spectacular romancing of the *genus* outlined above; four centuries of Florida records will supply us with ample and succulent food. And it is with pride for my race, but with utter humility toward those humble blood-brothers of mine, that I submit the data covering the activities of Italians in Colonial Florida, in order that America may see how the countrymen of Columbus added their share of toil and tears to the upbuilding of even this comparative newcomer among the United States.



DR. BRUNO ROSELLI

Roselli was born in 1887 in Florence to a father who worked for the Italian government as a lawyer. In the early 1900s he graduated from the Liceo Galileo in Florence—apparently, without taking any examinations. One of his brothers became a lawyer, and in 1911, he too earned a law degree from the University of Urbino. That same year, he began teaching Italian art, literature and language at Adelphi College in Brooklyn. At Vassar, Professor Roselli was highly successful from the start. The influential professor of Latin Elizabeth Hazelton Haight '94, who became a good friend of Roselli, praised his Italian classes, noting his refusal to bring up the topic of Italian politics in them. The students seemed to like him a great deal, and enrollment in Italian classes rose steeply. An infrequently elected language, Italian had been relegated to sharing departmental status with Spanish. But Roselli separated the two languages into their own departments and ushered in a new era in Italian at Vassar. By the early 1920s, Vassar could boast of the largest Italian enrollment of any American college, and in 1921 Roselli hired an assistant instructor in Italian, a woman from Genoa named Gabriella Bozano.

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