

PATRICK TONYN - GOVERNOR OF EAST FLORIDA 1774-1784

by Robert Phillip Jones

Part One

Prologue

Colonel Patrick Tonyn arrived in St. Augustine in March of 1774 as the newly appointed governor of British East Florida, tasked with managing a diverse and divided province. As a staunchly loyal British official, Tonyn quickly found his leadership tested by the challenges of governing a multi-ethnic, multi-racial society, all while safeguarding British subjects in the midst of escalating unrest in the thirteen American colonies.

Just months before he arrived, in December of 1773, the Boston Tea Party had ignited tensions, and the punitive 'Intolerable Acts' of 1774, which closed the port of Boston, dismantled the Massachusetts government and required colonial governments to provide housing and supplies for British troops stationed in America, only added fuel to the fire.

The crisis in Massachusetts, though distant, was already casting its shadow on East Florida's fragile stability. Jim Piccuch wrote in the *Journal of the American Revolution*, "*Upon Tonyn's arrival, he found the small province to be on a solid economic footing. Of East Florida's approximately three thousand non-Indian inhabitants, about one half were African American slaves. Most of the slaves labored on plantations along the St. Mary's and St. Johns Rivers, while another thousand or so indentured servants from Europe, mostly Roman Catholic Minorcans, worked on Andrew Turnbull's plantation at New Smyrna, south of St. Augustine.*"

Tonyn possessed an unwavering loyalty to the Crown, and his military experience gave him the ability to confront any challenge head-on. As the American Revolution swept through the thirteen colonies, he emerged as a steadfast defender of British interests in East Florida. His tenure demanded not only the defense of the province but also the survival of thousands of Loyalists fleeing persecution in the rebellious colonies. With food and supplies often running low, and tensions mounting as the population surged, Tonyn had to balance military strategy with humanitarian efforts.

Under his leadership, East Florida became a refuge for as many as 15,000 Loyalists—men, women, and children—who looked to him for protection, shelter, and sustenance. The once-quiet province was transformed with camps springing up in and around St. Augustine, where the threat of attack was never far from anyone's mind. Lawlessness was rampant in the St. Marys River region from Patriots just across the river in Georgia.

Tonyn's resilience was tested to the extreme when the American Revolution ended. Under the Treaty of Paris in 1783, England receded East Florida to Spain. In his final year as governor, he faced the enormous task of managing the orderly evacuation of British Loyalists from the province—many of whom had trusted him with their safety for years. The once-bustling Loyalist camps near St. Augustine became staging grounds for a hasty departure, as ships crowded Matanzas Bay, and families packed what they could carry. Deadlines were set, then amended, as

confusion and uncertainty loomed. Tonyn's determination never wavered, but perhaps for the first time, he felt the sting of the Crown's decision to abandon its loyal subjects in Florida. Still, he managed the safe relocation of thousands of Loyalist families, ensuring they departed under his watchful eye, even as Spanish authorities waited to reclaim the territory. Despite the challenges, Tonyn remained steadfast, demonstrating his unyielding loyalty and remarkable leadership by maintaining order and coordinating the complex logistics of resettling so many people. He boarded the final British vessel only after ensuring that every last British subject was on board—a fitting exclamation point to a job well done.

As Dr. Roger C. Smith stated in the first sentence of Chapter One of his thesis, *The Façade of Unity: British East Florida's War for Independence* (August 2008): "*On November 19, 1785, with the wind finally in its sails, the HMS Cyrus put the coast of East Florida to her stern and carried the last remnants of a weary but loyal colony back to England—though not necessarily back home. The author of these words was Major General Patrick Tonyn, governor of East Florida—Great Britain's last colony in what is now the United States.*"

WHO WAS PATRICK TONYN?

Patrick George Tonyn was born on November 28, 1725, in the historic border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, strategically located between England and Scotland. As the eldest of six children, he was raised alongside three brothers and two sisters. His brother, Reverend Charles William Tonyn (1732–1805), became a respected figure in the Church of England, while his youngest brother, John Columbine Tonyn, was a cavalry commandant with the East India Company in Madras, India. Tonyn's other brother, Captain George A. Tonyn, was described on the swanbournehistory.co.uk site as follows. "*He was Captain of the British ship H.M.S. Brune, which, on 23rd October 1762, engaged the French frigate L'Oiseau, commanded by Capitaine De Modene. Captain Tonyn achieved a great victory by capturing the French vessel and taking over 180 prisoners. George had taken part in the capture of Quebec with General Wolfe during the Seven Years' War. He was appointed commander of His Majesty's Squadron off East Africa in 1768.*"

One of Patrick's sisters, Juliana, married Francis Levett, a connection that tied the Tonyn family to another prominent household. Although the name of Patrick's other sister remains unknown, the Tonyn family stayed closely bonded over the years. Patrick's leadership and steadfast loyalty to the British Crown ultimately elevated him to become the most distinguished member of the family.

Tonyn entered the British Army at the age of 18, receiving a commission as a cornet (the equivalent of a second lieutenant) in the 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons in 1743. His early military career was marked by his participation in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), where he fought in key battles such as the Battle of Dettingen (1743), the last time a British monarch led troops in the field, and the brutal Battle of Fontenoy (1745), where British and allied forces faced heavy losses against the French. These experiences in close combat helped to forge Tonyn's resolve and sharpen his tactical abilities.

Tonyn's leadership skills continued to develop during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), a global conflict that saw Britain locked in a fierce struggle against France and its allies. He fought with distinction in Germany as part of the British forces allied with Frederick the Great of Prussia, where he likely gained insights into the complexities of European military strategy and diplomacy. His courage and competence on the battlefield earned him a promotion to lieutenant colonel in 1759, marking him as a rising figure within the British Army.

In 1761, Tonyn was appointed colonel of the 104th Regiment of Foot, a short-lived unit in the British Army. This role exposed him to the challenges of military administration, experience that would later prove invaluable when he was tasked with governing the province of East Florida. Tonyn's military service instilled in him a sense of discipline, resilience, and strategic thinking—qualities that defined his leadership in the turbulent years that followed.

Tonyn's military experience and leadership, combined with his ability to maintain East Florida as a British stronghold during the Revolutionary War, solidified his reputation as a skilled military officer and colonial administrator. His efforts to protect the province and its Loyalist population, despite the turbulent political environment, earned him both respect and recognition within British government circles. After his tenure as governor ended, Tonyn retired from active service, but his legacy as a steadfast leader remained influential. In recognition of his distinguished service, he was promoted to the rank of major general in 1783, a testament to his military prowess and loyalty to the Crown.

GOVERNOR PATRICK TONYN'S LEGACY

Governor Patrick Tonyn has often been unfairly blamed for the failure of the New Smyrna colony by writers sympathetic to Dr. Andrew Turnbull, who, with his financial backers, founded the ill-fated colony. These critics argue that Tonyn's leadership hastened the colony's demise, but this assessment overlooks the grim realities that preceded Tonyn's arrival. By the time he assumed office in 1774, the New Smyrna colony had already endured six grueling years of hardship. The colonists had suffered through a devastating rebellion, hurricanes that obliterated most of the palmetto huts, a lack of food and clothing, and certain years of poor indigo yields—the crop that was supposed to provide the colony's economic foundation. Worst of all, nearly 700 colonists had tragically died since their arrival in 1768. Their graves are now hidden somewhere beneath the soil of New Smyrna Beach, Florida, the land that was once the Turnbull colony. Governor Patrick Tonyn had nothing to do with these catastrophes.

These insurmountable challenges had left the colony on the brink of collapse well before Tonyn's arrival. Dr. Turnbull's ambitious plans were already faltering by the time the eight ships left Port Mahon in 1768. To place the blame for the colony's failure at Governor Tonyn's feet ignores these stark facts. While it is true that Tonyn took over a troubled province, blaming him for the Turnbull colony's downfall is not only inaccurate but deeply unfair. Tonyn inherited a situation that had been irreparably damaged by mismanagement and misfortune long before his governorship. His critics fail to recognize the full scope of the disaster that was already unfolding.

When Patrick Tonyn arrived in East Florida in 1774, William Drayton Sr. had already served as chief justice for nearly a decade, having been appointed in 1765. During those nine years, Drayton had built strong political alliances with influential figures in the colony, including “*Andrew Turnbull, General Augustine Prevost, officers of the Sixtieth Regiment, and several local merchants,*” according to historian J. Leitch Wright Jr. These relationships made Drayton a powerful figure, and Tonyn quickly came to see him as a potential threat. Tonyn removed Drayton from his post twice. The first time Drayton was able to convince his friends in London to reinstate him, but not after his removal the second time.

Tonyn accused Drayton of treasonous correspondence with a family relative in South Carolina, who, in Wright’s words, was “*an outspoken South Carolina rebel.*” But Tonyn’s suspicions went beyond family ties. Drayton had increasingly aligned himself with colonial elites who were dissatisfied with British rule and sympathetic to the growing revolutionary cause in the American colonies. Tonyn viewed Drayton’s alliances, especially with figures like Andrew Turnbull, as part of a broader faction that sought to undermine his authority and, potentially, the Crown’s.

Despite Tonyn’s accusations, Drayton’s powerful connections protected him from immediate removal. However, the tension between the two men reflected the growing divide within the province itself, as revolutionary sentiment began to spread even among those who had initially supported British rule. Drayton’s correspondence with his uncle in South Carolina may have been the final straw for Tonyn, but it was Drayton’s broader sympathies for the American patriot cause that ultimately shaped his fate.

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At 49 years of age, Colonel Patrick Tonyn eagerly stepped into his new role as governor of East Florida on March 1, 1774. Having distinguished himself in military campaigns such as the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War, Tonyn brought with him a reputation for discipline and unwavering loyalty to the Crown—qualities that likely influenced King George III's decision to appoint him. His years in the field had shaped a leader who valued order and obedience, traits he intended to instill in East Florida.

However, Tonyn quickly discovered that East Florida was not the battlefield, and his firm, military-style governance drew criticism from local elites, many of whom were accustomed to exercising their own authority. Some bristled under his strict rule, resistant to what they saw as heavy-handed leadership. Despite the challenges, Tonyn remained committed to maintaining British control in a province that was increasingly caught in the tides of the American revolution.

The Crown granted Patrick Tonyn 20,000 acres of land in East Florida in 1767, the same time that wealthy British men, including Andrew Turnbull and Sir William Duncan, received their land grants. There is no historical evidence suggesting Tonyn and Turnbull had any prior acquaintance before Tonyn’s appointment as governor in 1774. However, historians reveal that the two quickly became rivals soon after Tonyn’s arrival, as the governor grew concerned about the conditions at Turnbull’s New Smyrna colony. During a visit, Tonyn was struck by the sight of exhausted and malnourished British subjects, many of whom had suffered under harsh working

conditions for years. Alarmed by what he saw, Tonym's concern for the welfare of these colonists soon escalated into a public feud with Turnbull.

One of Governor Patrick Tonym's most far-reaching decisions was his support for the Minorcan Catholics, allowing them to create a community in St. Augustine that remains strong and proud to this day. In doing so, Tonym restored Catholicism to a city that had not seen a Catholic presence since the Spanish evacuated to Cuba in 1763. For fourteen years, 1763 to 1777, the faith that had first taken root in America in 1565 was absent from St. Augustine, leaving a religious void in the city's cultural identity. His decision was not only a nod to the city's founding legacy, but also a strategic move to support the integration of the Minorcan refugees into British society, ensuring their loyalty and helping to stabilize the province. Catholicism had returned to the very place where it had first began and had flourished over two centuries before.

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Dr. Andrew Turnbull, along with his family and entourage, arrived in St. Augustine in 1766, as documented in numerous historical accounts. With the support of Governor James Grant, who was keen on encouraging economic development in the province, Turnbull, with considerable help from fellow Scotsman Governor Grant, created comfortable accommodations for his wife and children in St. Augustine before sailing back to London to begin gathering indentured laborers for the New Smyrna colony.

In March 1767, Turnbull set out with the goal of recruiting '500 Greeks' for his planned colony. However, his efforts were greatly hindered by the political and logistical obstacles posed by the Ottoman Empire, which controlled many of the territories where Greeks lived. Undeterred, Turnbull expanded his search across the Mediterranean, turning to Italy, the Peloponnese, and Minorca to gather his indentured laborers.

By the summer of 1768, after more than a year away from his family, Turnbull had successfully recruited 1,403 men, women, and children as indentured laborers, far surpassing his initial target of 500 Greeks. The group was diverse, consisting of over 100 Italians, several hundred Greeks, a few Corsicans, and the majority from Minorca. These colonists boarded eight vessels at the Port of Mahon, Minorca, and set sail for East Florida. Despite the hardships of their 70-day voyage—enduring cramped, overcrowded conditions, scarce supplies, burials at sea, and the ever-present threat of disease—they still represented the largest European colony transported to America during the colonial era. The future of Turnbull's ambitious agricultural colony now depended on their resilience and his capacity to navigate the daunting challenges that awaited them.

Turnbull's ambition to establish a profitable colony in East Florida was driven purely by financial gain, not any sense of altruism. His goal was to export indigo and other commodities to England, creating enormous wealth for himself and his partners, all of whom were well-connected British leaders. As a Scottish entrepreneur with influential friends, Turnbull saw the opportunity to capitalize on East Florida's fertile land as one he could not pass up. His ambitious enterprise might have succeeded were it not for a combination of crippling obstacles, especially the actual cost of creating a British colony.

Turnbull's deep and constant financial difficulties started well before his ships reached St. Augustine. In fact, just before departing from Port Mahon in 1768, he was so concerned about the costs that he wrote to Sir William Duncan, proposing a drastic measure: selling half of the Minorcans to other East Florida planters. In this letter, Turnbull wrote, "*I may endeavor to get half of them off my hands at St. Augustine... But I must admit, I would much prefer to employ them all on our own lands, as I foresee many of them staying with us even after their 13 or 14 years of service have ended.*" The mere fact that Turnbull expressed the idea of selling the unsuspecting Minorcans was no different from the practice of selling slaves. It became even more apparent that Turnbull intended to use them as laborers for up to 14 years, far beyond the terms agreed upon in their signed indentured servant contracts or verbal agreements.

The colonists faced relentless hardships, from violent storms and oppressive heat to the constant threat of Native American attacks, which ravaged their crops and made survival a daily struggle. Many were forced to live in flimsy palmetto huts ill-suited to the harsh environment. Inadequate food supplies led to malnutrition, while funding for the colony frequently fell short of meeting the immense demands of establishing a new colony. To make matters worse, the rugged, mosquito-infested landscape rendered agricultural work not only exhausting but perilously dangerous.

Turnbull's reliance on slave-trained overseers to manage the Minorcans while he was frequently absent only worsened the situation. The overseers' brutal treatment of the indentured laborers, confirmed by sworn statements, combined with Turnbull's poor oversight, sowed discontent among them, many of whom came to resent the colony's leadership. Compounding the problem, Turnbull left much of the day-to-day management in the hands of his very young nephew, also named Andrew Turnbull, whose inexperience further undermined the colony's fragile stability. The colony's eventual failure was not due to a lack of ambition, but rather to a combination of mismanagement, cruelty, and harsh conditions that no amount of entrepreneurial vision could overcome.

Tonyn played no role in the constant financial difficulties Turnbull faced. He had nothing to do with Turnbull's decision to bring 1,403 colonists across the Atlantic Ocean when plans had only been made to accommodate '500 Greeks.' Nor was Tonyn responsible for the failure of the crops, which left the Minorcans with limited food and scant clothing during several harsh years. These issues were well-documented long before Tonyn's arrival.

Governor James Grant's letter to the Earl of Hillsborough, dated September 1, 1770, reveals the dire conditions of the colony: "*But at present they are destitute of every convenience, they are ill clothed, many of them almost naked, and are obliged to live in small huts put up in a hurry to shelter them from the weather upon their first arrival. Doctor Turnbull has neither money nor credit to supply them with clothes, and has not the necessary tools and materials to build houses for them.*"

This stark description of the New Smyrna colony's suffering occurred four years before Tonyn assumed office, making it not just unreasonable but a significant distortion of the truth to hold him accountable for the colony's failure. By the time Tonyn became governor in 1774, the

colony was already teetering on the edge of collapse due to a lack of resources, poor planning, and Turnbull's extended absences.

Following the departure of Governor James Grant in 1771, Andrew Turnbull sought to leverage his success in developing the New Smyrna colony by asking his influential partner, Sir William Duncan, to help him secure the position of East Florida Lieutenant Governor. Turnbull believed the added authority would allow him to better protect his colony from potential uprisings or raids, while also giving him more political control over the entire province. However, his bid was unsuccessful, as the British government decided to retain John Moultrie as Lieutenant Governor and later appointed Patrick Tonyn as governor in 1774. One writer even suggested that Tonyn had been offered the governorship in 1763 but had not been in a position to accept it at that time.

Turnbull's frustration over his failed bid for political power contributed to growing tensions with both Moultrie and Tonyn. These tensions escalated after the courts and Tonyn sided with the Minorcans in their grievances against Turnbull, which centered on the brutal working conditions and mistreatment they were enduring at the New Smyrna colony. As unrest grew, Tonyn's support for the Minorcans played a critical role in their decision to abandon the colony and resettle in St. Augustine. Their mass departure would ultimately spell the end of Turnbull's ambitious colonial enterprise, marking a significant turning point in East Florida and St. Augustine's history.

The reasons behind King George III's decision to retain John Moultrie as Lieutenant Governor of East Florida can only be speculated, though it may have been influenced by the recommendation of former Governor James Grant. Moultrie, a veteran of the British Army who served as a lieutenant during the French and Indian War, had proven himself not only in battle but also in governance. Between 1771 and 1774, Moultrie acted as Governor of East Florida during Grant's absence, skillfully managing the affairs and maintaining stability during a period of political transition. His administrative experience and steady leadership in Grant's absence made him an attractive candidate for the role of Lieutenant Governor.

In contrast, Andrew Turnbull, while an experienced naval surgeon and the ambitious founder of the New Smyrna colony, lacked significant administrative experience in managing a British province. His background as a medical officer in the British Royal Navy may have given him valuable knowledge in health and logistics, but it likely did not prepare him for the complex political and economic management required to serve as lieutenant governor of East Florida.

Grant's influence in this decision may also have played a critical role. As a respected figure both in East Florida and Britain, his endorsement of Moultrie would have carried significant weight. Grant's successful tenure as governor had earned him the trust of the British government, and his recommendation likely reflected his confidence in Moultrie's ability to continue the policies he had put in place. By retaining Moultrie, the British government may have sought to ensure continuity and stability, particularly given the growing unrest in the American colonies during the early 1770s.

East Florida, as a relatively young and strategically important British province, needed steady leadership to avoid falling into the kind of revolutionary sentiment spreading throughout the

northern colonies. Moultrie, who had proven his administrative capability as Acting Governor in Grant's absence, represented a stable choice for the Crown, one that would help maintain order in a time of uncertainty. Given these considerations, the British government likely saw Moultrie's retention as a safeguard against potential upheaval, ensuring that East Florida remained a loyal and stable province in the face of increasing rebellion elsewhere in the American colonies.

In a 1774 letter to Sir William Duncan, Andrew Turnbull expressed his frustration at not securing the position of East Florida Lieutenant Governor, writing, "*You might have obtained the governorship of the province for me, I mean [Lieutenant] Governor, if you had asked for it, for Lord Hillsborough told me he wanted to do you a service but as you didn't ask him, he gave in to Grant's solicitation.*" Turnbull's disappointment is clear, as he believed that with Duncan's influence, the role could have been his. Lord Hillsborough, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, had hinted that he was open to helping Duncan, but ultimately deferred to Governor James Grant, who evidently supported John Moultrie.

Despite his disappointment, Turnbull was careful not to let the situation damage his relationship with Duncan, reassuring him, "*Carrying my own people away will be done with as much regard for your interest as possible. I mean only to secure myself not to hurt you. Nothing can ever induce me to any meanness of that kind.*" This diplomatic language shows Turnbull's awareness of the delicate balance between his personal ambitions and his financial partnerships. As tensions grew in East Florida, particularly with the Minorcans in his New Smyrna colony, Turnbull needed to safeguard his own position while maintaining the support of his influential partners.

Turnbull's failed bid for the lieutenant governorship must have deepened his frustrations, as his relationship with Governor Patrick Tonyn became increasingly strained. The political landscape in East Florida was shifting, and Turnbull's inability to gain political power left him vulnerable to the growing unrest among the Minorcans.

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Mrs. Turnbull and her children had been living in St. Augustine since 1766, comfortably positioned in the upper echelons of British society under the patronage of Governor James Grant, a fellow Scotsman like her husband. The Turnbells became part of a well-established British social circle that included other prominent families in the colony. Mrs. Turnbull's social standing likely played a key role in maintaining her family's influence during her husband's long absences. By the time Patrick Tonyn arrived in 1774, this elite circle had already formed its alliances and traditions, leaving little room for newcomers to challenge their status.

Whether Tonyn was accepted by this segment of the community remains uncertain. Some writers suggest that Tonyn was snubbed by St. Augustine's privileged class, possibly due to strong loyalties to Grant and Turnbull. If true, this exclusion would have undoubtedly shaped Tonyn's sentiments toward the established British society, particularly as he navigated the political tensions between himself and Andrew Turnbull. Tonyn's background as a career military officer, rather than a well-connected socialite, may have set him apart from the established privileged, deepening the sense of separation.

Life was far more challenging for Mrs. Turnbull after her family moved to the New Smyrna colony, far removed from the social activities she once enjoyed in St. Augustine, where she dined regularly at Governor Grant's residence. Though there may have been other women of her social standing on nearby plantations, with whom she could occasionally visit, her days were undoubtedly consumed by the demands of raising her numerous children and managing the household. The relative isolation of the plantation, coupled with her husband's frequent absences, added to the weight of her responsibilities.

During her years in New Smyrna, Mrs. Turnbull gave birth to three children: William Duncan, born in 1773, Robert James on January 14, 1774, and John on February 11, 1775. These three youngest children joined their older siblings, Nichol (15), Maria Gracia (12), Jenny (11), and Margaret (9), at the family's mansion. However, the joys of motherhood were tempered by profound sorrow, as Mrs. Turnbull had tragically lost four children before the family's move to St. Augustine: Jane in 1756 at 1½ years old, Katherine in 1758 at 4 months, Helen in 1763 at 7 months, and Flora in 1766 at 5 months. The emotional weight of these losses must have been heavy, and lingered in her heart even as she welcomed new life into the world.

The challenges of life at the colony would have been compounded by the isolation and the harsh realities of frontier life. Managing a large household and caring for seven children must have been overwhelming. The natural beauty of the area could not compensate for the dangers and difficulties that came with it—whether it was the unpredictable weather, the remote location, or the lack of a strong social network.

Still, through all of these hardships, Mrs. Turnbull's resilience was undeniable. She remained the backbone of her family, managing her household and raising her children despite the emotional toll of loss and the challenges of life in a distant colony. Her quiet strength, often overlooked in the grander historical narratives, was a testament to the fortitude required of women in colonial America.

Several accounts mention her involvement and active participation in the church where Father Camps served as pastor. Father Michael J. Curley, in his dissertation *Church and State in the Spanish Floridas (1783-1822)*, states that Mrs. Turnbull was Catholic, though this claim has not been substantiated by other sources.

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There has been a great deal of speculation about whether Patrick Tonyn was married, with various historical clues offering conflicting possibilities. However, parish records from 1745, found in *Clandestine Marriages in London*, document the marriage of "Patrick Tonyn of Elsbury in Buckinghamshire, Gentleman and Bart., and Miss Mary Willing of Red Lyon Street, Holborn, in the County of Middlesex." While this record suggests that Tonyn married early in his life, some writers propose that Mrs. Tonyn was not warmly received by British society in St. Augustine, possibly due to her perceived lower social status. If Mrs. Tonyn did not come from a wealthy or well-connected family, this could explain why she might have been snubbed by the colony's elite, if that happened. In British colonial circles, lineage and connections were often key to social acceptance. The barrier separating 'us' from 'them' was impenetrable at that time.

One speculative incident further deepens the mystery. It suggests that Andrew Turnbull refused to allow his wife to return a social call from Mrs. Tonyn. In the rigid world of 18th-century colonial etiquette, such a refusal would have been seen as a grave social slight, potentially adding fuel to the personal and political tensions between Tonyn and Turnbull. Whether this incident actually occurred or not, the rumor itself hints at how social exclusion may have fed into broader conflicts in East Florida. Others speculate that Mrs. Tonyn may have died before Patrick Tonyn became governor, which would explain her absence from historical records during his tenure.

Also, it was not uncommon for military men like Tonyn to leave their wives in England when venturing into dangerous or unsettled territories. If Mrs. Tonyn had indeed remained in England while her husband governed in St. Augustine, this could have isolated Tonyn from the social life of the colony, affecting his ability to build alliances among the local elite. Ultimately, the truth about Mrs. Tonyn remains elusive, but her potential presence—or absence—casts a shadow over Tonyn's personal and political life in East Florida.

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In a November 1770 letter to Sir William Duncan, Turnbull wrote, "[He] hired Charles DeLaire to survey the plantation, paying him a fee of £20 Sterling. DeLaire measured the cultivated land, and two copies of his survey are enclosed in a box along with samples of indigo. You will see that we have 970 acres cleared and under cultivation" (Turnbull letters). While this was a significant amount of land, its productivity depended on whether enough Minorcans were healthy enough to work it.

In mid-May of 1774, Governor Tonyn, along with Frederick Mulcaster and others, embarked on a two-or three-day horseback ride to the New Smyrna colony. The Governor had already been made aware of the growing discontent among the Minorcan settlers, who had been facing harsh working conditions and neglect under Turnbull's management. During his visit, Tonyn took the time to listen to the settlers' complaints but ultimately recommended "*obedience to the People*," a temporary measure likely intended to diffuse tensions.

Mulcaster, who accompanied Tonyn, made a stark observation, writing that "*the Dr.'s fields were in bad order at present, not the least appearance of a crop*" (Turnbull letters). The poor state of the fields underscored the broader failures of Turnbull's agricultural project, which had struggled to produce sufficient crops to sustain the colony. This agricultural failure was not just a reflection of environmental challenges, but also of the mismanagement that had plagued the colony for years. For the Minorcans, it meant ongoing hardship, as they faced both inadequate food and difficult labor conditions.

Interestingly, it seems that Turnbull did not learn of Tonyn's impending visit until two or three days before the Governor's entourage arrived. Whether this short notice created tension is unclear, but Turnbull's surprise at the visit may have reflected his anxiety about the state of the colony. It is probable that Tonyn stayed more than a day, given the long journey, and he was likely offered a good accommodation in the 'village,' which consisted of thirty-one buildings, including a church, and a windmill. However, it is possible that Tonyn dined and lodged at the

Turnbull mansion, four or five miles to the north, where Mrs. Turnbull and her children had lived since relocating from St. Augustine three years earlier.

Tonyn's observations during this visit may have planted the seeds for his later support of the Minorcans. Although he recommended obedience of the people during this visit, the poor conditions and the complaints of the settlers likely stayed with him. As tensions in the colony grew, and Turnbull and Drayton's allegiance became questionable, Tonyn was led to take a more active role in addressing the sworn grievances of the Minorcans, contributing to the collapse of the New Smyrna colony.

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Quickly acting on East Florida's most pressing challenges, Governor Patrick Tonyn wrote in his first report to his superiors about the growing threat of conflict with the local Creek and Seminole tribes. British settlers, mostly from Georgia and South Carolina, had been steadily encroaching on Indigenous lands, sparking tension as they sought to claim free resources and land.

The Proclamation of 1763 had designated certain areas of East Florida for exclusive Native American use, but the influx of settlers in the years following the American colonies' expansion into the South made enforcement difficult. The Proclamation's boundaries were increasingly ignored, and local colonial authorities struggled to maintain control as settlers pushed deeper into Indigenous territory.

The Creek and Seminole tribes, with a long history of resisting colonial encroachment, were not passive in the face of British expansion. They had organized raids, defended their lands through strategic alliances, and made clear their opposition to further settler intrusion. Tonyn's reports reflected his growing concern that these tensions could erupt into open conflict, which would destabilize the province at a critical time. He viewed the settlers from neighboring colonies as an unpredictable, unmanageable element, driven by competition for land that had belonged to the Native Americans for thousands of years.

Tonyn's strategy for managing this escalating situation was complicated by the settlers' disregard for the law and his limited ability to enforce the Proclamation in the frontier regions. He considered advocating for stricter enforcement of the Proclamation to prevent further encroachment, but he also understood that this might antagonize the very settlers he had invited, who were bolstering East Florida's population and economy. The balance between protecting Indigenous lands and managing colonial expansion would define much of Tonyn's early governorship, as he sought to avert a war with the Creek and Seminole tribes that would have devastating consequences for East Florida.

As if dealing with the threat of a potential Native American uprising and troubling news from London about the thirteen colonies impending revolution weren't enough, Governor Tonyn soon uncovered a possible conspiracy involving Chief Justice William Drayton and Dr. Andrew Turnbull. Now, with revolutionary ideas spreading from the north, it appeared that dissent had reached the colony's leadership as well.

Tonyn was not the only one to notice the growing unrest. Reverend John Forbes, concerned about the shifting loyalties within East Florida's elite, wrote a warning to former Governor James Grant on December 28, 1774: "*Mr. Drayton has gained control of the Doctor and some others to the side of liberty. The others are as you left us. These two gentlemen were not made for quiet.*" Drayton, who had served as Chief Justice of East Florida since 1765, had developed sympathies for the cause of liberty taking root in the thirteen colonies. It appears that he had drawn Turnbull, still reeling from his troubles with the Minorcans and his disputes with Tonyn, into his orbit.

The full extent of the conspiracy remains unclear, but it seems that Drayton and Turnbull were agitating for change, possibly in favor of greater self-governance or aligning with the revolutionary cause. Their alliance represented a dangerous breach in the colony's leadership, as Drayton wielded judicial power and Turnbull maintained considerable influence through his New Smyrna colony. Their opposition to Tonyn's leadership raised the specter of internal unrest in what was supposed to be a loyalist stronghold.

Tonyn's discovery of this possible conspiracy would have only deepened the divisions within East Florida's leadership. Already suspicious of Turnbull due to the Minorcan grievances and the poor state of the New Smyrna colony, Tonyn now had to contend with the unsettling possibility that revolutionary sympathies had spread among the colony's elite. While Tonyn acted swiftly to gather information, the question remained: could he neutralize this threat before it destabilized East Florida, a province that stood on the edge of both external and internal conflict?

Drayton and Turnbull were attempting to help former Georgia Council member Jonathan Bryan acquire between four and five million acres of land in northern East Florida, land that had been reserved for Native Americans under the Proclamation of 1763. This illegal scheme, if successful, would have not only violated British law but also further destabilized relations with the Creek and Seminole tribes, who were already wary of British encroachment. Governor Patrick Tonyn, upon learning of the conspiracy, issued a warrant for Bryan's arrest. However, Bryan, having been tipped off, fled to Georgia before Tonyn's men could apprehend him.

The plot didn't stop with Jonathan Bryan. Tonyn suspected deeper involvement from prominent figures in East Florida and filed charges against Andrew Turnbull and Chief Justice William Drayton, accusing them of being '*disloyal to the Crown.*' Their disloyalty was not only tied to their involvement in the land scheme but also reflected their growing opposition to Tonyn's policies, which they saw as too rigid and protective of British interests at the expense of local leaders. Fearing arrest and imprisonment, both men managed to evade capture. Turnbull fled to England in February 1776, hoping to clear his name and secure political support.

By the time Turnbull returned, his New Smyrna colony had changed dramatically. The Minorcans, long disillusioned by the harsh conditions and mistreatment, had fled to St. Augustine under the protection and freedom offered by Governor Tonyn. Turnbull's control over his colony had finally collapsed.

Though Father Camps, the spiritual leader of the Minorcans, was initially unable to leave with his congregation, he was eventually granted permission and established a new parish in St. Augustine. In November 1777, Catholicism returned to its rightful place in St. Augustine.

His relocation symbolized the end of the Turnbull colony and the beginning of the Minorcans' newfound freedom under Tonyn's leadership. The move marked not just a physical relocation, but the end of years of hardship for the Minorcans, who had endured difficult conditions under Turnbull's rule. Now, under Tonyn's protection, they could begin to rebuild their lives.

The Avero House, where Father Pedro Camps first conducted Catholic services, is now part of the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine in St. Augustine. Located on St. George Street, this house holds great historical significance, not just for the Greeks but particularly for the Minorcan Catholics, as it was the place where Father Camps celebrated Mass for the Minorcans.

Father Camps entry in his 'Golden Book' reads, "*On the 9th day of November 1777, the church of San Pedro was translated from the settlement of Mosquito to the city of Saint Augustine, with the same colony of Mahonese Minorcans which was established in the said settlement, and the same parish priest and Missionary Apostolic, Dr. Dn. Pedro Camps. (Dr. Pedro Camps, Parish Priest.)*

To be continued in Part Two.

PATRICK TONYN - GOVERNOR OF EAST FLORIDA 1774-1784

by Robert Phillip Jones

Part Two

Colonel Patrick Tonyn arrived in St. Augustine then took his position as Governor of East Florida on November 1, 1774. His primary responsibilities were to protect people and property under his authority, by upholding British law, promoting economic stability, and maintaining military control of the province. He was also tasked with preserving peaceful relations with the Native American tribes allied with Britain and encouraging settlers from the American colonies to relocate to East Florida, in order for the province to realize its full potential. This invitation, made at the request of King George III for the benefit of the province, quickly transformed into an offer to seek refuge in St. Augustine.

Tonyn brought his personal staff with him to St. Augustine, possibly including officers from the 31st Regiment of Foot, with which he had a long-standing affiliation, having served in the military for the previous thirty years. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Brown had fled South Carolina to St. Augustine in 1775 and soon caught the governor's attention. Tonyn appointed Brown commander of the Florida Rangers, a group made up of Loyalist refugees and Creek Native Americans. Brown commanded Fort Tonyn, defending East Florida against Patriot incursions from Georgia.

St. Augustine was of strategic importance due to its location on the Atlantic Coast. It was a base of operations for attacks on the southern colonies, particularly Georgia, and could serve as a staging ground for British expeditions into other rebellious colonies.

There were probably 800 soldiers, including regular British infantry, and support troops. To man the defenses of Fort Marion (Castillo de San Marcos) and other defensive works, artillery companies were also stationed in St. Augustine. The Royal Artillery provided cannons and trained soldiers to operate them, ensuring that the fort could defend against enemy ships and land attacks. On one occasion an incursion into East Florida reached the outskirts of St. Augustine but were repelled by the cannons in the fort and the arrival of a British warship.

These troops were reinforced by loyalist militias and local auxiliaries like the Florida Rangers, which further boosted the military capacity of the entire province. In addition to British troops, a significant number of African enslaved people were used in supporting roles, assisting with construction, logistics, and labor related to the fortifications and daily operations of the garrison.

British regular army units stationed in St. Augustine came from a variety of regiments, typically rotated out of other British colonial posts. The St. Augustine Garrison operated primarily out of Fort Marion but also maintained some smaller defensive positions around the city. By 1774, as revolutionary sentiments grew in the thirteen colonies, St. Augustine became a safe haven for loyalists fleeing persecution from the Patriots. This bolstered the population and allowed Tonyn to recruit locals into the militia and other auxiliary units. The British military in St. Augustine was supplied via sea routes from the Caribbean and Britain. Regular shipments of food,

weapons, and reinforcements helped maintain the garrison, though these became more challenging as the Revolutionary War progressed.

Tonyn was determined to maintain control of the military under the authority of the civilian governor. He felt strong about this as he did not want the citizens to feel they were under the command of a general. However, this grip on the military faced immense pressure, ultimately forcing him to surrender command to a regular British Army officer. The central issue in this prolonged conflict was who would command the Florida Rangers. The Rangers were the militia group Tonyn created and placed under the command of Thomas Brown, a man who despised the Patriots for what they had done to him. Brown had been brutally tarred and feathered by the Patriots and had lost several toes, which were burned off, leaving him a deeply embittered man. His desire for vengeance against the Patriots grew into a violent and unrelenting obsession. One significant event that Brown and his Creek warriors won was the Battle of Alligator Bridge, a bridge that crossed the Nassau River. The Georgia Patriots hoped to catch the Loyalists off-guard, but Brown prepared an ambush killing many and forcing the rest of the Patriots to retreat in disarray. The battle has been considered a turning point as no more incursions from Georgia occurred for the rest of the war. It can be speculated that the Creeks returned to their homes with many scalps.

There was a Black militia under Governor Tonyn's command during his tenure. This militia was composed of free Black men and enslaved people who were granted arms to defend the colony against external threats and internal unrest. The idea of arming Black men for defense was not uncommon in British colonies, particularly where manpower was scarce, and St. Augustine, with its loyalist population, was in constant need of additional defenses. The Black militia often served as escorts for British supply lines and helped patrol the outskirts of St. Augustine to ensure the safety of the colony. The militia also assisted in guarding key fortifications like Fort Tonyn (near present-day Jacksonville), as well as other defensive positions near the St. Johns River.

In some cases, enslaved people who served in the militia were promised freedom or other rewards for their loyalty and service. This was in line with British policies in other colonies during the Revolutionary War, where enslaved individuals were offered freedom in exchange for military service against the Patriots. Governor Tonyn was particularly keen on leveraging every available resource to defend British East Florida. With much of the white loyalist population either untrained or preoccupied with other tasks, he saw the Black militia as a crucial part of the defensive apparatus.

The Black militia was notably effective in helping to maintain East Florida as a loyalist stronghold throughout the Revolutionary War. St. Augustine never fell to the rebels, due to the coordinated efforts of British regulars, loyalist forces, Native American allies, and the Black militia. He empowered them to act in coordination with other British military forces.

The Black militia was a testament to the diverse forces that helped keep East Florida under British control throughout the turbulent years of the American Revolutionary War. Governor

Tonyn's use of the militia demonstrated his pragmatic approach to colony defense, relying on all groups loyal to the Crown.

St. Augustine reached its highest population during the Revolutionary War, particularly in the years 1778 to 1782. As the war progressed, loyalists from the American colonies, sought protection and refuge in British East Florida. After the British evacuated Savannah in 1782 and Charleston in 1783, thousands of loyalists fled to St. Augustine.

Governor Tonyn had to navigate these challenges while deeply troubled by the fact that two of East Florida's most influential figures, Chief Justice William Drayton and Andrew Turnbull, appeared sympathetic to the Patriot cause. This author believes that Chief Justice Drayton was the key figure leading the opposition against Governor Tonyn. One of his main criticisms being Tonyn's failure to establish the Colonial Council as required by English law. Drayton's leanings toward the Patriots further intensified the political tension in the colony during this turbulent time.

Fortunately, the Minorcans who survived the nine years of hardships at the New Smyrna colony were beginning to regain stability and were able to sell as much wild game, fish, oysters, clams, and vegetables as they could produce. The significant income they earned during this period contributed to their path toward economic independence. By the time the last British citizens departed in November 1785, the Minorcans had secured the resources and opportunities to engage in a variety of businesses. With the start of the Second Spanish Period, the Minorcans never had to look back.

* * *

Following the death of Florida's first Chief Justice, James Moultrie, William Grover was appointed as his replacement. However, Grover tragically died at sea en route to East Florida. William Drayton was selected as his replacement. He subsequently relocated his family from South Carolina to St. Augustine, where he became a significant landowner and of enslaved people.

In his work *The Enigma of William Drayton*, historian Charles L. Mowat highlights the significant influence South Carolina had on East Florida, starting with Governor Grant's headquarters throughout his military service during the Cherokee War (1758–1761), which was part of the larger conflict known as the Anglo-Cherokee War. This war was a regional theater of the French and Indian War, (1754–1763) which resulted in the British occupying East Florida for the next twenty years.

One internal challenge Governor Tonyn faced throughout his tenure involved Chief Justice Drayton, who continued in his position even after East Florida's first governor, James Grant, resigned. William Drayton was born in 1732 on a plantation near Charleston, South Carolina, into a prominent and affluent family dedicated to upholding the plantation lifestyle. Growing up, he would have been well acquainted with the family's enslaved labor force and their treatment. Likely in his teenage years, Drayton left for England to pursue higher education and was admitted to the English bar in 1755. A year later, he returned to his family's plantation and over

the years became an influential citizen, serving in the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly.

In a letter dated December 28, 1774, written from St. Augustine by The Reverend John Forbes to former Governor James Grant, Forbes detailed Georgia's Jonathan Bryan's scheme to acquire millions of acres of land from Native Americans. He wrote, "*A copy of it was sent to Governor Tonyn. Although he had no legal authority, the Governor, knowing that Drayton and the Doctor were involved, requested the Chief Justice's legal opinion in writing and made him sign a warrant to apprehend Bryan for trespassing on the King's land and a breach of prerogative, with damages set at £10,000 Sterling.*"

The entire time Drayton served as Chief Justice during Governor Patrick Tonyn's tenure, Tonyn suspected him of supporting the Patriot cause. When questioned by Tonyn at a council meeting on July 19, 1775, Drayton denied the accusation. However, according to Siebert, who had access to English journals, a letter from a South Carolina Patriot, a relative of Drayton, was presented and recorded in the council's journal. The letter suggested that Drayton had knowledge of certain schemes intended to support the colonies' cause. Dr. Andrew Turnbull was also suspected of sympathizing with the colonies, which put both Drayton and Turnbull in opposition to Governor Tonyn and the Crown.

Tonyn not only contended with these significant internal conflicts but was also notified by the Earl of Dartmouth that the supply of guns, ammunition, and provisions to East Florida would be restricted due to the war effort against the Patriots. Adding to the strain, Tonyn was ordered to send sixty of his soldiers to Virginia to assist Governor Dunmore, who was under threat from the colonists. Ultimately, nearly half of the 14th Regiment was left in St. Augustine while ninety were scattered between "*New Smyrna, Matanzas, the Cowford, the Lookout tower, and on St. Johns River.*"

On August 7, 1775, a British brigantine carrying gunpowder and supplies for merchants was unable to cross the bar into Matanzas Bay and anchored offshore. It was then boarded by a sloop from South Carolina, which seized all the gunpowder. Although a British ship was dispatched in pursuit, it failed to recover the substantial amount of stolen gunpowder. Governor Tonyn grew increasingly concerned about a direct assault on St. Augustine, as Patriots in Georgia and South Carolina were eager to capture the fort and its stockpiled supplies.

On November 1, 1775, Governor Tonyn received a letter, four months delayed, from the Earl of Dartmouth, conveying the King's desire to protect his subjects in the colonies where they were "*too weak to resist the violence of the times*" and expressing hope that East Florida might serve as a secure refuge for many. This communication prompted Tonyn to extend an invitation to British subjects in the besieged thirteen colonies, offering them protection in East Florida. As a result, 15,000 Loyalists, along with their enslaved people, flocked to St. Augustine by the end of the war, straining the city's resources to the limit.

Wilbur Siebert highlights the influential British figures who arrived in St. Augustine and played significant roles throughout the remainder of the war. Among those who came in the latter half of 1775 were Colonel John Stuart, superintendent of Indian affairs for the southern district, who

participated in council meetings from July 7 to February 13, 1776; Thomas Browne, a staunch British loyalist with strong opposition to Georgia's council of safety; and Daniel McGirth, who sought revenge against American officers after being mistreated in Georgia. Others included Allan Cameron and Captain Moses Kirkland, whose plans for an attack on Fort Charlotte and Augusta in late August 1775 were thwarted by South Carolina's William H. Drayton.

The arrival of these individuals in St. Augustine turned the city into a center for efforts to quell the Revolution in the southern colonies. Their plans involved calling for an early deployment of British troops to the region, forging alliances with Native American tribes to oppose the American forces, and forming refugee regiments to collaborate with the British army. These units would be assigned tasks such as scouting, destroying enemy crops, and capturing cattle and provisions from areas beyond the St. Marys River. This group devised an ambitious southern campaign that, with adequate backing from British military and naval leaders, could have potentially altered the outcome of the war in the South.

But even in the worst of times gossip survives. Captain Mulcaster in his conversation with a British General reported that verses posted at Payne's corner, a store at the intersection of today's St. George and Treasury Streets, which was a key commercial location at the time, criticized, "*Governor Tonyn and his lady for flogging their negroes.*" Mulcaster said there was truth in the verses. George Spencer, an ally of Drayton and Turnbull, added that, "*East Florida was going back every day and that he believed Tonyn had neither the ability to point out nor the interest to procure any good for the colony.*"

On May 8, 1777, a group of men, including Turnbull, gathered together. Concerned about a potential Patriot attack and doubting Tonyn's ability to defend against it, Chief Justice Drayton attended the secret meeting and stated that he, "*would be the first to sign a petition for Tonyn's removal and agreeing to join with those present "to capitulate with the Rebels."*" He believed that by surrendering and paying the rebels, their property would not be destroyed.

Around this same time, Colonel Samuel Elbert, a Patriot, landed on Amelia Island. He dispatched a patrol to survey the island, but they were ambushed by Loyalists, resulting in the death of one of Elbert's officers. Infuriated by the attack, Colonel Elbert retaliated by burning every building to the ground and slaughtering all the livestock to deny the British any food supplies. The slaughter of enemy livestock was a widespread tactic during this brutal conflict used by both sides of the war.

The idea of capitulation was presented to Tonyn, who rejected the plan outright, asserting that the St. Johns River provided a strong natural defense against an incursion and said, "*since the adjacent territory was now well guarded by troops, rangers, and Indians, it would be difficult for the enemy to pass.*" Governor Tonyn had far more military experience than either Turnbull and Drayton. The Patriots were just as apprehensive about a British attack as the British were about an assault from the Patriots.

Siebert writes about Tonyn and Turnbull's failing relationship, saying, "*As Turnbull had received warning by word and by letter that Tonyn intended to throw him and others into the dungeon at the fort, he departed without leave of absence for England with his friend Drayton.*"

Turnbull returned to America, first landing in New York, and did not reach St. Augustine until December 1777. By then, his New Smyrna colony had collapsed, with nearly all the colonists fleeing to St. Augustine under Governor Tonyn's protection. After Turnbull went to St. Augustine, he said that the Minorcans were destitute and dying, stating that "*women were begging for bread in front of the Governor's residence.*" Although many Minorcans died after reaching St. Augustine, it is likely many were already severely ill from the mistreatment endured at the hands of the colony's overseers during Turnbull's prolonged absence, one of several that contributed to the colony's failure. And, there was no way Dr. Turnbull would say anything positive about the Minorcan's who were treated so badly during their nine years at his colony

Part Three to follow.

PATRICK TONYN - GOVERNOR OF EAST FLORIDA 1774-1784

by Robert Phillip Jones

Part Three

“When the American Revolution broke out, East Florida, a British colony since 1763, supported the mother country and offered refuge to those in other American colonies who were loyal to the crown. East Florida became a loyalist haven when George III ordered Governor Patrick Tonyn to issue a proclamation in November 1775 inviting them to come to St. Augustine.”¹

This statement underscores the pivotal role St. Augustine played as both a military and civilian refuge during the American Revolutionary War, illustrating how political decisions were shaped by rapidly changing events. The King’s order placed Governor Tonyn in the position of not only protecting those already in the province but also safeguarding and providing food and shelter for an influx of Loyalist refugees he likely could not have anticipated. By the end of 1783, East Florida’s population “increased to between 16,000 and 17,375,”² a number that would have seemed unimaginable at the outset. The vast majority were in St. Augustine where protection was at the highest level although one report indicates some of the Loyalists lived as far as fifty miles away.

When Governor Tonyn received his orders from the king in 1775, he was already preparing East Florida and its capitol, St. Augustine, for what he felt would be an attack from Continental troops supported by the Georgia Militia. They did plan to invade East Florida in an early campaign known as the Florida Expedition of 1776. They were unsuccessful due to a strong British military presence, natural barriers such as swamps, and the lack of proper preparations. “Disease, combined with hot weather, increased the number of desertions as the Continental Army and Georgia Militia moved in force towards Florida.”³

There were major issues between the army and the militia about the command structure that added to the failed attempt to capture East Florida. The Battle of Thomas Creek stopped the Patriots momentum. As Charles E. Bennett writes, “The battle was significant in that it decisively ended the optimistically planned Patriot campaign of 1777 to liberate Florida from the British.”⁴

During the soldiers march south, they were constantly harassed by Lt. Colonel Brown’s Florida Rangers. One can only imagine how fierce Brown was in battle. He had good reason to fight with all his might. “Thomas Brown had his skull fractured by the butt end of a rifle, was tied to a tree while Sons of Liberty beat him remorselessly, scalped three times, they scorched his skin with fire, stripped him naked and poured boiling tar over him, pooling into his boot that scalded his foot and incinerated two toes. Lastly, he was feathered and paraded through the streets of Augusta. How he survived is nothing short of a miracle.”⁵

Brown's unyielding hatred for the Georgia Patriots drove him and his Florida Rangers to commit ruthless and barbaric acts during their raids, leaving a trail of terror and destruction in their wake. Turnbull castigated, “Bloody Colonel Brown for his scalping of “rebel” women and children

along the Georgia border.”⁶ Reading about the horrors that unfolded in the wilderness of Georgia and East Florida would be difficult. Raids by both sides against defenseless settlers were often carried out by men devoid of conscience or compassion. Both sides bear responsibility for the killing and maiming of unarmed people.

* * *

Governor Patrick Tonyn has faced considerable criticism, largely due to his strained relationships with Andrew Turnbull and William Drayton—tensions that persisted throughout his tenure as governor. However it can be pointed out that Tonyn kept East Florida under British rule, defended East Florida successfully against multiple rebel invasions, kept good relations with the Native Americans, gave the Minorcans their freedom from the New Smyrna colony and established a Citizens Council in 1781.⁷

Both Turnbull and Drayton had enjoyed the full support of Tonyn's predecessor, Governor James Grant, but that favor disappeared abruptly when Tonyn assumed office on November 1, 1774. Tonyn's governing style was unpopular among the colonial elite, and his reluctance to establish a Council of Citizens for East Florida remained a persistent source of frustration for many. There is also a story suggesting that Mrs. Turnbull failed to return a social call from Mrs. Tonyn, sparking rumors of a past romance between Andrew Turnbull and Mrs. Tonyn.⁸ However, this author believes that Mrs. Tonyn was not of Scottish origin.

There was a secretive land deal proposed by Georgian Jonathan Bryan involving millions of acres of American Natives land. Bryan was part of the ruling class in Georgia and from 1736 until he died in 1788, he owned over 32,000 acres and over 250 slaves.⁹ Tonyn suspected Andrew Turnbull and Chief Justice Drayton to be part of Bryan's plan making him suspect that Drayton and Turnbull were leaning to the side of liberty.¹⁰ Although Tonyn ultimately had nothing more than circumstantial evidence against Turnbull and Drayton, both stayed in America after the war and were welcomed by the Patriots. Turnbull was highly regarded in Charleston, while Drayton, in 1789, went on to serve as “an associate justice of the state's Supreme Court, a judge of the United States District Court for South Carolina.”¹¹

Governor Tonyn, in addition to daily briefings on what was happening with his troops, had to maintain a satisfactory relationship with the Native American tribes loyal to the British. The motives for Native Americans fighting for either the British or the Americans were varied, but it can be stated that they had one thing in common: Europeans had stolen and continued to steal Native American land since 1565.

Some tribes, such as the Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokees, sided with the British due to long-established trade relationships and familiarity with British political leaders. They believed their chances of preserving their lands were better under British rule, rather than facing the relentless expansion of the United States, which sought to open vast new territories to hundreds of thousands of settlers. Unbeknownst to the Native Americans, President Andrew Jackson would later force them on a brutal journey westward, marking the beginning of one of the largest land seizures in American history—the 'Trail of Tears'—and initiating generations of state and federal governmental efforts to dismantle Native Americans culture and destroy their heritage.

* * *

Governor Patrick Tonyn's tenure as the governor of East Florida from 1774 to 1784 was defined by significant challenges and key successes that positioned him as both a controversial and vital figure in the province's history. His leadership during the American Revolutionary War was marked by his unwavering loyalty to the British crown and his determination to protect East Florida from the incursions of American Patriots.

When King George III ordered Tonyn to open St. Augustine as a refuge for Loyalists in 1775, Tonyn not only followed through with this proclamation but also played a central role in managing the influx of refugees. By the end of the war, East Florida's population had surged due to the arrival of Loyalists, particularly in St. Augustine, illustrating Tonyn's ability to handle an overwhelming situation.

Tonyn's success in repelling multiple Patriot invasions, most notably the failed Florida Expedition of 1776, stands as one of his greatest military achievements. Natural barriers, disease, and disorganization among the Patriot forces played a part in their failure, but it was Tonyn's collaboration with Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Brown and the Florida Rangers that ultimately thwarted the Continental Army's advances.

Brown, with his personal vendetta against the Patriots stemming from his brutal torture at their hands, was a relentless force, conducting raids that terrorized settlers along the Georgia border. These raids, though barbaric, contributed to the defense of East Florida and were instrumental in stopping Patriot momentum.

Despite his military successes, Tonyn faced sharp criticism for his strained relationships with influential figures like Andrew Turnbull and William Drayton. These tensions, compounded by rumors of personal disputes, marred Tonyn's governorship and led to long-standing enmity.

The suspicions that Turnbull and Drayton were involved in a secret land deal and potentially sympathizing with the Patriots only further exacerbated their conflicts. Ultimately, both men chose to remain in America after the war, with Turnbull becoming highly regarded in Charleston and Drayton rising to prominence in South Carolina's judicial system.

Tonyn's relationships with Native American tribes were equally complex. Loyal to the British due to their long-standing trade relations and hopes of preserving their lands, tribes such as the Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokees fought alongside the British during the war. Tonyn had to navigate these alliances carefully, ensuring their continued loyalty while managing the tensions that arose from centuries of European encroachment on Native lands.

Tragically, despite their loyalty to the crown, Native American hopes of securing their lands under British rule were dashed after the British defeat. The relentless American expansion that followed, culminating in the Trail of Tears, would result in one of the largest land seizures in American history.

In conclusion, Governor Patrick Tonyn's legacy is one of military competence and political controversy. Though criticized for his conflicts with colonial elites and his management of local

affairs, his role in defending East Florida from rebel invasions and maintaining British rule in the province is undeniable. His ability to navigate the turbulent landscape of war, refugee crises, and delicate alliances with Native American tribes reveals a governor whose actions were pivotal during one of the most challenging periods in East Florida's history.

¹ *East Florida as a Loyalist Haven* Linda K. Williams – 1975 – Page 1

² Wilbur H. Siebert, "The Dispersion of the American Tories," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, I (September 1914), 195; Mowat, *East Florida*, 137.

³ American Revolutionary War website. <https://www.myrevolutionarywar.com/campaigns/1776-firstfloridaexpedition/> Sept. 17, 2024

⁴ *Southernmost Battlefields of the Revolution* by Charles E. Bennett. Page 2

⁵ Revolutionary War Journal. Battles of Thomas Creek and Alligator Bridge: Florida in the American Revolution website. [Battles of Thomas Creek and Alligator Bridge: Florida in the American Revolution – Revolutionary War Journal](#). Sept. 18, 2024

⁶ *Mullet on the Beach*, Patricia Griffin. 1991. Page 95

⁷ *Patrick Tonyn: Britain's Most Effective Revolutionary-Era Royal Governor* by Jim Piecuch. *Journal of The American Revolution*

⁸ *Mullet on the Beach*, Patricia Griffin. 1991. Page 93

⁹ *Jonathan Bryan's Plantation Empire: Land, Politics, and the Formation of a Ruling Class in Colonial Georgia*. Alan Galloway. *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 45, No. 2 (Apr., 1988), pp. 253-279 (27 pages) Published By: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture

¹⁰ The Reverend John Forbes to James Grant St. Augustine, December 28, 1774- James Grant Papers

¹¹ *The Enigma of William Drayton* by Charles L. Mowat. JSTOR- Page 33