

FREDERICK GEORGE MULCASTER - 1739- 1797¹

Frederick George Mulcaster was not directly involved in the day-to-day affairs of the Minorcan colony in New Smyrna. His only recorded visit took place in late May or early June 1771, when he accompanied Governor Patrick Tonyn to view the condition of the colonists and meet with Andrew Turnbull. There are no surviving details about how he traveled—whether by vessel or horseback—or how long he stayed. However, a letter Mulcaster wrote to Governor James Grant on June 10 confirms his return to St. Augustine.

Though this one visit was brief, Mulcaster's role in the Minorcan story lies in the correspondence he maintained with Grant, in which he provided updates on Dr. Andrew Turnbull's activities. Notably, he reported that Turnbull was considering relocating the Minorcans elsewhere in one of his letters. Through these letters, Mulcaster emerges as both a diligent observer and a man of principle—true to his honor and loyal to his country. His reports not only kept Governor Grant informed but also ensured that Turnbull's decisions were monitored and scrutinized from afar.

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Frederick George Mulcaster was born on February 27, 1739.² His March 12, 1739 christening was recorded at St. James church, Westminster, Middlesex, England. It lists William and Jane Mulcaster as his parents. "He married Mary Auchmuty and later Wilhemina de Brahm. The son Frederick William was born in 1772 in St. Augustine, Florida."³

A graduate of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, Lieutenant Mulcaster was deputy to the first Surveyor General of East Florida.⁴ The Mulcaster family motto affirms Mulcaster's loyalty to the crown, which reads, "*vincit amor patria*, meaning "my beloved country will conquer."⁵

Frederick George Mulcaster married Wilhemina de Brahm, the daughter of William Gerrard de Brahm, (1718-1799) in St. Augustine in 1769.⁶ Mulcaster has been identified as the natural brother of King George III.⁷ Historical documents read, "sired out-of-wedlock by Frederick, Prince of Wales."

In 1765, William Gerard De Brahm served as Surveyor General while James Grant governed East Florida. From the beginning, tensions arose between the two men, largely due to De Brahm's insistence on handling surveys personally. This independent approach, while in keeping with his authority to report directly to London, frustrated Grant, who believed it caused unnecessary delays in the establishment of new settlements.

As the conflict escalated, Mulcaster—who had taken on the role of deputy surveyor—began to stand out as a more pragmatic alternative. Recognizing Mulcaster's competence, Grant eventually recommended him as a replacement for De Brahm, hoping that a change in leadership would smooth the way for the colony's expansion.

De Brahm's inability to cooperate with Governor Grant eventually prompted him to take action against him. Governor Grant "suspended De Brahm as provincial surveyor, with the Council's concurrence, on 4 October 1770, and appointed Mulcaster to his place until the King's pleasure was known."⁸

The James Grant Papers

The first time Frederick George Mulcaster is mentioned in the 325 pages of the James Grant Papers is on June 26, 1769 in a letter that Governor James Grant sends to William Knox. Grants tell Knox about, “the malfeasance of the provincial surveyor, W.G. DeBrahm, and the marriage of DeBrahm’s daughter to a “genteel young man,” Frederick George Mulcaster, a member of the Royal Engineers.”⁹

What an interesting letter this is, on the one hand the governor speaks about the malfeasance of DeBrahm, and, then casually mentions his future son-in-law as a ‘genteel young man’. His name does not appear again until June 10, 1771 in a long, detailed letter from Acting Governor John Moultrie to Governor Grant after Grant had returned to England. Grant would never return to East Florida.

In Moultrie’s letter he is uncomplimentary to Dr. Turnbull about his fear of the Indians and mentions, “The Doctor sometimes talked of removing with his whole people to some island where they might be in safety if they were not protected by government troops. If he alone can remove them and if he can to what island would be good and who would be glad to take them. He has partners that have advanced many thousands; government has assisted them with thousands; the people have already undergone all the dangers and hardships of first settlers; he cannot carry them away when he pleases without their consent. They must not have less here than in every other British government, taste some of the sweets of a constitution that even to slaves gives some freedom.”

This is another time when Turnbull spoke about taking ‘his people’ somewhere else. Moultrie’s comment that the Minorcan colonists have the same rights as any other British citizen speaks well of him. He closes this letter with, “The parson, Drayton, Mulcaster, Doctor, Owen, Skinner and I will write of Augustine miscellaneous occurrences.”

Mulcaster wrote Governor Grant on October 2, 1771 telling him Dr. Turnbull was in town and that he had lost his third cutting [indigo] by the worm saying, “such havock I never saw by so insignificant a reptile.”¹⁰ Mulcaster wrote Grant on a regular basis keeping him up to date on what was going on in St. Augustine as Grant still had a functioning plantation, a plantation and Enslaved people he would possess until the American War of Independence. His letter on January 2, 1772 was, “seven pages long and filled with observations on crops, politics, and gossip. He also included commentary specifically pertinent to the visit of Cowkeeper and the Seminole warriors that Turnbull claimed to have been a great menace to his settlement.”¹¹

Mulcaster wrote Governor Grant again on February 13, 1772, from Smyrna, as he was exploring the land from Smyrna south to the Cape. He tells Grant that Turnbull sailed to England on January 20th and that his partners objected to his leaving Florida. He also tells Grant about Seacoffi, a Native American, whose wife was untrue and that he was in pursuit of the offender, who will be scalped. Seacoffi had already, “punished the wife by cutting off her ears, this [gentling?] I would call rather a particular than a general method of chastizing women for incontinency.”¹²

Mulcaster wrote Governor Grant on May 6, 1772 telling of a difficult trip to Key Biscayne and a beautiful description of the land leading him to pen, “Everything carried the face of spring.”¹³

In Mulcaster’s letter to Governor Grant on August 26, 1772 he says Smyrna would not produce a good crop of indigo, but provision were growing pretty well. Evidently the minister might have had a drinking problem as Mulcaster closes his letter, “Poor Parson Fraser, died lately upon St. Marys [River] in his way

to Georgia. He had been drunk for several days before so that with the bad rum and the heat he kicked.”¹⁴ On January 15, 1773 he told Grant, “The Dr. [Turnbull] has made about the quantity he did last year. He talks of getting into his back swamp which I dare say would [?]. His people are quiet and easy. The Indians behave well and bring him venison.”

Mulcaster’s letter to Governor Grant [now former governor] on May 14, 1774, tells how he set off with the new governor, Patrick Tonyn, “for a visit to Dr. Turnbull and the Smyrna settlement. The two men were accompanied by John Moultrie, David Yeats, Alexander Gray, an Ensign Wools, and “old Cumming who forced himself to be one. The Dr.’s people all dissatisfied, and applications from them to the governor for redress [had been received]. I had heard of it before and told Bisset to prepare the Dr., but the Dr. had found it out only a day or two before our arrival.” Mulcaster’s closing sentence read, “The Dr.’s fields in bad order at present, not the least appearance of a crop.”

Evidently the Minorcans had been able to let the officials in St. Augustine know about the way they were being treated. If any of the colonists had been under a six-year indentured servant contract, it was time to address that issue. Of course the original contract might have said six years, but the cost of getting them to New Smyrna was placed on them and at one time the total bill owed to Turnbull was over 30,000 pounds sterling, an amount that would seem to take a lifetime to pay in full.

Reverend John Forbes wrote to Governor Grant on November of 1774 letting him know, “Dr. Turnbull’s affairs seem near a crisis; he has made nothing, neither provisions nor above 1500 weight in indigo, yet still the same tales of next year, new rich swamp, and etc., and he has no doubt that his constituents will support the settlement, that they want him to enter into a new contract and that he means to go home next year for that purpose. The People are dissatisfied and I suppose will feel hunger.” Mulcaster also wrote Grant about the same thing and to top it off, a tragic cold snap came and Chief Justice William Drayton wrote on December 16, 1774, “The Dr. Writes me the mercury [thermometer] stood at 26 at Smyrna. All our gardens are [cracked?] up: my large field is scalded yellow, and as for the orange trees I never saw them in such a situation, their leaves are almost all of the same color with the fruit.”¹⁵

Mulcaster wrote Grant on January 4, 1775 that William Drayton was at Turnbull’s, “supposedly to consult about the Jonathon Bryan land purchase.” Jonathan Bryan was the Georgia official that tried to buy 4 million acres of Native American land, which was illegal as the king was the only person who could buy their land. Governor Tonyn got a warrant for Bryan’s arrest, but he found out about it and fled back to Georgia before Tonyn’s soldiers could catch him. Mulcaster had words for Turnbull after letting Grant know that not even 1000 pound weight [indigo] would be sent to England. His advice for Turnbull was, “I think it would be better to mind planting than politicks.”¹⁶

This was the last time that Frederick George Mulcaster was mentioned in the James Grant Papers, which can be read at www.minorcans.com.

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- ¹ [Frederick George Mulcaster, b.1739 d.1797 - Ancestry®](https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/frederick-george-mulcaster-24-2c2gx) https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/frederick-george-mulcaster-24-2c2gx
- ² [Geni - Frederick George Mulcaster \(1739-c.1797\)](https://www.geni.com/people/Frederick-Mulcaster/6000000022670929604) https://www.geni.com/people/Frederick-Mulcaster/6000000022670929604
- ³ [Mulcaster Family Crest, Coat of Arms and Name History](https://coadb.com/surnames/mulcaster-arms.html) https://coadb.com/surnames/mulcaster-arms.html
- ⁴ [Biscayne Bay – Florida History Online](#)
- ⁵ [Mulcaster Family Crest, Coat of Arms and Name History](https://coadb.com/surnames/mulcaster-arms.html) https://coadb.com/surnames/mulcaster-arms.html
- ⁶ Mowat, Charles L. (1941) "*That "Odd Being" De Brahm*," Florida Historical Quarterly: Vol. 20: No. 4, Article 3. Page 8- https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol20/iss4/3
- ⁷ Ibid
- ⁸ Ibid
- ⁹ James Grant Papers (C.O. 5/550) www.minorcans.com
- ¹⁰ James Grant Papers www.minorcans.com
- ¹¹ Ibid
- ¹² Ibid
- ¹³ [Biscayne Bay – Florida History Online](#)
- ¹⁴ James Grant Papers www.minorcans.com
- ¹⁵ Ibid
- ¹⁶ Ibid