

THE MINORCANS AND DR. ANDREW TURNBULL ARRIVE IN NEW SMYRNA  
deslliureu-nos de qualsevol mal. <sup>1</sup>

The Minorcans<sup>2</sup> referred to in this essay are the 1403<sup>3</sup> immigrants who sailed from the Port of Gibraltar on April 17, 1768<sup>4</sup> to British East Florida as indentured servants of Dr. Andrew Turnbull. Within the 1,403, there were several hundred Italians and several hundred Greeks, as well as a few immigrants from various other nations, on board the eight vessels carrying them to New Smyrna, East Florida. The overwhelming number were from the island of Minorca, which is why, over time, all who sailed to New Smyrna are referred to as Minorcans.

Andrew Turnbull, referred to in this essay, is a Scottish physician and entrepreneur who established the Minorcan colony at New Smyrna during the British occupation of East Florida. Turnbull's ambition and determination led to the establishment of the largest colony brought to America during the colonial era.<sup>5</sup> His venture was ultimately marred by lack of adequate funds, rebellion, mismanagement, and personal setbacks. *"His inability to produce marketable crops in quantities large enough to satisfy his investors cost him their support, as well as that of the British government. Half of his colonists died in the next ten years."*<sup>6</sup>

Andrew Turnbull was born in 1718 in Scotland and died on March 13, 1792 in Charleston, South Carolina. He was one of the founders of the South Carolina Medical Society.<sup>7</sup> He comes from a long line of outstanding members of the Turnbull clan. *"The history of the Turnbells has been closely interwoven with that of the Scottish/English Borders since they settled in the region as part of the Boernician race in 400 A.D. The Turnbells are a scion of the Rule family of Roxburghshire where they lived on the lands through which flowed the River Rule in the parish of Hobkirk. William de Rule became the first Turnbull when he saved the life of King Robert the Bruce at Stirling Park from a charging bull injured by the king while hunting. William, a large strong man, jumped in between the king and the angry bull, turning its head and breaking its neck. The gratified king dubbed his savior William Turn-E-Bull and gave him the first barony of the Bedrule area, held today by Wally Turnbull."*<sup>8</sup>

Andrew Turnbull was educated in medicine at the University of Edinburgh and later studied in Paris and Leiden. He was also a British official in Turkey.<sup>9</sup> He met and married Maria Gracia Du Robin, who has

---

<sup>1</sup> " deslliureu-nos de qualsevol mal," is a plea for divine deliverance, with deep roots in Christian theology, liturgy, and spirituality, reflecting the human longing for freedom from evil and the hope for God's protection. In Catalan language these are the last words of the "Our Father" saying, "Deliver us from all evil."

<sup>2</sup> Minorcans are people originally from the Mediterranean island of Menorca (also spelled Minorca), which is part of the Balearic Islands, an autonomous community of Spain. The term can refer to either the people native to the island or their descendants. Menorca has a unique history and culture, shaped by its geographical location, colonial influences, and traditional practices.

<sup>3</sup> Philip D. Rasico, *The Minorcans of Florida*- Page 24

<sup>4</sup> Philip D. Rasico, *The Minorcans of Florida*- Page 23

<sup>5</sup> East Florida Governor James Grant in a letter to the Count of Shelburne dated July 2, 1768

<sup>6</sup> Turnbull Surname Meaning, History & Origin

<sup>7</sup> [Dr Andrew Turnbull \(1718-1792\) - Find a Grave Memorial-](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12775913/andrew-turnbull)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/12775913/andrew-turnbull>

<sup>8</sup> [Turnbull Clan Genealogy Collection - Main Page-](https://www.turnbullclan.com/tcalibrary/tca_genealogy/TCA2017-o/up/index.htm)

[https://www.turnbullclan.com/tcalibrary/tca\\_genealogy/TCA2017-o/up/index.htm](https://www.turnbullclan.com/tcalibrary/tca_genealogy/TCA2017-o/up/index.htm)

<sup>9</sup> List of British Consular Officials in the Ottoman Empire and its former territories, from the sixteenth century to about 1860. *Consular Officials in the Ottoman Empire*. Turnbull, Andrew---Smyrna Page 66 and [William Rule \(the](#)

been referred to as a “Greek lady”<sup>10</sup> by many authors, but her father and grandfather are defined as French Levantines. In one thesis she is referred to as a Catholic.<sup>11</sup> In his extensive travels throughout the Ottoman Empire Turnbull developed an interest in agriculture and commerce that must have given him the confidence to manage a colony.

\* \* \*

The British acquisition of East Florida was a result of the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), a global conflict between Britain, France, Spain, and other powers.<sup>12</sup> The treaty marked a significant redrawing of territorial boundaries in the Americas. In exchange for the return of Havana, Cuba, to Spain, Britain acquired Florida, then divided it into East and West Florida for administrative purposes. This acquisition of millions of acres of virgin land created opportunities to amass great wealth by establishing and expanding plantations to produce goods that Britain had previously been forced to import at high prices from other countries. After the East Florida Society was organized in London, Turnbull began planning and advocating for his colony.<sup>13</sup> *“These speculative fires had been sparked by the pamphlets of Dr. William Stork and fanned by the reports of Dr. Andrew Turnbull.”*<sup>14</sup>

East Florida’s geographic location made it a vital strategic asset. St. Augustine became an important military outpost, serving as a buffer between the rebellious American colonies to the north and Spanish-controlled Cuba to the south. The British fortified the region to guard against potential Spanish or American incursions, enhancing its role as a military stronghold.

Turnbull and the Minorcans operated the New Smyrna colony as if nothing was taking place with the thirteen colonies to the north. It would be a few more years before everyone realized a massive rebellion was occurring. Although Britain’s control of East Florida was relatively short-lived (1763–1783), it left a lasting impact on the region. The influx of British settlers, land grants, and economic policies shaped the colony's early development. However, the American Revolutionary War ended all British efforts, and the Treaty of Paris (1783) returned Florida to Spanish control, ending Britain’s twenty-year experiment in East Florida.

There are many narratives concerning what the Minorcans had to live through in New Smyrna. One of the best accounts is a short story by Kenneth H. Beeson, Jr. It is only 12 pages, but covers a great deal of ground. His closing words are worthy of printing in any story about the Minorcans: *“The descendants of the Minorcans live in St. Augustine today and play an important role in the political, economic, and social life of the community.”*<sup>15</sup>

\* \* \*

---

[first Turnbull](https://www.turnbullclan.com/index.php/resources/vm/vmpeople?view=article&id=135:william-roule&catid=159)) <https://www.turnbullclan.com/index.php/resources/vm/vmpeople?view=article&id=135:william-roule&catid=159>

<sup>10</sup> Lord Adam Gordon to James Grant Cullen House, September 1, 1766- [The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> Father Michael Joseph Curley- *Church and State in Spanish Florida (1783-1822)*-Page 34

<sup>12</sup> [Treaty of Paris | End of French & Indian War, Peace, Colonies | Britannica](#)-  
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Paris-1763>

<sup>13</sup> [The East Florida Society of London, 1766-1767](#)-  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3403&context=fhq>

<sup>14</sup> Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol. 54 [1975], No. 4, Art. 7

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth H. Beeson, Jr.- *Janas in British East Florida* – 1965 Florida Historical Quarterly-Vol. 44

Life in the New Smyrna colony, though allowing the colonists to practice Catholicism, was a harsh juxtaposition of spiritual resilience and the brutal realities of daily existence, particularly during the first year when the wilderness remained untamed. Between June 1768 and December 31, 1768, 450 Minorcans perished. Governor Tonym's records attribute these deaths to 300 men and 150 women and children.<sup>16</sup> There were 629 deaths in the first 18 months. Some historians attribute the high mortality to malaria caused by mosquitoes, while others point to scurvy and illnesses stemming from the grueling 70-day Atlantic crossing.

Dr. Turnbull was a physician and would have known if there was yellow-fever or malaria killing the Minorcans. He only mentions scurvy and stomach ailments from the lack of proper food. This author believes it was a combination of illnesses, with scurvy being the primary cause in the first six months and other diseases in 1769—and what an awful way to die that must have been to suffer and die by scurvy. After the Minorcans escaped in 1777, *"53 Men and Women, and 16 Children died since they left Smyrna."*<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Andrew Turnbull's decision to allow the colonists to practice Catholicism and bring two Catholic priests with them was a first for a British colony, reflecting both a pragmatic approach to managing his Catholic workforce and the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean settlers. Under the Popery Act of 1699, Catholics were prohibited from owning any British land, including British East Florida; however, the Minorcans were told something different when they signed their indentured servant contracts. It is doubtful any would have signed on with Turnbull if they had known there was no way for them to ever own land in a British colony because of the Popery Act followed by Penal Laws.<sup>18</sup>

The Penal Laws pertaining to land ownership on England and Ireland barred Catholics from inheriting land. If a Catholic landowner died, their estate was typically divided among their heirs, reducing the landholdings over generations. If a Protestant heir existed, they could claim the entire estate of a Catholic relative, even if the Catholic landowner was still alive. If a Catholic converted to Protestantism, they could immediately take possession of any property or inheritance due to their Catholic relatives. Land ownership was often restricted to individuals who swore allegiance to the British Crown and the Protestant Church.<sup>19</sup> Catholics, by virtue of their faith, could not take these oaths. There were heavy *"Fines and imprisonment for participation in Catholic worship and severe penalties, including death, for Catholic priests who practiced their ministry in Britain or Ireland."*<sup>20</sup> These Penal Laws were applicable to the colonies.

All the land given as grants for plantations, colonies or settlements had to be for white protestants, even though some historians have doubts about this. However, the exact words of several Royal proclamations require, *"That if one third of the land is not fettled with white proteftant inhabitants in the abovementioned proportion, ' within three years from the date of the grant, the whole to be forfeited to his majesty, his heirs or fucceftors."*<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Governor Patrick Tonym to Lord George Germaine St. Augustine, December 29, 1777- <https://minorcans.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.kj>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> [Penal Laws | Catholicism, Discrimination, Intolerance | Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/event/Penal-Laws)- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Penal-Laws>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> An Extract from *The Account of East Florida*. Published by Dr. Stork. The Proclamation says it comes from the Court of St. James

The presence of Fathers Camps and Casanovas ensured access to the sacraments of baptisms, marriages, and funerals, which reinforced communal bonds they were all used to in Minorca. Their religion offered spiritual relief from the harsh realities of life on the Turnbull colony. Having Father Camps and Casanovas with them, provided the colonists with a sense of identity, hope, and comfort amid harsh conditions. They leaned heavily on their faith to endure physical exhaustion, disease, malnutrition, and mistreatment by the overseers.

While baptism and marriage records are somewhat available,<sup>22</sup> the record of the 964 Minorcans who died and are buried somewhere in New Smyrna Beach has never been found, nor have any of the graves. The graves, or at least one grave, must be found to close the book on Turnbull and the Minorcans.

A striking image of Andrew Turnbull in full regalia shows him seated in a chair, his left hand resting on a skull. Patricia C. Griffin captures the poignancy of this scene in her book, *Mullet on the Beach*, writing on page 78: “It is difficult to look at that skull and not think of the legions of dead settlers buried in New Smyrna.” This author, as well as many Minorcan descendants, share the same profound sentiment when reflecting on this haunting image.

The colonists' grueling work schedules, often extending from sunrise to sunset, left little time for formal daily worship, confining religious observance to Sundays and Feast Days. Father Camps and Father Casanovas faced their own difficulties, including maintaining morale, navigating conflicts with Turnbull, and caring for a population that was physically and spiritually strained. With a community of this size, there was inevitably some strife between Minorcan family members, including husbands and wives, and the priests were often called upon to help reconcile and bring people back together.

Since Camps and Casanovas had not been officially recognized by the Cuban bishop—despite a request made with the assistance of several Cuban fishermen who had come to New Smyrna—there was no official authorization for their ministry. Additionally, they lacked Holy Oil for baptism and funeral rituals. It took more than three years after their arrival in New Smyrna in June 1768 to gain official recognition and receive the Holy Oils necessary for administering the sacraments.

At last, “On December 3, 1771, again by Cuban fishermen, the two priests received notification that their faculties, greatly extended at this time, were extended for twenty years. They could administer every necessary sacrament except confirmation. Holy oils and other ecclesiastical supplies were also in the packet.”<sup>23</sup> There is commentary that indicates religious services were held regularly and other commentary that said religious services were not a high priority with the managers or overseers of the colony. While Turnbull allowed Catholicism, overseers and colonial authorities often showed little regard for the Catholic colonists' spiritual needs, prioritizing labor over religious observance. What the truth is remains to be seen.

---

<sup>22</sup> [Father Pedro Camps' golden book of the Minorcans: translation and Index : baptisms, 1768-1784, marriages, 1776-1784, Roman Catholic Church records, St. Pedro's Parish Church, New Smyrna \(Mosquitso\) and St. Augustine, East Florida - Geneanet](https://en.geneanet.org/library/doc/5597904/father-pedro-camps-golden-book-of-the-minorcans-translation-and-index-baptisms-1768-1784-marriages-1776-1784-roman-catholic-church-records-st-pedro-s-parish-church-new-smyrna-mosquitso-and-st-augustine-east-florida-geneanet) - <https://en.geneanet.org/library/doc/5597904/father-pedro-camps-golden-book-of-the-minorcans-translation-and-index-baptisms-1768-1784-marriages-1776-1784-roman-catholic-church-records-st-pedro-s-parish-church-new-smyrna-mosquitso-and-st-augustine-east-florida>

<sup>23</sup> Patricia C. Griffin-*Mullet On the Beach-The Minorcans of Florida 1768-1788*-Page 69

Despite the colony’s eventual failure and the colonists’ relocation to St. Augustine, the Catholic faith they nurtured in New Smyrna endured. Their experiences in the colony—marked by suffering but sustained by faith—deepened their devotion and solidified their identity as a resilient and spiritual community. When the Minorcans arrived in St. Augustine in 1777, they restored Catholicism to Florida, where the first Mass in America had been celebrated on September 8, 1565.<sup>24</sup> This marked the continuation of a lasting religious and cultural legacy in the region.

When Father Camps finally arrived near the end of the year, the first thing he did was select a house where he could hold Mass. What a joyous throng of happy Minorcan immigrants that must have been!

\* \* \*

Andrew Turnbull ultimately contributed more to St. Augustine than he did to New Smyrna Beach—a result far removed from his original plan. His ambition and bravery were evident in his decision to bring his wife and children to St. Augustine, find a suitable place for them to live within the British community, and then embark on what he thought would be a brief journey to recruit 500 Greek colonists. However, this recruitment phase of the venture lasted well over a year and historians believe he was not able to attract 500 Greeks.

Andrew Turnbull’s true legacy lives on in the people who embody the Minorcan culture of St. Augustine. In New Smyrna Beach, his physical, human legacy remains buried and hidden beneath the soil. In St. Augustine, it is tangible and vibrant. These Minorcan descendants, the heart of the St. Augustine community, are here because of Turnbull’s bold, if flawed, vision. His legacy is not only etched into the city’s structures built by Minorcan bricklayers and masons, but also carried forward through the stories, traditions, and resilience of the Minorcan people on a daily basis.

Turnbull’s vision was clear, shaped by his experiences in Ottoman Empire territories. He confidently informed his financiers and associates in the East Florida Society that his plan was to recruit “500 Greeks” for a colony that would grow indigo and other crops to sell in England. His strategy appeared straightforward and achievable. In his very first letter to Governor James Grant in July of 1766, he wrote, “I mentioned before to your Excellency of settling a Greek colony in that Province.”<sup>25</sup> The first time “500 Greeks” shows up is in a letter to Governor Grant from London in April 1767. In a letter dated May 1, 1767 he tells Governor Grant that he is departing for Dover to begin recruiting his “500 Greeks.”<sup>26</sup>

Had Turnbull been able to sail directly into a port with a nearby population of Greeks and load 500 willing men and women onto two or three ships, the story of New Smyrna would have unfolded completely different. Instead, the monumental challenges he faced during the recruitment process—and the resulting difficulties in managing such a diverse and dispersed group of colonists on limited funds—set the stage for a far more complicated and ultimately tragic narrative for him and his investors.

The descendants of the several hundred Minorcans who endured and survived the St. Augustine Freedom Walk hold a unique perspective. They consider themselves blessed that, despite the immense hardships faced by their ancestors, their heritage and culture continue to thrive in St. Augustine. One

---

<sup>24</sup> [First Mass | Visit St. Augustine](https://www.visitstaugustine.com/gallery-image/first-mass) - <https://www.visitstaugustine.com/gallery-image/first-mass>

<sup>25</sup> [The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf](https://minorcans.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf) <https://minorcans.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Turnbull to James Grant London, May 1, 1767 - <https://minorcans.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf>

might wonder, however, what would have happened if Turnbull had succeeded in recruiting his "500 Greeks" for New Smyrna. Would those who now proudly trace their roots to the Minorcans still call St. Augustine home? Chances are, they would not—and what a profound loss that would have been for the city's rich cultural tapestry and for the non-Minorcans who shared their lives with these beautiful people.

\* \* \*

There are dozens of accounts detailing the ports in the Mediterranean Sea where Turnbull recruited people for his colony. The New Smyrna Beach Historical Museum<sup>27</sup> presents a fascinating account of the many stops made during his search. Interestingly, the first colonists Turnbull recruited were Italians from the port of Ligorino. He believed the Italians were hard workers and skilled in winemaking.

In his first colonist recruitment voyage he left Dover, England<sup>28</sup> and sailed to Germany and then took a river barge to Marseilles on May 17, 1767. After a few days in port, he sailed to Mahon, Minorca, on May 26, 1767. Mahon was under British rule, so Turnbull felt safe and secure using it as his main staging area. According to his letters, he left Mahon after a few days and arrived at Leghorn (Ligorino), Italy, on June 7, 1767, hoping to recruit Italians who were winemakers. He arrived at a time when Leghorn was becoming the center of Hebrew printing. Jewish communities had been under the protection of the Medici family for generations.

The Italian immigrants involved in Turnbull's colony have a wealth of stories about their participation. Turnbull initially intended for them to cultivate grapes for wine, but his many-times descendant, through her maternal line, Carita Doggett Corse, documented a different legacy. She noted in her book<sup>29</sup> that Turnbull "*declared himself reluctant to cultivate vines and olives in Florida because he feared it would fill his colonists with sad memories.*" Corse writes critical remarks about the Italians.

Bruno Roselli,<sup>30</sup> in one of his accounts, quotes her as stating that, "*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).*" He also wrote, "*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.*"

Doggett's book, "*Dr. Andrew Turnbull and the New Smyrna Colony of Florida,*" was written in 1919, right after World War I. At the time, xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment were prevalent in post-World War I America. Italians, as part of a wave of immigrants, were often the targets of harsh ethnic prejudice. Doggett's statements against Italians in New Smyrna were not out of the ordinary for that era but rather

---

<sup>27</sup> [new smyrna beach historical museum - Search](https://www.bing.com/search?q=new+smyrna+beach+historical+museum&cvid=109454c6368d4b12ae1337a95024d149&gs_lcrp=EgRIZGdlKgYIABBFGDkyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQABhAMgYIAhAAGEAyBggDEAAYQDIGCAQQABhAMgYI BRAAGEAyBggGEAAYQDIGCAcQABhAMgYICBAAGEAyCAgJEOKHGPxV0gEJMTY4NTlqMGo0qAIAAsAIB&FORM=ANABO1&adppc=EDGEES&PC=HCTS)

[https://www.bing.com/search?q=new+smyrna+beach+historical+museum&cvid=109454c6368d4b12ae1337a95024d149&gs\\_lcrp=EgRIZGdlKgYIABBFGDkyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQABhAMgYIAhAAGEAyBggDEAAYQDIGCAQQABhAMgYI BRAAGEAyBggGEAAYQDIGCAcQABhAMgYICBAAGEAyCAgJEOKHGPxV0gEJMTY4NTlqMGo0qAIAAsAIB&FORM=ANABO1&adppc=EDGEES&PC=HCTS](https://www.bing.com/search?q=new+smyrna+beach+historical+museum&cvid=109454c6368d4b12ae1337a95024d149&gs_lcrp=EgRIZGdlKgYIABBFGDkyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQABhAMgYIAhAAGEAyBggDEAAYQDIGCAQQABhAMgYI BRAAGEAyBggGEAAYQDIGCAcQABhAMgYICBAAGEAyCAgJEOKHGPxV0gEJMTY4NTlqMGo0qAIAAsAIB&FORM=ANABO1&adppc=EDGEES&PC=HCTS)

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Turnbull to James Grant London, May 1, 1767 [The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf](#)

<sup>29</sup> Carita Doggett Corse - *Dr. Andrew Turnbull and the New Smyrna Colony of Florida*

<sup>30</sup> Bruno Roselli- *Italians in Colonial Florida* – Page 8

aligned with the widespread prejudices and stereotypes of the time. Her views were in tune with the general chorus: “Italians, go back where you came from,” words that echoed broader societal biases.

Two years after Doggett’s book was published Congress passed the first quota act because as “Thomas Bailey Aldrich<sup>31</sup> expressed in his poem, *The Unguarded Gates* (1895), that there was great concern for this infusion of aliens into the bloodstream of civilized America. According to the sentiment of the anti-immigration movement in 1919 when Doggett wrote her book, Aldrich wrote, America had “*wide open and unguarded gates*,” a phrase that is still used and echoed in 2024.

\* \* \*

Turnbull arrived in Malta on July 19, 1767, pausing there to wait out unfavorable weather before resuming his journey. On August 24, he reached Smyrna (modern-day Izmir, Turkey), a bustling port city that had been part of the Ottoman Empire since around 1425. Known for its prosperity and strategic importance to regional trade, Smyrna had also faced hardships, including a devastating earthquake in 1688 and another in 1778—just 11 years after Turnbull’s visit. Turnbull’s purpose in Smyrna was to recruit 500 Greeks for his planned colony in Florida. However, his efforts met with stiff resistance, as Ottoman authorities, suspicious of his motives, opposed the migration of Greeks to his colony. Facing insurmountable challenges, Turnbull was forced to cut his stay short and abandon his plans. On September 30, 1767, he found safe harbor off the port of Milos.<sup>32</sup>

Turnbull relied on small vessels like brigs and schooners, much smaller than frigates or men-of-war, for his voyage. After departing Milos, he landed near Sparta, Greece.<sup>33</sup> He only had one vessel so the number of Greeks recruited was limited. This area, in the Peloponnesian region, had been one of the last strongholds of the Greeks resisting Ottoman control. Turnbull hoped to recruit 200 Greek families from the Peloponnesian region, sending them ahead to Mahón, Minorca, on a separate vessel.

Three years after Turnbull’s visit, in 1770, the Peloponnesian Greeks, with Russia’s support, revolted against the Ottomans during the ‘Orlov Revolt.’ However, the uprising was brutally crushed by Albanian Muslim mercenaries, who went on a rampage after the Ottomans failed to pay them for their services. These mercenaries savagely attacked towns and massacred countless Greeks. Those who had already migrated to Florida with Turnbull were fortunate to have avoided this fate. Had they remained in the Peloponnesian region, they might have been victims of the same slaughter.

Turnbull faced numerous challenges during his voyage throughout the Mediterranean Sea, including bad weather and fears at one<sup>34</sup> point that some of the Greeks might have been carrying the plague,<sup>35</sup> which led him to refuse them passage on his ship. These delays and setbacks meant Turnbull did not reach Serigo, Italy, until November 23, 1767. By this time, he had written to Governor James Grant in Florida, assuring him he would return to St. Augustine with 500 Greeks by November, but this goal was now

---

<sup>31</sup> [Chapter 6: Anti-Italian Sentiment in America – Italian Americans and Their Communities of Cleveland](https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/italian-americans-and-their-communities-of-cleveland/chapter/chapter-6-anti-italian-sentiment-in-america/)  
<https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/italian-americans-and-their-communities-of-cleveland/chapter/chapter-6-anti-italian-sentiment-in-america/>

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan Milos, September 30, 1767 – Dundee City Archive

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan Near Sparta [Greece], October 10, 1767 [The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf](#)

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Turnbull to Sir William Duncan Minorca, February 21, 1768 [The-Letters-Of-Dr-Turnbull-pdf-SEARCHABLE.pdf](#)

impossible. While in Serigo, Turnbull continued to struggle with poor weather, forcing him to move from port to port in hope of better sailing conditions.

Turnbull finally left Italy on December 4, 1767, arriving back in Malta on December 13. From there, he made a stop in Palermo before reaching Leghorn (modern-day Livorno, Italy) on January 22, 1768. After departing Leghorn, he arrived at Mahón, Minorca, on February 3, 1768, where he reunited with the Greek families he had sent ahead earlier.

After spending nearly two months in Mahón, Turnbull's fleet finally departed on April 3, 1768, stopping briefly in Gibraltar. On April 18, 1768, the ships set sail for St. Augustine, Florida, carrying with them the hopes and aspirations of the migrants. This difficult voyage has been described in great detail in "*A Minorcan Mystery*."<sup>36</sup>

Approximately 1,000 Minorcans made the difficult decision to leave their homes and families in search of a new and better life. Their new life began the moment they boarded one of the eight ships Turnbull had arranged for their passage. However, the better life they sought would remain elusive for more than a decade. And, even being free in St. Augustine, they found themselves next to the bottom of British society.

Four of Turnbull's vessels, carrying 700 colonists, finally reached St. Augustine on June 26, 1768<sup>37</sup>—a date now recognized as the official arrival of the Minorcans. While Turnbull's fleet of ships faced delays, with some arriving earlier and others blown off course to Charleston, South Carolina, the Minorcans' arrival marked the beginning of their enduring legacy in Florida. Turnbull left Mahon with 1403 colonists on board and arrived in New Smyrna with only 1225 because of deaths at sea.

Thus, the Minorcan colonists arrived in America. Their journey continues to this day.

Next: The Forni Rebellion  
Robert P. Jones 12/16/2024

---

<sup>36</sup> Robert P. Jones- *A MINORCAN MYSTERY. WHERE ARE THEY?*

<sup>37</sup> Patricia C. Griffin-Mullet *on the Beach*- Page 29