

MINORCAN LIFE AT TURNBULL'S COLONY IN 1771



Life at Andrew Turnbull's New Smyrna colony in 1771 was defined by suffering: life in a palmetto hut, oppression by overseers, and survival in the face of relentless challenges. The struggles of the New Smyrna colonists serve as a poignant reminder of the human cost of colonial expansion and the exploitation that often underpinned it. No letters written by the Minorcans, detailing the conditions at the colony, have been found. The only written records available to this author come from the correspondence of officials involved in the province of East Florida and the New Smyrna colony. Despite this limitation, these myriad accounts provide valuable insights into what life was like for the Minorcan colonists. A life that has never been fully documented or recognized.

These letters can be found at www.minorcans.com. On the home page, click on the photo of Antonio Alzina, then click on the photo of Andrew Turnbull - The Letters of Dr. Andrew Turnbull. The letters will appear in PDF format, allowing them to be copied for direct quotes if desired.

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Before examining the Turnbull letters, it is important to note that East Florida initially focused on defense, agriculture—particularly on producing certain goods needed in England—and maintaining peaceful relations with Native Americans. It was relatively quiet and loyal to the Crown, with little sign of revolutionary sentiment. However, an undercurrent of change would evolve in a few years, with William Drayton and Andrew Turnbull suspected of leaning toward the American patriots.

During these years, the political tensions in the Thirteen Colonies were rising sharply as colonial leaders and ordinary citizens began openly challenging British authority. Events like the Battle of Alamance¹ and the lingering effects of the Boston Massacre² exemplified the growing unrest that

¹ [Alamance Battle Facts and Summary | American Battlefield Trust](https://www.battlefields.org/learn/battles/alamance)
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/battles/alamance>

² [Boston Massacre: Causes, Date & Facts | HISTORY](https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/boston-massacre) <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/boston-massacre>

would lead to the American Revolution. The leaders in the Thirteen Colonies opposed England's "taxation without representation."³

These contrasting experiences highlight the diverging paths of the Thirteen Colonies and British East Florida as British possessions. While East Florida remained a loyal, developing province, the Thirteen Colonies were on the brink of revolution.⁴

The 1771 Letters

Turnbull's letter to Duncan, January 9, 1771, provided an invoice for the crops and outlined his plans to construct eight sets of vats and cultivate several hundred additional acres of indigo seed.

Lord Hillsborough's letter to James Grant, February 11, 1771, informed the governor that King George III had approved John Moultrie as lieutenant governor of the East Florida province. The letter clearly confirmed Governor Grant's recommendation of John Moultrie for the position. Moultrie had served under Grant during the Anglo-Cherokee War.⁵ This relationship, forged under battle conditions, might not have been known to Turnbull.

Turnbull's letter to Duncan, February 15, 1771, mentioned his arrival in St. Augustine on January 5th and explained that bad weather had delayed his return. He noted that he was making shingles and that the newly acquired lands were registered in the names of "*Astle and Stone*."

Turnbull told Duncan that he had given up his home in St. Augustine and lamented, "*My family agreed to live [at Smyrna] with me as exiles from every convenience and amusement.*"

This must have been hard on Mrs. Turnbull and the children, who had to leave behind the many comforts and friends in the British society. Turnbull referred to this moment as the family being exiled, and he was correct. Their lives would be greatly changed, filled with uncertainty and much more difficult living conditions. However, Mrs. Turnbull gave birth to two more sons,⁶ before she left New Smyrna with her family for Charles Town, South Carolina. Gracia Maria du Robin Turnbull and her husband, Dr. Andrew Turnbull, are buried in Charleston, South Carolina.

He again affirmed that he would pay 8% interest on the money he owed and, "*that his share be taken out of the eventual proceeds of indigo sales.*" He said he lost all his money in Turkey and that he had just learned that George Grenville⁷ had died. Turnbull said he had a cold from riding in wet clothing when he rode to St. Augustine. He closed his letter telling Duncan that the Minorcans were well, and they have planted five hundred acres of corn.

³ "[No Taxation Without Representation](https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/no-taxation-without-representation)" | American Battlefield Trust

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/no-taxation-without-representation>

⁴ [On the Brink of War \(1770–1774\)](https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/educational-magazines/brink-war-1770-1774) | Encyclopedia.com <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/educational-magazines/brink-war-1770-1774>

⁵ [Anglo-Cherokee War – Colonial Americas](https://colonialamericas.com/welcome-to-colonial-americas/anglo-cherokee-war/) <https://colonialamericas.com/welcome-to-colonial-americas/anglo-cherokee-war/>

⁶ [Gracia Maria \(Robin\) Turnbull \(1736-abt.1798\)](https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Gracia_Maria_(Robin)_Turnbull_(1736-abt.1798)) | WikiTree FREE Family Tree

⁷ [George Grenville](https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Grenville) | British statesman, Whig politician, fiscal reformer | Britannica

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Grenville>

He said that his nephew, Andrew Turnbull, “*was managing the Mosquito Inlet plantation.*” This is another time that he speaks of his nephew, Andrew Turnbull, managing the colony.

In a letter from John Robinson to John Pownell, written from Treasury Chambers in London on March 8, 1771, he announced that no more public money would be spent as help to the Greek colonists. The words denying another bounty are: “*Their Lordships do not think themselves authorized to allow any farther sum of money for this service.*”

This lack of another £2,000 sterling would make life much more difficult for the Minorcan colonists, who are referred to as Greek colonists by the Commissioner of the Treasury. There is no doubt that the King’s officials considered New Smyrna a colony.

Note: Governor James Grant departed from East Florida on April 6, 1771, and returned to Scotland, citing health reasons as well as the need to manage his recently inherited family properties. He never returned to East Florida, though he did return to America to fight in the Revolutionary War before retiring to his estate in Scotland, where he spent the rest of his life.

Turnbull’s letter to Duncan, April 18, 1771, lists the number of people and their ages. Turnbull claims that the sickness and deaths among the colonists began in their countries before they joined his colony. However, he does admit that “the long voyage added to that bad state.” This author disputes Turnbull’s claim, as he had earlier stated how healthy and joyful the colonists were before leaving Minorca. The 70-day voyage, lacking fruit and Vitamin C, led to numerous cases of scurvy—a fact that has been affirmed many times. He noted that about half had been lost and that after all the bills were paid and accounts balanced said: “*it will be easy for me to increase our numbers without stirring from this place, and without such expences and risks as were incurred by our first tryal.*”

This shows the number of people and their ages as of March 18, 1770.

Age Group	Number of Individuals
Under 1 year old	12
1 to 4 years old	25
4 to 8 years old	47
8 to 12 years old	63
12 to 16 years old	133
16 to 30 years old	361
30 to 40 years old	47
40 to 50 years and upwards	14
Total	702
Gender Number of Individuals	
Males	406
Females	296
Total	702

Turnbull's letter to Duncan, April 19, 1771, informs him that, "*contrary to a rumor in London, he had not been appointed lieutenant governor of East Florida.*" Turnbull was still angry about not being appointed and protested that he should have been chosen for at least two reasons. The first was that Moultrie had only brought "*twenty Negroes,*" whereas he had brought hundreds of laborers. The second reason was that he had brought his family immediately, while Moultrie did not bring his family to St. Augustine for a year. Despite his disappointment, a disappointment that never abated, Turnbull acknowledged that Governor Grant had helped the colony and governed the province well.

In a second letter on this day, "*Turnbull exhorted Duncan to put pressure on government to build a good road from St. Augustine to Mosquito Inlet, and to arrange for a pilot to lead ships safely through Mosquito Inlet.*"

Turnbull's letter to Duncan, May 3, 1771, informs him that his indigo had been sent to London. He mentioned that the cost of the worst Negro clothing⁸ he bought for the Minorcans was high and that he tried to save money by buying only what was necessary. He noted that flour and rice were being raised and stated that, while the hogs supplied about £120 worth of pork, the harsh summer heat killed a number of them.

Turnbull's letter to Grant, May 9, 1771, tells about a group of seventy-two Indians coming, "*into this part of the country.*" He tells the governor they were led by Upper Creek chiefs and mentioned the names of Cowkeeper and Long Warrior. He said they beat some men. Turnbull describes the encounter this way: "*At first they were sulky, out of humor, and beat some of a boat's crew they found at my cow keepers, but on having provisions sent to them and on being invited to this place, the head men, with twenty warriors came here last Friday, dined, got drunk, and went away in better humour.*"

The Creeks came back again, drank their fill and left, but before leaving beat several of his warriors for offering to kill one of Turnbull's calves. He told them that the governor was, "*going to see the great King, but would return soon, that in the mean time there was another Governor at St. Augustine, who would be glad to see this head man.*"

When Long Warrior returned to the colony asking for a calf, Turnbull gave him one and said, "*I gave him one, and would rather give two at any time, than they should take one without leave.*"

Turnbull's letter to Grant, May 10, 1771, Turnbull indicated that the Indians were so appreciative at the way he treated them that they would protect him from being harmed by anyone. He told the governor when he was in the province he felt confidence in the government, but he again complains about not being made the lieutenant governor as that would have prevented any trouble from the Indians. Turnbull must have learned that Grant had promised Moultrie the appointment long before Turnbull became involved. He writes, "*Your recommending a gentleman you had given your word to, does you honour, and must be approved of. If it was possible for me to respect you more than I do, that would have added to it, but Sir William was*

⁸ [Negro cloth - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negro_cloth) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negro_cloth

under no engagement, therefore ought to have urged the merits of our undertaking, with which no other in this province can even be put in competition.”

Turnbull is praising Grant for his integrity and loyalty. At the same time, he criticizes Sir William Duncan for not being as supportive or enthusiastic about Turnbull becoming the lieutenant governor, especially since Duncan was free to act without prior commitments. He closes by saying that his efforts to establish a colony in New Smyrna are a far more important undertaking compared to others in the region.

Turnbull’s letter to Duncan, May 20, 1771, written only ten days after his praising the Indians, reports the Indians were, *“terrorizing women and children living at the farms and causing them to flee from their houses.”* He said his family, *“also experienced the terror, prompting him to put them into an open boat at midnight, exposed to the weather for thirteen hours, but they at least were kept out of the reach of the Indians.”* He said his nephew told the Indians Turnbull was appointed governor. He said he talked to the Indians when he arrived and they went away in good humor.

In keeping with his unrelenting desire to be lieutenant governor, *“Turnbull again criticized Moultrie, and pleaded with Duncan to go directly to Lord Hillsborough to use his influence to have Turnbull named lieutenant governor. Were he to hold that office he would be able to provide protection for Smyrnéa.”*

According to this letter, *“He threatened to leave East Florida if he did not receive the appointment.”*

This statement reveals how deeply Turnbull desired to become lieutenant governor, even going so far as to threaten to leave if he was not appointed. However, the appointment had already been made by King George III, and there was no possibility that the king would renege on appointing Moultrie. Ultimately, Turnbull did not carry out his threat; instead, he remained in St. Augustine until he was able to quietly slip away and flee to Charleston a few years after the Minorcans walked to their physical freedom in St. Augustine. Their economic freedom was yet to be won.

Turnbull’s letter to Duncan, May 25, 1771, noted that he was suffering from fatigue and experiencing trouble with his eyes. He informed Duncan that his first clerk was no longer available, which was the reason he had been unable to complete the plantation’s accounts. It took Turnbull a very long time to send a full accounting of all the expenses incurred since the project began in 1767. He expressed his frustration, stating that he would not endure the hardships he had faced at the colony any longer and warned that, unless he was put on better footing, *“I will leave the province.”*

This was the second time Turnbull threatened to leave and the second time he had criticized Governor Grant. The first instance was over Grant’s failure to recommend him for the position of lieutenant governor. Now, Turnbull voiced further grievances, accusing Grant of creating difficulties by *“obstinately refusing to meet with the chiefs.”*

He warned that he would never, *“live under Grant’s authority again if the governor was unwilling to take the necessary steps to ensure the province’s safety, such as traveling twenty miles to hold a congress with the Creek chiefs.”*

These were harsh words from Turnbull, especially given that it was Governor Grant who had successfully negotiated the Treaty of Picolata.⁹ That treaty had greatly contributed to maintaining peace with the Indian tribes in the region and secured massive amount of land for the British, stretching south all the way to the Keys. Turnbull never overcame his bitterness about not being appointed lieutenant governor.

Turnbull’s other letter to Duncan, May 25, 1771, shows the toll the colony is taking on him. He discusses the need for, *“one thousand yards of oznaburgh cloth¹⁰ to make frocks and trousers for the laborers.”* He noted he had to order fifty barrels of pork and three hundred bushels of salt. He was most concerned about the £1000 owed to a Mr. John Murray for expenses when he was recruiting the Minorcans, Greeks and Italians in the Mediterranean. Turnbull seemed distraught to the extent that he offered to, *“take it upon myself to pay this bill out of my own share of income.”*

He told Duncan he had lost sight in one eye, and that was why he could not complete the accounting of expenses. His last words of the letter describe his suffering, and speak for themselves. He wrote, *“I have sometime fallen off the logg I have been sitting on for chairs, we had none then, so oppressed I have been with fatigue and [lack of] sleep; six hours in twenty-four is the most rest I ever take....I would not undergo [the hard times] again for all the money it has cost, nor indeed could I go through it a second time, the first has been too severe a grinding....My health and spirits bore it. I flagg now in both, and if I am not put on a better footing in this province than I am at the moment, I must leave the management of this Affair to other hands.”*

His lamentations are enlightening, and he again declares that unless conditions improved on the colony, he would leave. If his health was taking a beating, what were the conditions that the Minorcans had to work under?

Turnbull’s letter to Duncan, May 27, 1771, included a sixteen-page accusatory letter to Governor Grant who had left the province of East Florida and was in Scotland. He harshly criticized Lieutenant Governor Moultrie because he would not send more soldiers to New Smyrna. The fact he was not appointed lieutenant governor is in his daily thoughts. He told Duncan that the Secretary of State favored his getting the appointment, but Grant, *“had it set aside, which hurts me and hurts my People. Had I succeeded the Indians would have been pleased and friendly. My People are trustworthy, and it would have been easy for me to have been in St. Augustine to tend to business of government for ten days or a fortnight every month.”*

⁹ [Fort Picolata – Florida History Online](https://history.domains.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/projects-proj-b-p-html/projects-plantations-html/hierarchy-of-plantation-pages/fort-picolata/) <https://history.domains.unf.edu/floridahistoryonline/projects-proj-b-p-html/projects-plantations-html/hierarchy-of-plantation-pages/fort-picolata/>

¹⁰ [Osnaburg - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osnaburg) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osnaburg>

Turnbull claimed again, that Moultrie did not bring many Negroes to East Florida. Turnbull said, “*There were more “black Guinea folks here” at Smyrnéa than at all of Moultrie’s East Florida estates.*” He also said Moultrie was, “*a lazy planter, lacking in energy and innovative spirit.*”

Turnbull’s desire was to be appointed Governor of East Florida if Grant was given a higher position. There is little doubt in Turnbull’s letters that the fact he was not appointed lieutenant governor was something that would remain with him forever. He bragged about being superior to Moultrie in every way. He again threatened to take the Minorcans to another province, showing his true character concerning the colonists by saying, “*They acknowledge no other Master but me.*” This indicates he felt he was the master, and the Minorcans were slaves. It is highly unlikely that, although the Minorcans might have been treated as slaves—particularly by the overseers—they would never accept being slaves to anyone.

Turnbull’s letter to Grant, May 27, 1771, was long, and he again shared his belief that things in New Smyrna, and the province overall, would have been better handled had he been appointed lieutenant governor. He could not get over his deep disappointment in Moultrie being appointed instead of him.

He describes the Indian raids, again pointing out his family and other women, “*were obliged to fly from hence at midnight in an open boat.*” The Minorcans hid in the mangroves. He recounted how he tried to get the people not to think about the scalping knives the Indians carried or, “*roasting on the fire, as is sometimes the treatment captives meet with among Indians.*” How dreadful this situation was for everyone, but especially for the women and children. He surmised the Indians were hostile because they thought the Minorcans were not British and because they were not receiving the gifts Governor Grant had previously provided each year.

After Turnbull calmed the Indians down, they said they were actually headed to a Spanish settlement on Cape Florida. However, Turnbull did not believe any such settlement existed. How, he wondered, could a Spanish settlement be functioning on British land? He knew the Indians were making up this excuse. He noted that John Stewart had told the Indians that Turnbull was the new governor, which changed their attitude considerably. They put on gay colors and accepted a few gifts Turnbull had, but he told them, “*the Governor at St. Augustine had presents for them on which the Chief disbanded his warriors, and went to make a visit to the Lieutenant Governor.*”

He reminded Grant that the Indians did not think the Minorcans were English, but he convinced them otherwise. Once again, he claimed that, if he had been appointed lieutenant governor, he would have been held in “*high esteem*” by the Indians and his people.

Turnbull asserted that “*Major Moultrie*” has lessened his status and could do additional damage to the colony. It is telling that he did not refer to Moultrie as lieutenant governor, but instead reduced his official status to “*Major.*”

He complained about only having five soldiers at the colony, but noted that it was Lord Hillsborough who had refused to send additional troops. Turnbull said the Lordship’s excuse—that the troops were needed because of disputes with Spain—did not sit well with him.

Once again, Turnbull stated that had he been lieutenant governor, everything would be much better.

He told Grant that he had received a letter stating Governor Grant had been informed of Turnbull's dissatisfaction at not being appointed. He expressed to Grant that this deeply hurt him in many ways.

He also stressed again that he could have served as lieutenant governor while still running the New Smyrna colony. In this letter, he raised the possibility that he had not originally planned to live in New Smyrna. He suggested that Governor Grant might have recommended Turnbull move his family so that, "*I and my family might be out of the disagreeable rebound, as you termed it, of some bills then expected back in protest, which, however, did not happen.*" He reiterated that he had successfully managed the colony while living in St. Augustine.

Moultrie's letter to Major Alexander Mackenzie, June 6, 1771, was a recap of the story about the Indians' behavior at the colony, sent to the commanding officer of the King's troops in East Florida. Moultrie did not expect acts of hostility, as he believed the Native American tribes and Britain were on good terms. Nevertheless, he asked Major Mackenzie to send twelve more soldiers to demand respect from anyone passing by with an intent to harm the colony and, at the same time, "*tend to quiet the minds of the affrighted settlers and give them confidence.*" Lieutenant Governor Moultrie made the request for more troops within a month of Turnbull's request for additional soldiers.

Turnbull's letter to Grant, June 7, 1771, consisted of two sentences in which he stated that he would be glad to resign his position as Secretary of East Florida in favor of David Yeats. Turnbull included a caveat, saying that if Yeats was not to be appointed, his resignation would not be submitted.

Lieutenant Governor Moultrie's letter to Governor James Grant, June 10, 1771, was both revealing and important for Grant to know. He mentioned hearing about Grant's voyage back to England from the Parson and David Yeats and expressed hope that the "*tumults in his intestines*" were over and that the voyage, along with his departure from East Florida, had made him feel ten years younger. He commented on his appointment, writing, "*I was soon put out of suspense concerning my appointment, as I received the Earl of Hillsborough's letter in a few days after your departure. Thank you, my dear Governor.*" Governor Grant departed East Florida on April 6, 1771, meaning Moultrie became lieutenant governor in April 1771 and served in that role until the end of British occupation of Florida in 1783.

Before a week had passed, a citizens committee wanted to present Moultrie with an address they had written. He declined their invitation to see or accept the address, as he had been informed by someone familiar with it that the purpose of the address was "*more to abuse you than be civil to me.*" Moultrie's refusal to see what they had written made the men "*very angry, and me Moultrie laugh.*" The citizen committee sent their address to Charles Town to be printed because the local printers would not print it.

Moultrie named the leaders and noted that *“the rest followed in silence; some of the ragamuffins and poor devils were taken in, as they imagined it was entirely a compliment to me.”* The ability to mislead and manipulate the masses was just as common in 1771 as it is in 2025.

Moultrie said that Turnbull’s story about the Indians was hard to believe, noting that both he and Grant did not *“believe a tenth part of the story, and were clearly of opinion that the Indians did not intend the least act of hostility.”* Turnbull said the reason of his uneasiness was that the Tribe said the colonists were Spaniards. This paragraph reflects themes of miscommunication, colonial tensions, and questions of credibility.

Moultrie questioned the reliance on an unnamed individual who was supposedly able to communicate with the Indians, suggesting it was questionable. He explained to Turnbull that the man in question was a soldier from Savannah and could not understand, *“a word of the Indian language.”* After this was explained to Turnbull, *“he began to be a little ashamed of this evidence if it was falsely sworn to, in one part it might be and probably was so on the whole.”*

Moultrie said he was surprised that Turnbull would write him a letter saying one thing and in a few days write just the opposite. Turnbull would not be satisfied until Moultrie called a congress with the Indian tribes and sent more troops to New Smyrna. However, Moultrie explained that he could not call a congress, as it would require funds for the gifts that must be presented at such a gathering. He noted, *“The £1,500 formerly allocated for Indian expenses this year has been cut off.”* Moultrie’s request for more men from Major McKenzie was refused, and his only recourse for more troops in New Smyrna was to ask General Gage,¹¹ *“which will take three months to do and get an answer. I may as well let it alone....”*

Moultrie tells Grant that Turnbull once again threatened *“removing with his whole people to some island where they might be in safety if they were not protected by government troops.”* Moultrie wondered what island Turnbull had in mind and whether the people already living on the island would allow them to settle there. He told Grant that the people had already endured the hard work of creating a colony, and the Minorcans would have to give their permission to be moved elsewhere. Moultrie was adamant in standing up for the Minorcans when he said, *“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.”* It would have been so informative if Moultrie had expanded on his statement that even slaves have some freedom. It is difficult to identify these supposed freedoms for the enslaved Africans who worked from dawn to dusk on myriad plantations scattered throughout East Florida and all the British colonies.

Moultrie did not believe Turnbull was going to take his people and leave, as one minute he talked about leaving and had stopped building houses for the colonists, and the next he talked about sending some of the people up the Tomoka River to make shingles. Moultrie said Turnbull was very pleased about the Mosquito Road.

¹¹ [Thomas Gage | Biography, Facts, & Revolutionary War | Britannica](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Gage)
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Gage>

From Moultrie's point of view, this did not look like Turnbull was going to leave the colony anytime soon. He was glad Turnbull was going back to England next winter, after one of his partners, Lord Grenville, had died.

Moultrie did not believe there was much to fear from the Indians at this time. As a matter of fact, he mentioned that some Indians, from another tribe, who were hunting near the colony took several of "*Caudry's and Levett's Negroes*," but they were returned to their plantations by the main tribe of Indians.

Frederick George Mulcaster's letter to Grant, June, 11, 1771, begins by telling the governor, "*Dr. Turnbull has been in town, not well pleased, rather disappointed at missing the Lieutenant Governor [appointment].*" From what the letters consistently indicate is that everyone knew how disappointed Turnbull was for not being appointed lieutenant governor, because he was always complaining to anyone he spoke with.

Turnbull wanted a congress with the Indians because he thought the Indians planned to harm the colony. Several of the chiefs still believed the Minorcans were Spanish. A chief, Mulcaster refers to as "King," sent all the Indians away from New Smyrna. Mulcaster says, "*The King who had sent them all away came to Augustine but finding himself taken no notice of, nor having anything given him farther than a little rice, was displeased and said he does not know if there is a white man in the province.*" Mulcaster thought not enough attention was given "King."

He talked about a long drought and the governor's villa was covered with yellow, but was now on the rebound thanks to some much needed rain. He said Chief Justice Drayton's plantation and, "*His indigo looks very well, above a foot high, his corn not so well....*"

Turnbull's letter to Grant, dated June 13, 1771, repeated the contents of a previous letter, stating that several chiefs and 72 warriors had arrived in New Smyrna and harassed the colonists.

David Yeats' letter to Grant, dated August 31, 1771, informs him that a two-month drought has severely impacted all the plantations growing indigo and rice. He describes the difficult conditions on most of the plantations but notes that Turnbull, by adding more lime water and steeping the weeds longer, was able to increase the yield per vat. This was a significant change in the process, and now all the other planters are following his lead.

He describes the yields of indigo Turnbull was achieving and mentions that Francis P. Fatio¹² had arrived from London. Fatio would later become one of the most successful figures of the British period and remained in Florida for the rest of his life.

Mulcaster's letter to Grant, October 2, 1771, informed him that Turnbull was in town and, although "*he has lost his third cutting by the worm*," he had 8,000 pounds of indigo in storage.

¹² [Review: The Fatio Family: A Book Review on JSTOR](#)

Note: The Fatio family has been in Florida since 1771, when Francis Philip Fatio, his wife and five children, sailed into St. Augustine harbor in a chartered vessel. *The Florida Historical Quarterly/Vol.31, No. 2, Oct., 1952*

Considering the drought, the Minorcans must have worked very hard to produce that much indigo. Mulcaster started to write a long letter describing how badly Grant's villa was suffering due to the lack of rain, but he threw the letter into the fire.

Turnbull's letter to Grant, October 28, 1771, apologizes to the governor, stating that his last letter "*was not in such civil terms.*" He said that the situation he was currently in "*made me angry and uneasy.*" He complained that Lieutenant Governor Moultrie was paying him no attention, as he claimed the Indians posed a danger. He claimed his troubles were numerous because Mr. Moultrie had been appointed lieutenant governor of the province of East Florida. Turnbull could not let go of his disappointment over not being appointed lieutenant governor, a sentiment he expressed repeatedly in his letters.

He wrote that, "*The Indians become more indolent every day, he [lt. gov. John Moultrie] more indolent in that business.*" He explained how the Indians were stealing his cattle, using the excuse that their hunting grounds were underwater. It is possible that the heavy rains following the months-long drought had flooded much of the land. He again stated that Moultrie was not paying any attention to him and that he was waiting to hear from Duncan. If Duncan's answers about the current situation were unsatisfactory, he would "*come to England and beg protection from the Minister of America.*"

Turnbull said he had planned to take his family to St. Augustine, but there was too much dissent among the governing officials for him to return. Chief Justice Drayton had resigned his seat on the Council, making it difficult for the few remaining members to conduct any business at all. He again mentioned that he wanted to resign his position on the Council, but only if Yeats was appointed in his place. He did not think it worth "*the miserable fifty pounds a year to lay myself under an obligation to a lieutenant governor for his allowing me to act by Deputy.*" Turnbull comes across as a very bitter man, which likely affected the way he treated the Minorcans. A man under as much mental anguish as Turnbull would likely have little patience for those he considered beneath his status as "master."

This rather long letter states that Sir William Duncan is coming to Florida. Turnbull thought the move was premature but, at the same time, said it "*will give me an opportunity of coming to London and staying there some time to solicit my business.*" In a rather sarcastic tone, he remarked, "*Let him lose an eye as I have done by the glare of white sand.*"

He refers to the money owed for bringing the Minorcans to New Smyrna and mentions having a letter in his files proving that he and Duncan had resolved the issue. "*The clamor about my accounts is ungenerous,*" he tells Grant. He also states that the final article in the most recent contract between himself and his partners obligated them to send a clerk to review the accounts. The clerk would be paid £100 sterling per year, and Turnbull expressed confidence that his books were in order, noting that he had all the receipts on hand.

In his final paragraph, he described how "*millions of caterpillars appeared and did not leave me a green leaf, only a part of the stalk.*" He tried everything to destroy them without success. Even so, they managed to harvest a crop valued at £9,000 sterling.

However, that accomplishment was achieved, Turnbull wrote, by working the Minorcans, “*night and day.*”

The immense pain and suffering the Minorcans endured to generate £9,000 sterling for Turnbull and his partners during this harvest is nearly unimaginable.

Turnbull’s letter to Grant, November 26, 1771, outlined the conditions for his resignation as secretary. Though only one sentence long, it spoke volumes about the state of his relationship with Grant. Grant had supported Turnbull from the moment he arrived in East Florida, protecting his family while Turnbull was gathering colonists in 1767–1768. He also arranged for provisions to be sent to New Smyrna at the appropriate time, expecting to feed 500 Greeks. Instead, the effort ended up sustaining 1,225 colonists, who would forever be referred to as Minorcans. Turnbull never overcame the extreme disappointment of not being appointed lieutenant governor.

Moultrie’s letter to Grant, dated December 4, 1771, is the last letter from that year available to this author from the Dundee Archives. In it, Lieutenant Governor Moultrie informed Grant about the ongoing dissension in St. Augustine, noting that Chief Justice Drayton had resigned his seat on the Royal Council, and Turnbull had also stepped down.

Life at Turnbull’s colony in 1771 was notably better compared to previous years in terms of mortality. However, ten men and six women and children were still carried to their burial site—a site that remains undiscovered. This elusive resting place may hold the key to locating the 964 “Missing Minorcans,” whose remains lie buried somewhere beneath the soil of New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

Despite the drama and harsh treatment from the overseers, the Minorcans managed to produce the highest amount of indigo this year. Those who remained healthy must have worked tirelessly, enduring long hours and immense effort to overcome both the drought and the devastation caused by the caterpillar infestation.

Turnbull shipped 2,420 pounds of indigo on the Brig *George*, captained by Regan, to London on April 26, 1771. Later, on November 29, 1771, he shipped 9,138 pounds of indigo on the Schooner *Margaret*, captained by Barton, to Charlestown.

The New Smyrna colony shipped the most pounds of indigo to England in 1771, which was also one of the two years when Turnbull shipped indigo twice in the same year. In contrast, 1774 and 1775 were years when less than 2,000 pounds of indigo were shipped to England.¹³

¹³ Colonial Office Papers (CO 5/558) *An Account of the [Indigo] Exports from the Smirnea Settlement from its first Establishment in 1768 to the first day of January 1778.*