
The Gulf Region

DE SOTO'S expedition of several hundred Spaniards, which explored from Florida to west of the Mississippi River, was an unsuccessful quest for gold and added nothing to geographical knowledge, or to the advancement of civilization, but left a legacy of half-breeds and disease.

After his people departed, in 1542, one and a third centuries passed before another white foot trod the regions of De Soto's explorations. The French from Canada, learning from the Indians of a large river in the west, Louis Joliet, a young American-born French fur-trader, and Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit priest, thirty-five years of age, with five French companions, and a number of Indian canoeists, were in 1673 sent from Green Bay, Wisconsin, in search of the river. Finding it, they went as far south on it as the Arkansas River. Learning there of Indian warfare farther down the river, they returned north; having travelled twenty-five hundred miles.

Seven years later, Rene Robert de la Salle, aged thirty-seven, of a wealthy French family, floated and paddled down the river from Mackinac and reported having reached the Gulf. Thereupon he proclaimed possession of the entire region for the King of France and named it Louisiana, in honor of Louis XIV.

Mark Twain, in his *Life on the Mississippi*, wrote: "Then, to the admiration of the savages, the Frenchmen set up a cross with the Arms of France upon it, and took possession of the whole country for the king, the cool fashion of the time; while the priest consecrated the robbery with a hymn, and they drew from

the simple sons of the forest fealty to Louis over the sea. No one even smiled at this colossal irony."

La Salle returned to Fort St. Louis, where he had left Tonti, an Italian companion, in charge, and then left for France, by way of Quebec, to report his discovery.

In a frigate and three other ships, with 280 colonists, La Salle returned to the Gulf in 1685, but unable to find the entrance to the Mississippi, he disembarked in Matagorda Bay, Texas. He had lost three vessels and the other one returned to France.

Some of his men mutinied and killed him near Navasota, on the Brazos River. The colony perished, except seven who made their way to Canada. This exploit, which was long before the English had any knowledge of the Mississippi Valley, was the basis of the French claim to the Mississippi River and all its tributaries.

Tonti, with fifty Canadians and Indians, went down the river that year in search of La Salle, but, not finding him, returned to the mouth of the Arkansas River where he established a post.

Pierre La Moyné d'Iberville, a native of Quebec, with other Canadians, had fought the English in Newfoundland, and had part in the capture by the French of Pemaquid in Maine. He promoted a French expedition to the Gulf coast thirteen years after La Salle, and sailed from France with the "Badine," of thirty guns, the "Marir," and two harbor boats of forty tons each.

On board were his brothers, Bienville and Sauvolle, and two hundred colonists, mostly Canadians who had been fighting with the French forces in Europe; also some women and children. They were joined at Santo Domingo by a French warship of fifty-two guns. [119]

Arriving at Pensacola, he found three hundred Spaniards from Vera Cruz had established a battery there, commanded by General Roalli, who claimed the entire country bordering on the Gulf. Roalli planned to drive out the French but concluded they were too strong for him to attack.

A fortification was erected by the French at Biloxi, with a garrison of seventy-six men and boys.

There appeared an armed English ship of twelve guns, which had been sent by Dr. Daniel Coxe, of England, that inveterate

monopolist of land in New Jersey. Coxe claimed the Mississippi region as part of the defunct Heath English grant of the Carolinas, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, an interest in which Coxe had bought as a gamble. The French dissuaded the English commander by asserting the French claim to all the land, by prior discovery and settlement.

This incident prompted the French to explore the Mississippi. Proceeding there in small boats, manned by crews under Bienville, then eighteen years of age, they advanced up the river, and at about fifty miles from its mouth established a fort. At about 175 miles from the mouth they came to an Indian village (presumably near present Baton Rouge), where they were told of the La Salle expedition of seventeen years previously. [169]

D'Iberville, with two frigates, sailed for France the same year, but soon returned from there with instructions to investigate and report on the natural and agricultural resources of the country, including the propagation of silkworms and buffalo. Explorations were made throughout what is now Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee.

French missionaries from Canada, and other French voyagers, were traversing the country between the Great Lakes and the Gulf coast to such extent that, together with the French forts, the French controlled the Mississippi River and all its tributaries. Search was made for Spaniards, but none were found to be in that region. [169]

Not until 1700 did the French, under D'Iberville, found a permanent colony. D'Iberville made frequent trips between France and Louisiana and was appointed commander-in-chief of the "Colony of the Mississippi." But three years afterwards, while on an expedition against the British, he died of yellow fever in Havana. Bienville had been, and continued, in actual command of the colony. [169]

Twenty-three girls, of "spotless chastity, and industrious," sent from France, arrived in 1704, and within a few days were all married to the men in the colony. Bienville asked the home government to send thirty additional marriageable women, to form home ties for the Canadian men, who were roaming the country for Indian women. In due course, twelve arrived, but they were

so homely only two of them promptly found husbands, the remainder, as officially reported, would likely remain unmarried for quite a time. The report begged that in future, when exporting women to Louisiana, more consideration should be given to beauty and less to chastity; otherwise the men would prefer the Indian women. [119]

The French built Fort St. Louis de la Mobile, on Mobile Bay, which was the seat of government for nine years and, in 1711, they founded Mobile.

King Louis XIV granted to Anthony Crozat, a French merchant, the exclusive right for fifteen years to mine and trade in the French territory, with the further right to appropriate land for actual use, but not to be held unused; also the right to import Negroes from Africa to be sold as slaves. [169]

By the treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, the Mississippi River watershed was recognized as a French possession. La Mothe Cadillac arrived from France that year, with a commission as governor of the colony, to succeed Bienville, and served for a brief period.

The king in 1716 ordered that trading-posts be established at Natchez and at Fort Toulouse, in Alabama. Several forts were ordered along the main river, beginning with one among the Natchez Indians, with eighty soldiers; also it was ordered that salt-makers be sent to Louisiana, who, after working there three years, were to receive land; and that one hundred hospital girls be sent annually to increase the population.

The king presented Bienville with the Island of Come, not as a fief, but in villanage tenure.

Five years after Crozat received his grant, he found the burden of it too great and relinquished it. A new grant was made, to the Company of the West and, subsequently, to the Company of the Indies. This company, with a capital of a hundred thousand livres, and John Law as director, was in 1717 given for a period of twenty-five years a monopoly of commerce in the region, and of the Indian trade in beaver skins from Canada.

It had power to make grants of land, dig mines, establish forts, levy troops, make munitions, appoint public officials, build vessels of war and churches, and pay the clergy under the ecclesiastical

jurisdiction of Quebec. It was to transport to the colony six thousand whites, including convicts from French prisons, and three thousand Negroes.

It made a grant of twelve miles square on the Arkansas River to John Law, on which two hundred Germans settled. Numerous other grants of land were made, some as far up as Natchez, and colonists were sent to inhabit them.

Bienville was appointed commandant-general and, in 1718, laid the foundation of New Orleans; the same year that the Spaniards, crossing the Rio Grande, founded the Alamo Mission at San Antonio. The French company sent troops and men and women—voluntary and involuntary—emigrants. [169]

Bienville complained that these colonists were undesirable; that he needed carpenters and laborers; the same complaint that was made at the founding of Virginia by the English, more than a century before, and by the Swedish governor on the Delaware.

The peaceful acquisition of Pensacola from the Spaniards was urged by Bienville in 1719, as affording a better harbor. But the Spaniards, asserting ownership through the bull of Pope Alexander VI, two and a quarter centuries previously, refused to part with it; whereupon Bienville took it by force. It was retaken by the Spaniards and recaptured by the French, but four years afterwards was, by treaty, returned to Spain. [169]

The cultivation of rice, indigo and tobacco had begun, but the whites could not endure the work and it was given over to Negro slaves. Lumber was exported to the West Indies.

To protect its monopoly, the company issued an edict in 1720, forbidding any vessel, under penalty of confiscation, to enter any port in the colony. Inhabitants were required to buy and sell commodities at the company stores, at arbitrarily fixed prices. Economically, the whites and blacks were on the same basis.

The company developed some trade on the Guinea and Hindoostan coasts [5], but greater development was hampered by climate, malaria and monopoly. [169]

Through wild speculation in its stock in Paris, and entanglement in French finances, the company became famous as the Mississippi Bubble. The bubble collapsed in 1720, causing thou-

sands of people of all classes, who had participated in the widespread speculation, to lose their life's savings.

The commandant at the fort near Natchez, in 1728, wanted some land on which there was an Indian settlement. The Indian chief objected and called a council of surrounding tribes, who determined to forthwith exterminate the French garrison and colony. More than two hundred French were killed. Three years later the French, with an army of 650 soldiers and 350 Choctaw Indian allies, attacked the Indians at Natchez, and returned to New Orleans with 427 captives of the Natchez tribe, who were sold as slaves in Santo Domingo.

The Indians who had escaped capture fled to the Red River, where they made attacks on the French settlements, in which ninety-two Indians were killed. This ended the existence of that tribe. Governor Perrier caused four Indian men and three women prisoners to be publicly burned to death in the street in New Orleans, in 1732. The following year Bienville again became governor.

In 1763: Spain ceded East and West Florida to England in return for Havana, which the English had captured. The same day, France ceded to England all the French territory east of Pearl River and the right of free navigation on the Mississippi River, and ceded Louisiana to Spain without defining any north or west boundaries.

To encourage settlement and improvement of the country along the river, the Spanish governor the following year offered small tracts of land to families that would settle upon them. The families were, within three years, to build and keep in order a levee and a road along the river banks, which was the beginning of the levee system.

General Thaddeus Lyman, of Connecticut, who had served in the Colonial Army during the French and Indian War, spent several years in London prior to 1772, endeavoring to obtain a grant of a large area of land in America. He reported at that early day that all the land in Connecticut had been privately appropriated, and he applied for 150,000 acres along the Mississippi River, between the Gulf and the Ohio River. He did not succeed in that, but was given twenty thousand acres in West

Florida, between Pensacola and the Louisiana border. Many others of influence each received grants of from four thousand to twenty-five thousand acres in the same region.

Land grants of five thousand to forty thousand acres each, aggregating 594,000 acres in East Florida, were, in 1773, held by thirty-five titled Englishmen*—held, not for use by them, but for the despicable purpose of exacting a purchase price of future settlers.

At the time of the American Revolution, the British government made efforts to attract settlers to their Florida possessions by making grants of land, at an annual land rent of a half-penny per acre, to begin two years after date of the grant. Many Tories migrated there from the American colonies and, being beneficiaries of British land grants, remained loyal to the British crown.

Carondelet, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, to encourage immigration of royalists fleeing from the French Revolution, granted to Baron de Bastrop twelve square leagues (36 square miles) on the Washita (Quachita) River; to Marquis de Maison Rouge, thirty thousand acres; to De Lassus and St. Vrain, ten thousand square arpents. These grants were not settled upon by the grantees. Most of the land in Louisiana was held in large tracts by French aristocrats who were absentee holders. [118] All land so held by individual grantees meant that the United States would receive just that much less land for the public domain when it purchased Louisiana from France. Individual Americans had to later buy the land from these French holders.

The De Bastrop land was afterwards bought by Stephen Girard of Philadelphia and Edward Livingston and Robert Goelet of New York. Because of fault in title, Congress refused for years to confirm, but, in 1854, validated the title. [21]

Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States on January 20, 1783, and the same year ceded Florida to Spain. Twelve years afterwards, Spain sold West Florida to France.

Georgia claimed, under the Oglethorpe charter from King George II, all the territory between 31° and 35°N. lat. between

*Dartmouth Manuscripts

the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; subsequently limited by treaty with France to the Mississippi River on the west. The Spaniards had fortifications at different points, and prevented American occupation of it. Notwithstanding, the Georgia legislature, in 1785, organized a government for the territory between the present western boundary of Georgia and the Mississippi River, and offered lands for sale.

Secretary Knox reported this as, "dictated by the avaricious desire to possess the fertile lands possessed by the Indians." In 1789, members of the Georgia legislature, being bribed, authorized, and Governor Telfair approved, a conditional sale of the larger part of this domain.

In the middle counties of Mississippi, 5,000,000 acres were sold to the South Carolina Yazoo Company for about \$60,000. In the northern counties of Mississippi 7,000,000 acres were sold to the Virginia Yazoo Company for about \$92,000. In the northern counties of Alabama 3,500,000 acres were sold to the Tennessee Yazoo Company for about \$46,000. All these represented grabs at a trifle more than 1¢ per acre.

Georgia, Spain and the Indians each claimed this land. President Washington, who was then engaged in endeavoring to settle the boundaries between them, fearing complications from these extraordinary sales, issued a proclamation against them.

The Tennessee Company disregarded this and sent agents, speculators and settlers down the Tennessee River to Muscle Shoals, where they located on an island and built a fort, intending to sell land situated along the river.

A band of Cherokee Indians, organized by William Blount (afterwards governor of Tennessee and United States Senator), who was promoting land speculations in his state, to stifle competition destroyed the buildings by fire. Other efforts were made to colonize, but were defeated by the Cherokees and Chickasaws and the Federal government.

The South Carolina Yazoo Company, attempting to colonize its lands, raised troops in Kentucky and prepared to attack the Spaniards at Natchez. The Spanish Minister to the United States protested, and President Washington sent a military force which arrested the leaders. [119]

All these companies presently failed to make payments due to Georgia, and the state legislature rescinded the sales; which brought charges of swindling innocent purchasers. President Washington was abused by the speculators and denounced as a tyrant.

But more scandalous Yazoo operations occurred six years later, in 1795, when the treaty between the United States and Spain became known, by which the former acquired from the latter an area of land a hundred miles wide from the eastern boundary of Alabama to the Mississippi River, a distance of about 350 miles, between 31° and 32°28' N. The Georgia "Yazoo" land frauds, the most notorious and widespread of the early American land gambles, were then promoted.

By bribery of members, the Georgia legislature again sold vast areas of Yazoo lands to speculators in each of the hastily-organized groups: Georgia Company, Tennessee Company, Georgia-Mississippi Company and the Upper-Mississippi Company.

These sales comprised 21,500,000 acres for \$500,000, or 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ ¢ per acre. Later surveys showed the actual acreage to be 35,000,000 acres, at less than 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per acre.

Shares or scrip in these early land companies were offered to the public. Philadelphia, New York, Hartford and Boston were the principal centers, each having its own "deal" and selling its shares throughout a wide area. The purchasers extended from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico and from Maine to the Mississippi.

The Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, the French philanthropist, visiting America at the height of this speculation, wrote while in Boston: "The Yazoo agents opened a kind of office to which purchasers of land flocked in such crowds that those gents, taking advantage of this inconceivable infatuation, raised the price each day, often twice a day, for the purpose of more strongly exciting the general eagerness and taking away all time for reflection. Every class of men, even watch-makers, hairdressers and mechanics, ran eagerly after this deception, in which Boston has sunk about \$2,000,000."

President Washington reported to Congress: "These acts em-

brace an object of great magnitude, and their consequences may deeply affect the peace and welfare of the United States." The attorney-general was instructed to investigate "the atrocious speculation, corruption and collusion by which said usurped acts and grants were obtained."

It was asserted that "bribery and corruption distinguished the proceedings of the legislators favorable to the sale." Public meetings of denunciation were held in different places, and at the next election, members who had voted for it were defeated and opponents elected, whereupon an act was passed, in 1796, revoking the sale. [119]

In its preamble the revocating act stated: "The sale of such an enormous tract to a few speculators was contrary to the rights of all good citizens, and was an injury to the State."

The promoters of the Upper-Mississippi Company, to protect its bribed purchase through becoming an "innocent purchaser," made a sale of a million acres at 10¢ per acre to its "dummy" New England-Mississippi Land Company, which included William Wetmore and other prominent New England land speculators.

Although a committee of Congress reported that this New England Company paid little or no actual part of the purported purchase price, the company, headed by some foremost Boston capitalists, lobbied in Congress for many years for an act to give it a large indemnity "as an innocent purchaser." Finally, nineteen years after the bribery, Congress appropriated \$8,000,000 for the speculative holders of these several companies, and their heirs; paid, of course, by taxes levied on the American people. The power of the lobbyist!

The United States Supreme Court, guided by its famous, and infamous, ruling, first proposed by John Marshall when pleading the Fairfax case in Virginia (he later was appointed Chief Justice), decided that irrespective of bribery or other methods used to obtain the grant, the grant, once made, was in the nature of a contract, and to revoke or impair it by subsequent legislation would "impair vested rights of innocent investors." This was the first of a long list of court decisions validating grants and franchises of all kinds, obtained by bribery and fraud, and by which

the American people have been robbed of land and cash. [107]

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the Federal government among citizens along the tributaries of the Mississippi, during the last decade of the eighteenth century, at being denied unrestricted navigation to the Gulf. There was also dissatisfaction among Georgians at the continued hold by the Spaniards of the land in the southern part of Alabama and Mississippi.

Genet was the French Minister to the United States under the Robespierre regime and he abetted this discontent. He went to Charleston and enlisted some Carolinians and Georgians and appointed military officers, in the name of the French Republic, for proposed warfare against the Spaniards along the Gulf; the recruits being promised allotments of land to be captured in the Spanish possessions in southern Alabama and Mississippi. [119]

The Spanish governor made active preparations for defense at New Orleans, Mobile and along the Mississippi. The governor of Georgia and President Washington both issued proclamations against the expedition, and Washington ordered all United States troops then in Georgia to resist the contemplated invasion.

Cattle from the great ranges of Kentucky and Tennessee were driven east to market, but all wheat, corn, pork, flour and lumber produced in that region were sent to the only available market, that at New Orleans. The Spaniards held the land on both sides of the Mississippi. By treaty, in 1793, Spain recognized free navigation of the river, and granted to the United States a place to deposit the produce brought down in small craft for transfer to ocean-going vessels.

Although Spain had, in 1800, secretly sold Louisiana to France, it continued in control, and Spanish officials at New Orleans, in 1802, denied to Americans the right of such deposit. They imprisoned all American citizens captured along the river; the purpose being to create popular discontent and a desire on the part of American citizens along the river for Spanish sovereignty in the Mississippi Valley, so as to secure unrestricted navigation of the river.

The great trading concern of Pantón & Leslie, which had a monopoly of all the trade on the Gulf side of Florida, and some trade on the east coast, was the chief proprietor of Spanish

sovereignty in those parts. Their interests were coupled with the intrigue of the Spanish emissaries.

United States Senator Blount of Tennessee was a prominent land speculator in his State. Wishing to have unrestricted navigation on the Mississippi to the Gulf, to increase the demand for, and value of, his land, he proposed to a group of Englishmen that they buy part of his land and then have the British government forcibly take possession of Louisiana and the river.

He was charged in the United States Senate with intrigue with the British to capture New Orleans and adjacent territory from the Spaniards, and was expelled from the Senate.

Meanwhile settlers made treaties with the Indians, which some of the settlers violated, and then made war on the Indians to seize more lands. [53]

The Federal government in 1802 paid Georgia \$1,250,000 for its claim to land in Alabama and Mississippi—the land which had been involved in the Yazoo bribes—and added it to the public domain; the sum to be payable from sales of the land to settlers and speculators. The government stipulated that it would recognize all valid claims to grants made by Spain and Britain, but refused to admit any of the claims of the Yazoo companies, or claimants under them. [119] Nevertheless, as noted, after lobbying in Congress eleven years, Congress paid the speculators in these Yazoo companies \$8,000,000, for which it received nothing in return.

Many claimed extensive tracts of land in the Yazoo region under Spanish, British and Georgia grants. Land commissioners were appointed by the Federal government, who, after investigation, allowed 2,366 of these claims, which were approved by the President.

Land in the public domain was sold on credit by the Federal government, mostly in large tracts to speculators, payable at a future date. This enabled the speculators easily to hold the land unused and to sell at increased prices, which the demand for land by the incoming settlers themselves automatically created.

At the Huntsville, Alabama, land office, in 1818 and 1819, wild land, with soil suitable for growing cotton, sold at auction at \$30 per acre, and occasionally higher prices were bid. When the price

of cotton fell a few years later, land prices also fell, just as wheat land in the West fell in price with the fall in the price of wheat at the close of the First World War in 1918.

By the Treaty of Paris, in 1783, recognizing American independence, the western boundary of the United States was agreed upon as the Mississippi River, and the southern boundary as 31° N. lat., which parallel runs approximately along the present northern boundary of Florida, continuing west on that line through Alabama and Mississippi to the Mississippi River; leaving below that line a small part of each of the two last-named states, which became designated as West Florida.

By the treaty of San Ildefonso (Spain), dated October 1, 1800, and revised the following March, Louisiana and the Floridas were ceded by Spain to France, but this was kept secret for two years. Napoleon had been contemplating a French Empire in Louisiana, which was unwelcome to America, and Jefferson sent James Monroe to France with authority to negotiate for the purchase of the Island of New Orleans.

War between France and Great Britain was just then threatening. Napoleon and Talleyrand, fearing that Great Britain would capture Louisiana, urged the United States to buy the entire French possessions. A purchase, known as the Louisiana Purchase, was concluded in 1803 at a cost of \$27,267,222, payable in installments, partially from proceeds of land sales. This sum included interest charges on deferred payments, and various claims of American citizens against France which the United States assumed to liquidate. The purchase recognized as valid all grants of land which France or Spain had made to individual holders—many of them fraudulent, and to the subsequent impairment of the United States public domain.

The area of land in the Louisiana Purchase extended west of the Mississippi River, but how far west and north was indefinite. The only land France specifically conveyed was that "which France had received from Spain in a treaty between them dated October 1, 1800," and that treaty omitted any statement as to bounds.

Upon the United States, by this purchase, taking possession of Louisiana, contention arose between the United States and Spain

(which held Texas), as to the boundary between Louisiana and Texas. The United States claimed to the Sabine River—the present boundary. But Spain claimed to about 125 miles east of there, at the Arroyo Hondo, and sent an armed force prepared to sustain the claim, which the United States checkmated by doing likewise. The troops of both rested in close proximity at Natchitoches, on the Red River, in Louisiana, and when the United States ordered the Spaniards to retreat west of the Sabine war seemed inevitable. [161]

For a possible clue to the boundaries: The grant by Louis XIV to Antoine Crozat, ninety-three years previously (subsequently relinquished), of the territory called Louisiana, gave the bounds thereof as: “. . . bounded by New Mexico, and by those of the English in Carolina. The River St. Louis, formerly called the Mississippi, from the Staghorn to the Illinois, together with the River St. Philip, formerly called the Missouri River, and the St. Jerome, formerly called the Wabash (Ohio) with all the countries, territories and lakes in the land, and the rivers emptying directly or indirectly into that part of the River St. Louis.”

This could by no possible construction include anything beyond the headwaters of the Missouri River. France never afterwards claimed beyond the Rocky Mountains. [103]

The contention with Spain respecting boundaries, and the problem of the bounds of the Louisiana Purchase, were both solved by the purchase by the United States, in 1819-21, of Florida from His Catholic Majesty of Spain.

This purchase of Florida included all the land therein, and the parts of Alabama and Mississippi south of 31°, except any land which Spain had already recorded as having been granted to others; the consideration being payment by the United States of claims of American citizens against Spain, amounting to \$5,000,000 for damages, mainly to American shipping.

Not until settlement had been made of the boundaries in this Spanish purchase, could there be any reasonable assurance of just what land the United States had acquired west of the Mississippi River by the purchase of Louisiana from France.

These boundaries west of the Mississippi began at the Sabine River, ran north to the Red River, thence west to the 100° longi-

tudinal parallel, then to the Arkansas River, and to the source thereof, then by a straight line north, to a juncture with the 42° parallel.

His Catholic Majesty ceded to the United States all his rights, claims and pretensions to any territory east and north of the said line, and for himself, his heirs, and successors, renounced all claim to the said territory for ever. Likewise, the United States renounced all its rights, claims and pretensions (of which it had not made any) to the territory lying west and south of that line.

This left the United States as the undisputed claimant to all the land west of the Mississippi River within the present states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas and Nebraska, almost all of Kansas and Oklahoma, part of Colorado and later on, as participating claimant with Great Britain, of the territory northwest thereof, which was marked on maps of that and a later period as "the unexplored region."

Inasmuch as there were a few Canadian fur traders prowling about the Northwestern region, and Spanish and British explorers hovering along the Oregon coast, the United States made no claim to the territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean until later, as shown in the chapter on the Oregon Region.

Rumors of the probable purchase of Florida from Spain by the United States started a wild speculation in land at Pensacola.

During the negotiations for the purchase, attempts were made by Spanish officials to make large grants of land to Spanish favorites and thereby reduce the area of land to be transferred to the United States.

The latter demanded that all Spanish grants made subsequent to 1802 be made void, to which Spanish officials replied, with injured pride, that such demand was "offensive to the dignity of the crown of Spain." However, the subsequent grants were voided.

Any impression that the Spanish occupancy and government of Florida were legendary, or had been desultory, is disabused by the fact that, from the days of De Leon, forty-five successive Spanish governors of Florida held office uninterruptedly for 250 years, from 1513 to 1763. During the following twenty years, under the

British occupancy, there were seven British governors. Then Spain again held Florida for thirty-eight years, under sixteen successive governors, at the end of which time Florida became a territory of the United States, followed in 1845 by Statehood.

Congress in 1824 presented to Lafayette 23,040 acres of land from the public domain in Florida, situated a few miles northwest of Tallahassee. He placed several Frenchmen on it to cultivate grapes, figs, olives and silk, but without success. He never visited it, but it continues to be known as the Lafayette place. [37]

As in other states, many of the soldiers from Florida, who had served in the Indian and other wars, were paid in land scrip exchangeable for land. The "Armed Occupation Act" of 1842 was enacted by Congress for the purpose of inducing people to take up land in Florida, to awe the Seminole Indians, for which purpose it was effective. Any able-bodied man could apply for 160 acres, south of Palatka and Gainesville, for which a deed would be issued after seven years' occupancy; and 1,321 entries were recorded. At that time a very small part of Florida had been surveyed. Many of these entries were annulled, some commuted for cash, and many were deserted.

Not less than ten million acres of high and dry land in Florida have been, by connivance between state and United States agents, fraudulently classed as swamp land. And this princely domain has been parceled out by the Florida Internal Improvement Board to railroad, canal and other promoters, under the guise of aiding transportation. [37]

Grabbers of Florida lands have been so bold that they have held up honest applicants for homestead locations by declaring the desired lands to be subject to the Swamp Land Act (noted in another chapter); these lands have then been sold to large timber and turpentine operators, at a fraction of a dollar per acre. [37]

In 1881 Hamilton Disston, the wealthy Philadelphia saw manufacturer, was induced to buy of the State of Florida four million acres of land, south of Kissimmee, for which he paid \$1,000,000 at 25¢ per acre. The object was to drain the land by cutting canals.

Mr. Disston, whom I knew, established a sugar plantation, erected a cane mill, and worked so assiduously to enlist financial

co-operation to carry out the contract, that he died suddenly of a heart attack. He had lost heavily in the undertaking.

A very large part of the four million acres was transferred to an English syndicate and they, too, lost heavily. Since then much of this land has been bought and sold at many thousand times the original price of 25¢ per acre. [37]

The notorious Florida land boom of the 1920's brought to the state car-loads of realtors and speculators, mostly schooled in California, and well versed in all the arts of subdivision. [37] Through these men numerous gullible people all over the United States, and in some foreign countries, lost heavily in a gamble which finally collapsed.