

TO STAY OR LEAVE

Under the terms of Article 5 of the Treaty of Versailles, British subjects in Florida were granted eighteen months to decide their future plans.

A partial census from 1784 recorded the decisions of almost 600 household heads. Ysham Safford, a watchmaker and millwright from Virginia, was among the 386 family heads who decided to leave East Florida.

By contrast, a widowed tailor named Margarita Evans was among the 120 household heads who petitioned the incoming Spanish authorities for permission to stay. A native of Pennsylvania, Evans expressed a desire to remain in St. Augustine provided her deceased husband's family did not come for her.

The end of the Revolution did not see Florida become part of the new United States. East and West Florida became Spanish colonies, only joining the American Republic in 1821.

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FLORIDA AT WAR

St. Augustine in the American Revolution



St. Augustine played an important role in the American Revolution — but not on the side of American independence!

The city and its residents remained loyal to Great Britain, with many consequences.

This exhibit is presented by UF Historic St. Augustine, Inc. (UFHSA) and curated by members of its Education Committee.

A CITY LOYAL TO BRITAIN

When the Revolutionary War broke out, the people of St. Augustine did not join the Thirteen Colonies in rebelling against British rule.

St. Augustine's residents had no reason to join in anti-British, Revolutionary activities. They lived in the capital of British East Florida and depended on funds, food, and supplies issued by Britain's Parliament. A British Navy frigate protected St. Augustine's harbor.

The office and residence of East Florida's governor was in the Governor's House. Governor Patrick Tonyn watched from the balcony as St. Augustinians burned in effigy two signers of the Declaration of Independence—John Hancock and Samuel Adams—in the Plaza (town square). To defend East Florida he raised his own company of troops, the East Florida Rangers, and maintained a city garrison of Hessians and redcoats.

As part of their campaign against the Revolution, British officials also encouraged enslaved Blacks to flee from servitude in the rebelling colonies, promising to free them. Hector, who fought for the British in Charleston, came to St. Augustine with his wife Rein. They became free employees of the Swiss settler Francis Philip Fatio and remained in Florida when it passed to Spanish rule at the end of the Revolution.



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ALLIES & ADVERSARIES

St. Augustine was a hotbed of intrigue. Local resident Luciano de Herrera became a spy in Spanish service. He chatted with British ship captains in St. Augustine's harbor, eavesdropped in taverns, and sent information to his superiors in Cuba who supported the Revolutionaries.

Meanwhile, Tonyn assured Indian leaders that the British and King George III, not rebelling Americans, had their best interests at heart. Creek and Seminole leaders like Long Warrior became staunch supporters of the British, aiding them in turning back Revolutionary forces that invaded from Georgia.



*Mico Chlucco the Long Warrior,
or King of the Seminoles.*

THE PRICE OF LOYALTY

As the Revolutionary War raged in the Thirteen Colonies, thousands of Loyalist refugees fled the violence and sought protection in East Florida. However, loyalty came at a cost. When the war ended, Great Britain was forced to cede its Florida colonies to the Spanish Crown. Defeated, East Florida's residents had a difficult decision to make: Abandon the province or pledge fealty to Spain's King Charles III. Most chose to leave.

