

HISTORY.

Cemeteries: Tolomato

MURDER OF FATHER CORPA.

In 1592 twelve Franciscan missionaries came to labor among the people. Father Corpa had an Indian mission house at Tolomato, in the north-west part of the city, where he was murdered while at prayer by one of his converts, whom he had publicly rebuked.

Father Montes, whose Indian church was on Cano de la Leche, shared also the same fate.

Among the Franciscans who arrived at St. Augustine in 1592 we see the name of Father Pareja, the author of a dictionary and a catalog in the Yamese dialect.

The mission of Tolomato, to-day the site of the cemetery of that name south-west of the present city gate, was under the charge of Father Corpa; whilst the Mission of Our Lady of the Milk (Nuestra Señora de la Leche), with its chapel, built on a small eminence overlooking the marshes of North River, was attended by Father Rodríguez.

The number of Catholic Indians went on increasing: Indian chiefs being often among those who asked for Baptism; when, in 1597, a rebellion broke out which threatened with utter ruin what good had been done. The instigator of the revolt was a son of a Cacique, who, chafing under the restraints religion imposed, wished to vent his hatred on the missionaries whom he held responsible.

With a band of discontented Indians he fell suddenly by night on the mission house of Tolomato; and, after slaying Father Corpa, pushed on to the Chapel of Our Lady of the Milk. Father Rodríguez has already put on his sacerdotal vestments and was preparing to begin Mass. All he could obtain from his assailants was leave to proceed with the celebration of the Divine mysteries.

Scarcely were they ended, when he was felled to the ground, his blood bespattering the steps of the altar at which he ministered.

The author of the history, "The Spaniards in Florida," who gives at length the account of the fearful drama, feelingly adds: "Three hundred years have passed since the blood of those martyrs was shed; yet, we can not repress a tear of sympathy and a feeling of admiration for those heroes of the cross."

TOLOMATO CEMETERY.

Tolomato Cemetery covers about one acre of ground and is situated south-west of the city gate. It was the burial ground of the church from the return of the Spaniards (1784) to the time when the ground around the Chapel of Our Lady of the Milk became the Catholic cemetery, 1878-1883.

At Tolomato was the Chapel where the Indian converts received Christian instructions and where Father Corpa, while in charge of that mission, was murdered by the Indians at the beginning of the rebellion of 1597.