

The Spaniards Return

Interest in Florida by England waned when the tide turned against her in the war of the Colonies for independence, in which Florida did not join. In 1783, England ceded Florida back to Spain, in a ridiculous exchange for several unimportant islands. The Spaniards returned to Florida in 1784, and practically all of the English left. The British land grants reverted to the Spanish crown, but the agreement included a provision that the British settlers should be remunerated for their lands. The English estates on the St. Johns were abandoned and remained vacant for some years, falling into rapid decay.^d

McIntosh and the Spaniards

About the year 1790, John H. McIntosh, of Georgia, arrived in the vicinity of the Cow Ford. Here he was appointed to some office by the Spanish governor, but he does not seem to have obtained an actual grant of land. McIntosh apparently was a turbulent man of restless and reckless disposition and it is not surprising that he and the Spaniards eventually clashed. The result was that he was arrested for intrigue in 1794 and sent to Havana, where he was confined for a year in Morro Castle. After his release from prison, he returned to Georgia, gathered together a band of adventurers, and swept down upon the Spanish post (San Nicholas) at the Cow Ford. This he destroyed, together with the "Boats of the Royal Domain" on the river.^e McIntosh and the Spaniards seem to have patched up their differences, however, for some years later he was again living in the vicinity of the Cow Ford engaged in the exportation of lumber on a large scale and incidentally living like a lord.

Prior to 1800, there were bona-fide settlers in the vicinity of the Cow Ford, regardless of the fact that this locality had by that time become the stamping ground of many undesirables—criminals from the States, slave catchers, ruffians, and banditti of varied kind. This was a condition that gave the Spanish governors a world of trouble and there were frequent exchanges of charges and counter-charges by Spaniards and Georgians which resulted in a sentiment that awaited only a pretext for an armed invasion of Florida. It came in 1812.