

### Patriot Revolution

Prior to the declaration of war between the United States and Great Britain in 1812, the United States Congress in secret sessions as early as January, 1811, considered seriously the question of seizing Florida although it was a possession of Spain, on the pretext that in the event of war the English might use it as a base of operations. There followed a chain of correspondence between the United States Secretary of State and the Governor of Georgia on the subject and instructions were finally issued by the government, with the consent of the President (Madison), for emissaries to proceed to Florida and try to procure its cession to the United States by peaceable means if possible, and failing in this they were to use their own judgment in the matter. The outcome was an armed invasion of East Florida by Georgians "unofficially" supported by United States regulars, accompanied by an uprising of Americans living in northern Florida. This armed attack upon the Spaniards is usually referred to in history as the "Patriot Revolution" in Florida.

General Matthews, of Georgia, to whom this delicate task of taking Florida over had been entrusted, found no difficulty in enlisting volunteers for an invasion of Florida. The first attack was upon Fernandina, which they captured without bloodshed. Eight armed United States sloops co-operated, and on the following day United States forces took possession of Fernandina and raised the American flag over the fort. This was in March, 1812, and war with Great Britain was not declared until the following June. Without the preliminaries usual to the establishment of governments, the Patriots at once set to work organizing a government of their own for Northern Florida, elected John H. McIntosh (the same McIntosh of Cow Ford fame) director-general, appointed judges and established a legislature. It proved to be a paper government and never functioned.

The next move of the Patriots was against St. Augustine, the Spanish capital of East Florida. They marched 300 strong to a point near the town and encamped. Here they were joined by a detachment of United States regulars. The Spaniards mounted some cannon on a schooner and shelled the camp, forcing the Americans to retreat. The Patriots retreated to the Cow Ford and established their camp. The United States troops remained in the vicinity of St. Augus-