

"The Masters Family."

by

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1940 Essay Contest

My family "The Mest~~re~~ family" dates their story back to that of a Scotchman Dr. Andrew Turnbull, who came in 1768 to Florida shores and founded the settlement of New Smyrna. The story of his voyageing has been told by many Romantistics and has been so heavily embroided that one has to go back to early chronocles to get at the facts.

"THE COMING OF MY FAMILY TO FLORIDA."

Out in the Mediterranean Sea lays a group sister Islands under the lee of Spain. Among them is the Island of Minorca. The inhabitants, who are my people are of Spanish extraction and appearance, they speak a language similar to the Spanish. These pwople are devout Roman Catholics, and a great percentage are sober, industrious and law-abiding, belonging to the farming class.

During the years from 1764-1767 the crops of this little island were a failure and alarge part of the farming population was on the verge of starvation.

At this time there was a wealthy man called Turnbull who was interested in agriculture in the New World and with the help and consent of England and land granted him, he set out to collect people to form a colony in Florida, which at this time was under the English flag. While in Greece he heard of the hardships of Minorca so he rushed to Port Mahon, capital of the little Isle and promised the people as they crowded aboard his ship ; that if they would come with him their way would be paid and they would be established in the Florida Grant.

After they had paid off their indebtedness to the company by from seven to eight years labor each was to receive fifty acres of land, with five additional acres for each child in his family and if they were not contented they could return to their own country in six months.

Turnbull's project succeeded in Minorca like wild-fire and the people begged him to take five times more than he had planned. Although Turnbull was instructed that all settlers were to be protestants, he allowed the Minorcans to bring a priest and a Monk with them also their letters and credentials from the Vicar general of Minorca.

So on March the 10, 1768, Turnbull set sail with ten ~~s~~coops filled with Minorcans, Greeks and Italians from Mahon, Minorca. After about four months of the hardships of the sea, six scoops landed at St. Augustine the latter part of June. The other four landed a little further north dropping in port here slowly. But all of them reached this port safely and soon ~~dispacked~~ to New Smyrna by land and water.

"THE HARDSHIPS OF MY FAMILY IN NEW SMYRNA."

Among the colonists who arrived at New Smyrna in 1768 was my fifth time great grandfather, Don Bartolome Mestre, his wife Antonio (Rohero) Mestre, their two children Maria and Pedro, and also Pedro's wife Maris (Andrew) Mestre, and their four children, (Antonia, Pablo, Pedro and Juan.)

Upon embarking on these shores the colonist were greatly disappointed in finding wilderness on all four sides and not the homes and fruit trees they expected. These conditions

resulting from loosing at sea of a slave ship which Turnbull had sent over before him.

So with very little hope left in their souls these colonists began to build homes, clear and cultivate the lands and make things possible for them to live. Each individual fought fiercely to live : Eating homony from tin plates and wearing clothes of indurable material and uniform pattern and sleeping crowded together in crude living quarters. The only comfort given to these pitfull people was that rendered by the kind and gracious , Father Pedro Camps who accompanied them from Minorco. In the latter part of August 1768, all was peacefull, the settlers were making such prograss that Turnbull invited some Carolina planters to view their successfull work. This cheered the calonists and they strived nine years longer to live at New Smyrna although conditions were gradually growing worse every day, because of the unfairness to the calonists by Tyron, Turnbull's attorney, while Turnbull was in England.

" COMING OF MY FAMILY TO ST. AUGUSTINE."

So in 1777 what was left of the calonists began a five day hike to St. Augustine. But on their way unfortunately many young and old died as a result of starvation and exposure. When tbe these people in such a pitfull state reached St. Augustine, they were gracously welcomed by the English Governor, to settle in the northern part of the city which is now knowmas North City. There they had to start out again in the building of houses and making of food. They built a few crude houses and a log church for Father Camps to say mass in. The process used in begging for their food was quite simple. At Easter time the young men of the

colony would masquerade and sing a song at each house they came to. They would knock on the door and the people would understand what this meant. Sometimes they would turn them away without anything and to this these men would sing them a verse telling them how mean they were. At the end of all of this they would take everything that they had collected to the sea wall and divide it among the colonists.

It was in 1779 two years after the march from New Smyrna to St. Augustine, that my fourth time great grand father and mother Pedro and Maria Mestre had their fifth child. This being a boy they named him Bartola Mestre. He was born on April 15 1779. It was also in this year that war was declared between England and Spain which lasted four years and brought about the second Spanish Occupation in 1783.

Two years before this Occupation that Bartola's aunt, Maria Mestre married Don Manuel Solano in 1781, the ceremony was preformed by Father Camps. Don Manuel who also came over with Turnbull, dates his family back to the late 1500's and it is said that his fourth time great grand father, Don Vincenti Salona was a Menéndez colonist.

Under the second Spanish Occupation the English colonists who had made homes for themselves in the New Country were given eighteen months to remove themselves with their property from Florida. However a few English remained and all the Minorcans. The Spaniards did not find it easy to get new colonist in place of the English. Some very fine estates on the St. Johns River and on the east coast were now

unoccupied and settlements in other parts of the possessions were abandoned. The few people in St. Augustine hardly dared to go out of the protection of the guns of the fort. It should be noted here that at this time Fathers Hassett, and O'Reilly came to St. Augustine to help the failing Dr. Camps in ministering to his Minorcan flock.

And also the name Mestre changed to Mestra.

At the age of fifteen my third time great grandfather Bartola Mestra son of Pedro and Maria Mestra, married Maria Lorenzo in St. Augustine, Dec. 8, 1794. Father Hassett performed the nupials and of this union came two children, Peter and Bartola. The latter who married Juana Baya Dec. 18, 1819 in St. Augustine. By this union there were three children Maria Mariana, Jose, ^{and} Bartola.

Here twenty years elapsed, this 20th, year being 1845, Florida was being sold to the U.S. ~~from~~ ^{by} Spain. Two years after Florida was a state my great grandfather married Dolorec Monzony, August 9th., 1847, by Father Madeore. Of this union came my grandfather, Frank Leon Masters, who was born July 28, 1856.

At the age of seven his father moved from St. Augustine to a farming settlement of Elkton about 12 miles from the city. Here Bartola raised his family of six children namely James, Philip, Mary Jane, Frank, Bartola and Eugene, among many hardships and still finding time to practice his religion.

"And even at this time love rules the lovers". Frank traveled (~~traveled~~) twelve miles in order to see Marcella Pomar who later became my grandmother in about 1873. Frank and his

bride moved to Elkton where they build them a home and raised a family.

They did raise quite a large family. One of seven children, Francis, Josephine, Arthur, Ambrose, Antonio, Ellize and Marcella.

My father being Ambrose, the youngest of the seven, lived the normal life of a boy, working hard at anything he could possible get in such a small settlement. At the age of twenty-three he joined the army and later saw active service in the front line of France. After the war, life went on as before except for the one moment that comes into the life of almost every one. He fell in love with Fay Minette Martin from New Orleans, La. So they were married in Gainseville by Father Connolly on June 14, 1921. Four years later he was employed in the Post Office as a substitute, six years later he became a regular clerk. On April 29, 1923, I, Juanita was born, after which came four more children and all being raised Roman Catholics as in the beginning of the Masters family in 1768.

So from 1768 to 1940 the Masters family has increased eight generations. I am proud to say, some of the family must have helped mold the customs and quitness of Old St. Augustine, as it now stands today.

TOTAL NO OF WORDS = 1,588