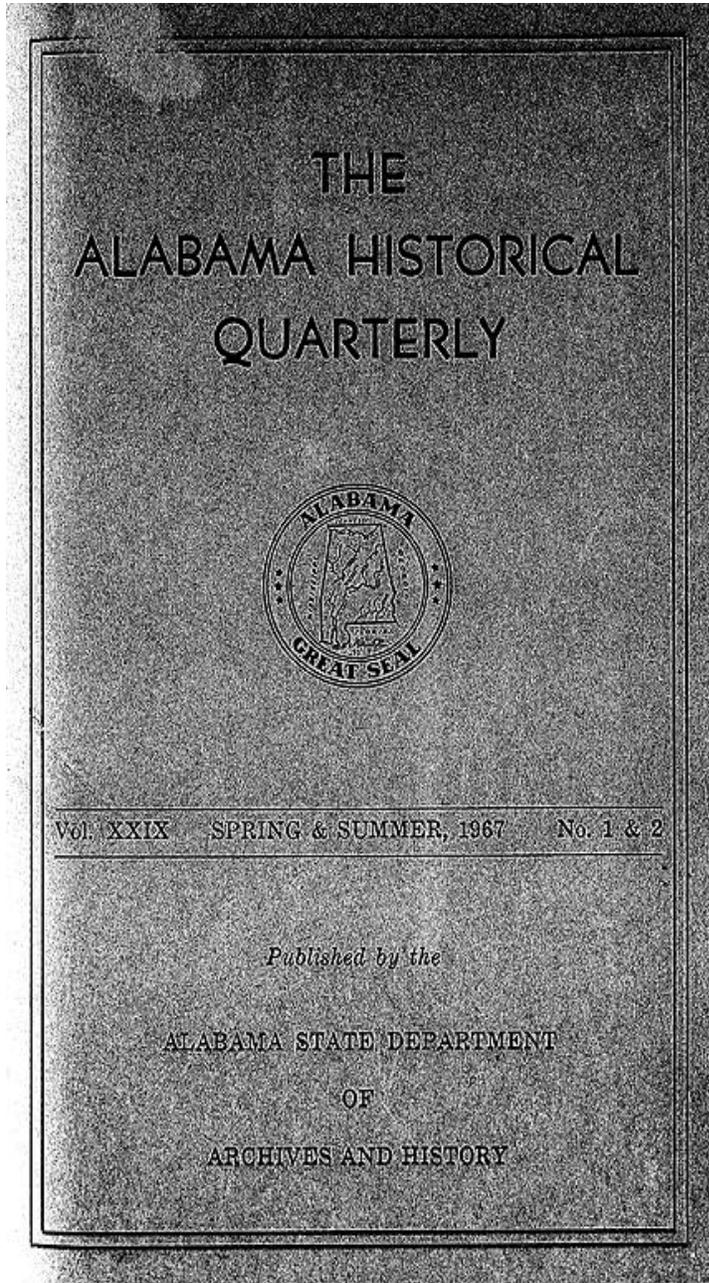


An Excerpt from:
The Alabama Historical Quarterly,
Spring & Summer, 1867 issue,
Pages 49-63, part 2 of 2 parts



DAUPHIN ISLAND'S CRITICAL YEARS: 1701-1722 By Jack D. L. Holmes

When a fire all but destroyed Pensacola, the French again sent aid, and on various occasions Bienville sent his Indian allies to help the Spanish resist attacks from pro-English Indians.(28)

Spaniards also helped the French from the beginning of their Gulf Coast settlements in 1699 when a Spanish pilot showed Iberville the approaches to Dauphin Island through the narrow channels. When the French moved from Biloxi to Dauphin Island in 1702, Governor Francisco Martinez of Pensacola lent the French several launches, notwithstanding his official protest On the French "invasion" of the Gulf of Mexico ! (29)

During the starving time of the French settlement, between 1707 and 1710, the Spaniards frequently sent them shiploads of vital supplies.(30)

Commerce, such as it was, was also active between the two powers, both in a semi-official and a private capacity. Mobile and Dauphin Island obtained needed supplies from Havana and Vera Cruz. In 1707 Bienville obtained over \$6,000 worth of supplies from Vera Cruz. At first the Council of the Indies in Spain disapproved of such trade and labeled the French as interlopers in the Gulf region, but Philip V countermanded this objection by ordering the French to be aided.

(28) Bienville to Pontchartrain, Ft. Louis, Feb. 25, 1708, *ibid.*, III, 113-14; Pierre Margry, *Decouvertes et etablissements des Francais dans l'Quest et dans le Sud de l'Amerique Septentrionale* (6 vok; Paris, 1879-1888), IV, 461-62; Faye, "Spanish Fortifications," 155-56; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 26-43.

(29) Martinez to Iberville, Santa Maria de Galve, Jan. 1, 1702, transcript in Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion, State Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, I, 361; Margry, *Decouvertes*, IV, 576; Manuel Lopez Pintado (Marques de Torre Blanca de Alzarafe, Lieutenant-general of the Royal Spanish Armada), "Relacion," Madrid, Nov. 22, 1732, Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), Documentos para la Historia de la Florida, Vol. 19, 508, fols. 149-77, cited hereafter as BNM; Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile*, 38.

(30) Martin Diron d'Artaguiette to Pontchartrain, Port Massacre, Feb. 12, 1710, and Nicolas LaSalle to Pontchartrain, Ft. Louis, June 20, 1710, AN, AC, C"[A: II, 531-38, 519-27; Pierre Heinrich, *La Louisiane sous la compagnie des Indes 1717-1731* (Paris, n.d.), xliv.



PENS AGO LA BAY (1744)
N.B. (Narcise Broutin?), "Plan de la Baye de Pansacola"
1744, from Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris), Collection
d'Anville, No. 8810.

English Translation:
PENS AGO BAY (1744)
ise Broutin?), "Bay of Pensacola plan"
1744, Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris), Collection from
d' Anville, no. 8810.

On one occasion, however, when Bienville sent merchandise to New Spain, which frowned upon such "contraband trade, the goods and ship were confiscated. Still, Spanish and French officials in America both winked at the commercial restrictions, and many Spanish officers were known to have profited from the illegal trade. In 1708 Admiral Andres de Fez lodged official complaints in Spain, and Philip V grudgingly acquiesced in his ministers' insistence that contraband trade of this type be prohibited, but he also declared that the French settlements should be aided when necessary. (31)

Between Dauphin Island and Pensacola there developed an interesting trade, whereby Spanish settlers received fresh vegetables, poultry and other subsistence products from the French, while these obtained valuable specie (money in the form of coins) in return.

One of the reasons for the removal of many settlers from Mobile and the mainland to Dauphin Island was their desire to be closer to the ship lanes which led to and from Pensacola.(32) Although Philip V's ministers warned him of the dangers inherent in permitting the French to remain in the Gulf of Mexico, he replied that their warnings were "premature and ill-advised." (32)

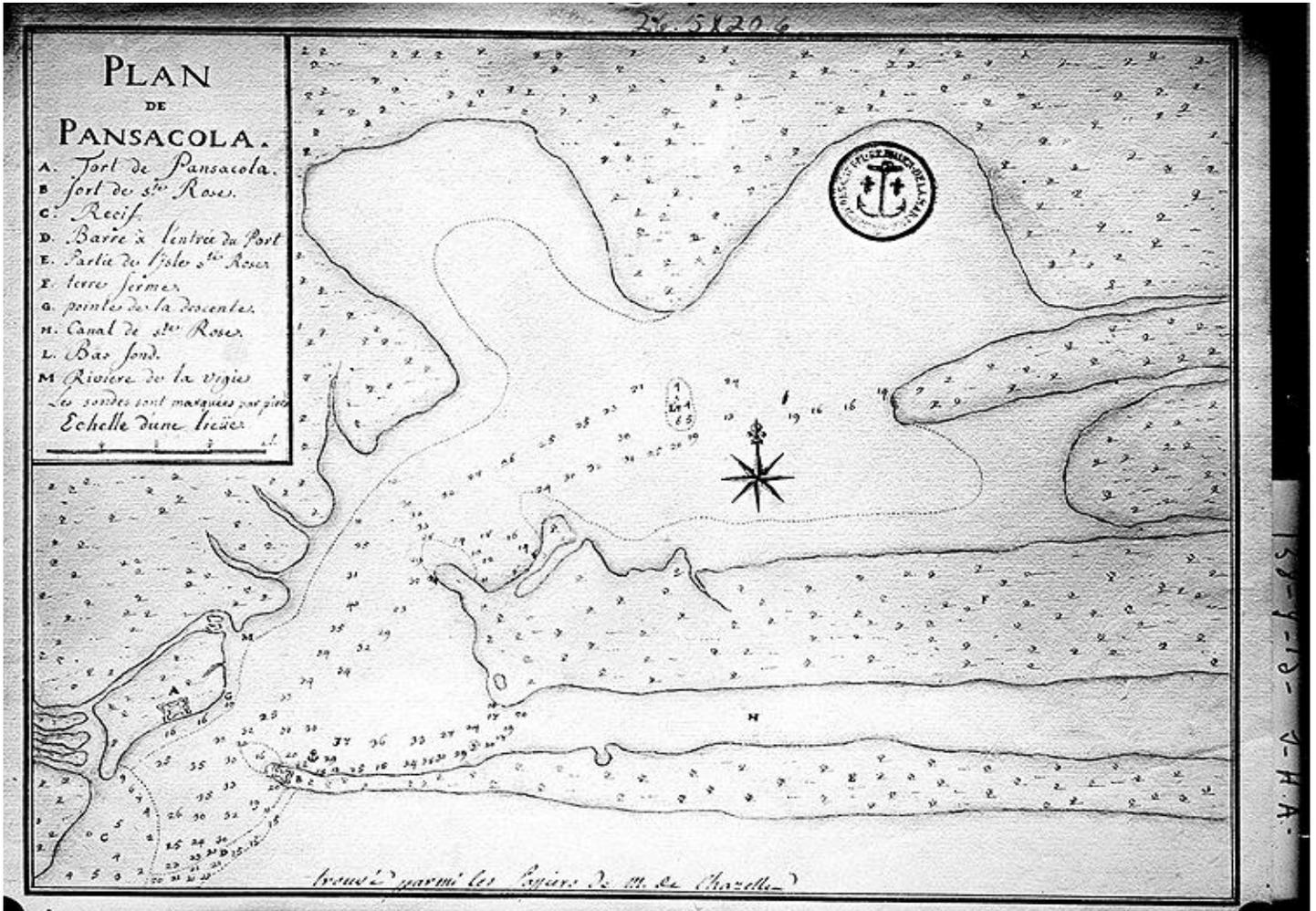
But the "honeymoon" between the French and Spanish settlers in the northern Gulf region was rapidly drawing to a close by 1718 for various reasons, most of them attributed to French ambition for expansion. It was no secret that ultimately France hoped to expand into Texas, establish a fortified post at San Bernardo Bay (Matagorda Bay), drive a wedge into New Spain, and in particular, approach the glittering El Dorado dreamed of by Europeans since the sixteenth century: the mines of New Mexico. A captured document indicated the French also hoped to establish coastal posts which would permit their ships-of-the-line to ravage the Spanish *flota* coming from Mexico or Peru:(33)

(31) Shelby, "International Rivalry," 52-55, 60.

TM *Ibid.*, 55-58; *Memoire on a Trading Company for Louisiana, 1708*, AN, AC, C13, A: II 367-94; Heinrich, *La Louisiane*, 6-7, 14-15; Parkman, *Half-Century of Conflict*, I, 312.

(32) Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry*, 214-15.

(33) *Idee d'un memoire en Espagnol concernant la Mobile, c. 1718*, AN, AC, C13, A: V, 238, transcript in Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion, State Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, VIII, 178-80.



Anonymous [Chazelle, Sieur de?] [Jackson 125]

[1719?]: Plan de Pansacola. [At bottom: "trouvé parmi les papiers de M. de Chazelle" (found among the papers of Mr. de Chazelle).] [BNF catalog: Manuscript version of engraved map in Laval (1728), *Voyage de la Louisiane*, facing p. 100. See Ge SH 18 pf 138 div 9 p 13 D.] [HMC Karpinski series F 21A-2.] [Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des cartes et plans, Ge SH 18 pf 138 div 9 p 13/1 D.] [Formerly in Archives de la Service hydrographique, 138 9-13.]

English Translation:

Anonymous [Chazelle, Sieur of?] [Jackson 125]

[1719?]: Pansacola plan. [At bottom: "found among Chazelle M. papiers" (found among the papers of Mr. Chazelle).] [BNF catalog: Manuscript version of engraved map in Laval (1728), travel of Louisiana, facing p. 100] [See GE SH 18 pf 138 div 9 p 13 D.] [A CMO Karpinski series F 21 - 2] [National Library of France, Department of maps and plans, GE SH 18 pf 138 div 9 13/1 D p.] [Formerly in hydrographic service archives, 138 9-13.]

On March 5, 1718, Admiral Andres de Fez summarized these dangers and added that the French alliances with the Southern Indians had all but encircled the Spanish post of Pensacola. He condemned the contraband trade which existed between the French and Spanish ports as a threat to the prosperity of Mexican merchants. Fez's solution was to restrict Spanish trade with Dauphin Island and Mobile and to block French trade with Spanish ports altogether. He also urged the stepped-up fortification of posts at Pensacola and Matagorda Bay.⁽³³⁾

The Crown reluctantly responded to Fez's warning on June 11, 1718, when Philip V issued a royal decree closing all ports in New Spain and Cuba to French ships.⁽³⁴⁾

Notwithstanding this decree, illegal trade continued to exist between the two areas even after France and Spain went to war in 1719!⁽³⁵⁾

As Spanish officials scurried through the royal corridors bearing messages, decrees, and regulations designed to check French expansion in America, the governor at Dauphin Island found a new reason to seek a port other than that at the island. Iberville had warned at the outset that a storm bearing down on the island from the south or southwest could easily pile sand bars across the narrow channel and render the harbor useless. In May, 1717, the prediction came true. Two ships, the *Paon* and the *Paix*, were anchored within the harbor when the storm struck, while a third named *Ludlow* lay south of Pelican Island in the outer harbor known as "*La grande rade*." The storm piled great masses of sand which blocked the channel

⁽³³⁾ Andres de Fez to Council of Indies, Madrid, March 5, 1718, copy made by Gabriel y Estenoz, Sevilla, Jan. 7, 1806, ASHM, Legajo 5-1-9-9. This valuable document is summarized, without date, in Shelby, "International Rivalry," 155-57.

⁽³⁴⁾ Royal Decree (*Real Cedula*), Balsain, June 11, 1718, Archivo General de la Nacion (Mexico), Section of *Historia*, Vol. 321. Cited hereafter as AGN. Major 1812), 36, says that the Spanish interdiction of commerce in 1713 [*sic*] was one of the causes of the Franco-Spanish war of 1719-1722.

⁴⁰Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, III, 298-99.

and joined the tip of Pelican Island to that of Dauphin Island.⁽³⁵⁾ Such a harbor was obviously unsuited for ships-of-the-line or heavy draught vessels needed for the commerce between the French in Louisiana and the Metropolis.⁽³⁶⁾

Although engineers proposed a system of jetties like those in use at Dunkirk, Bienville preferred to abandon the island and find a better port on the Gulf of Mexico.⁽³⁷⁾

As early as 1713, *Commissaire-Ordonnateur* DuClos suggested a complete reconnaissance of the Gulf from the Mississippi to Tampico, not only to find a better port than the harbor of Dauphin Island, but also to be closer to the "Mines of Mexico."⁽³⁸⁾

But it was not to the west that Bienville located the first harbor he felt might be suitable to replace Dauphin Island. He sent his brother, Antoine LeMoynes de Chateaugue east to St. Joseph's Bay, east of Pensacola, and in May, 1718 plans were drawn by Jean Beranger of Fort Crevecoeur, a four-bastion, rude fort protecting fifty troops.⁽³⁹⁾

This flanking of Pensacola by the French brought immediate, outraged protests from Pensacola's governor, Juan Pedro Matamoros de Bernard de la Harpe..

(35) [actually written by the Chevalier de Beaurain], *Journal historique de etablissement des Francais a la Louisiane* (New Orleans and Paris, 1831), 132; McWilliams, *History of Dauphin Island*, 8-9. Lieutenant du Sault's 1717 drawing of the island shows these ships blocked by shifting sandbars. It is printed in Jack D. L. Holmes (comp.), "Maps, Plans and Charts of Colonial Alabama in French and Spanish Archives," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XXVII (Spring-Summer, 1965), 17; and McWilliams (ed.), *Fleur de Lys*, opp. 206. On the damage suffered by the harbor, see Hubert to the Council of Marine, Oct., 1717, in Minutes of the Council, Sept. 17, 1718, AN, AC, C13, A: I, 115-27, 139-45;

(36) Heinridh, *La Louisiane*, 13; d'Artaquiette's Report, in Newton D. Mereness (ed.), *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York, 1916), 24.

(37) Hubert to the Council of Marine, Oct. 1717, BNP, FNA, Vol. 9310^0^09, and enclosed in Minutes of the Council, Sept. 17, 1718, AN, AC, C13, A: I, 39-45.

(38) Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, II, 134-37. LDuClos to Pontdhartrain, Fort Louis, Oct. 12, 1713, BNP, FNA, Vol. 9310, fol. 170.

(39) Beranger's plan BNP, Collection d'Anville, No. 8809; Bienville to the Council of Marine, June 12, 1718, Rowland and Sanders (eds.), *Miss Urov. Arch.*, III* 228-29; Stanley Faye, "The Contest for Pensacola Bay and Other Gulf Ports, 1698-1722," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XXIV (Apr., 1946), 185; Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, III, 298,

Too late, Bienville realized that he had overplayed his hand, for he accurately predicted, regarding St. Joseph's Bay, "As it once belonged to the Spaniards, I doubt not that they will try to oust us in turn... I see clearly that this leads straight to rupture."⁽⁴⁰⁾

St. Joseph's Bay was really unsuited for the purpose which Bienville envisioned. The harbor would not admit ships-of-the-line and would be difficult to defend. It was too far away from the other French posts and the sterile land would not support even the small garrison. After discussing these disadvantages with his general council in June, Bienville issued orders for the destruction of the fort and evacuation of the bay..⁽⁴¹⁾

The French hardly had left before 800 Spanish troops led by former governor of Pensacola, Gregorio de Salinas Varona, arrived and built a new fort and tightened Spain's defenses in the area..⁽⁴²⁾

While a Spanish expedition was being formed in Vera Cruz to check any French plans for expansion toward Texas, the Viceroy of New Spain took an active interest in improving the defenses of Florida. Acting on a report of 1718 by Governor Salinas Varona, which had recommended strong fortifications at Pensacola and St. Joseph's Bay, Viceroy Baltasar de Zuniga, Marques de Valero,⁽⁴³⁾ sent a military engineer to Pensacola with materials and workers to build a small battery on Santa Rosa Island.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Captain of Infantry Juan Pedro Matamoros de Isla was appointed governor of ^Pensacola, Madrid, Feb. 18, 1717, BNM, Vol. 19,508, fols. 80-81, 82-83. "Bienville's *Memoire*, quoted in Faye, "Contest," 185. d8Chateaugue to Bienville, St. Joseph's Bay, June 25, 1718, AN, AC, C13, A: V, 203-10; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 167-68.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Royal decree, Jan. 12, 1719, AGN, Historia, Vol. 321; Francois Xavier Martin, *The History of Louisiana, from the Earliest Period* (rev. ed.; New Orleans, 1882), .128; Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, III, 298; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 168. Gregorio de Salinas Varona had been governor of Honduras when he was appointed governor of Pensacola (Madrid, May 16, 1709), and he was replaced in 1718 by Captain Matamoros de Isla. Royal Appointment, Madrid, May 16, 1709, BNM, Vol. 19,508, fols. 78-79, 84-85.

⁽⁴²⁾ Valero succeeded Linares as Viceroy of New Spain on Aug. 16, 1716, and served until Oct. 15, 1722. He vigorously opposed French expansion and authorized the expedition under Governor San Miguel de Aguayo, which kept the French out of Texas. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Mexico* (6 vols.: San Francisco, 1887), III, 290-92; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 187-206, 236.

It was thought that the crossfire of guns from this battery and those of San Carlos fort on the mainland would prevent any enemy attempt to sail into Pensacola Bay.(43)

In order to learn the intentions of the French, Governor Matamoros de Isla, who had arrived at Pensacola in February, 1718, sent Captain Juan Manuel Roldan to Mobile, ostensibly to settle pending financial accounts between the two posts, but actually to observe what was going on. When Roldan returned to Pensacola he brought word that three French vessels had just arrived with hundreds of settlers and quantities of war materials and supplies. He showed the governor a broadside of the recently-organized Company of the West which boldly stated French plans to expand in Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico region.(44)

The Company of the West, with which John Law was so intimately involved, was formed in 1717 to succeed Antoine Crozat's monopoly over Louisiana. For a twenty-five year period the company was supposed to have a monopoly of the commerce, government, and defenses of Louisiana and to send both white settlers and Negro slaves to the lower Mississippi Valley.(45)

Company agents were successful in winning the support of the Indians, and in a short time Pensacola and St. Joseph's Bay were all but surrounded by hostile natives.

(43) Salinas Varona to Viceroy (Valero), Mexico, Jan. 22, 1718, cited in *ibid.*, 162-63; Royal Decree, Madrid, Mar. 13, 1719, AGN, Historia, Vol. 321.

(44) Roldan to Valero, Santa Maria de Galve, Apr. 3, 1718, Archivo General de Indias (Seville, Spain), Section of Mexico Indiferente, leg. 61-6-35; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 166; *Relacion de la sorpresa hecha por los franceses de la Movila al Castillo de San Carlos y Punta de Siguenza y su restauracion por las armas de S.M. el dia 7 de agosto 1719* transcribed copy of a printed pamphlet (Mexico n.d.), in Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (Madrid), Vol. XIX, MS No. 56; cited hereafter as *Relation de la Sorpreso*. ^William Coxe, *Memoirs of the Kings of Spain of the House of Bourbon, from the Accession of Philip V to the Death of Charles III, 1700-1788* (5 vols.; London, 1815), II, 121-22; Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, III, 28-59; Hemrich, *La Louisiane*, 3-10.

(45) Bienville to Minister of Marine, Port Dauphine, Oct. 27, 1711, BNP, FNA, Vol. 9310, fol. 158; Fez's report to the Council of the Indies, Mar. 5, 1718, copy in ASHM, leg. 5-1-9-9; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 156; Giraud, *Histopre de la Louisiane*, II, 179; III, 300,

Spanish attempts 'to win the Creeks to their side were not as successful.(46)

Iberville had suggested in 1702 that France "take" Pensacola away from Spain,(47) but diplomatic negotiations with Madrid were unsuccessful. The Comte de Pontchartrain was unable to convince Spanish ministers that a strongly-garrisoned French post at Pensacola would protect Spanish hegemony in the Gulf of Mexico!(48)

Events in Europe during 1717-1719, however, gave the French settlers on Dauphin Island the opportunity they sought to take Pensacola. Philip V's involvement in French and Italian affairs caused England, France, Holland, and Austria to sign the Quadruple Alliance on August 2, 1718, and on January 9, 1719, France declared war on Spain.(49)

On April 19, 1719, two ships of the Company of the West, *Le Marechal de Villars*, commanded by Captain des Grioux, and *Le Comte de Toulouse*, under Captain Mechin, anchored off Dauphin Island.(50)

On board one of the ships was Joseph LeMoyne de Serigny, Bienville's brother.(51)

(46)-(51) **Ibid.*, III, 298.

¹Iberville to Governor of Pensacola, On board *La Renomme*, Jan. 3, 1702, transcription in Mississippi Provincial Archives, French Dominion, State Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, I, 357.

⁷"*Relacion de la Sorpvesa*," Shelby, *International Rivalry*, 26-39.

⁸*Ibid.*, 177-78; Edward Armstrong, *Elizabeth Farnese* (London, 1892), 58-118; Coxe, *Memoirs of the Kings of Spain*, II, 188-353.

⁹"de la Harpe" (Beaurain), *Journal historique*, 146; Regine Hubert-Robert, *L'histoire merveilleuse de la Louisiane Francaise* (New York, 1941), 145; Albert James Pickett, *History of Alabama and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi* . . . (rev. ed.; Birmingham, 1962), 216; Faye, "Contest," 192; Heinrich, *La Louisiane*, 55 erroneously states that the ships arrived on April 20, and that one of them was the *Philippe*, which was already in the colony by that time Penicaut gives the arrival date as sometime in February: Me Williams (ed.), *Fleur de Lys*, 228.

Lieutenant (later Captain) Serigny, Knight of the Military Order of St. Louis, had been named in 1718 to command one of the Company of the West's ships and to explore the Gulf coast to determine what suitable posts ought to be established. He later served as governor of Rochefort, and was the only LeMoyne brother to have progeny. Commission to Serigny, Paris, July 31, 1718, Rowland and Sanders (eds.), *Miss. Prov. Arch.*, III, 230-32; Heinrich, *La Louisiane*, 55; Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, III, 115-16; Me Williams (ed.), *Fleur de Lys*, 228 note.

He brought news of the declaration of war between France and Spain and orders from the Company of the West to capture Pensacola. Fortunately for the French, the Spaniards were still unaware at Pensacola or Vera Cruz that war had been declared.⁽⁵²⁾

Bienville held an unusual Council of War in which no other military leaders except his brothers participated. They decided on an immediate attack against Pensacola.⁽⁵³⁾ The company ships just arrived were joined by the *Philippe*, and Bienville divided his forces into three commands. Serigny and one of the company directors, Larcebault, led 166 officers and men. Bienville commanded four skiffs with eighty soldiers and forty-five volunteers, who left Dauphin Island on May 13th. A brigantine carrying ammunition and supplies, accompanied by a sailing barge and a pirogue, went to the mouth of the Perdido River to await the third force led by Bienville's other brother, Chateaugue, and consisting of sixty soldiers and between 300 and 400 Indians.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Between May 13 and May 17, the French forces from Mobile and Dauphin Island successfully attacked Pensacola and captured the garrison and the confused Governor Matamoros de Isla who refused to believe that war had broken out between France and Spain. The Spanish prisoners were sent to Havana in the ships *Le Marechal de Villars* and the *Comte de Toulouse* on June 26, but Captain-general Gregorio Guazo Calderon of

(52) Faye, "Contest," 188-89; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 1770-78. Navy Council to Bienville, Paris, Jan. 15, 1719; Minutes of the Council of Commerce, Dauphin Island, Apr. 20, 1719, Rowland and Sanders (eds.), *Miss. Prov. Arch.*, III, 236-37, 240-41; "de la Harpe" (Beaurain), *Journal historique*, 147; Faye, "Contest," 188-89, 192; Shelby, "International Rivalry," 177-78; Heinrich, *La Louisiane*, 55.

(53) Bienville, Serigny and Larcebault to Directors of the Company, June 18, 1719, AN, AC, CM, A: V, 211; Bienville's report, Oct 20, 1719, *ibid.*, V, 274; Charles Legac's Memoire (1719), Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Paris). *Memoires et documents, Amerique*, I, 81-129; "Relation de la prise de Pensacola par les Français," *Mercur* (Paris), Oct, 1719 163-64; Heinrich, *La Louisiane*, 55-56; Faye, "Contest," 192-95.

(54) The story of the struggles between Dauphin Island and Pensacola which follows is based on Jack D. L. Holmes, "Dauphin Island in the Franco-Spanish War, 1719-1722," a paper read at the Second Conference of the French in the Mississippi Valley, Edwardsville, Illinois, Feb. 14, 1967, and scheduled for publication in 1968 in a volume edited by John Francis McDermott.

Cuba refused to honor their flag of truce. He took the French crews and officers prisoner, released the Spanish prisoners, and organized an expedition to be commanded by his brother-in-law, Admiral Carrascosa de la Torre. With almost 2,000 men, including privateersmen and French deserters, the "mosquito fleet" sailed for Pensacola and arrived off Punta de Siguenza on August 4.

The captured French ships opened fire on the Frenchmanned guns of the Spanish Fort San Carlos, and Chateaugue, whose troops had deserted *en masse*, was forced to surrender, although aid was on its way from Dauphin Island and Mobile. With the desire to drive the French completely out of the Gulf of Mexico area, Admiral Carrascosa de la Torre launched an attack by several privateersmen-manned ships, and the French on Daphin Island prepared to defend their homes. The French had learned from Chateaugue and his nephew, Gilles-Augustin Payen, Chevalier de Noyan, that Viceroy Valero was organizing a squadron of seven warships at Vera Cruz to attack the French, and Bienville was none too confident his meager forces could hold out.

Bienville kept a reserve force of Canadians and Indians at Mobile while Louis Juchereau de St. Denis brought fifty Pascagoula Indians to Dauphin Island on August 13. Francois Trudeau led another force of Indians and Canadians to the island, and Sieur de Villainville joined him with still another force. Bienville's generosity toward the Indians and his ability to speak several of their tongues now showed results: by August 20, some 400 Indians were assembled at Mobile and Dauphin Island ready to defend their "French brothers."

On the island itself, Serigny commanded a number of settlers, concession-holders, and an unreliable group of 100 troops, twenty tobacco farmers destined for Natchez, and twenty miners bound for the Illinois mines. When the Spanish privateersmen approached Dauphin Island on August 13, Serigny ordered the *Philippe* anchored in a small inlet called the "Trou de Major" on the western end of the island. Cannon were unloaded and mounted in two batteries consisting of three 12-pounders near the former channel on the left flank of the *Philippe* and two 18-pounders and two 4-pounders facing the port.

Canadians, known for their skilled marksmanship, manned the guns and exchanged shots with the two Spanish ships, *Le Grand Diable* and the *Notre-Dame de Vigogne*. Captain Antonio de Mendieta sent ashore a long-boat with a message demanding the surrender of the *Philippe* and warning the defenders against scuttling or burning the vessel. It was his king's will, wrote Mendieta, to treat "with rigor those who have taken up arms, but with cordiality those who surrender in good faith." The French captain contemptuously rejected the demands and prepared to defend the ship and island to the death.

The Spanish forces were too small to risk a frontal attack on the island so they contented themselves with cutting off French supplies from Mobile. On August 15, a Spanish bilander sailed up Mobile Bay to a spot ten leagues north of Dauphin Island called Miragouin. Guided by eighty French deserters, the Spanish privateers approached a plantation where they hoped to rob the French settlers of their valuables, cattle, and Negro slaves sent there for safety. The most imaginative account of what happened is given by the Louisiana historian, Charles Etienne Gayarre:

"The owner of the premises was asleep, and little dreamed of the danger which was at his doors. Suddenly** the invaders, confident of success, and secure of their coveted booty, uttered three cheers, and rushed forward, intent on their meditated work of destruction. But what was their dismay, when they were answered with the unexpected and terrific war-whoop of Indians. Before they could recover from their surprise, they were assailed by sixty Indians and some Frenchmen, who, by the order of Bienville, were marching to the relief of Serigny, the commander of Dauphine Island, just in time to save it from ruin,

*More reliable reports give a different series of events.
Charles E. Gayarre *History of Louisiana, the French Domination* (4th ed.; 2 vols.; New Orleans, 1903), I, 245.

And, note that \$4,000 worth of property was taken in the first assault, but on a later attack, Villainville's small force of fifteen Indians and several Canadians sent the deserters and their Spanish allies helter skelter to their boats. Eighteen deserters were captured; one was hanged on Dauphin Island and the rest tomahawked by the Indians with Bienville's permission.

On August 17, two additional ships joined the Spanish attacking force and for several days exchanged cannon fire with the *Philippe* and the shore batteries. Neither side was able to do much damage, and another Spanish attempt to land troops at Guillory Point was foiled by Francois Trudeau's Indians and Canadians. Nor were the Spaniards able to land anywhere but Grand Cozier Island, where they took on water.

On August 25, after twelve days of haphazard and impotent siege techniques, the disgusted Captain Mendieta ordered the ships back to Pensacola, but left two bilanders and the *Marechal de Villars* anchored between Guillory Point and Grand Cozier Island until September 2. The French contented themselves with putting out the few fires caused by the Spanish cannonading and in ordering the Indians to keep watch on the movements of the remaining Spanish ships. Serigny had repulsed the first attack, but he was aware that a full-scale expedition might arrive from Vera Cruz at any time.

What was his dismay when, on September 1, 1719, five ships hove into sight! Four of the largest carried the Spanish flag, while the fifth bore the French standard at half-mast, as if captured by the others. As the ships drew nearer, however, the Spanish flags were lowered and the French Bourbon raised to the relief and heartfelt cheers of the Dauphin Island defenders. This was no Spanish flotilla, but rather a French squadron under the command of Commodore Desnos de Champmeslin, who had orders to recapture Dauphin Island if taken by the Spaniards. This explains his ruse of using Spanish flags as he approached the harbor.

On September 5 the military and company leaders agreed to attack Pensacola once again, and on September 16 the large French force was anchored off Pensacola. Bienville had taken 100 troops and 500 Indians overland and they were camped just one league from Fort San Carlos. The struggle on September 17 was more spirited than the earlier attacks on Pensacola. When a Spanish cannon-ball sliced the great yardarm of the flag-ship, the delighted defenders cheered, "Hurrah for Philip V." Nonplussed, the French gunners then sliced through the Spanish flag-pole toppling their colors and yelled, "Hurrah for Louis XV."

Although the Spaniards had worked feverishly under the engineer Colonel Bruno, Caballero de Elvira, and with captured French prisoners in the hot months of July and August to improve the defenses of Fort San Carlos and Punta de Siguenza, the French succeeded in forcing Governor Matamoros de Isla to surrender in the face of mounting casualties. The Spanish officers were kept as hostages pending the release of the French officers held at Havana, and they were ultimately sent to Brest, France, where on January 3, 1720, ex-Governor Matamoros de Isla finally believed that a war indeed existed between France and Spain!

The French maintained the garrison at Pensacola and, by flying the Spanish flag, lured several ships into the harbor where they were captured. Sieur Delisle with twelve soldiers and eight Indians kept Pensacola until November 26, 1722, when the fort and town were destroyed and the site returned to Spain in keeping with the peace terms between the two powers. Although both Spain and France planned expeditions to capture or recapture Pensacola and Dauphin Island, there was no more military activity in the Gulf of Mexico at this time.

The filled-in harbor of Dauphin Island rendered that settlement untenable for the French, and between 1720 and 1722 Sieur Drouot de Valdeterre, the officer-*concessionnaire* there suggested moving the French colony to New Biloxi and using the harbor at Ship Island.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Only a sergeant and ten men remained at the lookout post on Dauphin Island.⁽⁵⁶⁾

(55) **Memoire of Drouot de Valdeterre, 1722, BNP, FNA, Vol. 9310, fol. 220; Giraud,

(56) "Hubert-Robert, *Histoire merveilleuse*, 149.

Biography (New York, 1928-1958), XIX, 351-352; Willis Brewer, *Alabama: Her*

By 1726, the post was abandoned; France's second major focal point in Louisiana was shifted to the rapidly - growing town of New Orleans on the Mississippi River.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Few historians have given Dauphin Island credit for its role in preserving French domination of the lower Mississippi and Alabama Valleys and for securing a toe-hold on jealous Spain's *Mare Nostrum* . . . the Gulf of Mexico.

Had Spain launched a concerted attack on the exposed settlement of Dauphin Island during the Franco-Spanish War, and had succeeded in driving the French out of the Gulf of Mexico as she hoped to do, the subsequent history of Alabama and Louisiana would have been seriously modified.

But Spain was unable to break the alliances formed between the French and the Indians, and the French would hold Louisiana for three score years before the 1762 Treaty of Fontainebleau which ceded that province to Spain and the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which gave the Floridas to England. Almost a century would pass before the United States of America would demand Mobile and Dauphin Island as justly part of the Louisiana Purchase, and Spain would have cause to regret her failure to drive the French out of the Gulf of Mexico during these crucial years.

In no small measure, Dauphin Island had served its purpose well: it was the cradle of French Louisiana and the crucible of French settlement in Alabama.

(57) T. Bienville's *memoirs* on Louisiana (1726), Rowland and Sanders (eds.), *Miss. Prov. Arch.*, III, 511; Faye, "Contest," 324-26.

Histoire de la Louisiane, III, 313-15.