

**A general description of the sea-coasts, harbours,
lakes, rivers, etc. of the province of West Florida, 1769**

1769

Mss.917.59.G23

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Gauld, George.
Title	A general description of the sea-coasts, harbours, lakes, rivers, etc. of the province of West Florida, 1769
Date	1769
Call number	Mss.917.59.G23
Extent	1.0 Volume(s) 31 p.
Location	LH-MV-E-12
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	<p>Between 1764 and 1781, the Scots surveyor George Gauld was assigned by the British Admiralty to chart the waters of the Gulf Coast off British West Florida, an area that extended from New Orleans to the modern-day Florida. In 1773, Gauld submitted some of his findings to the APS, probably in hopes of having them published in the Transactions, and although these were not published, they became one of the first manuscripts entered into the Society's collections. The Gauld manuscript also includes an extract of a letter from John Lorimer to Gauld, 1772, and a sketch of the Middle and Yellow Rivers of West Florida by Thomas Hutchins. When it was received at the APS, it was endorsed: "This long uninteresting Paper can hardly obtain a Place in the Transactions of a</p>

Philosophical Society. It should however be preserved in the Files for the Use of Historians or map makers."

Preferred Citation

Cite as: George Gauld, A general description of the sea-coasts, harbours, lakes, rivers etc. of the province of West Florida, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

The scientific exploration of the North American continent was a major priority of the American Philosophical Society from at least the time of its reorganization in 1769. Surveyors, cartographers, and natural historians carried their work westward, ultimately culminating in the expedition of Lewis and Clark in 1803, but particularly in the years prior to the Revolution, others also sought to explore the southeast. Particularly after the APS began publishing its Transactions in 1771, the Society became a hub of activity for exploration and mapping. Bernard Romans, Thomas Hutchins, and John and William Bartram were all members of the Society -- indeed, John Bartram was one of its founders -- and they and others, like William Stork, all submitted the results of their explorations to the APS for discussion, commentary, and dissemination.

Between 1764 and 1781, the Scots surveyor George Gauld was assigned by the British Admiralty to chart the waters of the Gulf Coast off British West Florida, an area that extended from New Orleans to the western coast of modern-day Florida. Viewing his work as a benefit for navigators of all nations, not just Britain, Gauld readily shared his work, including with the APS. He was elected to the Society in 1774. His subsequent history, however, was less happy. In 1776, Gauld was forced to suspend his work in the Dry Tortugas and Florida Keys due to the depredations of American privateers, and he was taken prisoner at the Siege of Pensacola in 1781. Carried off the Havana and then New York, Gauld was repatriated to England, dying shortly thereafter at age 50. He is buried at the chapel in Tottenham Court Road, London.

Scope & content

George Gauld's manuscript, "A general description of the sea-coasts, harbours, lakes, rivers etc. of the province of West Florida," was the result of a survey completed in 1769, and represents one of the first manuscripts added to the APS Library. In some detail, Gauld's narrative progresses from New Orleans eastward to Florida, commenting on potential ports and any conditions that might affect navigation.

The manuscript is accompanied by an extract of a letter from Dr. Lorimer to Gauld, August 13, 1772, transmitting a "sketch of the Middle River and Yellow River" from Thomas Hutchins, and discussing both Hutchins and Bernard Romans. The map is included. Upon receipt at the APS, the following comment was appended:

"This long uninteresting Paper can hardly obtain a Place in the Transactions of a Philosophical Society. It should however be preserved in the Files for the Use of Historians or map makers."

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Presented by George Gauld, 1773.

Processing Information

Only map is noted.

Related Materials

Related Material

The APS Archives contains a letter from Gauld (Feb. 15, 1773) on The height of Catherine's Hill and of the Blue Mountains, Jamaica, and a letter from Gauld to Hugh Williamson, Feb. 15, 1773, transmitting Lorimer's account of the Chester River and also the description of the sea coast of Florida.

A copy of Gauld's Observations is held at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, which contains a brief account of Gauld's surveying work.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Maps and Surveys
- Official Government Documents and Records
- Sketches.

Geographic Name(s)

- Florida -- Surveys.
- Middle River (Fla.)
- Yellow River (Fla.)

Personal Name(s)

- Hutchins, Thomas, 1730-1789
- Lorimer, John, 1732-1795

Subject(s)

- Colonial Politics
- Exploration.
- Government Affairs
- Hydrographic surveying -- Florida.
- Rivers -- Florida.
- Science and Technology
- Surveying and Maps

Other Descriptive Information

George Gauld served as a surveyor in the British Army. Stationed in Florida after the Seven Years' War, this collection contains his general observations of the recently acquired territory. Its MOLE entry is very detailed. There are two other general features that should be mentioned. First, Gauld's essay contains smatterings of references to Native Americans and occasionally local Native American names for geographic features. The second is that this document captures part of the imperial consolidation Great Britain began in the wake of the Seven Years' War.

Bibliography

Ware, John D., *George Gauld, Surveyor and Cartographer of the Gulf Coast* (Gainesville, Fla.: Univ. of Florida, 1982).

Gauld, George, *Observations on the Florida Kays, Reef and Gulf : with directions for sailing along the Kays, from Jamaica by the Grand Cayman and the west end of Cuba* (London: W. Faden, 1796).

Call no.: 973.3 Pam. no.34

Collection Inventory

Map

Hutchins, Thomas, 1730-1789

1772

1 map, 26.3 x

A sketch of the Middle River and Yellow
River in West Florida

22.5 cm

Other Finding Aids

Realms of Gold, 17 (1).
