

## = Siege of Pensacola ( 1707 ) =

The Siege of Pensacola was two separate attempts in 1707 by English @-@ supported Creek Indians to capture the town and fortress of Pensacola , then one of two major settlements ( the other was St. Augustine ) in Spanish Florida . The attacks , part of Queen Anne 's War ( the North American theater of the War of the Spanish Succession ) , resulted in the burning of the town , and caused most of its Indian population to flee , although the fort withstood repeated attacks .

The first siege , in August 1707 , resulted in the destruction of the town , but Fort San Carlos de Austria successfully resisted the onslaught . In late November 1707 a second expedition arrived , and made unsuccessful attacks on three consecutive nights before withdrawing . Pensacola Governor Don Sebastián de Moscoso , whose garrison was depleted by disease , recruited convicted criminals to assist in the fort 's defense .

## = = Background = =

English and Spanish colonization efforts in southeastern North America began coming into conflict as early as the middle of the 17th century . The Spanish population of Florida at the time was fairly small . Since its founding in the 16th century , the Spanish had set up a network of missions whose primary purpose was to pacify the local Indian population and convert them to Roman Catholicism . The founding in 1670 by the English of Charles Town ( present @-@ day Charleston , South Carolina ) in the recently established ( 1663 ) Province of Carolina heightened tensions . By the early 18th century Carolina traders like Anthony Dodsworth and Thomas Nairne had established alliances with Creek Indians in the upper watersheds of rivers draining into the Gulf of Mexico , who they supplied with arms and purchased slaves and animal pelts from . These traders penetrated into Spanish Florida , leading to raiding and reprisal expeditions on both sides .

In 1700 , Carolina 's governor , Joseph Blake , threatened the Spanish that English claims to Pensacola , established by the Spanish in 1698 , would be enforced . Pierre Le Moyne d 'Iberville , the French founder of Mobile , in January 1702 warned the Spanish commander at Pensacola that he should properly arm the Apalachee Indians and engage in a vigorous defense against English incursions into Spanish territory . D 'Iberville even offered equipment and supplies for the purpose . However , an attempt at a punitive expedition against the Creek resulted in a rout of the Spanish and their Apalachee allies in October 1702 , shortly before news of war declarations bringing England into the War of the Spanish Succession arrived . After a failed English assault on St. Augustine , Spanish mission towns were severely reduced by numerous raids by Carolina @-@ led Indians against the Spanish mission network from 1703 to 1706 . A French @-@ organized 1706 expedition against Charles Town was a failure but motivated Carolina authorities to again target the Spanish at Pensacola and the French at Mobile . Nairne proposed a major expedition after the attack on Charles Town , intending to recruit as many as 1 @, @ 500 Indians to capture Mobile , but political divisions in Carolina prevented execution of the plan .

## = = First siege = =

In 1707 , Pensacola was under the command of Don Sebastián de Moscoso . The exact size of his garrison in 1707 is not known . The authorized strength of the garrison was 220 , but it rarely reached that strength owing to the difficulty in recruiting soldiers for what was viewed as a highly undesirable posting and a fairly high rate of desertion . Moscoso reported in 1708 that the garrison numbered about 100 , having been reduced by the events of 1707 . The garrison was housed in Fort San Carlos de Austria , a wooden stockade fort built in 1698 .

Extant records do not describe the composition of the forces that attacked Pensacola in August 1707 beyond " several hundred Tallapoosas and a few South Carolina traders " . The siege began on August 12 with the arrival of a band of 20 to 30 Indians , who began terrorizing the Indians living in the town outside the fort . They took prisoners ( including some women and children ) and began burning houses . Governor Moscoso fired one of the fort 's cannons , scattering the attackers ; some

of their captives managed to escape to the fort in the confusion . Two days later , ten men sent out of the fort to do laundry disappeared . On August 14 an estimated 300 Indians appeared before the fort and engaged it in a battle lasting several hours . The next day the attack resumed , as did the pillaging of the town . Activity quieted down until the 18th , when an English flag was raised over a house near the fort . This prompted Moscoso to open fire from the fort , beginning a battle that raged until dark . That day , the attackers burned down the rest of the town , and Moscoso 's men had to work to prevent the fort from burning as well .

This marked the end of active assaults on the fort . However , the area beyond the range of the fort 's guns was unsafe for at least the next month ; a number of people disappeared after they ventured too far from its vicinity .

= = Second siege = =

The second siege began with the arrival on November 27 of a contingent of about 20 Carolina traders and 300 Creeks , primarily Tallapoosas and Alabamas . On that day , an Englishman ( unidentified in Spanish reports , but possibly Thomas Nairne ) brought a demand for surrender written in English . Since none of the Spaniards could read it , he was sent away , and the demand was eventually transmitted orally by a French Huguenot . Moscoso rejected the demand , even though his garrison was depleted by disease . The besiegers began an ineffectual attack on the fort around midnight which lasted until daybreak , at which point they delivered a final surrender demand . Moscoso again refused . In order to supplement his forces , he successfully recruited convicts being held in the fort 's guardhouse to participate in the defense , offering them freedom and money for their service . During each of the next two nights the besiegers renewed their attacks on the fort , without significant effect . During the night of November 29 / 30 , one of the leading Creek chiefs was killed . This apparently broke the besiegers ' morale , for the siege was lifted the following morning . The attackers were reported to have suffered significant casualties .

Word of the attacking force had reached the French at Mobile on November 24 . Governor Jean @-@ Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville raised a force of 100 Frenchmen and 400 Indians . They reached Pensacola on December 8 , only to learn that the siege had been lifted a week earlier .

= = Aftermath = =

These attacks were the last major assaults on Pensacola in the war , although there continued to be minor skirmishes and kidnappings . Most of the Indians that fled during the sieges never returned , reducing Pensacola to little more than its garrison . Governor Bienville learned from a Spaniard who had escaped English hands that Mobile was also being targeted for attack . Although he improved Mobile 's defenses in 1708 , the outpost was never attacked , although a village of Mobile Indians was attacked in May 1709 .

A French force from Mobile captured Pensacola from the Spanish in 1719 , during the War of the Quadruple Alliance , but it was returned to Spain after the war . The location of Fort San Carlos de Austria is now occupied by Fort Barrancas , a National Historic Landmark whose construction began late in the 18th century .