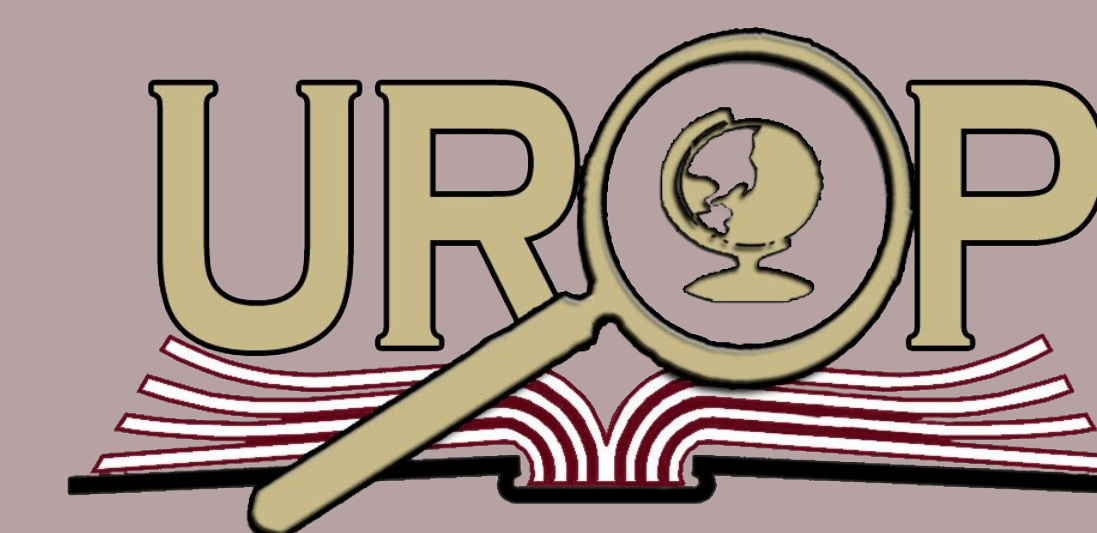




# Antonio Proctor (c. 1743-1855)

Franco Angeles

Dr. Benjamin Gunter, Idy Codington and Theater with a Mission  
FSU School of Dance, FSU School of Communication



## Introduction

This project focuses on primary documents to shed light on the mysterious history of Antonio Proctor. Because Antonio Proctor was illiterate, there are no personal accounts in his own handwriting, such as a diary or a memoir, to illuminate his character. But using other primary sources, we can identify fascinating facts about Antonio Proctor's life which supply a research basis for sketching his character

One such primary source is a case between Antonio Proctor and a man named Felipe Magriña. This case takes place in 1818, when both East and West Florida (commonly known as Spanish Florida) were under the reign of the Spanish monarch. Other governmental records show a sizeable land grant given to Antonio Proctor. As shown in the map and certified translation dated December 18, 1818, below, this land grant amounts to 185 acres near St. Augustine.

## The Case Between Antonio Proctor and Felipe Magriña

The case between Spanish Antonio Proctor and Felipe Magriña deals with the selling of one of Antonio Proctor's sons from Felipe Magriña to another man (Daniel Hart) who was a Protestant American. At this point in time (1818), it was illegal for a slaveowner to sell a slave who is a Catholic to another man who is not Catholic, especially a Protestant.

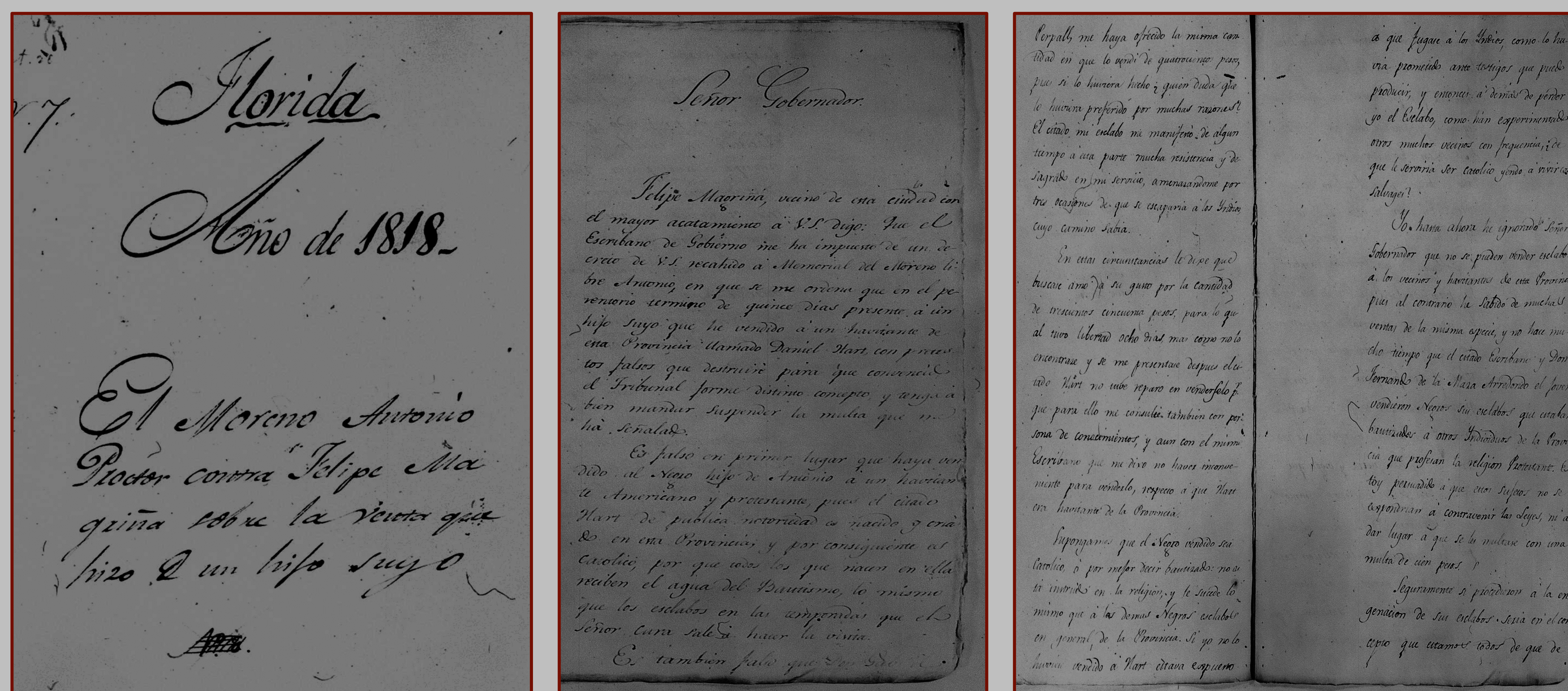
Because of this, Antonio Proctor, who was a free black man at this time (as clearly stated by the letter "moreno libre") opens the case by accusing the seller, Felipe Magriña of violating the law. He also attacks saying that there was another Catholic, who is named Gabriel Perpall, who was willing to buy the same slave for the same amount of money, but was refused instead for the American Protestant. Due to Antonio Proctor's illiteracy, his argument was presented by Antonio González.

Felipe Magriña argues that he did not sell the slave to a Protestant, in fact claiming that the buyer was born in the same province, St. Augustine, where everyone is baptized as a Catholic upon birth. The buyer was Catholic and hence the sale was legitimate. Magriña also denies Perpall having offered the same amount for the same slave (400 pesos), claiming he would have preferred that and would have made the sale to Perpall instead.

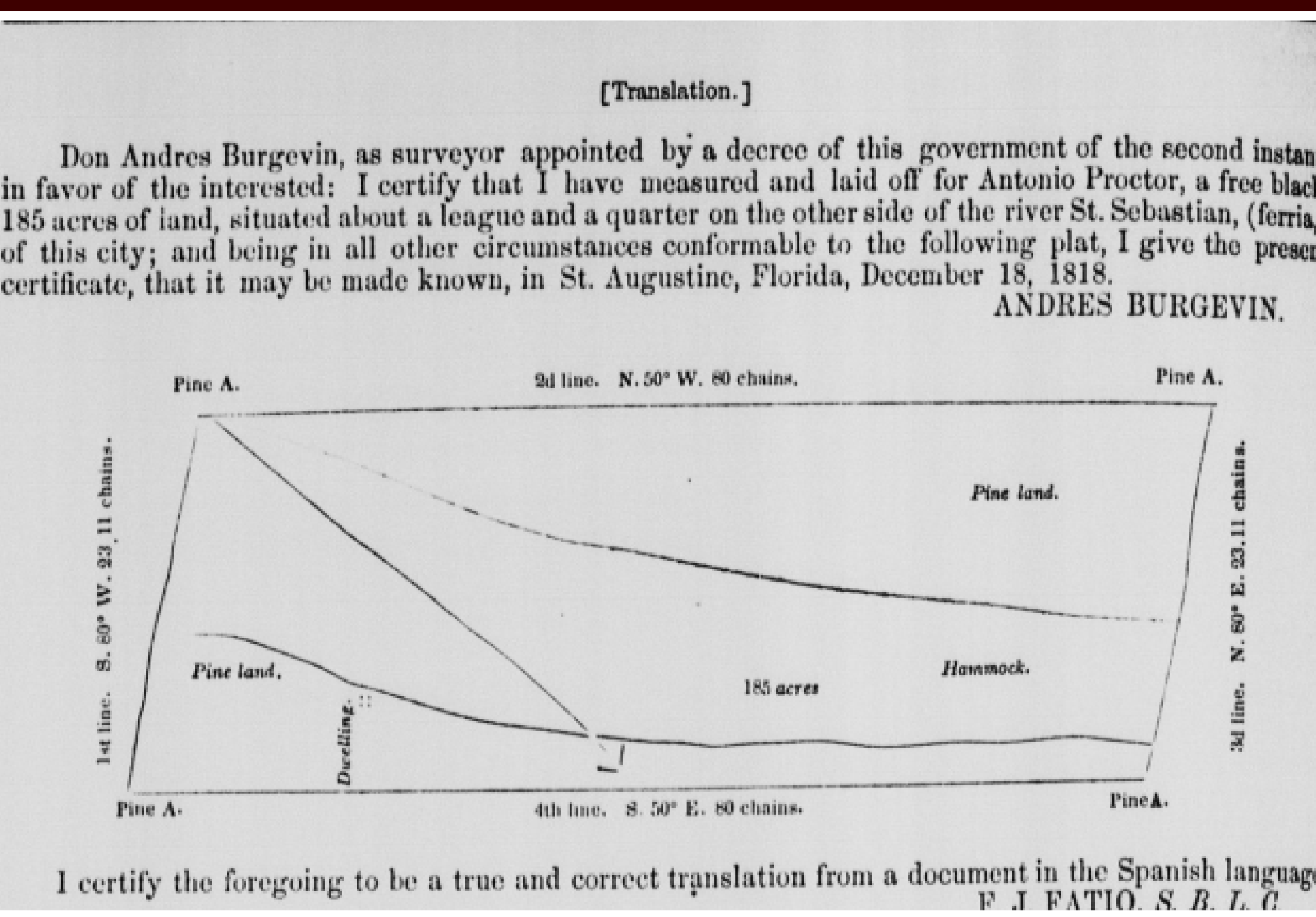
## Other Key Findings of Antonio Proctor

This case between Antonio Proctor and Felipe Magriña reveals more about Proctor's life and times than might appear on the surface. It illuminates differences between race-based chattel slavery (as practiced in the USA) and slavery under Spanish rule. As this summary of key findings shows, Antonio Proctor's lifetime connected the Revolution that created the USA to Florida's transition from Spanish colony to US territory:

- There are many speculations that Antonio Proctor was involved in the American Revolutionary War and Proctor claimed that he was involved in the Battle of Lexington.
- There is also record to show that he wedded a woman named Serapia Edinborough and had children, one of which, George Proctor, would become a successful man.
- Antonio Proctor became a free man at some point in time before Florida became a territory of the United States.
- Antonio Proctor was an interpreter for the Spanish government while Spain had control over Florida and for the Floridian government at the time the United States established the Floridian territory with the Florida Treaty
- There is speculation about Antonio Proctor's involvement in the Treaty of Payne's Landing (1832), but such claims are impossible to verify due to minutes not being taken during the discussion.



Left: Title Page of the Case. Center: Felipe Magriña's start of his argument against Proctor. Right: Continuation of Magriña's argument.



Something to note about this case is that Proctor's argument is quite short compared to Magriña's argument in defense. Proctor's letter amounts to about half a page, compared to Magriña's letter which is almost 5 pages and a half. Indeed, the length in Magriña's letter perhaps benefited him, since he wins the case and it is then proved that the buyer to whom Magriña sold Proctor's son is a Catholic.

## Acknowledgements

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