

What was the role of Translators in Revolutionary Era Florida

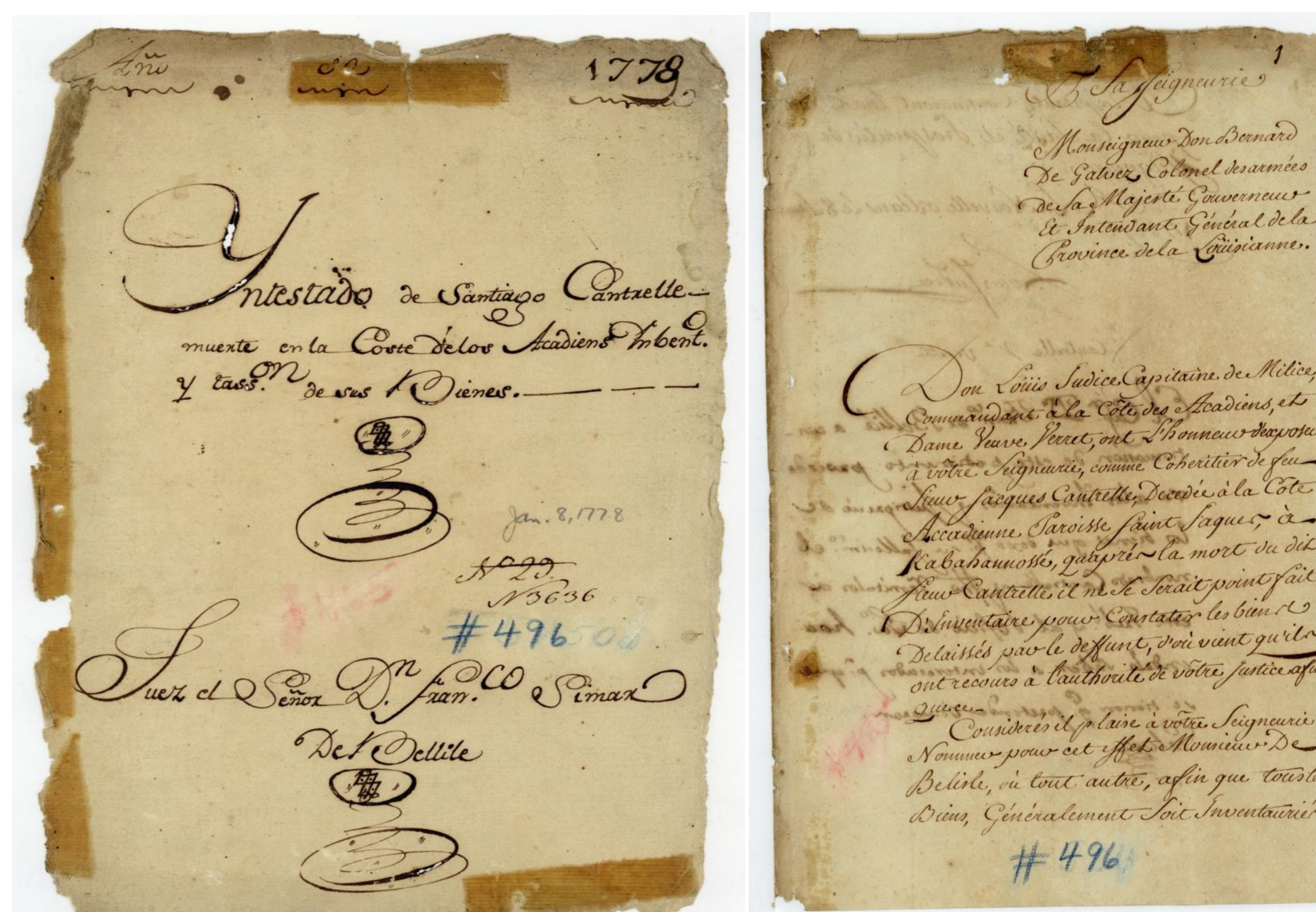
Ella Alvarez Benjamin Gunter

Abstract/Introduction

In Revolutionary War era West and East Florida, there were more languages than just English being spoken. Spanish was extremely prevalent due to previous and present Spanish influence in Florida. There were many documents written in Spanish from important officials detailing time sensitive matters relating to the Revolution... that went completely unread because there was no possible way of translating them. This is what I have been researching. Finding original Spanish documents is tricky when most sources simply reference a translated version. I found that there was one specific letter that was written in Spanish from Spanish Louisiana Governor, Bernardo de Galvez that was sent to the Continental Congress in Pennsylvania and was disregarded due to it being fully in Spanish. This document led me to research the availability and experience of translators during this period. Translators were rare but not uncommon in certain parts of the colonies; such as Louisiana and Florida. In the end, it was determined that while translators were a thing, they were not very common in people other than merchants who made a living in and around Florida and educated wealthy people. This led to a lack of Spanish speakers when I would argue the land was the most Spanish it has ever been. Combing through archives and government libraries afforded the opportunity to discover documents such as these that helped me piece together the role of translators in Revolutionary Era Florida.

Reasoning

There is no method or data or procedures for this project. This was a historical research project meaning my data was historical texts and sources. Through my research though, I was able to discover the significance of history and understanding what has happened in the past that contributed to the way something is today.



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Methodology

When researching historical periods, it isn't the same as conducting experiments and collecting traditional numerical data. For my research, I had to search through congressional libraries, read books and examine footnotes, investigate in person libraries, and keep an open mind. Sometimes when researching, I would find a source that was only vaguely related to my topic but upon reading further, I would sometimes find something imperative to my research topic. I used the Congressional Libraries frequently as well as ArchiveGrid and the National Archives of Spain as well. Primary source analysis was my best friend while researching. My second best friend was finding academic, peer-reviewed translations and second hand accounts to these primary sources. I also had to do extensive historical comparisons and analysis. I had to understand what I was looking for before I could look for it. All these methods of research were compiled together to help me find my original Spanish documents, as well as translations of said documents. By researching this topic, I hope to achieve greater understanding of historical Florida in a context that is largely unexplored. As well as, divulge the significance of translators before 'translators' were really a thing.

Findings

Through my research I was able to realize that while Florida history is not as mainstream, it is still incredibly important. Florida was riddled with Spanish speakers including a lot of merchants and government/military officials. The Louisiana Governor, Bernardo de Galvez was one of the most influential Spanish speaking government officials. He frequently wrote messages and correspondence in Spanish. At one point, he wrote a letter fully in Spanish to the Continental Congress in Pennsylvania and it was never read due to no translator being available. Additionally, while translators were not very common, they were very successful when recognized. An Irish Immigrant named Oliver Pollock was a very successful merchant in Florida who spoke Spanish to ensure his business thrived.