

The Impact of Spanish Land Grants on the Development of Florida and the South Eastern United States

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Key words:

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the development of Florida and the Southeastern United States in light of the numerous and confusing system of Spanish Land Grants. The author argues that the development of Florida, and parts of the Southeastern United States, may have developed at a more rapid pace if the confusion caused by conflicting land claims had not interfered. It is shown that land grants given to British officers and favorites caused concern with land title validity on the early frontier. Spanish co-option of these claims further increased the confusion of title and acted as an inhibitor to settlement. Greater problems arose from the fraudulent claims and liberal interpretation given the powers of the Surveyors General, especially in East Florida. The acceptance of fraudulent evidence in West Florida and the Florida Parishes of Louisiana indicated some corruption of early American officials that also retarded settlement. The final, and most important, cause of slower settlement of these areas was the problem of grant location by the United States Deputy Surveyors. Until these grants were properly located and laid out, few Federal surveys could be conducted. Without proper survey lines and the tying in of the land grants to the rectangular system, no safe title could be given out. This lack of certain title to land acted as a blockage to a more rapid development and settlement on the Southeastern frontier of the United States, especially in Florida.

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