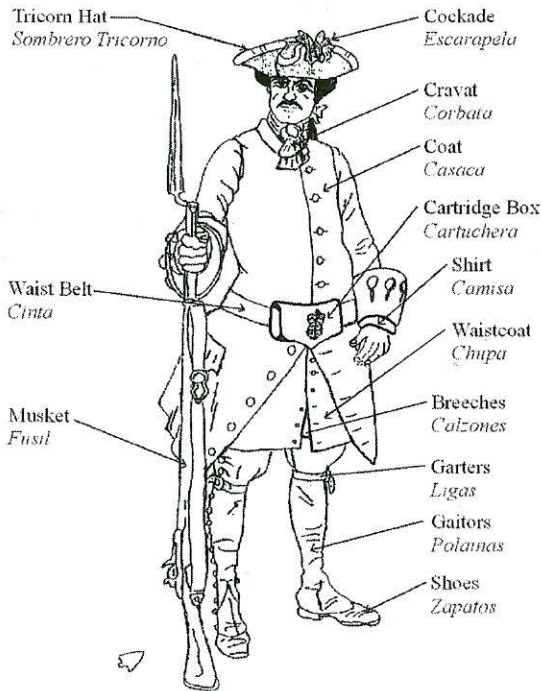


A soldiers diet consisted of one pot meals. The main ingredient in these meals was rice. They would pour rice in a pot, add water, vegetables, beans and meat, and simmer over an open fire for hours. They also would have bread or hardtack (hard bread, like a cracker) for dipping into their food. Oranges, lemons, figs, peaches, pears, grapes, guavas and melons were grown locally and were part of the local diet. Other foodstuffs were flour, corn, salt and olive oil.

Many soldiers had other jobs in addition to being in the military. They would be carpenters, bakers, shoemakers, leatherworkers, etc. These men had to find a secondary source of income because their pay was often delayed for a long period of time. Trading for goods became common in St. Augustine.



SOLDIER OF THE KING "Soldado del Rey"



Castillo de San Marcos
St. Augustine, Florida

Colonial Florida's Spanish Bluecoats 1720's - 1760's



By
Frank Suddeth
and David Shepard

Royal Coat of Arms of Spain

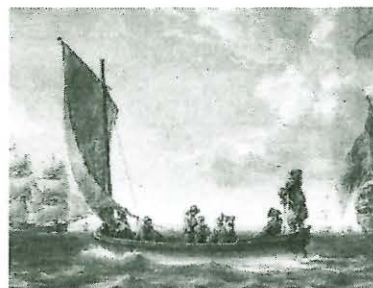


Spain's Independent Companies Overseas Troops of New Spain Florida's Colonial St. Augustine

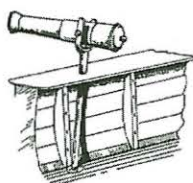
Few Americans today know that for over 235 years, Spanish soldiers were stationed in Florida and Georgia, fighting Indians, pirates and English soldiers. The homeward route of the Spanish Treasure Fleets ran along miles of primitive Florida coastline from the Keys to the Carolinas. These sea-lanes were considered critical to the global empire of Spain. 18th century British intrusion into the region brought about years of warfare between Spanish and British regular soldiers, colonial militias and respective Indian allies.

Many of the soldiers in St. Augustine were locals, meaning they were born and raised within the city. Additional troops were sent from Mexico, Cuba or Spain. From the 1720s - 1760s, the military garrison (troops stationed at the fort) of St. Augustine was made up of three companies of infantry (about 180 men), one artillery company (about 50 men), and one cavalry company (about 25 men). In 1738, Spain sent 310 regular army soldiers from Spain to reinforce the small amount of troops that defended all of La Florida.

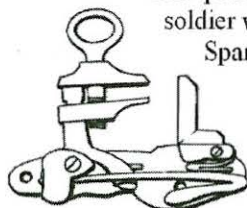
Defending the Castillo de San Marcos and the city of St. Augustine was the first priority. Soldiers also manned wooden watchtowers located up and down the east coast (from Ponte Vedra to just north of Daytona). They were stationed at Fort Picolata and Fort San Francisco de Pupo on the St. Johns River near what is today's Green Cove Springs. They were also sent to Fort San Marcos de Apalache, 30 miles south of what is today Tallahassee. They guarded supplies, mail and payrolls aboard St. Augustine ships on voyages to other Caribbean seaports. They patrolled the coast and salt water marshes looking for shipwreck survivors and pirates. The boats they used were called "piraguas." These long shallow draft boats were equipped with a swivel gun (small cannon). Much of the fighting was small unit action, firefights and ambushes, followed by weeks or months of boredom, insects, heat and humidity.



This boat is similar to a Piragua



Swivel
Guns

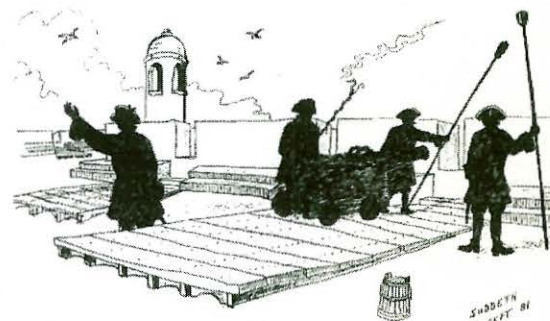


Spanish Miquelet Lock

The primary weapon for a Spanish soldier was an Escopeta. This was a Spanish flintlock musket of .69 caliber. The lock of this weapon is different from any other European musket, with a large open steel ring above the top-jaw.

Along with the musket, a waistbelt with a 9-round cartridge box, a bayonet and sword would be worn during guard duties or military ceremonies in the fort or within the town. When in the field, a soldier would replace the sword with a machete. This was useful for hacking through the high thick brush. In addition, he wore thick canvas leggings called "gaitors" to protect his legs. He would also carry a backpack, canteen, haversack (canvas bag) and blanket. This would create an extra burden for the soldier while in the back country away from St. Augustine.

A St. Augustine soldier's uniform at this time consisted of a black three-cornered hat (tricorn) with a red cockade (hat bow) to symbolize Spain, and was edged with yellow lace trim. He wore a large blue wool coat with red cuffs, a long-sleeved red wool waistcoat, blue wool breeches (short pants), red wool stockings with garters (to hold up his stockings) and black leather shoes with brass buckles. His long-sleeved white shirt with a short collar, worn under the waistcoat, doubled as his night shirt (pajamas). He would wear a pancho, made from a wool blanket, when it was raining.



A Spanish Infantryman could become a member of the artillery crew in times of need. The soldiers of St. Augustine were crossed-trained in both infantry and artillery tactics. This was essential due to the large distances between Spanish provinces (cities or towns) and the time it would take for reinforcements to arrive.