



The Change of Flags



For 200 years the Spanish Empire ruled over a third of the world but growing wealth from the newly 'discovered' lands of Africa, Asia and the Americas spawned rivals to Spanish Power in Europe and overseas. A series of conflicts erupted throughout the colonial era.

In 1763 the Seven Years War, the first great world war came to an end, known in North America as the French and Indian War, it involved all the major powers of Europe: Prussia, Great Britain (with British Colonies in North America), and Hanover were pitted against Austria, France (with New France), Russia, Sweden, and Saxony. Spain and Portugal were later also drawn into the conflict. The most tangible outcome of the war was the end of France's power in the Americas and the emergence of Great Britain as the most powerful colonial power in the world. More importantly, France's Navy would never again be at near equal terms with the British Navy.

During the conflict (1754-1763) Britain captured Havana in Spanish Cuba and Manila in the Philippines the two major trans-shipment points for the Spanish Treasure Fleets. Part of the Treaty of Paris ending the war returned these cities to Spanish control in exchange for the territory of Florida which became the British Crown colonies of East and West Florida (the 14th & 15th colonies in North America).

For the Spanish *floridanos* it meant abandoning the only home they had ever known, one that many of their great grandfathers had created from the wilderness. For the English it meant a new colony to found and untold opportunities in land and trade and they flocked to St. Augustine changing the face of the city forever.

On July 21, 1763 Spanish officials in St. Augustine transferred the territory to British forces under the command of Captain John Hedges of the British Army. The Change of Flags event today recreates the ceremonies that officially transferred Florida from Spanish to British control and celebrates this important moment in history.