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***Shipwreck and Adventures of Monsieur Pierre Viaud. Translated
and edited by Robin F. A. Fabel***

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The Alva Consolidated School (c. 1900), located along the Caloosahatchee River.

Photograph from *Florida Portrait* by Jerrell Shoffner.

Shoffner's failure to use pertinent revisionist sources. The clearest evidence of historical research comes from the bibliographies. Shoffner has only seven sources after 1979 while Keuchel uses over twenty-two books, articles and other materials printed or published in the past twelve years.

Shoffner's text is best in his overview of twentieth-century Florida, but again, Keuchel is more innovative in incorporating contemporary historical explanations. Keuchel's refreshing interpretative approach is the basis for his text, while Shoffner relies upon "little known facts" in a less effective attempt to update a traditional view of the past.

L. Glenn Westfall

Shipwreck and Adventures of Monsieur Pierre Viaud. Translated and edited by Robin F. A. Fabel. Pensacola, Florida. 1990. University of West Florida Press. Pp. viii, 137. Notes. Cloth. \$16.95.

In 1767, when Florida was in English hands, a French merchant ship sank off Florida's panhandle near what is today called Dog Island, about fifty miles west of Tallahassee. After two weeks of death, starvation, treachery, and cannibalism, a few survivors were saved by the English garrison of Fort St. Mark of Apalache. One of them was Pierre Viaud, a Frenchman. On his return to France he published a small book telling of the shipwreck, his survival, and rescue. In 1774 an English translation was published in Philadelphia and again in 1799 in New Hampshire. In France the Viaud account became a bestseller, and by 1800 it was translated into

many other languages. Since the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, the European and American reading public had been fascinated with shipwrecks and the fate of their survivors.

The book soon became controversial. Some thought Viaud was a pathological liar, or certainly had exaggerated or embellished his account. A few said it was truthful. The important author and authority on Florida, Bernard Romans, whose own description of Florida is now a classic, “impugned Viaud’s truthfulness.” Editor Robin Fabel writes that Romans’ “criticisms have particular weight in that he knew both the country where Viaud’s adventures supposedly occurred and one of the men who had rescued the Frenchman.”

Some internal evidence did show that Viaud’s account had much truth but might be embellished. Personalities mentioned, including the rescue party, did exist, and they confirmed the existence of the shipwreck and survivors. Viaud apparently was an enterprising but vain and cruel person, who also had considerable charm.

The narrative of Viaud is just over one hundred pages. Its reading is not difficult. Viaud’s style lacks the pomposity of his personality. The story vividly reflects the attitude of the period – disdain for natives who are savages, inferior, and heathen. But how savage is the sophisticated European Viaud who, when faced with starvation, kills his faithful black servant, also a survivor of the wreck, in order to eat him? This is cannibalism at its worst. But to the survivors the slave was disposable property and nothing else.

The best part of the book is the 32-page introduction by the translator and editor, Professor Fabel of the History Department of Auburn University. It is a model of thorough and painstaking historical research to determine the truth and falsehood in the Viaud account. It is neither superficial nor a product of haste as introductions so often are. To me it is one of the best analyses of a historical diary that I have ever encountered. It is scholarly, with convincing data, but not tedious, repetitive or too minute. However, I would have liked to have been provided with more biographical information about Viaud and some pages explaining Florida in 1765, the year of the shipwreck. It was two years into the English period, as Florida was ceded to the English in 1763, and significant changes were occurring. To be sure, the fifty-eight notes of the introduction are useful, but an index to the whole book would have been welcome. In all, this slender book by the University of West Florida Press has much to recommend it to scholars and the general reader interested in Florida.

Charles W. Arnade

Los Sobrevivientes de la Florida: The Survivors of the de Soto Expedition. By Ignacio Avellaneda. Edited by Bruce S. Chappel. Gainesville, Florida. 1990. P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History. Pp. ii, 104. Tables. Notes. Appendices. Index. Paper. \$18.50.

This publication is a fine contribution to colonial Florida and American history. Rather than a textual monograph, it is a detailed annotated listing with a useful introduction. The de Soto expedition of the early sixteenth century penetrated into the heartland of today's United States from the central Florida West Coast. It was a large expedition, listed variously between 600 to 1,000 individuals. About 40 to 50 percent survived to return to Mexico.