GCHR Gulf Coast Historical Review

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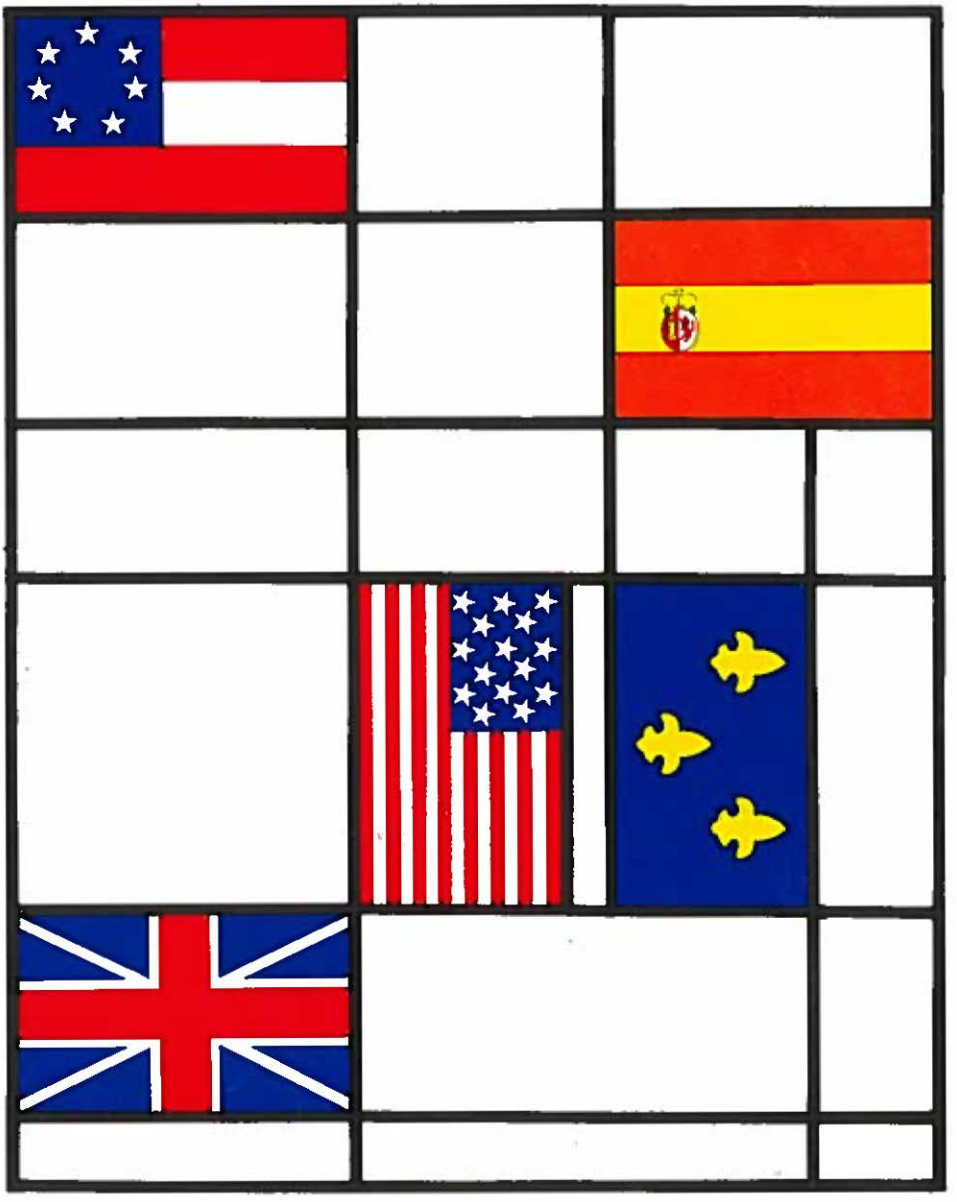
Discovery and Exploration on the Gulf Coast



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From the Editors. . . .

This volume of the *Gulf Coast Historical Review* includes many of the papers presented at the Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference held in Pensacola, October 3-5, 1991. In keeping with the Columbus Quincentenniel Celebration which was then only a year away, the conference adopted the theme of "Discovery and Exploration on the Gulf Coast."

The conference featured a total of twenty-one papers including the after dinner talk by Dr. Roger C. Smith, "Early Spanish Ships of Exploration and Discovery." Judging their discussions and comments, those attending the conference were well pleased with the papers presented, several of which created considerable discussion. For a variety of reasons not all of the papers are published in this issue. For example, papers by Ethan Grant, Edward Cashin, and James Denham were included in the last number of the *Gulf Coast Historical Review*; several papers including that by John Winslow are parts of larger studies which will be published elsewhere at a later date.

This is a good opportunity once again to thank the many persons who so ably participated in and/or assisted with the conference. Our two co-sponsors, Pensacola Junior College and the University of South Alabama, contributed in many ways and without their help the conference would have never gotten off the ground. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Douglas D. Friedrich, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of West Florida, and his able associate Dr. Carl Backman, for the very generous financial support for the conference.

Plans are now being made for the fourteenth Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference scheduled for Mobile in October 1993. The general theme will be "The Gulf Coast in the Gilded Age." Those interested either in contributing a paper or being kept on the mailing list for further announcements should contact Dr. George Daniels, Chair, Department of History, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL. 36688-0002 or any of the board members.

William S. Coker, Professor Emeritus
University of West Florida, 1991 Program Chairman

Proceedings of the

Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference

Volume XIII

Sponsoring Institutions and Board of Directors, 1991

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Discovery and Exploration on the Gulf Coast

Mythology and Discovery: Welsh Exploration of the Gulf Coast in the Twelfth Century

Dean DeBolt

Alexander von Humboldt, a German naturalist known for his exploration of South America and Asia in the nineteenth century, once noted that there are three stages in the popular attitude toward a great discovery; first, men doubt its existence; next, they deny its importance, and finally, they give credit to someone else. [1] Over the past century, historians, archaeologists, students of ethnic history, and folklorists have put forward numerous claimants to Columbus's title of discoverer. The list of challengers is long and some are more credible than others.

As we celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus, it is ironic that we continue to be haunted by one of these challengers, a legend, perhaps a Welsh fairy tale, which over the last five centuries has attained what the Indians call the idea-that-walks, that is, an idea that has become a material force. [2] Indeed, historian Samuel Eliot Morison calls it the most popular, persistent, and pervasive of the pre-Columbus narratives. [3]

The pre-Columbian claim of the Welsh to have discovered the New World has a long list of adherents and opponents, most of whom have written passionately in support of their belief. This paper will not repeat their work but will summarize the history, source, and proofs offered in support of the Welsh discovery of the New World.

The story is a simple one, stemming from the oral traditions of Wales, a tale told by the bards around the blazing hearths of Welsh castles and passed on from generation to generation. It is the story of Prince Madoc and the legend begins thus:

Prince Madoc, a son of Owain the Great, King of Gwynedd (the Welsh word for North Wales), being a restless wanderer sailed westward from Wales about the year 1170. He discovered a new land to the West, a very warm land with forests teeming with game. Leaving 120 colonists, he returned to Wales, organized a larger expedition of ten ships, sailed back to the new land, and was never heard from again. Allegedly, Madoc planted his Welsh colony on the shores of a large bay (some claim Mobile Bay) and established the first settlement of Britons in North America.

By the time of Columbus's arrival (or rediscovery), all traces of the settlement had disappeared. Over time, the Welsh settlers had intermarried with the Indians. Welsh traits were assimilated into the Indian culture, creating a descended tribe of Welsh Indians whose language bore traces of Welsh words and whose ceremonies incorporated elements of Welsh Christian customs.

The story of Prince Madoc is a colorful case study for the historian. It illustrates how people use myth to create history, and conversely how history itself can create a myth. Applying historical method to the Madoc legend, we must first ask, is the story true? What kinds of objective and even subjective evidence exist? Are there documentary sources for the legend? And barring solid objective evidence, is the story even plausible?

The first mention of a person named Madoc appears in a number of Welsh bardic poems. These are oral ballads handed down through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and eventually preserved in manuscript form sometime in the fifteenth century. Because of the nature of the Welsh language, translators of these passages have been consistently at odds with each other as to the meaning and tone of the translations. A great deal of the confusion arises by the use of the material by each translator to support their own viewpoint on the veracity of the Madoc story. Probably the best historical examination of these ballads was done by Madoc historian Thomas Stephens in 1858.

Stephens's exhaustive study of the Madoc legend is one of the finest published examples of historical detection. Stephens came to believe that Madoc did not discover America, thus clouding his research forever in the eyes of those who support the Madoc tradition. His analysis shows that while portions of the poems do refer to Madoc and his apparent father, Owain, none of the bardic examples explicitly refer to a discovery of America. Most Madoc scholars whether they support or deny Madoc's claim grudgingly admit to the exhaustive detective work of Stephens on the bardic poems. [4]

One such poem by a bard named Meredith ap Rhys was published in 1589. [5] Some scholars say Rhys lived about 1477; others claim he was still alive and writing after knowledge of Columbus's discovery in 1492. [6] The translation reads:

> Madoc I am the sonne of Owen Gwynedd
> With Stature large, and comely grace adorned;
> No lande at home nor store of wealth me please,
> My minde was whole to search the Ocean Seas. [7]

As a typical example, the poem makes no reference to a discovery of the New World. But in this case, it is not the poem that is important, rather how it has been used. This translation, by Richard Hakluyt, appears in his 1589 edition of *The Principall Navigations and Discoveries of the English nation, made by Sea or over land. . . .* [8]

Richard Hakluyt is a major figure in the history of geography and was one of the first to teach geography as a discipline at Oxford. His compilation of voyages of exploration and discovery is a major primary work in historical study of the age of exploration.

This bardic poem excerpt mentioning Madoc is the only primary source example that Hakluyt prints, but it is not the poem that is important here. It is how he uses it. First, Hakluyt places this in the third section of his book, which narrates the "English valiant attempts in searching almost all the corners of the vaste and new world of America." [9] Secondly, Hakluyt places the Madoc poem before a report where Columbus sought King Henry VII's permission to search for the West Indies in 1488. And finally, Hakluyt prefaces the chapter with an essay taken from a book titled *The Historie of Cambria* published in 1584. [10]

The book *Historie of Cambria* is an important key in this historiographic puzzle. Cambria is what the Welsh call Wales, and this *Historie of Cambria* consisted of a manuscript written by Humphrey Llwyd about 1559 which in

turn was supposedly based on the bardic poems of Caradog of Llancarvan. The Llwyd manuscript was taken up, extensively edited by David Powel, and published in 1584. In this book appears the following:

> Madoc another of Owen Gwyneth his sonnes left the land in contention betwixt his brethren, and prepared certaine ships with men and munition, and sought adventures by seas, sailing West, & leaving the coast of Ireland so far north, that he came to a land unknowen, where he saw manie strange things. This land must needs be some part [11] of that countrie which the Spaniardes affirms themselves to be the first finders sith Hannos time, for by reason & order of Cosmographie, this land, to the which Madoc came, must needs be some part of Nova Hispania or Florida. Whereupon it is manifest, that that countrie was long before by Brytaines discovered, afore either Columbus or Americus Vesputius lead anie Spaniardes thither. Of the viage and returne of this Madoc there be manie fables fained, as the common people doo use in distance of place and length of time rather to augment than to diminish; but sure it is, that there he was. And after he had returned home and declared the pleasant & fruitfull countries that he had seene without inhabitants; and upon the contrarie part, for what barren and wild ground his brethren and nephues did murther one another; he prepared a number of ships, and got with him such men and women as were desirous to live in quietness, and taking leave of his freends tooke his journie thitherward againe. [12]

By the placement of Madoc before Columbus in his cosmography, and by excerpting a section of a 1584 history of Wales, Hakluyt for all time destroys any claim to the New World by the Spanish. Before proceeding, we must re-examine Hakluyt's source. Humphrey Llwyd died in 1568; his manuscript, which has not survived, claimed to be based on an earlier manuscript of a bard, Caradog of Llancarvan, which has not survived either. Llwyd's manuscript was "corrected, augmented, and continued" by David Powel and published in 1584. In Powel's published book, there is a brief note beside the key sentence about Nova Hispania or Florida; it cites the source for this comment as Humphrey Llwyd.

The trail ends there. This is frustrating for the historian but convenient for the champions of Madoc. A small circle of writers and historians—Humphrey Llwyd, David Powel, and Richard Hakluyt—proudly announce the discovery of America by a Welshman, negating all claims of the Spanish. Hakluyt cites his source as Powel's book; Powel cites his source as notes of a lost manuscript based on another lost manuscript. Yet, there is one more person in this circle—a man named John Dee.

John Dee, born in 1527, was an English mathematician and astrologer; he was a practitioner of astrology, alchemy, and mysticism, and has achieved notoriety for his writings on navigation and calendar reform. He was good friends with Richard Hakluyt, and together they shared one overriding passion—the desire to see England colonize the New World and become a world power the equal of Spain.

England in the late 1570s and early 1580s was a nation struggling to become empire. At the religious level, a Protestant England was watching uncomfortably while a Counter-Reformation Spain was monopolizing the lands in the New World, conquering Portugal, and claiming dominion of the entire coast of North America under the banner "Nova Hispania." [13] Sitting on the English throne was a red-headed woman of Welsh descent, Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn, who had restored Protestantism to England. She was surrounded by advisors, among them men like John Dee and Richard Hakluyt, who encouraged her to send expeditions of exploration and colonization to the New World. But she was hesitant; Spain was undeniably a major world power, and had laid claim to the New World by right of Columbus's discovery and the Papal Bull of 1493. It offered the greatest threat to her rule—a possible Catholic coalition of power which could force her from the throne and restore a Catholic monarch in England. [14]

John Dee, in 1578, presented to Her Majesty a manuscript "Royal Titles" to show the chain of title of New World lands to convince her of the right of Englishmen to a part of that continent. The 1578 manuscript has been lost, but Dee prepared another copy in 1580. On the back of the map, he penned the following first claimant in the chain of English title: "Circa An. 1170. 1. The Lord Madoc, sonne to Owen Gwynedd Prynce of Northwales, led a Colonie and inhabited in Terra Florida or thereabouts." [15] Elizabeth was convinced and issued Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a friend of John Dee, the first royal patent for colonization of the New World; the patent was good for six years and gave him permission to discover and settle "heathen lands not actually possessed of any Christian prince or people," a vague yet diplomatic license. [16] Gilbert on a second voyage in 1583 established a colony in Newfoundland. When he drowned at sea, the patent was reissued to his half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, who led an expedition in 1586 to Roanoke, Virginia.

After John Dee's 1578 map came Powel's 1584 book of Llwyd's 1559 manuscript, closely followed by Hakluyt's 1589 book of English voyages. And after Hakluyt, practically every English historian and geographer began to cite Madoc in their books and publications of explorations. Do these materials prove the validity of the Madoc legend? Not quite; instead they show how a legend has been used to create history—the founding of a British North America supported by a twelfth-century title to a Welshman. The writers and circumstances are very suspect; it is Dee and Hakluyt who propose that Madoc landed in Florida, and they have prime motives for making such a claim, the expansion of the British dominion. Is it not strange that the precise landing of Madoc in Florida is only known after the 1492 discovery of the New World by Columbus? Hakluyt cited Meredith ap Rhys's bardic poem as being from about 1477, yet it says nothing about landing in Florida. The most that can be said is that it shows that Madoc existed. Finally, would not a queen of Welsh background have been passionately stirred to discover a Welsh countryman as the real first European in the New World?

The evidence against the Madoc legend is strong at this point. There is considerable ambiguity in the source material. The key primary sources are missing; those that are available lack a common viewpoint. The writers that do mention Madoc are increasingly suspect of having ulterior motives. Madoc was no longer a fact in the timetable of exploration, but a political pawn to be used against Spanish conquest of the New World. Ironically, the proponents of the Madoc story argue at this point that the Madoc case is even stronger. While the evidence does not objectively support Madoc, neither does it deny claims made on his behalf. If we cannot prove the Madoc story from primary sources, are there other possible avenues of evidence?

Humphrey Llwyd and Richard Hakluyt obviously considered this. Turning back to Hakluyt (1589), we continue the narrative of Madoc taken from Powel which proports to prove that there is other evidence for Madoc:

> Therefore it is to be presupposed, that he and his people inhabited part of those countries, for it appeareth by Frances Loves, that is Acusanus and other places, the people honored the crosse: whereby it may be gathered that Christians had beene there, before the coming of the Spaniards. But bicause this people were not manie, they folowed the maners of the land they came unto and used the language they found there.
>
> This Madoc arriving in that Westerne countrie, unto the which he came, in the yeare 1170, left most of his people there: and returning backe for more of his owne nation, acquaintance and freends, to inhabite that faire and large countrie, went thither againe with ten sailes, as I find noted by Gutyn Owen, I am of opinion that the land, whereunto he came was some part of Mexico; the causes which make me thinke so be these.
>
> 1. The common report of the inhabitants of that countrie, which affirme, that their rulers descended from a strange nation, that came thither from a farre countrie: which thing is confessed by Montezuma king of that countrie, in his oration made for quieting of his people, at his submission to the king of Castile, Hernando Curteis being then present, which is laid downe in the Spanish chronicles of the conquest of the West Indies.
>
> 2. The Brytish words and names of places used in that countrie even to this daie, doo argue the same: as when they talke togither, they use this word Gwrando, which is Hearken or listen. Also they have a certeine bird with a white head, which they call Pengwin, that is, white head. But the Iland of Correoso, the cape of Bryton, the river of Gwyndor, and the white rocke of Pengwyn, which all be Brytish or Weoshe words, doo manifestlie shew that it was that countrie which Madoc and his people inhabited. [17]

Citing Powel, Hakluyt has come up with a list of intriguing evidence to support the Madoc claim. Initially, Powel stated that he believed that Madoc landed in some part of Nova Hispania or Florida. Using the map published in his 1582 *Divers Voyages*, Hakluyt shows that the term "Florida" then applied to the entire North American coast from South Florida to Newfoundland. [18] Nova Hispania, on the other hand, applied to present-day Mexico and the Yucatan peninsula. Why Mexico? Powel supplied the answer—the presence of Christian-like rites—cited by Montezuma. And where does this come from?

The story of the Madoc colony was that it disappeared, assimilated into the native culture. If that happened, then it would be logical to assume that part of the culture had survived—these would have included Christian religious customs and the use of Welsh words. If one examines the early Spanish narratives, there are uncounted stories of explorers stumbling on cultures which use beads, crosses, baptism of water, and other Christian-like rites in their ceremonies. Without dwelling on this at length, the European cultures often interpreted alien cultures through their own mindset; the use of iconographic symbols as well as earth elements (water, for example) that mirrored those in use in Christianity would have been viewed as Christian.

Obviously an assimilation of a colony of Welshmen would have produced a linguistic alteration of language to include Welsh words. Testimony for this comes from the account of David Ingram. In 1567, John Hawkins sailed from England with a small squadron of ships intent on trade and plunder in the New World, generally through harassment of Spanish galleons. Ingram was a sailor aboard one of Hawkins's ships. The expedition was surprised by a Spanish squadron and Hawkins managed to escape with two ships, very overcrowded with survivors from the other boats. One hundred men, including Ingram, were put ashore on the Gulf Coast in 1568. Ingram and two companions headed north along the Atlantic seaboard, eventually reaching Nova Scotia having traveled three thousand miles in eleven months. They made it back to England aboard a French ship. In 1582, seeking further information about North America, Ingram was summoned for questioning by Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's Secretary of State. Ingram's testimony appears in Hakluyt's 1589 *Principall Navigations.* [19]

It was Ingram who claimed that the Indians "have also in use divers other Welsh words, a matter worthy of noting." [20] It was also Ingram who cited as his major examples the bird that they call "Penguins" which "seemeth to be a Welsh name." Ingram's testimony was a defense attorney's nightmare. Practically in the same breath he discussed seeing penguins, flamingos, and elephants. And his claim that penguin was a Welsh word provided the "proof" that Hakluyt needed. Unfortunately no one at this point stopped to consider that the Welsh words *pen* and *gwyn* mean white heads, something that penguins do not have.

Montezuma's testimony was common knowledge by 1580, that his people emerged from a fair-skinned race that came from the East bringing concepts of civilization and fairness. [21] All of these claims—Dee's land titles, Llwyd's story, Powel's evidence of language and Christian customs reinforced by Ingram's testimony and widely reiterated by Hakluyt—move us to the next phase of seeking proof of the Madoc colony—the search for what must be the remnants of Wales long lost immigrants—the Welsh Indians.

After Hakluyt's publication of the Madoc legend, his information was repeated again and again by subsequent writers. As Elizabethan England moved into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the legend of Madoc grew more widely known and more accepted. The English settlements along the North American coast grew more numerous after 1578. English explorers and settlers began moving into the interior of North America, reporting and recording their geographic and botanical discoveries. Realizing the need to make allies of the Native Americans,

the English inaugurated widespread trade with the Indian tribes, initiating frequent contact, and in many ways, like sociologists, recording and reporting on the customs, manners, and culture of the tribes they visited. Unfortunately they were not impartial in their reporting and often imposed their own culture in the interpretation of another. Present-day anthropologists and sociologists understand this; the eighteenth-century Englishman did not. Their observations of Indian culture were colored by their own perceptions. Rites and ceremonies that were considered normal to the Indians were viewed as savage or uncivilized. And everywhere they went, they consciously or unconsciously looked for remnants of the lost Welsh colony. When surprised at the use of some seemingly Britishlike custom or Welsh-sounding word, they found confirmation of the Madoc legend. Not only did they find such examples, they found them everywhere!

Consider a few examples of the many available to us. David Ingram's discovery of Welsh words in use by the Indians points to a region between Florida and Nova Scotia. Welsh Quakers, Thomas and Charles Lloyd, contemporaries of William Penn, stumbled upon a minister named Morgan Jones. Jones recounted his capture by the Doeg Indians near Port Royal, South Carolina in 1660 and his deliverance from death when he and the Indians, who he also referred to as Tuscaroras, realized they could converse in Welsh. Jones's tale appeared in the popular and authoritative *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1704 and again in 1740. [22]

Interest in the Madoc legend was fueled by the formation in London in 1771 of a Welsh-appreciation society, the Gwneddigion. Meeting monthly, the Society frequently turned its attention to the old Welsh tales and soon Madoc was resurrected. [23] These Madoc enthusiasts were eagerly looking for references to Welsh-like words and customs among the Indians of North America. One member of this Welsh organization, Dr. John Williams published a tract in 1791 entitled *An Enquiry into the Truth of the Tradition Concerning the Discovery of America by Prince Madog ab Owen Gwynned about the Year 1170.* This summary of the known reports and knowledge about Madoc up to that time incited even more intensive inquiries into information about the Welsh Indians. As the British pushed further into the Spanish borderlands and into French Louisiana, even more reports reached the Society about strange Indian cultures and anomalies. A number of these concerned the existence of a tribe of "white" Indians. Might these be the remnants of Madoc's colony? Williams summarizes these new reports even though it is reported that the tribe of white Indians are living along the Upper Missouri (present-day North Dakota) River, deep in the interior of North America, closer to the Pacific Northwest. [24]

In addition to compiling reports of explorers, the London Welsh Society frequently sought out returning travellers, questioning them at length about Welsh Indian information. In 1791 they found another first-hand source of information, a visitor to London in the person of the self-styled "King" of the Creek Nation, William Augustus Bowles.

It is hard to describe Bowles; his biographer, J. Leitch Wright, has noted that you could call him many things, but you could never call him dull. [25] Born of British parents in America, he was an ensign in the Maryland Loyalists assigned to Pensacola in 1778. He quit his commission over an administrative squabble

and joined a party of Creek Indians leaving Pensacola. He lived with the Creek Indians the remainder of his life, becoming their Director General, yet living his life constantly involved in a wide variety of schemes designed to further his own ambitions as a trader and as a "king" of the Creek Nation. In 1791 Bowles arrived in London where he quickly found an audience for his notion of using the Creek Nation in the service of His Majesty to drive the Spanish from North America. Not only was he popular in court, but he was equally popular in the taverns. [26]

In return for plenty of liquid refreshment, he would regale Londoners with tales of his life and adventures on the frontier for hours or as long as the drink held out. Two scholars were sent to him from the Gweneddigion Society to ask if he had any knowledge of Welsh Indians. Indeed there were white Welsh-speaking Indians, he said, a tribe known as the Padoucas. He added that he did not speak or know Welsh but many of his friends did and they had repeatedly confirmed the use of Welsh words among the Indians. [27] Inspired by this new authoritative tale, Dr. John Williams rushed another book into print entitled *Further Observations on the Discovery of America by Prince Madog ab Owen Gwynned about the Year 1170.* But Bowles did more than to confirm what the Welshmen already believed, he called them "white" Indians and gave them a name, the Padoucas. And where was this "white" Indian tribe? It was already on the maps, on the Upper Missouri River, near the Pacific Northwest, a wild region, still in French hands and contested by the Spanish.

It is at this point that the Welsh society plunged into feverish activity. One of the researchers, Iolo Morganwg, began studying every frontier account of interior America, gradually piecing together an elaborate testimony to confirm the existence of this tribe of white Indians. To cite just one example, Jonathan Carver in 1784 published his book, *Three Years Travels, Through the Interior Parts of North America* covering his treks to the west of Lake Superior. At one point in his narrative, he states:

> A little to the north-west of the heads of the Messorie and the St. Pierre, the Indians further told me, that there was a nation rather small and whiter than the neighbouring tribes, who cultivate the ground, and, (as far as I could gather from their expeditions) in some measure, the arts. To this account they added that some of the nations, who inhabit those parts that lie to the west of the Shining Mountains, have gold so plenty among them that they make their most common utensils of it. These mountains (which I shall describe more particularly hereafter) divide the waters that fall into the South Sea from those that run into the Atlantic.
>
> The people dwelling near them are supposed to be some of the different tribes that were tributary to the Mexican kings, and who fled from their native country, to seek an asylum in these parts, about the time of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, more than two centuries ago.
>
> As some confirmation of this supposition it is remarked, that they have chosen the most interior parts for their retreat, being still prepossessed with notion that the sea-coasts have been inflicted ever since with monsters vomiting fire. . . . [28]

From such accounts the Madoc-inspired Welsh researchers found confirmation for their tribe of white Indians, a tribe different from other Indian tribes, and one that logically migrated from the warm lands of Nova Hispania or Florida to the upper Missouri River. Bowles had called them the Padoucas, but the Madoc historians gradually came to believe they were the Mandans.

Having convinced themselves of the existence of the tribe, it was time to make contact, and a volunteer stepped forward offering to travel to America and search out the long-lost Welsh brothers. His offer was accepted and in September 1792, John Evans, a young twenty-one-year-old son of a Welsh Methodist minister climbed aboard ship heading for America. [29] Four long years and many adventures would befall Evans; in 1796, we find him in St. Louis where he had been hired as an assistant to James Mackay. Together they explored the interior, and on September 23, 1796, Evans walked into the Mandan village, possibly the first white man to visit this remote and culturally distinct tribe. He spent six months with them and returned to St. Louis in 1797. He wrote the Society that the Mandans were not Welsh Indians.

Evans's letter, though, was not believed; the London Society pushed forward seeking further contact with the Mandans. However the Mandan territory suddenly became unavailable to them. On December 20, 1801 the United States took possession of the Louisiana Territory, a vast region stretching from New Orleans to the Pacific Northwest. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned an exploration to be led by Meriweather Lewis and William Clark. Upon reaching St. Louis, they were introduced to a resident of St. Charles, James Mackay, who gave them his notes about his travels and a map drawn by John Evans, showing the Indian tribes and locations along the Upper Missouri River. Evans's map had been copied by a number of individuals for on January 22, 1804, President Jefferson wrote to Lewis that he was enclosing a map by Mr. Evans "whose original object I believe had been to go in search of the Welsh Indians, said to be up the Missouri." [30] Lewis and Clark never reported finding any Welsh Indians; they did find the Mandans and reported on their customs and habits. Certainly their journey was aided by the Evans map, a fortuitous circumstance that might not have existed at all if not for the Madoc legend. It is equally fascinating to acknowledge that by 1803, it was commonplace in America to suppose that a tribe of Welsh Indians existed.

Were the Mandans the lost tribe of Welsh Indians? We have, including the accounts of John Evans, the written testimony of nine white men known to have spent any considerable time with them. Their testimonies are similar; all commented on the unique character that separated this tribe from others. Examples included their farming, the construction of their boats—hides stretched across a wood framework—not unlike the coracles of Wales, but completely unlike the bark and wood canoes found more commonly, that they were an agricultural people amid a country of primarily hunting and migrating tribes, and that their houses were wood and mud structures with thatched roofs. Amazingly, none of the nine white men actually believed them to be descended

from the Welsh, but simply summarized the difference of this tribe from others. It is these differences that in the eyes of pro-Madoc forces make them likely candidates as Welsh descendants. [31]

Henry Marie Brackenbridge, founder of the Naval Live Oaks Reservation, visited them in 1811 and noted their fair complexions. One of the last to visit was a painter named George Catlin; he noted that they were a very strange people, unlike any of the others he had seen, and he emphasized the civilized nature of these people. [32] Catlin reiterates what others have said—their complexions are white, their eyes blue, hazel, and grey. [33]

Despite these descriptions whether the Mandans were Welsh descendants or not will never be known; the tribe was nearly exterminated by a smallpox epidemic in 1837. By the twentieth century, only three hundred Mandans survived and their customs and culture have been lost.

It is at this point that our documentary trail grows cold. With even wider expansion of the knowledge of Madoc, more supposed confirmations are found everywhere. Strange ruins, unidentified skeletons, fanciful Indian tales—again and again are used as examples of the Welsh colony. In an exchange of letters in 1810 between Amos Stoddard and John Sevier, first governor of Tennessee, Sevier explains that thirty years previously he interviewed a Cherokee Indian chief, Oconostota, who confirmed that his tribe knew of a group of Indians that were called the Welsh; they had landed in Mobile Bay, gradually moved up the Alabama River to Lookout Mountain, eventually down the Tennessee River to the Ohio, to the Mississippi, and up the Missouri to the west. These "white" Indians, the old chief asserted, were now long gone. [34] These letters, apparently not known to Madoc supporters until the twentieth century, have been seized upon with enthusiasm. They have led indirectly to claims of Madoc as the founder of Clark County, Indiana, and used as confirmation of Mobile as the landing site of Madoc in 1170.

We may never know the entire story for the Madoc legend has now become a perplexing entanglement of myth, of repetition of uncorroborated statements—which enourage the belief that something is true simply because it is repeated so often, and of the passions of partisans of both sides of the story.

Some of those passions led to the erection of a historical marker at Fort Morgan, Alabama in 1953 by the Daughters of the American Revolution. It states, "In memory of Prince Madoc, a Welsh explorer who landed on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1170 and left behind, with the Indians, the Welsh language." It cites as its source the *Encyclopedia Americana*, Webster's *Encyclopedia*, and Richard Hakluyt. In the forty years since that marker was dedicated, it has been taken down and placed in storage—caught between disrepute and affirmation. [35]

Another example of the controversial nature of the legend is provided by the Eisteddfodd, an annual gathering of Welsh poets, which in 1858 offered a prize for the best essay on the discovery of America by Prince Madoc. At the gatherings, the committee announced that it had received a number of essays, that none were deemed suitable, and indeed, one particular essay was rejected by the committee for being totally unsuitable. The committee refused to comment

further, and among the distraught audience, one man rose. He introduced himself as Thomas Stephens, author of the rejected paper, and proceeded to harshly criticize the committee. It had rejected his paper, not because of any fault of research, but because the viewpoint of the paper did not match that of the committee. Writing on the discovery of America by Madoc, Stephens had, instead, produced a paper that could be titled the "Non-discovery of America by Prince Madoc."

Fortunately Stephens's research was published but not until 1893, thirty-five years after the controversial contest. Why so late? Because in 1893, the annual gathering of the Eisteddfodd was not held in England, rather it was held in the one place in the entire world where the Madoc challenge should be re-echoed—the World's Columbian exposition in Chicago. It is now a century later; Columbus is again celebrated while Madoc continues to languish in the shadows.

This paper has traced the story of Madoc from the earliest evidence through four hundred years of testimony, from an Elizabethan era plot to wrest the title to the New World from the Spanish through the attempts of many explorers to find traces him on the North American continent or failing that, some lingering traces of the Welsh people among the Indians. We have also seen some examples of the passions of those who support the story and those who do not. What is our conclusion? The evidence offered to support the Madoc discovery appears unreliable at its worst and vague at its best. Those who support the view that Madoc never made it to America, if he existed at all, have strong arguments, chief among them, the unreliability of the very evidence offered by pro-Madoc supporters. The legend of Prince Madoc is just that—a legend, but like all good stories, it will probably never die.

In 1989 Wales held a national competition to select a National Hostess. The winner of the competition, a twenty-two-year-old Welsh schoolteacher, Stella Owen, was sent to North America. Here she toured cities urging travelers to vacation in Wales in the summer of 1989 for the investiture of Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales. Speaking in New York City and wearing the national costume—a long red skirt, black-laced bodice, and tall black hat—she urged Americans to visit Wales, because, after all, she stated America was discovered by a Welshman. She explained that all the Welsh history books told of Prince Madoc and his fleet of ten ships sailing up Mobile Bay to discover the New World and establish the first European settlement in the western hemisphere. [36] The *New York Times* called this assertion nothing short of "fantastic." But perhaps the best reply was in a letter to the editor on March 23, 1989.

Jerrems C. Hart of Litchfield, Connecticut, reminded the readers that the true discoverers were Eric the Red and his son Leif, but in the final analysis, Columbus has been given all the credit because he was able to write about what he saw and what he did.

Notes

[1] Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (New York, 1971), 81.

[2] Gwyn Williams, *Madoc: The Making of a Myth* (London, 1979), [1].

[3] Morison, *The European Discovery of America*, 84.

[4] Thomas Stephens, *Madoc: An Essay on the Discovery of America by Madoc Ap Owen Gwynedd in the Twelfth Century* (London, 1893), 7-20, 187-226. Stephens performs an exhaustive analysis of bardic poems, their authors, sources, interpretations, etc. See also Williams, *Madoc*, 44ff. Williams, a passionate proponent of the Madoc legend, does not counter Stephens, but argues that the absence of discovery in the poems does not necessarily mean there was no discovery!

[5] David B. Quinn, ed., *America from Concept to Discovery. Early Exploration of North America* (New York, 1979) 1: 67.

[6] Stephens, *Madoc*, 17-18.

[7] Richard Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation, made by Sea or over Land . . .* (London, 1589), 507.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., title page.

[10] Caradog of Llancarvan, *The historie of Cambria, now called Wales . . . written in the Brytish language above two hundred years past; translated by H. Lloyd . . . Corrected, augmented and continued by David Powel* (London, 1584). Cited by numerous Madoc scholars; see also Stephens, *Madoc*, 27-28.

[11] The original 1584 edition of *Historie of Cambria* contains a side-note, or notation in the margin of the source of this sentence; it states "H. Lhoyd." From David Quinn, *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612* (New York, 1979), 67.

[12] Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations*, 506. Quinn, *New American World*, 67-68.

[13] Williams, *Madoc*, 35.

[14] Ibid.

[15] James A. Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery Under Henry VII* (Cambridge, 1962), 201. Citation taken from a map of the North Atlantic drawn by John Dee in 1580. British Museum, Cotton MS Aug.Li,1. Short Title: "A brief remembrance of sundry foreign Regions, discovered, inhabited, and partly Conquered by the Subjects of this Brytish Monarchie: And so the lawfull Title of our Soveraigne Lady Queene Elizabeth for the due Clayme and just recovery of the same disclosed. Which (in effect) is a Title Royall to all the Coast and Ilands, beginning at or about Terra Florida, alongst or ner unto Atlantis, going Northerly . . ." The note on Madoc is written on the back of the map; the Hakluyt Society dates the writing from 1578 based on internal evidence of the writings.

[16] Sir Humphrey Gilbert, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1975) 10: 411.

[17] Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations*, 507-8.

[18] Richard Hakluyt, *Divers voyages . . .* (London, 1582), Map [1], [1527].

[19] Richard Hakluyt, *The Relation of David Ingram*, from *The Principall Navigations*, March of America Facsimile Series, no. 14 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1966), foreword [n.p.].

[20] Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations*, 560.

[21] Stephens, *Madoc*, 37-38; Williams, *Madoc*, 41-42. See also Ellen Pugh, *Brave His Soul* (New York, 1970), 123, for account theory of Mexican god Quetzalcoatl being none other than Madoc!

[22] This is a simplification of a number of variant reprintings of Jones's letter. It appears in Stephens, *Madoc*, 227-29, and is retold in the "Crown of England's Titles to America Prior to that of Spain" a letter from Theophilus in *Gentlemen's Magazine* 10 (1740): 103-5.

[23] A group of Welshmen living in London founded the Gweneddigion in 1771, meeting monthly, they discussed the old Welsh legends. From this group came some of the most enthusiastic and prolific writings in support of the Madoc legend ever to see print. See especially Pugh, *Brave*, 42.

[24] John Williams, *An Enquiry into the Truth of the Tradition Concerning the Discovery of America* . . . (London, 1791), 121.

[25] J. Leitch Wright, Jr. *William Augustus Bowles, Director General of the Creek Nation* (Athens, 1967), *vii.*

[26] Pugh, *Brave*, 46.

[27] Owen-Pughe, the Welsh dictionary-maker, has noted the similarity in sound between Madogwys (pronounced Mad-uh-goo-was) and Padoucas (Pad-ooh-cas) believing the latter to be a linguistic twist of the former: Madogwys means people of Madoc. Pugh, *Brave*, 48.

[28] Jonathan Carver, *Three Years Travel through the Interior Parts of North America* . . . (Philadelphia, 1784), 59.

[29] Pugh, *Brave*, 51.

[30] Thomas Jefferson to Meriweather Lewis, January 22, 1804, in *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, ed. Donald Jackson 2d (Urbana, 1978), 1: 165-66.

[31] These notes are assembled from a variety of sources including George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (New York, 1841), 1: 80; Harold McCracken, *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York, 1959), 83-90; Pugh, *Brave*, 90-91.

[32] Catlin, *Letters and Notes* 1: 85.

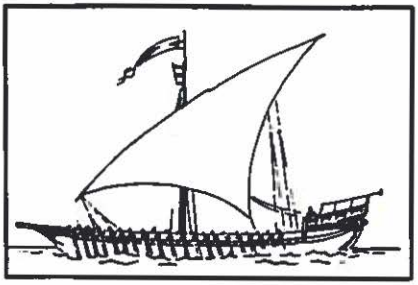
[33] Ibid., 1: 94. Noteworthy comments from a painter versed in color.

[34] Dana Olsen, *Prince Madoc: Founder of Clark County, Indiana* (Jeffersonville, IN, 1987), 36-37. Also repeated in Pugh, *Brave*, 106-7.

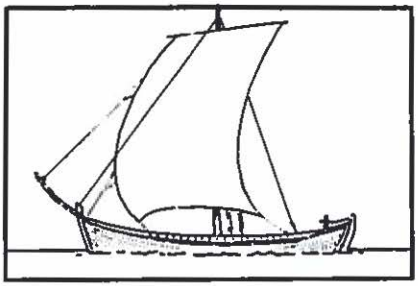
[35] Photograph of marker, Pugh, *Brave*, facing p. 1.; conversation with Dr. Jerry Yares, University of West Florida.

[36] *New York Times*, February 9, 1989, 231.

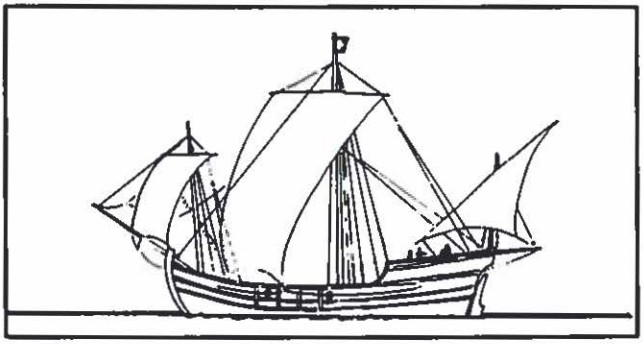
Dean DeBolt is University Librarian for Special Collections at the University of West Florida, Pensacola.



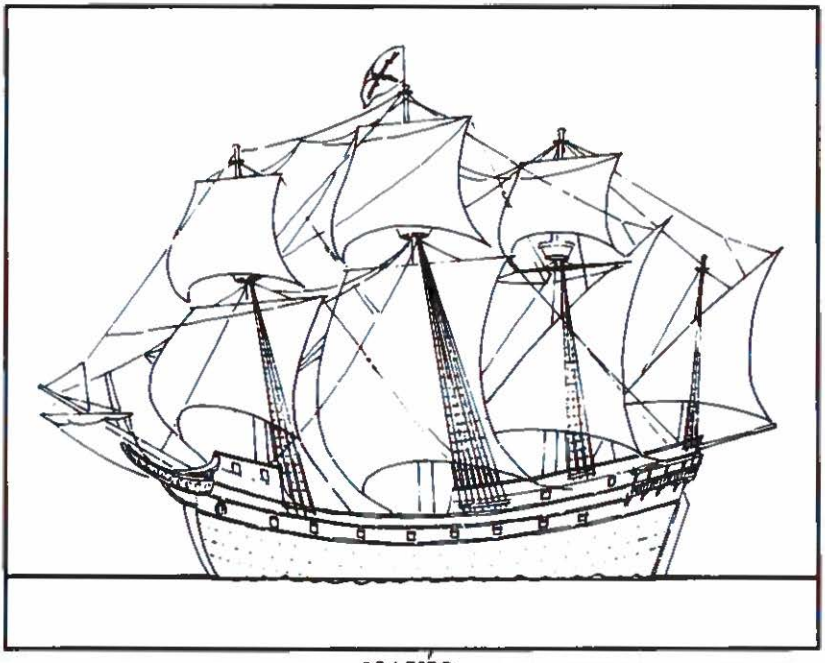
GALEOTA



BARCOLONGO



CARAVELA



NAVIO

Ships in the Exploration of *La Florida*

Roger C. Smith

Sixteenth-century Spanish exploration of *La Tierra de Florida*, the unknown land between New Spain and Cuba, was made possible by ships, guns, and horses. These primary tools were prerequisites for the expansion of empire into Florida from the Caribbean and the Mexican mainland. Historians have long discussed various routes taken, geography recorded, and native peoples encountered. But the armed *entradas* of Narváez and Soto, and the settlement ventures of Luna and Menéndez, were primarily amphibious expeditions. Their failures and successes ultimately depended on the availability of suitable watercraft that were carefully selected, provisioned, and maintained. Seagoing vessels always have served as vectors of cultural transmission, carrying ideas, languages, inventions, and raw and finished materials over increasing distances to alter the complexion of human existence forever. They also were vectors of biological transmission, carrying plants and animals, as well as disease, often with immediate and permanent consequence. Spanish maritime investigation of the Americas in the early sixteenth century was perhaps the most profound example of the role of sailing ships in changing global history.

The types of Spanish vessels that appeared in American waters were the result of a linking of southern and northern European ideas about ship construction and rigs. By the dawn of oceanic discovery in the fifteenth century, this admixture of nautical technology had produced two distinctive blue-water craft capable of sustained voyages—*caravelas* and *naos*. These vessel types were preferred by almost all Iberian maritime explorers; they carried the Portuguese around the Cape of Good Hope to India and the Spaniards across the Atlantic to the West Indies and beyond. As colonial settlements were established in America, a host of smaller *bergantines*, *fragatas*, and *barcos* were employed to connect and to support these outposts. And from Europe came a new deep-water vessel, the *galeón*, developed through trial and error to service and to defend the expanding maritime lifeline between the Old World and the New.

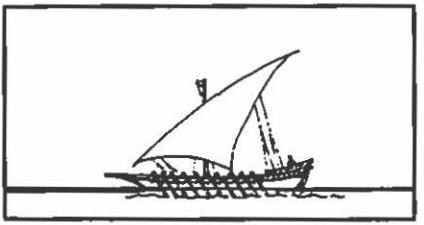
The caravel is known in literature as early as the thirteenth century in association with fishing and commerce, and in the fourteenth century with river and coastal trade. [1] The vessel as a distinctive type emerged during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when it became widely admired for a revolutionary but mysterious combination of qualities that enabled early Renaissance mariners a passage into uncharted waters. Built for seaworthiness rather than cargo capacity, the caravel possessed precisely the characteristics needed in its time. Adapted from different regions by the Portuguese through seagoing trial and error, an innovative combination of lateen sails, lean hull, and axial stern rudder, produced a most efficient sailing machine in which to ride over heavy seas off Africa and to venture up equatorial river mouths. The triangular lateen sail, employed on small Mediterranean craft from the seventh century, most likely was brought

from the Indian Ocean by Arab conquests in Egypt. Northern European crusaders gave the lateen sail its present name when they encountered the distinctive rig in the southern waters of Latin countries. [2] The segmented spread of triangular canvas distributed over a long hull allowed the *caravela latina* to point, pivot, tack, and run as wind directions necessitated. Preconstructed hull framing, upon which flush, edged-joined (caravel) planking was nailed, provided support for the multiple lateen rig. A long, light hull, with fine lines and partial decking, was fitted with an axial stern rudder, instead of traditional steering oars on either stern quarter, thus increasing maneuverability in the open ocean.

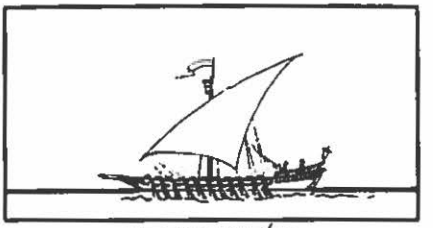
Caravels had proven themselves off Africa and across the Indian Ocean; but soon they faced a broader challenge—the Atlantic ocean. On his first voyage to the New World, Columbus used two caravels, but changed *Niña*'s rig in the Canary Islands from the traditional *caravela latina* to that of a square-rigged *caravela redonda* to take advantage of following Atlantic trade winds. Each of his later voyages also would depend on shallow-draft, highly responsive caravels to comb the shoals and reefs of the West Indies. These vessels were square-rigged on fore and main masts, but kept a lateen sail on the mizzen mast to assist in tacking and coming about maneuvers.

Soon, the Spanish banners of exploration flew from caravels that methodically probed outward from the islands charted by Columbus. Two of the Admiral's former crew members, Juan Ponce de León and Antón de Alaminos, sighted the coast of Florida in 1513 from the caravel *Santiago*, flagship of a small fleet of three vessels that also carried Ponce's favorite mare. [3] Sailing southward along the Atlantic coast, through the Keys, and up the Gulf coast, Ponce was not sure whether he had discovered a large island or not; but, pilot Alaminos had noted a phenomenon that would impact all subsequent navigation in the region—the Gulf Stream, a natural current that would propel future Spanish shipping homeward from the Caribbean.

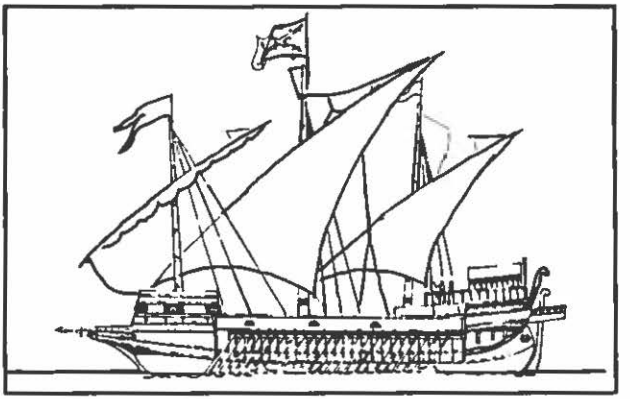
In 1517 two caravels and a *bergantín* (brigantine) manned by 110 soldiers and sailors set sail from Cuba under the captaincy of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, with Antón de Alaminos as pilot. The original purpose of the voyage was to kidnap Lucayan Indians in the Bahamas, but Alaminos persuaded Hernández to sail west to search for rich lands reputed to lie in that direction. [4] The expedition explored the Caribbean coast of the Yucatán peninsula, the Spaniards believing it to be a large island, noting Mayan pyramids (one of which they called *Gran Cairo*), and encountering large seagoing canoes. Heavy casualties from battles with the natives and a serious shortage of water caused their mission to be aborted, and Alaminos directed the explorers to the Florida peninsula, where they landed at the same location that Ponce had four years before. Here they found water, but quickly were repelled by Indian attacks that left many Spaniards dead; Alaminos and Hernández both were wounded, and the latter died after returning to Cuba. [5] Both caravels survived the ill-fated voyage, but the *bergantín* was left behind, stripped and scuttled, since there were not enough sailors alive to man three vessels.



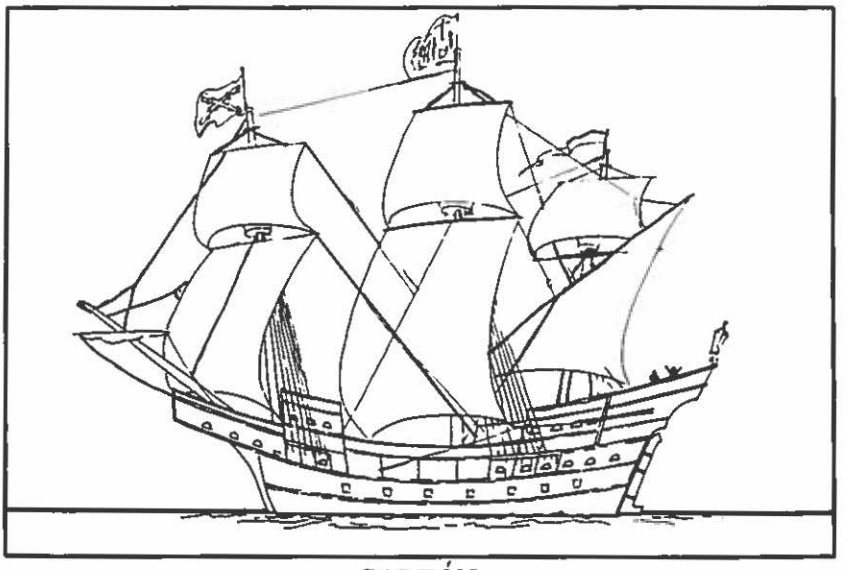
FRAGATA



BERGANTÍN



GALEAZA



GALEÓN

With this voyage the Spaniards had seen evidence of a highly organized civilization to the west of the islands. A series of subsequent voyages culminated with the expedition of Hernán Cortés reaching the heart of the Aztec empire in 1519. Meanwhile, other adventurers sought their fortunes by sailing farther north to find new lands. The Governor of Jamaica prepared a small fleet under the command of Alverez de Pineda, which sailed in 1519 from that island into the Yucatán Channel and turned north to find land at the western end of the present state of Florida. From there the fleet turned south and followed the west coast of the "island" found by Ponce, until winds forced them to reverse course to the north and west, following the coastline until they reached the settlement of Cortés in Mexico. In the course of his voyage, Pineda's voyage disproved the notion that Florida was an island, discovered the Mississippi River, and sailed some three hundred leagues along the northern Gulf. The result was a map of the entire Gulf of Mexico, which formed the basis for future navigation in the region.

Little is known about the four ships of Pineda's fleet, since no formal account of the voyage survives. They are simply listed as armed ships (*navíos armadas*) in official correspondence, but they may have included two Portuguese caravels known to have been purchased by the Governor of Jamaica. [6] Similarly, the principal vessels of the ill-fated *entrada* into Florida by Pánfilo de Narváez in 1528 were simply called *navíos* (ships), of which there were four, as well as a *bergantín*. They may have been caravels, but more likely they were of a larger type called *nao*, according to one chronicle. [7] Some authors have considered the word *nao* to be a contraction of *navío*, but in Spain and Portugal the *nao* was a well-defined type of merchant vessel. The type most probably evolved from a medieval Mediterranean vessel with a single mast amidships, carrying a large lateen sail bent on a yard nearly the length of the hull and steered by two oars, one on each side of the stern. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, *naos* had become preferred cargo carriers. Slightly more beamy but rigged similarly to the *caravelas redondas*, the larger workhouse *naos* carried colonists, arms, tools, and provisions in the wake of caravels, and paved the way for commercial maritime empires in the East and West Indies.

Storms encountered off the southern cape of Africa had demonstrated that early Portuguese exploratory caravels were vulnerable to heavy winds and seas. In addition the lengthy voyage from the southern Atlantic into the Indian Ocean exhausted provisions and crews of such small craft. Returning from the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, Bartolomeu Dias recommended that the future design of vessels bound for the East Indies be altered to produce larger cargo capacities and higher freeboards. What he sought was a vessel like earlier round ships that stood higher in the water, but which still could navigate in coastal waters. Keeping some characteristics of the caravel, shipwrights devised stouter, roomier craft with more hull capacity and crew quarters. For the voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1497, Dias helped to design two *naos* of between 100 and 120 tons, carrying square fore- and mainsails and lateen mizzens. Their forward masts

had topsails with crow's nests, and bowsprits were fitted with spritsails. [8] These full-rigged ships were self-sufficient and seaworthy, of a type that would pave the way for European domination of the world's oceans.

A traditional shipbuilding formula was applied to the rule that for each unit of breadth, there were two for keel length and three for length on deck. Cargo capacity of the hull followed the same ratio: depth of hold was determined to be about half the beam, which was half the length of keel, and so on. [9] Compared to caravels, this hull form was fairly large and beamy, short at the keel, and deep in the hold. Columbus complained that his flagship *nao Santa María* was very heavy and not suitable for the business of discovery, after she wrecked on the north coast of Hispaniola on his first voyage to America. On succeeding voyages, he purposely employed smaller-draft caravels to explore shallow Caribbean waters.

Characteristics of Spanish *naos* were their ability to carry sufficient cargo and arms for lengthy voyages without sacrificing strength and speed. Primarily a merchant vessel that carried some artillery, they also could function as warships with the addition of more cannons. The evolution of their features for transoceanic trade during the Age of Discovery and shortly thereafter foreshadowed the development of the galleon, embodying refined responses to the needs of maritime commerce and defense during the settlement phase of the new Spanish-American colonies.

Narváez landed his expedition of four hundred men and horses (half of the horses had died at sea) in the vicinity of Tampa Bay in April 1528. He immediately sent the small *bergantín* northward to find a bay that pilot Diego de Miruelo recommended as a future rendezvous point. When the vessel did not return, Narváez decided to send the other ships to find the harbor (Apalachee Bay) and to wait for the soldiers to march overland to meet them. This decision, protested by some among the party, was to prove fateful; the explorers would never see the *naos* again. For a year, the ships searched the coast for Narváez and his men; at last they gave up and sailed for New Spain. Eight years later, four survivors of the expedition were found by Spanish slavers after escaping their Indian captors. They told of how the disheartened army had built five crude open boats after aborting their trek through swamps filled with hostile natives, only to become separated and lost on the coast of modern-day Texas. [10]

The disastrous venture of Narváez was followed by an ambitious expedition to *La Florida* in 1539 under the command of Hernando de Soto, a wealthy veteran of Pizzaro's conquest in Peru. Soto's fleet consisted of five *naos*, two caravels, and two *bergantines*. While the fleet was provisioning in Cuba, Soto sent his chief pilot, Juan de Añasco, ahead with a caravel and a *bergantín* built in Havana to scout for a landing place. When the fleet anchored off the coast of Florida in the vicinity of Charlotte Harbor, the *bergantines* were deployed to sound the channel approaches to find deep water for the larger ships. After troops, horses, arms, and provisions were landed, the ships were sent back to Havana; later, the *bergantines*, under Añasco met the army at Apalachee Bay

after reconnoitering the coast and finding the remains of Narváez's boat-building camp. These vessels were then sent west under the command of Francisco Maldonado and Gómez Arías to find a suitable harbor where Soto expected to march his army. Sixty leagues distant in the winter of 1539-1540, they reached a province called Ochuse with a sheltered, deep harbor which today is called Pensacola. [11]

The *bergantín* played an important role in the exploration of *La Florida*. A small partially-decked, flat-bottomed longboat, propelled by sail and oar, the early Spanish brigantine is not to be confused with later vessels of the same name that were of a larger two-masted ship type with square sails on the foremast. For this reason, the term *bergantín* sometimes has been translated as "pinnace" by writers seeking an equivalent English type. The brigantine referred to in the Spanish chronicles of discovery was a small, light galley used for military exploration in the shallows of the coastline and rivers. With lateen sails on one or two masts, benches for oarsmen with long sweeps, and open space for soldiers or livestock, these versatile vessels descended from a different shipbuilding tradition than caravels and *naos*: the Mediterranean galley family.

Evolved from a classical ancestry of long warships in Phoenician, Greek, and Roman times, the galley (*galera*) was reintroduced by the Italian Maritime Republics at the end of the ninth century. As a natural product of the Mediterranean, where uncertain winds did not favor vessels relying solely on sails, the medieval galley became a single-banked rowing ship with outriggers on each side to support longer oars. Sometime in the fourteenth century, an axial stern-mounted rudder replaced traditional steering oars and quarter rudders.

The typical sixteenth-century galley was about eight times as long as it was wide. Lightly built with keel and frames covered by planking joined edge to edge, the hull sat very low in the water. The vessel was divided into three sections. The first was a fighting platform on the bow containing an array of artillery pointing forward to fire at point blank range a murderous charge of scrap metal. The galley's main weapon, however, was a long iron-reinforced ram, which was thrust through an enemy's hull at ramming speed. Between the bow and the stern, the second section of the vessel contained benches for the oarsmen. The benches slanted inwards toward the stern of the ship, allowing the long, heavy oars a maximum reach at the beginning of each stroke. The third section was a sterncastle and cabin aft, which housed the galley captain, the helmsman, and the drummer directing the strokes of the oarsmen.

Early galleys had one main mast, situated a third of the way down the ship's length, with a fighting top which also served as a lookout. A composite lateen yard, made of two yards lashed together, was longer than the mast itself and served also as a gangway in assaults on castle walls. Depending on wind conditions, different sizes of lateen sails were hoisted. Other galleys had two masts: a mainmast stepped amidships and a foremast in the bow. Sails were only used on voyages from one port to another in favorable wind conditions. Given the tactical advantages of a low-slung, sleek hull, there were disadvantages

to the galley's performance under sail. Waves came inboard even in a slight sea; and during strong winds, the whole lee side of the deck went underwater, which often reached the waists of the oarsmen. [12]

Small *bergantines* had accompanied early Spanish voyages to America as support craft towed behind larger caravels and *naos*. However, the vessel type soon was employed independently for coastal reconnaissance. Ponce's 1513 fleet included the *bergantín San Cristóbal*, and, as mentioned above, *bergantines* sailed in the expeditions of Hernández, Narváez, and Soto. In the vanguard of the 1565 conquest of Florida by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés was *La Esperanza*, a two-masted brigantine with a crew of six soldiers and eleven benches for oars, which were manned by soldiers. [13] As a veteran mariner Menéndez knew the value of shallow-draft, oared vessels to the accomplishment of his mission. Having ousted the French from Fort Caroline and established St. Augustine, he gathered another fleet to explore the three hundred leagues of Florida's coastline from the St. Johns River to Tampa. Of the seven ships, two were brigantines in which he and Diego de Amaya probed the islands, bays, and inlets, while the other vessels stood off in deep water. They found a new passage for New Spain's convoys between Marquesas Keys and the Tortugas. [14] Cruising in the shallows of the west coast (the brigantines only drew three feet of water), Amaya's vessel was approached by a canoe with a lone occupant. The individual turned out to be Hernando de Escalante de Fontaneda, who had spent seventeen years with the Calusa Indians after being shipwrecked at age thirteen in the Keys. [15]

Bergantines were built by the Spaniards in the New World as well. With the hardware and tackle removed from their scuttled fleet, the army of Cortés built thirteen small *bergantines*, which were carried in pieces from the coast to Lake Texcuco to be launched for an assault on the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán. After the conquest the vessels were preserved for display as memorials in the dockyards of Mexico. [16] In 1543 during the expedition of Soto, his successor, Luis de Moscoso, ordered seven *bergantines* to be built on the bank of the Mississippi River. The operation took six months; horse tack and slave shackles were forged into nails and anchors; henequen fiber was used for caulking; Indian robes cut for sails; and mulberry bark twisted into cables. [17] The vessels which had proper rudders and oars carried the survivors of Soto's expedition down the river and into the Gulf, reaching New Spain after fifty-three days of coastal sailing. *Bergantines* also were built on the Florida coast at Pensacola, after the disastrous hurricane that befell the colonization attempt of Tristán de Luna y Arellano in 1559. The fleet was being unloaded when the storm wrecked seven of ten vessels in the harbor. Luna ordered two brigantines constructed to transport the ill-fated colonists to Bahía Filipina (Mobile), and then to ascend and explore the Alabama River. [18] The Florida brigantines were built of local oak and pine, and perhaps with the remains of rigging and hardware salvaged from the wrecked fleet.

In a letter to Luna the Viceroy of New Spain, Luis de Velasco, had suggested that he build a *fragata* (frigate) to carry dispatches between the two men. [19] Smallest member of the galley family, the *fragata* was an open, undecked longboat with six to twelve benches for one-man oars, and one or more masts. The early Spanish frigate is not to be confused with the later, larger warship that is known from colonial times until today. Luna had used a frigate to scout ahead of his colonization fleet for the Bay of Ochuse, but the vessel had mistakenly led the convoy to Bahía Filipina. Luna sent the frigate out again; it soon found the right bay, and led the fleet there. Menéndez also made use of *fragatas* in Florida waters. These probably were adapted to carry more canvas, and perhaps were fitted with square sails rather than lateen (as caravels had been) to take advantage of following winds. Undoubtedly they were very fast. A Havana-built frigate, *El Aguila* (The Eagle), was employed by Menéndez for coastal exploration and a quick Atlantic crossing in 1567 from Florida to the Azores in only seventeen days. [20] On this voyage she carried a crew of five, twenty-five soldiers, six Indians, two prisoners, and three artillery pieces. [21]

Barcos (barks) also took part in the exploration of *La Florida*. Sometimes a generic term for any small watercraft, exploratory barks were of a class of open coastal commerce and fishing boats, rigged with square sails on one or more masts. The *barco gavarra* was the largest, with main- and foretopsails; the *barco longo* was the smallest, with a single square sail and a low freeboard that made the boat easy to row. [22] In preparation for the Luna expedition, Viceroy Velasco in 1558 wrote to the King that six hundred-ton barks of less than three-foot draft were being built to accompany the fleet for bay and river navigation and for defense against native canoes. [23] Two of these would survive the hurricane that damaged the fleet at Pensacola. Prior to Luna's departure from New Spain, Velasco had sent an expedition under Guido de Lavazares to explore the ports and bays on the coast of Florida. The flagship was a large *barco*, accompanied by lateen-rigged *fusta* (foist) and a *chalupa* (shallop), all manned by sixty soldiers and sailors. [24] These were very small ships in which to explore the Gulf of Mexico. The *fusta* was a light craft propelled by sails and oars; the chalupa was a small, decked boat, with two masts and six to eight oars per side. The object of Lavazares' mission must have been a speedy reconnaissance; his voyage from Veracruz to Chocktawhatchee Bay and back took a little over three months. *Chalupas* were a favorite of Menéndez; his expedition to Florida in 1565 employed four armed shallops between sixty and seventy-five tons, named *Magdalena*, *San Miguel*, and *Concepción*. [25]

These various small vessels had proven their worth in the exploration of *La Florida*. The nautical strategy of Luna's fleet was reflected soon after in the official *ordenanzas de poblaciones* of 1563, in which Phillip II required every discoverer to take at least two vessels of not over sixty tons each, in order to enter inlets, cross the bars of rivers, and pass over shoals. Larger ships, if employed by an expedition, were required to remain in a safe port until

another safe port was found by the small craft. Thirty men and no more were to go in every ship, and the pilots must write down what they encountered for the benefit of other pilots. [26]

Associated with the Luna and Menéndez settlements of Florida was the *galeón* (galleon), a new type of vessel that began to appear in the American waters. Armed freighters of the maritime lifeline between Spain and her colonies, *galeones* were developed during the sixteenth century in response to a need for transatlantic speed and security. Born in the Mediterranean Sea of Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish traditions, galleons combined the cargo capacity of heavy, round ships and the swift waterlines of oared galleys with the sail patterns and riggings of oceanic caravels to become among the most advanced sailing ships of their day.

Early galleons essentially were similar to transport *naos*, but more heavily armed. As the wealth of the New World began to pour into Spain's imperial coffers, and thence into her creditors' hands, the need for greater cargo capacity initially was solved by increasing ships' beams and raising their bulwarks to accommodate bronze and iron cannons needed to defend their precious contents from corsairs. The Spanish admiral Alvaro de Bazán and his brother Alonso promoted this development by employing larger galleons of their own design for transport of merchandise and treasure. They also incorporated new innovations such as copper bilge pumps, lead sheathing, and mixing of preservatives in the wax which the hull planks were treated.

To concentrate the weight of ordnance near the ship's center of gravity, 'tumble-home' was introduced, making the deck much narrower than the hull at the waterline. By the middle of the sixteenth century, galleons averaged between three and six hundred tons; later in the century, they grew twelve hundred tons. As carrying capacity of the ships increased, decks often were added to house additional artillery and passengers for the Indies route. Supporting large fore- and sterncastles, as well as three or four masts, mid sixteenth-century galleons tended to be topheavy in rough seas, especially when overloaded, and were prone to capsize in storms. Even when cleaned of bottom growth and not overloaded these 'castles of the sea' could not average more than four or five knots in favorable winds. [27]

To combat unseaworthiness a change in construction and theory was needed. Although sleeker and faster than older broad-beamed vessels, the galleon's high sides and towering sterncastle made her roll and pitch due to the short length of keel in proportion to length of deck. One advance in design was the development of a low square forecastle set back from stem, making it less apt to catch the wind and force the ship's bow to leeward.

In the 1560s Menéndez formally advocated a lengthening of the galleon's keel in relation to its beam. Despite opposition from older builders, ships called *galeoncetes*, with lighter draft, finer lines, and a lower deck for rowers, were constructed in Cuba as defense against pirates. [28] Later, the King of Spain ordered eight of these vessels built for use in the Bay of Biscay since they proved

to be good sailors. Menéndez's ideas were the first step in evolution of the man-of-war, and would eventually be adopted at the end of the seventeenth century by all European navies.

The flagship of Menéndez's Florida fleet was a new Viscayan *galeón* named *San Pelayo*, of nine hundred tons, armed with ten bronze guns as well as iron artillery. She carried 77 mariners, 18 artillery men, a pilot, 316 soldiers, and 26 families. [29] But, the *San Pelayo*'s role in the settlement of Florida was short-lived; after unloading part of her cargo, she sailed to Hispaniola. Menéndez never saw his ship again; and later he learned that she had been destroyed on the coast of Denmark. [30]

The use of nautical technology was crucial to the exploration of *La Tierra de Florida*. The celebrated Spanish discovery of another world in 1492 had opened vast and unknown directions for maritime expansion westward into the Atlantic. At first a trickle and then a flood of small sailing ships traced the new route to the Americas, steered by the motive of profit masked by religion. In their wake came settlers and conquerors, eager to participate in the Iberian dream. Within a short span of years the Spanish culture—once confined to a poor and arid peninsula—took control of the West Indies and the North American continent. Fortunately, Spain enjoyed the benefits of surprise. Except in Florida her ships and guns rarely encountered any substantial or sustained resistance; they never faced any major naval opposition. Slowly the shores on which Ponce de León and his followers landed were explored and settled, but not without a price to native peoples. This process of overseas expansion was only made possible by royal patronage, private enterprise, and nautical technology involving a multi-functioned array of watercraft serving as scouts, transports, suppliers, and defenders of newly found territories.

As Spanish hegemony grew, its American empire could function and survive only as long as maritime power made use of increasing nautical technology to control political and mercantile colonial policies. Other European cultures soon acquired the same technology, and the inevitable contest of competition began. However for a short while in history and at just the right time, the Spanish people possessed the technical ability to construct and to launch vehicles that broke through the boundaries of the known world.

Notes

[1] Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, *Estudos sobre Navios Portugueses nos Séculos XV e XVI* (Lisbon, 1892), 43.

[2] Roger C. Smith, "The Portuguese Caravel," in *Early Modern European Ship-types, 1450-1650*, The Newberry Library Slide Set no. 6, (Chicago, 1986), 5-7.

[3] Robert Weddle, *Spanish Sea: The Gulf of Mexico in North American Discovery, 1500-1685* (College Station, 1985), 40.

[4] Jerald T. Milanich and Susan Milbrath, "Another World," in *First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570* (Gainesville, 1989), 13.

[5] Weddle, *Spanish Sea*, 61-63.

[6] Ibid., 98, 99.

[7] Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia general y natural de las indias, islas y tierra-firme del mar oceano* (Madrid, 1851), 1: 588.

[8] Jaime Martins Barata, *O navio "São* Gabriel" e as naus manuelinas (Coimbra, 1970), 25-27; João Brás de Oliveira, *Os Navios de Vasco da Gama* (Lisbon, 1892).

[9] Tomé Cano, *Arte para fabricar, fortificar, y apareiar naos de guerra, y merchante; con las reglas de achearlas; reduzido a toda cuenta y medida; y en grande utilidad de la navigación* (Seville, 1611), fol. 15v.

[10] Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America*, trans. Cyclone Covey (New York, 1961).

[11] *Final Report of the United States De Soto Commission*, ed. John R. Swanton (Washington, DC, 1985), 163, 169.

[12] Roger C. Smith, "The Mediterranean Galley," in *Early Modern European Ship-types, 1450-1650*, The Newberry Library Slide Set no. 6 (Chicago, 1986), 1-4.

[13] "Inventario y relación de los navíos, gente, bastimentos, artillería y otras cosas . . . ," in Eugenio Ruidíaz y Caravia, *La Florida, su Conquista y Colonización por Pedro Menéndez de Avilés* (Madrid, 1893-94), 2: 559.

[14] Eugene Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568* (Gainesville, 1976), 147.

[15] Hernando de Escalante de Fontaneda, *Memoir of Do. d'Escalante de Fontaneda Repsecting Florida*, trans. Buckingham Smith (1854; reprint, Miami, 1973), 11.

[16] William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (New York, 1939) note, 548.

[17] Weddle, *Spanish Sea*, 222.

[18] Herbert Ingram Priestley, *The Luna Papers* (Deland, FL, 1928), 1: 95, 97.

[19] Ibid., 1: 79.

[20] Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 187.

[21] Albert Manucy, "Notes on the *fragata*," unpublished ms., 1962, Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board.

[22] Albert Manucy, *Florida's Menéndez. Captain General of the Ocean Sea* (St. Augustine, 1983) 101.

[23] Priestley, *The Luna Papers* 2: 257.

[24] Ibid., 2: 333.

[25] Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 90.

[26] *Final Report*, note, 99.

[27] Roger C. Smith, "The Spanish Galleon," in *Early Modern European Ship-types, 1450-1650*, The Newberry Library Slide Set no. 6 (Chicago, 1986), 12-14.

[28] Clarence H. Haring, *Trade and Navigation Between Spain and the Indies in the Time of the Hapsburgs* (1918; reprint, Gloucester, MA, 1964), 264.

[29] "Inventario y relación de los navíos, gente, bastimentos, artilleriá y otras cosas . . . ," 588.

[30] Lyon, *The Enterprise of Florida*, 164.

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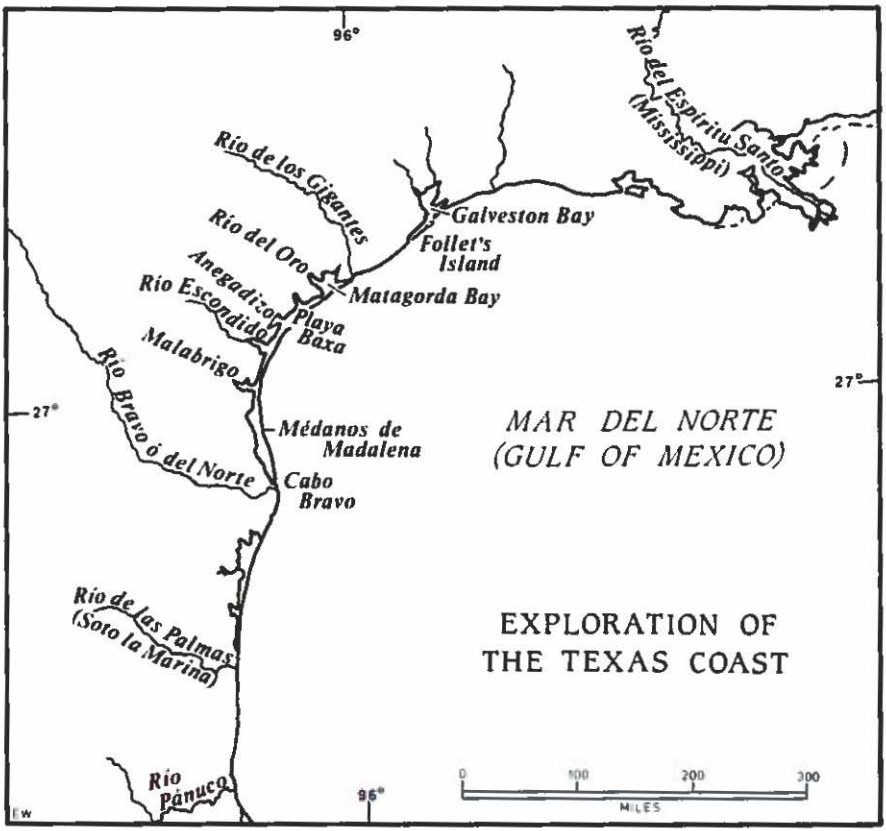
96°
Río del Espíritu Santo
(Mississippi)
Río de los Gigantes
Galveston Bay
Follet's
Island
Río del Oro
Matagorda Bay
Anegadizo
Río Escondido
Playa
Baxa
Malabrigo
27°
Río Bravo ó del Norte
Médanos de
Madalena
Cabo
Bravo
MAR DEL NORTE
(GULF OF MEXICO)
EXPLORATION OF
THE TEXAS COAST
Río de las Palmas
(Soto la Marina)
Río
Pánuco
96°
0
100
200
300
MILES
EW

Exploration of the Texas Coast: Álvarez de Pineda to La Salle

Robert S. Weddle

It can be said with a fair degree of certainty that European exploration of the Texas coast began in 1519 with the voyage of Alonso Álvarez de Pineda. Francisco de Garay, governor of Jamaica, sent the expedition to search the northern Gulf shore for a strait to the Pacific Ocean. The voyage extended from the Florida discovery of Juan Ponce de León to Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, Hernán Cortés's beachhead some thirty-five miles north of the present city of Veracruz.

Even though no firsthand account of this voyage is known, it is often recited as the opening episode in the recorded history of Texas, as well as some other states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Unfortunately, the meagerness and obscurity of sources has given rise to supposition and error. Only from Bernal Díaz del Castillo's history of the Mexican Conquest do we know Álvarez de Pineda's name and that it was on the Río Pánuco—not the Río Grande or the Mississippi—that he careened his ships, traded among the Indians, and began a settlement. [1]

The few known details of the voyage itself come from the royal patent of 1523, granting Garay authority to settle the region explored, and the so-called Pineda map. This map sketch, unlike the original report that it is supposed to have been part of, has been preserved. [2] It is the earliest map to show the Gulf of Mexico in anything like its true outline and proportions.

The map names no rivers or other features on the Texas coast. Although Garay's patent relates that the explorer found fertile lands, rivers yielding fine gold, and natives wearing gold jewelry (some dwarfs and others giants more than seven feet tall), none of these things is assigned to a specific location. Yet names that began appearing on maps a few years later suggest a link to the 1519 voyage. The maps of Diego de Ribero, who in 1526 began work on the master chart of discoveries in the Casa de Contratación in Seville, afford an example. Ribero probably was the author of an unsigned Spanish chart, dated 1527, that today is found in the Grand Ducal Library at Weimar. This map shares many characteristics with his two signed maps dated 1529, one of which also reposes at Weimar. This latter example of his work shows Río de los Gigantes ("the giants' river"), which seems to correspond with Álvarez de Pineda's observation of "giants more than seven feet tall." [3] Indeed, it may well be a reference to the Karankawan tribes of the Texas coast, whose great size was often noted.

Ribero shows in this same region a "Río del Oro," which may stem from the royal patent's reference to "rivers yielding fine gold." If such is its origin, the feature is surely misplaced, for no "river of gold" has ever been identified on the Texas or Louisiana coast. Casting doubt on the whole matter is the fact that the name, first appearing on Juan Vespucci's world map of 1526,

could just as well be taken as Río de Loro, making it a river of parrots rather than gold. [4] Since both Ribero and Vespucci worked on charts in the Casa de Contratación, the agency that governed Spain's overseas commerce and collected geographical data, they had access to information relating to early voyages to America. But, as far as the record goes, there had been no voyage that might have provided such toponyms but that of Álvarez de Pineda.

Appearing for the first time on an unsigned Spanish map in 1527, and again on Ribero's 1529 maps, was Río Escondido. This "hidden river" is indicated in the Texas coastal bend, where the Nueces River mouth in Corpus Christi Bay is obscured behind barrier islands. Between the Río del Oro and the Escondido on the 1529 Ribero-Weimar map are the descriptive words *playa baxa* and *anegadizo*, the one suggesting a low, level beach, the other an area subject to flooding. [5] Whether or not such descriptions were provided by Álvarez de Pineda, it seems clear that the nature of the Texas coast was well understood by Spanish explorers before 1530. South of the Río Escondido, Ribero shows *malabrigo*, indicating poor shelter or unsuitable anchorage. On this lee shore, sailing ships often had difficulty holding to the offing, and apparently Álvarez de Pineda's were no exception. It was in this area in 1554 that three Spanish ships, homeward bound from Veracruz, were driven upon the coast by storm.

Farther south, Ribero noted C Bravo—Cabo Bravo, or wilderness cape—from which the Río Grande probably acquired the name by which it is still known in Mexico: Río Bravo. There was never any real basis for calling this river the Río de las Palmas, as many have done. According to Peter Martyr—and numerous other reliable sources—the Río de las Palmas was the Río Soto la Marina, some 150 miles south of the Río Grande. It was so named by Garay himself in 1523, when contrary winds forced him to land there instead of at the Río Pánuco. [6] Garay, in crossing the Gulf on his voyage from Jamaica, passed nowhere near the Texas coast and therefore could not have provided the place names of the Ribero maps.

The next known European contact with coastal Texas after Álvarez de Pineda was the expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez, of which no information reached Spain before 1536. The Narváez expedition, having launched itself from Florida's Apalachee Bay in improvised boats, became scattered along the Texas shore in November 1528. Two of the craft, containing ninety to one hundred men, were storm-tossed upon the shore near Galveston Island, the others farther down the coast. The wilderness trials that left alive only four of the almost 250 men who embarked from Florida have come to us through Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación*, first published in Spain in 1542, and the joint account that he and his companions made in Mexico. The two accounts taken together should put to rest the many misconceptions that have permeated the historiography of the episode since Buckingham Smith in 1851 sought to terminate the coastal voyage east of Mobile Bay. [7]

For almost a century, debate has raged in Texas, fueled by some ranking university professors as well as regional chauvinists, over Cabeza de Vaca's landing place and route through Texas. Various interpretations were published from time to time in the Texas State Historical Association's *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, each with a different hypothesis, tending generally to take him west through the central Texas Hill Country. The occasional article that approached the truth failed to triumph over longstanding myth. It is fitting, therefore, that this same publication should at last come forth with an article that sifts through the various theses offered since the *Quarterly* began publication in 1897. This study, by Donald E. Chipman of the University of North Texas history faculty, not only puts the matter in perspective but also proves that the history of historiography can be quite as interesting as history itself. [8]

Dissecting the various articles and books that have ascribed to these first Texas tourists a route entirely within the state's borders, Chipman exalts the more scholarly efforts that have sought to separate fact from fiction. Thus, once and for all, the chauvinistic myths should be put to rest. It becomes clear also that Cabeza de Vaca's Texas landing place was not Galveston Island but a smaller one just west of it. This smaller island, since joined to the mainland, is known as Follet's Island or Velasco Peninsula. The castaways, their numbers decimated during winter, crossed to the mainland in canoes provided by the local Indians and walked southwest down the coast. Before reaching Pass Cavallo, the natural entrance to Matagorda Bay, they crossed Oyster Creek, the Brazos and St. Bernard rivers, and Caney Creek, where they first encountered Karankawa Indians. [9] Later, they began overtaking their companions whose boats had progressed farther down the shore and learned from them the fate of some of the others. One boat had wrecked at the mouth of the St. Bernard River. Narváez himself was last seen at Matagorda Island, where his craft dragged anchor during the night and drifted out to sea—not at the mouth of the Mississippi.

In the coastal region between Matagorda Bay and Aransas Pass, the castaways were enslaved by Karankawan and Coahuiltecan Indians. Most of them died of exposure, starvation, or harsh treatment by the natives. Not until September 1534, did Cabeza de Vaca, Dorantes, Castillo, and the slave Estebanico escape their captors. They spent the following winter among a different tribe of Coahuiltecans, whom they had met in the prickly pear fields. They traveled south toward Pánuco in the spring of 1535, visiting among other Coahuiltecan bands.

In the country south of the Nueces River, they came at last to a river described as being "as wide as the Guadalquivir at Seville." After crossing it, the travelers began to see mountains that "ran from the direction of the North Sea"—the Gulf of Mexico which, in the nomenclature of that period, was indistinct from the Atlantic Ocean. The Indians told them they were only fifteen leagues (about forty miles) from the sea. [10] The river they had crossed was the Río Grande, not the Texas Colorado as often proclaimed. The mountains they saw were not those of the Texas Hill Country but an extension of the Sierra Madre

Oriental in the Mexican state of Nuevo León. At this point the travelers heard reports that the coastal Indians farther south were intensely hostile, while those farther inland were friendly and hospitable. Believing the settlements on the west coast were not much farther than Pánuco, they set a westward course. [11] They traveled through northern Mexico and probably Trans-Pecos Texas before crossing the Sierra Madre Occidental to encounter Nuño de Guzmán's slave raiders on the Río Yaqui of Sonora in the spring of 1536.

Thus ending their wilderness adventure, Cabeza de Vaca and his companions had traversed virtually all the Texas Gulf shore and much of its coastal plain. Information on the Indians encountered during their odyssey, given in Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación*, has been of inestimable value to anthropologists. It suffers from the same problem as Álvarez de Pineda's descriptions in that it often fails to relate the data to specific locations or Indian groups. Yet some of his observations correspond with those made by members of the La Salle expedition among the Karankawan tribes a century and a half later. Others fit the accounts of the Coahuiltecans by Alonso de León (*el padre*) in his seventeenth century *Historia de Nuevo León* and the Franciscan *cronista* Espinosa in his history of the missionary colleges a century after that. [12] The elder Alonso de León, incidentally, was the first to ascribe to the four castaways—on the basis of Cabeza de Vaca's data compared with his own—a route across northern Nuevo León, "very close to the town of Cerralvo." [13] León's experience as a frontier soldier and explorer enabled him to make a plausible comparison.

After Narváez came Hernando de Soto's men, led by Luis de Moscoso Alvarado after the leader's death, approaching Texas from two different directions. First seeking Pánuco by land, they reached the Caddoan tribes of eastern Texas before withdrawing to build boats to descend the Mississippi. Afterward, when sailing around the Gulf toward Pánuco, they narrowly escaped a Narváez-type catastrophe. Their boats, unmanageable in the ground swells, almost crashed on the lee shore, probably not far from Cabeza de Vaca's Texas landing. Only by erecting a barrier with their bodies were they able to hold the boats off the shore and avert disaster. [14]

When the boats were built on the banks of the Mississippi, one ingredient had been lacking: pitch for caulking. In a cove not far from the near-shipwreck, the voyagers found chunks of tar, like that which still oozes from natural seeps around the Gulf and, to the detriment of surf bathing, washes up on the beaches. Two days after a pause to melt the substance and caulk the bottoms of the boats, the Spaniards came to a bay so large that six men who ascended it in a canoe could not find its end. [15] Two days' travel beyond that bay, the boats entered another, which was encircled by an island. Thus it appears that Soto's men made both the first recorded exploration of Matagorda Bay—which has been prominent in Texas history almost ever since—and the first entry of Aransas Bay.

The itinerary of the Soto *entrada* is suggested by the so-called Soto map of Alonso de Santa Cruz, found among the cosmographer's papers upon his death in 1572. Santa Cruz, however, had sources besides Soto, including Cabeza de Vaca's narrative and data from participants in the ventures of Ponce de León, Vázquez de Ayllón, and Vázquez de Coronado. Most of his coastal toponymy derived from other maps and is not directly traceable to any expedition. The actual Río Grande is indicated as Río Solo. Just above it appears one of two streams that Santa Cruz labeled Río de las Palmas, thus contributing to the confusion by which that name has been identified with the Río Grande. The real Río de las Palmas appears on the map in its proper place, between the Río Solo and the Río Pánuco. [16]

Identification of the Río Solo as the Río Grande is supported by a notation on the left bank some distance upstream: "From Quivira to this place are great herds of cattle"—meaning buffalo. This animal was seldom seen in large numbers below the Río Grande. Such information probably came from the Portuguese soldier and gardener Andrés do Campo on the Coronado expedition, who had stayed with Fray Juan Padilla on the Kansas plains when the army withdrew. Following Padilla's death, Campo fled southward to Pánuco across "the prickly pear country"—perhaps the same prickly pear fields mentioned by Cabeza de Vaca—on the South Texas coastal plain. [17]

Another notation, on the right bank of the Río Solo near the coast, indicates the mountains through which Cabeza de Vaca had passed: "In these mountains are silver mines." [18] The mountains, in the vicinity of Cerralvo, Nuevo León, are too far inland to have been observed from the coast; with the possible exception of Campo, Cabeza de Vaca was the only European who could have given such a report.

A little more than a decade after Soto's men passed along the coast, the shipwrecks of 1554 occurred, as contemporary accounts express it, "on the coast of Florida near the Río de las Palmas in 26 1/2 degrees." [19] Discovery of the wreckage in the 1960s and subsequent identification of the ships by name through archeological salvage and archival research shows the site to have been on Padre Island near the Port Mansfield cut—precisely where Ribero's 1529 map had warned of *malabrigo*, the type of coast on which ships might come to grief. [20]

The number of passengers and crew on board the three ships is uncertain but may have been more than three hundred. Some drowned before reaching shore. One of the shipmasters, Francisco del Huerto of the *San Esteban*, took about thirty persons and sailed for Veracruz in a launch to get help. The greater number waited at the site for rescue but appear to have been cut off from the landing place by Indians while trying to move their camp to the mainland. Thus they lost most of their food and extra clothing. Ill-prepared as they were, yet unable to return to the landing, they began walking toward Pánuco. Only one person, a Dominican friar named Marcos de Mena, survived the march. [21]

Almost three months later a two-pronged expedition, including land and sea elements, reached the submerged vessels to salvage the cargo, which included gold and silver worth some 1.5 million pesos. This expedition was led by Antonio de Villafañe, who later was sent to pick up the pieces of Tristán de Luna's Florida colony, and García de Escalante Alvarado. Escalante, like Moscoso, was a nephew of Pedro de Alvarado of Mexican Conquest fame and a first cousin of Luis de Moscoso Alvarado, who succeeded to command of the Soto expedition upon Soto's death. [22]

Although the expedition had little if any impact on Texas coastal exploration, it did contribute a name that appeared on maps well into the next century. Escalante, arriving by sea from Veracruz on Magdalene's Day, July 22, named the place Médanos de Madalena. [23] Thus the Padre Island dunes became the first Texas coastal feature given a place on European maps for which both the origin and the location are known. The name was still in use a century later. It does not, however, account for the name Río de Madalena, which was first assigned to a Texas river in the same general region on the unsigned Spanish map dated 1527.

The 1554 wrecks and other shipping disasters on the Gulf and Atlantic shores combined with the outcome of the Soto *entrada* to bring forth the Luna expedition to Pensacola Bay in 1559-61. Among those advocating this new effort was Fray Andrés de Olmos, a Franciscan who once had been recruited by Bishop Juan de Zumárraga to chastise Spanish witches. Olmos, after beginning missionary work at Tampico, journeyed to "the border of Florida"—meaning the Río de las Palmas, or Soto la Marina River of Tamaulipas—to win mission converts. His journey is often extended by overzealous interpreters into present Texas, and even to peninsular Florida. But it was only the friar's vision that went so far. In proposing settlement of the upper Gulf Coast, Father Olmos enlisted the support of Rodrigo Ranjel, who had served as Soto's secretary and kept an account of the expedition to the time of Soto's death. Ranjel had since become *alcalde mayor* of Pánuco. Father Olmos had proposed to the emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) settlements at the Río de las Palmas, the Río Bravo (Río Grande) and Ochuse (Pensacola Bay). Ranjel, while supporting the entire plan, let it be known that he most favored Ochuse. That it was the best approach to Florida, he said, he himself well knew, "for I traversed that country with Captain don Hernando de Soto." [24]

Since Álvarez de Pineda's 1519 voyage, all contact with the Texas coast had been accidental, resulting from plans that had miscarried. Viceroy Luis de Velasco, reviewing the record, realized that more information was needed on which to base the choice of the site for a colony. He therefore outfitted three ships, commanded by Guido de Lavazares, to explore from the Río de las Palmas to the Florida Keys. Lavazares sailed from Veracruz on September 3, 1558. After a pause at the Río Pánuco, he registered the Texas coast at 27 degrees 30 minutes, approximately the latitude of present-day Kingsville. Hugging the shore for two days more, he discovered at 28 degrees 30 minutes

a shallow, uninviting bay, which he named San Francisco. The latitude and the description indicate Matagorda Bay. Here Lavazares went ashore and took possession of the region for the Spanish monarch, 127 years before the Sieur de La Salle claimed it for France. [25] This is, in fact, the first European claim of record to the Texas coast. After leaving Matagorda Bay, Lavazares encountered contrary winds and was forced to fall off to the south to approach the coast again at the Mississippi Sound. The rest of his exploration therefore pertains to regions other than Texas.

A few years later, a slave-trading voyage of the Englishman John Hawkins affected Texas in two ways. In his shootout with the Spanish fleet at Veracruz, Hawkins lost three ships and was forced to take their crews aboard his own vessel. Fleeing northward, he soon realized that he could not make the homeward voyage with such crowded decks. With much of his slave cargo still in the hold, he put 114 sailors ashore in the wilderness north of Tampico. The castaways split, one group going south, the other north. Among those going north were David Ingram and two companions. They at last separated themselves from the group, twenty-three of whom were never heard from again. From the landing place they walked up the Tamaulipas coast into Texas and thence across the continent to their ultimate rescue within fifty leagues of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Had one of the three been able to relate their adventure fully and accurately, his account might have rivaled Cabeza de Vaca's. Ingram afterward spun a fanciful yarn, recorded by Richard Hakluyt, that reflected his confused mental state; he mixed events from more than one voyage and related observations made in other localities as though they pertained to this journey. [26]

The castaways who went south, meanwhile, fell into the clutches of Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, a lesser official at Tampico, who had received news of the affray at Veracruz and a warning to be on the lookout for Hawkins's men. Carvajal, making as much of this capture of unarmed and naked men as if they had been an armed invasion force, had their hands bound and sent them off to Mexico City under heavy guard. [27]

With such exaggeration of his deeds, Carvajal impressed himself upon Viceroy Martín Enríquez de Almanza and eventually won colonization rights within an area two hundred leagues square. In 1572 Viceroy Enríquez commissioned him a captain and gave him a twofold assignment. First, he was to open a road to Mazapil in northern Zacatecas state. That mission accomplished, he was to proceed to the mouth of the Río Bravo to punish the coastal Indians for their "many murders, robberies, and other crimes on ships that have wrecked there." The guilty natives, he was instructed, might be taken captive and sold into slavery for ten years. [28]

Carvajal crossed the Río Bravo in pursuit of his quarry, which he identifies as "the Indians who had slain four hundred Spaniards going to Spain on three ships that went down between the Río Bravo and that of Palmas and robbed them of the gold and silver"—which is to say, the ships wrecked on Padre Island eighteen years previously. Upon the Indians, Carvajal imposed harsh

retribution: "I had the guilty punished, the chiefs hanged, the daring of that barbarous people repressed." [29] Such was the first Spanish expedition to enter Texas via the lower Río Grande.

Somewhat later, after Carvajal had journeyed to Spain in 1579 to win his great concession, he established a meager settlement at present-day Cerralvo, in northern Nuevo León state. In the nearby Sierra de San Gregorio, he found the silver lode referred to on the Santa Cruz Soto map. The record reflects, however, that his principal activity was slave raiding along the Río de las Palmas and the Río Bravo, [30] thus accounting in part for the natives' hostility that stalled settlement of that region for almost two centuries.

It seems likely that Carvajal's slave-catchers crossed the Río Grande on numerous occasions, but the real significance of his exploits is that they effectively shut off the shortest overland route between the Mexican coastal settlements and Texas. The hostility of the coastal Indians forbade travel along the coast north of Tampico and virtually closed the road between Tampico and Monterrey for half a century. When the reasons for entering Texas became compelling, the road north was forced to detour away from the coast, making a wide sweep inland to approach the coast again at Matagorda Bay.

Exploration of the Texas coast lay dormant for almost a hundred years after Carvajal's time. Until then almost every contact the Spaniards had had with the region was either born of or ended in disaster. No strong motivation for further exploration or settlement had yet emerged, and none was forthcoming until late in the next century. When motivation at last arose, it sprang from foreign incursion.

In the meantime, Spain had yielded mastery of Gulf navigation to a host of multinational pirates. These freebooters became more familiar with the bays and inlets on the remote upper coast, where they might go to elude the Armada de Barlovento or seek shelter from foul weather, than the most experienced Spanish pilot.

Early in 1684 such a band of sea-rovers entered Matagorda Bay. They were looking for a sunken treasure ship of which one of them had knowledge from a previous foray into the Gulf. During their stay, they hunted buffalo on the peninsula that divides Matagorda and Lavaca bays and acquired a familiarity with the entire area that would prove useful to the Spaniards later. Failing to find the sunken vessel, the pirates went on to sack Tampico and thus fell prey to the Armada de Barlovento. [31] Many were subsequently hanged, but one, a pilot and artilleryman called Juan Poule, entered Spanish service. It was he who in 1687 guided a Spanish expedition on its probe of Matagorda Bay, seeking signs of a French settlement that Sieur de La Salle had planted on the coast somewhere, according to the Spaniards' uncertain understanding, between San Marcos de Apalache and Tampico. [32]

The intrusion supposedly was at a river or bay called Espíritu Santo, which was indicated on most maps, but no Spaniard could be found who had visited it. [33] Available records of explorations in the previous century were meager

and vague. Confused by names they had never heard before—such as "Michipipi"—and lacking any knowledge of a river that La Salle might have traveled from Canada, the Spaniards had no way of knowing that the Frenchman had landed where he never meant to be. Consequently, they embarked on a three-year search that constituted the most thorough exploration of the Gulf yet made. [34] In the process, the name Espíritu Santo was transferred from the Mississippi to the Texas bay complex where the ruined French settlement eventually was found, Matagorda.

It was learned that La Salle—having confused his River Colbert with a map feature on the Texas coast that probably originated with Álvarez de Pineda—had become confused and lost. The river he had explored simply did not fit the map representation of the Río del Espíritu Santo, which was shown flowing straight south into a well-defined bay. To La Salle's mind, it more nearly resembled the Río Escondido, the "hidden river," that first appeared on a 1527 European map in the Texas coastal bend. [35] Seeking the mouth of his river by sea, therefore, he set his course for the Escondido, which, like the Mississippi pass he had reached in 1682, entered the Gulf from the northwest. Having reached that point, he sought the nearest bay that would accommodate his ships, then set out to look for features that he could recognize from his 1682 journey to the mouth of the Mississippi.

Thus, as Peter Wood has ably demonstrated, it was neither bad navigation nor secret design that brought La Salle to the Texas coast when he was seeking the Mississippi. Rather, it was the prevailing lack of geographical knowledge of his time. [36] The desperate wanderings of Soto's men through Arkansas and Louisiana and into eastern Texas had contributed only a pinpoint of light to dispel the darkness that shrouded the inner continent. As Spanish officials pondered the implications of La Salle's intrusion, the purposeful exploration of the Texas coast was just beginning.

Notes

[1] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (Mexico City, 1955), 2: 104. Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States, 1513-1561* (New York, 1905), 150, for example, credits Álvarez de Pineda's ascent of the Mississippi. Among those declaring for the Río Grande are W. Eugene Hollon, *The Southwest, Old and New* (Lincoln, NE, 1961), 45, and Paul Horgan, *Great River: The Río Grande in North American History* (New York, 1954), 88, both of which identify the Río Grande with the Río de las Palmas.

[2] "Real cédula dando facultad a Francisco de Garay para poblar la provincia de Amichel, en la costa firme que con navíos armados por su cuenta para buscar un estrecho había reconocido," in Martín Fernández de Navarrete, *Colección de los viages y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles* (Buenos Aires, 1945), 3: 147-53; "Traza de las costas de Tierra Firme y de las Tierras Nuevas" (map sketch), Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Mapas y Planos 5, Seville.

[3] Henry G. Taliaferro, "Introduction: Early Cartography of the Texas Coast," in *Cartographic Sources in the Rosenberg Library*, ed. Jane A. Kenamore and Uli Haller, comp. Henry G. Taliaferro (College Station, TX, 1988), 6-7; detail of the Ribero-

Weimar map in Jean Delanglez, *El Río del Espíritu Santo: An Essay on the Cartography of the Gulf Coast and the Adjacent Territory during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1945); also Ribero's 1529 world map, reproduced in W. P. Cumming, R. A. Skelton, and D. B. Quinn, *The Discovery of North America* (New York, 1972), 106-7.

[4] Planisphere by Juan Vespucci, 1526, ibid., 86-87.

[5] Ribero Weimar map.

[6] Pedro Mártir de Anglería, *Décadas del Nuevo Mundo*, trans. D. Joaquín Torres Asensio (Buenos Aires, 1944), 570.

[7] Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación de los naufragios y comentarios de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* (Madrid, 1906); Harbert Davenport, ed., "The Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez by Gonzalo Fernández Oviedo y Valdez," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 27, nos. 2-4 (October 1923; January, April 1924): 120-39, 217-41, 276-304; and 28, nos. 1-2 (July, October 1924): 56-74, 122-63; Buckingham Smith, *Relation of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* (1851; revised and reissued, Ann Arbor, MI, 1966).

[8] Donald E. Chipman, "In Search of Cabeza de Vaca's Route across Texas: An Historiographical Survey," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 91, no. 2 (October 1987): 127-48.

[9] Caney Creek then flowed directly into the Gulf of Mexico, not into East Matagorda Bay as it does presently. The Colorado River flowed into Matagorda Bay until man-made works about 1929 caused it to flow into the Gulf. Robert S. Weddle, *Spanish Sea: The Gulf of Mexico in North American Discovery, 1500-1685* (College Station, TX, 1985), 206.

[10] Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, 99, 102; Weddle, *Spanish Sea*, 201-2.

[11] Chipman, "In Search of Cabeza de Vaca's Route," 146.

[12] Cabeza de Vaca, *Relación*, 97; Alonso de León, Juan Bautista Chapa, and Fernando Sánchez de Zamora, *Historia de Nuevo León* (Monterrey, 1961), 15; Isidro Félix de Espinosa, *Crónica de los colegios de propaganda fide de la Nueva España* (Washington, DC, 1964), 761-64, 771-72.

[13] León, *Historia*, 15.

[14] The Gentleman of Elvas in *Narratives of De Soto in the Conquest of Florida*, trans. Buckingham Smith (Gainesville, FL, 1968), 188-89.

[15] Ibid., 189.

[16] Santa Cruz Soto map, AGI, Mapas y Planos. Writing in 1574, Juan López de Velasco (*Geografía y descripción universal de las Indias* [Madrid, 1971], 94) also lists two rivers called Palmas: one identified with Río Solo, the other south of Santa Cruz's Playa Delgado.

[17] The prickly pear country may refer to the south Texas region in which Cabeza de Vaca had sojourned in 1534-35. This has been identified by T. N. Campbell and T. J. Campbell, *Historic Indian Groups of the Choke Canyon Reservoir and Surrounding Area, Southern Texas* (San Antonio, TX, 1981), 10-11, 37-38, as being west and northwest of Corpus Christi Bay, near the Nueces River.

[18] Santa Cruz Soto map.

[19] Antonio Rodríguez de Quesada to "muy poderoso señor," July 15, 1554, AGI, Mexico 68.

[20] See J. Barto Arnold III and Robert S. Weddle, *The Nautical Archeology of Padre Island: The Spanish Shipwrecks of 1554* (New York, 1978).

[21] Casa de Contratación to Emperor Charles V, January 21, 1555, AGI, Indiferente General 1093; Vincente Paletino de Corzula, "Tratado del derecho i justicia de la guerra que tienen los Reyes de España contra las naciones de la India occidental," Real Academia de la Historia, Colección Muñoz, A/118, ff, 47-61; Weddle, "History," in Arnold and Weddle, *Nautical Archeology*, 46-47.

[22] Escalante to the Crown, March 24, 1552, AGI, Mexico 168.

[23] Escalante, "Bucéo de las naos," 1554, AGI, Contratación 58.

[24] Ranjel to Crown, April 25, 1557, AGI, Mexico 168.

[25] Guido de Lavazares (sometimes given as Guido de las Bazares or Guido de Bazares), "Declaración," RAH, Colección Muñoz, A/115, ff. 84-86.

[26] Ingram in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations of the English Nation*, 2: 557-58, reproduced in facsimile in Everette Lee DeGolyer, *Across Aboriginal America: The Journey of Three Englishmen across Texas in 1568*. DeGolyer (ibid., 9) recites the publication history of Ingram's account, including the fact that the story was omitted from Hakluyt's second edition because it seemed so improbable.

[27] "Diligencias hechas por el muy magnífico Señor Luis de Carvajal sobre los yngleses," Tampico, October 8, 1558, AGI, Patronato 265, no. 1, ramo 12; Miles Phillips in Hakluyt, *Principall Voyages* 2: 568-70.

[28] Viceroy Martín Enríquez de Almanza, "Comisión del virrey al D. Luis de Caravajal," Mexico, April 11, 1572, AGI, Mexico 103, ramo 2.

[29] Carvajal, "Declaración," Mexico, January 15, 1578, AGI, Mexico 103, ramo 2.

[30] "Advertimientos generales que el Marqués de Villamanrique dió al Virrey Don Luis de Velasco en el gobierno de la Nueva España," Texcoco, February 14, 1590, in *Documentos para la historia del Mexico colonial*, ed. France V. Scholes and Eleanor B. Adams, 29.

[31] Testimonio de las declaraciones que hicieron los piratas de los que cojió la armada Real de Barlobento en el robo de Tampico y sentencia que se les dió," Veracruz, June 5, 1684, AGI, Mexico 560, ramo 1.

[32] "The Enríquez Barroto Diary" in *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents*, ed. Robert S. Weddle (College Station, TX, 1987), 172.

[33] Gaspar de Palacios to the viceroy, October 27, 1685, AGI, Mexico 616 (transcript, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin).

[34] Treated in Robert S. Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (Austin, 1973).

[35] The "Chucagoa Fragment" in *Découvertes et établissements des français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique septentrionale (1614-1754)*, ed. Pierre Margry (Paris, 1876-86), 2: 198; detail of Ribero-Weimar map in Jean Delanglez, *El Río del Espíritu Santo: An Essay on the Cartography of the Gulf Coast and the Adjacent Territory during the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries*, plate 2.

[36] Peter H. Wood, "La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer," *American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1984): 294-323.

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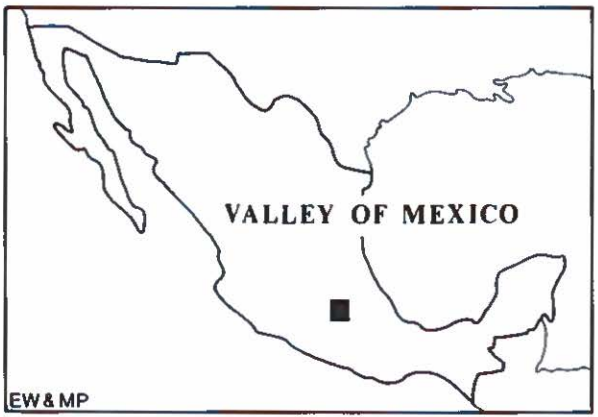
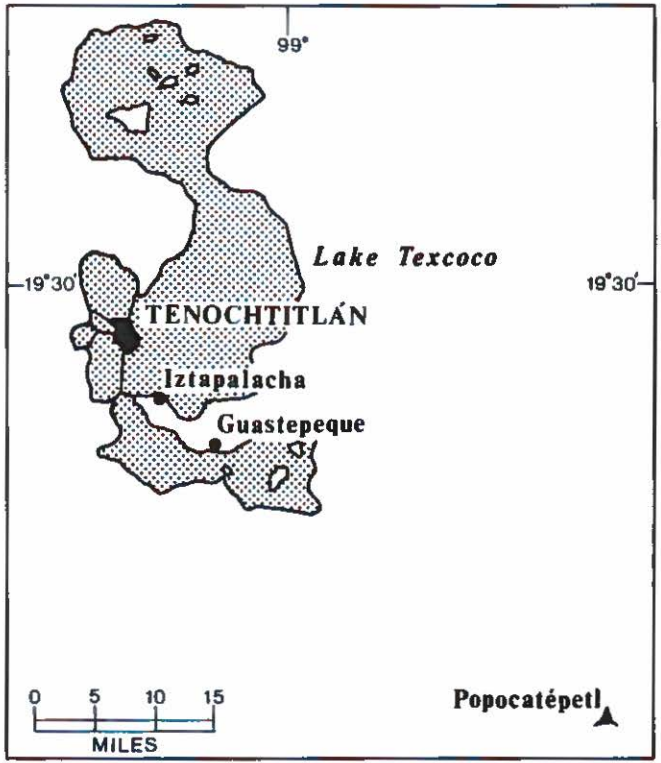
VALLEY OF MEXICO

A.D. 1519





Base Map: MIDDLE AMERICA NGS 1972

Nature in Cortés's *Cartas de Relación*: A Utilitarian Perspective

Thomas M. Longton

The principal focus of Hernán Cortés's *Cartas de Relación* has been the political, diplomatic, and military scenarios that are at work in the *Cartas*, and that are reflected in the rhetoric. One major theme is the legal justification of the conquest. Victor Frankl shows how Cortés manipulated the legal terminology of his time to justify his actions and to discredit others. For example, the concept of the "public interest, of all national and state interests" [1] is one of the crucial themes of the legal documents of the time and of the *Cartas*. Cortés uses this theme to condemn his enemies who are portrayed as extremely self-serving and thus a threat to the Spanish crown. It has also been suggested that the long monologues of Montezuma in the Second Letter reflect the language of the medieval legal document *Las Siete Partidas*, [2] and that the justification for waging war against the Aztecs is grounded in "the scholastic right of war elaborated in the Middle Ages." [3] Blásquez Garbajosa sees legal justification as only one part of a larger picture, "the psychological and literary framework that the author constructs to obtain the goals he seeks: official and legal confirmation for his authority in the New World; recognition of his military and political accomplishments; the attainment of honors and riches." [4] In her opinion, every part of the *Cartas* is skillfully crafted to obtain these goals. Beatriz Pastor discusses similar themes but stresses the role that fictionalization of events in the *Cartas* plays in helping Cortés procure his goals. "The transformation of Cortés the rebel into Cortés the model manifests the process of fictionalization most important in the narrative discurse and constitutes one of the immediate and fundamental goals of the *Cartas*." [5] Stephanie Merrim extends Pastor's model to show that the concept of "autobiography," as defined in sixteenth-century terms, can be applied to the *Cartas*. She notes that Cortés, by writing his own autobiography, is the eyewitness of the events he records. Since eyewitness accounts are seen as more reliable than second-hand ones by sixteenth-century standards, Cortés is able to use this to his advantage against his political enemies who must rely only on secondary sources. [6]

Still another literary model rests on the idea that Cortés is an "agent-historian." That is, he is narrator of his own history, but as agents, he is free to present the "facts" to his own advantage. This "split personality" between narrator/agent is used by Cortés to try to downplay the crown's paranoia of his growing power. "Although the narrative voice is one of almost imperial authority and control the agent-Cortés consistently effaces himself, pictures himself as an institutional embodiment rather than an individual leader." [7] On another front, Irving Leonard's *Books of the Brave* argues the possibility that the "novels of chivalry" might have influenced the early discoverers and chroniclers of the New World. He includes Cortés in this group and cites evidence that the Spanish leader was well acquainted with *Las Sergas de Esplandian*, which contains

stories involving the legend of the "Amazons." Leonard then cites a reference to the Fourth Letter where Cortés speaks about making plans to find a tribe of Indians resembling the legendary women warriors. [8] That the books of chivalry left much of a mark on Cortés is a matter of dispute, as Pastor notes about Cortés that "it is difficult to imagine someone more rational or less inclined to fantastic explanations." [9]

Todorov's controversial work, *The Conquest of America*, claims that the conquest of Mexico came about because Cortés could read the "signs" better than Montezuma or the Aztecs. By this Todorov refers to the ability of the Spanish leader to adjust rapidly to the evolving political, diplomatic, and military situation. The author further suggests that Cortés is the embodiment of Machiavelli in his ability to manipulate people. [10] Todorov then discusses the concept of the "Other," representing the alienated Indians, as being a key to the causes of the "Leyenda Negra." In this theory he proposes that the inability of Cortés to accept the Indians as equal leads to "the greatest genocide in all history." [11] These last ideas have sparked some controversy. Some believe that "his observations are important and he needed to make them," [12] while others feel differently. "There is a historical chauvinism in Todorov's smug and repeated denunciation of Sixteenth Century Spaniards that implies that his European, post-Enlightenment tolerance for cultural differences is an ideal to which all other cultures should aspire." [13]

In my opinion, one area that has not been examined enough by the scholars of colonial literature is the theme of "Nature" in the *Cartas de Relación*. However, before discussing this point further, I will look briefly at what the critics say about nature in the works of other early writers of chronicles. Because it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine all of the important participants, these comments will be limited to three prominent *cronistas*: Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo. According to Antonello Gerbi, Columbus describes with fresh enthusiasm and spontaneity the new elements of nature he encounters. [14] On the other hand, Ramón Iglesia states that Columbus essentially ignores nature because of an obsession with gold, [15] and Alfonso Reyes feels that Columbus was caught up in such a web of fantasy that he was incapable of presenting a true impression of nature. "He [Columbus], for example, could have left us some true impressions of the nature or peoples of America. But no: fantasy intervenes and the desire to find verification for this mythological prejudices deprives us of any descriptions comparable to his lively descriptions of maritime storms." [16] Pedro Henríquez Ureña puts more perspective on the subject when he states that "his pictures may seem artificial, but only because he paints them according to the literary fashion of his time." [17] This entry from Columbus's *Diario* on October 21 is a good illustration of this point: "And here and in all of the island the groves are all green and verdure like that of April in Andalucia. And the singing of the small birds [is so marvelous] that it seems that a man would never want to leave this place. . . . And also there are trees of a thousand kinds and all

with their own kinds of fruit, and all smell so that it is a marvel." [18] One of these common methods employed by Columbus in this example is the *locus amoenus*, in which an idyllic scene of nature is described. [19] Another technique is his use of hyperbole, as in the sentence of the above description in which the singing of the small birds is so wonderful "that a man would never want to leave this place." [20] To summarize, I agree with Henríquez Ureña's overall assessment that Columbus "had no wealth of words at his command; but he achieves delightful effects with his scanty vocabulary." [21]

At the very end of Columbus's voyages, from 1500-1502, another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, wrote several letters to a patron in Florence, Pier Francesco de Medici. Vespucci's writing style has been generally characterized as more realistic than the visionary Columbus. [22] However, while Gerbi notes that these characterizations are oversimplified, he still feels the differences are substantial between the two. "Vespucci, confronted with the nature of the New World, becomes grave and thoughtful, inquiring and humble, reactions that could not be more different than Columbus's noisy claims and triumphant and mystical discoveries." [23] It is true that Vespucci takes a more scientific approach to things and tries to analyze the placement of the stars (something in which Columbus showed no interest), and to figure out the exact reasons that cause the climate in the Caribbean. Furthermore, there is a general avoidance of hyperbole, so prevalent in Columbus. However, there is one subject that stirs his enthusiasm, and this is the earthly "Paradise." "This land is very pleasant, and full of an infinity of very large and green trees that never lose their leaves, and all have a gentle and aromatic scent, and produce a large quantity of fruit. Many of these are good-tasting and beneficial to the body. The fields grow so many grasses, and delicate roots and flowers that once I was so amazed by the sweet smell of the grasses and flowers and the taste of these fruits and roots that it occurred to me I was near the earthly Paradise." [24] References to the earthly paradise were apparently common among early explorers, including Columbus. [25] Besides these references to paradise, in another episode on the island of Curacao, Vespucci claims to have encountered giants that "were so tall that even standing I did not even reach the knees of anyone of them." [26] Perhaps Margarita Peña states it best when she indicates that although more realistic than Columbus's, Vespucci's letters "are not exempt from fantastic details or picturesque commentaries." [27]

Finally, I would like to mention Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, a renowned historian, naturalist and ethnologist, and the official "general chronicler of the Indies." His most famous writings are the *Sumario de las Indias* (1526), and the *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535), about which the critics have mixed opinions. Although Oviedo highly prizes the truth, and fancies himself the Pliny of the New World, [28] Alberto Salas notes that objectivity suffers because "the history . . . mixes and confuses the natural order of plants and animals with that of mankind." [29] Ramón Iglesia notes that his writings are a logical reflection of the clash of old medieval ideas with the humanism of

the Renaissance. "It is a emotional study . . . [about] the conflict created in the Renaissance mentality between the rediscovery and veneration for ancient culture on one hand, and the flood of new experiences that occurs at the same time upon confronting this [new] culture." [30] In specific reference to nature, Fernández de Oviedo's classifications of animals and plants greatly advanced the knowledge of flora and fauna of the New World and provided the "first methodological description of the Indies." [31] His works emphasize the utilitarianism of nature, but also an unabashed enthusiasm and attention to detail that adds to the enjoyment of these works. To demonstrate this point I will end my comments about Oviedo with this delightful description of the "pájaro mosquito" (hummingbird) from his *Sumario de las Indias*: "There are some little birds that are so small that their total size is smaller than the head of one's thumb and without their feathers is even less than half that size; it is a bird that, despite its diminutive size is so fast and nimble in flight that when watching it in the air one can not consider the wings in any other way than those of beetles or bees, and there is no one who in observing its flight would think it is anything more than a bee." [32]

While some attention has been paid to the descriptions of nature in the works of these *cronistas*, very little has been said about the *Cartas de Relación* in this context. As we noted above, other aspects of the *Cartas* have attracted the attention of critics; for example, the legal and political intrigues of the Spanish conqueror. However, Cortés's writing style, which has been characterized as "temperate, serene, and unembellished," [33] has not been discussed in any detail. This applies as well to his descriptions of nature, which perhaps seem lifeless compared to the hyperboles of Columbus, the enthusiasm of Vespucci, or the striking details offered by Oviedo. The critics generally attribute to Cortés a military or utilitarian point of view toward nature, as Merrim states, "the geography and demography of Mexico are portrayed with an eye to military action; Cortés systematically describes the location and composition of towns and cities in terms of how they might affect his military plans for conquest." [34] Pastor expresses almost identical sentiments when she states that under the pen of Cortés a strange metamorphosis occurs, "a transformation of reality that converts the rivers, valleys, mountains and plains of the geography of Mexico [as well as] the peoples, the streets and plazas of the complex Aztec Empire into a gigantic military objective." [35] Finally, Antonello Gerbi observes that "even the virgin forest, a stupendous sight for every European and especially a Spaniard, the virgin forest so vividly and movingly described by Oviedo, only strikes Cortés because of the tactical difficulty of marching through it in good order. . . ." [36] Gerbi's observations apply well to the Fifth Letter, as Cortés discusses the difficulties involved in crossing the jungle, "I was obliged, therefore to send some Spaniards and Indians in that direction to look for the road and upon, discovering it, to make it possible for the rest of us to advance for it was through very great forests." [37] "Very great forests" is about as emotive as Cortés gets about "the virgin forest" that Gerbi mentions, and other aspec

of nature fare more or less the same. A mountain, for example, is described repeatedly as a "high steep mountain," [38] and a wetland is normally a "great marsh" or a "large lagoon." [39]

I agree with the assertion by these critics that Cortés perceives nature in almost exclusively practical terms, and that this certainly has an effect on how he writes about nature. However, I find in the *Cartas de Relación* two different areas of nature descriptions that do not neatly fall into this category and thus merit special attention. These are what I refer to as "man-made" nature settings and his references to the volcano that occur from the Second through the Fourth Letters.

Before continuing with this study, I must address the exclusions of two of the *Cartas* in the rest of my analysis. The Fifth Letter, in which Cortés is struggling for survival in the jungles of Yucatán, simply lacks any mention of artificial nature settings or the volcano. However, the reason for the exclusion of the "lost First Letter" from this study is more complicated. There are scholars who are convinced that Cortés is the author of the First Letter. For example, Victor Frankl writes that "the author of the First Letter is undoubtedly Cortés himself" [40] and proceeds to do an admirable linguistic analysis of the First Letter as compared to the remaining four. However, there are some scholars who take a different view of the authenticity of the First Letter. Anthony Pagden, translator of a recent excellent English version of the *Cartas*, *Letters from Mexico* states the following: "Although called the Primera Relación for the sake of convenience, it is not written by Cortés and is not the account referred to in the Second Letter. . . . The actual First Letter has never been found." [41]

Beatriz Pastor also hesitates to include this letter in her analysis because she states that although "its main arguments are directly inspired by Cortés," [42] there is no proof that Cortés actually was the author. Since a primary goal of my analysis is to look specifically at what Cortés himself says about nature, it seems inappropriate to include a text which is subject to controversy among colonial specialists. Thus, this paper will examine only letters two through four.

Man-made nature settings refer to natural environments that have been specifically created to bring pleasure to the owners. These include gardens or private animal preserves. While there might indeed be a secondary practical function, for example, to provide food, the main goal is purely aesthetic. Cortés is quite pleased to discover these man-made natural settings and on some occasions, his descriptions are prolific. For instance, in the Second Letter, on his journey to Tenochtitlán he provides comments on the gardens and private animal preserves of an unnamed brother of Montezuma in Iztapalacha:

> There are both upper and lower rooms, and very refreshing gardens, with many trees and sweet scented flowers, bathing places of fresh water, well constructed, with steps leading down to the bottom. He has also a large garden round his house, in which there is a terrace with many beautiful corridors and rooms, and, within the garden, is a great pool of fresh water, very well built with sides of handsome masonry, around which runs an

> open walk with well laid tile pavements, so broad that four persons can walk around abreast on it, and four hundred paces square, making, in all, sixteen hundred paces. On the other side of this promenade, towards the wall of the garden, it is all surrounded by a lattice work of canes, behind which are arbours, planted with fragrant shrubs. The pool contains many fish, and water fowl, such as ducks, cranes, and other kinds of water birds, in such numbers that the water is covered with them. [43]

Cortés carefully takes us step by step through the rooms, gardens, and what appear to be private zoos. One could say that he is duly impressed with the wealth that the well-constructed rooms, gardens, and private zoos exhibit. But I feel that there is something else here. Cortés, in his logical approach to things, is impressed by the man-made orderliness of these "artificial" natural habitats. The natural world appears to have little significance to Cortés unless it offers him some benefit or obstacle to overcome. But he seems to admire man-made nature settings, perhaps because they are directly controlled and orchestrated by man. Thus one might speculate that a sense of order and control by man are important concerns to Cortés.

Later on, the Spanish leader takes the same approach in describing the gardens and zoos of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán. As in the other example, many features concerning the construction of the houses are noted. Then, from this point on, he provides a wealth of details:

> In this house there were apartments for two great princes, and all their servants. It had ten pools of water, in which were kept all the many and divers breeds of waterfowl found in these parts, all domesticated; for the sea-birds, too, there were pools of salt water, and, for those of the rivers and lakes, there was fresh water, which for the sake of cleanliness, they renewed at certain times by means of pipes. To each kind of bird they gave the food which suited its habits in its free state, so that to those which ate fish they gave it; and, likewise, worms, maize, and smaller seeds were supplied as required by the different birds. [44]

Again, it would appear that more than economics, it is man-made nature and a sense of orderliness that moves Cortés to provide an account so thorough as to include even the variety of food each fish eats. He continues with still more details about another part of this private animal preserve:

> Each of these houses contained a bird of prey, representing all the sorts known in Spain, from the kestral to the eagle, besides many other great numbers of each of these kinds. Across the tops of these houses there was a perch, and another one out beyond the lattice, so that the birds might use the one at night and when it was raining, and the other to sun themselves, and take the air. All these birds were fed daily on chickens, with no other food. There were certain large rooms in this palace, fitted with great cages, very well constructed, and joined with heavy timbers, in all or most of which were kept lions, tigers, foxes, and every kind of cat in considerable numbers. These were also fed on chickens. Three hundred other men had charge of these animals and birds. [45]

No other examples can come close to the attention to detail manifested by these two citations from the Second Letter, but the Third Letter nonetheless had one noteworthy passage. It concerns the presence of gardens that Cortés observes. This is significant, since the idea of a perfect garden is a common theme that is extremely important from antiquity through the Renaissance to both historians and poets. [46] Whereas in antiquity it represented a kind of Golden Age, in the Middle Ages the idea of a lost garden of Eden took precedence. As previously noted, finding and describing these ideal gardens or paradisiacal places was a strong motivation for early explorers of the New World like Columbus and Vespucci, and these preconceptions led in part to the frequent idealization of the landscape that is found in these early texts. [47] This, however, is not what we generally find in the *Cartas* of the pragmatic Cortés. Hence, passages such as these are fascinating. The gardens Cortés refers to surround a country house in Guastepeque. It is a particularly tense time, as Cortés and his men are fighting their way back to Tenochtitlán, and the country house and surroundings provide a welcome respite to recent fighting:

> . . . we lodged in the chief's house, situated in the most refreshing gardens every seen. These gardens have a circuit of two leagues, and in the midst flows a very beautiful rivulet, and at intervals of two cross-bow shots are kiosks and very gay flower beds, and an infinite number of different fruit trees, many herbs and fragrant flowers; certainly it is an admirable thing to see the charm and grandeur of this place. [48]

Cortés makes no attempt to claim he has found the Garden of Eden, but his description fits most of the requirements of the closely related motif of the *locus amoenus*, whose "minimum ingredients comprise a tree, a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added." [49] Economic regards have no bearing on Cortés's admiration of the garden, but clearly the pleasant surrounds are uplifting to the tired soldiers. The gardens are man-made, and are thus under the order and control of man, as in the other examples cited above. Cortés is effusive in his compliments, as noted in the statement that "certainly it is an admirable thing to see the charm and grandeur of this place" and in his use of hyperbole when he states that the house is "situated in the most refreshing gardens every seen." [50]

The Fourth Letter offers no such examples of gardens or private zoos. Perhaps in the Fourth Letter, the Spanish leader is too preoccupied with the rebuilding of the Aztec capital and plans for the future explorations to be bothered with these kinds of descriptions. Also, since the chaos and destruction immediately following the fall of the capital was great, probably such private sanctuaries were destroyed.

To summarize, while there are only a few examples of man-made nature settings in the *Cartas*, the passages are long and quite detailed, thus attesting to the Spanish leader's interest. Cortés is truly able to admire and to take pleasure

in a natural habitat orchestrated by man, whereas in the real world (except for the volcano, as we shall see shortly), only the more pragmatic concerns predominate.

In the natural world it is a volcano which inspires Cortés's longest descriptions. Volcanos, however, were certainly not an unknown quantity to the Spaniards. For example, in Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, he relates the events of Cortés's travels in essentially the same fashion as the Spanish leader does in the *Cartas*. However, when he reaches Cortés's descriptions of this natural phenomena, Oviedo, the naturalist, could not resist the temptation to discuss other volcanos with which he is familiar, "the mountain of Guajocingo, from which smoke is emitted, and in the same manner [smoke is emitted] from the mountain of Volcano Island, near the island of Sicily or the famous Mt. Etna, that by another name is called Mongibel." [51]

While not a new discovery of nature to the Spaniards, it is clear that the volcano, called Popocatepetl by the Aztecs, is the most spectacular and unusual item of nature in Mexico that Cortés discusses. In fact, Stephanie Merrim considers his descriptions of the volcano in the Second Letter as the "one moment of truly disinterested scientific curiosity in the narrative." [52] However, Antonello Gerbi takes a different position, "he sends ten soldiers to discover the 'secret' of the river that flows from the volcano Popocatepetl. But even this expedition has a practical and military purpose: the crater of the volcano provides the Spaniards with the sulphur they need to prepare emergency ammunition." [53] This is in keeping with his overall assessment of the Spanish leader: "exclusive utilitarianism . . . makes it impossible for Cortés to experience the naive astonishment that overwhelmed Columbus when he came fact to face with the New World. . . ." [54] I suspect that both Merrim and Gerbi are right. Their differences depend mainly on which of Cortés's statements about the volcano is recalled, as the Second, Third, and Fourth Letters all contain references to this natural phenomenon. Thus, Merrim's view concerning "disinterested scientific curiosity" seems appropriate if one considers the very long passage in the Second Letter. Witness the amazing detail that Cortés provides concerning the smoke of the volcano in only one small part of the total description:

> . . . from the highest one, a great volume of smoke, as thick as a house, continually comes forth, not only by day, but also by night, rising to the clouds as straight as a pillar, and it appears to come out with such force, that although on the top of the mountain a strong wind prevails, it does not turn it. [55]

To get a better understanding of the volcano he sends some men to climb the "smoking" mountain, but they never reach the top:

> They went, and strove, and did all that was possible to scale it, but never were able to do so on account of the quantity of snow which lay on the mountain, and the clouds of ashes which are blown about on it, and also because they could not endure the great cold which prevails there. They nearly reached the top however, and so high was it, that, when they were

> up there, the smoke began to come out, and they say it came with such an impetus and noise as if the entire mountain was about to sink; so they descended. . . . [56]

While the word "naive," which Gerbi applies to Columbus, could hardly be applied to the Spanish leader, something approaching astonishment is present in this description. Cortés takes great care in relating the events that transpired to his men and in describing the unique qualities of this apparently dangerous natural phenomenon. Furthermore, at the end of the passage, he relates with a mixture of child-like fascination and scientific curiosity, what his men brought down from the mountain:

> . . . [they] brought with them a considerable quantity of snow and icicles, which seemed a strange thing to see in these parts, for according to the opinion of the pilots, they belong to the tropics. [57]

The blatant utilitarianism that Gerbi alludes to and which is present in almost all of Cortés's references to nature seems absent here.

By the time Cortés refers to the volcano in the Third Letter, some of he initial enthusiasm was worn thin, and his interest centers on its utility. At he time, the conquest of Tenochtitlán has just been completed, and the loyalty of the Indians in the region is not in any way secure. However, when he finds out that in the minds of the Indians the volcano was considered taboo and hat "it was a very fearful thing to ascend it," [58] Cortés decides to again send his men to climb the mountain. Because of the danger involved, it takes two xpeditions to succeed and find out the volcano's "secrets":

> When they ascended, the smoke came out with such noise that they neither could nor dared to reach its mouth; and afterwards I made some other Spaniards go, who ascended twice, reaching the mouth of the mountain where the smoke comes out, and from one side of the mouth to the other it was two crossbow-shots, for the circumference of it is almost three-quarters of a league, and the depth is so great that they could not see the bottom of it, and they found near the circumference some sulphur, deposited there by the smoke. [59]

fter the dangerous climb Cortés astutely notes that "the Indians held it a very reat thing to have dared to go where the Spaniards had gone." [60]

The last mention of the volcano occurs in the Fourth Letter. At the time, ortés had been complaining that his political enemies in Cuba and in Spain id prevented him from obtaining arms and ammunition, vital for the defense the newly conquered empire. This does not deprive the Spaniards from what ey need, as he tells the Emperor that "nothing exercises a man's ingenuity e necessity," [61] and he then describes how they manufactured their own apons and ammunition. A basic ingredient for ammunition is sulphur, which something the volcano can supply:

> As for sulphur, I have spoken to your Majesty of that mountain in the province of Mexico that smokes. A Spaniard descended by means of a rope, seventy or eighty fathoms, and obtained a sufficient quantity to last us in our need. [62]

By now there is no sense of amazement or even an attempt to describe the volcano, probably because it would have seemed repetitious. It has been categorized for its utility to the Spaniards, as it provides sulphur for armaments. Perhaps even more useful is the fact that the incident provides an opportunity to bolster his heroic image by demonstrating his creativity at improvising armaments in time of need. Thus, in this citation, the pure utilitarianism that Gerbi refers to is as obvious as the detailed scientific curiosity of the first reference to the volcano. It appears, nonetheless, that the volcano's economic exploitation is to be shortlived, as Cortés notes that "henceforth there will be no necessity of going to this trouble because it is dangerous." [63]

While it is true that the last reference to the volcano focuses exclusively on the possible benefits to Cortés, I feel that previous examples, especially the long passage of the Second Letter, [64] make the volcano a unique exception in the way that the Spanish leader normally looks at nature. The volcano is the only item of the natural world that Cortés encounters in his journeys that is worthy of any detailed description on its own merits.

Nature in the *Cartas de Relación* has been given little study by the colonial specialists; the political, diplomatic, and military themes have instead been analyzed. Any comments that have been made concerning nature note that Cortés took a utilitarian view, especially in comparison to other sixteenth-century writer/explorers of the New World. However, aesthetic value also is important to Cortés and is seen in two rather different aspects of nature: artificial nature and the volcano. While one refers to a man-made natural habitat, and the other to a phenomenon of nature, they both share a common characteristic: the ability to awaken the Spanish leader's interest in something other than practical application. While far too pragmatic to search for the earthly paradise, the elaborate, detailed, and spirited descriptions that Cortés offers concerning these two areas of nature clearly rival those of his contemporary explorers. They also temper the view of Antonelli Gerbi and many other colonial specialists that Cortés only looks at nature with "the cold gaze of the soldier" [65] and thus add balance to the perceptions we hold concerning the Spanish leader.

Notes

[1] Victor Frankl, "Hernán Cortés y la tradición de las *Siete Partidas*," *Revista de Histori de America* 53, no. 4 (1962): 27.

[2] Eulalia Guzmán, *Relaciones de Hernán Cortés a Carlos V sobre la invasión a Anáhuac*, (Mexico, 1966), 279.

[3] Silvio Zavala, *Hernán Cortés ante la justificación de su Conquista* (Mexico, 1985 121.

[4] Andrián Blázquez Garbajosa, "*Las Cartas de relación* de la conquista de México: Política, psicología, literatura," *Bulletin Hispanique* 87, no. 1 (1985): 5.

[5] Beatriz Pastor, *Discurso narrativo de la conquista de América* (Havana, 1983), 187.

[6] Stephanie Merrim, "Ariadne's thread: Auto-bio-graphy, History, and Cortés' *Segunda Carta-Relación, Dispositio* 11 (1989): 57-61.

[7] Jonathan Loesberg, "Narratives of Authority: Cortés, Gómara, Diaz," *Prose Studies* (December 1983): 246-47.

[8] Irving Leonard, *Books of the Brave* (Cambridge, 1949), 47-49.

[9] Pastor, *Discurso narrativo*, 136.

[10] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1984), 116.

[11] Ibid., 147.

[12] Rolena Adorno, "Nuevas prospectivas en los estudios literarios coloniales hispanoamericanos," *Revista de Critica Literaria Latinoamericana* 28, no. 2 (1988): 19.

[13] Roberto Gonzalez-Echevarría, "America Conquered," rev. of *The Conquest of America* by Tzvetan Todorov in *Yale Review* 74 (1985): 284.

[4] Antonello Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh, 1985), 3.

[5] Ramón Iglesia, *Cronistas e historiadores de la conquista de México: el ciclo le Hernán Cortés* (Mexico, 1972), 34.

[6] Alfonso Reyes, *Ultima Tule* (Mexico, 1942), 62.

[7] Pedro Henríquez-Ureña, *Literary Currents in Hispanic America* (New York, 1963),

[Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to Imerica*, trans. and ed. Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley (Norman, 1989), 159.

Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William .. Trask (Princeton, 1973), 195.

Columbus, *The Diario*, 159.

Henríquez-Ureña, *Literary currents in Hispanic America*, 8.

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Edmundo O'Gorman, *Cuatro historiadores de Indias, siglo XVI: Pedro Mártir Anglería, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas* (Mexico, 59), 64.

Alberto Salas, *Tres cronistas de Indias: Pedro Mártir de Anglería, Gonzalo rnández de Oviedo, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas* (Mexico, 1959), 64.

Iglesia, *Cronistas e historiadores de la conquista de México*, 130-31.

Antonello Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 132.

[32] Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Val, *Sumario de la natural historia de las Indias*, ed. Manuel Ballesteros (Madrid, 1986), 121-22.

[33] Iglesia, *Cronistas e historiadores de la conquista de México*, 46.

[34] Merrim, "Ariadne's thread," 77.

[35] Pastor, *Discurso narrativo*, 201.

[36] Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 93.

[37] Hernán Cortés, *Fernando Cortés: his five letters of Relation to the Emperor Charles V*, trans. and ed. Francis A. MacNutt (Cleveland, 1908), 1: 237. In this study all citations of Cortés will be taken from this text.

[38] Ibid., 1: 194, 195.

[39] Ibid., 1: 247.

[40] Frankl, "Hernán Cortés y la tradición de las *Siete Partidas*," 58.

[41] *Letters from Mexico*, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. Anthony Pagden (New York, 1986), *liv*.

[42] Pastor, *Discurso narrativo*, 157.

[43] Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 1: 231.

[44] Ibid., 1: 265.

[45] Ibid., 1: 266.

[46] A. Bartlett Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic* (New York, 1966), 2-7.

[47] Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 38.

[48] Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 2: 45.

[49] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 195.

[50] Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 2: 45.

[51] Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Val, *Historia general y natural de las Indias* in *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, ed. Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso (Madrid, 1959) 119: 26.

[52] Merrim, "Ariadne's thread," 77.

[53] Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 94.

[54] Ibid., 93.

[55] Cortés, *Fernando Cortés*, 1: 223-24.

[56] Ibid., 1: 224.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 2: 146.

[59] Ibid., 2: 147.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 2: 203.

[62] Ibid., 2: 205.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 1: 223-24.

[65] Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*, 94.

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Hernando de Soto: Saint or Sadist?

Hampton Dunn

Historians are divided in their description of Hernando de Soto, the Spanish conquistador who tramped through the wilds of Florida for a period of ten months in 1539-40, and through other southeastern states until his death in 1542. "Brave" and "gallant" are two adjectives used but so are "ruthless" and "cruel."

His heroic image was challenged by the Florida historian, Karl H. Grismer, who wrote:

> It would be nice indeed if de Soto could be described as a gallant, benevolent, kindly nobleman inspired by a desire to carry the story of the cross to the brown-skinned men of Florida. But to do so would be in direct contradiction to the facts. He certainly was brave and he may have been gallant according to the sixteenth-century definition of the word. But, he was certainly neither benevolent nor kind if old Spanish writers can be believed. Said one of them, "De Soto was fond of the sport of killing Indians."

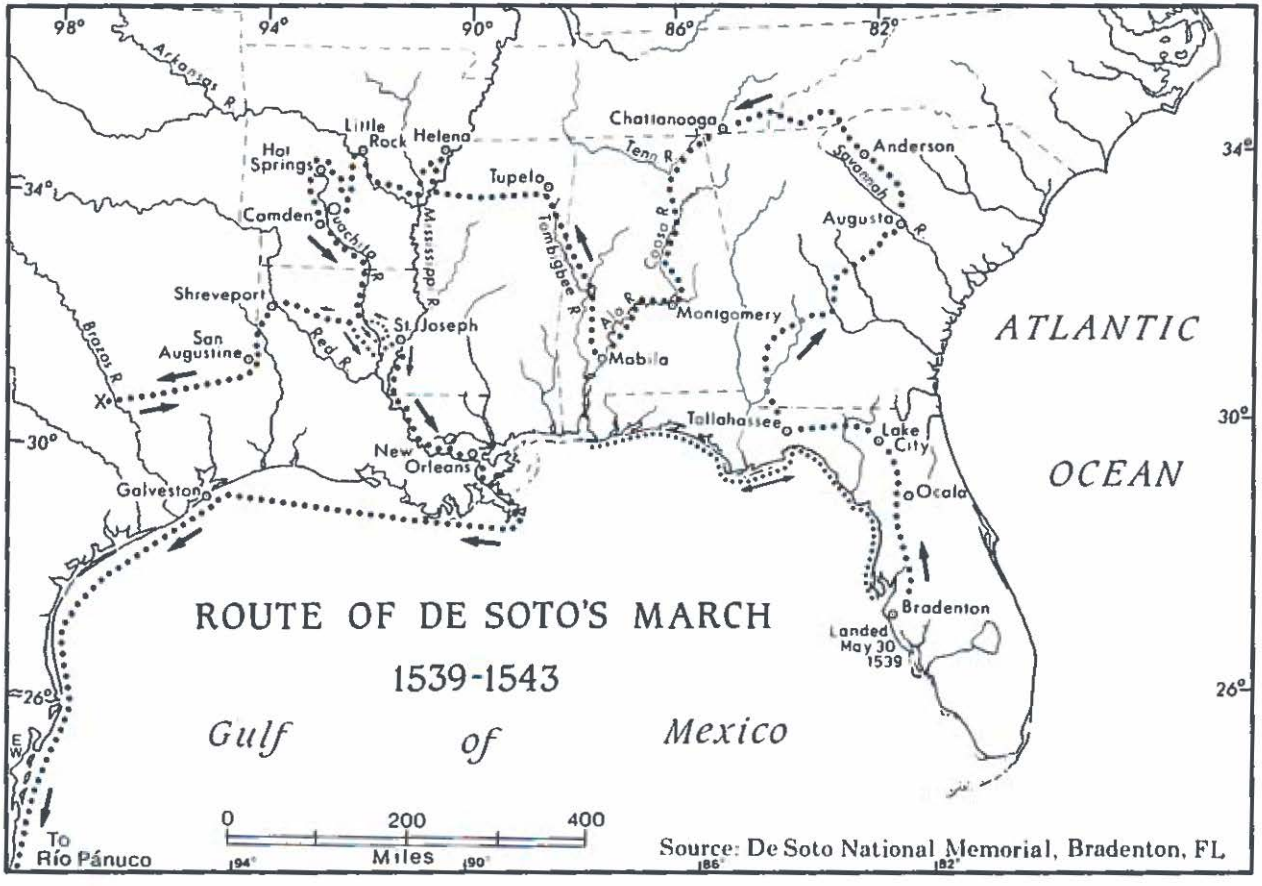
To which Grismer added, "If killing Indians was sport, then de Soto had sport galore in his lifetime. His record literally drips with Indian blood." [1]

Another Florida historian, Michael V. Gannon, in his book *The Cross in the Sand*, a history of the early Catholic Church in Florida, treated Soto a little more sympathetically, "Although it is recorded that de Soto was not above the use of deception in dealing with the Indians, nor averse to reducing them to slavery when it served his purposes, to his credit it is also recorded that he sometimes assisted the priests in instructing Indian chiefs and tribesmen in the basic beliefs of Christianity." [2]

Gannon expanded his thesis that Soto was an important force in spreading the gospel in Florida.

> On one such occasion—by a strange coincidence the same day, March 26, 1541, when his one-time commander, Francisco Pizarro, was assassinated in his palace in Peru, calling out "Jesu!", drew a cross with his finger in his own blood on the floor—on that same day, de Soto fashioned and raised a towering pinetree cross at the town of Casqui on the western bank of the Mississippi River, and proclaimed to the Indians of the place, "This was He who had made the sky and the earth and man in His own image. Upon the tree of the Cross He suffered to save the human race, and rose from the tomb on His third day . . . and, having ascended into heaven, was there to receive with open arms all who would be converted to Him." [3]

Soto was a devout Catholic and when he had landed in Florida he was so optimistic about the success of his adventure that he recommitted himself to his religious beliefs. Announcing his landing, he wrote, "Glory to God, who by His goodness directed all so that it appears as if He had taken this enterprise in His especial keeping, that it may be for His service, as I have supplicated and do dedicate to Him." [4]


98°
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Arkansas R.
Little Rock
Helena
Hot Springs
Camden
Ouachita R.
Mississippi R.
Tupelo
Tombigbee R.
Chattanooga
Tenn. R.
Coosa R.
Anderson
Savannah R.
Augusta
Shreveport
Red R.
St. Joseph
Montgomery
Alabama R.
Mobile
San Augustine
Brazos R.
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
Tallahassee
Lake City
Ocala
New Orleans
Galveston
Bradenton
Landed May 30 1539
ROUTE OF DE SOTO'S MARCH
1539-1543
Gulf of Mexico
0
200
400
Miles
To Río Pánuco
Source: De Soto National Memorial, Bradenton, FL

Henry William Elson presented another view of Hernando de Soto in his 1918 textbook. "De Soto was not at heart a cruel man," he wrote. "He had no desire to wantonly slay the natives; he fully intended, however, to give battle whenever the Indians opposed his march . . ." [5]

By contrast, Dr. James W. Covington, Dana Professor of History at the University of Tampa, noted that "as de Soto moved from the limits of southwestern Florida, he was fiercely resisted by the Indians, who hid in heavy underbrush and fired arrows at the Spaniards. De Soto treated many Indians with great cruelty and often allowed the dogs to kill the helpless captives." [6]

This image was echoed by *Miami Herald* columnist Nixon Smiley, who described Soto's march through central Florida, and declared, "In the pinewoods a Spanish horseman could run down an Indian and lance him in the back as he attempted to flee." Smiley added, "De Soto traveled with the aid of Indian guides, who, if they proved deceitful, had the Spaniards' brutish dogs set upon them. These dogs, believed to be of mastiff strain, would tear an Indian to shreds." [7]

The conduct of Soto in his treatment of Native Americans is still being discussed today. Each March at Bradenton, Florida, civic group calling itself the "de Soto Crewe," or the "Conquistadors" commemorates the landing of Soto at Shaw's Point on Tampa Bay near Bradenton. The colorfully-costumed celebrators arrive by boat and reenact the historic 1539 landing. At the 1991 celebration, a group of Native Americans was on hand to peacefully protest the event. A spokesman for the Indians told a Tampa television reporter why they were there. "We're down here to object to this activity for its subtle suggestion of genocide where they celebrate the annihilation of a race of people, specifically Native Americans," he said. "It commemorates genocide in its purest form, where [they] glorify the massacring of the Indian people. It says this country needs heroes to exist. To say that de Soto, Ponce de Leon, and Columbus were heroes drives the mentality of the general public back into the dark ages." [8]

The same television reporter put the question bluntly to Park Superintendent Richard Hite, a veteran of nineteen years service with the National Park Service, "Was de Soto a saint or a sadist?" The ranger replied:

> Well, I'm not sure that you could say either one. Or, you could say either one. I think somewhere in-between. The common mistake that's made today when we think about de Soto is that we compare him to our values of today. . . . Yes, he did some ruthless things, but so did all the rest of the people back in those days. I don't think we should single de Soto out specifically from all the explorers of that period and pin a bad name on him. I just don't think that is correct. All those people [explorers] did dastardly deeds. They were very severe people compared to our standards of today. We don't necessarily commemorate or celebrate those parts of the expedition. . . .
>
> We have to remember this is history; we can't change history. And I think it behooves us all to remember that, and go forward with a positive thought: What came of that expedition . . . He [Soto] did not convert many Indians and he really wasn't trying to. His mind was set on gold and glory.

> I know it was detrimental to the Native Americans, but again, that's history, and we can't change that. And we're not going to change it by taking a real negative point when we look at history.

Later in the interview, Superintendent Hite made a concession, "We've had different groups of Native Americans that have protested the treatment received in those days 400 or 500 years ago. . . . And I think if I were in their place, I'd feel a little bit upset about it too." [9]

From this composite of opinions, it is apparent that there is no clear-cut vision of this adventurer from Spain who came to America not seeking the fountain of youth, nor even the famous sunshine of the Sun Belt. He came for gold.

Hernando de Soto was born in the year 1500 into an impoverished aristocratic family. [10] It is said that Ferdinand, or Hernando, de Soto was a boy of remarkable beauty and gave early promise of unusual talent. His father was too poor to educate him and too proud to teach him the art of earning a livelihood. His boyhood, then, would have been spent in idleness, had not a powerful nobleman, Don Pedro Avilla, adopted him into his family and saw that the young lad got a good education.

Upon reaching manhood Soto made his way to the New World where many were his deeds of wild and daring adventure. It was reported that he was the handsomest and most chivalrous man in the [Spanish] army, who surpassed all his fellows as a horseman and swordsman.

He joined Francisco Pizarro in Peru in 1531 as his second in command. One historian wrote that although Soto was far more humane than his cruel and heartless chief, "the fact he was a member of that gang of robbers and shared in its spoils must remain forever a blot upon his name." The young Spaniard amassed a fortune in Peruvian gold valued at a half-million dollars—certainly a fortune at that time in history—and even today a goodly sum. [11]

After many years out of the country Soto returned home to Spain to claim the hand of Isabella, the lovely daughter of his benefactor, Avilla. Isabella, the playmate of his childhood, had been pronounced the most beautiful woman in all the kingdom, and she had waited faithfully for her lover. [12]

Fresh in the ranks of the *nouveau riche*, Hernando soon spent much of his fortune. He lived in a great mansion and kept a large number of servants. In two years half of his savings had "melted away," and the knowledge that his fortune was dwindling prompted him to seek some means of replenishing it. [13]

Figuring there was more gold to be had in America, Soto turned his attention to returning to the New World. [14] He was assigned to "conquer, pacify, and populate" the peninsula of Florida and the lands extending westward to the Rio Grande. Emperor Charles V gave him immense powers over Florida "for all the days of your life." [15]

Soto quickly gathered an army of over seven hundred men, described as the flower of Spain and Portugal, and outfitted a fleet of nine ships. [16] He sailed for Cuba where he would stage the hop to Florida, bringing along his

bride, Isabella. [17] The expedition spent the winter of 1538-39 having a merry time in Havana. Finally in May 1539, the army sailed for Florida. Soto kissed Isabella goodbye at the Havana port and left, never to see her again. Fondly and futilely, she hoped for his early return laden with riches and honor. [18]

Soto landed somewhere on the Gulf Coast of Florida. His actual landing site is still being hotly debated. In the late 1930s, on the eve of the four hundredth anniversary of Soto's arrival in Florida, Congress decided it would determine once and for all where he had landed. It sent the United States de Soto Expedition Commission, led by ethnologist John R. Swanton of the Smithsonian Institution, to make the determination. The scholars selected Shaw's Point on Florida State Road 64, just west of Bradenton. [19]

Local historian Walter P. Fuller of St. Petersburg has since disputed this claim and declared that Soto landed in the Point Pinellas-Safety Harbor area, touching land first at Mullet Key. [20] Warren H. Wilkinson, a Jacksonville Beach lawyer, debated with Fuller, and argued that Soto landed at Charlotte Harbor. [21] Fort Myers Beach writer, Rolfe F. Schell, also fixed the landing site as Charlotte Harbor. [22] A modern historian, George R. Fairbanks, claimed Soto landed at Gadsden Point in Tampa Bay, where MacDill Air Force Base is today. [23] Anthropologist William M. Goza, of the Florida State Museum at Gainesville, sided with Wilkinson and insisted that Soto came in at Charlotte Harbor and landed on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River in the Fort Myers region. [24]

For years Tampans have perpetuated the legend that Soto negotiated with the Indians under the "de Soto Charter Oak" in front of the old Tampa Bay Hotel, now the University of Tampa campus. [25] The first to capitalize on it was railroad magnate Henry B. Plant who used the story to publicize his Tampa Bay Hotel. Foresters of the Division of Forestry, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, say that it is a romantic thought but find little evidence to support the story. [26]

Dr. James W. Covington can look out his office window and see the "de Soto Oak." However, he debunks the tale declaring "I don't think this tree is 400 years old. Also, none of the three accounts of de Soto's explorations mention any conversations with the Indians." [27]

All that be as it may, Soto made history by naming Tampa Bay Espiritu Santo. He gave it that name because the Spanish festival of Espiritu Santo fell on May 25, the day he first sighted land. Thus, Soto's report to his superiors back home was the first letter ever written with a Florida "dateline"—Espiritu Santo, July 9, 1539. [28]

After his May 30 landing, Soto soon learned that there were rich Indian villages to the north and he set out to find riches in Florida as other Spaniards had in Mexico and Peru.

The Spanish commander now made a most fortunate acquisition to his army in the person of Juan Ortiz, a teenage fellow countryman who had lived with the Indians for ten years. [29] He had come from Cuba with a party searching for an earlier Spanish explorer, Panfilo de Narvaez, and had been captured with

three companions. The others were tortured to death, but Ortiz, a handsome and athletic youth of eighteen years, was saved by an emotional Princess Uleila, the daughter of Chief Ucita, who begged her father to spare Juan. This love story developed eighty years before the 1609 Pocahontas-Captain John Smith romance in Jamestown. Young Juan, after a decade of living with the Indians, was now familiar with their language and habits, and he became Soto's guide and interpreter. [30] But he never led the explorer to any city or village where gold was to be found.

This article will not attempt to trace or fix the route of Soto's wanderings in southeastern United States. How could it, when one official commission after another has failed to do so? The latest report on the subject was issued in 1990 by the National Park Service as required by the de Soto National Trail Study Act of 1987. The riddle in the route is best stated in the preface of the *Final Report*.

> If there is a point of agreement regarding the expedition of Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, it is the fact that his route through the southeastern United States will never be fully retraced throughout its entire course. To wit, after extensive study by the U. S. de Soto Expedition Commission, and years of intensive research by numerous scholars, it is still not possible to identify the actual route of the expedition. If anything, debates regarding the route which have raged for years are far from resolved and appear to be more intense than ever before. [31]

The National Park Service report did point to the route reconstruction by Charles Hudson, University of Georgia, and acknowledged that the work of Hudson is widely accepted among Soto scholars. The report made it plain, however that it "neither accepts nor endorses the route reconstruction of Dr. Hudson or the work of any other de Soto scholar." [32]

The Trail Study Commission did come to one conclusion: "The only location to which de Soto can be linked with a reasonable degree of certainty is the site of the expedition's first winter encampment in Tallahassee, Florida." [33] It was at that location that Soto, at Christmastime, celebrated the first Christ's Mass in the New World north of Mexico. It was reported that "De Soto, his fellow explorers, priest missionaries, and native Indians gathered around an altar at the Indian Mounds near Tallahassee to celebrate a sacred moment in the life of Christians—the birth of Christ." [34]

This event gives us one more glimpse at Soto's devotion to the Church. In 1975 Tallahassee artist, Claribel Jett, recreated the historic scene on canvas. Mrs. Jett spent months of research and three months of painting in order to capture authentic details for the work. According to Monsignor Terrell Solana, a consultant for the painting, the spirit of the characters, as well as the authenticity and sacredness of the event, were admirably depicted. [35]

As a result of the de Soto Trail Study, the National Park Service "has determined that the route of the expedition fails to meet two of the three criteria for national historic trail designation." The report added, "Although the expedition is of national significance, the determination indicated that there is a substantial lack of evidence as to the actual route location. . . ." [36]

The action of the National Park Service did not deter one United States Senator, Florida's former Governor Bob Graham, from his goal of getting the route declared a National Historic Trail. Senator Graham wrote one constituent in 1989, "While I understand the points raised by the Park Service, our efforts will not be sidetracked by semantics." The Senator introduced new legislation that would direct the Park Service, through the work of a special commission, "to develop a comprehensive plan for administration of the ten-state de Soto route and to create an archaeological/historical research institute." [37]

Whatever route he followed, Soto is generally credited with discovering the Mississippi River. The river was little used at the time because, in the words of Mark Twain, "nobody happened to want such a river; nobody needed it, nobody was curious about it; so . . . the Mississippi remained out of the market and undisturbed. When de Soto found it, he was not hunting for a river, and had no present occasion for one; consequently, he did not value it or take any particular notice of it." [38]

After leaving Florida and before arriving at the Mississippi River, Soto and his party experienced some hard times. North of Mobile, they tangled with Chief Tascalusa and, in a fierce day-long battle, the Spaniards burned the town and slaughtered some three thousand Indians. Soto suffered crippling losses: twenty men killed, including a brother-in-law and a nephew; a number of horses killed; most of the expedition's supplies and property destroyed; "and wounded comprised all the men of most worth and honor in the army." [39] Enroute there were battles and tremendous losses of men, horses, and supplies. Soto feared his men might desert him and he felt deeply dejected. He had spent his fortune and accomplished little. His faithful Isabella had written him, urging and begging that he give up his vain pursuit of a fortune and return to her. [40]

But, it seems that Soto's spirit was too proud. How could he return with his ragged and penniless army? How could he endure poverty and humiliation after the taste of wealth and popularity he had enjoyed? No, he must succeed or die; disgrace was worse than death. Soto was no longer the frank, energetic, and trusted commander; he was moody, sullen, distant, and careworn. He had lived about forty years, but the furrows of age were deepening in his face. Perhaps his travails had caused him to become mentally unbalanced.

Crossing the Mississippi, Soto explored what is now Arkansas and eventually made his way back to the river he had discovered. Stricken with malaria, he died May 21, 1542, near the banks of the great river. His body was committed to those waters with the full rites of the Church. Soto was only forty-two when he died. Years before, an astrologer had foretold his death at that age and this

prophecy came true. [41] When Doña Isabella heard of his death, she was unable to control her grief. One historian noted: "Her grief was the grief of Niobe and in a few years she had mourned herself to death."

Years ago Henry Elson noted that for wild and reckless adventure, the career of Hernando de Soto would be difficult to parallel. [42] His great expedition in the southeastern United States, while fascinating, was singularly barren of good results. Aside from the accidental discovery of the great Mississippi River, there is nothing to mark it as useful—no study of the language and habits of the natives, no record of the flora and fauna, nor scientific observations of the topography of the country. Little indeed was added to the knowledge of the New World by Soto's costly expedition.

However, one contemporary chronicler of the Soto trek, while loyally recording the commander's death, described him as "the magnanimous, the virtuous, the intrepid Captain. . . ." [43]

Notes

[1] Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida* (St. Petersburg, 1950), 23.

[2] Michael V. Gannon, *The Cross in the Sand* (Gainesville, 1965), 8.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bert Collier, "De Soto Visits Florida for God and Gold," *Gainesville Sun*, July 14, 1974.

[5] Henry William Elson, *History of the United States of America* (New York, 1918), 43.

[6] James W. Covington, *The Story of Southwestern Florida* (New York, 1957), 1: 49.

[7] Nixon Smiley, "How Ocala Looked in de Soto's Day," *The Miami Herald*, July 28, 1968.

[8] Interview by Hampton Dunn on *WTVT-TV*, Tampa, April 14, 1991.

[9] Interview by Hampton Dunn on *WTVT-TV*, Tampa, April 14, 1991.

[10] Elson, *History*, 41.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Covington, *Southwestern Florida*, 46.

[15] Garcilaso de la Vega, *The Florida of the Inca*, ed. and trans. John Grier Varner and Jeanette Johnson Varner (Austin, TX, 1951), 18.

[16] The number of men varies from source to source: Elson says 570 men and 223 horses; the National Park Service says 600 men; Grismer, over 700 men, more than 200 horses; Covington, number of men unstated, more than 300 horses; Fuller, over 600 soldiers, 213 horses; Charles Hudson, about 650 men.

[17] Grismer, *Tampa*, 24.

[18] Elson, *History*, 43.

[19] Grismer, *Tampa*, 26.

[20] Walter P. Fuller, *St. Petersburg and Its People* (St. Petersburg, 1972), 27.

[21] "De Soto Landing and Debate Planned for February," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 22, 1970.

[22] Rolfe F. Schell, *De Soto Didn't Land at Tampa* (Ft. Myers Beach, FL, 1967), 95.

[23] Fuller, *St. Petersburg*, 27.

[24] Roslyn Averill, "Anthropologist Think de Soto First sailed up Caloosahatchee," Ft. Myers *Newspress*, January 11, 1984.

[25] Grismer, *Tampa*, 27.

[26] "Plant City Founder Capitalized on Famous de Soto Oak Legend," Plant City *Courier*, June 3, 1974.

[27] Interview by Hampton Dunn on *WTVT-TV*, Tampa, January 29, 1988.

[28] Grismer, *Tampa*, 25.

[29] Ibid., 27.

[30] Covington, *Southwestern Florida*, 47.

[31] National Park Service, *Final Report* (1990), 9.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 7.

[34] Fort Walton Beach *Playground Daily News*, December 15, 1979.

[35] Ibid.

[36] National Park Service, *Final Report*, 7.

[37] Letter, Sen. Bob Graham to Dr. and Mrs. William Leonard, Tampa, March 24, 1989.

[38] Twain, Mark (Samuel L. Clemons), *Life on the Mississippi*, (New York, 1874, 1951), 8, 9.

[39] National Park Service Brochure, de Soto National Memorial, Bradenton, FL, revised, 1966.

[40] Elson, *History*, 51.

[41] Carl Payne Tobey, "This Week in Astrology," *Tampa Tribune-Times*, September 21, 1969.

[42] Elson, *History*, 51, 53.

[43] A Gentleman of Elvas and Luys Hernandez de Biedma, *Narratives of de Soto in the Conquest of Florida*, trans. Buckingham Smith (Gainesville, 1968), 146.

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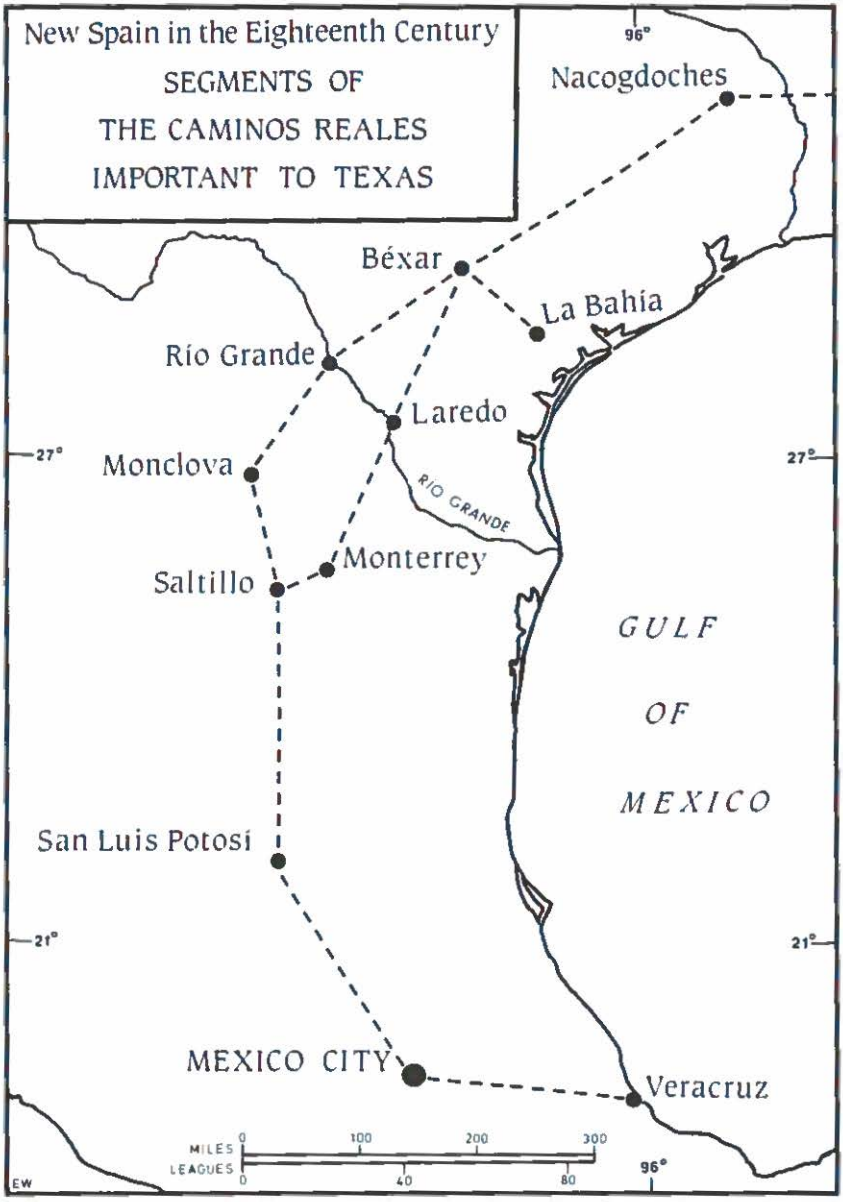
New Spain in the Eighteenth Century
SEGMENTS OF
THE CAMINOS REALES
IMPORTANT TO TEXAS
96°
Nacogdoches
Béxar
La Bahía
Río Grande
Laredo
27°
Monclova
RIO GRANDE
27°
Monterrey
Saltillo
GULF
OF
MEXICO
San Luis Potosí
21°
21°
MEXICO CITY
Veracruz
MILES
LEAGUES
0
100
200
300
0
40
80
96°
EW

El Camino Real: Lifeline of Colonial Texas

Jesús F. de la Teja

Camino Real—Royal Road—seems hardly an appropriate description for the network of Indian trails, natural stream crossings, and exploration routes that made up northern Mexico's communications system in the colonial period. Without a heavy investment in construction and maintenance, and there was practically none as a matter of fact, these early avenues of commerce, migration, and communication quickly changed to meet their users' defense, subsistence, and convenience needs. Distances were no greater then than they are today but it is unlikely a modern traveler will be attacked by Indians, run out of water, have their transportation stampede into the hills, or have to hunt for a meal.

The camino real, or more aptly the caminos reales, was more than a route, a set of connecting places—*parajes*—between two end points; it was a complex set of relationships between traveler and nature, governor and governed, buyer and seller. The hardships and dangers of the road made their own distinct contributions to the quality, and even the quantity of life at a given place. As Governor Muñoz noted in response to a viceregal inquiry in 1792:

> I make known to Your Superiority that in this Province under my charge there is not a single inn, nor any hostelries other than those which the residents provide to their guests and acquaintances who visit them, owing to the small number of settlements as well as their poverty, and the region not being transitable by anyone not having been raised and residing here. [1]

Despite the lack of amenities, the roads were frequently travelled. Life, harsh as it was, made its demands: the mail had to get through; supplies and payrolls had to be delivered to garrisons; missionaries had to transfer; goods had to be moved; occasionally even a wayfarer came along. As the only form of travel available in the eighteenth century—seaborne contacts with Mexico were not established until the nineteenth century—the camino real was the only means of communication between Texas and the rest of New Spain.

Although it had a long coastline on the Gulf of Mexico, Texas remained a landward province from the time of its first settlement. Several factors contributed to this situation. The failures of the Narváez and Soto expeditions to establish permanent settlements, combined with the isolation of the upper Gulf from Spanish colonization centers, led to a loss of interest in the region. By the time pirates and privateers began making use of the region in the seventeenth century, Spanish resources were insufficient to expend on any but the most serious threat. Thus, the response to La Salle's landing at Matagorda Bay led to a flurry of activity that soon dissipated as the Spanish realized the insubstantial nature of the threat. [2]

Considering the tentativeness of Spanish efforts in the upper Gulf, it is not surprising that a land expedition rather than a seaborne one discovered the remains of La Salle's aborted settlement in 1689. Spanish penetration of

northern New Spain in the latter seventeenth century was in the direction of the lower Rio Grande, as sheep and cattle ranchers searched for new pastures and missionaries sought new converts. Progress was slow, however, owing to the truculent nature of most Indians encountered and the absence of any attraction other than pasture land in the region. Having determined that the French threat was over, the Spanish soon retreated west of the Sierra Madre Oriental to resume a more sensible pace of northward expansion.

The La Salle episode had, however, exposed a considerable number of frontiersmen and missionaries to the network of Indian trade and migration trails that in the early eighteenth century served as the basis for the camino real. It was the very existence of such a network that allowed a missionary in Coahuila, Fr. Francisco Hidalgo, to write the governor of Louisiana for his support in obtaining missions for the Indians of East Texas. The Indian trails also served Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, a French trader from Louisiana who visited the Spanish outpost on the Rio Grande, San Juan Bautista, in 1705 and again in 1714. This avenue of communication would serve as the road for the 1716 entrada that made the Spanish settlement of Texas permanent. [3]

The primary consideration for anyone wishing to travel, communicate, or conduct business with the world beyond their immediate community was time. Texas settlements were not only distant from each other, they were also distant from the rest of New Spain. Closer to New Orleans than to San Antonio, Los Adaes was the nominal capital of Texas until it was abandoned. The 230 leagues between the two Texas settlements (according to the colonial reckoning) was about a month's travel by mule train. It took about as long to make the same trip from Saltillo to San Antonio. The trip from the viceregal capital, Mexico City, to Nacogdoches was a three month journey, if uninterrupted. From San Juan Bautista del Rio Grande, the Mexican settlement closest to Texas, it was a three to four day horseback ride to San Antonio under favorable conditions. [4]

The Crown attempted to make governing New Spain's far-flung northern frontier more efficient by establishing a separate governmental structure, the General Command of the Interior Provinces, within the frontier region. Soon, however, commandant generals realized even this was a clumsy solution. As early as 1779, Commandant General Croix wrote to Governor Domingo Cabello of Texas granting discretionary powers and expressing frustration at the situation: "for the distances greatly retard the usefulness of [my] determinations." [5] Manuel Muñoz, the last eighteenth-century governor, lamented his difficulties in governing Texas. Never having made the trip to Nacogdoches, he complained that "the intervening distance between this capital and Nacogdoches (as I am informed) is 160 leagues of wilderness, which give rise to grave risks in their transit and therefore retards the news and the receipt of requested documents." [6] This remark echoed Governor Angel de Martos y Navarrete, who in 1759 named Captain

Manuel Ramírez de la Pisina lieutenant governor for the San Antonio River settlements in order to avoid having all petitions and court cases sent to the capital at Los Adaes. [7]

There were many natural and man-made obstacles to easy communication between Texas and the rest of the viceroyalty, and even within Texas itself. Water, or the absence thereof, was an important impediment during an age when roads were not paved and bridges existed only in the settlements. Governor Fernando Pérez de Almazán found himself frustrated in his travel plans during much of his tenure. Swollen rivers kept him from making the trip from Los Adaes to San Antonio for seven months during 1724. He experienced a similar delay two years later, while attempting to return to east Texas with the supply convoy. [8] In 1790 Governor Rafael Martínez Pacheco reported on the effects of the drought that had consumed the countryside the previous two years. "Only now do the people of this province begin to go to Coahuila, for not even the mail has been able to traverse the distance of 80 leagues that separates this capital from the Presidio of Rio Grande because of the absence of water and pastures." [9] Yet only a year later the commandant general wrote to Governor Muñoz that the mail was detained at Rio Grande due to high water. An earlier governor, Barón de Ripperdá, found himself confused and in need of clarification when he received letters dated February 10, February 24, and March 3, all at the same time, with the last letter countermanding an order given in an earlier one. [10]

Such delays were not mere inconveniences in communication, but detriments to the region's economic welfare. A delay of just a few days could spell the difference between a profitable and money-losing transaction. For instance, in March of 1794 Manuel Delgado complained that he had lost money on his cattle drive to Saltillo because the herd was held up at Rio Grande. Unable to cross the river until the waters receded, Delgado found himself having to pay his cowboys their one peso per day wages while he waited. By the time Delgado got the cattle to Saltillo, the price obtained for them was not enough to cover his labor costs. [11]

Human obstacles to travel consisted of hostile Indians, who made life precarious even in town. It is unnecessary to provide a count of all the deaths attributable to the Apache, Comanche, and Norteño warriors who harassed the caminos during the colonial period. At times the settlements, particularly San Antonio, found themselves under virtual siege from the nomadic tribes. Often only the presence of large escorts made the roads at all passable. In 1775 the governor reported that he had been unable to send a letter to Rio Grande for four months because of the Comanches' continual interference. [12]

Conditions were particularly poor in the late 1760s, a time when many residents pleaded for permission to abandon the province. Hostilities reached such proportions that the ranches were abandoned and the farmers' fields were unsafe. Captain Luis Antonio Menchaca complained that the Indians had not only halted travel for residents but also for those who would enter or leave

the province, except under strong escort. [13] At one point the town suffered a twenty-two day siege during which time Captain Menchaca maintained "the troop mounted, the horse herd confined [in the presidio], and these few unarmed residents remaining also manning the posts to which I assigned them." [14]

The following account from Father Agustín Morfi's diary of his trip from Rio Grande to San Antonio repeated itself a number of times during the colonial period, and well into Texas statehood:

> . . . to the left of our road there is a hill, taller than the surrounding ones, which is called the Sow, from behind which the Apaches a few days before had fallen upon some residents of San Antonio who were taking oxen to the province of Coahuila. They killed one man, captured another, and with great difficulty one woman and two men escaped, having hidden when they heard the shooting. Some locals who accompanied us recovered the bones and returned them to Béxar for Christian burial. [15]

As dangerous as it was, the camino real required a great deal of forethought and precaution to be successfully traversed. This usually meant that travel took place in large groups, often under military escort. At times the presidio's capacity to supply escort service was overextended. One of the first requests made of the viceroy by Toribio Urrutia, who took command of San Antonio in 1740, was a reduction in the number of convoys making the remaining ones bigger and thus safer. At the end of the century resources remained strained. With some of the soldiers on mail service, others providing escort for a mule train from Saltillo, and a third protecting Bexareños conducting their roundups, Governor Muñoz could only apologize to Fr. José Mariano Roxo about having to delay his departure for Zacatecas. Thus, the Indian menace aside from making the road dangerous also made it slow by requiring that travelers often wait on military protection. [16]

Despite the difficulties, business, both the king's and private, was conducted on as regular basis as possible. Twice yearly, each garrison's quartermaster led a detachment to Mexico City, and later to San Luis Potosí or Saltillo, to collect his company's payroll and buy supplies. After the establishment of the royal tobacco, gunpowder, and playing card monopoly in the mid-eighteenth century, detachments from Texas presidios regularly travelled to Laredo to meet the convoys. [17]

All legal, and most illegal goods came into Texas along one of the roads that made up the camino real network. Due to the rough nature of the roads which were often little more than trails, most commerce was conducted by mule train. The typical train of twenty mules could expect to have four or five drivers sometimes including the merchant who owned the goods. As in modern long haul trucking, the most efficient method of conducting business was to make sure the mules carried freight in both directions. For instance, Santiago de Zúñiga, a Guadalajara petty merchant, who brought flour to Béxar, intended to take his seventeen mules back to Coahuila packed with dried beef and tallow.

Indians, distance, and poor roads combined to make freight charges one of the principal considerations in conducting business. Under normal conditions, the one peso per mule charge for the ninety-mile trip to La Bahía added as much as fifty percent to the cost of a *fanega* (1.6 bushels) of corn over the cost in San Antonio. Freight costs between the Saltillo and Parras region and San Antonio were as high at the end of the eighteenth century as they were in the early decades. In 1735, the forty-five mule loads of garrison supplies cost five hundred pesos, just over eleven pesos each. A half-century later, freight charges to Real de los Alamos, approximately one hundred miles west of Saltillo, were sixteen pesos per mule; the charge from San Luis Potosí was eighteen pesos per animal. Prices appear to have been a little better for legal goods coming from New Orleans to Nacogdoches. A 1786 shipment of Indian gifts cost 132 pesos, or 6 pesos per mule. [19]

In the latter part of the colonial period, particularly in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, the camino real became a cattle trail. The first Texas cattle drives took place along the roads to Rio Grande, Laredo, and Natchitoches. Cattle drives to the annual fair at Saltillo, to the presidios along the frontier line, or to towns in Nuevo León and Nuevo Santander became common. Some cattlemen even became traveling salesmen. Francisco Xavier Rodríguez, for example, took a large herd out of Texas, parts of which he sold to Camargo, Laredo, Vallecillo, and Boca de Leones. [20]

Texas cattle drivers made Saltillo their most common destination. The annual September fair there required roundups be conducted in July and early August. In mid-August, with passports from the governor, the herds left on their month's journey, often with a military escort as far as Rio Grande or Laredo. In mid-October the governor would dispatch a presidial detachment to Laredo to await the cattlemen's return. On more than one occasion it was not until mid-November that they made it back to Texas. This three month business trip was expensive as well as dangerous, for the cowboys earned what then was the high wage of one peso per day and the cattle often did not bring top dollar. [21]

Perhaps the most civilizing use of the camino real was the mail. Up to 1779 mail service was an informal arrangement both for the civilian population and the military. For settlers, outbound merchants, friars, and special couriers carried their correspondence to the outside world. At times, such as in 1735, the mails became hostage to a governor's whim; Governor Salcedo managed for a time to prevent the citizenry from lodging a complaint against him by not allowing anyone to leave San Antonio, thereby preventing the mail from getting out. [22]

With the establishment of the General Command, the reorganization of the presidial system throughout the north, and the issuance of new rules for the supply and maintenance of the presidial companies, there also developed a need for a more efficient mail system. In 1779 Commandant General Croix informed Governor Cabello that he was inaugurating a monthly postal service

from Nacogdoches in the far northeast to Arispe, Sonora, his capital. The postal service took advantage of the existing caminos, a string of presidios, and various missions to make the twelve hundred-mile connection. So popular did the system turn out to be that by 1785 the regular post had been increased to every fifteen days, followed by the military mail in 1793. [23]

How then to describe the camino real? The camino might almost be considered a living thing: ever changing its humors, taking on new roles and responsibilities, responding to the needs of a developing frontier province. The obstacles of travel on the road made the wayfarer respectful and fearful of it. Anyone wishing to go from Texas to the rest of the world had to be patient with the road, for it had a slow and often evasive nature.

The caminos were the arteries that kept Texas alive. Not only did they carry information vital to the survival of the province—orders for its administration, reports of danger, and appeals for help—they were the sole avenue of commerce throughout the colonial period. The only ships that came to Texas during the colonial period belonged to pirates, filibusters, the royal navy, and an occasional shipwreck. Trade, whether licensed or contraband, made use of the road network that connected Texas to the rest of the Spanish world, but also for a time to French and later American Louisiana.

Just as Texas never grew beyond a handful of rough and remote outposts, the camino real did not develop beyond a few primitive and isolated Indian trails and exploration routes. The camino real may, therefore, be said to symbolize Texas's marginality within the Spanish imperial system and the price of that official neglect.

Notes

An earlier version of this article appeared in the Texas Department of Transportation Report *A Texas Legacy, The Old San Antonio Road and the Caminos Reales: A Tricentennial History, 1691-1991* (Austin, 1991), 61-113.

[1] Governor Muñoz to viceroy, December 17, 1792, Carpeta 4a, Archivo General de la Nación de México, ramo Provincias Internas, vol. 99, microfilm, University of Texas at Austin, Benson Latin American Collection (hereafter cited as AGN:PI).

[2] The expeditions sent to find La Salle's camp are detailed in Robert S. Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish Search for La Salle* (Austin, 1973).

[3] Carlos E. Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936* (reprint, New York, 1976), 2: 12-35; A. Joachim McGraw, et al., ed., *A Texas Legacy, The Old San Antonio Road and the Caminos Reales: A Tricentennial History, 1691-1991* (Austin, 1991), 61-113.

[4] Noticias de los presidios que esta provincia de los Texas, Nuevas Philipinas, de mi cargo, tienen señalados, December 15, 1771 AGN:PI, vol. 100; Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo to viceroy, [1730], carpeta de correspondencia de las Proas. Internas, AGN:PI, vol. 236; Cabello to Croix, November 1, 1780, Bexar Archives, the University of Texas at Austin, Barker Texas History Center (hereafter cited as BA).

[5] Croix to Cabello, May 14, 1779, BA.

[6] Muñoz to viceroy, November 19, 1792, in Copybook of Muñoz correspondence, September 19, 1992, BA.

[7] Navarrete to the commander, justice, and council of San Antonio, October 7, 1759, BA.

[8] Pérez de Almazán to viceroy, October 24, 1724, in Autos sobre diferentes (asuntos) consultados por el gobernador de la Provincia de los Texas: muerte de uncorreo y otras materias, AGN:PI, vol. 183; ibid. to ibid., July 11, 1726, in Carpeta de correspondencia de las Proas. Internas por los años de 1726 a 1731 . . . AGN:PI, vol. 236.

[9] Martínez to commandant general, June 6, 1790, BA.

[10] Castro to Muñoz, August 5, 1791, BA; Ripperdá to viceroy, May 23, 1773, AGN:PI, vol. 100.

[11] Representation of Manuel Delgado, March 18, 1794, BA. [12] Ripperdá to viceroy, October 28, 1775, in carpeta 2a., AGN:PI, vol. 99; Menchaca to Governor O'Conor, August 18, 1768, BA; Viceroy to Captain Menchaca, May 5, 1769, BA; Cabello to Croix, August 19, 1779, BA; Cabello to Croix, July 17, 1780, BA; Benito Armiñán to Arredondo, August 15, 1814, BA.

[13] Menchaca to Ripperdá, July 12, 1770, AGN:PI, vol. 100.

[14] Menchaca to O'Conor, August 9, 1768, AGN:PI, vol. 91.

[15] Juan Agustín Morfi, *Viaje de indios y diario del Nuevo México* (Mexico, 1980), 336.

[16] Luis A. Menchaca to Ripperdá, April 23, 1771, AGN:PI, vol. 100; Proceedings against Joaquín Benites, et al., August 1, 1774, BA; Gov. Cabello to Croix, Bexar, June 20, 1779, BA; Estado de la fuerza efectiba, October 31, 1782, BA; Muñoz to Fr. José Marino Roxo, November 29, 1791, BA; Juan Timoteo Barrera to Muñoz, November 6, 1795, BA.

[17] Regulation of escort duties is set forth in the following: Ordenanzas 1729, arts. 140-149, Archivo General de Indias, ramo Audiencia de México, legajo 62-1-41, transcript, Spanish Material from Various Sources, vol. 81, the University of Texas at Austin, Barker Texas History Center; *Reglamento e instrucción para los presidios que se han de formar en la linea de frontera de la Nueva España*, título I, art. 4, (1772; reprint, Mexico, 1790). Arispe to Muñoz, December 16, 1794, BA; Juan Timoteo Barrera to Muñoz, November 6, 1795, BA.

[18] Causa criminal against Juan José Sevallos, February 17, 1750, BA; Proceedings against Joaquín Benites, et al., August 1, 1774, BA; Autos formados contra Juan José Flores de Abrego y otros Rancheros por varios robos de ganado orejano en los agostaderos de la Misión de Espíritu Santo, September 23, 1778, BA; Expediente promovido por Santiago de Zúñiga sobre contidad de dinero que demanda contra D. Simón de Arocha, May 9, 1788, BA; Petition of Antonio Baca, March 30, 1791, BA.

[19] Proceso de diligencias seguidas en virtud de superior mandamiento del Ilo. y Exmo. eñor Arsobispo Virrey de esta Nueva España, por D. Manuel de Sandoval, governador e la Provincia de Texas, contra los vienes de D. José de Urrutia, Capitán del Presidio : S. Antonio de Béjar, para el recobro del crédito que el expresado Capitán debía la Rl. Hacienda, 1735, AGN:PI, vol. 163; Invoice for tobacco shipment, June 6, 1774, A; Memoria de los efectos que lleba para el repuesto de la compañía del Preso. de Antonio de Bexar el habilitado D. Francisco Amangual, April 14, 1788, BA; Expediente omovido por Santiago de Zúñiga sobre cantidad de dinero que demanda contra D. nón de Arocha, May 9, 1788, BA; Report to the King, December 31, 1792, in Copy

book of Muñoz correspondence with the viceroy, September 19, 1792, BA; Muñoz to Arispe, December 6, 1793, in Juan Ignacio de Arispe to Muñoz, October 12, 1793, BA; La Misión de Nra. Sa. del Refo. del maíz y toros librados por el Sor. Govor. de esta Prova. tente. Corl. D. Manl. Muñoz, September 3, 1795, BA; Account of expenditures from the Mesteña fund, January 31, 1786, NAT.

[20] Causa formada pr. el Govr. de esta provincia Barón de Ripperdá contra Francisco Xavier Rodríguez, March 7, 1777, BA.

[21] Proceedings against Joaquín Benites, et al., August 1, 1774, BA; Cabello to Croix, June 20, 1779, BA; Estado de la fuerza, October 31, 1782, BA; Diligencias practicadas sobre haber vendido de cuenta de S. M. cincuenta reses, August 14, 1786, BA; Expediente promovido por Santiago de Zúñiga, May 9, 1788, BA; Nómina de los vecinos de San Antonio de Béjar que han introducido partidas de reses vacunas en este alcabalatorio . . . Real Aduana del Saltillo, November 13, 1788, no. 2, BA.

[22] Auto a pedimiento de varios soldados del presidio de S. Antonio de Béjar, 1735, AGN:PI, vol. 163; Baptista de Iparraguirre vs. Gabriel Costales, May 25, 1735, BA.

[23] Dilixencias qe., se han practicado pa. la erección y establecimto. del Correo Mensal en esta Proa. de los Texas, February 15, 1779, BA; Commandant General Rengel to Cabello, August 25, 1785, BA; Commandant General Nava to Muñoz, November 11, 1793, BA.

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"Perrier's Water": Roullet's 1732 Exploration of Pearl River

John Hawkins Napier III

Three hundred years ago America's Deep South bordering the Gulf of Mexico was an imperial cockpit as Spain, France, and Great Britain fought to control it. What they named respectively Florida, Louisiana, and Carolina stretched from today's Brownsville to Beaufort and from Memphis to Miami.

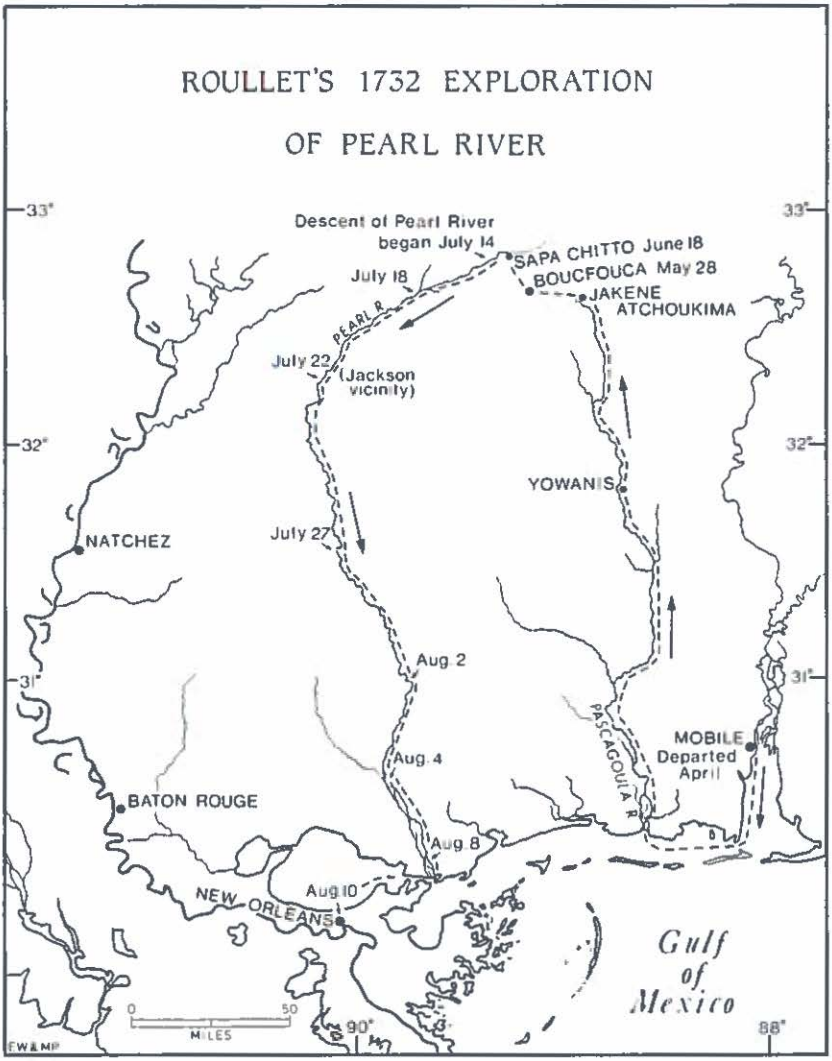
In the east of this vast region, on the Atlantic Coast, Vasquez de Ayllon tried as early as 1526 to establish a Spanish colony in "Chicora" (coastal Carolina) near Winyah Bay, but it failed. In 1540 Soto explored the Savannah River region, as did Juan Pardo in 1567. In 1562 Jean Ribaut founded a French Huguenot colony at Port Royal near Parris Island, but it too failed. The French also established Ft. Caroline on Florida's St. John's River, but Don Pedro Menéndez de Avilés destroyed it and founded St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States, in 1565. North of it, extending almost to the site of Charleston, Spain planted twenty fortified mission posts in "Guale," Low Country Georgia. In 1606 the year before Jamestown's founding, the Bishop of Cuba confirmed a thousand Indian Christians of those missions. However, the British established Charles Town in 1670 and finally checked the Spanish advance up the Eastern Seaboard at the Battle of Bloody Marsh in 1742, after having founded Georgia as their southern military outpost in 1733.

In the west of this region, René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle explored the Mississippi River to its mouth in 1682, claiming all its vast drainage as Louisiana. Four years later he founded an ill-starred and short-lived colony at Matagorda Bay, but it was Henri de Tonti who in 1686 established the first permanent white settlement in the lower Mississippi Valley at Arkansas Post. The alarmed Spanish advanced quietly up from Mexico and established several missions and presidios in East Texas. Later, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis founded France's farthest west post at Natchitoches in 1713.

In the middle of this region, the lands between the Mississippi and Chattahoochee Rivers, the tripartite struggle was equally intense. Patricia Galloway states that it was La Salle's efforts, not Soto's, that moved the Spanish to establish their outpost at Pensacola in 1698, when Don Andrés d'Arriola established the first fort on the site of Ft. San Carlos. [1]

The French reacted by Jean Baptiste le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville's founding Ft. Maurepas at Old Biloxi in 1699, Ft. Louis de la Mobile at Old Mobile in 1702, Ft. Rosalie at Natchez in 1716, Ft. St. Claude on the Yazoo twelve miles north of Vicksburg and New Orleans, both in 1718, and Ft. Chartres north in Illinois in 1720 (La Salle had earlier founded Ft. Prudhomme at Memphis in 1682).

British traders, mainly Scots, had already reached Alabama by 1680 from Charleston, just ten years after its founding. Bienville responded by founding Ft. Toulouse aux Alibamons fifteen miles north of Montgomery in 1714, and


ROULLET'S 1732 EXPLORATION
OF PEARL RIVER
33°
32°
31°
90°
88°
Descent of Pearl River
began July 14
July 18
July 22
(Jackson
vicinity)
July 27
Aug. 2
Aug. 4
Aug. 8
Aug. 10
SAPA CHITTO June 18
BOUCFOUCA May 28
JAKENE
ATCHOUKIMA
YOWANIS
NATCHEZ
BATON ROUGE
NEW ORLEANS
MOBILE
Departed
April
PEARL R.
PASCAGOULA R.
Gulf
of
Mexico
0
50
MILES
EW&MP

later Ft. Tombecbé at Jones Bluff on the Tombigbee River in 1736. ". . . in the coming contest between England and France for possession of the North American continent Louisiana would be pitted against Carolina." [2] However, the French did not establish like control over the interior of Mississippi, as we shall see.

Despite having planted the fleur-de-lis at these strategic points in the Gulf South and Mississippi Valley, Glenn R. Conrad states that "France's participation in the Great-Power struggle for control of large portions of the Western Hemisphere can best be described as a century-and-a-half of hesitancy and half-heartedness," and that France lacked the zeal to colonize of her European rivals, a judgement shared by James J. Cooke. [3] Despite France's colonial ambivalence, her short-lived North American empire resulted from the dedicated efforts of "a few colonial agents—a handful of imaginative, ambitious, perhaps ingenious men," such as Champlain, Frontenac, La Salle, and the brothers Le Moyne. [4] They were seconded by more junior and obscure figures, many of them ambitious and adventurous younger sons of the French *noblesse*, the gentry, equally dedicated to establishing a French North American empire.

One of these men was Régis du Roullet, referred to in the records as Monsieur or Sieur. Although his birthdate, birthplace, and parentage are uncertain, the "noble particulate" in his name shows that he was of the armigerous gentry, privileged to wear the plume and sword, as does his status as an Army officer. He said he entered his king's service in 1710, so he could have been born about 1695, since in those days noble European sprigs usually began military service in their mid or late teens.

He served for six years in France as a cavalry lieutenant before going to Louisiana in 1720 he said, although a biographical note puts it at 1724. [5] There he served at Ft. Toulouse as an ensign under command of Diron D'Artaguette, Commandant at Mobile, Inspector General and King's Lieutenant of Louisiana, and later Roullet's nemesis. [6] Next, Roullet served as a second lieutenant at Mobile in the company of Swiss Capt. Joseph Christophe de Lusser (who was later killed at the Battle of Ackia in 1736). [7]

Thence Roullet began his explorations of the Choctaw country, in 1729, establishing a small post on the Chickasawhay River after a mission there directed by the governor, Boucher de la Perrier. Then at the latter's behest, in 1732, Roullet explored and mapped the Pascagoula-Chickasawhay and Pearl Rivers. In 1733 Governor Perrier, with whom Roullet seemed to have been on good terms, wrote the latter advising him to return to New Orleans because he had enemies there in a clique opposed to Perrier's rule. Roullet returned to New Orleans to defend himself in May 1733 only to find that Bienville, appointed Louisiana's governor for the third time, had just supplanted Perrier.

Roullet informed Bienville that he had Perrier's permission to return home to France on furlough for treatment of his long-suffered rheumatism. Bienville stated coldly that if he went home, he would have to resign his commission.

This shocked Roullet, who had no intention of resigning after thirteen years in Louisiana and twenty-three in the king's service, but he was given no alternative. His friends reckoned that there were two reasons for Roullet's forced resignation:

> . . . the first my attachment to the previous Governor and the second my attention to Mme. de Crémont who I had noticed was pleased by them, which so went to the head of Sieur de Crémont, the Commissary of Mobile, that he went to find Baron de Crénay and uttered to him a thousand invectives about me. The Baron, soon aware of what was taking place, did not agree in his suggestion. This irritated him more and induced him to go and see M. de Bienville, who was more disposed to listen to him than was M. Perrier, to whom he had written against me.
>
> I think that these are the true causes which have given grounds for demanding my resignation, and that it was expected in this way that I should not return again to the colony. [8]

So Roullet had to return to France, but there he was promoted to a full lieutenancy in 1734 and to a captaincy in 1738. He next served in Cayenne (Guiana), where he commanded the post at Oyapok. He resigned again in 1741 to defend his rights in a law suit with his wife's brother (so he *was* married!) about an inheritance. He returned to Cayenne, where in 1766 he was asked again to resign, but by then he must have been about seventy and of retirement age. He went to Martinique, where he vanished from the record.

Actually, Roullet's troubles had begun earlier, when on October 17, 1729 Diron D'Artaguette wrote a complaint about him to Jerome de Maurepas, Comte de Pontchartrain, French Minister of the Marine and Colonies. D'Artaguette charged that Roullet had undercut his authority when he went to live among the Choctaws at their principal town of Yowanis (Yoanne, Hiowanni). But it was Governor Perrier who had ordered Roullet not quite two months earlier (August 29) to go among the Choctaws to learn why they were discontent with the French and calling upon the British. At a big pow-wow Roullet had recalled the Choctaw chiefs to their French allegiance, and then established a French post and warehouse at Yowanis, probably the only one in interior Mississippi. [9] During the conference, Roullet had to order repeatedly one Tarascon, a Mobile trader living among the Indians, to leave the council while he was delivering the governor's secret message to the chiefs. Finally, Roullet had to beat Tarascon about the ears with his sword to get rid of him and this enraged Diron, whose spy Tarascon may have been.

Diron further alleged that Roullet had told the Choctaws that the French of Mobile were thieves and that the tribesmen would do better to trade with the New Orleans French. Roullet persuaded several Choctaw chiefs to go to New Orleans to see the governor. Diron went on that "Sieur Régis had caused trouble from the time of Bienville," so this must have been 1725 when Bienville was dismissed as governor the second time or before. Diron even went back to Roullet's earlier service at Ft. Toulouse charging that he had left his post there without permission to return to Mobile, leaving but one officer there,

and that he had commandeered the Dauphin Island garrison and boat to take him to New Orleans, leaving the Mobile coast unguarded. Despite Diron's accusations, one notes that two months later, after the Natchez Indians had massacred the French at Ft. Rosalie, Roullet persuaded the Choctaws to send 700 warriors against the Natchez in reprisal and another 150 to the Yazoos to capture any Natchez or Negro prisoners there that might be taken to the Chickasaws. [10]

Roullet survived these allegations, but more than three years later another complaint about him was levied, this time by Louisiana Commissary General Edmé Gatien Salmon in another letter to Maurepas on February 8, 1733. Salmon went back to the events of 1729, stating that Governor Perrier had sent "Sieur Régis" to the Choctaw country in that year to invite the Indians to come down to New Orleans to receive presents and to agree on the price of trade goods. Only on these conditions did the Choctaws let themselves be led to New Orleans, but the Great Chief and several leading men of the nation refused. Roullet returned with them to Yowanis where he had since stayed, "to the great displeasure of the Indians, who had often complained of his conduct and have earnestly asked that he be removed." According to Salmon, they thought their request had been honored when he returned to New Orleans in 1731, only to be surprised when he returned with a detachment of four men "under the pretext" of exploring the Pearl River (remember that this was Governor Perrier's order). Governor Perrier asked Salmon to give Roullet merchandise for the expedition, the results of which Salmon complained that he had heard nothing. He imagined "that it served only as a specious pretext to send Sieur Regis back to the Choctaws and to make available to him the means for trade and for continuing a commerce that he has been carrying on for a long time to the prejudice of the service." [11]

Here Salmon was calling into question Governor Perrier's policy. Salmon called Perrier's attention to the complaints the Indians were making about Roullet, complaints significantly that "had come to me by way of M. de Crémont!" The Governor replied that Roullet was returning for the good of the service and that he would have him recalled but had no suitable replacement. Salmon grumped that he could have named plenty of people but that they would not have suited the governor at all. Three months later, both Perrier and Roullet were out of Louisiana.

Regardless of Roullet's own merits or shortcomings, there was evident intrigue within the Louisiana colonial establishment. It was not the first time, as an examination of the earlier animosity between Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and Bienville shows. Both D'Artaguette and Salmon went over their governor's head to Paris. After Perrier relieved Bienville in 1726, he got rid of all Bienville's friends. Perrier's severity toward the Natchez also aroused the Chickasaws and some of the Choctaws and he was accused of causing the November 28, 1729 massacre at Natchez and on the Yazoo. Bienville's return as governor again in 1733 was hailed with delight among the colonists, whose favorite he was. [12] If Perrier were Roullet's protector, the latter was dead meat under the restored

Bienville regime. Another factor was the apparent rivalry between New Orleans and Mobile over the Choctaw trade, with Perrier undercutting the Mobile authorities.

From such hostile reports it is difficult to judge what manner of man Roullet was, despite his apparent diplomatic successes among the Choctaws. From his exploring accounts of the Pascagoula and Pearl river systems we know that he kept meticulous records and was a careful navigator and mapper. His maps were quite accurate, considering that his only instruments were his magnetic compass, telescope, and his own two eyes. Since he never mentioned the Pearl River mosquitoes in the summertime, he must have been either hardy or a stoic! In 1729 D'Artaguette complained that Roullet had to rely upon an incompetent interpreter Domingue (the governor's own), but three years later Roullet could fool some Choctaws by understanding them when they thought he could not. [13]

Whereas Rowland's and Sanders's published record of Roullet's ascent of the Pascagoula and Chickasawhay rivers is rich with accounts of the Indians and their place names, it lacks topographical details, possibly because it was known land. In contrast, the ninety-four-page transcript they omitted of his descent of the Pearl is just the opposite: a boringly detailed and minute account of every feature of the watercourse, almost devoid of human contact or context. One reason is that Rowland and Sanders edited considerably the Roullet journal excerpts that they published. Another reason is that the seventeenth-century wars between Chickasaws and Choctaws had depopulated the Pearl River Valley, with the latter fleeing east and south. It was an empty land that Roullet explored. Perhaps that is why Bienville asked for a fief on Pearl River. Instead, he got Horn Island off Pascagoula in socage tenure. [14]

As stated, in April 1732 Governor Perrier directed Roullet to explore Pearl River to learn whether it was navigable so as to afford better communications and trade with the Choctaws. Instead of exploring from the mouth of the Pearl River north to its source, Roullet did it the other way around. He went to Mobile and up the already-known Pascagoula River to the vicinity of the Pearl's headwaters, which is near the sacred Choctaw mound of Nanih Waiya, the Great Mother of their nation.

From Mobile, Roullet first went up to Yowanis, where he had established a post three years earlier. There he left an officer, M. de Chambellon, said to be a son either of Governor Perrier or his wife, with four other Frenchmen. Roullet then headed north for Boucfouca, the Choctaw town five leagues from the Pearl River, "which I have to explore" (a French league was 2.42 English miles). [15] He stayed May 28 in a cabin of the chief there. He needed Indians both to guard him from the Chickasaws while he was building cypress pirouges and also as porters to fetch the goods left at Yowanis. On May 30 he sent porters from Jakene Atchoukima, along with one of his four soldiers to insure that there was no pilferage of his goods. [16]

On June 18 Roullet left Boucfouca for the outlying hamlet of Sapa Chitto, where the Choctaws had a little stake fort to protect them from the Chickasaws across the river (was the Pearl the boundary between the two?). [17] There his four French soldiers and fifteen Indian guards built a little stockade near the Chickasaws' river crossing and a cypress pirogue which was finished July 12. That day arrived four Indians from Yazoo and fifteen from Cushtusa villages to be his escort down Pearl River. [18] The next day he ordered them to range along the river for Chickasaws and to fire two musket shots as identification whenever they came in sight of Roullet. He noted that these Indians called the Pearl the Ecfinacha but left blank the meaning in his journal (others called it Taliacha, "River of Pearls," from the coarse pearls found at its mouth, or simply Hacha, "The River").

Roullet began his exploring descent of Pearl River on July 14, embarking near the present Leake-Neshoba County line near Edinburg. At that point, he found the river seven to eight fathoms wide and nine feet deep, but two days' rain had raised the water level three feet. [19] Since his mission was to determine the Pearl's navigability, it is odd that he did not record another depth sounding for three more days, July 17, where he found eight feet of water. On the previous day, the sixteenth, he found a bluff with Bayou Taskalamitta ("Young Warrior") to the left, six or seven leagues from Sapa Chitto and suitable for a French establishment if desired (the Tuscolameta flows into the Pearl seven miles as the crow flies below Carthage, Leake County seat, to the east of which is today's Choctaw Reservation). On the eighteenth, he encountered a large rapid bayou he identified tentatively as Jakene Oukou and there first marked his route with crosses on trees (the Yockanookany River flows south from Kosciusko).

From here on it is not possible to pinpoint Roullet's route, for he gives no more topographical names. Clearly, he was entering a *terra incognita* for his Indian guides, as well as himself. All we are left with are his terrain descriptions, compass headings, and distances. The latter include not only French leagues, fathoms and feet, but the "end of the telescope's range" (*au bout de la longue vue*), "the distance of a gunshot," which he equated to 150 fathoms (266 yards), an extreme range for a smoothbore musket, and once "the distance of a pistol shot" (who knows?). [20] None of his later depth soundings were close to his first ones, ranging from two to five feet, but "Pearl River has an unusually low flow during the summer and fall months." [21] Despite the sweltering Mississippi summer, he spent virtually every night in a hut-shelter prepared for him.

On July 20 Roullet found a horse belonging to "Red Show" of Chickasawhay according to Mongoulacha Mingo, a chief of that village, who recognized the horse's markings. This chief is the only person, red or white, that Roullet mentions by name as a companion on this "Traverse of the Pearl." The horse's owner was probably Red Shoe (Shulashummashtabe), a Choctaw chief. [22]

to control interior Mississippi to the British, although they were able to maintain themselves in Alabama until defeated in the Seven Years War. As a result of the Treaty of Paris of 1763, Great Britain gained all of the Southeast this side of the Mississippi River, except the Isle of Orleans, as West and East Florida and the French marched out of Fts. Toulouse and Tombecbé, while Mobile became part of Charlotte County.

However, it would be the American successors to British hegemony who would open up interior Mississippi and Alabama after the War of 1812. When they did, they found the Pearl River Valley still virtually empty and rushed to settle it. Significantly, when Mississippi moved toward statehood, the Pearl River settlers wrested political power from the Natchez District planters. Natchez and its suburb of Washington were superseded as capitals successively by Columbia, Monticello, and Jackson, all on the Pearl. The Pearl River Convention of 1816, which petitioned Congress successfully for statehood, met at John Ford's on the Pearl between Columbia and Gainesville. The Pearl was finally opened for navigation. Steam boats brought the materials for Jackson's Old Capitol up from New Orleans (it was completed in 1842), and as late as 1904 steam boats were seen at Monticello. However, the opening of the Choctaw and Chickasaw lands in central and north Mississippi caused a land rush which once more virtually depopulated the valley of the Pearl.

Finally, man's interference with the natural flow of the Pearl River destroyed it as an avenue of commerce, even before the coming of the railroads, and the consequential flooding ruined the bottom lands for farming. The Pearl never realized Perrier's and Roullet's dreams for it and remains a melancholy testimony to what might have been.

Notes

[1] Patricia Galloway, "Sources for the La Salle Expedition of 1682" in *La Salle and His Legacy*, ed. Patricia K. Galloway (Jackson, MS, 1982), 11.

[2] Wesley Frank Craven, *The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, 1607-1689*, vol. 1 of *A History of the South* (1949; reprint, Baton Rouge, 1970), 406.

[3] Glenn R. Conrad, "Reluctant Imperialist: France in North America" and James J. Cooke, "France, The New World and Colonial Expansion," both in Galloway, *La Salle*, 81-91, 93.

[4] Conrad, "Reluctant Imperialist," 100.

[5] Dunbar Rowland and A. G. Sanders, eds., 3 vols. *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion* (Jackson, MS, 1927-1932) and Patricia Galloway, rev. and ed., vols. 4 and 5 (Jackson, MS, 1984), hereafter *MPAFD*. Compare 1: 17, fn 4 with 1: 191.

[6] *MPAFD* 4: 22-23.

[7] *MPAFD* 1: 17; Peter J. Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile* (Boston, 1910), 140.

[8] *MPAFD* 1: 17, 191-92. Baron de Crénay, Sieur de Poilvilain, Lt. Col. in Louisiana in the 1730 Natchez War, was appointed Commander of Mobile in 1731.

[9] Hamilton, citing James Adair and Bernard Romans, erroneously placed Yowanis in Pearl River (196), although later (199) he stated correctly that it was on the Chickasawhay. Today it is Hiwanee, a hamlet three miles south of Shubuta, MS in Wayne Co. *MPAFD* 1: 70-91.

[10] *MPAFD* 1: 56, 67; 4: 22-23.

[11] *MPAFD* 4: 126-27.

[12] Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile*, 124-25.

[13] *MPAFD* 1: 21, 186.

[14] Conversation with Patricia Galloway, for whom I am indebted for much of the approach to this paper, September 13, 1991; Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile*, 100, citing Grace E. King, *Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville*, (New York, 1893), 228.

[15] Boucfouca means "Surrounded by Bayous" and was five miles west of Philadelphia, Neshoba Co., MS. *MPAFD* 1: 44, fn 1: 143-46.

[16] It was fourteen miles west of DeKalb, Kemper Co., MS. The meaning of the name is not given.

[17] It means "Big Corn Field" and was in southwest Neshoba Co. at the site of the extinct town of Dixon.

[18] Cushtusha means "Fleas are There" and it was three miles south of Yazoo Old Town, Neshoba Co., MS, both near the headwaters of Oktibeha Creek. The meaning of Yazoo is unknown. Oktibeha means either "Ice There in Creek" or "Bloody Water," where the Chickasaws and Choctaws fought a battle.

[19] Chief of Engineers, War Department Report, *Pearl River, Mississippi and Louisiana*, 71st Cong., 2d sess., H. Doc. 445 (Washington, DC, 1930), 2, 3 (hereafter cited as Corps). The French fathom was 5.318 English feet, not six; the French foot (pied) was 1.21 English and divided into 12 inches (pouces).

[20] Régis du Roullet, "Traverse of the Pearl River," unpub. ms. transcribed and translated by Albert G. Sanders, edited by Jo Ann Bomar, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), RG 24, vol. 35, Folder 5, pp. 6, 8, 11, 16, 17, 61, 90.

[21] Corps, 9.

[22] Roullet, "Traverse of the Pearl River," 28-29, 31. The Choctaws took their word for shoe "shulush" from the French "soulier."

[23] Conversation with Patricia Galloway, September 13, 1991; comparison with the Pearl River Boatway Map, Pearl River Basis Development District (Jackson, MS, 1985). See my *Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods: Its Land and People* (University, MS, 1985); "Piney Woods Past: A Pastoral Elegy" in *Mississippi's Piney Woods: A Human Perspective*, ed. Noel Polk (Jackson, MS, 1986), 12-24, and "The Pearl—Rape of a River," unpub. ms. read at the twelfth Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference, Mobile, AL, March 9, 1989, 1-17, an earlier version of which appeared in *The* Picayune (MS) *Item*, November 24, 1985, 8A.

[24] Roullet, "Traverse of the Pearl River," 45-46; Corps, 6-7.

[25] Roullet, "Traverse of the Pearl River," 56.

[26] Conversation with Patricia Galloway, September 13, 1991.

[27] Roullet, "Traverse of the Pearl River," 72, 74.

[28] I am much indebted to the late L. Mansfield Downes of Picayune, MS, justly recognized statewide in 1984 as Mississippi's Conservationist of the Year before his death in 1986, *the* expert on the Lower Pearl River, who helped me identify these places in my *Pearl River's Piney Woods*, 23-24 and who taught me to care about the river. This paper is in his memory. Roullet, "Traverse of the Pearl River," 76, 78, 82-84; Andrew Ellicott, *Journal* (1803; reprint, Chicago, 1962), 188-89 and Plate E.

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Armchair Adventurers and Horseback Botanists: Explorations of Florida's Natural History, 1763-1800

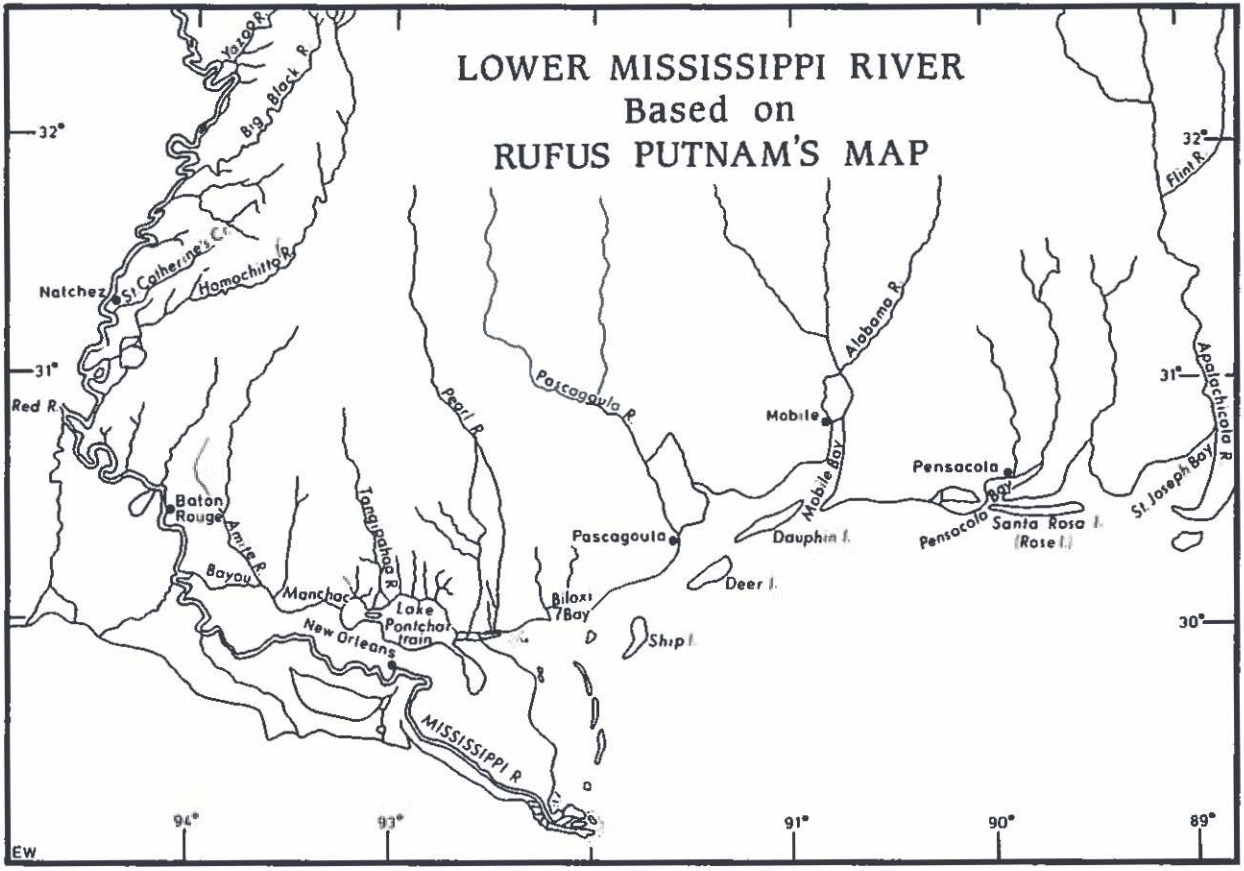
James H. O'Donnell

This paper is an examination of the nature and sources of the published information available to prospective colonists during the two decades after the British acquisition of the Floridas. Who indeed, were the armchair adventurers, those who never journeyed to Florida? What were their sources of information? Further, who were the persons I have called horseback botanists, meaning by that anyone who traveled in the Floridas and gave us some first hand information. Finally, for purposes of illustration, a connection can be made between one of the first hand observers and a group of potential settlers in West Florida, the Company of Military Adventurers.

As Professor Charles Mowat pointed out almost fifty years ago, the propaganda campaign aimed at promoting British settlement of the Floridas originated in London. [1] Information implicitly advertising the potential of the King's new colonies appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as early as January of 1763. [2] Florida was reported as a land of fruitful soil where settlers could cultivate grapes and mulberry trees for wine and silk, harvest rich timber from the woodlands, and provide meat for their tables with deer, goats, and other animals from the forests. All this Eden lacked was the improving hand of the planter.

Had the advertisers been satisfied with the information in the January issue, the modern investigators might not be so critical of the writers' purposes. Within six months, however, hyperbole was out of control. According to "Some Accounts of Louisiana . . . ," which appeared in the June and August issues of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the emigrant would find lands "excellent for culture" all along the Mississippi River. The location was free from inundation: "Above the drowned lands, at the mouth of the Mississippi, the banks of that river are from 100 to 200 feet high, without any marshes about them, and continue so for 900 miles to the River Ohio, especially on the East side of the river." [3] Apparently the writer had not visited the Mississippi River valley, nor had he read a first hand account of it; no observer could have described the banks in this manner. The author did, however grasp the river's imperial significance. He assured his readers that the nation which controlled the Mississippi would dominate the continent. It seems clear that the author of the "Louisiana account" was not aware of the royal government's plans for organizing and promoting the new frontiers. While French Louisiana and Spanish Florida were evidently still distinct in his mind, Florida's climate and "sandy desart" soil making her less desirable, imperial planners had other ideas.

The new perspectives would be taken in October's Royal Proclamation. Those flood-free Mississippi lands now would be in West Florida, not Louisiana. Despite the moratorium on land grants stipulated in the October proclamation, the November *Gentleman's Magazine* revealed different intentions. A map


LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER
Based on
RUFUS PUTNAM'S MAP
Yazoo R.
Big Black R.
Natchez
St. Catherine's Cr.
Homochitto R.
Red R.
Baton Rouge
Amite R.
Bayou
Manchac
Tangipahoa R.
Lake Pontchar train
New Orleans
Pearl R.
Pascagoula R.
Biloxi Bay
Pascagoula
Deer I.
Ship I.
Mobile
Alabama R.
Mobile Bay
Dauphin I.
Pensacola
Pensacola Bay
Santa Rosa I. (Rose I.)
Flint R.
Apalachicola R.
St. Joseph Bay
MISSISSIPPI R.
32°
31°
30°
94°
93°
91°
90°
89°
EW

was printed of the two Floridas along with a positive account of the potential of the new colonies. At least this writer was honest about the sources of his information: "The soil of many parts of Florida is remarkably fertile, and may be cultivated to great advantage; and it is affirmed, but upon what authority we know not, that grapes may, with proper care, be ripened to maturity, and wine extracted from them. . . ." [4] During the same month additional advertising appeared, apparently backed by the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. Public notice was given: "That his Majesty has been pleased to direct, that the lands in his Majesty's said province of East Florida and West Florida shall be surveyed, and laid out into townships, not exceeding twenty thousand acres each, for the convenience and accommodation of settlers" ; [5] Mowat reports a notice in the *London Gazette* inviting those interested in developing Florida plantations to place their applications with John Pownall, Secretary to the Board of Trade. [6]

During the year that the Floridas officially became part of the British Empire, the first of the armchair adventures devoted specifically to Florida, and more especially to sales to the curious, was published. William Roberts in his *An Account of the First Discovery, and Natural History of Florida* attempts to synthesize the available information about the Floridas. Since Roberts had never been to the Floridas so far as we know, the publication leaves something to be desired as an accurate source of information. By far the most important contribution of this slim volume are the maps of Thomas Jefferys, printer and "Geographer to His Majesty." [7]

The editor of the facsimile edition of Roberts published in 1976, Robert L. Gold, points out that William Roberts sought to capitalize on the public's curiosity about their nation's new possessions. While not a "fastback" in the parlance of modern publishing, it closely resembles that type of publication. One would like to know in what month the book was published, since several of the passages in Roberts closely parallel the language of the articles in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. St. Augustine was noted as "seated in North latitude 29 degrees 8 min. . . . about 80 leagues North from the mouth of the Gulph of Florida, and 30 S. of the river Alatamaha. It is built along the shore, *at the bottom of a hill*, shaded with trees, in the form of an oblong square, and is divided into four streets cutting each other at right angles." [8] Roberts likewise notes: "the city runs along the shore, *at the foot of a pleasant hill*, adorned with trees; its form is oblong, divided by four regular streets crossing each other at right angles." [9] Both the periodical and Roberts may be drawing upon the best available source, who was Jefferys. His 1762 comments likewise placed St. Augustine at the bottom of a hill: "It is built along the shore, *at the bottom of a hill*." [10]

Four years after the Floridas had passed into British possession, "want of information" was considered by some as a hindrance to relocating there. The editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* headlined page twenty-one of the January 1767 edition with some "Friendly Advice to settle in East Florida."

In the second column of that page he printed "An Exhortation to Gentlemen of small Fortunes to settle in East Florida." The exhorter noted that many of the grants of crown lands had been made to "gentlemen of rank and fortune." He wondered why there had been so few of "middling gentry of England, and the younger sons of good families?" Perhaps it was "want of information" which was letting "slip an opportunity . . . not likely to occur again." The writer assured readers of the magazine that the cost of living was so much higher in England than in America that it would profit an ambitious person to relocate. He argued that: "The advantage of having, by gift from the crown, fifteen hundred acres of fertile ground, by the side of a navigable river, in a good country and fine climate, (which is confessedly the fact in East Florida) is so great, that person's situation becomes thereby totally altered." The person with one thousand pounds, argued the promoter, could completely outfit a plantation with sufficient funds to make it through the first year until the second year when he should reap the "profits of trade." In an appeal to authority, the publisher then included a proclamation by the governor of East Florida promoting the "healthiness, soil and productions" of his province. He assured potential settlers that "former inhabitants lived to great ages" ; although the soil is sandy, it can, with proper cultivation, be productive even to the point of producing "two crops of Indian corn in one year." [11]

One of the individuals who made an attempt at developing a plantation and then wrote about Florida was Dr. William Stork; his abandoned lands later were noted by William Bartram during his journey along the St. John's. Stork was not only active in trying to develop his own lands in the 1760s but also in offering to bring over settlers from Germany, provided the British government could support the cost of transportation. When official backing was not forthcoming, Stork contented himself with publishing *A Description of East Florida* in 1766. [12] Three years later he added *A Journal Kept by John Bartram of Philadelphia, Botanist to His Majesty in the Floridas.* Despite his sojourn in East Florida, William Stork's account reads more like promotional literature from the pen of a paid copywriter than the work of a detached observer.

In the observations attributed to John Bartram by Stork, the attention of prospective planters was called to "deep rich swamps" : "These swamps are supposed to be the best rice-grounds, as neither the dry weather nor wet can hurt them so much as where there is no water in dry times, and in wet there is too much, for this is rarely overflowed but in spring-tides, and these will always keep wet enough in the dryest seasons, especially below the great lake." [13]

If these comments were attributable to John Bartram perhaps it was this perspective which helped persuade William Bartram to try his hand at planting in East Florida. Parenthetically, it should be pointed out that the style of the selection credited to John Bartram is so radically different in tone and vocabulary from the balance of the diary that one wonders about the actual authorship of this passage.

During the early years of relatively slow growth in both the Floridas, there were few trained observers who might have rectified the problem of "want of Information." There were, however, two individuals whose reflections ultimately would bring some reasonably accurate information to bear. One of these persons came southward with the troops assigned to West Florida. Philip Pittman, a lieutenant in the British army, was a surveyor-engineer under orders to map and chart the territories through which he passed. [14] The other was a voluntary visitor, John Bartram, the self-taught Pennsylvania naturalist and King's botanist who came south with his son William in 1765 to observe and gather specimens of East Florida's flora and fauna.

The ultimate result of Pittman's Mississippi adventure would be his *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi*, which would not be published in London until 1770. [15] As noted above part of John Bartram's account was included in William Stork's *A Description of East-Florida With a Journal Kept by John Bartram of Philadelphia, Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas*, also published in London, but a year earlier than Pittman's. [16]

Pittman's information was used by at least one group of would-be settlers to West Florida. The prospective emigrants were the Company of Military Adventurers which included Rufus Putnam, a self-taught surveyor. [17] Like many other speculative groups in the 1760s and 1770s, these adventurers were veterans of the Seven Years War who sought to capitalize on their military service by translating it into royal favor in the form of generous land grants. Why else would one go to war, except for a share of the spoils, such as Spanish gold or western lands?

The Company of Military Adventurers was organized in Hartford, Connecticut, on June 15, 1763. Composed of those who had served in the regiments approved by the colonial assembly, this gathering selected their regimental colonel, Phineas Lyman, to press their claims in England. Off to London in 1763, Lyman reportedly did not return until 1772; when he arrived, he announced that the company had been granted land on the Mississippi River toward the Yazoo between 32 and 34 North Latitude. Although Lyman brought with him no proof of the grant, a meeting of the company on November 18, 1772, laid preparations for a reconnaissance of the prospective tract. In typical meeting fashion, a committee was appointed, which was to journey from New England to the Mississippi, meet with the proper authorities in West Florida, visually inspect the Mississippi lands, and then return to report on the prospects. Included in the committee were two kinsmen later to play an integral role in the Ohio Company's successful speculation fourteen years and another war later: Colonel Israel Putnam and his younger relative, Lieutenant Rufus Putnam. The delegates agreed that four of the committee would go overland via the Mississippi, while the two Putnams, along with Israel Putnam's thirteen year old son David, would join the remaining representatives in a sea voyage.

One month and one day after the meeting of the company the sea party left New London for New York in order to complete preparations for their passage to Pensacola. [18] The vessel sailed from New York on January 10, 1773. Rufus Putnam complained of many days seasickness during seven weeks at sea; finally the sloop reached "Rose Island," as Putnam called it, on Sunday, February 28. By Friday, March 5, 1773, the representatives from Connecticut were able to arrange a meeting with Governor Peter Chester, who was cordial as he explained that he had no information about a grant on the Mississippi for Phineas Lyman and the Company of Military Adventurers! The governor, however, did offer them the alternative of proceeding for a visit to the Mississippi lands and applying for grants through the channels of his office.

Immediately before and after the meeting, Rufus Putnam sought local information about the Mississippi country. On March 4 he questioned a Dr. Laramore "who is much acquainted with the geography of the country" ; two days later Putnam spent the day making a draft of the Mississippi River using Philip Pittman's information. Because Rufus Putnam was self-educated his spelling is extremely creative; his journal says he spent the day making drafts of the Mississippi from Mr. Pittman's "pabot." [19] This term was not familiar to the editor who published the journal nor is it to this author. It is, however, clear evidence that Lt. Pittman's labors were appreciated. On March 10 Putnam spent another afternoon making drafts, as he described it; two days later he was sworn in by Elias Durnford as a lawful "Deputy Surveyor of the provance [*sic*] of West Florida." Along with his commission as a deputy surveyor, Putnam received a detailed list of nine instructions on how to proceed. Evidently Durnford was concerned with possible impropriety; he reminded the New Englander: "no person is to lay a hand upon the [measuring] chain till he has taken the oath hereto anexed." [20]

Although the Putnams and their party left Pensacola on March 18, they did not reach New Orleans until March 30. Not only was Israel Putnam received coolly by the governor, but also the visitors were having trouble persuading their ship captain to proceed farther than New Orleans. Rufus Putnam's frustration was evident, even in his journal, when he complained that they faced the prospect of rowing one hundred leagues in an open boat in order to see the lands they sought. No doubt he was much relieved when they finally secured a bateaux (barge) belonging to Durnford (commanded by a Mr. Willey). On April 8 they finally began moving upstream.

Working their way slowly toward the Yazoo, they stopped at settlements along the great river, inquiring of the experienced about the nature and possibilities of agriculture. At Richard Thomason's on St. Catherine's Creek they learned that all the land near the river commonly flooded. An informant named Wells suggested they try the lands near the "grate Black," since the soil appeared promising and the territory was well watered. By the first week in May they had begun to survey and mark what Putnam called the "Military Company lands." They did have to exercise caution since their Choctaw guides were telling

them of tribal opposition to any settlements north of the Big Black; those were the Choctaw's last remaining hunting lands, where the deer and bear were fat. Indeed, two Choctaw chiefs informed the Putnams of Superintendent John Stuart's assurances at the last congress that there would be no settlements above the Big Black. As the chiefs explained, if they lost their hunting grounds, they could not provide blankets or flaps for their wives or themselves. This message of the two chiefs was then reiterated by another Choctaw leader whom Putnam identified as Mingo ouma, or the Snake head, who showed the explorers his commission from George III as a measure of his important status.

As the New Englanders slowly returned south they were pleased to find their sloop a few miles below Manchac. By July 7 they were back in Pensacola, trying to arrange for their land grant. Officials there had some questions about Putnam's method of laying out the plats and were pressuring the company to return and claim their lands by March 1, 1774. After the prospective settlers explained how difficult it would be for the New Englanders to sell their lands, pack up their families, and return so quickly, the West Florida officials relented and granted them an extension. Phineas Lyman and two of his sons would return in early 1774; by the time others of the family arrived in the summer the two Phineas Lymans (father and son) were dead, a catastrophe which the grief stricken Mrs. Phineas Lyman survived only a month.

Rufus Putnam later would write that he had lost eight months' time, the cost of two trips to Hartford, and personal expenses far beyond those granted by the company. [21] In the "Shorter Version" of his journal he suggests that the coming of the American Revolution put an end to any more plans for the Military Company of Adventurers to settle on the Mississippi. Whatever Rufus Putnam may have lost in time and money in 1773, he gained enormous experience which would be beneficial after the Revolution when he joined another group of military adventurers in the Ohio Company's speculative venture in the west.

While Rufus Putnam was losing time and money in West Florida during 1773, another surveyor was leaving Florida that year. This traveler was Bernard Romans, well-known to all students of early Florida history as the author of *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida.* [22] Romans had reached Britain's southern colonies in the 1760s, securing positions first as surveyor for the earl of Egmont, then the province of Georgia, and finally, in 1769 as a deputy to W. G. De Brahm, the British Surveyor General of the Southern District. [23] In these capacities he gained the knowledge and experience to map the coasts of the Floridas. He also obtained land grants in both Georgia and Florida, but when he wrote his book, he reserved his most positive compliments for West Florida. In his *Concise Natural History* Romans seems determined to attract others to settle in the Floridas, and, in seeking to accomplish this, he was driven to defend Florida against its detractors. He sought for example, to answer the condemnations of climate by asserting that Florida had a "perfect climate" ; all illness was simply the result of the excesses of human behavior.

Outbreaks of yellow fever among the troops at Mobile in 1765 were attributed to the soldiers drinking water from "stagnated pools" and failing to live a "regular sober life." A person of strong convictions, Romans likewise minced no words criticizing several individuals, including not only his former employer De Brahm, but also those who had attempted settlements in East Florida (Turnbull and Rolle) as well as the commissaries in the Indian department. On the other hand he was complimentary toward "Dr. Stork and the self taught Pennsylvanian Philosopher [who] deserve our perpetual thanks." [24]

No matter what Romans wrote in his *Concise History*, few of his contemporaries had opportunity to buy his book. One can find few examples of timing so poor as Bernard Romans when he advertised his work as completed on April 25, 1775. Although he listed 199 subscribers, one wonders how many of them actually fulfilled their pledge. Romans's book and career were quickly swept into the flash flood of revolutionary events. Only with the passage of time would this fascinating publication garner posthumous fame for its author.

In seeking to establish his authority, Bernard Romans denounced his former employer, William De Brahm. How could anyone have an accurate understanding of America, asked Romans, "when we find principal officers misrepresenting facts to the chief rulers of the land?" [25] If, Romans declared, De Brahm's reports were erroneous to the Board of Trade, at least they had the merit of being unpublished. The same could not be said of *The Atlantic Pilot* which De Brahm published in 1772; that could have happened only "in the brain of this Bedlamite" who turned water into land and land into water. One suspects this character assassination was designed to discredit his former mentor's work, hoping the public would find Romans's new *Concise History* more accurate, and, hopefully, attractive enough to buy.

While Bernard Romans was in the process of writing his magnum opus, the Gulf region was being visited by a traveler whose work would become far better known than any of those already mentioned. The individual was William Bartram, whose exotic descriptions of the Floridas would ultimately inspire both poets and settlers after the publication of his *Travels* in 1791. [26]

During the twenty-one years of British dominion over the Floridas, there was much written for, but little learned by the public which accurately depicted the prospects for possible emigrants. A careful reader of the *Gentleman's Magazine* would find many contradictions in what appeared in that publication alone. Although the *Monthly* did publish maps from time to time, those served as little more than visual aids to the prose. Roberts's contemporary book publication more or less summarized the common misinformation of the day. Although the experiences of a planter like William Stork might have been expected to provide corrective information, Stork's *Description of East Florida* is little better than a propaganda tract. It was the good doctor, you remember, who asserted that "governor Grant is regularly on horseback every day from eleven to three o'clock in the afternoon," [27] If, indeed, Grant rode daily for four hours it is a wonder he did not die of sunstroke or some other malady brought on

by too much sun. When Stork sought to improve the second edition of his work by adding part of a journal from John Bartram's 1765-66 southern expedition, especially since the text essentially was the same which had appeared in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* two years earlier, little additional light was shed.

As indicated above, one exception to this lack of information seems to have been the work of Philip Pittman. His manuscript reports and *Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* certainly assisted the Company of Military Adventurers; after 1770 his book would have been available to the public. An unanswered question might be whether there was a public which was interested.

Bernard Romans rambling diatribe contrasted sharply with Pittman's rather brief, but pointed remarks. While there was useful information in the former's book, it often was buried within one of his digressions, such as his lecture on the savage nature of the Indians. More practically, however, Romans's misfortunate publication date, plus the return of the Floridas to Spain after 1783 left him without an audience.

Given the lack of available, accurate information, and the brevity of the British period, not to mention the absence of a resident English colonial population with whom to correspond about the new colonies, it is not surprising that so few actually ventured to the Floridas during England's rule there. One wonders if the Putnams and their companions would have returned had not the war intervened. At least they had the option of seeing the land before attempting a settlement.

Notes

[1] Charles L. Mowat, "The First Campaign of Publicity for Florida," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 30 (December 1943): 359-76.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine* 33 (January 1763): 29.

[3] Ibid., 283; 380.

[4] Ibid., 552-54.

[5] *Scot's Magazine* 29 (November 1763): 627.

[6] Mowat, "First Campaign." Five years later a "J.P." wrote a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* with specific recommendations for a planned settlement on the Mississippi. By then he had at least read Philip Pittman's account. See "J.P." to the *Gentleman's Magazine* (February 1772): 63-64. Printed between pages 56 and 57 of the same issue is "A Map of part of West Florida from Pensacola to the Mouth of the Iberville River with a View to shew the Proper Spot for a Settlement on the Mississippi."

[7] William Roberts, *An Account of the First Discovery and Natural History of Florida* (1763; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1976).

[8] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 33 (January, 1763): 29. Emphasis added.

[9] Roberts, *Account*, 24. Emphasis added.

[10] Thomas Jefferys, *A Description of the Spanish Islands and Settlements . . .* (1762; facsimile ed., New York, 1970). Emphasis added.

[11] *Gentleman's Magazine* 37 (January 1767): 21-22. For the suggestion that this exhortation was written by the promoter Denys Rolle, see Charles L. Mowat, *East Florida as a British Province, 1763-1784* (Berkeley, 1943), 51.

[12] William Stork, *A Description of East-Florida, with a Journal Kept by John Bartram of Philadelphia, Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas upon a Journey from St. Augustine up the River St. John's as far as the Lakes* (1769; facsimile ed., Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1979).

[13] Ibid., Bartram Journal Extract, 7.

[14] Philip Pittman, *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi*, ed. Frank H. Hodder (Cleveland, 1906). See also two volumes by Robert R. Rea, *Major Robert Farmar of Mobile* (Tuscaloosa, 1990), and *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (Gainesville, 1973).

[15] Some of Pittman's unpublished information is filed in the Haldimand papers. See Pittman, *Present State*, ed. Hodder, 12.

[16] Although part of the Bartram journal, erroneously attributed to William Bartram, first was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 37 (April 1767): 166-68, its focus was the Savannah River and Georgia, so it was of no assistance in clarifying information about the Floridas.

[17] *The Two Putnams; Israel and Rufus in the Havana Expedition of 1762 and in the Mississippi River Exploration of 1772-73 with Some Account of the Company of Military Adventurers* (Hartford, CT, 1931). See also Robin F. A. Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida, 1763-1783* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 153-97.

[18] *The Two Putnams*, Rufus Putnam Journal for December 29, 1772.

[19] Ibid., Journal for March 4, 1773.

[20] Rufus Putnam Papers, Special Collections Department, Dawes Memorial Library, Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio. Special thanks should go to Professor Sandra Neyman, Librarian, for expert assistance with the Putnam papers.

[21] Rufus Putnam, "Shorter Journal," in *The Two Putnams*, 261-62. In this source, which may have been intended for publication, Putnam was candid about his realization that the lands along the Mississippi River were ever subject to flooding, that the swamps might be impractical to drain, and doubted what might grow in "the Soil (if it can be called soil) [which] is a white Sand." Ibid., 256, 240.

[22] Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida*, (New York, 1775). With regard to Romans see also P. Lee Phillips, *Notes on the Life and Works of Bernard Romans* (Deland, FL, 1924), and *De Brahm's Report of the General Survey in the Southern District of North America*, ed. Louis De Vorsey (Columbia, SC, 1971).

[23] Phillips, *Notes*.

[24] Romans, *Concise History*, 117.

[25] Ibid., 296.

[26] William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram*, Naturalist's Edition, ed. Francis Harper (New Haven, 1958).

[27] Stork, *A Description of East-Florida*.

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Encounters Up the Mississippi, Yazoo, and Big Black Rivers: The Explorers of the Company of Military Adventurers

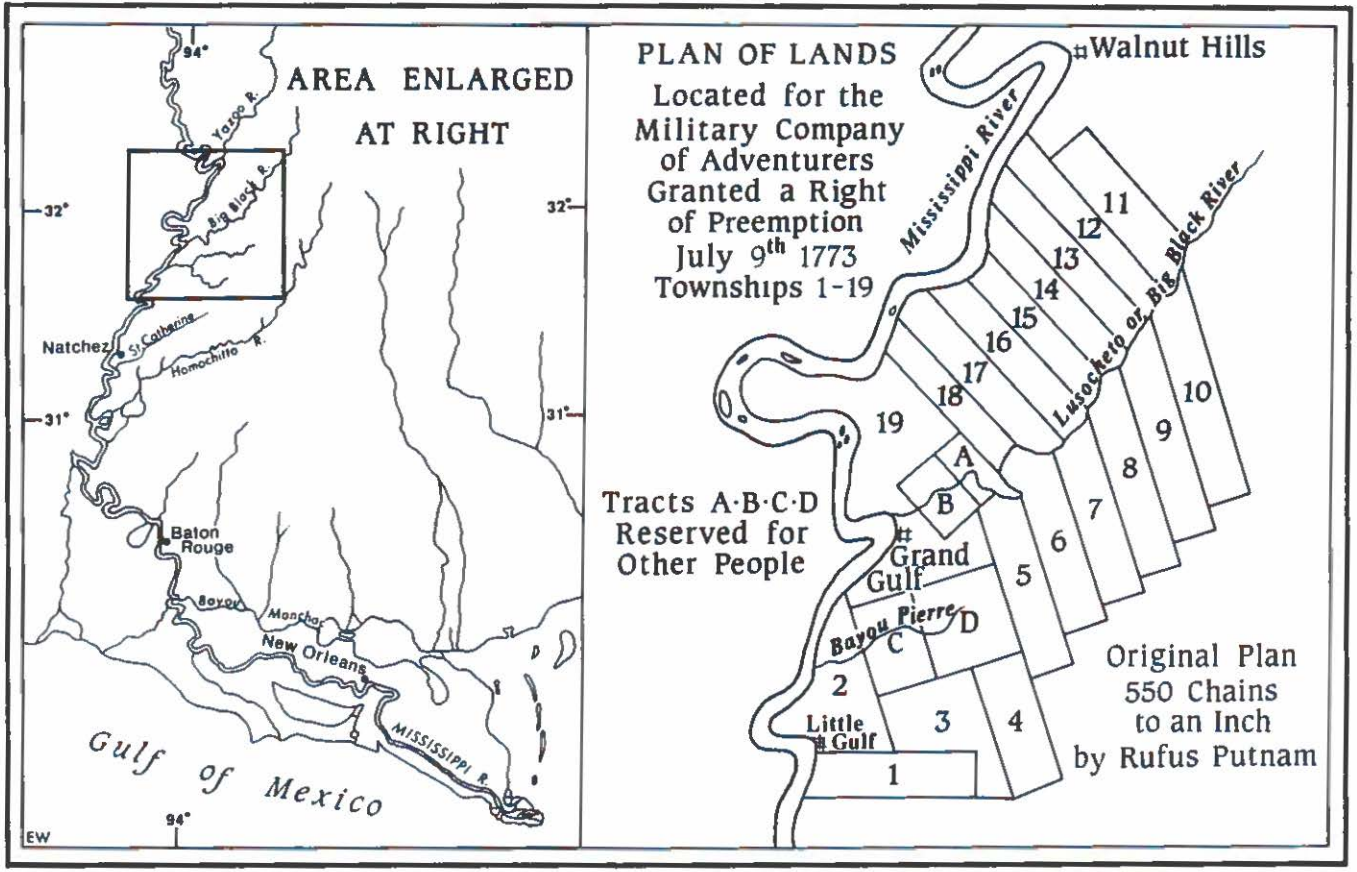
Robin F. A. Fabel

The phrase westward expansion may conjure up a picture of covered wagons toiling across the Great Plains in the nineteenth century, but the process was in full swing well before the American Revolution. Nobody, not even the ministry that issued it in 1763, saw the governmental ban on settlement beyond the Alleghenies as more than a temporary measure. Powerful consortia like the Illinois Company, the Ohio Company, and the Vandalia Company, planned to make fortunes by acquiring huge blocks of acreage west of that great ridge of mountains. [1] Farther south, ambitious individuals like Governor Montfort Browne sought glory and enrichment by establishing new colonies on the banks of the Mississippi. [2]

Less dominated by greed than the big landjobbers of the northern companies, whose aim was profitable absenteeism, and undazzled by glory, were the founders of the Company of Military Adventurers, who simply and literally wanted promised land. They were not speculators. They planned to settle their families on their own land, to farm it, and to pass on viable acreage to their children, an increasingly impossible ambition in their native Connecticut. [3]

The seed from which the Company of Military Adventurers grew was probably planted in Cuba. In 1762 the commander of all provincial troops there was Major General Phineas Lyman of Suffield, Connecticut. His brigade included volunteers from Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey, but its most solid component was Connecticut's First Regiment, twelve hundred strong, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Israel Putnam. The role of these provincial troops was important to victory over the Spanish in Cuba, and in casualties their sacrifice may be compared to the worst in the Civil War a century later. Of 109 soldiers in Israel Putnam's own company, for example, 76 died between August and December 1762, nearly all from disease. [4] The survivors looked for fulfillment of a promise made by Jeffrey Amherst, the British commander in chief in the American theater, to reward their service with land grants. To this end the Company of Military Adventurers formed on June 15, 1763 in Hartford, Connecticut. Its stated purpose was "obtaining a grant of land sufficient for a government in some of the conquered lands in America." [5]

Britain acquired vast American lands from her defeated enemies in 1763, including the province of West Florida. The Adventurers sent General Lyman to Britain to lobby for the grant they sought and he soon decided that he wanted it on or near the Mississippi in the vicinity of the old French Fort Rosalie at Natchez. Unfortunately, at that time the desired region was not part of West Florida. The British government, ignorant of Florida's geography, had decided in 1763 that the new colony's northernmost boundary should be the thirty-first parallel. [6] Soon afterward the ministry realized that with this boundary


AREA ENLARGED
AT RIGHT
94°
32°
31°
Yazoo R.
Big Black R.
Natchez
St Catherine
Homochitto R.
Baton Rouge
Bayou Manchac
New Orleans
MISSISSIPPI R.
Gulf of Mexico
EW
PLAN OF LANDS
Located for the
Military Company
of Adventurers
Granted a Right
of Preemption
July 9th 1773
Townships 1-19
Walnut Hills
Mississippi River
Lusocheto or Big Black River
Tracts A·B·C·D
Reserved for
Other People
Grand Gulf
Bayou Pierre
Little Gulf
Original Plan
550 Chains
to an Inch
by Rufus Putnam

West Florida fell outside the area's most fertile land. Lyman claimed the credit for that realization and the subsequent revision of West Florida's boundary almost three degrees northward to where the Yazoo entered the Mississippi. [7]

Despite this promising start, Lyman had far longer to wait in England for his land grant than he had expected. He had literally years there to crystallize his ideas. Building a community more than money-making animated him. He envisaged an economy dominated by plantations worked by black slaves. Sensitive to Indian rights, he insisted that Indian consent must precede occupation of their hunting grounds, and planned a public college in which Indian, French, and American children would together be taught mostly agricultural subjects. [8] One suspects here the influence of his friend, the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock, who devoted his life to educating Indians. [9] This scheme of Lyman's, penned in 1766, coincided with the advent to office of the earl of Shelburne. As secretary of state for the southern department, Shelburne was responsible for American affairs and was known to favor western settlements. His reasoning was that it was pointless to oppose the inevitable. Unluckily for Lyman, during Shelburne's tenure of office, finding ways to get money from America and keeping peace in the Indian country preoccupied the ministry. It had no appetite for new colonies. Skepticism surely greeted Lyman's claim that a white settlement in the interior would cost the government nothing and would improve relations with the Indians. Shelburne's fall from power in 1768 was a severe blow to Lyman, especially as the secretary's successor, the earl of Hillsborough, was known to oppose any western expansion whatever.

Still Lyman lingered. In 1770 he secured a royal grant of 20,000 acres in West Florida for himself, but nothing for his company. He seems to have persuaded himself that Hillsborough was the sole obstacle to approval for the 150,000-acre company grant for which he had applied. Therefore, when political opponents finally forced Hillsborough's resignation in 1772, Lyman sailed at once for New England.

The dormant Company of Military Adventurers revived remarkably when Lyman debarked with news that at last he had secured a large grant. Advertisements in five New England newspapers publicized a company meeting to be held on November 18 to elect officers, organize finances, and appoint a committee to explore and choose suitable settlement sites.

Since 1763 the British government had learned much about the Mississippi River and the various small posts on its banks. This information was not classified intelligence. In 1770 an army engineer, Philip Pittman, had published a book, well illustrated with accurate maps, called *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi.* [10] For the Adventurers' purposes this excellent work had limitations. It focused on existing settlements, whereas the Adventurers planned to establish themselves where there were no settlements. It mapped the Mississippi, up which Pittman had voyaged in 1764, but not the tributaries of the Mississippi on the banks of which the Adventurers intended to survey townships.

The company gave up its initial intention to send a group of explorers overland via the Ohio, and instead parsimoniously supported a party of five to go to and up the Mississippi. Commanded by Israel Putnam, the party included his thirty-five-year-old cousin, Rufus, his thirteen-year-old son, Daniel, and an old comrade from Cuban days, Roger Enos. Old General Lyman was not a member: Thaddeus, the most vigorous of his several sons, represented the family interest. The four adults were to receive forty shillings pay and thirty shillings for expenses monthly, and an immediate advance of forty shillings. [11] For purposes of comparison the explorers, ex-commissioned officers for the most part, were thus paid rather less than sergeants in the British Army. [12]

The principles employed to select this small exploring committee remain unknown but the result was a little odd. Rufus Putnam was a sound choice. Surveying sites would be a prime activity for the explorers and Rufus Putnam already had considerable surveying experience and expertise indeed he would one day be Surveyor General of the United States. The preponderance of military veterans was natural, but in fact the committee would do no fighting. Much exploration was inevitable; yet there was no experienced explorer among them. And if fighting were expected, why was a young teenager included? What is more, the committee contained no Choctaw speaker, nor anyone familiar with the southern colonies. [13]

Hugh Ledlie of the Company's standing committee was able to supply a sloop suitable for the voyage, not just to the Mississippi but, if it were found safe to go there, as far as the mouth of the Yazoo. But, again a thrifty note, its voyage would be combined with a trading trip to the French West Indies.

Sailing with admirable dispatch on December 19, the sloop stayed for three weeks in New York for refitting and to take on stores. It displaced sixty-five tons and mounted a dozen cannon in addition to small arms and a plentiful supply of ammunition in case of Indian attack. Its hull was black, its sides and stern green, and its new name, *Mississippi*, gleamed golden between the cabin windows. It was managed by a captain, mate, and four crewmen, while Tim, the son of Treasurer Hugh Ledlie, came aboard as supercargo: his probable duty was to keep an eye on his father's commercial stake in the voyage. [14] The sloop finally left New York on January 10, 1773. [15] Eighteen days later *Mississippi* was at Turk's Island; then angled southwest to Haiti (known at the time as St. Domingue), where Captain Wait Goodrich disposed of *Mississippi*'s cargo of hogs, sheep, flour, and onions. [16] After a brief stop in Montego Bay, Jamaica, the explorers at last saw the white sands of Pensacola on February 28.

One may guess that the motives of the explorers were not political; that establishing a loyalist haven away from the impending revolution was not their aim. Of the four adult explorers only Thaddeus Lyman came from a loyalist family, and there was no hint in the Putnams' diaries that he held strongly loyalist views. [17] By contrast, Israel Putnam was already known for opposing the Stamp Act and for organizing a branch of the Sons of Liberty. [18] He

would become a revolutionary general after war broke out, as would his fellow explorers Roger Enos and his cousin Rufus. Far from political ends, the understandable desire for free land probably motivated the explorers, other than the youngster Daniel, going surely for the adventure of the trip. Israel Putnam had long dabbled in land schemes and in 1761 had been a member of the committee of another emigration organization for would-be settlers, the Susquehannah Company. [19]

The explorers might have aborted their mission on arrival at Pensacola, the capital of West Florida, had the colony's governor, Peter Chester, been less encouraging. Although the governor had received no confirmation that the Adventurers had been granted any land, he welcomed their intention to survey numerous townships as the prelude to the immigration of hundreds of sturdy New Englanders. His province lacked population and needed above all immigrants of quality, for there was some truth in a previous governor's description of West Florida as a sump for the overflowing scum of the empire.

Rather than see the explorers turn back or cool their heels in Pensacola waiting for word from London, thus wasting the year's best season for exploration, Chester wined and dined them and sent them on their way to the Mississippi. With them they took a chance acquaintance, a Frenchman named Cators who himself wanted to scout out land for German settlers. The New Englanders welcomed Cators who would prove a useful companion. [20]

At last the Adventurers quit Pensacola on March 16 and their sloop slowly made its way, partly by warping, up the awkward stretch of the Mississippi River from its entrance to New Orleans. Israel paid his respects to Governor Luis de Unzaga. Soothing the Spanish, who then possessed New Orleans and all the western bank of the Mississippi, made good sense. The flood of immigrants expected to follow the explorers would all want to buy stores in New Orleans for their pioneer plantations. Soothing the Indians, in whose lands they expected to settle, would also have been sensible, but no such overtures were made.

In defiance of his instructions, according to the Putnams, Captain Goodrich refused to take the explorers farther north than New Orleans. It was therefore lucky that they were able to obtain use of a bateau, the property of West Florida's lieutenant governor, but a misfortune in that the small exploring party had now to toil upstream for three hundred miles in an open boat.

The explorers began rowing on April 8. The going was slow—on only two days did they travel over twenty miles—but plantation owners were friendly, as were the Houma Indians who supplied the Adventurers with fresh venison. A planter, Richard Thompson, gave them excellent advice. He warned them that, except in the rainy season, the land in the area was dry, but that up the Bayou Pierre and the Big Black River they could find rich well-watered soil.

A sociable Choctaw, Sam, hitched a ride with the explorers as far as the Grand Gulf, where all stopped at the trading house of Thomas James. [21] Because James could speak his language, Sam was able to tell them, as previously he

could not, that the Choctaws would not agree to white settlement above the Big Black because it would ruin their hunting grounds. Telling Sam that they were there to look at the land, not to stay, Enos, Cators, and the Indian set off by land to explore the Yazoo, which was above the Big Black, on May 9, while their companions went there in the bateau. No sooner did they get together by the Yazoo than seven Choctaws joined them. Their "soured countenances" made the explorers quickly change their minds about further sightseeing. [22] Soon afterward, without warning, Sam decamped. When the explorers returned to Thomas James's house, the trader was able to tell them that Sam had left them because two of the seven Choctaws they had met were chiefs who had scoffed when Sam told them that his white companions were simply looking not settling. The headmen's conclusion was restrained but shrewd and firm:

> If we [i.e., the explorers] liked the land we intended to come and plant there. . . . They loved the white people . . . but not to see them plant. It was their hunting ground and the only place they had left to hunt. . . . They could raise their bread at home, but if they had no hunting ground, they could not procure blankets and flaps for themselves and [their] wives. . . . The superintendent told them at the last [Indian] congress that the white people should not settle above the Big Black. [23]

Sensibly the Adventurers did not return to the Yazoo. Instead, on May 18, after viewing much drained and broken land on the lower reaches of the Big Black, they found what they were looking for; well-watered level ground, especially on the left bank, about sixteen miles from the Mississippi. In the following three days Rufus Putnam seems to have done most of the surveying needed to reserve enough land for nineteen townships. As well as vast acreage on the Big Black's left bank, they embraced most of the territory south of Vicksburg (then called Walnut Hills) down to the Big Black. The explorers staked a claim for their company by carving letters on suitably placed trees. During May 21 they met and exchanged gifts with Mingo Ouma (Snake Head), second headman of the Choctaws, whom they persuaded to join them at James's trading post for more meaningful talks than were possible through sign language. Snake Head repeated the intention of his tribe to resist any settlement above the Big Black, but the warning was needless. The Adventurers had completed their mission, so much so that they abandoned their previous intention to scout land up and east of the Homochitta River. The Adventurers would settle on the Big Black, while the Lyman personal grant would be established on the Bayou Pierre in the vicinity of what is now Port Gibson—the very places which Richard Thompson had recommended as the most suitable sites. Having found what they sought there, it was now imperative that they get back to Pensacola as quickly as possible to secure governmental endorsement for their claims. West Florida was vast, but much of the available land was less than ideal for cultivation, and competition for the best land was keen. Over and over again during their short exploration the explorers had met parties of newcomers bent on precisely

the same quest as themselves, some as isolated squatters, but others at the head of large parties. [24]

Several factors explain the success of the exploring expedition of the Company of Military Adventurers, for it was as successful as such an enterprise could hope to be. The main object had been amply achieved. The explorers had found and staked out land suitable for a large immigration from among the New Englanders who had sent them into what was then largely unknown and potentially hostile territory. In the process they had enjoyed good sport, shooting alligators, bear, buck, and turkey, and they had caught catfish of extraordinary size. None of the Adventurers had died or even been injured, although their companion, Cators had not survived. Cators's death, which is undoubted, is an odd omission from Rufus Putnam's otherwise detailed diary of the expedition. [25] Success was due to luck, hard and competent work, and the application of common sense both by themselves and by Indians.

Unseasoned New Englanders, they were lucky to explore, more by chance than good judgment, at a benevolent season of the year. They were lucky in finding cooperative West Floridians who, like Richard Thompson, gave them sound advice or, like Thomas James, smoothed their relations with the Indians. They were lucky to be neither robbed nor attacked. Less than ten years before, hostile Indians had forced a much better armed party than their own in ten large bateaux to abandon a voyage up the same stretch of the Mississippi they themselves had rowed in peace. [26] The labor of pressing on with their expedition when, contrary to his instructions, Goodrich had refused to take them higher than New Orleans, is a tribute to the explorers' determination and probably also, to the leadership qualities of Israel Putnam. Further, the competence of Rufus, who should be considered the committee's key man, in surveying the sites for nineteen townships in some three days was also a major contribution to success. So too was the explorers' restraint in withdrawing to within the boundaries of West Florida. The Choctaws also, until recent times pro-French enemies of the English, in acting peaceably toward the explorers whom they outnumbered, and instead of fighting, insisting on their legal rights, showed reciprocal, and perhaps even greater restraint. The Choctaws may have been more shrewd than we know. Was it purely by chance that the Choctaw Sam met them before the explorers went to the Yazoo and persuaded them to let him accompany them? We shall probably never know.

If the exploration was a success, its sequel was less so. Problems arose as soon as the explorers arrived back in Pensacola on July 5. The governor had to tell them regretfully that, in the months they had been away, no letter had arrived from England to back their claim that the king had granted them 150,000 acres. The West Florida Council, therefore, was cautious about letting them reserve prime land without limit. The best the councilors would offer was to reserve four of the surveyed township areas until March 1, 1774; too soon, thought the exploring committee for families intending to emigrate to

settle their affairs in New England, make the long voyage to the Big Black, and confirm their claim by settlement.

The dissatisfaction of the explorers with bureaucratic punctilio, and the dismaying brutal fact that the royal grant of which Phineas Lyman had spoken often and confidently never did arrive because it did not exist, did not deter members of the Company of Military Adventurers from risking emigration. Two ships full of Adventurer settlers sailed from New England in December 1773. Another left in 1774 and another in 1775. Nobody described their fate more concisely than Rufus Putnam: "They arrived generally too late in the season to expect health in such a change of climate, soon fell sick. Many died, and the revolutionary war breaking out in 1775 put an end to the business of further prosecuting the settlement." [27]

Notes

[1] George H. Alden, *New Governments West of the Alleghenies before 1780* (1897; reprint, New York, 1971), 16-61.

[2] Robin Fabel, "The Eighteenth Colony: Montfort Browne's Dream for Mississippi," unpublished article.

[3] "The land . . . in most of the families . . . is reduced to very small quantities, so that when a man has a number of sons, which is very common, he must . . . teach some of his sons trades . . . or else they must settle on some new land." Petition of Phineas Lyman to the king, n.d. in *The New Regime 1765-1767*, ed. Clarence W. Alvord and Clarence E. Carter (Springfield, 1916), 284.

[4] Albert C. Bates, ed., *The Two Putnams: Israel and Rufus in the Havana Expedition 1762 and in the Mississippi River Exploration 1772-73 with some Account of the Company of Military Adventurers* (Hartford, 1931), 49-53.

[5] Ibid., 8-9.

[6] Arthur B. Keith, ed., *Selected Speeches and Documents on British Colonial Policy 1763-1917* (London, 1933), 1: 4.

[7] Lyman to the earl of Dartmouth, December 8, 1772, Dartmouth Papers, Staffordshire County Records Office, D(W)1778/II:471. Clarence Carter, in "Some Aspects of British Administration in West Florida," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 1(1914-15): 368, plausibly suggested that land speculators closer to government, like the earl of Eglinton and Thomas Robinson, were more influential in securing the change.

[8] Lyman's "Reasons for a Settlement," 1766, in *New Regime*, ed. Alvord and Carter, 272.

[9] Lyman to William Johnson, May 22, 1761, in *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. William W. Hamilton (Albany, 1921-62), 10: 271.

[10] Robert R. Rea, intro., *The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (1770; reprint, Gainesville, 1973).

[11] Bates, *Two Putnams*, 27.

[12] Edward Curtis, *The British Army in the Revolution* (New Haven, 1926), 158.

[13] "Pine Barrens," and "catfish" were words that Rufus Putnam learned only after arrival in the South. Bates, *Two Putnams*, 182, 187.

[14] This fact is made clear in a deposition Rufus Putnam made in 1773 which is located in the Cutler Papers in the special collections department of the library of the University of Illinois, Evanston. I am greatly indebted to R. Russell Maylone for a transcription of this deposition, the object of which was to complain of the conduct of Hugh Ledlie and of Captain Wait Goodrich.

[15] *New York Gazette*, January 18, 1773.

[16] Ibid., March 15, 1773.

[17] It is true that Thaddeus accepted a royal captaincy in 1778 (Public Record Office, Kew, Great Britain C.O.5/580:327) but siding with the revolutionaries was not then a realistic alternative for him.

[18] William F. Livingston, *Israel Putnam: Pioneer, Ranger, and Major General* (New York, 1901), 149-51.

[19] Julian Boyd, ed., *Susquehannah Company Papers* (Ithaca, NY, 1930), 2: 53.

[20] Bates, *Two Putnams*, 131.

[21] James was one of the earliest British settlers in the Natchez District, receiving a grant of 600 acres on the Grand Gulf three miles below where the Bayou Pierre entered the Mississippi in 1767. A versatile man, he built a mill, established a plantation run by himself, his wife, and nine slaves, as well as trading with the Choctaws, whose language he acquired. C.O.5/612:655, 658; C.O.5/635, Council Minutes for November 16, 1778.

[22] Bates, *Two Putnams*, 195, 197. The explorers' motives may have been pure. The explorers retreated southward after Rufus Putnam took a bearing and discovered they were north of the provincial boundary and it does seem that by 1773 the Adventurers had lost interest in founding a new colony and wanted to stay in West Florida.

[23] Ibid., 203.

[24] Jacob Winfree, for example, whom they had met on May 7 near the Grand Gulf, had come from Virginia by way of the Tennessee River. With him were some one hundred blacks and whites of both sexes. Ibid., 194.

[25] Peter Chester to the earl of Dartmouth, September 24, 1774, C.O.5/592:9.

[26] This was the Loftus expedition of 1764. *New York Mercury*, June 11, 1764.

[27] Bates, *Two Putnams*, 262.

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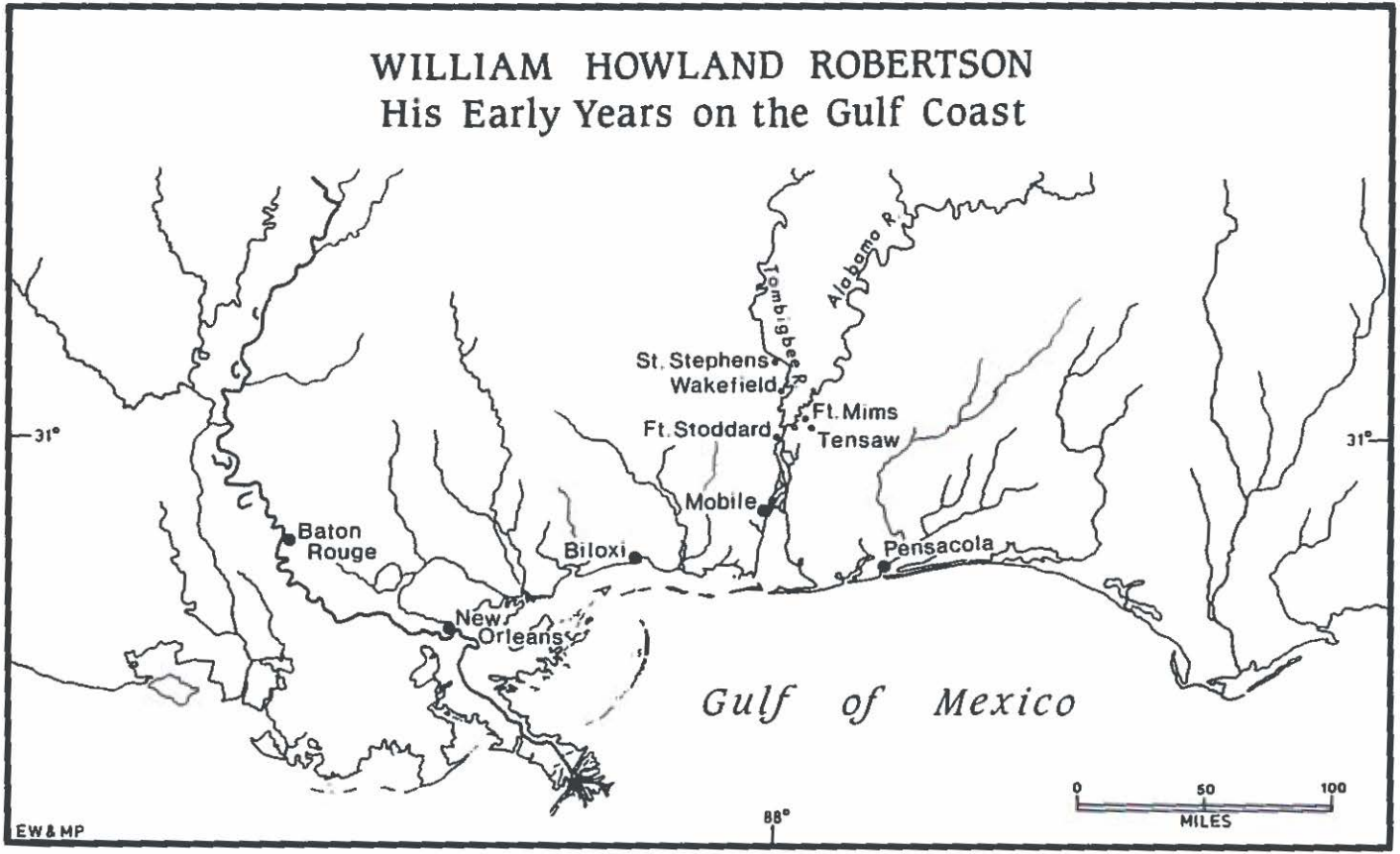
WILLIAM HOWLAND ROBERTSON
His Early Years on the Gulf Coast
Tombigbee R.
Alabama R.
St. Stephens
Wakefield
Ft. Mims
Ft. Stoddard
Tensaw
31°
Mobile
Baton Rouge
Biloxi
Pensacola
New Orleans
Gulf of Mexico
0
50
100
MILES
88°
EW & MP

William Howland Robertson: His Early Years on the Gulf Coast, 1804-1808

Kit C. Carter III

The year was 1803. Napoleon's plans to restore the French empire in North America had gone awry, thanks to, among other things, a successful slave uprising in Santo Domingo. As a result the emperor was about to make President Jefferson's envoys an offer even Jefferson could not refuse. The following Louisiana Purchase would roughly double the size of the young republic and lead to its involvement in the periphery of the great protracted conflict between England and France during the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon. Subsequently, the fledgling United States would follow its successful involvement in the War of 1812 with a period of dynamic expansion.

A Connecticut Yankee named William Howland Robertson became an integral part of that great historical drama of the early nineteenth century. The very year that James Monroe and Prince Talleyrand negotiated the purchase price of Louisiana (in actuality about three cents an acre) the fifteen-year-old Robertson sailed out of New York harbor beginning a three-week voyage to New Orleans. This was the start of a series of adventures that would take him into much of the area of the Gulf Coast and later into areas much farther abroad. [1] This paper, however, is mostly concerned with a small segment of his voyages, journeys, and involvements in the Pensacola, Mobile, New Orleans coastal region, with a particular emphasis on a trip up the Tombigbee River in 1806.

William Howland Robertson is not a well-known historical name, but neither is he one who watched the world pass by from the security of a privileged family position in his native Connecticut. His adventures were many—and fortunately he told us of at least some of them in a reminiscence he wrote in the late 1850s. Unfortunately he died in the middle of a sentence in 1859. What he said to posterity, however, he said with considerable humor and what he noted he noted with a perceptive eye. Thus we have a sample of participatory history remembered by a man who lived his time fully and with great zest.

By the time of his arrival in New Orleans, young Robertson had already completed two eventful commercial voyages from Connecticut to Surinam, Marintique, and back aboard ships owned by his step-father and had acquired a sense of accomplishment and curiosity that would eventually take him so far afield as Russia—but that is another story. [2] Let us permit William to tell us one of his Gulf Coast stories in his own words.

Upon arriving in New Orleans Robertson noted that settlement was "confined within what was called the old limits of the city. There was not a sidewalk on any part of it. On the street fronting the Levee, or river, the keels of flat bottomed boats were laid lengthwise, and on these one walked in muddy weather."

He continues, "There were, perhaps, not twenty buildings above Canal Street. I have stood near the old City Hotel, on the corner of [present] Canal Street to watch hundreds of hunters through the swamp." He adds, "At that early

period there were very few Americans settled there. The population was, of course, principally French; and they were both kind and hospitable." [3]

Despite this rather primitive picture of the city, William listened to advice from some of his friends and quit the sea to try his hand at commerce. He found employment in the trading firm of McNeil and Montgomery, headed by William H. Montgomery, in December 1804 and for a time worked mainly in receiving and delivering goods. One of the customers was a man who traded with people in Mobile, and Robertson and he "became tolerably well acquainted." Upon this new acquaintance's suggestion that "codfish and potatoes would do well in Mobile since Lent was approaching," William successfully prevailed upon Mr. Montgomery to become involved in such a consignment—to which the young entrepreneur added a sizable quantity of bottled port. A ship captain named LaSalle hauled the goods to Mobile. The results were disappointing. Several weeks later LaSalle informed the fledgling merchant "that the potatoes had all rotted; that the bottles of port had all burst; and that the codfish had not been sold; so he had brought it back with him. . . . The codfish I sent to one of the warehouses, which, proving offensive, the police fined me ten dollars, and threw it in the river. Thus ended my first venture in the commercial world." [4]

The young entrepreneur was not daunted. Since he lived in the same building with several merchants he knew them all well, and his employer was generous about allowing Robertson to carry out assignments for other traders. In August 1806 he was loaned to Kenner and Henderson, agents for two Natchez trading houses which, becoming estranged, were splitting their partnership. He was to get himself deputized by a judge at Opelousas and then proceed south to Belize, the entry point to the Mississippi. There he was to seize the cargo aboard ship and instruct the captain to deliver the goods to the sheriff until a settlement was made between the separating Natchez partners. The seizure was complicated and difficult, and young Robertson held his own against a more experienced agent who tried unsuccessfully to prevent him from seeing the manifest. While still at Belize, following the close of the seizure, William was hired by George T. Phillips to manage the transfer of cotton from one of his vessels which had run aground on the bar. Again the young man efficiently and thoroughly carried out his assignment. [5]

Subsequently Robertson was sent by Mr. Montgomery to the recently purchased plantation of the merchant house of Forman, Hunt, and Company to receive the crops. While there he perceptively noted the humanitarian reforms instituted by Forman's overseer, a Mr. Armstrong, concerning the living and working conditions of his slaves. Robertson comments that these changes produced such an increase in production that neighboring planters followed suit to the degree that he felt that "there are no slaves in the world in better condition." [6]

So well respected was young William that soon other merchant houses were asking for his services. After delivering letters concerning shipping up the Tombigbee from Whitton, Evans, and Company of New Orleans to John Forbes and Company of Mobile, he became involved in a venture that proved as dangerous

as it was exciting. While staying at Forbes's home in Mobile, Robertson met the commandant of Fort Stoddard which was the port of entry into the United States north of Mobile (near present Mount Vernon). The commandant was Edmund Pendleton Gaines who would later distinguish himself in battle at Fort Erie in the War of 1812 and continue with a long and distinguished military career. Subsequently Edmund Pendleton Gaines and William Howland Robertson would marry cousins, daughters of Matthew C. Toulmin and his brother, Harry Toulmin, once president of Transylvania College and Secretary of State of Kentucky. The latter Toulmin also was first federal judge of the Tombigbee District. In 1806 Gaines was in Mobile to negotiate for provision for his command at Fort Stoddard. Robertson writes, "Mobile was then a mere garrison town; the fort [old Fort Conde], as it were, in the midst of the village; and every person living there was employed in some manner by the Spanish King, with the exception of Messrs. John Forbes and Company. . . . The population of Mobile, at this time did not exceed two hundred, including the garrison."

Three days after his arrival from New Orleans Robertson received permission to proceed upriver. William continues:

> I may add that this was almost the first time that a vessel [it was a three-masted schooner] ever attempted to reach the point to which we finally attained.
>
> So little was the river disturbed at this period (I still speak of 1806) save by the Indian canoes, that the water was literally alive with alligators. About mid-day there was no time that one could not see anywhere from one to two hundred of these beasts basking themselves in the sun. . . .
>
> We had ascended about twenty miles with our sails when toward night the wind died away, promising a bright moonshine. The sweeps [large oars] were employed until about twelve o'clock then the hedge [a small anchor which could be used to pull a boat upriver] was thrown overboard, and the vessel was anchored in the middle of the river. Unfortunately the sweeps were not taken in. . . . I brought up my mattress . . . and spread it on the after hatch, rigging my mosquito net under the boom; and there I stretched myself and went to sleep. . . .
>
> Between the hatch and the mainmast, directly at my head, there was a coop of fowls, and toward morning I was awakened by their extraordinary noise. In attempting to look out to see what was the matter, I found, as I supposed, one of the sailors lying partly on the edge of my mattress, and also on the mosquito net. After several ineffectual efforts to awaken the supposed fellow, I tried the other side, and again without success. In vexation I crawled out at the foot, only to discover that I had been lying between two tremendous alligators, for how long I do not know; and as I looked around I saw five more on the main deck and one on each sweep. The moon was still shining brightly, but the men were all sleeping under the awning on the quarterdeck, upon which I immediately sprang, giving the alarm, "The vessel is in the possession of the alligators!"
>
> All hands were soon awake, and in hot pursuit, and although no less surprised at the sight before them than I had been, they could not resist a burst of laughter when they saw my two companions on the mattress,

> the beasts still so intent upon the chickens that they had not moved. . . .

Robertson states that it took about ten minutes to dispatch all the reptiles and that the sweeps were duly brought aboard. The following day the vessel proceeded upriver and William amused himself by "throwing a line overboard which had at the end of it an empty bottle, tightly corked." The gators would chase the bottle until he could touch their heads with the muzzle of his gun. For two days he shot alligators. The third day the craft arrived at Fort Stoddard where Robertson renewed his acquaintance with Captain Gaines and spent ten days trading with the garrison and with the few persons living in the vicinity of the fort. [7]

The day his ship left Fort Stoddard heading further up the Tombigbee, young Robertson was taken with a violent fever. By the time of his arrival at the next destination, McIntosh's Bluff, he was delirious and was put ashore into the house of a 'Mr. Johnson.' (This man was possibly John Johnson, late of Georgia, who was Justice of the Peace in the settlement.) This was, in fact, the only house on the immediate premises and Johnson had agreed to take in the ill young man on provision that he remain on the gallery of his house. There he was left with his pillow, mattress, and trunk "in a state in insensibility."

Robertson might well have died except for a 'Mrs. Kennedy' who dropped by for a visit from her home nearby. Finding the lad "with eyes, nose, mouth and ears filled with flies," she asked who he was, but Mrs. Johnson (née Joyce Powell, possibly) knew only that he had been left by the schooner heading upriver. (Mrs. Kennedy was the wife of Joseph Pulaski Kennedy, notorious frontier adventurer, and the sister-in-law of Joel Barlow, poet and sometime minister to France.) Mrs. Kennedy began to minister to the young man while talking with Mrs. Johnson. During the conversation, the women made reference to a visiting preacher. Mrs. Kennedy said that she was reminded of a well-known preacher from her home-town of New Haven, Connecticut. She remarked aloud about this man, David Austin, who, she recalled, built twelve stores in New Haven and named them after the Twelve Apostles. The deathly ill young Robertson had been acquainted with Austin during his adolescence at Norwich and upon hearing the name, he struggled to speak. "In the name of heaven, where have you known David Austin?" She told him of her Connecticut background and he burst into tears and was consoled by his fellow New Englander. Mrs. Kennedy arranged for Mrs. Johnson to take William into a bedroom and departed to return shortly with medicine and food. He credits her with saving his life. [8]

With the impetuousness of youth, Robertson decided a week later that he was fit and procured a horse from Johnson to head north in pursuit of his vessel. Mrs. Kennedy told him how foolish this was but he set out despite her objections. In less than two hours, the fever returned and he again became delirious. During a lucid moment, he encountered a boy on horseback who was frightened by the disheveled appearance of what must have seemed to be a deranged man. The boy did manage to direct William to his father's house to which the

young man galloped furiously. Leaping his mount over the bars of the gate, he dismounted, entered the house, and threw himself onto one of the two available beds, crying for water. A pitcher of water was brought and in his frenzy, William "bit out a great piece of it." This family, which Robertson fails to name, allowed a son to be sent in pursuit of the schooner and another to go to St. Stephens for a physician. The doctor came, examined the patient's pulse and tongue and "then shook his head." Robertson writes, "He then left, saying that he was going to see a friend . . . and that he would be back in about an hour."

"When he returned his friend was with him, and subsequently I learned that the second man was a lawyer. They approached my bed and began to remark upon my critical condition. Then they explained that they understood that I had a schooner loaded with valuable cargo, and that in case of my death it might all be sacrificed unless I appointed someone to take matters in charge; and that he, himself, was a resident of St. Stephens and would like to be useful."

Robertson replied, "Doctor have you any calomel and jalap?" (Both of these are powerful purgatives.) "Yes," he replied. "Then be good enough to prepare me six doses." Robertson then requested that the doctor prepare him half a pound of bark (quinine). He then asked the man how much he owed him, immediately paid him, then added, "Doctor I have now no longer any occasion for your services."

William further notes, ". . . the man took his leave, although not entirely satisfied, in spite of the liberal fee I had given him. Anyway he did not get possession of that cargo." One presumes that the lawyer left with the doctor. Perhaps the alligators were not the worst bedfellows William Robertson encountered on his Tombigbee journey. [9]

Soon the boy earlier sent upriver brought back word from the schooner's captain that all was well. He also brought wine, sugar, candles, crackers, and flour that Robertson had ordered. William noted that "there had never been a candle in the house until the ones I had ordered arrived from the schooner." After nine or ten days with this hospitable family, he asked them to prepare a "sort of horse-cart" for him to travel on to a new village he had learned of while ill but which he fails to name. This was no doubt Wakefield in Washington County in what was later the state of Alabama, a settlement named for the village in Oliver Goldsmith's novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield.* The vehicle was prepared and after "amply" compensating the family, Robertson took his leave and proceeded to the above mentioned village. There he inquired for a "northern woman" of whom he had heard who took in boarders. This woman turned out to be the jailer's wife, and their one-room log cabin had no extra accommodations. The still unsteady traveller was offered a lodging in the yet unfinished jail in which were incarcerated several inmates. There being no visible alternative, he accepted. Exhausted and still weak, he slept soundly the first night in this "airy abode."

The second night, however, proved a different story. Robertson writes:

> I was awakened by a tremendous cracking, splitting, and breaking up in the jail itself, and as this doubtful stronghold was situated six hundred yards

from any other dwelling, the inhabitants of the village were unaware of what was going on; and I was far too weak and feeble to give the alarm, in fact it would have been death for me to have attempted it, as I was lying in a profuse perspiration.

So I kept still and listened to every one of the steps toward liberation, taken by the jail breakers before effecting their release. Then followed a consultation in the yard, after which the six men came to the back door, and followed each other into the room. Two of these men were murderers, the other four, horse thieves, and as there was a little flame from a pine knot in the fire place, their figures were all full reflected in the half light, and they appeared to me to be the most enormous men that I had ever seen.

The men paused for a few moments and one strode over to Robertson's bed to see if the occupant was asleep. Another man said, "Oh let the little damned wretch alone, for he is going to die anyhow, so let him have his own way." Then they all left. The next morning the jailor appeared, got what details he could from William, and ran down to the main village to give the alarm. The male population shortly took off on horseback in hot but futile pursuit of the culprits. [10]

Robertson soon hired the jailor to transport him by covered wagon back down to McIntosh's Bluff where he boarded a sloop bound downriver. The next day he arrived at the hospitable home of Mrs. Kennedy, his previous benefactress and nurse. There he rested for nearly a week, still suffering from chills and fever. During this respite, he chartered the sloop and "put in a cargo of live hogs." He then bade the Kennedys good-bye and headed downstream. Some years later Robertson would again enjoy the kind woman's hospitality in more civilized circumstances in a country home outside Washington—but that is another story. [11]

Having begun his journey downriver, young William again fell desperately ill. He became delirious and threw himself overboard. On hitting the water, however, he gained his senses and struck out for the sloop. He was fortunately spotted and a boat was lowered to bring him back on board. The next day they arrived at Fort Stoddard where Robertson again spent several hours in the company of Captain Edmund Pendleton Gaines. During the course of their conversation, Gaines suggested to William that he obtain a receipt from the Spanish collector at Mobile since his cargo would be subject to a duty at that port. Upon arrival at Mobile the young trader asked John Forbes and Company to ascertain for him the amount of duty payable on his cargo. This seemingly normal procedure immediately produced another adventure for the crisis-prone Robertson.

He went to Don Miguel, the collector or intendant, went over the list of the cargo with him, and they agreed upon the amount of duty. When Robertson asked for a receipt, however, the collector was angered and ordered his men to ". . . take this boy to the Calabase." William remembers:

> It was certainly a dismal place, the water dripping from the arch, and the floor very wet. Immediately, the circumstances became known to the General Interpreter, an Englishman, a man I knew very well. He came immediately to the cell to inquire the cause of the incarceration, and I, in turn, informed him of every particular; that I was a lad who had to give an account to my employer for all the money that I disbursed, and therefore I must produce a voucher. The Interpreter went immediately to the Commandant and explained the circumstances to him, whereupon he wrote a note to the Intendant, ordering him to give me the receipt. I do not think I ever saw a man in such a rage. His hand fairly trembled while he wrote the receipt, then taking the money he threw the paper in my face and ordered me out of the house.

In an intriguing afterthought Robertson adds, "Strange as it may appear, in subsequent years, this man and I became very intimate friends . . . although I never intimated to him anything of our first acquaintance." [12]

William Robertson left Mobile and returned to New Orleans where he continued to suffer from chills and fever for the next six months, an unpleasant reminder of his first Tombigbee adventure. At that point in his young life he was full of daring and short of money. So, he wrote to an uncle in New York City for "a small loan." The stodgy old skinflint, fearful of never regaining his money due to his nephew's penchant for involvement in dangerous and complicated situations, sent the somewhat wry reply, "Mr. William, you are much too clever a fellow, and keep too good company, and for these reasons I cannot lend you any money; but when I can hear you called a damned, stingy, mean Yankee, I will lend you what money you may require." [13]

Young Robertson remained financially stressed and physically ill as the year 1807 approached. As he puts it, "I had one foot in the grave and the other out." His ambition undaunted, however, he eventually recovered and entered into employment with the House of Messrs. Ford and Geraud "at a much higher salary" than he had made at McNeil and Montgomery. He was shortly called away on an enterprise to sell Spanish cotton from East Florida and from Baton Rouge on the Mississippi to a Russian ship anchored in Pensacola. The venture was a great success both logistically and financially. The transport of the Mississippi cotton was via a complicated route through Bayou Manchac to Lake Maurepas in flatboats, thence transferred to schooners which sailed through Pontchartrain and through Mobile Bay to Bon Secour. It was then carried by land and by pirogues to Pensacola's port and the waiting Russian ship.

The financial gain so intrigued young Robertson that he returned to New Orleans with the idea of starting "a small store for myself." After all, the cotton was purchased in Mississippi for four or five cents a pound, transported for about that same cost, and sold for more than three times the total cost. But William Robertson's star was not yet risen. Less than six weeks after he opened his business he was beset with a violent attack of yellow fever. He tells us, "Having no clerk my little establishment was closed during the period of my illness, which of course proved a great loss to me."

Nevertheless, undaunted, he adds, "On recovery I went to work again with renewed energy, and tried to make up for lost time. In this I was successful, but it only lasted a year, for the revolution broke out in Baton Rouge . . . putting down the Spanish flag in that quarter, and putting me down as well."

"Some of my principal debtors lived across the Lake in West Florida, and although they had been very punctual in their payments up to that period, they now availed themselves of this event, in order to plead ruin, and from them I never collected another dollar." His youthful constitution still hardy despite continuous setbacks, Robertson tried to recoup his losses with shipment of "a small cargo of wines, brandies, etc. to Pensacola, in charge of a man who belonged to one of the very best families. It had been stated to me that these articles were very greatly desired in that city, so I had little doubt but that the shipment would meet with great success."

He was wrong again! He finally heard from this man of good family after a three-month lapse. The man (at least he appeared in person) gave the following account, in William's words, "that he, himself, had joined the H.F.S. society: which I learned was the 'Hell Fire Social'; where my groceries had been consumed, while the balance of the cargo went to pay freight, and the man's own private expenses." So much for pedigree!

"This," in Robertson's words, "with my losses from the Lake venture, closed me up completely." It is of interest here to note that despite the financial disaster inherent in the previous statement, Robertson adds immediately and with great optimism the following: "and yet, after all, my deficit did not exceed fifteen or sixteen hundred dollars, which I subsequently paid." [14]

It may seem unlikely, but William Howland Robertson would go on from this rash of failed business ventures and physical illness to lead an even more colorful and adventurous life. He would become a spy for General Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812; he would be detained by the British, arrested by the Spanish, and become involved in numerous sorties along the Gulf Coast. He would visit with Eli Whitney, invent (perhaps) gunny bags for cotton bales, and become a director of the Bank of Mobile. He would father several children by two wives who were very different from each other (one whose portrait by Sully hangs in the National Gallery). He would confer with Nicholas Biddle about cotton, donate land for the site of Spring Hill College, lose a contract to build waterworks for Mobile, fail at installing gas lines in Havana, become United States Consul to Bremen, converse with Count Nessebrode in St. Petersburg, Russia, and fail in an attempt to import gun cotton for use by the United States military.

The optimism of William Howland Robertson never lagged. In 1845, years after his Tombigbee adventure, he collaborated with Senator Dixon Hall Lewis of Alabama, renowned for his girth as well as for his abilities, concerning the introduction of Indian corn into Europe as a major food crop. When the European potato crop subsequently suffered a massive failure the idea seemed more pregnant than ever. That same year Robertson became Consul at Bremen. In a scene

almost too good to be real, William Robertson, in an elegant hotel in Antwerp in Belgium, introduced cornmeal mush flavored with butter and syrup to an international cast of sophisticates. These included a skeptical Frenchman who, watching Robertson consume the dish with gusto, burst forth, "eh, Garçon, What dish is this?" The garçon did not know. The Frenchman then acquired a dish of the concoction for himself and ate it vigorously, exclaiming, "Diable, it is a droll dish, nevertheless, it is good!" William said to him, "May I inform you that it is an American food called, 'Crème de la Choctaw.'" [15]

Shortly afterward Robertson departed for Brussels, hopefully to continue educating Europeans to the wonders of Indian corn. Did he succeed? Well, that episode, like every other chapter of his colorful life, is another story.

Notes

[1] Transcription of the Life of William Howland Robertson from original longhand manuscripts. Capitalization and punctuation are modernized in many places. Obviously misspelled words are corrected without notation. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century spellings are retained. Page numbers referred to are those in the transcription and not the original manuscript. This is hereafter cited as Typed Manuscript. The original manuscript and the first transcription are in the Special Collections of the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library, The University of Alabama.

[2] Typed Manuscript, 8.

[3] Ibid., 8-11.

[4] Ibid., 15-16.

[5] Ibid., 17-19.

[6] Ibid., 22.

[7] Ibid., 23-26, 100-102; Peter J. Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile* (Boston and New York, 1910), 381, 558.

[8] Typed Manuscript, 25-27; Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile*, 399-400; Jaquelin Anderson Matte, *The History of Washington County: First County in Alabama* (Chatom, AL, 1982), 21.

[9] Typed Manuscript, 28-30.

[10] Ibid., 30-32; Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile*, 377.

[11] Typed Manuscript, 32, 33.

[12] Ibid., 33, 34.

[13] Ibid., 35.

[14] Ibid., 39-41.

[15] Ibid., 59-81, 91-93, 110-12, 126-28, 130, 131, 141, 146, 147, 151-56, 158-63.

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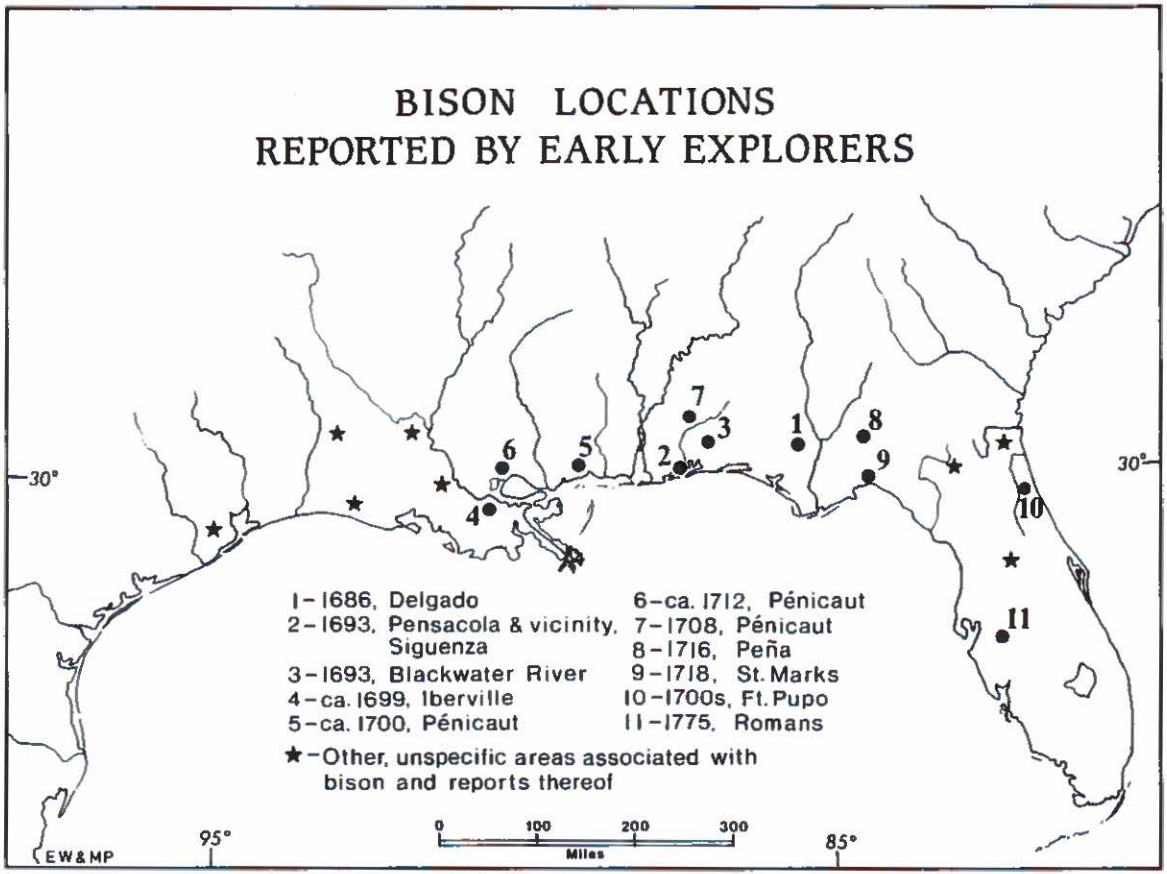
BISON LOCATIONS
REPORTED BY EARLY EXPLORERS
30°
30°
95°
85°
EW&MP
1 - 1686, Delgado
2 - 1693, Pensacola & vicinity, Siguenza
3 - 1693, Blackwater River
4 - ca. 1699, Iberville
5 - ca. 1700, Pénicaut
6 - ca. 1712, Pénicaut
7 - 1708, Pénicaut
8 - 1716, Peña
9 - 1718, St. Marks
10 - 1700s, Ft. Pupo
11 - 1775, Romans
★ - Other, unspecific areas associated with bison and reports thereof
0
100
200
300
Miles

Where the Buffalo Roamed: American Bison on the Gulf Coast During the Age of Exploration

Brian R. Rucker

When the first permanent European colonization attempts were made along the Gulf Coast in the late 1600s, the Spanish and French encountered herds of buffalo. When most people think of buffalo—the American bison—they picture vast migratory herds sweeping the western plains. Most Americans are not even aware that buffalo were common along the bayous of Louisiana and the piney woods of West Florida. But bison were there—from the Texas Gulf Coast to Tampa, Florida, and this presents us with something of an ecological mystery. There are no reports of buffalo by the European explorers of the 1500s. The Soto and Luna expeditions reported no herds of buffalo in the southeast. This leads us to some interesting questions. When did the buffalo reach the Gulf Coast? To what extent did they establish themselves? Why and when did they disappear from this region? And what was their impact?

The ancestors of today's bison originated in Asia, traveling across the Bering land bridge into North America during the Ice Age thousands of years ago. These prehistoric bison ranged most of the North American continent, along with mammoths, mastodons, camels, saber-toothed tigers, and early Amerindians. Fossil remains of these first bison have been found as far south as the Florida peninsula, but after the Ice Age only one descendant of these first buffalo remained—the one we know today—and the species' range was confined to the vast prairie lands west of the Mississippi River. [1] The American buffalo was an integral part of the environmental and Indian worlds of the pre-Columbian West. Before the introduction of firearms and horses to the Indians, the buffalo were secure in their vast numbers—estimated at approximately thirty to fifty million at the time of Columbus. [2] The largest of all North American land animals, bison were imposing. Full-grown bulls could weigh from eighteen to twenty-four hundred pounds, stand six feet high at the shoulder, and average from ten to twelve feet long, including the tail. [3] They fed entirely upon the rich grasses of America's prairie lands, and they moved constantly—and erratically—from place to place in search of new pasture. [4]

It was this biological necessity to find new grazing lands which led to the bison crossing east of the Mississippi River, sometime around 1000 A.D. Whether prompted by overpopulation, Indian attacks, drought, or other factors, buffalo began to infiltrate the eastern portion of the United States, working their way from Illinois and Indiana southward and eastward, towards the Atlantic Coast and into the Appalachians and eventually in the direction of the coastal plains. Though they were never as numerous as the immense herds of the prairie regions, buffalo advanced further and further into the great southern forests. Indian inhabitants of the region inadvertently paved the way for the buffalo. Agricultural Indian societies, through clearing the dense forests, had opened up highways of migration for the bison. And in many regions, the annual fires set by the

Indians to hunt deer created large expanses of open forest, a forest with a carpet of rich grasses—an ideal pasture for the steadily expanding buffalo herds. By the mid-1500s bison were poised on the perimeters of the deep South; some were just beginning to arrive along the Gulf Coast where they found abundant pasturelands of wire grass, canebrakes, and even palmettos. [5]

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was perhaps the first European to see the American bison. He and his shipwrecked companions first encountered the buffalo in the 1530s near the Gulf Coast region of present-day Texas. [6] Approximately ten years later, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's expedition into the American southwest discovered large buffalo herds for the first time, somewhere in the vicinity of the Texas panhandle. [7] At the same time, however Hernando de Soto's large expedition through the American southwest reported no buffalo at all. There was never physical contact between the Spanish explorers and living buffalo, but the two were tantalizingly close. Frequently the Spanish encountered Indians with buffalo skins, shields made of buffalo leather, buffalo horns, and even buffalo meat. The Indians told the Spaniards on several occasions that "cattle"—buffalo—were very plentiful to the north. Thus, it appears that the migratory herds of buffalo were on the very edge of the southeast by the 1540s. [8]

The ill-fated Luna expedition at Pensacola from 1559 to 1561 makes no mention of buffalo in the area, evidence that bison had not yet descended to the Gulf Coast. [9] But the herds of eastern bison were probably on the move during this time working their way southward into the grassy coastal plains. The herds in the southeast were much smaller than the familiar plains herds; the buffalo often traveled in single file fashion and were grouped together in herds that ranged in size from fifteen to sixty, with occasionally some groups as large as two hundred or more individuals. [10] Some of the first buffalo on the Gulf coastal plain were probably seen by a shipwrecked Spaniard named Fontaneda between 1560 and 1575. Fontaneda's memoirs refer to the Apalachee Indians of the Tallahassee region, and he states that they ate deer, fox, and "wooly cattle"—a term often used by the early explorers to describe the American bison. [11]

The early to mid-1600s saw a further penetration of the southeast, including the Gulf Coast, by the migrating herds of bison. Bishop Gabriel Calderon, in a letter describing the state of Florida's missions in 1675, noted that the Timucua Indians hunted bears, panthers, and bison with bows and arrows. [12] In 1686 Marcos Delgado led a small Spanish expedition from the present-day Tallahassee area northwesterly into the interior of West Florida and Alabama. Delgado's goal was to seek out the intrusive—and feared—French colony of La Salle (which actually failed on Matagorda Bay, Texas). The Spanish were woefully ignorant of the Gulf Coast region between northern Mexico and the Florida province of Apalachee, and Delgado's expedition was perhaps the first penetration into this region since Soto and Luna nearly 150 years before. One of the new denizens

of the southern forests since that time were buffalo, which Delgado began encountering near present-day Jackson County, Florida, and he continued to observe them in southeastern Alabama. [13]

By the late 1600s the Spanish knew the Gulf Coast region was fertile and also abounded in a variety of cattle "which produced as good wool as that gotten from a sheep's back." [14] When the Spanish began preparations to recolonize the Pensacola area in the early 1690s, the true extent of bison along the Gulf coastal plain became evident. Don Carlos de Siguenza y Góngora's 1693 scouting expedition to Pensacola Bay provides several noteworthy accounts of bison. On Santa Rosa Island near present-day Fort Pickens, Siguenza observed buffalo tracks; this is the only known reference to the presence of American bison on a coastal barrier island (beach bison). [15] Along the shores of present-day East Bay Siguenza's party discovered a hastily abandoned Indian camp, complete with buffalo meat still cooking over the fire. [16] A short distance away, at another Indian camp, the Spanish explorers found even more evidence of buffalo:

> . . . the buffalo meat was . . . half-cooked . . . [and] had been pounded into very fine, evil-smelling powder in wooden mortars; there was a large quantity of all this, for the reason that on this spot or near by they had killed a buffalo; this had happened only a short while before, as the exceedingly large and frightful head was still intact. Near numerous, not badly shaped pots and pans with gourd dippers and ladles of buffalo horn in them were ten or a dozen tanned hides of this animal and uncured pelts of martens, foxes, otters, and many deer. . . . There was considerable yarn of buffalo hair, both slender and coarse, in balls and on cross-shaped distaffs. . . . [17]

Siguenza also noticed the woodlands of West Florida, remarking that the "forest of oak and pine was remarkably free of underbrush." The Spanish "marveled at seeing lofty pine trees, clear of underbrush, growing down to the beach itself." [18] Such open forests, with their carpets of rich grass, were the pastures for the now-established bison herds. And in this same year a simultaneous Spanish overland expedition from Apalachee to Pensacola Bay also discovered the presence of buffalo. [19] On one occasion, probably in the vicinity of present-day Santa Rosa or Okaloosa County, the small Spanish expedition reached a stream they were unable to cross until "some buffaloes, in crossing the stream, showed us the way." [20] Along possibly Blackwater River "a number of buffaloes were killed on its banks and with these the men were refreshed." [21] It was quite evident that bison were now inhabiting the pineywoods of West Florida.

Bison were also appearing in large numbers near the mouth of the Mississippi, both east and west of the great river. When the French began their exploration and settlement of Louisiana between 1698 and 1702, they found numerous bison to supply them with meat. The bison were well entrenched in the Louisiana/ Mississippi Gulf Coast among the rich grasses and canebrakes of the prairie and bayou regions. Sieur d'Iberville noted buffalo in present-day Plaquemines and St. James parishes, as well as on the actual site of present-day New Orleans. The Frenchmen also saw buffalo among the canebrakes at Bayou Goula, south

of Baton Rouge. The large animals seemed to be everywhere, from Winn Parish in northwestern Louisiana to the mouth of the Red River to the southwestern parishes of Louisiana. Pénicaut and other early explorers reported hunting buffalo along the shores of St. Louis Bay in Mississippi, as well as noting their evidence at present-day Pascagoula and Biloxi. [22]

The year 1700 probably marks the peak of bison population and penetration into the American southeast and the Gulf Coast. It would not be long before these relatively small herds faced competition from cattle and exploitation by increased numbers of Indian and European hunters. Professional hunters killed thousands of buffalo north of New Orleans during the early 1700s, bringing back dried and salted meat, buffalo tongues, and pelts to sell in the river city. [23] French chronicler Pénicaut reports killing over twenty bison in 1712 near Pass Manchac, between Lake Maurepas and Lake Pontchartrain. [24]

Herds were still evident in Florida as well. In 1708 several Frenchmen located a herd of buffalo north of Pensacola, near the present-day Alabama/Florida border. [25] And in 1718 because of an unreliable supply and relief system at the small Spanish garrison at St. Marks, Florida, the Spaniards were forced to hunt buffalo which were described as "plentiful" in the area. [26] In 1716 Diego Peña made an overland expedition from St. Augustine to the "Apalachee" and "Apalachicolo" districts and discovered numerous bison. During the journey Peña's expedition killed over thirty bison for food, ranging from present-day Alachua and Columbia counties to the Suwannee and Aucilla rivers to the vicinity of Tallahassee. North of Tallahassee, at Lake Jackson, Peña saw a mixed herd of more than three hundred bison and cattle. [27] Bison remains have also been uncovered at Fort Pupo, an early eighteenth-century Spanish garrison which was located on the St. Johns River, three miles south of Green Cove Springs in Clay County. [28]

Both Indians and the first Europeans utilized the buffalo they found along the Gulf Coast. The bison served as a major food item, the meat being cooked fresh or smoked, dried, and salted. Buffalo tongues and tails were considered delicacies. The hides were a valuable trade item and were utilized as robes, clothing, and bedding. The hides were also made into moccasins, belts, and even shields. Green buffalo hides were sometimes made into small boats. The wool or hair of the buffalo was utilized as well; it was often spun into yarn, cords, rope, and ornamental ribbons. Even the bones were used. Shoulder blade bones were used as hoes; and horns were transformed into ladles, dishes, spoons, and ornaments. [29] The early French settlers even hoped to develop the spinning of buffalo wool into an industry; and d'Iberville was instructed on his second voyage to "breed the Buffalo at Biloxi." [30]

But the eighteenth century saw a steady depletion of the Gulf Coast bison population due to human and perhaps even animal competition. White and Indian hunters of course killed thousands of bison and increased settlements gradually drove the remaining buffalo inland. The relatively small herds could not withstand such an onslaught for long and eventually succumbed. [31] Besides the introduction

of horses and firearms the Europeans also introduced another factor which may have sped the demise of the southeastern buffalo—cattle. The cattle population along the Gulf Coast during the colonial era swelled enormously, and it is quite possible that the increasing cattle herds competed with the buffalo for pasturage. Cattle also destroyed the canebrakes which bison often used for hiding places, further endangering their numbers. [32] With all these pressures their days were indeed numbered.

Apparently the colonization of the Gulf Coast in the 1700s pushed the bison inland, and further south into the Florida peninsula. In the 1760s William Bartram reported that the buffalos—"once so very numerous"—were no longer seen in

Boeuf de la Nouvelle France
artist unknown, etching, c.1775

1964.11 Amon Carter Museum, Ft. Worth

the coastal areas of northeast Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas. [33] However, at the same time, John Bartram noted that "the buffalo is found in the savannah, or natural meadows, in the interior parts of East-Florida." [34] And in that same decade William Roberts noted that there were still buffalo in Florida and that buffalo skins were being shipped from St. Marks. [35] Bernard Romans, writing in the 1770s, observed that the Florida Indians spun buffalo wool. He also listed "Buffalo Tallow" as a product of the Floridas and even went as far as to advocate breeding the buffalos instead "of wantonly destroying this excellent beast, (perhaps for the sale of his tongue only)," [36] Even more interesting is Roman's discovery of buffalo tracks—which he presumably could discern from those of regular cattle—at the head of Manatee River near Tampa Bay. This is perhaps the most southerly known position of bison in historic times. [37]

The last reference to buffalo in Florida comes from 1821. James Grant Forbes, describing the animals of the territory, stated that "the buffalo is said to be among the number of wild beasts, but not commonly seen." [38] By the early 1800s, the American bison were being completely eliminated from the area east of the Mississippi River. In Louisiana the last wild buffalo was reportedly killed in 1803. [39] It was the end of an era. Placenames, however, carried on the tradition of bison along the Gulf Coast—Buffalo Bayou in Houston, Texas; Lake Boeuf and Bayou Terre Aux Boeufs in La Fourche and Plaquemines parishes, Louisiana; Buffalo River, Wilkinson County, Mississippi; and Buffalo Mill Creek, Buffalo Bluff, and Buffalo Ford in Santa Rosa, Putnam, and Polk counties, Florida. [40]

Other than an interesting historical footnote, several things can be learned from the presence of bison along the Gulf Coast. Why and how they were able to arrive here are interesting questions. The buffalo were in search of grasslands for forage. And the Indians of the southeast frequently burned the forests, either for agricultural purposes or to facilitate the hunting of deer. This created open lands and grass-carpeted forests. However the Indian population would certainly have halted the expansion of buffalo into the southeast. But the expeditions of Soto and other Europeans introduced diseases which decimated the native Indian populations to an unbelievable extent. This is the reason Soto saw Indians and no buffalo in the 1500s, but a hundred years later Indians were less plentiful and buffalo were widespread. The bison stepped into the ecological vacuum left by disease, and the lands deserted by the Indians—old fields and burned forests—became accessible to the migrating buffalo. [41]

The bison were good stewards of the coastal pine forests. Their foraging helped keep the underbrush from growing, and later when the European cattle herds were introduced, the cows found well-kept, readily available pasturelands across the Gulf Coast region courtesy of the bison. [42] But by that time a combination of factors were exterminating the less extensive bison herds of the east—firearms, Indian and white hunters, and expanding cattle herds. The buffalo

consequently disappeared. Yet there is a possibility—remote to be sure—that the buffalo survived genetically. Some of the Gulf Coast bison may have interbred with the cattle introduced by European settlers.

Domesticating the buffalo had been proposed on more than one occasion, and in the 1770s Bernard Romans even suggested that the British "endeavor its domiciliation, either by a pure breed, or by raising a spurious one with him and our common cattle." [43] Such attempts had actually been made in the colonial and early American era with varying success, and natural crossbreeding may have occurred as well. [44] Buffalo are gregarious animals and are prone to joining cattle herds, and this occurred along the Gulf Coast. [45] In 1716 Diego Peña recorded a herd of over three hundred cattle and buffalo free ranging near present-day Tallahassee. [46] There are other accounts of cattle and buffalo together, and it is possible that the rugged pineywoods cattle of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a small amount of buffalo blood in them. [47]

More important questions also arise, questions which may never be answered adequately. What caused the buffalo to initially cross to the land east of the Mississippi? Was it climatic or manmade causes? And what was their impact on the Indians of the east? Though Indians are traditionally viewed as exploiters of the buffalo, there is evidence that the sudden appearance of migrating buffalo altered traditional cultures and perhaps even led to the demise of the great Mound Builder civilization. [48] And what was the bison's true impact on the Gulf Coast forests and grasslands? Was it destructive or was it constructive? [49] And though in limited numbers, what was the bison's effect on the Amerindians, on the deer, on the cattle introduced by the Europeans, on the Europeans themselves? The Columbian exchange is an incredibly complicated issue with dozens of interconnecting aspects, some of which are only now beginning to be scrutinized. A hundred years ago most authorities dismissed the very idea of bison inhabiting the Gulf Coast region, and many today are unaware of their former presence. And if the presence of bison has been doubted by scholars, is it not possible that the stories of early explorers finding elephants near the Appalachians may be true as well? Perhaps the mastodons or mammoths did not become extinct at the end of the last Ice Age. [50] At any rate, historians of the early contact period need to be more in tune with the work of zoologists, botanists, archaeologists, and even climatologists. Ecological revolutions had occurred in America before the Columbian Exchange. The arrival of Europeans only accelerated, complicated, and altered natural environmental changes. Bison on the Gulf Coast fit into this ecological flux; and in an era where global ecology is paramount to survival, we all should be interested in the interconnectedness of animals, plants, and mankind.

Notes

[1] David A. Dary, *The Buffalo Book: The Full Saga of the American Animal* (Chicago, 1974), 5-7; and Jesse S. Robertson, Jr., "Fossil Bison of Florida," in *Pleistocene Mammals of Florida*, ed. S. David Webb (Gainesville, 1974) 214-59.

[2] Larry Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns: The Compleat Buffalo Book* (Fort Worth, 1985), 21; Francis Haines, *The Buffalo* (New York, 1970), 32-33; E. Raymond Hall and Keith R. Kelson, *The Mammals of North America* (New York, 1959), I: 1024; and Cy Martin, *The Saga of the Buffalo* (New York, 1973), 9.

[3] Martin, *Saga of the Buffalo*, 9.

[4] Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 19-20; Haines, *Buffalo*, 13; and Hall and Kelson, *Mammals* 1: 1024.

[5] Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 19-22, 193; J. F. H. Claiborne, *Mississippi, as a Province, Territory and State* (1880; reprint, Baton Rouge, 1964), 27; Albert E. Cowdrey, *This Land, This South: an Environmental History* (Louisville, 1983), 14-15; Benjamin F. French, ed., "Historical Journal; or, Narrative of the Expeditions Made by Order of His Majesty Louis XIV, King of France, to Colonize Louisiana, under the Command of M. Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, Governor General," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida*, ed. Benjamin F. French, 2d ser. (New York, 1875), 61, 76; Haines, *Buffalo*, 12-13, 32, 73-76; Lewis H. Larson, *Aboriginal Subsistence Technology on the Southeastern Coastal Plain during the Late Prehistoric Period* (Gainesville, 1980), 181; J. Albert Rorabacher, *The American Buffalo in Transition: A Historical and Economic Survey of the Bison in America* (Saint Cloud, MN, 1970), 29; Erhard Rostlund, "The Geographic Range of the Historic Bison in the Southeast," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 50 (December 1960): 405-7; and Timothy Silver, *A New Face On the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1990), 18-19, 24, 51.

[6] John Bakeless, *The Eyes of Discovery: The Pageant of North America As Seen By the First Explorers* (Philadelphia, 1950), 43-44; Dary, *Buffalo Book*, 8; Haines, *Buffalo*, 28; and Frederick W. Hodge, ed., "The Narrative of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca," in *Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States 1528-1543*, ed. Frederick W. Hodge and Theodore H. Lewis (New York, 1907), 68. Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez supposedly saw a buffalo around 1520 in Montezuma's menagerie in Mexico City, but this reference appears to have been inserted into the account a century later. See Dary, *Buffalo Book*, 7; and Haines, *Buffalo*, 28-29.

[7] Dary, *Buffalo Book*, 8; and Frederick W. Hodge, ed., "The Narrative of the Expedition of Coronado, by Pedro de Castaneda," in *Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States 1528-1543*, ed. Frederick W. Hodge and Theodore H. Lewis (New York, 1907), 382-83.

[8] Gentlemen of Elvas, *Narratives of De Soto in the Conquest of Florida* (Gainesville, 1968), 74, 111, 116, 121, 127-28, 254, 258, 285; and John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 137 (1946; reprint, Grosse Pointe, MI, 1969), 324.

[9] George W. Percy, *A Review of Evidence for Prehistoric Indian Use of Animals in Northwest Florida*, Bureau of Historic Sites and Properties Bulletin no. 4 (Tallahassee, 1974), Table 7; and Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 401.

[10] Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 18-21; Haines, *Buffalo*, 12-13, 33; and Newton D. Mereness, ed., "A Ranger's Report of Travels with General Oglethorpe, 1739-1742," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton D. Mereness (1916; reprint, New York, 1961), 219.

[11] Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 400; and David O. True, ed. and trans., *Memoir of D. d'Escalente Fontaneda Respecting Florida* (1854; reprint, Miami, 1944), 24, 62-63.

A group of Frenchmen retreating from the Spanish attack on Fort Caroline in northeast Florida in 1565 may have seen buffalo as well. They described seeing "a great beast like a deer, which had a very big head, flaming and staring eyes, pendant ears, and a humped back." See Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 400-401. David Ingram, another shipwrecked European, may have been one of the first to witness bison herds entering the upper Southeast during the 1580s. See David Ingram, *The Relation of David Ingram, from the Principal Navigations by Richard Hakluyt* (1589; reprint, Ann Arbor, 1966), 560.

[12] Swanton, *Indians*, 326; and John R. Swanton, "Notes on the Occurrence of Bison Near the Gulf of Mexico," *Journal of Mammalogy* 19 (August 18, 1938): 379.

[13] Mark F. Boyd, "The Expedition of Marcos Delgado From Apalache to the Upper Creek Country in 1686," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 16 (July 1937): 2-7, 23.

[14] William Edward Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry in the Gulf Region of the United States, 1678-1702: The Beginnings of Texas and Pensacola* (1917; reprint, Austin, 1971), 22-23.

[15] Irwin A. Leonard, comp., *Spanish Approach to Pensacola, 1689-1693* (1939; reprint, New York, 1967), 154-58, 187. Buffalo tracks were also reported on the mainland in the vicinity of present-day Fort Barrancas.

[16] Ibid., 160-61, 188. The site of this Indian camp was named "Robledal," located at Axelson Cove on East Bay, Santa Rosa County.

[17] Ibid., 161-62.

[18] Ibid., 160.

[19] Ibid., 232-34, 255, 267, 270-71, 281; and John R. Swanton, "Occurrence of Bison in Florida," *Journal of Mammalogy* 22 (August 14, 1941): 322. The Spanish overland expedition spotted bison near the Chipola River and noted that there was an abundance of bear, deer, and buffalo for the Indian hunters.

[20] Leonard, *Spanish Approach*, 270, 281.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Claiborne, *Mississippi*, 26-27; Daniel Coxe, "A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spaniards Called Florida, and the French La Louisiana," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, ed. Benjamin F. French (Philadelphia, 1850), 2: 226-27; George H. Dacy, *Four Centuries of Florida Ranching* (St. Louis, 1940), 21; French, "Historical Journal," 49, 58-61, 73-76; Gordon Gunter, "Remarks on American Bison in Louisiana," *Journal of Mammalogy* 24 (August 17, 1943): 398-99; M. Pénicaut, "Annals of Louisiana from 1698 to 1722," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida*, ed. Benjamin F. French, n.s. (New York, 1869), 1: 47-50; M. de Remonville, "Memoir Addressed to Count de Pontchartrain, on the Importance of Establishing a Colony in Louisiana," in *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida*, ed. Benjamin F. French, n.s. (New York, 1869), 1: 2-3; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 396-97, 403-4; John R. Swanton, "American Bison in Louisiana," *Journal of Mammalogy* 22 (August 14, 1941): 325; Swanton, *Indians*, 326-27; and Swanton, "Notes on Occurrence of Bison," 380.

[23] Dacy, *Florida Ranching*, 21. Buffalo were especially plentiful throughout the St. Francis River Valley north of New Orleans.

[24] Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 397.

[25] Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, trans. and ed., *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Pénicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1953), 126-27; and Swanton, "Notes on Occurrence of Bison," 380.

[26] Barcia, *Barcia's Chronological History of the Continent of Florida* (1951; reprint, Westport, CT, 1970), 368.

[27] Mark F. Boyd, "Diego Peña's Expedition to Apalachee and Apalachicolo in 1716," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 28 (July 1949): 14-16, 18-19; and H. B. Sherman, "The Occurrence of Bison In Florida," *Quarterly Journal of the Florida Academy of Sciences* 17 (December 1954): 228.

[28] John M. Goggin, "Fort Pupo: A Spanish Frontier Outpost," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 30 (1951): 176-77, 182; Robertson, "Fossil Bison of Florida," 229; and Sherman, "Occurrence of Bison in Florida," 228.

[29] Jean-Bernard Bossu, *New Travels in North America, 1770-1771* (Natchitoches, LA, 1982), 42; Jean-Bernard Bossu, *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1751-1762* (Normal, OK, 1962), 196-97; Boyd, "Diego Peña's Expedition," 14-16, 18-19; Mark F. Boyd, Hale G. Smith, and John W. Griffin, *Here They Once Stood: The Tragic End of the Apalachee Missions* (Gainesville, 1951), 26; Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (1929; reprint, Ann Arbor, 1956), 69-70; Dacy, *Florida Ranching*, 21; French, "Historical Journal," 58-59, 61, 73-74, 76; Gentleman of Elvas, *Narratives of De Soto*, 74, 111, 116, 121, 127-28, 254; Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (New York, 1941), 1: 9, 2: 867; Leonard, *Spanish Approach to Pensacola* 160-62, 167, 267, 270; Pénicaut, "Annals of Louisiana," 47-50; Remonville, "Memoir," 2-3; Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (1775; reprint, Gainesville, 1962), 85, 96, 174; Swanton, *Indians*, 249, 324-27, 439, 448-49; Swanton, "Notes on Occurrence of Bison," 379-80; and Samuel Cole Williams, ed., *Adair's History of the American Indians* (1775; reprint, New York, 1930), 445-46.

[30] Claiborne, *Mississippi*, 27; Gray, *History of Agriculture*, 1: 9; and Hodge, "Expedition of Coronado," 383.

[31] Dacy, *Florida Ranching*, 21; Dary, *Buffalo Book*, 12, 18; Gunter, "Remarks on American Bison," 399; James C. Malin, *History & Ecology: Studies of the Grassland* (Lincoln, NE, 1984), 39-41; Rorabacher, *American Buffalo*, 29-30; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 406; Silver, *New Face on Countryside*, 100; and Williams, *Adair's History*, 445-46.

[32] Malin, *History & Ecology*, 39-41; and Rorabacher, *American Buffalo*, 29-30.

[33] William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram* (New Haven, 1958), 29-30, 204. William Bartram also noted "heaps of white, gnawed bones of the ancient buffaloe" in the inland areas.

In the 1740s buffalo could still be found in the interiors of Alabama and Georgia. One Georgian even reported seeing a herd of ten thousand buffalo along the Georgia coast in the vicinity of McIntosh County. See Mereness, "Ranger's Report," 219, 221; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 398-400; and Thomas Spalding, "A Sketch of the Life of General James Oglethorpe," in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, 1840), 1: 268.

[34] John Bartram, *An Account of East Florida* (1765; reprint, Fernandina, FL, 1881), 16.

[35] William Roberts, *An Account of the First Discovery, and Natural History of Florida* (1763; reprint, Gainesville, 1976), 98-100.

[36] Romans, *Natural History*, 85, 96, 174, 202-3. Romans believed the bison to be an animal that could "easily be domesticated, whose fine wooll might yield good profit, and whose flesh is equal at least to our beef, and yields as much tallow."

[37] Ibid., 280-81; and Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 397. The evidence for historic bison as far south as Tampa Bay is not improbable. On eighteenth-century maps, present-day Gadsden Point in Tampa Bay was labeled "Sivelo Point," or "Buffalo Point."

Knowledgeable people can tell the difference between buffalo and cattle tracks. While both have similar cloven hooves, buffalo hooves make rounder shapes at the points. See Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 15.

[38] James Grant Forbes, *Sketches, Historical and Topographical, of the Floridas; More Particularly of East Florida* (1821; reprint, Gainesville, 1964), 169.

[39] Dary, *Buffalo Book*, 12, 18-19; Gunter, "Remarks on American Bison," 399; Martin, *Saga of the Buffalo*, 10; and Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 406.

[40] Gunter, "Remarks on American Bison," 398-99; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 396-97, 403-5; and Frank F. White, Jr., ed., "A Journal of Lt. Robert C. Buchanan During the Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 29 (October 1950): 135. Along the Gulf Coast there is a relative absence of Indian place-names with the word for buffalo, more evidence to suggest that the appearance of the bison in the southeast was fairly late.

[41] Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 19-20, 22; Cowdrey, *This Land, This South*, 14-15; Haines, *Buffalo*, 12-13, 73-74, 76; Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 847-48, 850; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 401, 405-7; and Silver, *New Face on the Countryside*, 17-19, 24-26, 51.

[42] Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 842-43, 847-52; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 406-7; and Silver, *New Face on Countryside*, 111, 173.

[43] Romans, *Natural History*, 174.

[44] Dary, *Buffalo Book*, 18-19, 271-78; Haines, *Buffalo*, 214-15; and Tom McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo* (New York, 1972), 307-9. The offspring of domestic cattle and buffalo are known as "cattalo" and several herds developed by ranchers exist today.

[45] Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 18.

[46] Boyd, "Diego Peña's Expedition," 18.

[47] Ibid., 14, 18-19. Joe A. Akerman, Jr., *Florida Cowman, A History of Florida Cattle Raising* (Kissimmee, 1976), 2-3, 10-13, 18-20, 23-24; Charles W. Arnade, "Cattle Raising in Spanish Florida, 1513-1763," *Agricultural History* 35 (July 1961): 118-19, 122-23; John Bartram, *Account of East Florida*, 16; Haines, *Buffalo*, 215; Cecil Johnson, *British West Florida, 1763-1783* (New Haven, 1942), 170; McHugh, *Time of the Buffalo*, 307-9; Robert R. Rea, "Planters and Plantations in British West Florida," *Alabama Review* 29 (July 1976): 233; Silver, *New Face on Countryside*, 173-75; Joe G. Warner, *Biscuits and 'Taters: A History of Cattle Ranching in Manatee County* (Bradenton, FL, 1980), 4-6; and Williams, *View of West Florida*, 26. Compare especially the photographs of native Florida range cows in Warner's *Biscuits and 'Taters* (p. 5-6) to those of cattalo in Dary's *Buffalo Book* (facing p. 274, 275, and 278).

[48] Haines, *Buffalo*, 78.

[49] Barsness, *Heads, Hides & Horns*, 5-6, 15; Cowdery, *This Land, This South*, 14-15, 23, 94-95; Gunter, "Remarks on an American Bison," 398-99; Haines, *Buffalo*, 76; Malin, *History & Ecology*, 38-43; Roe, *North American Buffalo*, 842-52; Rostlund, "Geographic Range," 395-407; and Silver, *New Face on Countryside*, 17-19, 24-26, 50-51, 90-91, 100-101, 110-13, 128-29, 172-73, 186-91, 196-97.

[50] Bakeless, *Eyes of Discovery*, 18, 23; Ingram, *Relation of David Ingram*, 560; and Silver, *New Face on Countryside*, 36.

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